

Towns County Herald

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Towns County sales tax is now 8 cents

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Attention Towns County residents and business owners – the sales tax went up countywide to 8 cents on the dollar back on Saturday, Oct. 1.

The sales tax went up on Oct. 1 due to the local passing of a 1 cent education tax, or ELOST (Standing for Education Local Option Sales Tax), a referendum that carried by popular vote during the May General Primary Election earlier this year.

The reason the tax is going up is because the ELOST overlaps with the current county SPLOST collection, which will come to an end after June 30, 2017.

Starting July 1 of next year, the sales tax will drop back down to 7 percent.

“Sales tax is a retail point-of-purchase tax imposed by state and local governments that is paid by the purchaser for goods and services,” according to the U.S. Small Business Administration. “As a small business owner, you are required to assess sales tax,



Dr. Darren Berrong

collect it and pass it on to the appropriate authorities within the prescribed time.”

amount of tax, which is now 8 cents of the dollar.

Dr. Darren Berrong, superintendent of Towns County Schools, said that his office has been contacted by several businesses in recent weeks that were unaware of whether or not the ELOST had gone into effect, and he wants business owners to know that, yes, it's time to start collecting that extra ELOST penny.

“We actually had a hard time finding out when the tax was going into effect,” said Berrong. “We had been calling people for months

– (the Georgia Department of Revenue) couldn't even tell us when it would go into effect when we first passed the SPLOST, and so we just had to continuously be calling and staying in contact with our lawyers.”

“I think people were under the impression that the school would somehow be informing businesses of the tax, but we keep being told that we are not, that it's somebody else, that the Department of Revenue would be informing everybody what the proper

See Sales Tax, Page 6A

Towns County millage rate drops again in meeting

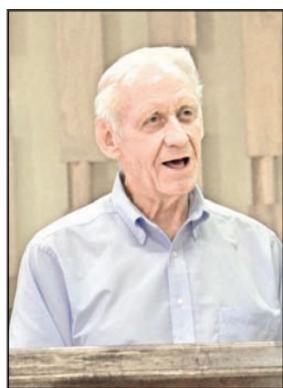
By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

In a special called meeting to set the county millage rate on Thursday, Oct. 6, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall lowered the rate below what he'd already announced.

Previously, the commissioner had advertised lowering the rate from the 2015 rate of 5.495 to a 2016 rate of 5.395, or exactly a tenth of a mill, though he ended up going with the even lower rate of 5.375 in the Oct. 6 meeting.

Since 2010, the county has collected less money in property taxes each year than the previous year, and 2016 will be no different.

The gross digest has



Commissioner Bill Kendall

increased slightly from last year, though the county is down a quarter of a billion dollars in total property values compared to 2009.

Even so, the commissioner, who has had a

longtime goal of keeping taxes low in Towns County, lowered the rate again based on new operating reserve projections studied the day before the millage meeting last week.

Overall, the new millage rate will bring in \$3,826,665, which is \$77,198 in fewer property taxes levied across the county than in 2015.

“That's just my philosophy on running government – you need to try to watch the taxpayer's money as well as you can,” said Commissioner Kendall. “We've been fortunate to lower them a little bit every year.”

Since 2009, property taxes have decreased some \$1.5 million in Towns County, and the county currently has a more than \$3 million operating reserve.

Business owners win residency hearings in Hiawassee



The Towns County Board of Elections held hearings on Thursday, Oct. 6, to determine the registration fate of certain Hiawassee voters.

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

All five individuals who appeared before the Towns

County Board of Elections and Registration on Thursday, Oct. 6, successfully defended themselves against the board's challenges to their status as

Hiawassee residents. Larry and Angela Sorgen,

Timothy and Amy Barrett, and Linda Pallone were the

See Residency, Page 6A

Multiple felony drug arrests in Hiawassee



Adrian Martin



Heather Heard



Chad Garrett



Tonya Newberry



Lissa Ledford



Jessica Cox

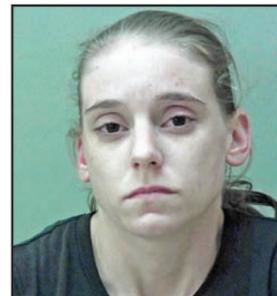
News Special to
Towns County Herald

The Hiawassee Police Department has been hard at work fighting a growing drug problem in the area.

In the past month alone,

Hiawassee PD arrested a total of eight suspects for felony drug charges.

An additional six suspects have also been arrested for misdemeanor drug charges in recent weeks.



Heather Cooper



Dexter Adams

All arrests were results of traffic stops by Hiawassee Police Officers, with the assistance of the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

The following are the felony drug arrests:

Adrian Martin, 46, of Hayesville, NC: Possession of Methamphetamine, Possession of Drug Related Objects, Obstructing Law Enforcement Officer.

Tonya Newberry, 35, of Bartow: Possession of Methamphetamine.

Heather Heard, 41, of Young Harris: Possession of Methamphetamine, Possession of Methamphetamine with

See Arrests, Page 6A

General Election early voting begins Monday, October 17

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Early voting begins next week, and will run for three weeks leading up to the big General Election on Tuesday, Nov. 8.

Every weekday between Monday, Oct. 17, and Friday, Nov. 4, during the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., registered Towns County voters will be able to walk into the Towns County Board of Elections to cast their votes.

The board of elections is located within the Old Rock

See Election, Page 6A



Early voting takes place at the Towns County Board of Registration, which is located in the Old Rock Jail near the Towns County Courthouse

Annual Fall Festival celebrates local heritage

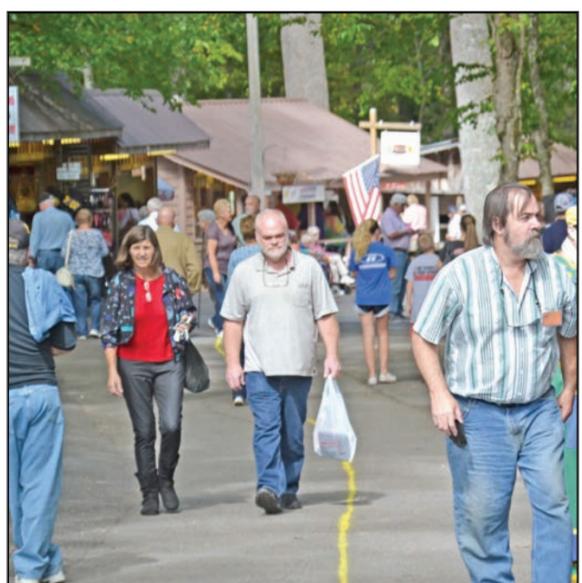
By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Georgia Mountain Fall Festival is in full swing at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, with plenty of crafts, demonstrations, games and entertainment for the whole family to enjoy.

The festival opened on Friday, Oct. 7, and will be running until Saturday, Oct. 15, offering a plethora of craft booths, multiple antique exhibits, live music and everyone's favorite fairgrounds classic – the Pioneer Village.

From beekeeping to corn shucking to blacksmithing, the Pioneer Village came to life last weekend with the spirit of Appalachia, celebrating the trades of those who settled the area so many years ago.

See Festival, Page 6A



The 2016 Fall Festival drew huge crowds on its opening day, on Friday, Oct. 7. Photo/Lily Avery

Hiawassee man dies in accident

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Chris Mazur, 62, of Hiawassee, died following an accident in which his car left Sunnyside Road in the morning hours of Monday, Oct. 3, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

“Chris was a beloved husband, brother, father, uncle, and grandfather,” read his

obituary. “He is survived by his wife, Renee Mazur; daughter, Kristen Matesevac (Mark); grandchildren, Sydney and Clara; brothers, Paul Mazur and Matt Mazur.”

There will be a memorial service held for Mazur this Friday, Oct. 14, at 2 p.m. in the Peachtree Corners Chapel of Crowell Brothers Funeral Homes and Crematory, though the family will receive friends

between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Crowell Brothers is located at 5051 Peachtree Industrial Blvd., Peachtree Corners, GA 30092.

Several of his friends and family have left written tributes to Mazur's memory at www.crowellbrothers.com.

Mazur was a frequent contributor to the Letters of the Editor section of the Towns County Herald.

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RETIREMENT PARTY
for Towns County Commissioner
Bill Kendall
See page 7A

Towns County Candidates Forum
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Football
Fri Oct 14 @ Athens
Cross Country
Thurs @ Union Co. 4:30