

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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Wednesday, September 10, 2014

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thu: T-Storms	84 66
Fri: T-Storms	83 64
Sat: T-Storms	79 58
Sun: T-Storms	76 56
Mon: Cloudy	76 54
Tue: Cloudy	75 53
Wed: Cloudy	74 54



Upstream Elevation Predicted 09/10/2014	
Lake Chatuge	1,921.51
Lake Nottely	1,769.74
Blue Ridge	1,680.22

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2 Sections, 18 Pages

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SPORTS

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Praise Together Christian Music Festival
Sat. Sept 13th
Meeks Park
See Page 1B



Food Distribution
Mt. Zion Church
Thurs. Sept. 18th
10-noon

Food Pantry
Tues. Sept 16th
2-5 PM



Softball
Tues 9/9 vs. Prince Ave
4:45 PM
Thurs 9/11 @ George
Walton 4:45 PM

Football
Fri 9/12 vs. Lakeview
7:30 PM

TCMS Football
Thurs. 9/11
@ Athens Christian
4:30 PM

TCMS Softball
Wed 9/10 vs. Lakeview
5PM

Wednesday at 4 p.m. deadline to vote online for EMC BOD

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

The online election of three board of directors to Blue Ridge Mountain EMC concludes Wednesday at 4 p.m.

In a note from General Manager Matthew Akins in the August electric bills, he tells members that one of the most important parts in the operation of the Cooperative is their participation in the election of Board members.

"In the past, you have had to attend the Annual Meeting to vote in person. To provide more member participation in the process of Director Elections you will now be allowed to vote online," Akins writes.

Online voting is available at www.brmemc.com until Sept. 10th at 4 p.m. Login information (identification number and verification code) is provided on the front side of each member's bill.

The annual meeting is on Saturday, Sept. 13 at Anderson Music Hall in Hiwassee. Registration begins at 8 a.m.

"Login information will



Julie Payne (I)



Brian Trout (I)



Lenny Parks (I)



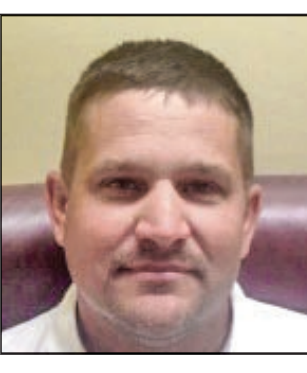
Steven Phillips



Chris Logan



Charles Jenkins



Mike Patton

appear only on the bill tied to your membership number," Akins writes. "If you have any questions, please call our office at (706) 379-3121."

Each member who is

not in a status of suspension, as provided in Section 2.01, of the EMC bylaws, shall be entitled to one vote and no more upon each matter submitted to a vote at any meeting of the

members, including votes cast by mail ballots and electronic transmission.

All ballots cast other than those cast in person at the meeting shall be in the office of

the EMC on or before the close of business the day before the member meeting.

There are three members nominated by the Cooperative's Board of Directors. Brian Trout of Clay County, NC, Julie Payne of Towns County, and Lenny Parks of Suches are seeking reelection to the Board of Directors.

There are four persons nominated by petition of the Membership. They are Chris

Logan of Brasstown, NC, Steven Phillips, of Towns County, Charles Jenkins of Blairsville, and Mike Patton of Blairsville.

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Isakson: 'ISIS needs to know we have a strategy'

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Young Harris - U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., met with area residents in a Town Hall meeting on the campus of Young Harris College last week.

Young Harris College President Cathy Cox introduced several special visitors in the audience. In attendance were Georgia State Sens. John Wilkinson, Steve Gooch and Frank Ginn, former Governor and U.S. Sen. Zell Miller and his wife, Shirley Miller, as well as Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris.

Cox spoke fondly of Sen. Isakson.

"He is a great friend of mine, and certainly a great friend of our college, and we are very glad to have (Sen. Isakson) back on our campus," said Cox.

Students of Young Harris College asked the first round of



U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson and former Georgia Governor and retired U.S. Sen. Zell Miller reminiscence at Young Harris College last week. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

questions, on subjects ranging from the national debt to the recent Ebola outbreak.

"I'm here to hear what's on your mind. I'll do the best I can to answer your questions, and if I can't get you an answer

today, I'll get you an answer when I go back to Washington," said Sen. Isakson.

The first question of the day dealt with the United

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Chatuge Regional upgrades moving right along

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County's own Chatuge Regional Hospital is getting a facelift, both medically and aesthetically.

Chatuge Regional, which was acquired by Union General Hospital, Inc., in 1999, received a Certificate of Need from the state of Georgia earlier in the year for a geriatric psychiatric unit.

"That's where people 55 and older with psychiatric or mental problems will be treated," said CEO of Union General Hospital Mike Gowder. "We took part of the hospital that was used for something else, and we gutted it and we're building a nice, state-of-the-art geriatric psychiatric unit. It'll be 10 beds. That will open sometime between now and next May."

There's more. "They have the state-of-the-art X-ray equipment, just like we do," said Gowder,



Mike Gowder

comparing Chatuge Regional to Union General. "We're right now putting in a new big bore MRI, which means it's got a bigger opening so people who are claustrophobic don't have as much trouble getting into that machine."

Residents of Towns County will have surely seen the construction going on at the hospital, which is part of Union General's plan to modernize Chatuge Regional.

"We're remodeling the entire exterior of the hospital,

putting in new windows, building a new lobby, a new main entrance, a big canopy where people can drive through and get out without getting rained on," said Gowder.

Union General Inc. aims to promote the most welcome environment possible in the design of Chatuge Regional, and is willing to spend the money to make sure that Towns County residents have a hospital of which they can be proud.

"Right now, it's got tile that goes halfway up the wall like the old Hill-Burton hospitals were back in the '50s and '60s," said Gowder. "So, we're taking that down and remodeling it so that the interior is going to look much like Union does now."

Not only will Chatuge Regional look more like Union General Hospital when all is said and done - the two hospitals will be more alike on a fundamental, best practices

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Sheriff's Office investigates scams

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Scams come in all shapes and sizes, and lately, Hiwassee has seen an influx of telephone scammers attempting to get money from senior citizens they hope will take their bait, hook, line and sinker.

Patricia Wright, 65, received two phone calls at her home several weeks ago in an attempt to collect on past due medical bills.

The only problem was she had no past due medical bills.

"He said his name was James, and he was collecting past due bills for Chatuge Regional Hospital," said Wright. "And if I didn't send him a check in a certain amount of time to pay it off, that they would start legal proceedings."



Sheriff Chris Clinton

Wright sensed something fishy about the man and hung up the phone. Five minutes later, she received a call from the same number. This time, however, it was a different person altogether, but the song and dance remained the same.

"It was a lady representing herself as Ms. Jones, and

she was collecting past due bills at Chatuge Regional Hospital," said Wright.

Ms. Jones went on to threaten legal proceedings as well, but Wright wasn't buying the story. She asked Ms. Jones her whereabouts, and Ms. Jones replied that she was currently at work, at Chatuge Regional. Wright hung up and drove to the hospital.

"There is no Ms. Jones at all anywhere working there," said Wright. "And I went to their billing department, and they have a policy that they do not hire debt collectors to collect old medical bills and hospital bills. They just don't do that, and they had never heard of this woman, never seen this woman."

Chatuge Regional's billing department pulled up

See Scams, Page 12A

New Taco Bell only second of its kind in Georgia

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiwassee's very own Taco Bell could open its doors to hungry residents as early as March.

Taco Bell Franchisee Bob Cox and developer Greg Blosser of Paragon Development gave new details on the restaurant at the Hiwassee City Council meeting Tuesday, Sept. 2.

The council approved the utility agreement and site plan for the Taco Bell in the same meeting.

"We're down in east Ellijay and Summerville and Dawsonville and places like that, but we've been trying to come to Hiwassee for a while now," said Cox. "So, finally, I think we're going to be here, and we're mighty proud to be here. We hope we can do a good job for you, and serve all of you and make you welcome every time you walk through the front door."

Blosser is hopeful that construction will begin in November and take no more than four months to complete, depending on the weather. Currently, Blosser is finishing up



Rick Stancil

work on another Taco Bell in Summerville, Georgia, which is the same building design that Hiwassee will be getting.

"Everybody down there is impressed," said Cox. "It's a new prototype building - it's the newest design that they've come out with, so you'll have the second one in Georgia."

The new design will feature brilliantly glowing purple lighting that will stand out against the nighttime, letting all nearby know there is a safe haven for growling stomachs in Taco Bell.

Housed within the 1,961-square-foot building will be enough seating for at least 40

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Hiwassee City Council adopts 2015 Millage rate

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Hiwassee City Council met Tuesday, Sept. 2, to discuss several items of business.

Mayor Barbara Mathis and the City Council conducted a final public hearing on the 2014 millage rate before adopting the proposed lower rate of 2.266 down from 2.270.

Based on the five-year tax digest, which saw a reassessment of property values that have increased over last year, property taxes levied this year will be slightly more than in 2013, despite the lower millage rate. The city expects to bring in \$167,875 in property taxes, which is \$344 more than last year.

Next, the mayor and council turned to the proposed mayor's park, which has been an item of consideration for many years by the city. The residents of Hiwassee voted for an appropriation of funds to the park in a SPLOST referendum back in 2011.

TVA Parcel 52 is a six-acre piece of lakefront land that the city is currently applying for to be used in the construction of the mayor's park. The parcel is just at the boundary of city limits across from Parker Oil. If the application goes through, the land will be annexed to the city.

City Engineer Don Baker presented the park plans in place of TVA representatives, who could not make the meeting. He explained the relationships between the city, TVA and Georgia DNR, with City Manager Rick Stancil putting



Mayor Barbara Mathis

a fine point on the matter.

"Trying to talk in terms of projections for the future, the immediate thing would be to get this piece of property from TVA, because six acres on the lake doesn't become available every day," said Stancil.

Assuming the city is granted the recreational easement from TVA, many steps remain before construction can begin, as the project is still in very early stages.

"We've got to work out the plans, who's going to fund what, and that is a process that will take place over the next one to two years," said Stancil. "Nothing's been cut in stone, nothing's been decided."

Several residents expressed concern over the size of the park. The land may be six acres in total, but after parking, the boat launch and boat ramp, the actual green space is estimated to be between 1 1/2 to 2

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