

Wrestling...from Page 1

Historically, KOM has taken place in the Towns County Middle School gym, but this 10th anniversary tournament will take place for the first time ever in the state-of-the-art Towns County Recreation and Conference Center, and will span two days, with wrestling starting around 5:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 4.

The tournament is true double elimination, so every team wrestles until they have lost twice. Friday night wrestling is varsity only and will run for four rounds on six mats, and wrestling will pick back up on Saturday, Dec. 5, at 9 a.m., and will go until a team is declared King of the Mountain, probably around 5:30 or 6 p.m.

JV teams will also wrestle on Saturday, so the JV squads will have three mats and the varsity will have three mats.

"We're really appreciative of (Towns County Sole Commissioner) Mr. Bill Kendall and the rec department people allowing us to have it out there," said Coach Stowers. "Space has been our biggest issue, because we wrestle in the middle school gym, and we can only get three mats in there, and there are only a certain number of fans you can get in there comfortably."

"And so we're hoping that this alleviates those two issues, because we're going to be on six mats on Friday and Saturday. If this alleviates some of those issues, then we're going to try to go to a full 32 teams next year for the varsity tournament, or get as close as we can to 32, anyway."

Not only does Varsity KOM shine a spotlight on Towns County as a regional wrestling powerhouse, the

tournament allows for Towns County residents to get in on the action of supporting the students of the county in their endeavors to be successful student athletes.

And none of it could happen without the continuing support of many already.

"It takes a lot of work, it really does," said Coach Stowers on tournament organization. "Just like everything, the finished product is what people are going to see. The behind-the-scenes work that nobody knows about is what takes all the time, and really, we've had parents that have been working on this for the last three months. Since school started we've been in the planning stages, and even last spring, when we decided we were going to be able to move it out to the rec facility, we started planning with some of the guys at the rec facility and stuff like that about things that we needed to do and make happen."

"It's been a long time in the works, and this Friday and Saturday really is the culmination of probably thousands of hours of work and preparation by lots of different people. I can't thank my wrestling parents enough for all the stuff that they sacrificed to help out. My wife and my family have sacrificed time with me to try to make this event happen."

Above all, Coach Stowers hopes that, for the sake of the kids involved, the community rallies and comes together in full support of the King of the Mountain tournament this year and in years to come.

"I hope the community kind of takes some ownership of it, and really embraces the fact that, aside from the state

wrestling tournament, this is the second biggest wrestling tournament in the state of Georgia every year," said Coach Stowers. "That's something to be really proud of, for a town our size to be able to put on an event like that, and for it to be a positive event."

"A lot of times we go to tournaments and they're not positive experiences for people, but I've never had a complaint from a wrestler or a coach or a parent about how our community treated them or anything like that. Everything has been super positive. We look for that to continue, and hope that as the tournament continues to grow, people will come in and recognize the kind of effort that goes into it and be appreciative of that."

Tickets for the two-day event can be purchased for \$15, which will cover the cost of both days of the tournament, or folks can buy a one-day ticket for \$10, and money raised will go toward covering the cost of equipment as well as travel expenses, because the team travels so much.

"We hope that it has an impact in our community, as well as being a good thing for our kids," said Coach Stowers. "Our kids, we travel all over the state to wrestle matches and tournaments all over the place, and this is one of the weekends that we can stay at home and just show our hometown fans and our schoolkids the kind of work that our kids put in, and that we're competitive with every classification of school that we wrestle."

"There will be every classification in Georgia high school represented this weekend. We have Class A teams, we have Class AAAAA teams and everywhere in between. We

have a Class AAA team out of Florida coming, and we have a Class AAAAA team out of Tennessee coming. We've got different classifications in North Carolina coming. This is really a chance for us to show off the fact that kids from a little bitty town in North Georgia can be competitive with anybody, and you don't have to go to a Class AAAAA school to be a good wrestler."

Towns County wrestling has enjoyed much success leading up to the Varsity KOM tournament.

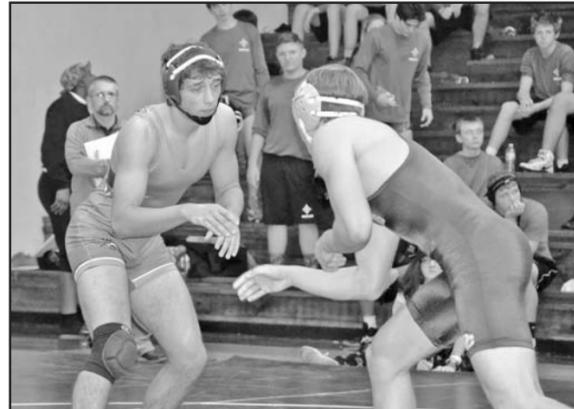
The Indians went 2-1 and finished second in the Melee in the Mountains tournament at home on Friday, Nov. 20.

And on Saturday, Nov. 21, Towns placed third in the Union County Invitational, with individual placers as follows:

Angel moss finished fourth at 106 pounds; Kaine Hoffman finished first at 120 pounds; Thomas Mitchell finished first at 126 pounds; Dylan Roberts finished first at 160 pounds; Daulton Rogers finished first at 170 pounds; Russell Cox finished first at 182 pounds; and Harold Cox finished third at 195 pounds.

Looking ahead to this weekend, Coach Stowers would like to invite everyone in the community to join him and his Indians in welcoming the more than two dozen teams to Towns County.

"We've got a lot of people up here who have never seen a wrestling match, and this is a great chance to watch not only our kids, but kids from all over the Southeast compete at a great venue that's going to have plenty of good food and lots of good places to watch from," said Coach Stowers. "It's just going to be a good event, and I hope everybody comes out to support them."



Clinton...from Page 1

but we usually get started around Thanksgiving," Sheriff Clinton said. "Our Sheriff's Christmas Parade (scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 5th) is usually the big kickoff event, but some people are already donating."

Last year, the fund provided gifts to more than 215 local children, but according to Sheriff Clinton, he's seen the fund benefit as many as 280 children during his tenure as Sheriff.

"We serve the children of Towns County, that otherwise wouldn't get Christmas gifts due to financial hardships," Sheriff Clinton said. "Each year the community steps up and makes donations of toys, or the money to buy toys."

Those interested in donating to the cause can do so at several local businesses, the Towns County Courthouse, or at the Towns County jail.

"This is a really great program that I'm truly blessed to be a part of," Sheriff Clinton said. "It's definitely one of the greatest things that I get to do as Sheriff. The community has been tremendous. There has never been a case where we've known about a child and not been able to serve them."

When the sheriff's office receives the name of an underprivileged family, they will reach out to that family to obtain a wish list from the child/children and try to find at least one item from that list. The parents can then pick up the items, or have them discreetly brought to the home, if need be.

"The family can then do Christmas however they want," Sheriff Clinton said. "If they want the gifts to come from Santa, or to come from mom and dad, that will be completely up to them."

According to Sheriff Clinton, one of the questions that he's frequently asked is: "Is this for Towns County children?"

"And my answer is, 'yes it is,'" Clinton said.

Although there is no official deadline to make a donation or nominate a family in need, the TCSO prefers to have every family taken care of before Dec. 23. If you wish to contribute financially by check, make the check out to: "Sheriff's Empty Stocking Fund." If donating toys, they should be new and unwrapped.

Voting...from Page 1

come to Atlanta and help fix the problem, but redrawing the precinct lines created more problems than it solved.

"When it was done, it was done in such a fashion that it was not conducive to the way we have voted historically for many, many years, and it was not conducive to the way people live as far as census data and as far as 911 data. So we knew there was an issue, but of course we were overridden by that," said Oliva.

The issue afterward was that the public was not notified of the changes.

"You have 60 days to make changes. You have 30 days to notify the public of any

changes that are made as far as voting precincts. That did not occur, and the newer board members were not aware of it. Notification cards were not issued. By law, when they make the changes at the state level, they're required to send out the cards," said Oliva.

The elections board has spent the past year attempting to correct the maps, and this week, Faith Bryan, who is information services director of the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, came up to Towns County to help.

"Thanks to Faith, we have it fixed and are going to get our card notifications out, which should have been done

years ago. When she came yesterday, it was put back perfectly, exactly the way we had voted in the past. So we're going to get that down and get all this done according to law and our timeframes before our first election in 2016," said Oliva.

"There were some issues with this map that some of your citizens were voting away from their original polling place," explained Bryan.

Bryan worked with Towns County 911 Mapping Director Marty Roberts to re-order the precinct maps according to the way they were before the data loss.

"Those individuals that were to the west of Highway 76 were taken out of your

Hiawassee voting district and put into the Young Harris voting district. Then, those individuals that were along Fodder Creek Road were taken out of the Hiawassee voting district and put back into the Macedonia voting district. The Tate City voting district remains unchanged," explained Bryan.

"So there were three voting districts that were changed and amended, and that would be your Macedonia, your Hiawassee, and your Young Harris voting districts," she added.

At the meeting the Towns County Board of Elections, each signed the new map, signifying that they had adopted it and that it was now the official voting precincts map.

Hiawassee...from Page 1

getting it started. And from that, the Hiawassee Ambassadors program has worked very faithfully out there. They have all worked really faithfully out there for the last week or so," said Mayor Mathis.

Last year, the City of Hiawassee held a Christmas tree lighting, but it is hoping to top previous efforts with a better ceremony this year.

"We just didn't have any time to get the last one pulled together or anything, and it turned out okay, and we just wanted to have one this year. I think it's going to be a pretty lighting and all of that," said Mayor Mathis.

The ceremony will take place immediately following the conclusion of the Towns County Sheriff's Christmas Parade, which should be sometime around 6:30 p.m.

This year, the tree lighting is named "Christmas in the Mountains Unity Christmas Celebration."

Connie Fisher, head of the Hiawassee Ambassadors program, said that attendees can expect a warm and festive celebration.

"We will have free hot chocolate and free entertainment," said Fisher. "Enotah CASA, the Court-appointed advocates for foster children, will have some luminaries dedicated to people, and there will be a lighting of the luminaries all around the square, as well as two local personalities, Alan Kendall from McConnell Baptist Church, and Megan Corbin, who is the latest Towns County Teen Idol. They'll be singing and entertaining us. Of course Santa and Mrs. Claus

will show up, and of course, Crystal Fairless, who is one of the Towns County Chamber of Commerce workers, will be the mistress of ceremonies.

"The mayor will kick off the program with a welcome, and Rev. Steven Taylor from McConnell Memorial will say a prayer, and then probably Alan will sing, and then a tree lighting, and then luminaries preceded by Megan Corbin. Then Santa will ramp up the evening. We're planning a program that won't last longer than an hour so the children will get to see Santa before they get tired," she said.

Soon afterward, the children will visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

"We have packages of candy to give to every child who comes to visit Santa and Mrs. Claus," said Fisher.

She is hoping this year's tree lighting will far surpass last year's.

"The Hiawassee Ambassadors program went out and solicited funds, and thanks to the generosity of our citizens and the businesses in our community we've had donations, and we've purchased new ornaments. We have completely decorated the gazebo. We will have three dogwood trees as you enter the Hiawassee Square lit up as well, and we've put lights around the City of Hiawassee sign," said Fisher.

"Thanks to the City of Hiawassee and the mayor as well as members of the community. We've had tremendous support. And we could not have gotten the lights on the trees without those folks," she said.

Meals...from Page 1

they just get frozen meals, because it's too far a reach at the center to provide a hot meal for them, so we'll provide them with frozen meals for the week. So there are many types of action we take to make sure that people needing meals get provided with those meals."

Typically, donations are pooled into a general fund, but Parker says that the gift certificates will allow someone to donate meals to a specific person for Christmas, so from Thanksgiving until New Years Day, all meals delivered in this way to senior citizens in need will include a special certificate

wishing Happy Holidays from the gift giver.

"We can do a little gift certificate if there's someone they want to sponsor particularly. Some people want to be anonymous. A lot of them are from churches. If someone, say, knows their neighbor gets meals from Meals on Wheels and wants to contribute to the fund, then I've got the gift certificate that can say this meal is provided to you courtesy of your neighbor," explained Parker.

Although the gift certificate program is new in Hiawassee, Parker said it has been practiced for some time in surrounding areas.

"I know that Blairsville does it on an annual basis around the Christmas holidays, because a lot of people are also looking for ways to write off the donations, and we are a nonprofit, so I can give a receipt for that for them to use in their taxes. So a lot of people are looking at the year's end to make donations for that purpose," said Parker.

The Meals on Wheels program benefits mostly the elderly and the homebound. Many recipients have nobody to look after them and are unable to look after themselves.

"We've got amputees, we've got disabled, we've

got people who basically don't drive anymore and there's not a family member around, so we provide them with a hot meal. We help with the providing of lunch so they get their three meals a day. There's a couple out there that I firmly believe that this may be the only meal they get each day, as sad as that is," said Parker.

People interested in donating can help to provide meals for an amount of time ranging from one day to a full year's worth of meals. The cost of one meal is \$3.68, one week is \$18.40, one month is \$80.96, and one year is \$971.52. All gifts are tax deductible.

Young Harris...from Page 1

while the Enotah Garden Club of Young Harris provides other refreshments, like cookies and hot drinks.

"Andrea speaks, and then everybody's going to sing a song, and then Santa will appear. And all the kids get so excited," said Wade.

According to Mayor Gibby, Young Harris City has been lighting the Christmas tree since 1970. She personally began participating as a young girl soon afterward.

"It's an annual tradition that's something going on 40-something years. The Enotah Garden Club actually helps put it all on. It's a lovely tradition,"

she said.

Mayor Gibby expects a large number of residents to show up for the lighting and Santa Claus, as is the cause every year, even for a city as small as Young Harris.

"I don't know that we've ever taken a headcount, but there's always a lot. It is a good amount," she said.

For the ceremony, Young Harris will borrow the talents of Towns County Schools' chorus and band for a variety of holiday-themed songs.

"The high school band generally plays. The elementary school usually

sings," said Mayor Gibby. She said that the vocals were usually provided courtesy of Towns County Kindergartners and first graders.

"If it's not raining we all meet outside around the tree and the gazebo, and there's singing and playing, and then at one point we will light the tree. I let the kids count down," she said.

After the tree is lit in Mayor's Park, everyone in attendance goes inside to the Community Room of City Hall to visit with each other and have treats.

"The Enotah Garden Club always has food prepared

in the community room. Then we bring in Santa Claus. Then the families can go in and have treats and the kids can have their pictures taken with Santa. It's just a good community night," said Mayor Gibby.

"I always think the best thing about it is that it brings the community together. There's so many people here and some people know it and some don't, but it's just a really, really sweet night that people can get together and talk, and talk to old friends and meet new friends and gather. They gather together. It's a chaotic world, but we have a night that's still, and it's about community," said Gibby.

Parade...from Page 1

Christmas presents, and part of the tradition each year to kind of signal our big kickoff of the drive is we have the Sheriff's Christmas Parade," said Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton.

The parade will, as always, contain a number of creative floats provided by local churches and businesses.

"We actually have people judge the floats, and we give out awards for the floats. The people who participate in the parade, there's no fee, but they are asked to bring an unwrapped gift for a boy or a girl," said Sheriff Clinton.

through, and we do give out candy to the kids. I don't think it'd be much of a Christmas parade if we didn't do that. That's part of being a kid and watching the parade," he said.

Each year, the parade has a theme. This year, the theme is "Christmas in the Mountains."

"And each year the theme kind of goes along with some of the ideas for the parade, and of course people don't have to follow that theme, but it's just something that we traditionally do. There's always some remarkable floats. We had one last year that actually had a fireplace, and they were sitting around it. I think they ended up getting an award for that last year," said Sheriff Clinton.

As exciting a spectacle

as the parade may be, Sheriff Clinton urged that people not forget the meaning behind it.

"For me, probably the neatest thing about the whole thing is just the community getting involved in this project of helping out kids, and otherwise these kids wouldn't get anything for Christmas," said Sheriff Clinton. "That's just what really touches my heart every year, it's just something I'm very honored to be a part of."

The Sheriff's Empty Stocking Fund usually serves a high number of children who would not otherwise get anything for Christmas.

"It's tremendous. We typically serve over 200 children every year in Towns County, and last year - there was some last minute stuff that happened on Christmas Eve - but last year the count was right at 220 kids that

we had helped. One year, we had even more than that. Typically that's about normal, somewhere around 200-plus children that we end up serving each year," said Sheriff Clinton.

"So far we've not had a situation that we've known about that we weren't able to serve that child or that family. And we hope to be able to continue that tradition of being able to make sure that we do that. It'd be heartbreaking to me to have a situation where you knew about a child and didn't have the money to serve them or the toys to serve them, but we have not had that happen," he said.

The parade will start out from the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds at 5:30 p.m. this Saturday, and will end up at McConnell Memorial Baptist Church and Park Sterling Bank near Downtown Hiawassee.

Music...from Page 1

unlike today's music where it's evolved into pop, this is true Country Music. This is the last of it. Well, hopefully not the last of it. I hope it gets better," he said, adding that he considered Diffie to be in the same category as Chesnutt.

Appleby spoke for many other fans when he said that he was able to relate lyrically to Chesnutt and Diffie's music.

"I think it's the things they sing about that's the difference. Honestly, some of the songs about pickup trucks and broken hearts and drinking beer. That's a lot of the things that people relate back to old Country Music to where this new country has evolved into other things. I do think that as of right now, this is the last of the Country Music," he said.

Asked what his favorite song was, he replied instantly, "Too Cold at Home."

"That's about it, it's too hot to fish and too cold at home. It's about being hot everywhere but there's no love at home. No love being at home. I also like some of his other ones, like 'Almost Goodbye' and 'I Just

Wanted You to Know.' I'm more of a love song type guy. That's just me. I like the heartbreak," he said.

If Appleby counted himself a huge fan, he wasn't alone. Amber Bohrer, 30, and her uncle, Robert Burns, 37, drove from Tennessee and Florida, respectively, to see the show.

"I grew up listening to Mark Chesnutt. Just real country sound. I want something I can relate to. Not half-naked and sitting on a tailgate. If you think about it, every new country song today talks about a half-naked girl sitting on a tailgate. I mean, I'm the biggest Luke Bryant fan around, but if you give me Mark Chesnutt, Sammy Kershaw, and Alan Jackson, I'm going to take them over Luke," said Bohrer.

Burns expressed that Diffie and Chesnutt were among the last few artists making "real" Country Music.

"As opposed to Crossover Country, where you're mixing pop rock and Country Music together. I'm not with all that. When you think of Country Music, you don't think of Elton John," he said.