

Sheriff...continued from page 1A

and already is facing an immediate staffing crisis.

"We're here tonight because Commissioner (Bill) Kendall asked us to develop a long-range strategic plan for the future of the Towns County Sheriff's Office," he said. "Here it is."

Clinton told the crowd that his department has become a training ground for neighboring departments, law enforcement agencies that the small Towns County Sheriff's Office simply can't compete with financially.

"The real question is do you want people that you know and trust and have worked with for awhile serving your needs, or are you more interested in brand new faces and brand new folks," Clinton asked the crowd. "That's the only way I know how to explain it."

Clinton has asked for 14 new staff members in 2011 that include four jailers, four road deputies, two court services deputies, one investigator and an administrative assistant.

The department, which has eight road deputies and eight jailers, is faced with an increasing demand on its staffers. The department averages 10,000 calls each year with each call averaging one hour, Sheriff Clinton said.

Ridges... continued from page 1A

"They want to be hands on owners," he said. "They want to come in and build a strong team and make sure they're involved in the business operation of the Ridges. That includes the lodging, the restaurants and the marina side."

"They really enjoy being a part of the day-to-day operations and seeing the expertise that they can bring to the table from their past experiences," Hooper said. "The community will soon begin to notice changes on the grounds and subtle improvements that will make a difference to The Ridges experience."

The Ridges will host three fireworks show each year that don't impact the Fourth of July fireworks display at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, Hooper said.

"They're looking closely at ways they can give back to the community

"We've gone as far as we can go with the resources that we have," Clinton said.

In addition to staffing needs, the sheriff said a plan must soon be developed to replace aging infrastructure, add additional living space for inmates and coming up with a long-term solution to keep deputies from defecting to other agencies which pay higher salaries.

"We're updating our strategic plan," the sheriff said. "We can't do it without public input."

"These deputies give you everything they've got, day-in, day-out," he said. "If we don't do something, they're going to jump ship and move on to another department with better benefits, safer patrol vehicles and better working conditions."

"The choice is up to you, because we work for the taxpayers," he said. "Do you want the status quo or do you want what we all want, a safer community to live in."

To obtain a copy of the Sheriff's Office Strategic Plan, call (706) 896-4444.

"Get a copy of this plan, study it," he said. "Are there areas that we're not addressing that you're concerned about? We need your input. We work for you. Call us."

and be involved in making a difference in Towns County," he said. "That brings us back to the Labor Day weekend event."

Events include pontoon rides, Cornhole competition, horseshoes or just kicking back and enjoying the fireworks under the stars.

"We're hoping to see this event grow throughout the years," Hooper said. "We expect the event to get bigger and the fireworks to become an attraction well into the future. We want this to become a community event and that's what our new owners want it to become."

"They want the Ridges to be known for community support and involvement," Hooper said. "Bottom line, the Ridges is strong, it's well founded and our new owners bring a lot to the table that will enhance the experience of coming to The Ridges Resort."

Kendall...continued from page 1A

to the local budget to keep taxes within reason, the only department that didn't sustain a cut was the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Currently, the commissioner said that the continued economic malaise is expected to get worse with 2011 believed to be among the worst during the recession/depression.

Deeper cuts are expected to impact the county's health department and library.

The toughest assessment of all comes from the County's projected Tax Digest, which is believed to be off by \$88 million. That means the county has \$35 million less in assessed property value from which to continue to service its tax base.

"Usually, Tax Digests grow," he said. "That's not the case at the present time. The assessors are predicting a lot worse year next

than this one. The banks are foreclosing and they're selling the property off at a value far less than are on the tax books.

"There is a new law that says you must assess property at its sale value for at least a year," he said. "That's going to hurt us."

The commissioner has already closed the transfer station one day per week; the county's day care workers have been furloughed for up to two days a month; the road department has been cut from 16 employees to 10; the county's emergency services budget has been cut and overtime eliminated with the exception of emergency situations and the recreation department eliminated one employee last month.

"We're hurting," he said. "Tough decisions must be made during a recession to keep the county solvent and strong."

MCUG monthly meeting

Computer club to discuss open source desktop software at next meeting.

On September 13th, there will be a presentation on the Ubuntu Linux software. The presentation will be given by MCUG board member Art Frenz, who also serves as the club's Publicity Chairperson. Art will demonstrate how you can download and install this free operating system and application software as an alternative (or in addition) to existing proprietary systems for your personal computer. Art will discuss options for using the graphical Linux interface that can co-exist with your current operating system.

A "Q&A" session will begin at 6 PM (prior to the presentation) so bring your questions and we will try to find you an answer. Join us for an interesting evening discussing personal computer stuff. The meeting will be held in the Goolsby Center, Young Harris College. All the Mountain Computer User Group (MCUG) meetings are open to the public the 2nd Monday of each month. Great door prizes are awarded to members present. For more information please go to www.mcug.org.

NT(Sep1,X1)SH

Dance at CCSC

Dance at the Clay County Senior Center, 196 Ritter Road, Hayesville, NC, Friday, September 3rd, from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Music by "Swing Time Band". Playing Foxtrots, Waltzes, Latins, Line Dances, Country, Rock, and Polkas. For more information call: (828) 389-9271 or (828) 369-9155. T(Sep1,F2)SH

Arts... continued from page 1A

The event dutifully promoted the Young Harris community to newcomers and tourists alike.

The festival also featured music and dancing enjoyed by all who attended the two-day event.

Overall, friendly faces, great weather and a beautiful location (Mayor's Park) made for an incredible festival. The event also featured the artwork of artist Paul Fontana.

Flocks of visitors scoured over the seemingly endless cache of art work on display, each searching for that special work that would significantly contribute to the home décor.

The festival also included a baking and canning contest. The baking and canning contest attracted some of the region's finest cooks and homemakers as hundreds of entries were on display during the two-day event.

Denise Reese took

home first place in the baking contest for her Lemon Velvet Cake. Without a doubt, it was delicious.

All financial proceeds from the baking contest fittingly were awarded to the Towns County Food Pantry.

Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby, Young Harris College President Cathy Cox, Brasstown Valley Resort General Manager Charles Burton, Promoters Robin and Leon Roberts and other warm-hearted folks took part in the Free Hugs phenomena, where free hugs were offered to all takers. It was this extra detail that made for such an incredible friendly atmosphere.

The inaugural event was well attended with by people from all over the Southeast.

"Young Harris is a great little town," one visitor said. "We are already planning to come back later in the fall. This is true Southern Hospitality at its best."