

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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Publication Number 635540 Volume 84 Number 6

Wednesday, December 12, 2012

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thu: Sunny	56 26
Fri: Clouds	57 35
Sat: Rain	56 47
Sun: Rain	57 35
Mon: Clouds	52 31
Tue: Snow	49 33
Wed: Rain	50 30



Upstream Elevation Predicted 12/12/12	
Lake Chatuge	1916.56
Lake Nottely	1758.99
Blue Ridge	1669.85

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Shop with a Cop Needs Your Help
See Page 2A



Marine Corps Toy Drive Distribution Date



Dec. 15 • 9 a.m. - noon
Dec. 22 • 9 a.m. - noon
Towns County Courthouse
See Page 5A

Georgia State Patrol Toys for Tots Drive & Car Seat Check



Friday, Dec. 14
12:30 p.m. - 2 p.m.
Ingles in Hiawassee
See Page 2A

Free Food Distribution



Tuesday
December 18
11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Towns County Food Pantry

Fundraisers aid Empty Stocking

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
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The Gold Academy hosted a fundraiser for the Towns County Sheriff's Empty Stocking Fund on Sunday evening, Dec. 9th.

The only cost for admission was an new, unwrapped toy for children ages 0-12 years.

Sheriff Chris Clinton was on hand to welcome folks, shake their hands, and thank them for coming out to participate in this very worthwhile event.

"I am very thankful for the Levys and all the folks who came out to support the children and community. I'm really thankful to be able to serve this Towns County and be a part of this community. I feel very blessed," said Clinton.

Clinton also expressed his appreciation to all who came out to the basketball game Friday night and donated toys for the Empty Stocking Fund.

Clinton's administrative



The Gold Academy Empty Stocking Fund toy drive was complete with Classic music from the Rock era. Photo/Libby Shook

assistant, Vicki Ellis, was also at the fundraiser. Ellis and her counterpart, Heather Whitaker, administrative assistant at the Towns County Detention Center, spend many countless hours shopping and getting the gifts ready for Santa to deliver on Christmas morning.

"I'm very grateful that people of this community come together and do something like this. To know that there are so many good people willing to

pull together to make Christmas a little brighter for the children of Towns County is inspiring to me," said Ellis.

Owners Bob and Vicki Levy were delighted with the turn out as guests perused the art work, bid on silent auction items, and purchased raffle tickets.

Silent auction items were donated by local artists and lo-

See Toy Drive, page 12A

GSP confirms ID of Tate City car crash victim

By Charles Duncan
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Tate City - The Georgia State Patrol has received word of the positive identity of a crash victim who died Nov. 26th in a one-vehicle accident in Tate City, patrol officials said Monday.

Patrol spokesman Gordy Wright said David Marvin Wheeler, age 56, from Highlands, NC is the victim who perished in the crash.

The accident occurred on Tallulah River Road about 10 p.m., Nov. 26th, patrol officials said. Wheeler, driving northbound in a 2009 Chevy Silverado, lost control, left the roadway and the vehicle overturned, patrol officials said.

The vehicle burst into flames, Towns County Fire and Rescue responded to the crash scene, patrol officials said.

Firefighters from neigh-



boring Rabun County also responded to the crash, patrol officials said.

Wheeler was burned beyond recognition and was pronounced dead at the crash scene by Towns County Coroner Ricky Mathis, patrol officials said.

Wheeler's remains were sent to the Georgia State Crime Lab for positive identification.

See Crash, page 12A

Santa Claus gives Towns children thumbs up

It looks like Christmas is all clear in Towns as children have been nice, not naughty

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
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Young Harris - Christmas found its way to the beautiful Young Harris on Friday night, Dec. 7th, as the traditional Christmas Tree Lighting at the Mayor's Park was underway.

With stars overhead and mild temperatures, it was the perfect night for the crowd to be able to come out and participate in this annual event.

To the surprise and delight of everyone there, especially the children, sleigh bells began to ring and there was Old Saint Nick himself.

He hugged the children and was absolutely surrounded by them as they greeted him with great enthusiasm and love.

Off they went to the beautifully decorated City Hall where snacks, goodies, and punch was waiting for the children.

But, the children were not very interested in the snacks. They were eager to get close to Santa Claus and tell him how good they had been and what they wanted him



Santa Claus addresses the crowd on Friday at Mayor's Park in Young Harris. He said he was aware that Towns County children had been nice, not naughty in 2012. Photo/Libby Shook

to bring them for Christmas. What a delightful event and the smiles on the children's faces was the perfect theme for this community-based event. There was a tremendous turn out as the park

filled up with hundreds of folks eager to listen to the music, hear the sweet sounds of children singing, and await the lighting of the tree.

See Tree Lighting, page 12A

Love Light Tree is shining bright

By Libby Shook
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On Monday night, Dec. 3rd, the Chatuge Regional Hospital and Nursing Home Auxiliary hosted their annual Love Light Tree Ceremony at 6 p.m. with 60 plus people in attendance for this special occasion.

Everyone was welcomed by Chairperson Brenda Hitchcock. Karl Berndt of Calvary Chapel in Hiawassee gave the invocation.

Berndt, who also gave the benediction at the end of the ceremony, said, "To your relief, I am not going to preach a sermon. I just want to remind us of what God did 2,000 years ago. It was the greatest gift of all time; the ultimate gift; a gift we were not necessarily looking for, but the gift we needed most, the birth of Jesus



The annual lighting of the Chatuge Regional Love Light Tree warmed the hearts of many. Photo/Libby Shook

See Love Light, page 12A

Hiawassee experiences 5-day treasure hunt

By Libby Shook
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The Great American Treasure Hunt, a touring road show event which travels the North American Continent, came to Hiawassee Nov. 27th through Dec. 1st.

It was free to the general public.

The five-day event was held at the Holiday Inn Express.

There were many folks who turned out to have their gold and silver jewelry appraised and many of them walked out satisfied with their



Betty Wilson of Hiawassee gets her treasures appraised during the Great American Treasure Hunt. Photo/Libby Shook

See Treasures page 12A

County, cities head to court over L.O.S.T.

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
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Towns County municipalities Hiawassee and Young Harris, have officially filed a law suit against the government of Towns County regarding the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST).

Commissioner Bill Kendall was served papers regarding the LOST litigation on regarding the complaint filed against the county by both municipalities.

A mediation hearing was held on Thursday, Oct. 25th, with mediator James Mahar, a Gainesville attorney specializing in mediation, meeting with both the cities and the county to work out a settlement regarding the LOST negotiations.

The negotiations broke down and there was no choice but to go into Baseball Arbitration for a resolution between the cities and the county.

Prior to arbitration, at the final negotiation hearing on Aug. 28th, Kendall made the following proposal. "I support and submit the committee's recommendation of not taking money away from anyone by keeping the formula for the past 10 years at 82 percent for the county and 18 percent for the cities to decide how to split their share."

At the mediation hearing, the county offered an 80/20 split to avoid litigation and the cities declined the offer.

Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis said Hiawassee needs the money.

"In 2012, the LOST proceeds received by Hiawassee have resulted in a 2.033 roll back in city property taxes," Mayor Mathis said. "Due to the sales taxes generated in our city, Hiawassee property owners will continue to pay a net millage in 2012 of 2.270, the same millage levied since 2008. Receiving our fair share of the LOST proceeds is



Commissioner Bill Kendall

of great concern to the Hiawassee Council," said Mathis.

Mathis added that the current tax division is clearly unfair to city residents and intended to benefit county residents to the detriment of city residents.

"It is regrettable that city residents cannot receive a fair division of the LOST dollars that the cities generate," she said. "I expect that the city residents will win, but regardless of the outcome, tax dollars that could be spent on needed services will go instead to lawyers and experts. This is a loss to the taxpayers."

Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby said the suit pulls at the heartstrings of Young Harris residents.

"It saddens me to know that we haven't been able to work through this negotiation," Mayor Gibby said. "We began this negotiation in good faith. We did not hire outside expertise until the end of the summer when the commissioner's expert presented for the county."

"That expert cut in half what the City of Young Harris has been receiving from LOST," she said. "After all the time that has been expended, it is time for a judge to help decide this issue. Either way, 2013 will be a new beginning for all of us."

Commissioner Kendall said that residents of Hiawassee and Young Harris also are

See L.O.S.T., page 12A

TCSO becomes state certified

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton is happy as a proud papa.

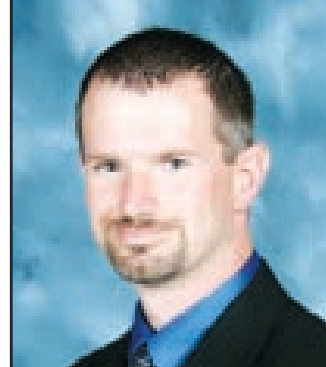
On Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Towns County Courthouse, there will be a formal presentation of the State Certification Seal.

This event is open to the public, and all are encouraged to attend.

Gilmer County Sheriff Stacy Nicholson, Region I Vice President of the Georgia Sheriffs' Association will be making the official presentation.

"You are cordially invited to attend a presentation ceremony on Dec. 13, at 7 p.m. at the Towns County Courthouse, as the Towns County Sheriff's Office receives State Certification," Sheriff Clinton said.

"This prestigious honor is only bestowed upon agencies that develop and maintain standards of professionalism set forth by the State of Georgia," he said. "Our Sheriff's Office has now joined



Sheriff Chris Clinton

an elite group of law enforcement agencies, - less than 100 agencies statewide - to receive this honor.

"We hope you will join us as the Office of Sheriff takes the next steps into ensuring the citizens of Towns County a law enforcement agency based on state standards of professionalism."

TOWNS COUNTY HERALD



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