

Tornado...from Page 1A

The Towns County Sheriff's Office posted a Tornado Watch on its Facebook page earlier that day, and the National Weather Service issued a severe storm warning for that Wednesday, March 1.

"A severe weather event unfolded across much of the eastern part of the United States on March 1, as a strong storm system pushed eastward," according to National Weather Service Peachtree City following the storm. "In North Georgia, the ingredients were in place for some severe thunderstorms.

"With very warm temperatures across the area, there was enough instability for convective development with strong force along the approaching cold front.

"Additionally... one brief tornado was recorded in North Georgia while many reports of large hail occurred. Some reports of damaging wind gusts also occurred as the storms moved through North Georgia. As the storms moved southward into central



Many trees and branches were knocked down in the March 1 stormy weather, including this one on the Haigler property of Georgia 180, which was uprooted from the ground. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Georgia, they weakened substantially with the loss of the best dynamics."

The "brief tornado" noted by the weather service occurred in Chatsworth, which is in neighboring Murray County, a couple of counties

west of Towns.

The Chatsworth tornado hit a more developed area, doing damage to several buildings and overturning a semi-trailer, which helps to account for its higher profile status.

TCHS...from Page 1A

and subsequent selection to the band, the students met over two days to practice for a concert involving all of the many schools participating from across Northeast Georgia.

This is the second year that Towns County High has sent students to perform in the YHC honor band, and TCHS Band Director Derrick Nolen is proud of the hard work his students put in every step of the way.

"This is not a lot of time (to prepare)," said Nolen. "It's a pretty intensive two days. They basically have the audition first thing in the afternoon, and Feb. 3 was when they did that."

"And then they had an evening rehearsal that night, where they sight-read all the music for the first time and started to hear how the group sounded."

The day of the concert, the band members met up for two rehearsals, the first of which took place in the

morning, and the group hammered out some of the finer points of the music.

After that, they all ate lunch together, and then held an afternoon rehearsal to put the finishing touches on their collective performance.

Then came the big show later that second evening. With only three rehearsals under their belts, the talented students worked together to make beautiful music for their friends and families.

"These four did a great job representing us," said Nolen. "The music that they played was not easy, and had it not been for the ability level of the group overall, you wouldn't be able to pull an event like this off."

"For instance, it takes usually about eight weeks for our group to put together a concert, and these kids have such a high ability that they put together a pretty demanding concert in three rehearsals over two days. It speaks to them."

Not only is Nolen pleased with the performances of the students that he hand-picked to audition for the college's honor band, he's thrilled that such opportunities exist for his kids, and right in the high school's backyard.

"That's one of the things that I always tell our kids when an event like this comes up, because not everyone has a college, and not only a college, but a college with a good music program 13 minutes away," said Nolen. "So, that's something we definitely try to take advantage of. Whenever they have an event, we try to get as many kids as we can over there."

Nolen appreciates the good working relationship the high school enjoys with the college, and said he wanted to thank Young Harris College Director of Bands Dr. Mary Land for helping to coordinate this yearly activity for the many students involved.

"We try to get our kids in their doors as often as we can," said Nolen of the college.

Firewise...from Page 1A



Residents from Madison Ridge, another community in Hiawassee, accepting their community's Firewise designation.

Residents of Madison Ridge and Autumn Ridge attended the Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition meeting to receive plaques and signs recognizing their communities' Firewise statuses.

The primary goal for Firewise landscaping is fuel reduction – limiting the amount of flammable vegetation and materials surrounding the home and increasing the moisture content of remaining vegetation – thus eliminating fuel that could feed wildfires.

Marsha Elliott, president of the Firewise Citizens Coalition, presented the awards, sharing the importance of becoming a Firewise community and what it will mean for the future of each neighborhood.

"The whole purpose of the Firewise group is to provide education and awareness," said Elliott. "We want to inform people of the things that can be done in an individual home and, taking it a step further, in a community."

"In doing so, it makes the area less vulnerable for fire incidents."

Each community was given a sign to proudly display at the entrance of each neighborhood to note its Firewise status.

Frank Riley, Executive Director of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and Development Council, said that adding new Firewise communities is part of an ongoing effort to make the county and eventually the entire state "Fire Adapted."

The Fire Adapted program is a national program, and with all that has been done in the county, Riley added that Towns County is a model that other communities on the East Coast can use to help improve their preparedness recognized as Firewise.

"Everybody wants to know about what we're doing here in Towns County," said Riley. "What this coalition has done here is going to jump start other communities to become Firewise, even in other states. I know there are places in North Carolina all the way up to Virginia that are seeing what's going on here and want to do the same."

The results of the Towns coalition's efforts over the past three years is a 40 percent drop in wild fire calls in the first year and 90 percent drop in the second year. According to Riley, all of these results prove that the Firewise education by way of the citizens coalition, which uses peer-to-peer communication, works efficiently and effectively.

"What we realized early on is that we can talk all day to homeowners but when we leave, there's no one to keep it going," said Riley. "This is why

we engaged a citizens coalition here in the county to help out. We can't be everywhere.

"You have to know who your audience is and you have to know which communities you're going into. These people with the citizens coalition know all of that because they're part of it."

As of right now, there are 21 Firewise communities in Towns County, making up for a large portion of the 91 Firewise communities across the state of Georgia.

The citizens coalition hopes to continue efforts to increase the number of neighborhoods involved in the program, even reaching out to the city of Young Harris and Hiawassee to become Firewise cities, all in the name of preserving the beauty of the mountains and ensuring the safety of the residents.

"We all got a message loud and clear in October and November about wildfires," said Elliott. "It was up close and personal. So, it was an opportunity to further make the case for Firewise. That's what we're dedicating this year to do."

"We're going to make the case for Firewise communities, make the case for Firewise cities, to make the case for individual homeowners to do some things that will lessen the chance for fire."

For those who are interested in learning more about the Firewise program, the Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition will be holding its next meeting on March 21, at Fire Station #6. All who wish to attend are welcome.

Whitt...from Page 1A

in order to graduate," said Whitt. "We often don't get to see students bring all of their skills and abilities together in an independent long term project.

"That's what a capstone does. It allows the student to pursue an area of interest for a long term, independent project that takes several months to complete.

"The capstone allows us to reinforce some essential processes. We want to see that students can develop, implement and manage their time in order to come to fruition and completion on a project that requires them to stretch in order to learn something that they have not previously mastered."

Students begin the capstone in August of their senior year and must have the portfolio portion completed by February, followed by an oral presentation of their portfolio in March.

The capstone is separated into four components: the research paper, the product, the portfolio and the presentation. Whitt explained that the paper promotes students to become familiarized with the Modern Language Association citation format, or MLA, which is the most common citation format used on the collegiate level.

"Students select a career and college of interest to do their research," said Whitt. "It reinforces the need for good research and citation skills, but this is also an opportunity for me to show students how to protect themselves against plagiarism."

Along with the research paper, students are required to generate a product that displays a mastery of a skill that was previously unknown before the project began, such as welding or carpentry. This portion of the capstone requires the student to select a previously unknown skill in their interested career and become more educated in that skill.

Throughout the course of the capstone, students will learn how to build a resume, cover letter, write business letters and conduct themselves in a professional manner. Along with the curriculum of the capstone, students are required to find a mentor as part of the learning and research process of the product requirement.

"We require mentors to work with our students for at least 15 hours," said Whitt. "That way we can verify that they have grown in a particular area. We verify time and we also ask that students self-evaluate."

"One of the best things that comes out of this, I believe, is the ability to learn how to look at what you've done



Emma Kate Ledford, Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong, and Kendall Floyd in the March 3 meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers.



Towns County 4-H Coordinator Andrew Smith presented Ledford and Floyd each a \$25 check on behalf of the Mountain Movers and Shakers, to go toward travel expenses for an upcoming FBLA competition

honestly and to say, 'this is where I'm going to grow next time.'

One of the final processes of the capstone is the completion of a portfolio, which serves as tangible verification that the student has indeed finished all portions of the capstone project. If completed properly, students can use this portfolio later on as a reference for jobs and colleges since it serves as storage for documents essential to career and post-secondary success.

After the research paper is written, the product is completed and the portfolio is turned in, students are required to give a presentation over the capstone experience. The presentation is eight to 10 minutes long that is given in front of a panel of judges and community members.

According to Whitt, TCHS will be introducing additional components to next year's capstone project that will be based on the Georgia BEST (business ethics student training) standards. These standards are fairly new, having been introduced by the

Georgia Labor Commissioner Mark Butler in 2011.

"We are going to introduce some of the Georgia BEST training into our capstone," said Whitt. "Georgia BEST concentrates on areas like attendance, punctuality, teamwork, communication skills – all those things that students need to be successful in both post-secondary institutions and the workforce. It is a part of what the students will do with their mentors."

Beginning next year, if students receive 25 out of the 30 points outlined by the Georgia BEST rubric, they will be recognized by the state with a Georgia BEST certificate that can be utilized for resumes, applications, interviews and other career and education related communications.

Also during the meeting, TCHS students Emma Kate Ledford and Kendall Floyd presented speeches to the Movers and Shakers that they will be taking to a Future Business Leaders of America competition in the coming weeks.

Clinic...from Page 1A

food, company and tours of the new facility.

Up until this point, the Young Harris community has been without a healthcare facility, lending to residents and Young Harris College students driving to either Hiawassee or Blairsville to receive medical care. While this has not been a large issue in the past, the increased populations in both the city and the college have developed a demand for basic necessities, such as a clinic.

According to Robin McLendon, Union General Hospital Practice Administrator, the decision to open the clinic in Young Harris was a no-brainer for the hospital authority after assessing the need for an easily accessible facility in the area.

"Obviously, there was not a clinic in Young Harris," said McLendon. "We saw the need to open it here, especially an acute care, walk-in clinic, similar to the clinic in Walmart. This will allow for residents to have a clinic closer to them, plus the students."

"Now that the college is a four-year college, there's more of a need. Sometimes there are transportation issues to get the students down to Walmart or to the hospital. So, now, they can just come across the street, which is more convenient."

Similarly to the clinic in Walmart, the Young Harris Clinic will have three experienced staff physicians available to see patients: Paula Boyle, MD; Jaclyn Collins, FNP-C and Elizabeth Dyer, FNP-C. Boyle will only be available to see patients Monday through Friday however, both Collins and Dyer will be on call for the weekends.

The clinic will also have access to x-ray machines as well as a full lab to test for basic colds and viruses, which will significantly limit the need for patients to drive to



Residents mingling inside the clinic's Community Room on opening day.

Blairsville to receive treatment for simpler ailments.

"The big thing here is they will be able to perform x-rays here," said McLendon. "So, if a person needs an x-ray done, they can have that done here, and there is also a lab at this clinic."

"They can draw blood, they can do testing, things like that. So, this facility will be doing family practice type care for people in the area. This clinic will see children over two years old, as well."

McLendon also added that this clinic, along with the new clinic opened in Suches last year, is just the beginning of the hospital's expansion to open specialty clinics in the area to limit the need for residents to drive to Gainesville and other cities for treatment. McLendon said that two specialty clinics would hopefully be added to the list this summer.

"We're trying to recruit and bring specialists to the area so that people don't have to leave the area for care," said McLendon. "I know that we're planning on having a pediatrician coming to the area in July. He'll be in Blairsville.

We're trying to build up our orthopedics as well.

"But, as far as this clinic goes, everyone in the community seems to be excited about it. It's great for the kids at the college and I'm sure there will be some parents that are going to be happy about it as well."

The clinic will be open Monday through Saturday, from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. Scheduled appointments will be seen through the weekdays until 5 p.m., and walk-ins only on the weekend and after 5 p.m.

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CORRECTION

Jimmy Morse, Life Force Membership Sales Manager, was accidentally misidentified in last week's *Towns County Herald*.