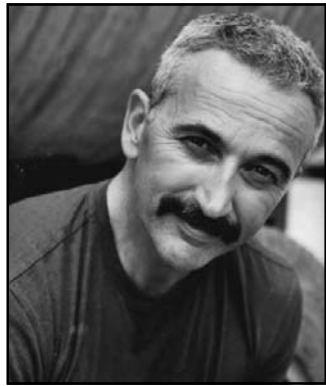


a "blast," according to his Web site. His health is good, his energy is high and, at long last, he enjoys being sober and interacting with business associates and fans.

As for Tippin, he's excited that "The Possum" is back on the road and headed to Hiawassee.

"The Possum is gold," Tippin said. "I'm glad to see the 'Old Hall' getting some music acts back in there and start letting Country Music roll again."

"Country Music and its artists have suffered over the last few years, not having any place to play," Tippin said. "May be things are getting generated again and we can get back to enjoying some good Country Music."



Aaron Tippin says acts like George Jones, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard and himself come to Hiawassee because of its great Country Music tradition. He says "I'm glad to see the 'old Hall' getting some music acts back in there." Tippin will play Anderson Music Hall on Oct. 10.

continues on the flat side.

Commissioner Kendall will set the 2010 county millage rate at the Oct. 15 meeting in the Towns County Courthouse. The current millage rate is 5.580 mills.

The county's proposed millage rate follows a proposed increase of 1.24 mills for the 2009-2010 fiscal year.

The board met last week to approve advertisement of the five-year tax digest and to post announcements regarding millage rate hearings over the next two weeks.

Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Richard Behrens said the proposed increase in millage rate from 3.554 mills to 4.784 mills is to offset state budget shortfalls and shortfalls in the local sales taxes.



Dr. Richard Behrens

The proposed budget for the next fiscal year is \$11.6 million, Behrens said.

"And we've trimmed that down considerably," he said. "I wish there was a way we could hold the line, but we've been hit hard by state budget cuts."

The hardest hit for the local school system budget is the local fair share.

The amount Towns County pays into the local fair share budget has increased by \$2.3 million since 2004.

The current fiscal year's budget ran at \$12 million. The board will hold two meetings this week on Thursday. The first will be at noon at the Towns County School Auditorium and the second will be at 6 p.m. also at the school auditorium. A third meeting will be held at 8 a.m. on Oct. 8.

A shortfall of revenues combined with increased financial burdens imposed by state cutbacks, increased

Local Fair Share obligations and mandated salary requirements have impacted the

2010 millage rate proposed by the BOE.

The state recently cut funding to the local school system by \$125,617. The net loss to the school system is \$5,959,21 following the three days of unpaid leave.

The school system lost half a day early in the school year, the first of the scheduled unpaid leaves for teachers and administrators.

A full day of unpaid leave is scheduled for Oct. 7 and another half day is planned for Dec. 18. The final day of unpaid leave for teachers and administrators is scheduled for Dec. 21.

The cuts were due to a large decline in sales tax revenues, prompting the state to look at the educational side of the expenditure spectrum for additional cuts.

Water Authority proposes joint water facility with City...from page 1

plant. According to Mitchell's letter, the Authority has been paying 45 percent under the present contract.

"When the debt is paid under the present contract, the Authority will have no equity in the City's plant," Mitchell writes. "The Authority believes that they owe it to their members who are paying a portion of the indebtedness to establish an equity position in the treatment plant and any expansions."

"The Authority proposes that the City's facility be expanded and the Authority and the City own the facility

equally," Mitchell writes. "The City would continue to operate the plant."

The authority serves about 3,800 customers, has 400 miles of water lines, and can store 1.6 million gallons of water in its eight tanks: Bear Meat, Taylor Ridge, Hightower, Bayless Nob, Twin Mountain, Brasstown Gap, Brasstown Valley, and Mining Gap. They plan to place another tank at Rocky Nob in Young Harris, which will increase their storage capacity by 100,000 gallons.

In addition, the authority claims about \$12 million in as-

sets, and budgets approximately \$1.2 million a year. The authority owns an office building and warehouse on Jack Dayton Circle, four trucks, two tractors, and a computer system that monitors each tank and connection points on its line.

The authority gets all of its water from the Rowe Canupp Water Treatment Plant, which is owned and operated by the City of Hiawassee.

An agreement between the two entities is a must as the county continues to grow, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall said.

"I think the Water & Sewer Authority and the City need to come to an agreement to expand the City's existing facility," Commissioner Kendall said. "In the best interests of the residents, there needs to be a consolidation."

"It is my hope that they can get together and come to an agreement that takes the best interests of everyone in Towns County into account," Kendall said.

Kendall compared the water treatment plant to a multi-tiered school system.

"If you have several

small and separate schools the best option is to consolidate them into one system," Kendall said. "You save all the way around by avoiding the duplication of services."

Mayor Mathis agreed that the overture by the Authority was one to closely examine.

"This is something that the Council must weigh. I'd like to work with the Water & Sewer Authority," Mayor Mathis said. "There are some issues that need to be addressed regarding the future water capacity for the city and the county."

Angel's Chamber message Puttin' on the Dog...continued from page 1

The Towns County Herald and the Towns County Chamber of Commerce are Teaming Up!

Our weekly column in the Towns County Herald will soon be expanding to a weekly newspaper insert. The Herald will be working with us to cover stories that are of interest to our membership as well as the community at large. We have named our insert "The Chamber Chronicle". This wonderful new partnership will add yet another valuable benefit to your Chamber membership in a variety of ways. In addition to our weekly insert in The Herald, a newspaper complete with our insert will be mailed to all chamber members once a month at no charge. Chamber members will also have the exclusive opportunity to advertise in our Chronicle at a reduced rate as well. Contact us here at the Chamber if you would like to be one of the first to take advantage of this effective and affordable marketing opportunity.

The Towns County Herald is also offering generous subscription discounts as well. Chamber members can purchase a subscription to the Towns County Herald members for \$10 a year for up to 5 (five) years.

The Towns County Chamber of Commerce is Selling Apples!

The Towns County Chamber of Commerce was on the Square at the Towns County Tourism Association sponsored Summer's Last Kiss Art Festival this weekend. Despite the weather on Saturday, we had a great time. We still have Jonagold and Golden Delicious apples here at the Chamber for only \$5 per bag, so come on by and get a bag!

October is Disability Awareness Month

The October meeting of the Union/Towns Employer Committee will be held Oct. 6th at the recently renovated Young Harris College Dining Facility from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Nancy Duncan with the Disability Resource Group will be

speaking. She is a great lady and a fabulous speaker. For only \$12, you can have a great lunch, network with other business professionals and hear an informative and interesting speaker. You can contact us at the Chamber to RSVP at (706) 896-4966 if you would like to attend. Please take a moment to read Nancy's story below. You will see that her sense of community and belief in supporting others comes from her own personal experiences.

Nancy's Story

My life as an advocate for people with disabilities began one sticky August afternoon when my father came into the den where my brother and I were watching Huckleberry Hound. He turned off our favorite show and told me we needed to talk. He informed me that I would not be going to our county high school in two weeks. Dad said the principal told him that since I had been diagnosed as legally blind, I would have to attend the state school for the blind, one hundred miles away in Macon. I was filled with anger, disbelief, and terrible sadness. I had attended school with my friends for the last nine years. I didn't think of myself as blind and I sure didn't want anyone else to think of me as less than... I called my grandmother, my biggest cheerleader, and she called the principal and two school board officials. She promised them to help me keep up with the increased homework load and reading assignments. Two of her friends, in their late seventies, also called board members. The principal changed his mind and I began school with everyone else. My grandmother and I found several retired teachers to help me with reading. A star French student helped me with my French homework. Each evening my grandmother and I sat at her kitchen table while she read to me from a biology or chemistry book not even understanding most of the terms, so that I could do my homework. Then there were no recorded or Braille school books. I could still see to read but not fast enough to keep up with assign-

ments. My teachers, without any laws that required them to do so, read tests for me. I remember my advanced algebra teacher marking the problems she wanted me to work so that I could complete the assignments in the same amount of time as my classmates.

A neighbor took me to school each day since it wasn't safe for me to walk. The guidance counselor helped me find resources for Braille, recorded books, a Braille watch, and most importantly state services that could help me go to college. Two years later I discovered talking books, produced by the Library of Congress. The mailman carried dozens of big boxes of recorded books and made sure I got them as soon as possible. Several organizations in town helped buy some of the expensive equipment I needed to succeed in school. My entire community helped me succeed. I graduated with all A's and finished second in my high school graduating class. I could not have done so without such commitment and energy from the people in my home town.

Those of us who have disabilities need the financial safety net that government agencies such as vocational rehabilitation, libraries for the blind, special education programs, etc. provide. We also need community support. We need average people to value the things we can do and help us do those tasks that we cannot accomplish alone. We need our neighbors to advocate for us, helping us to become a part of every aspect of our community: church, recreation, shopping, and politics. The services I need most now as the director of an agency, a homemaker, and a grandmother, are readers and drivers. There are many people in Towns County just like me, who need the support of their neighbors. With your practical help they can succeed and become helpers to others. Towns County will become stronger and richer, and a better place to live, as we all help one another.



Andrew Domino, president of the Mountain Animal Shelter board of directors, shows off one of the many auction items aimed at helping the shelter over the next year. The shelter serves Union and Towns counties. Photo/Jessica Keaton

at Crane Creek Vineyard offered lots of food, catered by Moschetto's Continental Café in Young Harris, and fun, with wine tasting, live music by The Vintage Notes, and a silent and live auction.

Moschetto's in Young Harris provided exquisite hors d'oeuvres along with a main course consisting of various pasta salads, ham, meatballs, and chicken with mushrooms.

Goodies for both pets and humans were available dur-

ing the silent auction such as gift baskets and artwork.

Golf seemed to be popular during the silent auction. Gift certificates for 18 holes of golf at Brasstown Valley Resort in Young Harris and Butternut Creek Golf Course in Blairsville were auctioned off during the live auction, along with a golf gift basket for the ladies.

However, golf-themed items weren't the only ones up for bid. Paintings donated to the cause, including an Old English

Painting with a beagle theme, fitting for the theme of the event, were up for grabs as well.

Regardless of the sudden change in plans, animal lovers came out to support the Mountain Animal Shelter in their largest fundraiser of the year.

The funds collected during the event could feed animals sheltered at Mountain Animal Shelter for two years and provide medication for the out-of-place pets for six months.



Towns County Chamber of Commerce President Angel Long spent the weekend selling apples fresh off the trees from Mercier's Orchard during Summer's Last Kiss. Photo/Lowell Nicholson