

Towns County Herald

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Publication Number 635540 Volume 83 Number 47

Wednesday, September 26, 2012

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Clouds	84	52
Fri: Clouds	82	54
Sat: Rain	76	53
Sun: Clouds	75	50
Mon: Rain	74	50
Tue: Clouds	75	48
Wed: Sunny	75	50



Upstream Elevation Predicted 09/26/12	
Lake Chatuge	1920.88
Lake Nottely	1767.38
Blue Ridge	1670.65

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Sports Page 10A

Gridiron

Towns County fell last week to the neighboring Rabun Gap Eagles 37-35 in a barn burner. The Indians are off this week.

The Indians didn't just lose a ball game on Friday, they lost sophomore sensation Cruz Shook for the season. The wideout suffered a lacerated spleen. **Story Page 10A**



TCMS

Playoff Bound

The Towns County Middle School Indians football team fell to 3-2 after a 30-12 loss to Lumpkin County. The Indians have earned a spot in the Top-4, earning a spot in the postseason. **Story Page 10A**



Cross Country

Towns County's Cross Country competed at Murphy last week against solid competition from around the area to prepare themselves for the Area and State Meets. **Story Page 10A**



McClure bags 8-pointer

Young Harris' Matthew McClure teams up with The Kentucky Antler Company to bring home an 8-point buck.

Read about Matthew's inspirational visit to the Bluegrass State on **Page 11A**.



Tips from the Range

Having trouble being consistent with your 3-wood? Towns County Herald Staff Writer Joe Collins discusses the fundamentals to a consistent swing, using fairway woods. For more details see **Tips from the Range on Page 10A**.

County gets clean bill of financial health

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
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A recent audit of Towns County's finances show the county is in strong fiscal condition.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall told those who attended the monthly commission meeting last week that the county annual Financial Audit was completed and timely filed with the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts as required by state law.

"Enabled by strong budget controls and conservative spending practices the Financial Audit shows a 120-day emergency and operating reserve fund," Kendall told the crowd. "This is to help meet future budgets and offset anticipated declines in revenues due to the worst recession-related four years of economic and revenue decline since the Great Depression more than 80 years ago."

"The recession is ongoing, however, the present budget saw a 16 percent decline in the tax digest," said Kendall. "The next digest to fund the 2013 budget will show another anticipated 8 percent to 10 percent decrease."

Kendall added that he will hold the line on the county's millage rate and use spending controls and operating reserves to meet any revenue shortfall for the 2013 budget which is still in the planning phase.

"Taxpayers who receive tax assessment reductions notices from the Board of Tax Assessors will receive a tax cut on the county portion of their tax bills," said Kendall.

The audit report contained no audit discrepancies and revealed the county to be in very strong financial health, Deputy Clerk Andrea Anderson said.

At the exit conference with staff, the auditor reported that Towns County is among the Top 5 financially strong counties in the state, being a debt-free county and having four months cash operating reserve of more than \$3.7 million



Commissioner Bill Kendall says the county's millage rate won't increase. A recent audit shows the county is in sound financial shape. In its general fund at the end of Fiscal Year 2011.

"In late August, the county received confirmation from the Department of Audits that the audit had been reviewed and accepted by the state with no corrections needed," said Kendall.

The audit report is available for inspection at the Commissioner's Office.

The 2012 Fiscal Budget called for a millage rate of 5.320 mills for maintenance and operation and .470 mills for Fire and Rescue operations.

The 2012 Fiscal Budget came in around \$9.38 million, virtually the same amount as the 2011 Fiscal Budget, county records show.

That budget included \$1.12 million for the Towns County Sheriff's Office, \$912,000 for Jail Operations, \$1 million plus for Towns County Ambulance Services, \$930,700 for the County Road Department, \$294,000 for the Recreation Department and \$370,000 for Fire Services, county records show.

Commissioner Kendall was able to realize some savings last year that allowed him to shave the county's millage rate. Those savings included negotiating a Point of Service agreement for county employees' health insurance.

Those rates were projected to climb 36 percent, but with the new deal, they dropped 15 percent.

Casting Crowns at The Hall

By Libby Shook
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Joyful Listening is pleased to announce that Casting Crowns and Kerrie Roberts will be performing at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds' Anderson Music Hall on Saturday, Oct. 6th.

Don't miss this rare opportunity to see this amazing band performing in your own backyard.

Atlanta-based Casting Crowns has been spreading 'the good news' to fans all over the country and internationally as well.

Over the past nine years,

Casting Crowns has consistently delivered music that points believers back to what truly matters, and they do so yet again on their most recent album *Come to the Well*.

Casting Crowns continues to deliver passionate, thought-provoking music as they strive to bring a message of hope and renewal of Christian values to believers and non-believers alike.

Even though Casting Crowns has become Christian music's most successful act, lead singer Mark Hall and his fellow band members have continued working at their home churches.

Hall has remained a

youth pastor at Eagles Landing Baptist Church in McDonough even with the band growing in global acclaim.

As an example of their commitment, the group will not perform on a Saturday night unless it is possible for them to return home for services at their home churches the following day said Joyful Listening Promoter Thomas Morgan.

Morgan shared a story about a lady from a small Baptist church in Morganton, whose church does not listen to Contemporary Christian music in her church, nor does she listen to it in the car, but she knows the message is the

See Crowns, page 14A

Eastwood movie gets high reviews



Folks have been lining up to see *Trouble with the Curve*, which was filmed in Georgia, including in Young Harris and Towns County.

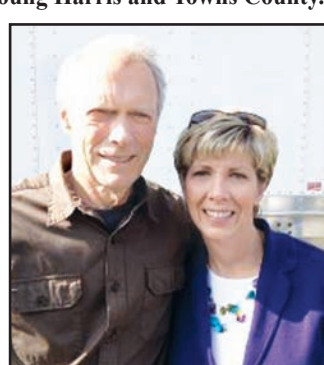
By Libby Shook
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Warner Brother's *Trouble with the Curve* made its debut at Fieldstone Cinemas 6 on Friday with a private viewing for the local 'extras' that were participants in the movie.

Among the approximately 200 attending the premier was former U.S. Senator and Georgia Governor Zell Miller and wife Shirley.

"Seeing the mountain beauty in color on the big screen is worth the price of admission," Zell Miller said. "Listening to members in the audience who had bit parts in the movie shout with excitement 'there I am; see me,' adds to the local flavor."

"Then there is 82-year-old Clint Eastwood playing the wise old baseball scout who knows much about baseball, but his wisdom does not extend to raising a daughter who he taught the game of baseball,



Clint Eastwood and Cathy Cox visit during the filming of *Trouble with the Curve* at Young Harris College.

but missed telling her about the game of life," Zell Miller said. "It all comes together to make it a very special movie for us locals especially. I loved it."

His wife Shirley Miller was very adamant that she was ready to go see the movie again.

"Beautiful mountain scenes, good baseball movie,

See Trouble, page 14A

Gardens project underway through Oct. 21st

By Libby Shook
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With the sun setting over the North Georgia Mountains, yet still sparkling through the trees of the Hamilton Gardens, Paul Hansen, garden curator, and his wife Catherine Hansen, finally relax after a hard day of work.

However, they do so with much satisfaction knowing that their vision for the Hamilton Gardens is beginning to unfold.

With the help of many generous donations, a few volunteers, and a lot of hard work, the first full year of this project has been very successful.

Beginning Sept. 22nd, the launch of the Autumnal Equinox, and continuing through the Fall Festival (Oct. 12th - Oct. 21st), the beautiful Hamilton Gardens is selling all remaining quart-size perennials for the incredibly affordable price of \$2 each.

Many of the one gallon perennials grown in their greenhouse will sell for a mere \$3 each

They will be carrying a selection of hard to find pansies and unique garden gifts in the Hamilton Garden Exhibit area within the Fairgrounds during the Fall Festival.

All proceeds from the sale of any plant or retail item will go directly back into the garden fund and help support garden projects.

In just a short time, much has been accomplished at the Gardens.

The original greenhouse has been fully restored to working order. The shade house is



Catherine and Paul Hansen dote over some of the perennials available for sale at Hamilton Gardens through Oct. 21st. The Gardens is selling remaining quart-size perennials for \$2 each.

brimming over with flats of fabulous perennials and wildflowers. Nearly 200 donated 15 gallon to 25 gallon plants surround the garden shop grounds waiting for their fall planting in the Hamilton Gardens.

Trails are all mulched, trees are trimmed, and countless rhododendron and azalea have been pruned back for the season.

"We have been blessed with a great foundation to build on now that the leaking roof has finally been replaced, but the interior of this house stills needs a lot of work," said Garden Shop Manager Catherine Hansen, metaphorically, as she likened the work done to resurrect the Hamilton Gardens to

the rebuilding of an old beloved home.

"As with any rebuild or remodel, budget and funding is everything," said Hansen.

The new retail Garden Shop served as a great way to finance many of the garden projects this past season.

The Hansens invite everyone out to see all that's been done this past summer at the Hamilton Gardens.

"Both Paul and I are very grateful for all the community support we have received this past year," said Catherine Hansen.

"The Lions Club and Commissioner Bill Kendall have truly made this all possible.

See Gardens, page 14A

Water Authority reviews 10-year plan for future

By Libby Shook
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The Towns County Water Authority met Monday night, Sept. 17th, to discuss projected 10-year growth and "to inform customers on what we do and where we are focused," said TCWA Chairman Chad Hooper.

Present at the meeting was Chris Poje, consulting engineer of Turnipseed Engineering, Atlanta.

Poje has been affiliated with TCWA for the past 10 years.

"Chris has been a real asset to the Water Authority," according to Hooper.

Poje told the Authority that "in regard to quality piping in relation to surrounding counties, you're on par."

Board Member Ralph Nichols, who has been with the TCWA almost since its inception, said, "We've been self-sufficient from the beginning. It used to be all volunteer.

"We've brought it from nothing to what it is now," Nichols said. "It was and still is all about the water."



Water Authority Chairman Chad Hooper, left, looks over the authority's 10-year plan.

The TCWA has been battling the same issues that businesses are facing everywhere in this struggling economy.

However, Hooper was very pleased to announce, "We've had only 3 disconnects

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