

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Sunny	86	58
Fri: Storms	84	61
Sat: Storms	77	56
Sun: Clouds	78	54
Mon: Clouds	80	57
Tue: Clouds	79	58
Wed: Clouds	80	57



Upstream Elevation Predicted 08/15/12	
Lake Chatuge	1923.02
Lake Nottely	1771.53
Blue Ridge	1672.13

INDEX

2 Sections, 20 Pages

Arrests.....	2A
Chamber News.....	7A
Church/Obits.....	8A,9A
Classifieds.....	3B
Editorial.....	4A
Letters.....	4A
Legals.....	4B
Moonshine Cruiz-In.....	13A

Sports Page 10A

Bruce Rogers



Tax Commissioner See Page 2A

Early Voting

Early voting for the Aug. 21 runoff for the 9th Congressional District GOP nomination concludes Friday, Aug. 17.

Gainesville Republicans Doug Collins and Martha Zoller will go head-to-head on Aug. 21 in a runoff for the GOP nomination for the 9th District Congressional seat.

Collins took 41.81 percent of the district-wide vote on July 31, finishing with 45,894 votes. Zoller claimed 41.13 percent for a final total of 45,156 votes. Only 738 votes separated the two candidates.

The runoff was necessary because White County Republican Roger Fitzpatrick took 17.06 percent of the district-wide vote for a final tally of 18,728 votes.

In Hall County, the home of both Collins and Zoller, the latter defeated Collins by taking 47.07 percent or 11,963 votes. Collins collected 43.40 percent in his home county, or 11,030 votes. That's a 933-vote differential.

Collins said Zoller's key endorsements come from outside the 9th District, actually, he said they come from outside the state, referring to endorsements by Sarah Palin, and FOX News mainstream analysts.

Two weeks ago, she received the endorsement of former Republican Presidential candidate Rick Santorum. She also has endorsements from former Republican Presidential hopefuls Herman Cain and Newt Gingrich.

Collins is endorsed by former U.S. Sen. Zell Miller, also a former Georgia governor, and Georgia House Speaker David Ralston.

On Aug. 21, the polls are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Cookbooks

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) 896-2231.

Back to the books; students return to class

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
libby.tcherald@windstream.net

Thursday morning was a day of rejoicing for parents, a day of excitement for returning students, and a day of uncertainty for young students starting school for the very first time.

Towns County Schools reopened and students returned to the classroom.

"The first couple of days of this school year have gone smoother than any I can remember," said Towns County Schools Superintendent Melissa Williams. "Each school's administration, staff, and faculty were organized and going above and beyond to make sure every student was greeted and in the right spot at the right time.

Williams said that the school facilities are in excellent condition.

"Our maintenance and custodial staff are some of the best I have ever worked with and they made sure every nook



Towns County Elementary School students returned to the classroom on Thursday. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

and cranny was in top notch form," she said. "The school nutrition staff was back preparing delicious breakfast and lunch options for our students.

"Working within the stringent new federal guidelines has limited options for us, but we are determined to meet those requirements and keep

our students happy," she said.

Williams said the transportation department had buses rolling, on time and without any incidents reported.

"All in all a very successful first few days," she said. "Credit has to go to the quality

See Schools, page 12A

Towns divers recover Tallulah Falls drowning victim

By Libby Shook
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TALLULAH FALLS – A 17-year-old Habersham County youth drowned last week in Tallulah Falls Lake just inside Rabun County, Rabun authorities said.

The young man, Jordan Phimmachack, was recovered in 21 feet of water, 35 feet from shore, 21 minutes after the Towns County Water Rescue Recovery team members entered Tallulah Falls Lake, said Towns County Fire Chief Mitch Floyd.

Towns County's Water Rescue Recovery team was called to assist early on after a distress call went out. It was the first operational water recovery mission for the Towns County Fire and Rescue team, Chief Floyd said.

Two other teens, Hannah Jones, 18, and Kendall Countryman, 19, both of Habersham County, were swimming with

Phimmachack at the time of the accident, according to the Rabun County Sheriff's Office.

"Jordan Phimmachack began struggling in the water while they were swimming and had trouble staying above the surface," reported Captain Gerald Johnson, chief investigator for the Rabun County Sheriff's Office. "His friend Kendall Countryman attempted to assist Phimmachack to the water's edge, but unfortunately was unsuccessful."

According to Incident Commander Mark Moore, Towns County Fire and Rescue's Water Rescue and Recovery Team members were holding a training session, a follow up to last week's Inter-Agency Emergency Response Exercise, when they got a mutual aid call.

That call came in shortly after 5:15 p.m. from Rabun County Emergency Management.

See Drowning, page 12A

Businesses cash in on Moonshine Cruiz-In

By Libby Shook
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Towns County once again received a huge economic boost as the Fourth Annual Georgia Moonshine Cruiz-In returned to Hiwassee.

Area guests showered the community with their dollars during the three-day event.

Local restaurants reported a huge increase in business.

The Chophouse of Hiwassee, Brothers at Willow Ranch, and Michael's Chocolate Cafe reported that business was great and lots of folks showed up after the parade wearing their Cruiz-In T-shirts.

Restaurants throughout the community saw a boost in business over the three-day event.

The Chophouse actually reported a 30 percent increase in sales over last year.

With more than 600 cars registered for this event, local gas stations, grocery stores, and gift shops all benefited from the influx of visitors to the area.

Katie Polstra, general manager of the Ramada Inn Lodge on Lake Chatuge, said the car show was a great success this year.

"Even with the weather not always cooperating," Pol-



The Fourth Annual Mountain Moonshine Cruiz-In was as big a success as it has ever been. The three-day event attracted thousands to the local area and filled up local hotels. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

stra said. "The Ramada and Holiday Inn Express were both full for three nights during this event. We were full Thursday through Saturday."

The Ridges Resort & Marina also was full according to General Manager Chad Hooper.

"We love when the Cruiz-In is in town," Hooper said. "This, plus the Fly-in, made for a very successful few days."

The Haulin' Mash Bash Kickoff started at the Ridges Resort & Marina on Thursday evening with hundreds of folks turning out to enjoy the

festivities which included the opportunity to watch the Eighth Annual Georgia Fly-In from the shores of Lake Chatuge.

The visitors enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by The Oaks, and enjoy the unique sounds of local legend Tommy Townsend who drove into the Ridges in a two-mule drawn wagon to the delight and entertainment of his many fans.

Townsend, who now resides in Nashville, Tenn., is a Union County native who made it big in the Country

See Cruiz-In, page 12A

LOST negotiations continue in Towns

By Libby Shook
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Local Option Sales Tax negotiations are now ongoing between Towns County and its municipalities, the city of Hiwassee and the city of Young Harris.

Negotiations began early last week to determine the formula in which Local Option Sales Tax dollars will be distributed.

The formula used to determine what percentage of LOST revenue that each county and their cities receive is renegotiated every 10 years.

More LOST distributions formulas are based on population, with larger cities and counties receiving a bigger piece of the sales tax revenue pie.

State law also requires that LOST distributions consider other factors, such as public services provided in an area.

On hand to present information on the county's behalf was Douglas Eaves of Eaves Consulting Group, of Duluth.

Eaves had a Power Point presentation ready and presented his findings to the group of approximately 30 interested parties.

"We are pleased to have Towns County as a client and honored to assist in the negotiation process by providing an independent analysis of the criteria and measurements to be used during the negotiation process," said Eaves.

Towns County, Hiwassee, and Young Harris all had legal counsel present at the meeting.

The LOST is one of the most significant sources of



Douglas Eaves of Eaves Consulting Group, of Duluth, explains the method Local Option Sales Tax dollars are distributed.

revenue for municipal governments in Georgia, second only to the property tax. LOST revenues account for approximately 16 percent of municipal general fund revenues.

"Hiwassee will approach these negotiations with the understanding that a fair and equitable tax distribution is important for all our citizens," City Manager Rick Stencil said. "As we look forward to the next 10 years, we are well aware that growth and development is occurring either in the cities or as a result of the services provided by our cities such as water and sewer.

"The city of Hiwassee will have our analysis completed and available by the next meeting for presentation to move these negotiations forward," said Stencil.

See LOST, page 12A

HB 1162 threatens state's public schools

By Libby Shook
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House Bill 1162 has the Towns County Board of Education worried.

It should have every public school in the state on the edge of its seat.

A proposed constitutional amendment on the Nov. 6th General Election ballot would overturn a 2011 Georgia Supreme Court decision that ruled it unconstitutional for the state to create charter schools without local board approval.

Reacting to the proposed amendment, the Towns County Board of Education passed a resolution last month asking state officials to recommit to adequately funding K-12 education without taking money away for charter or private schools.

Towns County Schools Superintendent Melissa Williams said if the amendment passes that the school system would lose money to state-approved charter schools and simultaneously have no control over operation.

Williams said the problem has to do with control and allocation of funds, adding that she is for public education.

She said that when the state stipulates certain rules and reallocates local funding, that's not public education.

Ann Crow, Ninth District Georgia School Board Association representative, told the Towns board members that if the charter amendment passes in November, local communities will lose their voice.

"It will take local control



Ann Crow

away from the community," Crow said. "It will take money out of the local schools' pockets."

District 50 State Sen. John Wilkinson feels passionately about Georgia's Public Schools.

"I worked in public education for 32 years and my wife is currently a Kindergarten teacher in the Franklin County School System," said Sen. Wilkinson, who represents Towns in the State Senate. "My dad served as county school superintendent in Stephens County and as a principal in Habersham County during a career that spanned more than 30 years.

"I am proud of the fact that everyone in my family is a product of public schools," he said. "I am also cognizant of the fact that 93 percent of the students in Georgia attend public schools. I mention all of that to acknowledge the value and importance of public schools to the future of our state. I will never support any effort that I believe will be detrimental to the public schools."

In an economy where

See Amendment, page 12A

City Council approves alcohol ordinance

By Libby Shook
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YOUNG HARRIS – Restaurants in Young Harris can rejoice as the Young Harris City Council has approved alcohol by the drink within the City Limits.

The Council voted 4-2 in favor of allowing the pouring of beer and wine in restaurants within the city at its regular council meeting last week.

The home of Young Harris College, Cupid Falls, and the beautiful Young Harris Valley, made history as the City's proposed Alcohol Ordinance passed with Councilmen David Sellers, John Kelley, Matt Miller and Stuart Miller approving the measure by a vote of 4-2.

The city will now allow beer and wine by the drink only in local restaurants, Councilman Sellers said.

The last big historical change for this tiny mountain community came when Young Harris College announced that they had been approved to become a four-year institution.

The council heard the first reading of the alcohol

Ordinance in July. The second reading of the ordinance happened last Tuesday, Aug. 7th, at the monthly City Council meeting.

It went to a vote. Sellers made a motion to approve the measure, seconded by Matt Miller.

When the words "all in favor" were asked, Sellers, Kelley, Matt Miller and Stuart Miller raised their hands, according to Deputy City Clerk Lisa Weldon.

City Councilmen Donald Keys and Terry Ingram voted against the passage of the alcohol ordinance, Weldon said.

The motion passed by majority rule.

"The Council made a sound decision for the future of Young Harris," Mayor Andrea Gibby said.

The council will now provide licenses for qualified restaurants seeking to pour beer and wine in their establishments. For more details about the requirements of the alcohol ordinance, contact City Hall.

TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

