

Fiddle Queen...from Page 1A

she was determined to play the mandolin, guitar, bass, clawhammer banjo, Dobro, and recently the ukulele.

Phillips has not only played in all of these, but is also one of the top cloggers for her age in her home state of Tennessee.

In 2013, she was the first to bring home seven awards out of seven categories at the Smithville Fiddlers' Jamboree in Tennessee.

This accomplishment led her to become the National Championship Country Music Beginner Fiddler and Entertainer of the Year in overall instrumental.

Phillips dreams one day to fiddle and dance her way on to the Grand Ole Opry, graduate from college, and travel the world through the love of her music.

She's off to a pretty good start.

Meanwhile, in other categories, Meredith Hudson of Gordo, Alabama, took the state title in Beginning Fiddle; Abby Warnke of Dawsonville took second; and Clara Wiley of Rebecca took third.

In Harmonica, Johnny Roquemore of Mansfield is the state champion. Rob Pearys of Smyrna, Tennessee, finished second, and Kenneth Enfinger of Blakely finished third.

Meredith Hudson also is the state champion buck dancer. Phillips takes second, and Charles Smith of Monroe finished third.

Peary is the Dulcimer state champion. Phillips takes second, and Ben Johnson of Martin finished third.

Phillips is the Dobro state champion. Andrew Dowling of Spartanburg, South Carolina, took second, and Peary finished third.

Elliott Sperin of Clarksville is the Old Time Banjo state champion again. Phillips finished second and



Phillips, second from the right, and her Bluegrass Band, The Trailblazers, also won State Championship Bluegrass Band during the competition. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Pearcy took third.

Tyler Andal of Nashville, Tennessee, is the Mandolin state champion. Phillips took second, Josh Hicks of Hartwell took third, and Pearcy finished fourth.

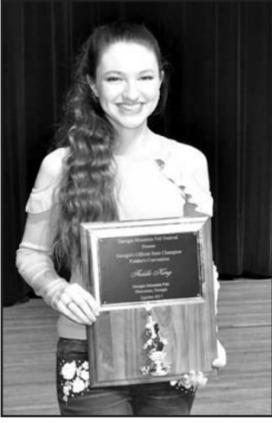
Alex Edwards of Salisbury, North Carolina, is the Banjo state champion. Hicks finished second, Warren Carnes of Dalton finished third, and Michael Hill of Iva, South Carolina, took fourth.

Andal is the Flat Pick Guitar state champion. Daniel Thraikill of Mt. Ulla, North Carolina, finished second, Pearcy took third, and Hicks finished fourth.

Steve McKoy of Swansea, South Carolina, is the Finger Style Guitar champion. Thraikill finished second, Edwards finished third, and Jonah Horton of Wilkesboro, North Carolina, took fourth.

The Trailblazers of Chapmansboro, Tennessee, is the state champion Bluegrass Band.

The Rail Riders of Warne, North Carolina, took second, The Last Minute Band of Dalton finished third, and The Cotton Pickin' Kids of Hanceville, Alabama, took fourth.



2017 Fiddle Queen Ivy Phillips with her trophy. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Phillips is the Junior Fiddler state champion. Andal finished second, Jacob Johnson of Lincoln, Alabama, took third, and Jesse Payton of Litchfield, Kentucky, finished fourth.

Roy Crawford of Cullman, Alabama, is the state champion Senior Fiddler. Erik Payton of Litchfield, Kentucky, finished second, and Mack Snoderly of Clyde, North Carolina, finished third.

Appalachian Fest...from Page 1A

do all of the tastings. The only thing that's extra is the food."

The festival isn't called "Brew, Que & Stew" for nothing, as patrons will get to enjoy a side of homecooked barbecue, ribs, Brunswick Stew and more to wash down with their favorite beer of choice.

"We have all kinds of vendors with food, so it's going to be really, really good," said Thomason. "Then there's going to be pork skins and all kinds of nuts and things like that that people can purchase.

"We'll have several snack booths open, like the fudge booth, and there's even going to be a guy from Alabama coming pulling a cooker to do barbecue and ribs. And Hawg Wild is going to be coming and cooking up the chili and Mexican cornbread."

And what is a festival at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds without a little music. Thomason has several bands lined up throughout the evening, which is included in the cost of the ticket, for patrons to enjoy while they peruse the festival, or even sit back, relax and enjoy the tunes with an ice-cold brew

in hand.

"We have four or five different bands that are going to be performing," said Thomason. "We're building a stage down in the craft area and that's where the music will be. It's going to be great music, with some Bluegrass, Americana and some Folk artists. Then, we're going to have a big jam session at the end with all of the artists playing together."

Entertainment for the festival includes: Dogwood Winter, Rob Tiger & Friends, Austin Coleman, Hannah Thomas, The Paper Crowns and Wyatt Espalin.

For those who aren't interested in beer as much as the music and eats, there will be wine for sell, as well as soft drinks, water and other non-alcoholic beverages. In addition to all the food and brews and music, several craft vendors will also be present for the festival, selling their homemade goods and all things barbecue related, so patrons are sure to find something to take home as a token from the festival.

"We're also going to be having some crafters that are coming to sell their goods,"

said Thomason. "We have a lot of new crafters and there will be people selling barbeque sauce and rubs and things like that. There's going to be a lot to see and do. It's going to be a lot of fun."

But the good times don't stop with the music, vendors and eats. Courtesy of Windstream, two flat screen TVs are going to be set up onsite at the festival for those who have a love for craft beer and football, to watch the Georgia Bulldogs against the Florida Gators game. Kickoff is at 3:30 p.m.

"We want people to come and enjoy the ballgame and enjoy the festival at the same time," said Thomason. "This can be for the whole family. What makes it so nice is sitting around and eating your food and listening to the music there at the Fairgrounds.

"It all complements each other so nicely. It's a perfect set up for everything." The festival starts at 11 a.m. and lasts until 7 p.m. For more details on the breweries that will be present at the festival, visit georgiamountainfairgrounds.com.

EMC...from Page 1A

to assess franchise fees that the EMC is required to pay.

Furthermore, Mitchell writes that state law requires the EMC and other utility providers to obtain franchise agreements from cities to provide electrical and cable services to city residents.

"As with a number of other issues, I have no information as to why the BRMEMC has failed to pay or predecessor councils of the city have failed to assess the required franchise fees," said Mitchell.

On Nelms' concern that assessing separate fees for electrical and cable TV services on shared infrastructure amounted to double taxation, Mitchell said that he found "no support in the law" for such an objection.

"If the EMC is collecting revenue on both services, Georgia law anticipates that a franchise fee may be collected based on both revenue streams," wrote Mitchell. "In fact, the mechanism for assessing franchise fees for cable and video can differ

and include the option of a statewide franchise.

"This underscores the fact that the statutory scheme anticipates that the provider will pay fees based on all services it provides ... Again, as stated above, the statutes and Supreme Court authority appear to require that BRMEMC pay this fee as a condition of using the city's right of ways."

Finally, Mitchell clears up what he calls "confusion" about when the franchise fees should start being collected, pointing out a typographical error in the ordinance that carried over from an earlier draft.

"The ordinance as adopted sets forth an effective date of Dec. 31, 2017, but also requires payment of fees collected during 2017 by March 1, 2018," said Mitchell. "The latter provision was in an original draft of the ordinance in anticipation that the ordinance would go into effect upon adoption, and thus there may be fees collected during the remainder of 2017.

"As the fees need not be collected until after Dec. 31, the amount due on March 1, 2018, for 2017 would be \$0.00. I apologize for any confusion this may have caused."

Mitchell closes out his letter to Nelms with the following:

"If you have legal authority to the contrary on any of these points, I would be happy to consider it. Otherwise,

I trust this clarifies the matter for the benefit of you as well as the city's residents that are also BRMEMC's customers."

When reached for comment, General Manager Nelms said the EMC was in the process of reviewing Mitchell's letter with legal counsel.

"We will be preparing a response," said Nelms.

The city's franchise fee ordinance imposes a franchise fee of 4 percent on gross sales of electricity within city limits, as well as a 5 percent franchise fee on gross sales of cable and fiber services within the city.

As previously reported, the EMC has prepared its staff to handle questions and concerns of Hiawassee residents wanting to know why there are extra line item charges on their monthly bills.

"BRMEMC must pass along this new franchise tax fee to the citizens of the city for two primary reasons," according to the EMC. "First, BRMEMC does not have sufficient funds set aside to pay for these new franchise tax fees in our budget.

"Second, if BRMEMC paid these fees out of its general budget, and did not collect them from those located within the city, our member-customers located outside the City of Hiawassee (even those located in NC counties) would be unfairly charged for franchise tax fees associated with delivering services in an area in which they are neither located or responsible to financially support."

Brown-Mauldin...from Page 1A

service to the community," reads the resolution. "Ezekiel Brown purchased the Brown family farm in 1857, while Alexander Mauldin settled his family on property in Towns County in 1840.

"Both sites have had generations of the respective families live and farm the properties."

Indeed, the land there on either side of the Hiwassee River has been occupied by Browns and Mauldins for nearly 200 years.

Two Mauldins walked to the site of the dedication that Friday from their home just up from the bridge, and Frank Riley Jr., grandson of Walter Brown, maintains the Brown family farm to this day.

"It's a real pleasure for me to be here this morning and have a part in this ceremony, I appreciate all of you," said Sen. Wilkinson, welcoming everyone to the dedication.

In attendance were a number of representatives of both the Brown and Mauldin families, employees of the Georgia Department of Transportation, Rep. Gurtler, and Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw.

"The Mauldin family, the Brown family, these are friends of my family and have been since the mid to late 1800s," said Bradshaw. "We're just very thankful for these families and what you've done for the community, and again, we thank the DOT and senator for making this happen."



Frank Riley of the Brown family, with Sen. John Wilkinson. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Members of the respective families were pleased to be sharing the sign and designation of the bridge, and remarked that those who came before would have been pleased, too.

"I think it's an honor to my dad, to the name that he gave us," said Betty Allison, daughter of Earl Mauldin. "He taught us to work hard, be honest and all those things, and I'm just glad we can honor him with that."

The Brown family felt the same that day, as Sen. Wilkinson read the resolution, and everyone posed together for a joint picture with their namesake family bridge.

"I think about how pleased my parents would be, and my grandmother," said Sarah Riley, who remembers hearing the old bridge rattle when she was a kid, which always caused the family to

rush to the window to see who was coming.

Riley, 93, is the mother of Frank Riley Jr. and the daughter of Walter Scott Brown. W.S. Brown was raised on the Brown family farm and rose to prominence as the first county extension agent in Towns, later becoming Cooperative Extension State Director.

The original bridge, known widely as the Brown Bridge, was first constructed in 1939.

Seventy-five years later, the new bridge, which now bears signage as the Brown-Mauldin Bridge, began construction on Nov. 26, 2014; was open to traffic in September of last year; and reached completion on Oct. 29, 2016.

The cost of the new bridge was \$5,126,181.21, paid for by the state.

Voting...from Page 1A

this week, and runs weekdays now through Friday, Nov. 3, each day from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Polls will be open during lunchtime, and there will be no Saturday voting.

Both early voting and Nov. 7 Election Day voting will occur inside the Towns County Board of Elections and Registration Office, which is adjoined to the Towns County Civic Center just down from the Towns County Courthouse.

Nov. 7 Election Day voting will run from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

All voting will take place on the county's voting machines.

Those interested in voting on an absentee ballot will need to inquire at the Towns County Board of Elections Office.

Only eligible Hiawassee voters will be voting in this election, and the board office invites people to call ahead to check if they are a registered Hiawassee voter.

There are five candidates running for office in the Nov. 7 Hiawassee General Election, though Amy Barrett is running

unopposed: Liz Ordiales and Barry Dearing for mayor; Barret for Post 1; Incumbent Jay Chastain Jr. and Patsy Owens for Post 2.

For the Nov. 7 Hiawassee Special Election, which is running concurrently with the General Election, Ann Wedgwood and Nancy Noblet are each vying for the Post 5 Hiawassee City Council seat.

The Post 5 seat is part of a special election because whoever is elected, instead of the usual four-year elected term, the winner will fill the remaining two years of the term of former Hiawassee City Councilmember Ordiales.

Berrong Bridge...from Page 1A



The Berrong family and friends present for the unveiling of the sign for the Berrong Bridge on Friday, Oct. 20, at Upper Hightower Baptist Church. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Sen. Wilkinson teamed up with State Rep. Matt Gurtler to pass a bridge-naming resolution through the two chambers of the Georgia General Assembly earlier this year, during the 2017 Legislative Session.

Thanks to their efforts, the bridge in Upper Hightower on Georgia 2 will henceforth be known as Berrong Bridge, with the requisite signage already in place.

The senator brought with him to the dedication a special guest from Stephens County, a man named Ferman Gregory.

Gregory, a retired schoolteacher, belongs in the Berrong family tree, and he remembers playing in the Upper Hightower area with fellow Berrongs when he was a kid.

Later in life, Gregory became young John Wilkinson's agriculture teacher in Stephens County, and Wilkinson said in the dedication that he recalled hearing many stories about the Upper Hightower area of Towns County when he was in Gregory's class.

In his own career, Wilkinson went on to oversee the state's agricultural education programs at the Georgia Department of Education, and some of that success can be attributed to his tutelage under Gregory.

And now, the two are friends, and Gregory is thankful to Wilkinson for the bridge dedication honoring his relatives.

"I know that if our mothers and daddies and cousins were here, they would be just as appreciative as I am," said Gregory, speaking of Berrongs who came before and the extended family. "There

were a lot of Berrongs that lived in this area at one time."

The resolution itself draws attention to the outstanding service undertaken by many in the Berrong family, from World War II Veteran Jay Berrong, to the present-day Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong and Hiawassee City Councilman Kris Berrong.

"I think all of us know the Berrong family is great and legendary, and this is kind of solidifying it," said Berrong. "All joking aside, it is an honor to get this. It's something we can remember and see, and I'm just happy to be a part of the Berrong family."

Added Mike Berrong, Kris' father: "It's an honor to be a part of this, knowing that we're in the area where many family members were born, raised, and are now laid to rest. It's just a great honor."

Joining the Berrongs that day were several employees of the Georgia Department of Transportation, as well as State Rep. Gurtler and Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw.

"I just want to thank you, Sen. Wilkinson and Rep. Gurtler, for all that you've done to make this possible," said Bradshaw, who has traced a distant relative to the Berrongs. "It's kind of an emotional day. The Berrong family, I look out here and I know all of y'all, and all of y'all are friends, and friends of my family."

"It's an honor to be able to do this. And the Berrong family, to have a bridge named after your family, that says a whole lot about your family."

Adam Penland, himself a member of the Berrong family, helped Sen. Wilkinson with the historical research for the bridge naming resolution.

The Berrong Bridge replaces the original bridge that was built in 1948. The newer bridge began construction in July of 2015, and was completed and opened to traffic this summer.

The cost of the bridge was \$3,659,956.60, paid for by the state.

Consumer Alert: Make sure your WiFi devices are protected against KRACK

Atlanta, GA - Attorney General Chris Carr is warning consumers about a new cybersecurity threat, Key Reinstallation Attacks or "KRACK." You may have read about how this WiFi vulnerability can leave your data exposed for hackers to take. To help keep yourself safe from a "KRACK" please see the following tips:

Update your smartphone to the most recent operating

system; Restart your computer daily and allow updates to install; Refrain from using your laptop or smartphone on public wireless networks until you verify that a patch is installed on your device; consider using your cellular network to connect instead.

Continue to use "WPA2" because it is still the most secure WiFi protocol currently available, according to experts. NTG0181212CA