

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Rain	77 58
Fri: Rain	79 61
Sat: Rain	81 63
Sun: Rain	79 62
Mon: Rain	80 64
Tue: Rain	83 65
Wed: Rain	80 64



Upstream Elevation Predicted 06/03/2015	
Lake Chatuge	1,926.06
Lake Nottely	1,776.79
Blue Ridge	1,687.58

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Apply NOW
to have a
Veteran's Name
added to
monument panel
see page 14A

The Wall is Coming

Blairsville Pro RODEO
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JUNE 19 & 20

Towns County graduates 82 seniors

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Eighty-two of the county's finest graduated from Towns County High School on Friday, May 29, and will surely go on to make big changes in the world.

"We've worked hard the past 13 years to reach this day, but would not have made it without the dedication and encouragement of those around us," said Senior Class President Angel Benedict in her words of welcome. "I'd like to recognize those who walked us through our childhoods and welcome them to the goal they helped us reach."

Benedict thanked God, parents, teachers, coaches and administration, family and friends, before addressing her



class.

"These past four years have brought many memories, and at times, struggle," said Benedict. "But don't forget the lessons we learned and the battles we won. Together we started a goal, and today we will receive it. So, welcome to our graduation."

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HRWC celebrates 20 years

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Blairsville - The Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition (HRWC) is celebrating 20 years of sustaining clean water in streams, lakes, and rivers that flow into the Hiwassee River.

In Union County, the Nottely River, and each of the creeks, and streams that flow into the Nottely are of importance to the HRWC since the Nottely River flows into the Hiwassee River in southern Cherokee County, NC after leaving the Nottely Reservoir in northern Union County.

The HRWC, based in Murphy, NC, began its 20th year with the 11th Annual Trout Dinner Fundraiser at Meeks Park on Thursday evening,



May 21.

Locally farmed, smoked rainbow trout were served up along with baked beans, coleslaw, potato salad, cornbread, drinks, and homemade desserts.

"This event is a fund raiser for the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition and we work in four counties, Cherokee and Clay counties in North Carolina

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Juniors head into fall as seniors

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Each year, as seniors graduate and open leadership positions for those who follow, Towns County High School honors its students who will return in the fall with a ceremony specially set aside for underclassmen.

This year, those students were honored in front of their parents and peers in the Anne Mitchell Auditorium on Tuesday, May 26.

"This is always an exciting time of year where we have the opportunity to celebrate exceptional academic accomplishments of such amazing students, many of which juggle their academics with demanding extracurricular events and



Kevin Reardon, Shea Underwood, and Michelle Miller at Underclassmen Honors Night. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

activities, such as job, church, family, and yet still find a way to maintain academic excellence," said Principal Jonathan Gibson.

Ninth-grade through 11th-grade students were awarded certificates for having achieved the A-B Honor Roll, as well as the All A Honor Roll.

Course-specific honors

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Good bye TCMS, hello TCHS



By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Middle School held its eighth grade commencement on Thursday, May 28. For the soon-to-be high school students, this is only the first step toward the fulfilling the expectation that they will go on to graduate high school.

For Class President Connor Kelley, this school year, with all its ups and downs, was a blessing. "This has been a perfect year for me," he said. "One of the best years of my life."

"When I say 'perfect,' a lot of you may think that I'm saying nothing ahs gone wrong this entire year," he went on. "That's completely false. About everything that could have gone wrong went wrong. But the thing that makes this year perfect, is that if I could redo it and change everything, I wouldn't change a single thing."

To highlight the impor-

tance of the ceremony, Principal David Turner explained that graduating from the eighth grade is a crucial step toward the overall goal for these kids, which is to graduate high school.

"In today's society, and with the jobs that are available, a high school diploma is the minimum requirement. And so we want to do everything we can to encourage them to get into high school, work hard and succeed," he said.

Fortunately, most Towns County students are not at risk of failing to graduate high school. Ironically, the small size of the community enables kids to have a larger support system when it comes to their academic work.

"I think the biggest thing that we have in Towns County is we have a small community that puts its support behind the children," Turner said. "We have a small school system and all the teachers and administra-

tion, their focus is on helping the students to achieve all their goals."

Shortly before commencement, Turner gave a speech detailing the importance of graduating high school. "I promise you, I never met anybody who regretted graduating from high school. But I've met many who wished they had," he said.

"There's many milestones that you have a head of you," he told the eighth grade class. "But one of the most important future milestones that each of you can accomplish is to graduate from high school. A high school diploma is a key to so many things that will lead to the other milestones in your life."

As Turner noted in his speech, most of the eighth graders have by this time passed may life "milestones," such as taking their first steps, saying their first words, reading their

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Reece Society honors Bettie

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer



Bettie Sellers

Choestoe - Byron Herbert Reece is a local literary legend, having been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and won various awards during writing career, and his torch is carried to this day by the society that bears his namesake.

The Byron Herbert Reece Society held its 12th Annual Meeting at the Reece Farm and Heritage Center on Saturday, May 30.

Chairman John Kay has been involved with the society since its beginning, and has headed up each meeting for the last 12 years. This year, however, he retires from the top spot of the society.

"It really feels good," said Kay on his involvement as chairman. "I think the time has come for me to make this transition from a position of leadership to being a good member. There are good people in place, and I have positive feelings going forward."

Along with announcing its 2015-2016 board of directors, the society's new board elected new officers. Keith Jones will serve as the new chair, Terry White as vice chair, Rosemary Royston as recording secretary, Debra March as treasurer and Teresa Sampson as membership secretary.

Professor Ted Olson of the Appalachian Studies Department at East Tennessee State University was the meet-

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Moss is TCMS TOTY

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer



Jennifer Moss

The Towns County School System recently announced its teachers of the year. Taking that award for the middle school is Jennifer Moss, the seventh-grade science teacher.

Moss, who has received the award multiple times now, is native to Hayesville, NC. Before coming to Towns, she taught at Dacula Middle School in Gwinnett County for 15 years. "It's been a long career," she said.

She moved back to Hayesville because of the death of her mother.

"I inherited her home. We didn't make enough money to have two homes, so I moved back here to Hayesville. That's where I grew up. I got a chance to go to a smaller town and raise my children, and I've been here ever since," she said.

Moss has two children. Her daughter is a Registered Nurse, and her son is in college at Appalachian State University.

She seemed at a loss as to why she would be voted Teacher of the Year. "I hope that

it's because my love for kids is evident," she guessed. "I want them all to succeed to the best of their ability and I do my best everyday and keep them in mind. My hope is that I can retire and never have been a child's bad memory. Or that I encouraged a child to take a path maybe that they didn't have enough confidence to pursue."

Moss always tries to take an exciting approach to education of her children.

"I hope that they get in here and decide at the end of the year that it's their favorite subject. I like to think that it happens. I try to do fun activities."

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Taco Bell open for business

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer



Mike Bender, left, and staff at Taco Bell. The eatery opened last week. Photo/Mason Mitcham

For fans of fast food, a long-awaited moment has arrived. On Wednesday, May 28, the new Taco Bell on 515 held its grand opening. Crowds wandered in and out all day, throwing the new staff into a frenzy of work.

"These first few days are going to be pretty tough," said Mike Bender, one of the restaurant owners. "Probably after about a week they should get into sort of a smooth flow."

Bender has owned several restaurants after graduating from Auburn and going to grad school. "I opened some Moe's Southwest Grills in South Carolina, and then about the time I opened my third store, my friend Doug and I started talking," he said. "At the time we had five restaurants, and we wanted to try to grow it into maybe 25 to 35. So he and I teamed up and so I've been in restaurant biz for

about 12 or 13 years now. Never would have planned it. But it's never a dull moment."

To prep for this moment, the staff trained for weeks, but all that training can't simulate the real world.

"This is just kind of the crescendo of 6-8 weeks of training and prep," said Bender. "It's tough. It's interesting because when you're training, you've

See Taco Bell, Page 12A

Chatuge Regional boasts a facelift

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer



Lewis Kelley

On Friday, May 29, Chatuge Regional Hospital opened up its new and improved senior behavioral healthcare center to public viewing.

Those interested were offered guided tours throughout the day.

The renovations came about because the hospital wanted to change the way it was perceived by the public.

"We took a survey and three years ago, people said our building looks old and antiquated, and since the building looks old and antiquated, they consider the services inside the building old and antiquated," said hospital CEO Lewis Kelley.

To call the services inside the hospital old and antiquated would be false. But the hospital

administration felt that it would put its patients more at ease to

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TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

