

# Lewis...from Page 1A

as GMRC chairman. Since becoming executive director, Lewis has assisted in countless initiatives, comprehensive plans and projects that have brought GMRC where it is today.

"I have watched some talented individuals leave this organization via retirement, finding other employment, furthering their education, or just to change careers," said Lewis. "In all cases we have filled vacancies with talented employees, whether internally or externally. I believe we have, overall, one of the finest group of superb employees found in this state.

"They work hard and celebrate victories with communities. I appreciate this staff and know our 51 local governments in this region do as well. I would rank us in the Top Three in the state."

Lewis presented his final Executive Director's Report to the council, walking the audience through the various chairmen with whom he has worked throughout the years, from Sen. Gooch to the current chairman, Dean Scarborough. Lewis highlighted each chairman's career, sharing funny quips about times spent together, and thanking each chairman for his leadership.

"My term as chairman was one year," said Sen. Gooch. "One of the most rewarding things we did during that year was hiring Danny



L.J. Harrison also retired recently from the GMRC, as chaplain. His many friends presented him with a parting gift in the July 28 meeting.

Lewis. I think we made the right decision. One of the things that stood out to us was that he had experience all across Georgia. Thank you all. We made a good choice in you, Danny. Best of luck to you."

A retirement reception for Lewis will be held at the Gainesville Civic Center on Tuesday, Aug. 2, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. It is an informal reception and drop-ins will be welcome.

Keeping with the theme of the night, L.J. Harrison of Toccoa, chaplain of the GMRC, also announced his retirement. According to Harrison, he has presented 290 devotions and prayers throughout his 41 years of service with the GMRC. Harrison shared his last word of prayer over the GMRC at

Thursday's meeting.

Next month's GMRC Council Meeting will be held in Forsyth County on Thursday, Aug. 25.

According to the GMRC website, the commission "is a sub-state district created by local governments in 1962 under provisions of Georgia Enabling Law. The purpose of the GMRC is to locally promote and guide proper development of human, natural, physical, social and economic resources in the Georgia Mountains Region. The area covers 3,500 square miles, and includes Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union and White counties."

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school.

"What students can do is get two college credits each semester," said Dr. Berrong. "They will take one class through the first half of the semester and get credit then, then they'll take another class the second half of the semester.

"They'll repeat that the second semester as well so they'll get a total of four college credits if they qualify to get into that program.

"We are excited to see that program get started. I think it'll be great for our students who are going to be going off to college after high school."

Eighth-grade students at Towns County Middle School

have had a similar opportunity, being able to take classes for high school credit. This year, the school system has included two additional courses to offer students even more opportunities to succeed.

"We're adding to that this year," said Dr. Berrong. "This past year we'd had students who had taken math, English and agriculture for high school credit. We're adding a business class, as well as science. So, at the end of this year, eighth-grade students could get a total of five high school credits when they're through with eighth grade.

"We want to continue to expand that program. Of course, these students are then

on track to take those college courses once they get into high school."

Towns County Elementary School is all decked out, ready for the 54 incoming kindergarten students that are registered to begin school on Thursday. While most of these kids will be starting school for the first time, all the elementary school faculty and staff are excited to welcome them and help out with any little bump in the road the students might face.

Towns County Schools are right on track for a year just as successful as last year, if not even more so. Students are going to be gearing up for a higher level of learning, and the teachers are more than ready to guide them along the way.

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managing the daily operations of the extension office, Smith will work with members of the community who are in need of sending out soil and water samples for testing at the University of Georgia.

According to Smith, the second half of the job will be his favorite - 4-H in the classroom.

Fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders receive a once-a-month classroom time where a 4-H associate comes to the school to teach the program - enter Smith.

From seventh grade to 12th grade, the program becomes a voluntary afterschool activity, but all levels provide an opportunity

for students to be thoroughly involved.

"We go in and we teach curriculum that is state performance standards," said Smith. "We go in and we aren't wasting class time, we're not taking away from the teacher.

"We're enforcing what the teacher is teaching, and we give the kids the opportunity to do hands-on learning. It gives them an opportunity to have fun while still achieving the standards the state says they have to achieve. It's a great partnership and relationship."

While typically a 4-H associate would only visit the classroom once a month, Smith aspires to one day visit the school twice a month to give

the kids more opportunities to become involved and grow in 4-H. He has high hopes of creating more activities within the community for 4-H'ers, including public speaking competitions, 4-H summer camp and even summer activities with the neighboring Union County 4-H program.

"4-H can really only go as big as you make it," said Smith. "I have so much going on in my mind that I want to bring to the program here in Towns County. I have to go slow, but I want to grow the program into something where every kid has the opportunity to do something and still be able to be affiliated with 4-H."

Smith can be reached at the Towns County Extension office at (706) 896-2024, or via email at andys128@uga.edu.

# Meeting...from Page 1A

years, giving an update on each project's status, its cost, and its funding source.

"Andrea is reading what we've accomplished over the last five years as a county," Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall said. "We've probably completed about 95 to 96 percent of what is listed. She's going to bring us up to speed on where we are before we go into the purpose of the meeting tonight, which is where we want to take the county over the next five years."

Civic leaders from Towns County and the cities of Young Harris and Hiawassee are also seeking input from members of the community in the form of a public survey, with which residents, business owners, students, visitors -

anyone with a connection to these communities - can share their visions of Towns and her cities for the next 20 to 30 years.

The survey was issued to all in attendance at last month's meeting, and is available online at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/FLN8TP8](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FLN8TP8).

Also, to see about obtaining a copy of the survey, stop in to the commissioner's office in the Towns County Courthouse, or in the city halls of Hiawassee and Young Harris. Physical copies of the survey can also be turned in at the above listed places.

During the meeting, Rothwell led a PowerPoint presentation that discussed the goals of the survey.

"Your hometown can only achieve its vision if it

knows what that vision is, so please take part in this process and tell us your vision for the future of your hometown," Rothwell said.

Examples from a few of the queries on the 10-question survey include:

"Would you like your community to attract or limit growth?"

"Would you like for new growth to be aimed at the cities or along highways, and what does the public feel is their community's most important asset and its biggest liability?"

Other questions focus on economic development, housing needs, historic and cultural resources, rating the public services, highway development, and more.

For further details, contact Rothwell at [jrothwell@gmrc.ga.gov](mailto:jrothwell@gmrc.ga.gov), or by phone at (770) 538-2619.

# Dedication...from Page 1A

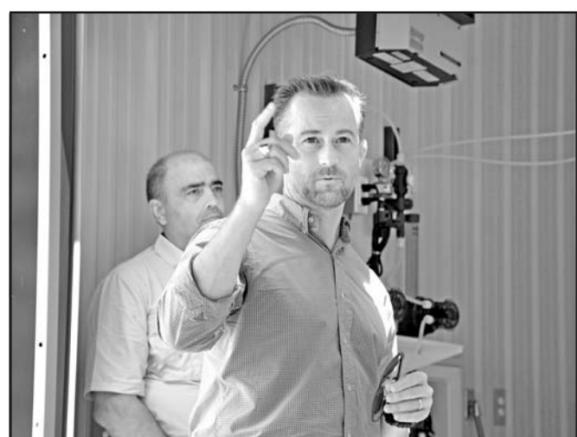
"A major recommendation was for the city to install and maintain the available technology for nutrient reduction," said Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis. "The coalition has continued to support the city's effort for nutrient reduction, and the city has committed to the coalition and the people of Towns County that the Hiawassee Sewer Plant will exceed all state and federal recommendations regarding treatment and discharge into Lake Chatuge."

Towns County donated \$150,000 to the project, all of which went toward assisting the funding of engineering, planning and permitting the improvements at the sewer plant. The City of Hiawassee spent approximately \$140,000 on the project, not including the money received from the county.

Along with the nutrient reduction system, the City of Hiawassee installed a state of the art ultraviolet disinfectant system, which was \$75,000 of the \$140,000. This particular system is to ensure that living bacteria is kept from being discharged into Lake Chatuge and disrupting the ecosystem.

A building was needed to house the new nutrient reduction system, which cost the city \$50,000. An extra \$15,000 was spent for electrical panels, chemical vats, pumps and medical equipment needed inside the building to ensure safety and functionality.

The system was designed to account for the possibility of expanding the plant's sewage processing capacity. As of right now, the sewer plant is operating under a 300 gallons per day flow permit. However, the new system will be able to support the proposed 500 gallons per day flow that is expected if the expansion occurs. The new equipment itself is expected to withstand 20 to 30 years of water treatment.



Fletcher Holliday of EMI is part of the team that has been leading the charge at the Hiawassee Sewer Plant, which has seen an upgrade in productivity this year. Photo/Lily Avery

The Hiawassee Wastewater Treatment Plant is considered an SBR facility, which means it processes using a sequential batch reactor, involving a combination of equal parts aeration and sedimentation to eventually remove the bacteria and particles from the water.

The new nutrient reduction equipment acts as a chemical supplement to the SBR action of the plant.

"Basically, it injects a chemical called polyaluminum chloride, PAC for short," said Fletcher Holliday, Assistant Vice President of Engineering Management, Inc. "Essentially, it's an aluminum coagulant that is injected into the wastewater stream as it goes through the batch reactor system and coagulates with the influent streams."

"It precipitates the phosphorous, which is what's causing the nutrient increase, and pulls it out of the wastewater. It's called precipitation.

"During the coagulation process, during the settling phase, it drops the phosphorous out into the lower levels of the basin where it can then

be wasted out by the sewer plant.

"It undergoes a processing where it can then be taken to the landfill, not deposited into Lake Chatuge."

Cedar Chem, a water treatment services and products company out of Cedartown, produced preliminary tests to determine the amount of phosphorous in the water after implementing the new system.

The results showed that the phosphorous reduction was consistently "less than 1" with the new chemical treatment, which Holliday equated to system success for the nutrient reduction system.

"This is one of the most significant steps forward for our community and the City of Hiawassee in the last 10 years," said City Manager Rick Stancil. "Basically, this is our commitment to lake quality and ensuring the health and safety of Lake Chatuge.

"It was done only through the cooperation of Towns County. This is something we didn't have to do, but are solely doing it out of care for the community."

# Towns County educators teach robotics in Texas

## Towns County Herald News Special

Three Towns County educators took a midsummer trip out to Austin, Texas, on an invitation from the University of Texas.

Lisa Ledford, Debi Williams and Jo Ray Van Vliet attended the WeTeach\_CS Summit, which ran from June 7 to June 9, and the three delivered presentations during their visit.

Ledford teaches in Towns County Elementary School's STEM Lab; Williams teaches computer science at the elementary school; and Van Vliet has volunteered for years at Towns County Schools, helping to build the system's math and science capabilities through robotics.

All expenses for the trip were paid for by the Texas WeTeach\_CS Summit, which was created specifically to expand the technical knowledge of both new and experienced computer science educators working in kindergarten through 12th grade.

The Summit featured speakers that were major players in the technology industry, such as Google, Oracle, AT&T, Code.org and IBM.

Highlighted during the Summit were students demonstrating technology they had created, and presentations of innovative technology use in the classroom.

For their presentations, Ledford, Williams and Van Vliet led two full sessions at the Summit.

One of their sessions focused on the Finch Robots in K-12 Computer Classes, with a goal of showing teachers how to make computer programming fun by using little robots to teach programming to students across the grade spectrum.

For two months last year, Carnegie Mellon University loaned Towns County Schools 30 Finch robots, with which Ledford, Williams and Van Vliet developed fun programming activities, on top of activities provided on the Finch website.

Towns County students loved programming and running the Finch robots, and they grasped the programming concepts quickly.

At the Summit, the Towns County teachers shared lesson plans and lessons learned, and gave attendees opportunities to program and run a Finch.

Activities included programming Finch to: dance to music, draw a painting, follow the light of a flashlight using onboard light sensors, and more.

The inexpensive robots are sturdy, easy-to-use, and en-



Debi Williams, Jo Ray Van Vliet and Lisa Ledford in Austin for the WeTeach\_CS Summit in June. The three women were invited by the University of Texas to give a presentation on robotics.

gaging with their bird shapes and glowing LED beaks. They can "speak," i.e. be programmed in, 12 computer programming languages.

During the last half of the session the attendees got hands-on experience programming and "driving" the Finch.

The three women also provided attendees with information about Carnegie Mellon's Finch Loan program for schools. To learn more about the Finch, search YouTube for "The Finch in Three Minutes."

In the second session, Ledford, Williams and Van Vliet introduced attendees to the world of e-textiles, a world that Towns County High School students explored last year.

Having seen videos about the uses of e-textiles/smart textiles in health care, fitness, the military, NASA and fashion, the robotics and physics students of Towns County High wanted to create their own interactive "stuffed monster" with e-textiles.

They did so using LEDs, conductive thread, a buzzer, a LilyPad microprocessor and Arduino for programming.

What are e-textiles? E-textiles are fabrics that enable digital components, including small computers and other electronics, to be embedded within them.

E-textiles can be for fashion or theater - like the flaming dress in the Hunger Games - but can also be used more seriously, as in medicine, sports, space and the military.

Examples of serious e-

textiles are fabrics with sensors, tiny processors and actuators that help regulate body temperature, monitor heart rates, and more. E-textiles are also used in protective clothing to guard against extreme environmental hazards like radiation.

The Towns presenters also made sure to attend plenty of other sessions, and brought back lots of new technology projects to engage students in learning more about STREAM - Science, Technology, Robotics, Engineering, Art and Mathematics.

Harmony High School students and their teacher gave one of the more impressive presentations during the Summit.

After working on many projects with their 3-D printer, they became involved in a program which allowed them to design and print a working robotic arm for a little girl in their school district. This project led to an outreach for more children.

The goal of these educators is to help Towns County Schools bring as much interest and opportunity for students as possible, within the fields of Science, Technology, Robotics, Engineering, Art and Mathematics, and to open doors by preparing them for 21st century jobs.

In most fields of employment, it will be necessary to problem solve and have a foundation in these areas to be a productive member of the workforce.

Towns County Schools is on the way to helping students move into the future.

# Unofficial Towns County Election Results

## General Runoff • July 26, 2016 • Votes By Precinct\*

Candidate	Young Harris	Tate City	Macedonia	Hiawassee	Absentee and Advance Voting included in Precinct Totals	TOTALS	Percentage
<b>State Representative, District 8 - REP</b>							
<b>Matt Gurtler</b>	97	13	118	162	27	309	726 61.84%
<b>Kent Woerner</b>	51	0	69	57	22	249	448 38.16%
<b>BOE 5</b>							
<b>N. Noblet</b>	90	4	93	119	32	278	616 47.60%
<b>K. Smith</b>	80	4	125	121	28	320	678 52.40%