

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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Wednesday, February 29, 2012

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Cloudy	69 48
Fri: Rain	65 55
Sat: Rain	59 33
Sun: Sunny	56 33
Mon: Cloudy	56 33
Tue: Sunny	60 37
Wed: Sunny	59 36



Upstream Elevation Predicted 02/29/12	
Lake Chatuge	1917.88
Lake Nottely	1761.74
Blue Ridge	1672.58

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Log onto our Web site

Log onto Towns County Herald.net to keep up with breaking news that impacts Towns County. March 6 election results can be found on Towns County Herald.net as well as any breaking news regarding Judge David Barrett.

TCSO Awards

The Towns County Sheriff's Office has been nominated for Agency of the Year to be announced March 22 in College Park at the annual Mothers Against Drunk Driving/Appalachian Trail Traffic Enforcement Network Conference and Banquet. Also, Towns County sheriff's Deputy Wayne Whidden has been nominated for Officer of the Year for DUI Enforcement, Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton announced Monday.

Sheriff Clinton and his department will host this month's ATTN meeting on Thursday, March 1st. POST In-service hours will be given for the training. All area law enforcement agencies and officials are invited. The meeting begins at 6 p.m. and dinner is provided.

In addition to the training, information will be available regarding Small Agency Incentive Grants awarded by the Governor's Office of Highway Safety. Interested agencies should contact the Towns County Sheriff's Office for location. As always, door prizes and incentive items will be given away.

Kindergarten

Registration will be held through Friday, March 2. Items you will need to bring to register your child include immunization Certificate Form 3231, Birth Certificate, Social Security Card, and proof of residency (a water bill or electric bill).

Judge Barrett in hot water over handgun

Langley: unfortunately 'poor judgment used to make rhetorical point with a gun'

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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The chief Superior Court Judge of the Enotah Judicial Circuit finds himself in hot water today following a Feb. 22 incident in Lumpkin County Superior Court in which he brandished a handgun during a court proceeding.

An investigation into the courtroom conduct of Enotah Circuit Chief Superior Court Judge David Barrett is underway by the Judicial Qualifications Commission of Georgia, the Towns County Herald has confirmed.

Judge Barrett reportedly pulled his personal handgun out during a joint bond hearing and temporary restraining order hearing in Lumpkin County Superior Court to make a "rhetorical point" to an uncooperative witness during the proceedings.

Georgia law allows judges to carry concealed weapons in a courtroom for their own protection.

Enotah Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley, who was present during the incident and asked the judge to put away his weapon, which he did, said that the incident "certainly was a significant breach of conduct in the courtroom by a Superior Court judge."

"On the other hand, I certainly saw nothing that I would characterize as a threat or an assault upon anyone," Langley said. "But it was a firearm and it was being held in (Judge Barrett's) hand while he talked and gestured."

The incident in question happened during the bond hearing for former Hall County Sheriff's Deputy Scott Sugarman and a civil proceeding where his estranged wife sought a temporary restraining order against Sugarman.



Judge David Barrett

porary restraining order against Sugarman.

Sugarman is facing charges of rape, criminal attempt to commit rape, aggravated assault, terroristic threats and two counts of third degree cruelty to children related to a Feb. 6 family violence incident in Lumpkin County, Lumpkin County Superior Court

records show.

He resigned from the Hall County Sheriff's Office on Feb. 17 after charges were filed in Lumpkin County, according to Langley.

The Towns County Herald does not reveal the identity of sexual assault victims. However, Sugarman's reasons for resigning his deputy's post and his alleged domestic assault against his wife have been widely reported in the Northeast Georgia news media.

Attorneys for both Sugarman and his wife were present in Lumpkin County Superior Court during the joint criminal and civil hearing. Judge Barrett was presiding over the case.

The day was intended to hear arguments for the victim to receive a temporary restraining order against Sugarman. The defense attorney for Sugarman

also sought an emergency bond hearing to set bail for his client.

As a matter of efficiency, the defense attorney consented to evidence in the case being heard at the same time as the TPO hearing, Langley said.

"At that hearing, the alleged victim in the case testified. She had her own attorney present," Langley said. "At one point, she was being questioned by (her estranged husband's attorney), her attorney made a series of objections, and the witness continued to talk - over Judge Barrett and over her own attorney."

"At that point, Judge Barrett began to admonish her, that she should let her attorney do her job," Langley said. "Some people do not realize that there is a specific statute that authorizes

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Ladies advance to Sweet 16

Bleckley, Arencibia, Cochran, and Stephanie Patton lead 78-27 rout of GMC

By Jerry Kendall
Towns County Herald
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Ali Bleckley, Gabby Arencibia, Eryn Cochran and Stephanie Patton combined to score 58 of the Towns County Lady Indians' 78 points en route to a 78-27 state playoff win over Georgia Military at Bill P. Kendall Gymnasium.

The win propels the Lady Indians (23-6) into yet another Sweet 16 appearance. They took on the Darlington Lady Tigers (26-3) on Tuesday night, again at Bill P. Kendall Gymnasium. Game results were not available at press time.

The Lady Indians quickly seized control of Friday's game against Georgia Military, beginning with a 3-point field goal by Ali Bleckley just 28 seconds into the game. The Lady Indians brushed aside a game tying trey by Georgia Military just 40 seconds later when a trey by Gabby Arencibia at the 6:39 mark



Head Coach Jim Melton and Assistant Coach Duncan Weekley congratulate the Lady Indians Starting Five after they built a commanding lead over Georgia Military. Photo/James Reese

triggered a 16-0 run for a 19-3 advantage by the 2:21 mark of the first quarter. Arencibia and Bleckley each added a trey and Eryn Cochran contributed a deuce and 4-for-4 free throw shooting as the Lady Indians led 24-7 after one quarter despite a second trey and a free throw by the Lady Bulldogs.

Arencibia then used two more treys and Kelsie Cowart three deuces for 6 points each in the second quarter while Bleckley added a deuce and another trey for 5 points and Cochran four more free throws without a miss as the Lady Indians

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Patton breaks freshman record

Freshman sensation quietly enters Towns County record books

By Jerry Kendall
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The beat goes on during a record setting season chock full of noteworthy accomplishments for Towns County High School Basketball. Lady Indians' freshman Stephanie Patton has quietly matched the accomplishment of fellow freshman Dallas Manus of the Indians in setting what is believed to be a new all-time scoring record for a freshman for the Lady Indians.

Patton actually

See Patton, page 10A



'No. 5' has made her mark on the record books. Freshman Stephanie Patton has played a big role this season. Photo/James Reese

Smoke detectors saved lives

By Fire Chief Mitch Floyd
Special to Towns County Herald
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The Towns County Fire Rescue Department has been extremely busy during the past week battling a number of structure fires. The trend began at 9:45 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 12th with a structure fire at 3622 Fodder Creek Road.

Fire Rescue Units arrived within 8 minutes of the call to find an approximately 1,800 square-foot frame house with flames showing through the roof. An aggres-

See Fires, page 10A



Towns County firefighters worked tirelessly to extinguish this blaze on Fodder Creek. The 81-year-old homeowner was able to escape in time thanks to a smoke detector. Photo/Marty Roberts

JQC controls fate of Judge Barrett's career

District Attorney Langley: criminal charges not likely

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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An investigation into the courtroom conduct of Enotah Judicial Circuit Senior Judge David Barrett has been opened, Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley said on Monday.

"I am aware that there is an open investigation," Langley said, referring to a complaint about Judge Barrett brandishing his personal handgun in open court in Lumpkin County on Feb. 22.

Reportedly Judge Barrett brandished the weapon to make a "rhetorical point" to an uncooperative witness during a bond hearing and a hearing to issue a temporary protective order in a Lumpkin County domestic violence case.

The investigation into the incident is being conducted by the investigator for the Judicial Qualifications



Jeff Langley

Commission of Georgia. Richard Hyde is listed on the commission's Web site as its investigator.

District Attorney Langley said his office will take a close look at the incident, but he doesn't expect criminal charges against Judge Barrett, who is allowed by Georgia law to carry a concealed weapon in the courtroom for his personal protection.

See Fate, page 10A

Early voting ends Friday

Last chance to cast presidential ballot early

By Charles Duncan
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Early voting for the "Super Tuesday" Presidential Preference Primary is drawing to a close with little fanfare in Towns County.

On Monday afternoon, only 309 votes had been cast early as the final days of early voting leading toward the Super Tuesday vote come to a close.

Early voting ends Friday, Towns County Registrar Irma Nichols said.

Early voting in person began Monday, Feb. 13th. The local polls were open on Saturday with few casting ballots from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Voters can still request an absentee ballot through Friday, March 2.

Georgia residents must return their absentee ballot to their county election office by close of polls on Election Day, March 6.

Absentee ballots cast by overseas and military voters must be postmarked on or before March 6, but will be accepted until the end of business on March 9. Voters are not required to provide a reason when requesting an absentee ballot.

The name on the Presidential ballot for Democrats is President Barrak Obama. The names on the GOP Presidential ballot include



Registrar Irma Nichols

Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, Jon Huntsman, Gary Johnson, Ron Paul, Rick Perry, Buddy Roemer, Mitt Romney and Rick Santorum.

Georgia election law requires the Secretary of State to set a date for the state executive committee of each party which is to conduct a presidential preference primary to submit a list of the names of the candidates of such party to appear on the Presidential Preference Primary ballot. On October 6, 2011, Secretary Kemp issued a notice to the chairmen of each political party to notify that the dead-

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TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

