

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Snow	51	28
Fri: Sunshine	39	22
Sat: Sunshine	41	20
Sun: Clouds	45	17
Mon: Rain	42	26
Tue: Snow	44	25
Wed: Snow	45	25



Upstream Elevation Predicted 01/19/11	
Lake Chatuge	1918.18
Lake Nottely	1762.23
Blue Ridge	1620.83

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Chamber Chronicles

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Don Williams

Don Williams will return to Hiawassee on March 26 for a 7 p.m. performance, Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thompson said. Tickets go on sale Feb. 4. Prices are \$35 plus \$2 handling for Level I seating and \$25 plus \$2 handling for Level II seating.

TCHD Furlough Schedule

Due to budget cuts, the Towns County Health Department staff is furloughed two days a month. The furlough dates for January are Friday the 7th and Friday the 21st. February dates are Friday, Feb. 4 and Friday, Feb. 18.

Bill Medley Saturday

Rock 'N' Roll Hall of Famer Bill Medley and his daughter McKenna Medley will perform Saturday at 7 p.m. at Anderson Music Hall. Medley is one of the most famous voices in Rock 'N' Roll, having teamed for many years with Bobby Hatfield to form The Righteous Brothers. Tickets are on sale now at Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Prices are \$35 plus \$2 handling for Level I seating and \$25 plus \$2 handling for Level II seating. Come out and enjoy a legend at The Hall.

Food Pantry

The Towns County Food Pantry will hold its free food distribution on Tuesday, Jan. 25 if Towns County Schools are open. The distribution will be held at the Towns County Food Pantry on Jack Dayton Circle from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. All that are in need of assistance are encouraged to attend. If you are unable to pick up your food, please call (706) 896-4783 for more details prior to distribution day. This allows us to make arrangements to deliver food to you. All clients and inquiries are kept confidential.

Search & Rescue saves two hikers from Trail

By Frank Riley
Special to Towns County Herald
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The search & rescue team of the Towns County Fire Rescue Department was pressed into duty twice within the first two weeks of 2011.

The team was needed to complete two dangerous rescue missions of stranded hikers on the Appalachian Trail.

Both times the temperature was below 20 degrees with blowing wind and deep snow. The search & rescue team did not hesitate to tackle the job at hand because both times, a man's life was in danger and they performed the jobs they were trained to do.

Last week, rescuers responded to Blue Mountain on the Appalachian Trail following a call to the Towns County 911 center. A stranded hiker, who called on a cell phone, told 911 dis-

patchers that he was out of food and had possible frost bite on both of his feet.

The temperature was below 20 degrees; heavy snow had fallen in the area.

The man said that he was located at the Blue Mountain Shelter on the Trail which made the rescue plan easier to develop since his location was known. The search & rescue team put its training into motion for the second time in two weeks and staged in Unicoi Gap to start the rescue of the desperate hiker.

Rescues on the Appalachian Trail are made more difficult than in other areas because most the trail is a National Wilderness Area where motorized vehicles are prohibited. The rescuers must carry the victim out on a metal basket, called a Stokes Basket, which has

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A hungry, exhausted and frost-bitten hiker is relieved to be bundled up in the bed of the Towns County Sheriff's Office ATV following a harsh ordeal on the Appalachian Trail. Photo/Frank Riley

TCMS Robotics team is on a roll

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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They call themselves the Kick 'N' Bots and to be simply honest, they're taking names and kicking butt as they unveil a project that may be scientifically revolutionary.

It's an apt description of Towns County Middle School's first ever robotics team, a group of five extraordinary students who have taken a class project to the state championship level of competition after regional and Super Regional contests.

Michael Austin, Danielle Diehl, Gabe Gilliland, Mia Manto and Sunshine Wood, the TCMS robotics team, took home first place two weeks ago in the Georgia First Lego League Robotics Super Regional Team Competition.

Their robotics coach, Jo Ray Van Vliet, provided the professional guidance and encouragement to lead the



Jo Ray Van Vliet, Gabe Gilliland, Mia Manto, Michael Austin and Danielle Diehl are a big part of the Robotics excitement. Not pictured, Sunshine Wood. The team heads to Georgia Tech Jan. 29 to compete for a state title.

TCMS robotics team to their second, first-place victory.

The team is using a Google Inventor Application program to develop a communication device in concept to aid Alzheimer's patients.

Austin, the team's lead strategist, said the project is feasible enough to make it into a reality.

"Yes it is in my opinion with the proper amount of time and effort," he said.

The device helps

Alzheimer's patients when they look at their telephone, it gives them the date, advises them of their day's schedule and even provides GPS support. It also includes telephone numbers of people they may need to contact, including pictures of the people beside the numbers.

"When they click on the person's picture, it gives the Alzheimer's patient in-

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SPLOST resolution signed

Towns County voters head to polls on March 15

By Charles Duncan
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After reaching an inter-governmental agreement with the cities of Hiawassee and Young Harris last week, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall called for a March 15 referendum to allow voters to extend a 1 cent sales tax.

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 15. The last day to register to vote in the election is Monday, Feb. 14, according to County Attorney Rob Kiker.

"Anyone choosing to vote in this special referendum may register to vote at 91 Berrong Street in Hiawassee," he said.

The Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax Referendum estimates that \$12.7 million will be raised over six years for capital outlay projects in the county and both cities.

The referendum allows for the distribution of 82 percent or \$10.413 million of SPLOST proceeds for the county, and \$1.143 million or 9 percent each for



Kendall signs SPLOST decree

Hiawassee and Young Harris.

Hiawassee would receive an additional \$450,000 if the proposal passes to expand sewer capacity per an agreement with the county. Of that expanded capacity, the county would receive 150,000 for its use.

The city of Young Harris' 9 percent proposed SPLOST revenue would include \$320,000-plus to build a crosswalk project to be developed in front of Sharp Memorial United Methodist Church in Young Harris.

A yes vote also would allow the county and cities to

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Kendall seeks SPLOST support

By Charles Duncan
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Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall says the question is simple: "do Towns County residents want part-time residents and tourists to pay for the capital projects of the county, and the cities of Hiawassee and Young Harris?"

Or, would they rather pay for those projects with property taxes?

With all due respect, Commissioner Kendall said that's how the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax works, day-trippers, part-time residents and tourists footing the bill by continuing to pay a 1 cent sales tax.

"The March 15 vote will not increase the sales



Commissioner Bill Kendall

tax in Towns County, if approved by the voters," Commissioner Kendall said. "It would keep the present 7 percent rate going. The 1 cent tax collected over the past 10 years by the Towns County Board of Education will expire on June 30, 2011.

"The BOE voted to not

seek another extension of the tax," he said.

If voters approve an extension of the 1 cent rate, that rate would just continue as is and be used by the county, Young Harris and Hiawassee after July 1 for infrastructure and capital outlay projects.

Those projects include roads, ambulances, public safety vehicles, fire department equipment, water, sewer, economic development, park development, including the construction of a multipurpose community center, libraries, fire hydrants and property tax relief, Commissioner Kendall said.

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School system gets a visit from Atlanta news media

NAACP questions BOE's calendar decision

By Charles Duncan
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Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Richard Behrens received a visit from 11Alive news reporter Doug Richards on Monday.

The Atlanta television station came to stir a stick of controversy about Towns County using the day set aside to reflect on the works of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as an inclement weather makeup day.

The news station reported that the President of Georgia's NAACP was highly upset with the school system for disrespecting Dr. King's legacy. Edward DuBose told 11Alive that to reduce Dr. King's legacy to an inclement weather day was unacceptable.

The news reporter did question locals about whether they thought children should have been in the classroom on Monday. The response was "yes."

Dubose's anger toward the Towns County School system is unfortunate, because on Sunday, Martin Luther King III told Atlanta television stations that he didn't believe that his father would object to students being in the classroom on the day set aside to remember his legacy.

Facing nine days of making up for lost snow days,



Dr. Richard Behrens

Dr. Behrens said there was no ill will towards anyone, just a school system trying to keep students on track and in the classroom. State budget cuts had already eliminated two classroom days for local students.

Dr. Behrens shot straight from the hip and unlike four school systems - Union, Habersham, Fanning and Gilmer - systems that backed off using the day for the same reason, he stuck with the system's decision.

"It was simple math: no disrespect to Dr. King," Behrens said. "We're simply doing what is in the best interests of our children."

Consider this: the school system missed four

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Nora Sutton named STAR Student

TCHS senior names Lynn Swanson STAR Teacher for 2010-2011

By Charles Duncan
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Nora Sutton is the ultimate student, she loves the classroom and she loves learning.

Sutton learned last week that she is the 2010-2011 STAR Student for Towns County High School.

The STAR Student Award goes to the senior with the highest SAT score.

"It was really exciting because it was something that I wasn't expecting."

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Principal Roy Perren presents Nora Sutton and Lynn Swanson, Towns County's STAR Student and STAR Teacher for 2010-2011.



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