

Shakers...from Page 1A

"It takes the generous support of our great sponsors," Wolchko said. Sponsors are invited to help support the Youth Leadership Development Program. For an opportunity to be a sponsor, please call Sam Fullerton at (706) 994-4658. Or call Program Chairman Ash Todd at (706) 896-0907 for additional details. The Mountain Movers

and Shakers, a nonpartisan conservative group, meets every Friday at Mary's Southern Grill, meeting at 8 a.m. Everyone is invited for details, great conversation and breakfast. This year the Shakers have committed to Helping Students Succeed. Find out how you can get involved. For more details, please contact Sam Fullerton at (706) 994-4658.

Hi River...from Page 1A

"We only have three paid positions," Chief Floyd said. Riley noted that fire was a particularly big danger in and around Hi River, which is largely forested. "Look at all the woods," he said. "They burn. They cause houses to burn. It's not a matter of if we have one, it's a matter of when." However, he added that Towns County doesn't experience forest fires on a regular basis. "But if we have one, we know what to do," he said. Riley explained that Firewise is only one program under the larger Fire Adapted umbrella, which is an overall fire-management plan for the county. The Fire Adapted program seeks to secure entire counties in the event of larger-scale fires. "There are only eight in the whole United States," Riley said. "Fire Adapted" includes fuel mitigation, forest management, and ready-set-go evacuation plans. The Towns County Fire Department is trying to push the Fire Adapted program through by June, in which case there will be a plan in place for the county that includes everyone knowing exactly where to go and what to do to keep safe in the event of a wildfire. "Thus far, the other Fire Adapted programs have only reached faraway states such as Colorado, Arizona, Minnesota, New Mexico, and California," he said. "The goal is to spread the Fire Adapted program across the entire Southeast." Watkins, who is on the

Board of Directors for the Hi River Homeowners Association, has worked closely with Riley on getting aboard the Firewise program. He met with Riley to discuss the Firewise certification, and sees it as part of his responsibility to keep his community safe. "We keep the lights on and do the landscaping and upkeep the pavement and signs and everything," he said. To get certified, he said that the Homeowners Association had to meet certain requirements. "We went ahead and talked to Frank about what we had to do about getting our places cleaned up," he said. "We got all the dry wood up off the streets and put it in the chipper and chipped it up and got rid of it. It's really a plus for us." Watkins did note, however, that being "Firewise" does not make a community completely safe. "You're not safe from stupidity," he said. "And we're right in the area where the National Forest is. Everything around us in national forest. We're susceptible to a big fire." But being a Firewise community does include a certain degree of comfort. It includes being responsible for yourself and your neighbors. "We're aware of our neighbors," Watkins said. "We're aware of the fire hydrants, where they are. We try to keep our places cleaned up. It looks neat. But at the same time, fire's not going to come in there."

The Dog...from Page 1A

one in attendance looked nice, not to mention high class, as they sauntered around holding their wine glasses and enjoying tasty hors d'oeuvres and sweets. There was a live auction for gift certificates and other goodies, as well as a separate, silent auction. There were more than 150 items to bid on, each with a minimum starting bid. There were gift baskets, lottery ticket trees, grab bags, art and more covering tables and available to bid on. Though there were no animals in attendance, there were plenty of animal quilts and crafts, including a kitty sculpture tangled up in yarn, an adorable piece donated by the Union County Art Class. Ironically, the venue for the event was not animal friendly, evidenced by the large white sign nailed to a post reading, "NO PETS ALLOWED."

There were, however, memorial bricks available for deceased pets, or for adopted pets that are still very much alive. Rounding out the selection of items was a raffle for an Apple iPad and a Samsung Galaxy phone. This is the 13th year Union County has put on the dog, and it was clear everyone knew what they were doing. Numerous volunteers walked around, mingling with guests, ensuring everything was perfect and all in attendance seemed happy. The chit-chat and laughter assured them the guests were pleased. It was a great turnout and a great cause. And hopefully, some of the guests were encouraged to stop by the Mountain Shelter and rescue a new family member.

Red Ribbon...from Page 1A

Five men appeared at the agent's side and shoved him in a car. After an entire month of torture, Camarena's lifeless body was found. Legler said the men had kept a doctor on hand to keep Camarena alive, to ensure they could torture him longer. In honor of Camarena's memory and the battle he so strongly fought, friends and neighbors began to wear red ribbons. Before long, that red ribbon was adopted as the symbol against drug abuse, and Legler wants to bring the campaign to Towns County proclaiming, "my organization wants to fulfill Camarena's dream." The Young Marines program is an inspiring one, taking willing youth through a training period referred to

as "Boot Camp." While there, they learn about traditions, courtesies, terms, and of course life as a Marine. They also place a great deal of importance on the fight to live a drug-free lifestyle. It is a program offered to students ages 8 through completion of high school. Along with drug-free living, the program focuses on character building, leadership, and the mental, moral and physical development of the boys and girls who participate. Legler was an outstanding example for the group, as he embodied all of the aforementioned ideals. To support Red Ribbon week, one can wear a red ribbon, or just remember the motto: "The Best Me is Drug Free."

Quilt...from Page 1A

honor our troops and veterans touched by war, and to offer comfort to those heroes. A "Quilt of Valor" is not a charity or service quilt. It is a beautifully made, pieced and quilted wartime quilt. Since 2003, when Blue Star mom, Catherine Roberts, began the Quilts of Valor Foundation with a small group of her quilting friends in her sewing room in Seaford, Del., thousands of volunteers across the nation have taken up the cause and to date more than 90,000 quilts have been presented to U.S. combat troops and veterans, both here in the United States and overseas. Quilts of Valor are stitched with love, prayers and healing thoughts. This Foundation is not about politics, it's about people. Ruud entered the U.S. Army on July 20th, 1967. Following basic training, Ruud was trained as



The Family of Gerald Ruud, of Towns County, stand beside him following the ceremonial Quilt of Valor program at Coosa UMC.

a helicopter mechanic. Seven years later, Ruud became a maintenance inspector and a Platoon Sergeant. He concluded his military career as a First Sergeant,

12th Calvary Regiment, at Fort Polk, LA. Ruud's stateside assignments included Fort Lewis, WA, Fort Eustis, VA, Fort Bragg, NC, Fort Riley, Kan.,

and selected the finalists. The final round will be held Saturday, Oct. 5th at Anderson Music Hall, and audience participation will be a major deciding factor in choosing the winner. So, make sure to come out and support your favorite singer. The Talent Show Finals are scheduled for 7 p.m. and feature the Top 10 Male and Top 10 Female Vocalists. This time it costs \$10 to sit in the audience, so, don't forget the folding money.

Finals...from Page 1A

vested, but he made no attempt at candy coating the advice. All auditioning females walked up to the stage to draw a number from Blackwell's hat that would decide their order. Afterwards, the males followed suit. Five at a time, the singers lined up backstage, nervously rehearsing their songs and pacing. From original songs to Elvis, Whitney Houston, Beyonce, The Jackson 5, Patsy Cline and Johnny Cash, there were all kinds of singers pres-

ent. There were even a few good old boys that competed in cowboy hats, baseball caps, and of course, cowboy boots. Some singers played their own instruments, while a majority brought karaoke tracks. For some contestants, their nerves were further shattered when their karaoke CDs failed to play on the sound system, forcing them to sing a cappella. All of those who had to resort to singing without music recovered beautifully, all sound-

ing very confident. There was so much talent, the three judges had an incredibly hard task in picking the finalists. Scores were based on stage presence, talent and audience participation. The winning male and female will each be able to sing a couple songs before Haggard performs on Friday, Oct. 25th. Though difficult, the judges had to choose. At almost 10 p.m. that night, they had finally tallied all of the votes

Sheriff Clinton hires another new deputy

By Heather Poole
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The Towns County Sheriff's Office welcomed a new deputy sheriff recently. Jeremy Parker, a Towns County resident and Fire and Rescue worker, has been given the job, and will make a great addition to the team, Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton said. Parker has been employed as a Detention Officer with the Sheriff's Office for more than three years, and successfully graduated from Police Academy on Friday, Sept. 13th. Parker is a graduate of Towns County High School, and is well known in the community. He will be an addition to the growing list of locals working for the Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Clinton has said he is not only proud when he can hire locals, but also that a majority of the law enforcement in Towns County is local, including himself. "We have a duty to hire the most qualified applicants," Clinton said. He added that the most qualified usually wind up being local.



Sheriff Clinton swears in the newest Towns County sheriff Deputy Jeremy Parker during a recent ceremony at the Sheriff's Office.

As a deputy sheriff, Parker will take on many responsibilities including, but not limited to, affect an arrest, forcibly if necessary, perform searches, prepare investigative reports, conduct law enforcement investigations, protect crime and traffic accident scenes, conduct interviews, record information, measure and diagram crime and traffic accident scenes and process evidence. Since Parker has been employed with the Sheriff's Office for a few years now, he will no doubt take on the added responsibilities easily, already comfortable around the rest of his fellow employees. He declined to comment on what his future plans are, already being a faithful employee and explaining that the Sheriff's Office will handle press releases. Regardless, he is sure to have a bright future, as he has already done so much good for the community between Fire and Rescue and working as a Detention Officer. As a detention officer, Parker had a full plate. It is a detention officer's constitutional duty to maintain the county jail, book inmates upon arrival, fingerprint and

classify them by offending rank (minimum risk, medium risk, maximum risk) and work inside the jail with the inmates. "We run a very structured environment," Sheriff Clinton explained. "They are responsible for meal times, four scheduled head counts, random head counts, and checking on the inmates." They also make sure the prisoners are safe, and assist them in getting ready for court, should they be summoned. "Basically, these are the guys with the boots on the ground as far as that leg of the Sheriff's Office goes," Clinton said. "We are very proud of all of them." It has been an exciting few months for the Sheriff's Office, as they have made many changes including Parker's move from detention officer to deputy sheriff, three new detention officers, and even a new K-9. They have also received much positive recognition for all of their hard work in the community. With 2013 quickly coming to a close, it is surely a great feeling knowing that the Towns County Sheriff's Office has witnessed such a phenomenal year.

Towns welcome sign destroyed beyond repair

By Heather Poole
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Many counties take pride in their welcome signs, as they set the tone for the area visitors are about to enter, and also welcome back residents who have been away. Towns County is no exception, as its welcome sign has always been well kept. The Welcome Sign in Towns County has been beautiful since it was redesigned and put on display in December 2012. Joan Crothers, a long time Hiwassee Garden Club member, had helped to put up the first sign in 1995, but as the years went on, some of the community members wanted to improve it. So, the Mountain Movers and Shakers repaired the sign by priming, painting, and rebuilding the structure, even adding beautiful flowers



The Welcome Sign in 2012 when it was first reconstructed.

around the base of the sign, to further improve its appearance. There were 16 sponsors who helped pay for the sign, and in turn got their plaques on the welcome sign, bordering the main image. These sponsors included

the Marine Corps League, Towns County Historical Society, American Legion Post 23, and the Rotary Club, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds and more. Unfortunately, after an accident a couple weeks ago, the structure looked like it

had literally been blown to smithereens. Samuel Bell of Habersham County hit the sign Wednesday, Sept. 18th, traveling southbound on Highway 75 South. Bell stated he failed to see the stop sign at the intersection of Highway 76 East. He attempted to make the turn, but his Ford F150 was unable to do so. He ran off the road, hitting the shoulder of the roadway, causing his car to flip onto the sign, and land on it. Miraculously, Bell was unharmed, and his insurance will cover the cost of the repair. Reconstruction of the sign will begin immediately, and Brandy Todd of the Mountain Movers and Shakers has already assured the group she will donate flowers again to border the new sign. The community no doubt looks forward to the new structure.

Mountain Movers and Shakers get a look at the future

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The Towns County Mountain Movers and Shakers guest speaker Dan Parker, gave the group a look at future technology that he uses every day. A huge turnout showed up at Mary's Southern Grill in Young Harris last Friday to see Parker demonstrate his drone piloting skills. The helicopter-like ma-

chine has the ability to reach altitudes of about half a mile, sometimes more, depending on the model, and take pictures every few seconds. Though fear of drones has become popular in the political communities, they are typically being used for real-estate, tourism and even law enforcement. Most recently, a drone equipped with infra red radar was used in Canada to find a missing person. Thanks to the

ability for the drone to see what the human eye could not, the person was found and rescued. This was an amazing feat, as the law enforcement working the case had been looking for the missing person for days with no success. Though Parker's use of his drone is not as dramatic as crime solving, he gets just as much satisfaction out of it as Canadian law enforcement no doubt experienced.

Parker got into the drone business because he loved photography and technology. Though that technology is constantly improving, Parker joked that operating the crafts can be difficult, even admitting to losing a drone after it went rogue recently. Thanks to the photos it took throughout its spontaneous adventure, the man who owned the land the drone wound up on was able to locate Parker and return his craft. He joked saying, "it started heading East, towards China where it was made." Because Parker had put so much money into the craft, when it was returned to him, he obviously wanted to thank the man who returned it. Rather than accepting any sort of monetary thank you, the man asked Parker to take pictures of a huge racing event he puts on at his property every year. Parker was happy to

oblige. The pictures the drone is capable of taking has helped sell numerous houses, as it can record its flight toward and around the house, helping the potential buyer to feel as if they are actually taking a tour of the property, simply by watching the video. While at the Movers and Shakers meeting, Parker took pictures of Mary's that the restaurant can use for advertisement purposes.