

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thu: Clouds	60 39
Fri: Showers	56 53
Sat: Showers	63 59
Sun: Showers	64 46
Mon: Showers	50 33
Tues: Sunny	50 37
Wed: Sunny	49 31



Upstream Elevation Predicted 12/18/13	
Lake Chatuge	1,918.28
Lake Nottely	1,762.46
Blue Ridge	1,669.28

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Animal Angel
Tree
Saturday, Dec 21st
11-12:30
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Blood Drive
Give Blood...

Give Life.
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Food Distribution
North Mt. Zion
Food Distribution
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WRESTLING:
Thurs. Dec 19th-21st
Disney Duals
Tournament
Orlando, Florida

BASKETBALL:
Tues. Dec 17th
@ Blue Ridge, NC
6:30 PM
Thurs. Dec 19th
@ Union County
6 PM

Recreation and Conference Center is open for business

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

When Commissioner Bill Kendall started to run for office, he had a proposition for the people of Towns County.

"When I started to run for office, I wanted to give the county a recreation facility that would serve the public for 50 years to come. That's how I described and designed it," he said.

Eight years later, that dream has come true.

The new Towns County Recreation and Conference Center held its ribbon-cutting ceremony on Saturday to the delight and satisfaction of the involved community.

Just before the ribbon cutting, Kendall asked the Rev. Jimmy Rogers to lead an invocation.

Rev. Rogers read from Psalm 121, but added a personal touch.

"I've had a good time in Towns County," he told the assembly.

"I wouldn't trade this place for anywhere in the



The Lady Indians cut the ribbon to open the new Recreation and Conference Center. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

world. I thank God for people like Bill Kendall and all the rest of the folks in Towns County who sure have been a blessing to me," he said.

Rev. Rogers is right; Towns County certainly has a

reason to be proud.

The new Recreation center wouldn't have been possible without a little bit of help from the entire community.

Shirley Stallings, a self-proclaimed "community advo-

cate," is a big believer in the power of communal engagement.

She was excited about this new addition to Hiawassee.

"This is all about the

people of Towns County and their desire to want their county to be the best," she said.

Stallings is certainly right about the power of small efforts adding up to create something grand.

Plans for the recreation center began at the suggestion of Commissioner Kendall in 2005, and was funded by a 1-cent Special Purpose Local Option sales tax.

The SPLOST referendum was passed by a nearly unanimous 90 percent "yes" vote.

The tax also funded other important infrastructure, such as a new fire truck, a new ambulance, and new fire hydrants.

"I am absolutely proud and thrilled to death," said Stallings. "It's a state of the art facility."

The attention to detail in the architecture reflects the mountainous surroundings, as well as containing enough space for a gymnasium, fitness center, walking track, and a conference and community

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Dr. Barge: 'TCMS definitely is a Georgia School of Excellence'

By Azure Welch
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

A much anticipated visit from State School Superintendent Dr. John Barge came to fruition.

On Thursday afternoon, Dec. 12th, Towns County Middle School greeted Dr. Barge with open arms.

Dr. Barge was on hand to present TCMS with its 2012 Georgia School of Excellence Award.

The auditorium at Towns County Schools was filled with middle school students, their teachers, and a handful of community supporters all waiting proudly to hear the "official" proclamation declaring TCMS as a 2012 Georgia School of Excellence in two out of two categories: Highest Performing and Highest Progress.

According to the Governor's Office of Student Achievements, "Reward Schools" are part of Georgia's waiver from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), GaDOE now identifies Reward Schools instead of Title I Schools of Distinction.

Reward Schools fall into two categories, Highest Performing and Highest Progress,



Dr. John Barge

and to achieve excellence the school has to meet all of the designated criteria in each of the two categories.

In the category for Highest Performing, schools must meet all of the following criteria. First, the average achievement of "all students" on every CRCT and/or EOCT in a school is among the highest 5 percent of Title I schools over the last three years in Georgia.

Second, the school made AYP in 2011, and finally, the school is not classified as Priority or Focus.

In the category for Highest Progress schools must meet all of the following criteria. First, the school is among the

highest 10 percent of Title I schools in academic progress of "all students." Second, the progress in graduation rates is highest among Title I schools, and lastly, the school is not classified as either Priority or Focus.

TCMS achieved both of these awards, and is now recognized as a 2012 Georgia School of Excellence.

Barge applauded the middle school and all of their efforts, which helped them to receive this distinction of excellence from the state.

Towns County Schools Superintendent Melissa Williams, ushered in Barge.

"It is a distinct pleasure to introduce our company visiting our school today bringing us this tremendous honor," Williams said. "An honor which could not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of both the faculty and the students of TCMS."

"The mission of TCMS is to inspire every teacher and student to think, to learn, and to achieve at their highest potential, as well as providing opportunities for students who wish to be challenged, extra help for students who are

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Towns a pilot program for Fire Adaptive communities



The Towns County Fire Adapted Communities Citizens' Coalition meets at Fire Station 6 last week.

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Frank Riley, executive director of the Resource Conservation and Development Council, has announced that Towns County is one of only eight communities in the United States chosen to be a pilot community to help develop the Fire Adapted Communities Wildfire Learning Network concept.

"When the Fire Adapted Communities concept is fully developed here, Towns will be a model for other communities to pattern their Fire Adapted Communities programs after," Riley said. "When the project is completed next summer our citizens will be able to rest assured that the various agencies in the county have plans and procedures in place to help protect their lives, their homes, and their businesses from a major wildfire event."

"Those who have helped lay the groundwork for the new wildfire mitigation concept came to the conclusion that in order for the project to be successful, help from the people who will benefit most from the end product, the citizens of Towns County, would need to be more involved to take the program to conclusion."

On Tuesday of last week, the Towns County Fire Adapted Communities Citizens' Coalition held its organizational meeting at Towns County Fire Station 6 in the Firewise training room, Riley said.

"The coalition is made up of six Towns County citizens with varied backgrounds and experience that can be used to build the FAC concept," Riley said. "The Coalition also includes a captain with the Towns County Fire Rescue, the local chief ranger with the Georgia Forestry Commission, and the fire manager officer for the U.S. Forest Service Blue Ridge Ranger District."

Riley said that ex-officio members on the Coalition are there for technical and moral support. "They are from Towns County government, Towns County Fire Rescue, the Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council, Towns County School Superintendent Melissa Williams, the state office of the Georgia Forestry Commission,



Frank Riley

supervisors office of the U.S. Forest Service, and other experts that can be called on when needed," Riley said.

The Coalition will take the project from the development stage, where it is now, to make it the best in the United States, Riley said.

"But most of all, becoming a Fire Adapted Community will help keep our homes, businesses, schools, utilities, infrastructure, and play areas safer from a devastating wildfire event, Riley said.

Coalition members include Mike Davis, Fire Manager Officer, U.S. Forest Service Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest, Candace Lee, president, Towns County Chamber of Commerce, Ann Atchison, Woodlake Firewise Community, Melissa Williams, Towns County Schools superintendent, Jason Demas, Fire Manager Officer, U.S. Forest Service, Blue Ridge Ranger District Chief Ranger Tony Harkins, who oversees the Georgia Forestry Commission in Towns Union & Fanning, Harold Koppel, Captain Station 1 - Towns County Fire Rescue, B.J. Peters, Lake Forest/Ramey Mountain Firewise Community, Billy Snipes, Scarlett's Way Firewise Community, Marsha Elliott, Ashland Cove Firewise Community and Angi Smith, vice president of student development at Young Harris College.

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Robotics team wins Judges' Award

Towns County Herald
News Special

The Towns County High School robotics team, Dragons and Tiaras, FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) robotics team 7673, competed in their first tournament on Saturday, December 7th, at Gwinnett School of Mathematics, Science, and Technology and won the Judges' Award.

Sixteen other teams competed in the event as well. Each team had designed and built a robot to try to complete both programmed and remote controlled (driver controlled) game challenges.

Teams also are judged on their engineering notebooks that they have maintained during the designing, building, and programming of the robot

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Dragons and Tiaras, FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) robotics team 7673 celebrate a Judges' Award last week.

Barge speaks to Towns GOP

By Azure Welch
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Republican Party members got an up close look at City Hall's new Training Center of Hiawassee, which is located on the second floor of the Hiawassee City Hall building.

The setting was very fitting for the speaker, Dr. John Barge, Georgia's School Superintendent.

The training center is a state-of-the-art media room complete with a white board, an LCD projector system, two huge flat screens TVs, and the room appears to seat close to 50 people.

The training room rivals many media training sites on college campuses.

After the room filled with people waiting to listen to Barge speak, Mark Wolchko, the Chairman of Towns' Republican Party, introduced Barge to the crowd.

Barge has been seen throughout the region at various events over the past couple of days, and he didn't disappoint.

Barge has graciously attended almost all of the events and/or meetings that have been requested of him in the region.

Barge started his conversation with a personal touch by explaining a little bit about where he comes from, so that people may understand a little

bit better about why he is so passionate about the things he advocates for.

And just to let folks know, Barge has announced his candidacy for the Republican nomination for governor.

According to Barge, he grew up poor in a family with six children, his home atmosphere was not perfect and his parents had their own demons to slay.

However, due to this exposure of a dysfunctional home, Barge knew at an early age that this is not a cycle that he wanted to repeat.

"What I saw, I did not want to repeat," he said.

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