

Hiawassee looking to receive FEMA funds

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Federal and state emergency management services are currently assessing the City of Hiawassee to determine which damages from the recent winter weather qualify for reimbursement.

Representatives from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Emergency Management Agency met with the city to begin the reimbursement process.

"At this point in time, the President (Barack Obama) has included us in a declaration of disaster," said Hiawassee City Manager Rick Stancil. "That just means we're eligible. Both the FEMA folks and the GEMA folks are going through the process."

"The first step is to get estimates in on the actual damage. We will then be filling out forms as part of the application and worksheets showing what the actual damage was, how you go about repairing it, and the estimates of damages and locations by GPS."

The city and the county operate under different jurisdictions, so each is responsible for repairing different parts of the damage done by flooding.

"We handle the roads and ditches and washouts that



Rick Stancil

occur in the city and the falling embankments in the city," said Stancil. "Really in the city, it's falling banks. We have several embankments that have slid down and are either blocking ditches or roads, so we've had to address those."

"The other major deal, it's just amazing how much silt has washed into ditches and filled up ditches and culverts. The problem with that is the water has nowhere to go except roadways and property until we get those repaired."

His estimate was that getting funding from FEMA would take about half a year.

"That's the application grant process," said Stancil. "You will probably see that 80 percent of the county's work has already been done. Ours is a little bit different, because about 10 percent of our work I would say has been done. So we're going through methodically and will move ahead with the work, but

we're not going to be able to complete all the work until we know about what the funding limitations are."

Although that may seem like a long period of time, it's relatively short when compared to the length of time it may take to make all the necessary repairs without the funding.

"We won't get it done quickly without the funding, because we don't have the money in the budget," said Stancil. "Our road budget is about \$20,000 a year to try to maintain what we've got, and currently I estimate it will be close to \$60,000 that we'll have in damages."

"So if we don't get everything this year, we'll have to move money around in other categories to fix it, or we fix it over a period of two years to three years."

Stancil pointed to the budgeting process, how this year's budget is based on last year's revenue.

"And we are just now starting to look at the budget for next year," said Stancil. "Right now we have roughly \$20,000 in assets. We have \$60,000 in liability. If we don't get federal assistance, then the work will be spread out over a couple of budget years."

He said the best-case scenario would be reimbursement for \$45,000.

Retaining wall a welcome project for detainees



Commissioner Bill Kendall, Guard Cecil Shook, and county detainees were all satisfied with the way the wall has turned out

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Detainees from the Colwell Probation Detention Center in Blairsville were busy last week working on a retaining wall that needed an update near the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center.

"This old retaining wall has been here for a long time, and we had to put these rocks on it and it looks a lot better," explained Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall when he came to visit the project.

Guard Cecil Shook began the project with a handful of detainees who needed on-the-job training at first. But he said that they learned quickly and completed the job at a good pace.

"We've had six people, and I've had two that showed the other four how to mix mud to lay this stone," said Shook. "They've taken off and done very well with what they've been shown, and they did a fantastic job with it. So I had six men total, but I had two that knew what was going on. Then they trained two more, and I've had two good helpers that learned how to mix mud and carry stone."

"We've had a lot of people stop by here and give us a thumbs up and tell us it looks great. So that's made these guys feel really good about their work ethic and what they've accomplished right here."



County detainees worked for a week to put a new face on an existing retaining wall near the recreation center

According to Commissioner Kendall and Shook, the detainees considered working on the wall to be their favorite project.

"They like to see that they've really accomplished something," added Commissioner Kendall.

Materials for the wall were ready to go the Monday before, and actual construction began last Tuesday. Two days later, on Thursday, the wall was completed.

"I think that's pretty fast considering I had some that were learning and some that hadn't really done it in a while," said Shook.

The detainees are also responsible for picking up litter from the sides of the road, but that task can often seem unending because people continue to throw litter over

freshly-cleaned roads.

"They pick up paper on the roads and then they see people on the other side throwing it out while they're picking it up," said Commissioner Kendall.

"We'll get one end of the road done and we'll go back through it and see that someone has come behind us and chucked it out again," said Shook.

As far as the wall goes, he said that the detainees have every right to be proud of what they have accomplished.

"They really accomplished quite a bit," said Shook. "And we've had a lot of compliments. It's good to teach these guys a trade. And thanks to Mr. Kendall for giving us an opportunity to be an asset to the county."

Odd Couple cast reflects on challenges of roles

By Annie Blanks

The *Odd Couple* remains playwright Neil Simon's most famous production, having won him a Tony Award in 1965 and inspiring countless renditions across stages big and small, even including a wildly successful big screen film adaptation in 1968 and an ABC sitcom that ran for five years. This April, Hayesville's very own Peacock Playhouse will put on this classic comedy, led by David Layfield and Richard Oldham in the leading roles of Oscar and Felix, respectively.

"Well, when you think of [Oscar], if you've watched the movie or show, he can come across as this grumpy guy, but there's more to him than that," said Layfield of the challenges of playing Oscar, a recently divorced protagonist. "He really cares about Felix' welfare, and really is good-willed, good-natured and so forth. So for me, the challenge is being to make Oscar multi-dimensional, not just this grumpy middle-aged guy."

On playing Felix, who has



L to R: Brian Dickerson, Ashley Eller, Richard Oldham, David Layfield, Michael Saturno

also been played in the past by the likes of Pat Sajak and Matthew Broderick, Oldham said the biggest challenge to embodying the other protagonist is serving justice to the emotional transformation of Felix throughout the play. "It's mainly just getting into the character of Felix emotionally, so that the audience can feel that he's going through the pain and the emotional struggle of going through a divorce," he said. "You'll see the arc of his character as he goes through it, with Oscar's help."

The *Odd Couple* runs

April 8 - 10 and 15 - 17; Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 and Sunday matinees at 2:30. Tickets are \$18 for adults and \$9 for students and are on sale now through the website peacockperformingarts.com, or by calling the box office 828-389-6531. Tickets are also available Mon. - Sat. 9:30 - 6 p.m. at Tiger's Mercantile (828-389-6531) on the square in Hayesville. Season Tickets for both plays and Songwriters series are still available! Call for information. The Peacock Performing Arts Center is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

Storytelling...from Page 1A

David Holt and Josh Goforth, band Sweet Sunny South, and "Affrilachian" storyteller Lyn Ford.

Similar to last year, the festival will showcase two days of Southern and Appalachian-themed storytelling. However, the organizers of the festival are bringing in new additions this year as well.

One thing that's new is that the Craddock Center, an educational non-profit, will be bringing their story express van to the festival.

"It's their bookmobile, and they're going to give away books to all of the children who come on Saturday," said Dr. Amanda Lawrence, an associate professor of English at Young Harris College. "They're partnering with us, and they're going to come give away books to kids. I made a connection with them - we were talking about having that festival and they asked if we would like that, and we said yes, of course."

On that Saturday, the festival will also feature two children's storytelling events with Appalachian storytellers who specifically tell stories to engage a younger audience.

"All of it is open to the



Dr. Amanda Lawrence

community and designed for the community as well as the college," said Lawrence. "There are kids' stories specifically for children in the community. We have storytellers who specialize in telling stories for little kids. So everything at the festival is family friendly, but these two sessions are especially for young children."

She also added that on Saturday afternoon, the festival will host a showcase of local storytellers.

"For the area storyteller showcase, we have six storytellers, and then two of our three storytellers telling

children's stories are also from this area. So we have eight. Two of them were here last year," she said.

Although the craft of storytelling is the focus of the event, the festival is aimed toward exploring and discovering all aspects of the local region, including history and culture. To that end, local organizations have agreed to come and set up tables so that anyone attending the event can learn more about Southern Appalachia.

"We're also going to have all day Friday and Saturday tables set up from some of our community partners, what they do. So there will be a Habitat for Humanity table, a table from the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition. A whole bunch of different groups are going to have information tables set up to share what they're all about," said Lawrence.

She hopes that the festival holds something for each of the families who attend.

"I think storytelling is something that bonds families together, and it helps people to learn about and then carry on their own family heritage," she said.

Poet Maurice Manning to present annual Heinze Lecture at Young Harris College

American Poet Maurice Manning will present the annual Heinze Lecture at Young Harris College on Thursday, March 31, at 7 p.m. in Wilson Lecture Hall of Goolsby Center on the YHC campus. The event is free and open to the public.

During the lecture, Manning will discuss the cultural and literary heritage of Appalachia as well as read from his own works.

Manning was born and raised in Kentucky, and often writes about the land and culture of his home. His first book of poems, "Lawrence Booth's Book of Visions," was chosen by poet and judge W.S. Merwin for the Yale Series of Younger Poets Award. His subsequent books include "A Companion for Owls: Being the Commonplace Book of D. Boone, Lone Hunter, Back Woodsman, &c.," "Bucolics," "The Common Man," which



Maurice Manning

was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in poetry, and "The Gone and the Going Away."

He grew up listening to stories of his father's childhood spent on a farm in Eastern Kentucky and has been inspired by the lives of his grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and a great-great-grandmother. Inventive and historical, his work reflects his

heritage and a respect for the natural world.

Manning received fellowships from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA., and the Guggenheim Foundation. He has taught at DePauw University and Indiana University, and is on faculty in the MFA program at Warren Wilson College and the Sewanee Writing Conference. He is currently a professor of English at Transylvania University.

Established in 1974 in memory of YHC alumnus James R. Heinze, the annual Heinze Lecture brings speakers to campus to discuss themes and ideas that encourage college spirit and offer inspiration to the entire college community. Traditionally, the lecture focuses on Southern or Appalachian topics.

For more information about this event, call (706) 379-5104.