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Residents of Towns County. "The purpose of the LOST is to use the revenue from the tax bill to roll back citizens' property taxes, which is shown on their property tax bill each year," Kendall said. "As Commissioner, I am elected to equally represent all citizens of the county, both inside and outside the city limits. "It continues to be my commitment and that of the County Negotiating Committee to provide a fair and equitable property tax roll back for all taxpaying citizens whether they live inside the city or out in the unincorporated areas of Towns County. "We will know the outcome when the judge makes this decision," he said. "It is regrettable that negotiations broke down, but I made the fairest offer I could to try and keep everybody's best interests protected and at heart."

County Attorney Rob Kiker said when this goes to trial, the county will bear the brunt of the expenses. "We offered the additional 2 percent to avoid the cost, stress, and expense of litigation," Kiker said. "It's not Mr. Kendall against the municipalities, they are all Towns County citizens and will all benefit from LOST regardless of how the percentages come out. "All citizens will benefit from the LOST and city residents will come out ahead," said Kiker. "The only citizens who can be hurt by these negotiations are the ones in the unincorporated area. "The municipalities will get a credit against their county tax and their city tax," said Kiker. At press time, a court date had not been scheduled for the litigation between the cities and county.

Crash...continued from page 1A

patrol officials said. After more than a week, Wheeler's remains were positively identified. The Towns County Herald has learned that Wheeler, was the medical director of the emergency room at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital in North Carolina. Towns County Emergency Services Director and Coroner Rickey Mathis said Towns County Fire and Rescue extricated the victim from the burned vehicle. Wheeler was

pronounced dead at the scene. Towns County Assistant Fire Chief Harold Copeland said agencies involved in the recovery included Towns County 911, Towns County Fire and Rescue, Towns County Sheriff's Office, Rabun County 911, Rabun County Fire and Rescue, Rabun County EMS, Rabun County Sheriff's Office, and the Georgia State Patrol, Toccoa and Blue Ridge posts. "Our heartfelt condolences go out Mr. Wheeler's family," Copeland said.

Toy Drive...continued from page 1A

cal merchants. They included: a beautiful acrylic on canvas donated by David Cohen, handcrafted jewelry donated by Vicki Wagoner, photo art by Ron Wallace, Quichua Indian painting from Ecuador donated by Gary Meier, framed print donated by Linda Rubenstein, and gifts from Always Christmas, and Tanning products from Hair Gallery & Day Spa. The raffle was for a Romance Package valued at more than \$200 and included a one night stay for two at the Ramada Lodge on Lake Chatuge, a \$20 gift certificate for Michaelee's Chocolate Caffe, a bottle of Habersham Scarlett wine from VanKeith's Insurance Co., and a manicure from Kim's Corner.

fund from their profit. Guests enjoyed delicious and extravagant food, beverages, and live entertainment provided by Janice Manette, Don Manette, Matthew Griffin, and Mark Wolchko. They performed popular Christmas music as well as Classic Rock music. "We like to partner with non-profit organizations like this who are trying to raise money for a good cause in our community. We have found that our location is a perfect setting to hold fundraisers. We have an Art Gallery to enjoy and plenty of room for live music, lots of people, and items for a silent auction. Also, we can help to raise a good amount of the donations with our gold business," said Bob Levy.

Guests also had the opportunity to bring in their unwanted gold and silver for appraisal and possible purchase. This gave folks of Towns and surrounding counties the chance to donate to the fundraiser, without any money out of pocket. Instead, guests could walk away with cash in hand while contributing to the TCSO's Empty Stocking Fund. Folks who opted to sell their gold and silver were paid for their items on the spot and the Gold Academy made the donation to the Empty Stocking

The sponsors for the Empty Stocking Fundraiser included VanKeith Insurance, the Gold Academy, Family Connection, and the Towns County Chamber of Commerce. If you were unable to attend Sunday's fundraiser but would still like to contribute to the TCSO's Empty Stocking Fund, it's not too late. If you are interested in adopting a child for Christmas or donating toys or cash, please contact Heather Whitaker at (706) 896-4444 or Vicki Ellis at (706) 896-8343.

Blue Ridge Community Theater thanks area community for support

As we wrap up the year, Blue Ridge Community Theater would like to thank the community for its support. With the support of the people of Gilmer, Fannin, and Union Counties we are able to continue our mission to enrich the culture of North Georgia with our productions. We are now looking forward to our 2013 season and are excited for the productions that have been picked. Along with our new season, we have some exciting events coming up to kick off January. On January 7th and 8th we will be having auditions for our first 2013 Main Stage production, *Rumors*, by Neil Simon. The comedy is about upper class gossip and a dinner party that goes terribly wrong was described by the New York Times as having "... nothing on its mind except making the audience laugh."

New for our 2013 season, BRCT will be hosting an Actor's Expo on January 12th at 3 p.m. The event is an open invitation to all actors regardless of experience. The Expo will feature information about the roles available for all the plays this season in an interactive environment. You will be able to speak one-on-one with each individual director. We welcome all actors and volunteers who are interested in joining the theater to come out and learn more. We are also currently selling season tickets for 2013. Information on smaller ticket packages can be found at our box office: Blue Ridge Community Theater, 2591 East First Street, Blue Ridge, GA (across from Swan Drive-In), 706-632-9223. You can also visit our website at www.BlueRidgeCommunityTheater.com.

Mountain Seniors give thanks

By Shirley Stallings On November 8, the Mountain Seniors celebrated a wonderful Thanksgiving with old and new attendees. With an array of homemade dishes and good fun the day was one of laughs, giving thanks and getting to know some very special friends and neighbors. This was the last meeting in the old Senior Center, and as we all left, there was a gentle goodbye to the old Center that has been filled with happy memories for us all. Future meetings will be held at the new Senior Center.

bringing a covered dish. One of the endearing projects, in which we are participating, is our program of "Books for Veterans." Bring a "gently used" novel, that you have enjoyed, and place it with those collected to be delivered to the Veteran's Rehabilitation Center in Atlanta and a covered dish for lunch. And, don't forget to bring your happy face and good spirits to share with everyone attending. Should you have questions or desire more information concerning the Mountain Seniors Group contact Shirley Stallings at 706-896-7943 or Ina Kozesky at 706-896-2995. Bring your smiles and enthusiasm and let's get to know each other to share ways to contribute to the betterment of our Mountain community.

Other than dinner meetings, our regular meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month at 1 p.m.

Tree Lighting...continued from page 1A

The Towns County Indian Raider band, under the direction of Frank McKinney, performed Christmas music including their own special version of *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*. To the crowds delight, the Towns County Kindergarten class, under the direction of Towns County Elementary School music instructor, Cathy Seis, performed *I Want to Be an Elf*, *I Saw Three Ships*, and *Merry Christmas Time*.



It was obvious that these very talented children had put a lot of work and preparation into this stellar performance. Folks were applauding and snapping pictures. It was a very special part of the evening. After their performance, the children helped with the countdown for the lighting of the Great Tree.

Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby asks the crowd to give it up for the Towns County youngsters who performed at the Annual Young Harris Tree Lighting at Mayor's Park. Photo/Libby Shook

It was spectacular and all applauded as the tree lit up the night with all the magic that brings that Christmas feel to the air. Marlene Cannon was

really enjoying watching the children sing, as her daughter Lilly was one of the little stars. "I absolutely love this. It's great for the kids and

the community as well," said Cannon. Mayor Andrea Gibby shared that sentiment as she spoke very humbly, "This is all about community."

Love Light...continued from page 1A

Christ." To everyone's excitement and much awaited anticipation, came the lighting of the Love Light Tree with Dr. Robert Stalhokuppe doing the honors. The lights came on and the guests applauded. This beautiful tree is to honor and memorialize county residents.

Hitchcock read the list of the 2012 Love Light donations given in honor of the following: United States Military (all branches), Chatuge Regional Hospital Auxiliary Volunteers, Dr. Tracy Edwards, Nursing staff of CRH, Debbie Rowland Ammiano, Don Layeunessee, and Dr. Lanier Nicholson. Hitchcock also read the list of the 2012 Love Light donations in memory of the following: Morgan Jill Weederholldt, John and Louisa Martin, Fred and Corine Gibson, Ray Rowland, Allen Rowland, Norma Goff, Ruth Layeunessee, Jean Farmer, W. Lamar Howell, Norma Jean Galloway, John Brandt, Linda Clabaugh, Shirley Clabaugh, Emma Varao, Joe Varao, Sr., George Hutchinson, Michael

Luke, David Gallagher, Tom Littrell, Laurie Wakefield, Helen Wakefield, Don Lilje, Mary Kocian, Charles Kocian, Grank Kocian, Norma Mullinax, Gladys Lotz, Our Fallen Warriors (all branches); and, auxiliary members, Deila Byrson, Anne Wofford, Sue Cochran, Lois Looper, Alice Hunt, Miriam Russell, and Ruth Baker. Holly Berndt (vocals) and Brad Smith (acoustic guitar) entertained the guests with beautiful Christmas music including *Oh Come Let Us Adore Him*, *Immanuel*, *Away in a Manger*, *Oh Holy Night*, and concluded with *Joy to the World*.

with a cough and sore throat. She did an excellent job and hit every note spot on. "We appreciate everyone coming out tonight and for their generosity to Chatuge Regional Hospital," said Hitchcock. Hitchcock invited everyone to stay and enjoy the wonderful refreshments in the hospital cafeteria. The refreshments were courtesy of the auxiliary volunteers.

Hitchcock wanted to make sure that everyone knew that the money raised by the Love Light Tree donations goes to provide scholarships for graduating students interested in going into the medical field. The scholarships will be awarded in the spring of 2013.

Berndt is to be commended as she was performing

to make a donation to the Chatuge Regional Hospital's Scholarship Fund, they can call me at home at (706) 896-1020," said Hitchcock. "We are always happy to accept donations for this very worthy cause."

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Treasures...continued from page 1A

cash in hand. Marley Silverman of Clay County, NC said, "I just had this bunch of stuff stashed away and thought I would bring it in and see what they thought it was worth. I walked out with almost \$700. That's pretty good considering most of it was damaged or in need of repair. It's just a little extra spending money for Christmas."

toys and trains, musical instruments, pocket and wrist watches, old U.S. currency printed prior to 1964, and foreign coins. "Everybody has an item or two that they are curious about its value. This event is a great place to find out what it's worth and sell it on the spot if you choose to," said Enright. According to appraiser Jason Hall, "We've been steady each day and the folks that come in seem excited to be here and to get their jewelry appraised."

decided they wanted to hold on to them. Either way they walked away satisfied with what they got," said Hall. "There was no pressure to sell. We don't do things that way. We make an offer and let the client make the decision. We would love to have everyone walk out with cash in hand, but if not, we enjoyed the opportunity to give them an appraisal on their items," said Hall. During a weak economy, gold and silver prices soar. Because of this, The Great American Treasure Hunt

is able to provide much needed revenue to communities and their families. "It's always great to see another satisfied customer walk out with a smile on their face knowing that we are making a difference for them during this holiday season," said Hall. "We were happy to be able to bring our show to the Hiawassee area. We met some really good folks and appreciate them giving us an opportunity to appraise their treasures and, in many cases, to purchase the items they brought in," said Hall.

Matthew Enright said, "While the Great American Treasure Hunt buys anything that is old, the focus is on gold and silver jewelry, coins made before 1965, military items,

walked away with cash for their jewelry or other items, and some

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Christmas is alive and well in Towns County



Photos by Towns County Herald Photographer Lowell Nicholson