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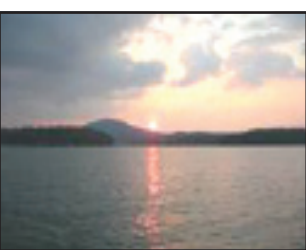
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Wednesday, June 6, 2012

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Sunny	76	52
Fri: Sunny	78	54
Sat: Sunny	82	58
Sun: Cloudy	84	59
Mon: Cloudy	84	60
Tue: Storms	83	62
Wed: Storms	84	61



Upstream Elevation Predicted 06/06/12	
Lake Chatuge	1924.24
Lake Nottely	1773.88
Blue Ridge	1673.00

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Music on Square

On June 9 music legends Elvis, Tom Jones, Johnny Rivers, Patsy Cline will be on the Enchanted Square.

On June 16, Jeff Bauman and Family will appear.

On June 23 Flashpoint is scheduled to perform.

Cookbooks

Chatuge Regional Nursing Home has collected the best recipes from group members, family and friends and compiled them into attractive keepsake cookbook that makes a perfect gift

The books are selling for \$12.50 each.

For more details on how to get a cookbook, call Tabitha Crawford or Rita Bradshaw at (706)

Big Meet

Towns County Democratic Party will host a multi-county meeting on Thursday June 14 at 5:30 p.m. at the Senior Center in Hiawassee on Berrong Street.

Guest speakers include Jana Hill, candidate for District 8 State Representative, and Steve Oppenheimer, candidate for Public Service Commissioner.

Democrats of Rabun, White, Fannin, Towns and Union counties are invited to hear their candidate speak.

Historical Society

Towns County Historical Society Members will gather at 5 p.m. on the second Monday of the Month at the Towns County Senior Center in Downtown Hiawassee.

Annual dues are \$15 and can be made payable to:

P.O. Box 1132, Hiawassee, Ga, 30546. Call (706) 896-1060 for more details.

Be sure to support the Historical Society.

MEC graduates 37 from Class of 2012

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
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Steffan Lucarelli was fortunate to be on the stage Thursday evening at the Fannin County High School Performing Arts Center.

While a student at Towns County High School, Lucarelli was diagnosed with a brain tumor at the age of 16.

On this stage, this night in Blue Ridge, Lucarelli was living the dream of almost every American High School student. He was delivering the Valedictorian Address.

"I am honored to be recognized as Valedictorian for the Graduating Class of 2012 and elated to represent such a diverse group of my peers," said Lucarelli.

It was all part of the Mountain Education Center High School's Commencement

Exercises for the Union, Towns and Fannin counties graduating classes of 2012.

There were many very happy and proud parents, family members, friends, and teachers who turned out to witness the transformation of these bright young men and women as they crossed that threshold from graduating high school students to young adults ready to go out and take on the world.

As the students walked down the aisle to take their seats, the swell of pride was felt throughout the auditorium.

MEC Superintendent Dr. Richard Behrens was on hand to welcome everyone

Dr. Behrens retired last year from the Towns County School System where he served as its superintendent.

The program was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the Na-

tional Anthem performed by Sara Kate Chapman.

Alicia Stamey, of Fannin MECHS, presented the Senior High Honors Address.

"We all arrived here in different ways, but we all had the same goal, to get an education," Stamey said. "The MEC staff helped us and pushed us to further our education, to pursue our goals, dreams, and ambitions. They stood behind us and supported us 100 percent."

Fannin County's MEC Site Administrator Lori Chastain praised Stamey.

"Alicia has been a great role model for other high school students who excel in a self-paced program with the support system that our school provides," Chastain said.

This year's Valedictorian, Lucarelli, was enrolled at the Union MEC Site, although he began his high



MEC Valedictorian Steffan Lucarelli delivers his address to a packed crowd at graduation. Photo/Teena Atkins

school career at Towns County High School. His time at TCHS was cut short as he was diagnosed with a brain tumor at the age of 16. He left TCHS in December of his sophomore year. "Steffan Lucarelli has the highest grade point average of all the graduates in the MEC system. He has earned the Zell Miller Scholarship and will receive \$4,000 per year to attend Young Harris College," said Dr. Behrens.

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Reece Heritage Center now open

By Charles Duncan
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Byron Herbert Reece

Blairsville - A chilly morning breeze along Wolf Creek couldn't keep the more than 200 admirers of the Mountain Poet Byron Herbert "Hub" Reece away from the historic family farm in Choestoe on Saturday.

After all, the day that was nine years in the making had finally come to fruition.

Writers, elected leaders and Reece family members joined The Byron Herbert Reece Society to celebrate the life works of a man known as the poet of the working man on Saturday and Sunday.

The event marked the opening of the Byron Herbert Reece Farm and Heritage Center, constructed on the land once farmed and harvested by the Reece Family. It was also the site where Reece composed his life's literary works, including Pulitzer Prize-nominated *Bow Down in Jericho*.

More than 200 people gathered under the 2,620-square foot pavilion, even more stood outside the framed tent as a community came together to celebrate its most heralded Mountain treasure.

A simple meal of barbecue sandwiches and all the

fixings, provided by Georgia Farm Bureau, followed the dedication ceremony.

On hand for the ceremony, Bettie Sellers, an inaugural member of the Reece Society, Frances Mathis Sr., widow of James Mathis Sr., the man with the vision of the center, State Sen. Steve Gooch, State Rep. Stephen Allison, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall, Young Harris College President Cathy Cox, Society member John Kay, as well as Fleming Weaver and Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris, both driving forces behind the Farm and Heritage Center.

Also, Terry Reece and his brother Steven Reece, nephews of Hub Ree-

ce, attended the ceremony. Steven Reece said the day was like a whirlwind of autumn leaves, spinning round and round, almost surreal and trance-like in nature.

"It's really quite amazing to be here and look around and witness how the Byron Herbert Reece Society has worked to bring this dream to fruition," Steven Reece said. "We've got a fantastic facility now and hopefully, people will have an opportunity to come and visit. They'll get a sense of not only what Byron Herbert Reece was about, and his great works in the literary world, they'll get a sense of what life was like in the North Georgia Mountains."

Commissioner Kendall said looking around the Heritage Center brought back memories. He remembered days when the Reece family mule plowed the fields, of course with Hub Reece trailing the plow. He remembered rows of high corn whipped by the wind along the Wolf Creek bottoms.

"Indeed, this brings back memories," Commissioner Kendall said.

Commissioner Paris said many thanks go to many people for helping make the project a reality. "I think we got it right,"

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Road sign thefts anger Kendall

By Libby Shook
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On Friday afternoon, Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall reported that vandals had struck in Towns County. It might only be the prank of a group of teenagers, but to Commissioner Kendall, it's serious business.

"On Tuesday, May 29th, a total of 42 road signs were stolen," Commissioner Kendall said.

A resident of the Bell Creek Community called to report that he had found 35 county roads signs dumped in his pasture. The county quickly responded and recovered the stolen signs.

Commissioner Kendall

reported that, as of Friday, all of the stolen signs had been replaced.

The details of the stolen signs are still sketchy. But Sheriff Chris Clinton, the recent keynote speaker at the regularly scheduled Friday morning session of the Movers and Shakers during their weekly breakfast at Mary's Southern Grill, said community watch programs make a difference.

"Over the past four and a half years, crime in Towns County has declined thirty percent. It's the only county in the Enotah Circuit that can say that," Sheriff Clinton said. "We attribute a lot of this to community involvement. Several of our communities have set up a Community Watch

Program where they are on the lookout for suspicious activity in their community."

The missing signs drew concern from Commissioner Kendall and raised his ire.

"If anyone is aware of a missing sign, they should call my office at (706) 896-2276 or notify 911 and the county will have the signs replaced as soon as possible," he said. "Anyone with any information concerning the stolen signs should report it the appropriate law enforcement officials," he said.

In addition to being expensive to the taxpayers to replace the signs, this could result in a life or death situation, Commissioner Kendall said.

"If an ambulance or fire

See Signs, page 12

Farmers Market a reality in Towns

By Libby Shook
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Saturday morning marked a new beginning for residents of Towns County as they celebrated the Grand Opening of the Towns County Farmer's Market with six vendors open for business.

The low number was anticipated as the growing season has only begun, but it is expected to increase significantly as produce begins to come in.

The weather was perfect and it certainly was a beautiful

See Market, page 12



The Farmers Market is open in Towns County through October. Opening weekend was slow, but steady. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Drugs, moonshine, cash seized in city

By Charles Duncan
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A joint investigation by the Towns County Sheriff's Office, Appalachian Drug Task Force, the city of Hiawassee Police Department and the Clay County Sheriff's Office have led to six arrests in two states on multiple drug charges, Towns County sheriff's reports show.

The cooperative effort between the four agencies led to the confiscation of drugs, non-taxed liquor and thousands of dollars in cash, Towns County Sheriff's reports show.

The agencies executed nine felony arrest warrants at the Hiawassee Fruit and Vegetable Market, sheriff's reports show.

The warrants included charges for conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, distribution of marijuana, and distribution of controlled a substance, sheriff's reports show.

During the service of

the warrants, a quantity of marijuana, a large quantity of hydrocodone, a small quantity of methamphetamine, approximately two dozen quarts of untaxed liquor, and large amount of cash was seized, sheriff's reports show.

Frank D. Cox, Kevin M. Reynolds, and Gene Kirby, all of Hiawassee, were arrested and taken to the Towns County Jail.

That investigation is ongoing, sheriff's reports show.

Information gathered by the Towns County Sheriff's Office deputy assigned to the Appalachian Drug Task force led to the arrest of the above suspects, as well as to a search warrant at a private residence in Hayesville, NC.

Three North Carolina residents were arrested by Clay County Sheriff's Office on multiple felony warrants issued by the task force.

During the service of these warrants, more marijuana as well as a substantial amount of cash was seized. That investigation continued at press time.

Kendall: 'TSPLOST is bad for Towns County'

By Libby Shook
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The Times in Gainesville recently paid a visit to Towns County to gauge interest in the mountain communities regarding the Transportation Special Local Option Sales Tax referendum slated for July 31.

In a special meeting called by Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall, 20 people attended to voice their opinions regarding the issue.

Times reporter Jeff Gill arrived with Times photographer Tom Reed. The two are traveling throughout the North Georgia mountain communities of Fannin, Towns, Union, Gilmer, Pickens, and Rabun Counties to talk with local government officials and concerned citizens regarding the T-SPLOST tax.

Residents voiced their concerns as they hope to reach a wider audience regarding the impact this proposed tax increase will have on smaller counties, Towns County in particular, while providing no foreseeable benefits.

Commissioner Kendall allowed participants to introduce themselves and tell who they were there representing.

"Looks like we've got a good cross-section of the community here," Commissioner Kendall said.

On March 1, 2011, House Bill 277 Transporta-



Commissioner Bill Kendall

tion Development Act Project Committee met in the Towns County Commissioner's Office to develop a list of road improvements to meet the March 18th deadline of the HB 277 Transportation Development Act of 2010.

After in-depth pro and con discussions of widening to five lanes Georgia 2 north of Hiawassee to the North Carolina line, the committee voted unanimously to not make it a part of the project list.

There were seven items on the list, in order of priority, which was unanimously approved to be sent in to the Georgia Mountain Regional Roundtable and Georgia Department of Transportation.

"Not one of the seven items that we asked for came back approved. Instead they stuck us with this five-lane highway that nobody wants

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