

Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, October 21, 2015

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Sunny	75 48
Fri: Sunny	76 53
Sat: Sunny	69 56
Sun: Clouds	63 52
Mon: Rain	61 50
Tue: Rain	56 47
Wed: Rain	58 44



Upstream Elevation Predicted 10/21/2015	
Lake Chatuge	1,919.83
Lake Nottely	1,765.10
Blue Ridge	1,676.68

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Sports Page 11

City of Hiwassee candidate forum
Monday, October 26, 2015
6:30 pm
New Towns County Senior Center

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Howl-O-Weenie Bash
Oct. 31st
Meeks Dog Pavilion Blairsville

See Page 12

SEE SAMPLE BALLOTS FOR CITY OF HIAWASSEE AND CITY OF YOUNG HARRIS

See Page 9



SPORTS FOOTBALL
Fri. Oct 23
VS. Commerce
HOMECOMING!!
7:30 PM
CROSS COUNTRY
OCT. 26
Indian Run XIII
GA Mtn Fairgrounds
4:15 PM

TCHS to crown new Homecoming King and Queen

By Mason Mitcham
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

Last week, the students of Towns County High School voted for their friends to take place on the 2015 Homecoming Court.

Homecoming is a special time of the year for students, a time meant to celebrate the coming home of former students to visit their family and friends.

Each year, the Homecoming Queen from the year before returns to crown the next Queen voted in by her peers, and the process repeats year after year in a passing of the torch down through the generations.

Kayla Davis, last year's Queen, will surely return to bestow the crown upon this year's winner at the

Homecoming football game on Friday, Oct. 23.

And it all starts with first being nominated to Homecoming Court.

"The seniors nominated their Top 10 male and female students for the court, and they have chosen those, so the court has been voted on. Then underclassmen voted on the king and the queen, and then the seniors will vote on the king and the queen," said High School Principal Connie Hobbs.

"They're working on their biographies that will be read during the football game. They kind of do a little report on themselves to introduce themselves. So we have the court, the court has been voted on and is set," she said.

Nominations for Homecoming King are Sterling Hedden, Dylan Roberts, Daulton Rogers, Andrew Watson, Chaiz



Davenport, Dalton Bradley, Adam Taylor, Shea Underwood, Adam Penland and William Lovelady.

For the Homecoming Queen: Tiffani Abrahamson, Rachel Barnard, Jocelyn Byers, Megan Corbin, LeAnn Dean,

Faythe Denton, Michelle Miller, Samantha Quijada, Kaelyn Smith and Taylor Underwood.

When the seniors have finished voting, the Homecoming King and Queen will be recognized this week.

announced Friday night, Oct. 23, during halftime of the football game. The king will be recognized Thursday during the homecoming parade and bonfire at the high school," said Hobbs.

"The queen will be recognized Friday night, Oct. 23, during halftime of the football game. The king will be recognized Thursday during the homecoming parade and bonfire at the high school," said Hobbs.

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School taxes lower this year

By Shawn Jarrard
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education has set its yearly millage rate, and taxpayers on the whole will be saving \$21,605 in property taxes.

Set in a board work session on Oct. 5, the rate is down to 7.964 in 2015 from 7.995 in 2014.

Last year, the board faced a need to raise the rate by 1.5 mills from the 2013 rate, due to a depleted General Fund through years of relatively lower taxes. Raising the rate last year by 1.5 mills resulted in a tax increase of \$1,076,205 in 2014 over 2013.

This year, the county tax digest and rollback rate applied to the school system were such that the schools would have needed to raise taxes to bring in the same estimated amount as last year, following the millage increase of 2014.

"So, instead of increasing the taxes to bring that back, we decided to go ahead and accept that millage rate, which is a reduced millage rate," said Towns County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Darren Berrong.

Total school taxes levied for 2015 are \$5,681,848.

"We felt really good about where our finances came out at the end of last year," said Dr. Berrong, explaining why the board decided to accept the

loss this year rather than keep taxes steady from last year. "We lost a person at the central office who ended up going to work at a different school system, and we did not replace that person, so we were able to save a salary down at the central office without having to replace that individual.

"And we had a couple of teacher positions that we're able to pay out of some federal funds, so we've been able to cut a few positions and try to be a little bit more fiscally sound as far as how we're spending money. So, I feel like we've really made a push forward to starting to increase our fund balance instead of losing money every year."

Dr. Berrong hopes that Towns County Schools will be able to add to the fund balance regardless of the \$21,605 loss in taxes brought in by the schools for 2015, and he and the board will be keeping an eye on changes coming in January that could affect that.

"We have a couple of things that are happening in January," said Dr. Berrong. "The system's payout for the teacher retirement is going up. Also, the system's cost for the healthcare for some specific employees in the school system is going to go up as well, so we're going to wait and see what happens at the end of the year. Hopefully, we'll at least come out even. My hope is that we



Dr. Darren Berrong

will actually make a little bit of an increase, but those are things that are hard to predict.

"The state legislature passed a few things last session that are going to cost all systems in the state more money. We were having to pay 13 percent toward teacher retirement, and now we're going to have to pay 14.7, I believe, which is going to be a significant increase in cost when you're talking about how many employees we have. So, there are a few things going in that we're going to have to pay that we haven't had to pay in the past, and that's going to probably be an increase of anywhere from \$250,000 to \$300,000 that we didn't have as a cost to us last year."

Towns libraries enjoy rising attendance rates

By Mason Mitcham
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

On the whole, the numbers are looking good for the libraries of Towns County.

At the Towns County Public Library Quarterly Board Meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 13, branch managers of the library system addressed last quarter's statistics and discussed the upcoming quarter.

In Hiwassee, some numbers are down while others keep increasing.

"E-books are down somewhat. They're down by 58 percent. I think personally from what I hear people say, we still have folks that say, 'I prefer a book - I love books, I love to have a book.' And I think it was so new in the beginning. That's my feeling for the decrease based on what I heard folks saying at the beginning," said Towns County Public Library Branch Manager Debbie Phillips.

"The videos are way down, and that is due to discards. It's a 272 percent decrease. We just didn't really have a place to put them. They have gone down a little bit in circulation, our adult ones. We still have children's videos, and they're pretty popular," she added.

However, attendance has gone up significantly for two



Debbie Phillips

quarters in a row. "Attendance is up 39 percent. Again, it was up 57 in our last quarter. Still got lots of folks coming in," she said.

Attendance might be growing because the library continues to host events for its patrons.

"Coming up, we have Mike Grimes. He's been here once before, he's a bookbinder. He does a really great job. He'll be here on Oct. 26. He doesn't just do Bibles - he does any kind of books, but he really specializes in Bibles. He comes and sets up and you bring your stuff to him and he will give you an estimate. If you want to do it, you'll say fine, he'll take it with him and he comes back in two weeks and brings your stuff. The things that I saw him take, after

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Vietnam Veterans receive Quilts of Valor

By Shawn Jarrard
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

Blairsville - The Quilts of Valor Foundation, in conjunction with the Misty Mountain Quilters' Guild, presented 20

Vietnam Veterans with quilts in a ceremony at The Moving Wall in Meeks Park on Monday, Oct. 12.

Each Quilt of Valor honoree was first wrapped in their quilt, then given a hug and Welcome Home by QOV Area

Coordinator Linda Gorman and former QOV Executive Director Susan Gordon, as James Gorman read brief histories of military service.

"For all the veterans

See Veterans, Page 10



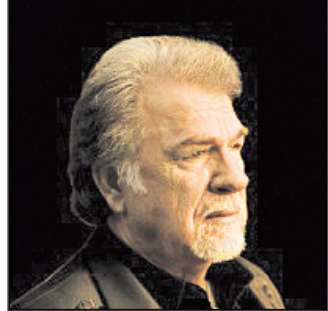
Gene Watson coming to Hiwassee October 24th

By Shawn Jarrard
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

The Fall Festival at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds may have just concluded, but the entertainment at the fairgrounds will continue this weekend as Gene Watson graces Anderson Music Hall on Saturday, Oct. 24.

Watson, a Country Music Legend in every way possible, has remained in the business for more than 50 years having recorded greater than 50 albums by keeping a level head and always being a man of the people.

"I treat people like I like to be treated," said Watson.



Gene Watson

"I've always had a saying that I've tried to live up to, that I'm no better or worse than whoever I'm talking to. My career, what I do, depends on what people think of me."

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New Fiddle King reigns supreme

By Mason Mitcham
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

When 17-year-old Jacob Johnson of Lincoln, AL, first stepped onstage at Anderson Music Hall to participate in Georgia's Official State Fiddlers' Convention, he didn't know that he would soon be taking home the most coveted prize: the title of 2015 Georgia Mountain Fiddle King.

But that's exactly what he did, beating out Senior Fiddler Chuck Nation with a tune called "Don't Let the Deal Go Down."

Other categories included Beginning Fiddle, Harmonica, Buck Dancing, Dulcimer, Dobro, Old Time Banjo, Mandolin, Banjo, Flat Pick Guitar, Finger Style Guitar, and Bluegrass Band.

After all the other winners were announced, the winners of the Junior Fiddle and Senior Fiddler Categories went head-



Jacob Johnson, Fiddle King to-head with a single tune apiece.

"When I got up this morning, I really didn't expect this to happen, but it

photo by Lowell Nicholson has happened," said Johnson, accepting his award.

Despite his young See Fiddle, Page 10

Beatles tribute band to play The Hall on Halloween



By Shawn Jarrard
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

The next best thing to the Fab Four is headed to Hiwassee, as The Return, a Beatles tribute band, performs its true to life show at Anderson Music Hall on Saturday, Oct. 31.

Patrons of the event are encouraged to dress in their Halloween best, as the Georgia

Mountain Fairgrounds will be hosting a costume contest onstage at the concert during the intermission, where best

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