

Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, October 31, 2012

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Sunny	57 29
Fri: Clouds	58 30
Sat: Sunny	61 32
Sun: Sunny	63 34
Mon: Showers	61 37
Tue: Clouds	61 39
Wed: Sunny	59 35



Upstream Elevation Predicted 10/31/12	
Lake Chatuge	1918.85
Lake Nottely	1765.01
Blue Ridge	1672.45

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Sports Page 12A

Groundbreaking

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall invites the public to attend the Groundbreaking for the construction of the Center at the Foster Memorial Park Saturday, Nov. 3rd, at 2 p.m.

Commissioner Kendall said this Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax-funded facility will be an asset to the county for years to come.

The 27,000 square-foot facility is designed to serve as a Recreational, Community and Convention Center that will accommodate up to 1,000 in a banquet style seating to stimulate economic development.

Again, the public is invited to attend this historic occasion for Towns County.

Gridiron

Towns County travels to Lakeview Academy in Gainesville on Friday night looking for its third consecutive victory.

Only two other teams in school history have marked down three straight in the win column, and Coach Langford and his Indians will look to join the 2008 and 2010 squads.

Lakeview is coming off a record-breaking fifth win over North Cobb Christian Academy 63-28 last week.

Lakeview will be seeking its first six-win season as Towns is on the hunt for three in-a-row.

Lakeview is led by senior quarterback Ted Reynolds, who operates the Lions' triple option attack and is a four-year starter.

Wrestling

Twenty-six wrestlers will make up the 2012-13 Towns County Middle School Wrestling squad.

According to Head Coach Jeff Stowers, Towns County should have several wrestlers competing for the League Championship.

The season will get underway on Tuesday, Oct. 30th at Towns County Middle School with Dawson County and Riverview Middle School.

Coach Stowers and his athletes are looking to continue the tradition that is Towns County Wrestling.

With plenty of veterans returning from last season, mixed with a young crop of upstarts on the rise, this season appears to be another exciting one for Towns County Middle School Wrestling.

Cross Country heads to state; wins Region

By Joe Collins
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Athens - It was an amazing afternoon for the Towns County Lady Indians Cross Country team and for Bradley Smith of the Varsity boys team as they won a chance to compete at the Class A State Championships on Saturday in Macon.

The Lady Indians absolutely dominated the other five teams in the public schools Area 4-A Championship claiming four of the top six places in the race and winning the Championship trophy.

Junior Ansley Vardeman finished first in the meet and won the individual crown while Bradley Smith came in third in the boy's event to earn himself a shot at State.

"I am so happy that we won and I am excited about running at the State Championship," declared a humble Vardeman when asked about the win and her title.

This will be the girls seventh trip to the State Championship in the last nine years and this could be the year that they take it all.

TCHS Principal and Cross Country fan Roy Perren said the victory came as no surprise.

"This is really not a surprise. Coach Ledford has built a very strong foundation for our boys and girls teams and we run really well in competition," Perren said. "Both our girls and boys teams have competed at the state level over the last several years with the girls making more appearances."

This is a great testimony to the talent of the TCHS teams and to the coaching ability of Head Coach Jeannie Ledford.

Ledford stuck to her guns all year and it proved to be the winning ticket.

"My girls only won one meet this year but it was the one that counted," she said. "We ran tough meets to prepare for the Area Championship and that was by design. We didn't win



The 2012 Area 4-A Champion Cross Country Team, the Towns County Lady Indians. Photo/Joe Collins

any matches but we trained against the best and that made us ready when the time came to make it count," said a very happy Ledford.

Placing first and second overall and getting two of the next four spots was proof positive that Ledford's plan worked. Vardeman and her girls were ready.

"The boys didn't do as well as they had hoped, but without making excuses, every one of them ran even though each one was suffering issues from asthma to injury," Coach Ledford said.

Even Smith was battling pain in the form of shin splints but they all gutted it out and finished the race. They really

had a good shot at placing in the Top Four and moving on to State too, because Commerce finished second and the Indians had already beaten them twice this season.

"I feel honored to be able to go to State and represent my varsity boys team," said Smith.

See *Cross Country*, page 16A

Senior Center open for business

By Libby Shook
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Close to 400 people braved the elements, with rain drizzling down and temperatures in the mid-40s, to celebrate the grand opening of the new Mountain Community Senior Center in Hiawassee.

This beautiful 5,000 square-foot facility has several offices, a grand foyer, dining area, commons area, and a state of the art kitchen complete with serving area, food preparation area, and huge pantries for food storage.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall was on hand to welcome all the guests. He did not make a speech, however, as he wanted the emphasis to be on the visitors and many seniors who turned out to be recognized at the open house event.

Special guests included Pat Freeman, executive director of the Area Agency on Aging, Lamar Gailey, Community Program Director, Nancy Smallwood, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission representative, Pat Nicholson, director Towns County Senior Center, Towns County Senior Center staff, Richard Bachman, architect, and Chad Winkler, Winkler Construction Company.

Freeman, Gailey, and Smallwood are all from Gainesville and enjoyed a beautiful drive across the mountain for the open house even though most of the leaves are already off the trees.

Towns County has the largest percentage of senior citizens of any county in the state. The new Senior Center building is the result of a



Members of the Mountain Community Senior Center offer Commissioner Bill Kendall many thanks. Photo/Libby Shook

\$500,000 Community Development Block Grant from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

Funding also included in-kind contributions. The Towns County Road Department did the clearing, grading of site, storm drainage and parking lot, and some local funds also were used.

Kendall was all smiles on Sunday.

"The Mountain Community Senior Center is dedicated to the promotion of fellowship among senior citizens in Towns County; introducing and welcoming new seniors to people, places, and resources; providing a meeting place for social and educational activities for seniors, and to promote projects that are beneficial to the betterment of our citizens and our beloved mountain community," he said.

Nicholson was ecstatic about the facility as well.

"As Center Director in charge of strategizing and planning for the Mountain Senior Center we are proud to be able to offer this new facility to our local seniors," Nicholson said. "We provide wellness programs, exercise classes, meals on wheels, transportation, games and recreation, as well as offering a hot noon meal at the center five days a week."

"We have a well trained and competent staff that works with the seniors and enjoys doing so," said Nicholson.

Representatives with Legacy Link Inc., the Area Agency on Aging, were extremely proud of the new facility that the Towns County Commissioner has constructed for the seniors of Towns County.

"The opening of this facility is the result of four years of planning and seeking funding on the part of the Commissioner," Gailey

L.O.S.T. negotiations headed to arbitration

By Libby Shook
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It's official, Towns County and its municipalities will go to baseball arbitration, as they were unable to come to an agreement at the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) mediation held on Thursday, Oct. 25th at the Towns County Courthouse.

The county offered an 80/20 split between the county and the cities of Young Harris and Hiawassee. This was their last and final offer to avoid litigation and save the taxpayers money according to Commissioner Bill Kendall.

"All residents, city and county, will bear the cost of litigation. We made the additional 2 percent offer to try to avoid additional litigation costs for Towns County residents," said Kendall.

The County and the municipalities were all represented by legal counsel as they were in the three previous negotiations.

Mediator Jim Mahar, a Gainesville attorney who specializes in mediation, took the meeting into closed session. "We will be going into Executive Session," Mahar said. "All participants will sign a form stating that they understand that the proceedings are confidential. Once the county and municipalities go into Executive Session, the meetings are closed to the press."

Mahar said this is a ruling handed down by the Georgia Supreme Court.

Mahar told the participants that he has limited his practice solely to mediation and said that he had mediated more



Commissioner Bill Kendall

than 1,000 cases to date.

"I mediate, that's what I do," said Mahar. "We settle here, with my help, or a judge will step in and settle it for you. Whatever the visiting judge decides is unappealable. 'You folks are the best equipped people to get this resolved and I'm going to help you do it,'" said Mahar. "I'll meet with each party and I'll carry the proposals. I'll play round-robin until we reach an agreement. There is only one pie and it's got to be divided."

Mahar told the participants that his mediation fee was \$200 per hour and that dollar amount gets divided according to the percentage of the tax.

The first LOST negotiation meeting was held Aug. 7th. On hand to present information on the county's behalf was Douglas Eaves of Eaves Consulting Group, Duluth, Georgia. Eaves presented his findings to the group of approximately 30 interested parties.

Based on the findings and figures presented by Eaves at that time, his recommendation was that the county should be receiving 86.88 percent of the sales tax revenue.

He also stated that Hiawassee should be receiving

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Halloween on the Square a hit

By Libby Shook
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The Downtown Hiawassee Square was full of ghosts, goblins, zombies, witches, and creatures of all sorts on Saturday as the City of Hiawassee hosted Halloween on the Square.

It was also surrounded by about 50 jeeps decorated and filled with candy as the North Georgia Jeepers returned for a second year to hand out candy to the kids.

Approximately 50 local businesses had booths set up and everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves as the little ones walked from booth to booth with their bags, bowls, and buckets hoping to go home with as much candy as they could collect.

Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis was handing out candy as well.

"We want to thank the North Georgia Jeepers for coming back to participate in our Halloween on the Square," Mayor Mathis said. "We also want to thank all the many businesses that came out as well as the great outpouring from the community. What a great success this year has been. It's



Mayor Barbara Mathis sorts through the candy she's handing out on Saturday. Photo/Libby Shook

really all about the kids and the City of Hiawassee is happy to be able to do this for the kids," said Mathis.

Mathis was right. It really was all about the kids and they all had a blast as the little ones jumped, bounced, and played in the bounce house provided by the city.

The American Red Cross was there selling hot dogs and hamburgers. They also had coffee and hot chocolate to help

take off the chill as the clouds settled in and the temperature began to drop.

Adults got into the festivities as well as many of them were in costume to enjoy the excitement with their children. There were even some dogs walking around decked out in costumes.

This really was a family event.

See *Halloween* page 16A

Early voting continues

By Libby Shook
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Early voting continued this week with another great turnout by the community according to Superintendent of Elections Jonni Marie Shook.

They were open on Saturday, Oct. 27th from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. This was the only Saturday that early voting will be available to public.

"It has been a great second week of early voting in Towns County," said Shook.

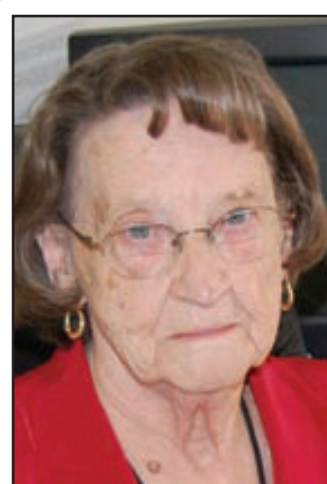
According to Shook, 1,467 voters turned out for "in person voting" and an additional 100 have returned their absentee ballots.

This makes for a total of 2,775 total early votes cast to date and a total of 389 absentee ballots returned since early voting commenced on Oct. 15th.

"This has been another record-setting week and we still have one more week of voting to go," said Shook.

Shook encourages voters to "Please tell your friends and neighbors and bring them with you to vote. This is a very important election."

The hours for early voting are Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. The office



Irma Nichols

will be open on Tuesday until 7 p.m. for all you working folks who find it inconvenient to try to get out to the polls during scheduled week day hours. Please remember that this is a very important election as incumbent Sheriff Chris Clinton squares off against Daren Osborn, incumbent Tax Commissioner Bruce Rogers squares off against Bill Kuykendall,

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