

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Sunny	70	40
Fri: Sunny	74	49
Sat: Cloudy	74	46
Sun: Cloudy	72	47
Mon: Cloudy	68	46
Tue: Showers	67	46
Wed: Showers	65	42



Upstream Elevation Predicted 03/16/11	
Lake Chatuge	1920.32
Lake Nottely	1773.50
Blue Ridge	1625.55

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Spring Sale

It's time for a Spring into Summer Sale. Gently used hand bags, shoes, scarves, jewelry and books will be available on March 23rd from 9 a.m. until they're gone. The event will be held in the Chatuge Regional Hospital lobby. All proceeds go toward funding Auxiliary Projects at the Hospital and Nursing Home. For more details, call (706) 896-1753.



Cruiz-In Meeting

The Towns County Tourism Association and the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds will once again sponsor the Third Annual Georgia Mountain Moonshine Cruiz-In Car Show. The 2011 event is scheduled for Aug. 11-13 at the Fairgrounds.

Promoter Rakes Parrish will speak at the Annual Cruiz-In Community Meeting on Monday, April 11 at 5:30 p.m. at Anderson Music Hall at the Fairgrounds. The Tourism Association is looking for all area businesses to be apart of this event, please make plans to attend.

For more details, please contact Jane Holland at (706) 896-4966.



Safe Driving

An AARP Safe Driving Course is scheduled for April 9th at McConnell Memorial Baptist Church from 9:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. The course is geared to drivers 50 and up and offers the chance for older drivers to better understand their driving skills, vehicle safety and physical changes that could effect their driving safety. Anyone may attend. The cost: \$12 for AARP members; \$14 for non-members.

For more details and registration information, call (706) 896-4806.

SPLOST passes; county projects will move forward

Almost 1,500 cast ballots; 90 percent of those ballots cast say 'yes' to SPLOST extension referendum

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

That loud noise heard from the heart of Hiawassee on Tuesday night was probably made by Towns County Assistant Fire Chief Harold Copeland.

Copeland crowed like a rooster, he was excited and with good reason.

The Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum passed overwhelmingly as 1,497 of Towns County's more than 7,000 registered voters came out to cast ballots in the special referendum.

Approximately 132 Towns County voters said 'no' to an extension of the sales tax. They were definitely in the minority as 1,322 voters said 'yes.'

Towns County Sole

Commissioner Bill Kendall didn't expect a 90 percent vote of confidence, but he was well pleased that it happened.

"We had a 20 percent turnout and only one item on the ballot. We had good projects and people believed in them," Commissioner Kendall said. "We had a good team of folks who got out, worked hard and spread the word. The voters spoke tonight and the message was 'we care about Towns County.'"

The approved SPLOST will last no longer than six years. It is estimated to raise \$12.7 million to fund capital outlay projects in the county and the cities of Hiawassee and Young Harris.

Collection of the extended tax will begin July 1, after the BOE tax ends.

The cities of Young Harris and Hiawassee will receive 9 percent each.

Once the projects are



Commissioner Bill Kendall

paid for, anything left over will be used to roll back taxes.

County projects include parks and recreation improvements that include acquisition, construction and equipping a multi-purpose recreational and community building. It also includes money for roads and bridges improvements and may include pedestrian cross walks, parking and capital equipment.

Fire Department improvements also are on the list of capital outlay projects to include vehicles, equipment facilities and fire hydrants.

Other projects include construction and improvements at public libraries, water and sewer improvements, including solid waste, storm water management and accompanying equipment.

Public safety vehicles and equipment including ambulances also are high on the list of capital projects. The SPLOST also includes funds for industrial and economic development.

"This means road improvements, ambulances, public safety vehicles, water and sewer and economic development," Commissioner Kendall said. "We've got \$100,000 in matching money for \$2 million in grants for our libraries.

"I want to thank the

voters for showing just how much Towns County means to them," he said. "You wouldn't think 90 percent of the people who cast ballots would say 'yes' to a tax. But they know what that money will be used for."

Grover Garrett, who co-chairs the county's Comprehensive Planning Committee said a 'yes' vote was duly warranted.

"Forty percent of our capital projects will be paid for by people just coming to visit Towns County," he said. "That's something we just couldn't pass up."

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton said the approved SPLOST really means something to the people who call Towns County home.

"This is a huge step forward for Towns County," he said. "It will really make a difference."

BOE honors Lady Indians

Moss, Arencibia earn high praise throughout Region

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

The Towns County Lady Indians basketball team had an incredible run in 2010-2011.

For two glorious stretches, the Lady Indians were almost unbeatable. The Lady Indians completed their season with a marvelous 27-2 record, the best winning percentage in school history and just one victory short of the single season school record for wins set during the Lady Indians' trip to the State Final Four in 2008.

This year's winning percentage of 93.1 percent eclipsed the 87.5 percent established by the Lady Indians during the 1972 season and matched by the 2008 squad. Also, the 103-19 overall record for the past four years easily surpassed the 96-17 record for



The Towns County Lady Indians were honored Monday night by the Towns County Board of Education. Photo/James Reese

the four year period through the 2010 season.

On Monday night, the Towns County Board of Education honored the Lady Indians during a ceremony at the monthly meeting of the Board of Education.

Two players duly noted and recognized during the ceremony were senior Jordan Moss and junior Gabby Arencibia.

Moss, a First Team

Region 8-A selection, scored more than 400 points during the season. She averaged 17 rebounds a game and will play in the Georgia Athletic Coaches Association All-Star game in Savannah at Armstrong State University on March 26.

Meanwhile, Arencibia broke two school records and set the state record for

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TCSO lawyers seek to dismiss civil suit

Sheriff: lawsuit filed in federal court in Gainesville

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

Attorneys for the Towns County Sheriff's Office have filed a motion in United States District Court, Northern District in Gainesville to dismiss a lawsuit brought by a Young Harris College student.

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton has reserved comment about the legal case. He did say however, that the truth will eventually come out and he'll be more than happy to discuss the case when it is officially closed.

The motion to dismiss, filed March 8 in Gainesville, seeks to put an end to a lawsuit filed Feb. 15 in U.S. District Court in Gainesville by Young Harris College student Jordan Brannon.



Sheriff Chris Clinton

Brannon, represented by Gerry Weber and Craig Goodmark of Atlanta, alleges that Towns County sheriff's deputies stopped and detained him on March 19, 2010 without probable cause as he drove west-bound toward Young Harris.

Brannon, an African-American, alleges that his

See Lawsuit, page 3A

Gridiron bass tourney on Saturday

Second Annual Touchdown Club event lures anglers to Lake Chatuge

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

The Second Annual Lake Chatuge Bass Tournament sponsored by the Towns County Touchdown Club is set for Saturday at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

Last year, Jeremy Cross and Butch Hogan, both of Hayesville, NC, took the top prize and won the Big Fish Contest.

The big bass weighed in at almost 10 pounds. Nearly half of the 21-plus pounds of bass that netted them not only the Big Fish prize, but the overall first place prize of \$750.

See Bass Tourney, page 11A



Tournament officials weigh in the catch of Butch Hogan and Jeremy Cross during last year's Towns County Touchdown Club Bass Tournament on Lake Chatuge. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Pancake breakfast on tap Saturday

Annual Unicoy Lodge fundraiser scheduled from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. at Senior Center

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

Expect to see some pretty excited faces on Saturday morning at the Towns County Senior Center.

The Worshipful Master of Unicoy Masonic Lodge, brothers within the lodge and members of the Order of Eastern Star will host the annual Pancake Breakfast at the Senior Center on Saturday from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.

For \$5, Lodge mem-



Unicoy Lodge and the Order of the Eastern Star will host a pancake breakfast at the Towns County Senior Center on Saturday.

See Pancakes, page 5A

HOPE has a future

State Sen. Butterworth helps craft legislation

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

The HOPE scholarship has been modified to ensure a future for Georgia students who stay in the state to get their post high school education, District 50 State Sen. Jim Butterworth said.

With only 24 percent of the actual lottery funds going to serve as the foundation of the HOPE scholarship, lawmakers knew that they would have to act swiftly to ensure a HOPE grant for future high school graduates.

Seventy-six percent of the lottery proceeds go toward payouts and marketing.

"The growth of enrollment and rising tuition costs has depleted lottery reserves," said Sen. Butterworth, who represents Towns County in Senate District 50. "In light of this fact, we had to eliminate the funding for books, fees and remedial courses.

"The loss of this funding would have occurred with or without this legislation because lottery reserves could not keep up," he said. "To ensure that HOPE scholars are prepared for college-level work and will not need to take remedial courses, starting in 2015, students will be required to demonstrate that they have taken a number of rigorous courses in high school to be eligible for the HOPE scholarship."

Gov. Nathan Deal's



State Sen. Jim Butterworth

signature is the next phase necessary for HB 326 to become law.

House Bill 326 would cut HOPE scholarships to 90 percent for all but the state's brightest students. Students who earn a 3.7 GPA and a 1,200 on the SAT get a full scholarship. Also, each school's valedictorian and salutatorian also would get a full ride to college.

"One of the main goals of the HOPE scholarship is to give incentive to the best and brightest students through a merit based program to stay in Georgia for their post-secondary degree," Sen. Butterworth said. "The new Zell Miller Scholarship program is for high school valedictorians, salutatorians and graduates with a GPA of 3.7 or higher and an SAT score of at least 1,200 or ACT score of at

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