

# Schools...from Page 1

"I'm a little concerned about the remainder of this January and February, and even into March what the weather's going to do. It's impossible to predict how many snow days you may get or when it may snow, but I have a feeling we'll have quite a few days this year," he said.

Towns County Schools allow for several "emergency days" that can be missed without having to make them up later.

"I believe there are two of those days in February and two of those days in March for that exact reason, so we can use those days to make up snow days. One of the policies that the State Education Board has in place is that if you're on a 180-day school calendar, which we are, you can miss up to four days and not have to make any of those up. Most

schools attempt to make those up if they can."

Unfortunately for the students, who no doubt look forward to each and every snow day, it's too early to decide whether the school will have to make up for the snow days.

"Depending on if we miss tomorrow, right now we only have one day. If we end up having to miss tomorrow, it'll be two days, and we can easily make those up in February and March if we don't get any more snow days, but I have a feeling we will," said Dr. Berrong.

And he was right - Dr. Berrong canceled classes on both Thursday and Friday of last week, a move that mirrored the precautions taken by other counties in the region in response to an even stronger storm moving in toward the end of the week.

The decision to call off a day of school for inclement weather is not to be taken lightly.

"It's an extremely tough decision, and what makes it worse, especially, for example, today's call, when you're hearing that it's coming in the morning or coming at noon, that makes it very difficult because there are so many factors that come into play, and the biggest thing you have to try to tell yourself is what's the best for the safety of our students," he said.

"So if we came to school and it did come earlier instead of later, we could have had some serious issues with kids on a bus on some very unsafe road conditions. That can make things very difficult. So what you have to decide is if you're going to make the wrong call, you better make the wrong call that's going to be for the safety of the kids and not the other way around," he said.

# Hiawassee...from Page 1

During inclement weather is always electrical in nature. That's the first thing. As far as the city proper, most people will not get out and travel during inclement weather. They'll use pretty good judgment. So our experience has been that people can control their own actions with getting out and driving. It's the things we can't control, loss of electrical which means loss of heat, that endangers the elderly and people that are infirm," said Stancil.

Waterflow also poses a concern.

"And then the next thing is loss of water, so we always try to keep our plants running. Even though the City Hall was closed Wednesday, the water plant, for example, is running 24 hours, just maintaining and keeping the water tanks full," said Stancil.

The City has the ability to keep the water plants running 24/7, but that ability becomes even more important during emergencies.

"We basically have the ability to run 24 hours, because if the plant's running, an operator has to be there by law. So what we get into is we've got three workers. We try to basically have people available seven days a week for 24 hours, but whether the plant actually processes water or pumps water is dependent upon demand and the water levels of the tank," said Stancil.

Careful watch will be kept on the waterflow.

"Generally during this time of year, demand goes down during the winter, but because of leaky, broken pipes, we need to be conscious because we may be pumping more water,

because more water may be leaking. So they're there. But the plant may or may not be running depending on what the demand is at any point in time," said Stancil.

He urged that anybody experiencing problems stay at home and let the professionals handle it.

"The main thing is don't get out. And communicate with your family and authorities. The best thing we have going for our elderly is 911, because our emergency services are very adept at helping and assisting whether it be in the city or the county. We're very proud of the job that they do, so the best thing for citizens to do is to stay in touch and listen to the news. If they have any problems, report it so that the proper authorities can respond. And 911 is where the information flow begins," he said.

# Firewise...from Page 1

got a whole bunch of stuff in order to protect ourselves if we do get a fire," he said.

He made the distinction between a community-wide initiative such as Ready-Set-Go and Firewise, and the bigger program, Fire Adapted, that encompasses them.

"A Fire Adapted Community means that the community has adapted to taking care of its own and protecting itself. And so we are one of eight original developers (in the nation) to develop the Fire Adapted Community of Towns County. Now we're trying to develop one in White County and Lumpkin County, and Union County's next. The goal of the program is to develop it in Towns - we

figure out what works and what doesn't work, and we spread it to other counties," he said.

"Firewise is just a portion of the Fire Adapted. Firewise is just for each community to get prepared. The Ready-Set-Go program is an evacuation program. Those are the two main components," he said.

The Fire Adapted program is a national program, and Riley knows that Towns County is a model that other communities on the East Coast can use to help improve their fire preparedness.

It's an ongoing process, as Riley estimates that there are about 200 communities in Towns County, and so far about 20 of them have taken the steps necessary to be recognized as

"Firewise."

"There are four more that are in the works that aren't on the list, so we'll have over 20 saved, but those are in the process. It'll take a couple of months, probably. Right now we have 18 certified Firewise Communities in Towns County and 83 in the state of Georgia," he said.

"The Fire Adapted will be Towns County, that'll be the whole thing. That will be when we've done all the necessary components to make our county prepared for a real dry year with a real dry community, when we've got a fire coming through here. And one day, it'll happen," he said, an eventuality for which Riley plans on being prepared.

# 50s Day...from Page 1

classic cars.

"I'm in my poodle skirt, I've got my hair done all 50s style, and the residents love it - I think it brings back memories for them," said Chelsey Phillips, activity director for Chatuge Regional Nursing Home. "A lot of them will see me and say, oh, you remind me of my sailor days."

For Phillips, events like 50s Day are important because she and her activity staff are there to accomplish one major goal.

"We're here to bring joy to their lives, so anything we can do to try to achieve that goal," said Phillips. "And it's not only fun for them, but it's fun for all of us, too. You can see the staff standing around to watch the excitement. I have the best job here."

And no 50s Party would be complete without an extra special appearance by the King of Rock and Roll himself, Mr. Elvis Presley.

When Roy Perren woke up that Thursday, Jan. 21, he had no idea he'd be donning his shimmering gold jumpsuit to play the part of 1950s American royalty.

Fortunately for nursing home residents, after one Elvis canceled his performance that day, Phillips was able to book Perren to reprise his ever popular role as Elvis.

As it turned out, the whole affair came together in the perfect storm, as Perren, who is facilities director at Towns County Schools, had the day off due to school cancellation for inclement weather, and was able to make it out of his driveway as ice melted moving into the afternoon on Thursday.

Residents couldn't have been happier, either, as the ladies in the front row of Elvis' live show called for hugs and even a kiss or two on the cheek, and many sang along as Elvis went into silky renditions of a great number of his biggest hits, including "Blue Suede Shoes," "Viva Las Vegas" and "Suspicious Minds."

"It was unexpected and



CRNH staff get into the spirit of 50s Day / photo by Lowell Nicholson

I hadn't practiced, so I was worried about getting the words right, because these ladies know the words to Elvis," said Perren. "But it's a lot of fun. You see it in their eyes, and they're mouthing the songs with you. It just gives them joy, which gives me joy in my heart that I'm doing something to make somebody happy."

Lena Henson, 88, and Connie Hagen, who turns 90 this year, didn't miss the chance to sit in the front row to see Elvis deliver his high-energy show.

"I've enjoyed this," Henson said of the 50s Day Party, adding that she used wear poodle skirts of her own design. "We have plenty to do here. I think it's nice, and it keeps us busy."

Hagen, a World War II veteran, served in the Women's Army Corps, and even met Elvis and danced with him during one of his tours in the Army.

"It's a good place we have here, and I thank God we have it, because they take care of us," said Hagen, who originally hails from New York.

Activity Aide David Vogel kept staff and volunteers light on their feet, as he danced with multiple partners to the

fast-paced Presley rhythms, and Lewis Kelley did what he could behind the scenes while many were kept busy with the party.

Kelley retired last year as lead administrator of Chatuge Regional Hospital, but is back to help out at the nursing home.

"I think this is great," said Kelley of 50s Day. "I think they identify with a lot of it. It is the 50's and 60s, and they were still up and about then. You're talking about 50 years ago, so we try to get them all fired up. They have something going on each month to try to make things exciting for them. The staff do a really good job with them."

The next big activity planned for the residents is a Valentine's Day Banquet, in which residents will vote among themselves who will be King and Queen of the party.

Phillips would like to extend a special thank-you to Doreen London, a constant volunteer who assists with everything from setup of special events to simply being with the residents at the nursing home several times a week.

# Fire Department...from Page 1

or just can't find a safe exit.

The thermal detection of the imagers is so advanced that each of the cameras is able to pick up the heat signatures of recently laid footprints on the ground.

"We assist law enforcement with these cameras when somebody gets out and runs from them in the woods," said Chief Copeland. "And we can use them for search and rescue, finding victims that are lost on the Appalachian Trail."

When it comes down to it, said Chief Copeland, thermal imaging equipment allows his department to see what can't be seen with the naked eye.

"In a fire situation, it helps us see fire and the temperature behind walls, and these imagers are great for detecting chimney fires," said Chief Copeland. "When we look at a chimney fire and we think we've put it out, we're able to monitor the temperature in the bricks."

"We're able to monitor the temperature in the different parts of the chimney to make sure it's going down. We're also able to look into attics, at rafters. We're able to look at electrical outlets in walls to see if there's fire."

Three chainsaws were also provided by the Fire Corps, which come in handy during storms when facing downed trees - like last week's wintry weather, for example - and by allowing firefighters to gain entry into homes during rescues, and to cut ventilation holes in walls and roofs.

One of the major concerns in firefighting is that fires are often rekindled in wood or materials that aren't quite saturated with water - which is where the donated wetting agent comes into play.

"What we do with this is, we put two and a half gallons to a thousand-gallon tank of water," said Chief Copeland. "The wetting agent helps us first of all with salvage and overhaul, the knockdown of the fire, but it really helps when it comes to the rekindling of a fire because it soaks into the wood really well."

Taken together, the imagers, the chainsaws and enough wetting agent for the entire fleet, Chief Copeland and his firefighters will be able to continue their excellent record of putting fires to rest with as little collateral damage as possible.

The Fire Corps is the fundraising arm of the fire

department. Through their endeavors of raising funds via community support, the Fire Corps was able to supply the fire department with all kinds of equipment last year - pole saws, med-bags, handheld radios, search and rescue gear, and more.

As for building improvements, Fire Station No. 1 has new concrete slabs in front of their bay doors, to allow for easier egress of fire engines.

Station No. 6 received a very welcome upgrade to close out 2015, replacing outdated, manual lift doors with electric doors.

Prior to the replacements, firefighters were having to pull on a rope to get doors started upward, then get low and push the doors up the rest of the way, using a board to finish pushing the doors high enough to allow fire engines to leave the station - a time-consuming process when seconds can mean life or death in a fire.

"The time element of electric doors versus what we were having to go through to get those doors up - it probably puts us on the road and gets us to a fire at least three to five minutes faster," said Chief Copeland.

the money would go toward making the park not only functional, but attractive as well.

"They can build this and do the concrete padding and basically turnkey operation. Underneath, when you look up, you'll see the pine that will be stained that will look attractive when you look up, but it's basically metal. So it'll have a lot of open space, and then we can use it for meetings, for concerts, farmers market, whatever," he said.

"If Bucky Plyler comes back and says I can do something just as good for \$60,000, that's different. But we want to get started on it, because I've got to obligate Tennessee Valley Authority money. They gave us \$15,000, but it has to be obligated, really in February, because the last time you get reimbursed is in March. So I'd really like to push this forward so by the first of the month we'll know what is going to be what," he said.

# Mayor's Park...from Page 1

before over in Stephens County on schools and those types of things. He's kind of like a broker, he works for several companies, but I want to give him the specs so that he can at least give us a proposal before any final decisions are made," said Stancil.

Eric Hasley of Hasley Recreation, Inc., is somewhat of a local.

"Eric Hasley is just probably the one who has been interested the longest, plus he has family up here. His mother and dad retired up here, and he has an interest in basically helping to do something for Hiawassee, since his daughter will be using it. He did the design work, and he has a history of working with local governments up here on playgrounds and recreational equipment," explained Stancil.

At the Hiawassee City Council meeting earlier this month, Hasley told the council

a little about himself and his plans for the park.

"My company designs pavilions, playground equipment, anything that would go in a park, we design and sell. My family's been in business for 35 years. My parents retired and actually moved to Hiawassee, so they're here. My daughter comes here all the time. That's essentially what we do, we design playground equipment for cities, parks, schools, and install them," he said.

According to Hasley, the rectangular steel pavilion would have wood decking situated atop a concrete pad, all under a metal roof.

"We would manufacture it, it'll be delivered, our installer would come up for the slab and install the building," said Hasley. "The pavilion itself is \$38,185, and then the install is \$32,900. That includes everything."

Stancil explained that

# FBLA...from Page 1

winners will be state competitors:

Nick Shook in Business Communications; Audre Tyner in Economics; the team of Nick Shook and Shea Underwood in Entrepreneurship; Chase Rogers and Sarah Bastian in Introduction to Business Communications; Alyson Nelson in Computer Applications, Nick McConnell in Spreadsheets, Jackson Taylor in Database Design and Applications; the team of Makenzie Carroll and Cadence Nichols in Business Ethics; Adam Penland in Public Speaking II; and Madison Chalker in Sales Presentation.

The following competitors also placed in the Top 10 in Region 13, but will not be advancing to state level competition:

The team of Hannah Green, Ashley Smith and Kristin Henson in Entrepreneurship (Fifth Place); the team of Mackenzie Burgess, Anna Dayton and Amanda Donnelly in Publication Design (First Place); the team of Jake Pyrlik, Adam Penland and William Lovelady in Public Service Announcement (First

Place); Kendall Floyd in Public Speaking I (Fourth Place); Sara Beth Hobbs, Hannah Whitehead and Taralee Arrowood in Business Presentation (Third Place).

FBLA competitors who also competed at region level were:

Brianna Shook, Chase Williams and Sierra Oakes in Business Communications; Shea Underwood, Brianna Shook, Sterling Hedden and Brianna White in Economics; Emily Davis, Jordan Hyatt and Sara Perry in Introduction to Business Communications; Madison McClure in Personal Finance and Will Barnhart in Word Processing.

The Towns County High School FBLA BATTLE of the CHAPTERS team, Chase Williams, Alyson Nelson and Nick McConnell, will advance to state level competition, having placed in Top 10 during FLC.

The Monopoly team of Adam Penland, Jake Pyrlik and William Lovelady will be advancing from their play at FLC. FBLA members form teams at FLC to play in the largest Monopoly Tournament

in the world - proceeds of entrance fees to benefit the March of Dimes. This team will continue play at SLIC.

Additionally, Towns County FBLA was given two chapter awards: the Region 13 Largest Chapter Award, which recognizes the chapter with the most members, was accepted by Alyson Nelson; and Towns FBLA also received a Second Place award in the FBLA Sweepstakes, a trophy given to the chapters who have the most "wins" at region competition, which was accepted by Advisors Melissa McConnell and Billy Barnhart, and Region Vice President Nick McConnell.

Congratulations to all competitors who gave generously of their time and dedicated themselves to representing our chapter with excellence. Your academic preparation and effort is reflected in your success. The FBLA State Leadership Conference and Competitions will be held March 6-8 at the UGA Classic Center in Athens. Seventeen additional competitors from TCHS FBLA will be joining these regional winners to compete in events that begin at state level. Good luck, Towns County FBLA!

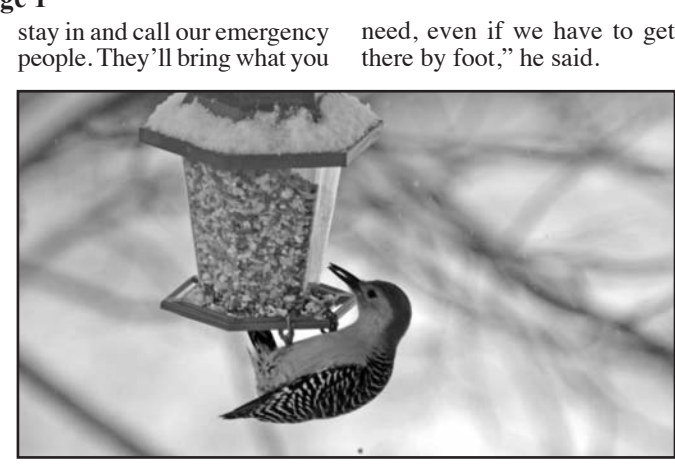
# Winter...from Page 1

"The part I like to tell people is don't panic. We're not in an extreme cold climate. It may be cold for 24 hours or 48 hours, but we're going to warm up. That's the way the situation goes with us," he said.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall said that, despite some obstacles, everything turned out okay over the weekend.

"We had some emergencies where we had to go and take some medicine and food to some people. The Fire Department rescued people and did a good job. I don't know of any emergency EMS reports. The Road Department was out working late, and we had a lot of trees down," he said.

"We got most of the places, but there's some so steep you can't get those. There are a lot of them. And we had a few people trying to drive out over that snow and slid off in a ditch. But the best thing is, when there's snow like that over these steep parts, try to



Winter weather photos by Lowell Nicholson

stay in and call our emergency people. They'll bring what you need, even if we have to get there by foot," he said.