

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Cloudy	56 36
Fri: Cloudy	46 29
Sat: Cloudy	47 30
Sun: Sunny	52 31
Mon: Sunny	50 30
Tue: Sunny	53 32
Wed: Sunny	55 37



Upstream Elevation Predicted 12/30/2015	
Lake Chatuge	1,924.78
Lake Nottely	1,772.54
Blue Ridge	1,682.16

Commissioner Kendall to apply for FEMA assistance

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Due to the extent of damage to roads and culverts around the county during the Christmas flash flooding, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall has gotten in touch with State Sen. John Wilkinson and Gov. Nathan Deal's office to try to secure disaster relief

funds through FEMA.

"We're hoping to get on the list, but we don't know yet," said Commissioner Kendall. "This is the worst anybody can remember in the county as far as road damage. Clyde Shook has been with the Road Department about 30 something years, and he's never seen it this bad. And I think the problem is, it may not be over."

Those who have been

blocked into their homes and neighborhoods either by persistent flooding or road damage should call 911, as the county's priority is to get people who are stuck at home or in dangerous situations help first.

Alisa Richards with the Commissioner's Office is also a member of Towns County's Disaster Team through GEMA, or Georgia Emergency Management Agency.

People looking to report damage that could potentially be covered in the FEMA application can call Richards at the Commissioner's Office at (706) 896-2276, or her cell phone at (706) 994-9068 during afterhours. Richards asks that pictures of damage be labeled and sent to bjkendall2@yahoo.com, to possibly be included in the FEMA application.

"This is going to be a long process getting the roads back the way they were," said



Flooding at Hiwassee River Trout Lodge

Commissioner Kendall. "If anybody has a real bad situation, be sure to call us here."

Damage is still being assessed, but is known to extend across the entire county, from Young Harris all the way to Tate City. Gander Gap at the Bald Mountain Park entrance, Russell Lane, Fodder Creek

and others have sustained heavy damage, and areas of the Upper Hightower area are still underwater.

"We had no fatalities," said Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland. "Fodder Creek was hit hard, the Bald Mountain Park Entrance was

See *Flooding*, Page 5A



Gander Gap at Bald Mountain Park

For Towns County, much will be new in the New Year

From Staff Reports
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

Every New Year, the *Towns County Herald* puts together a Year in Review, highlighting the biggest stories of the outgoing year.

2015 will forever be remembered as the year Hiwassee lost Police Chief Jimmy Wright, who passed away on Sunday, Dec. 13, of natural causes.

A 25-year law enforcement veteran of Towns County and Hiwassee, Chief Wright would have been honored by the hundreds of friends, family and fellow officers and emergency first responders from all over Northeast Georgia who attended his funeral at McConnell Memorial Baptist Church on Thursday, Dec. 17.

The annual Shop With a Cop program, for years championed by Chief Wright, took place the day after his funeral, and nearly every agency in the county showed up to help kids shop.

The 2015 event was dedicated to the chief's memory, and both his son Jared and daughter Brittany attended to show how much they appreciated the overwhelming support for their father and his cause for children.

Also making headlines this year were three names that will become increasingly important in the New Year - Liz Ordiales, Anne Mitchell and Kris Berrong.

These three ran for Hiwassee City Council seats, defeating incumbents Pat Smith, Janet Allen and Joan



Chief Jimmy Wright

Crothers, and they will take their seats in January 2016.

Issues central to these three councilmembers-elect are development within the city, making sure meeting times fall within optimal hours for the most number of residents to be

See *New Year*, Page 5A

Enota Mountain Retreat gives back to the community



By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

This holiday season, Enota Mountain Retreat donated \$1,000 to the Towns County Food Pantry.

It was a case of "givers helping givers," and to Swan Freed of Enota Retreat, nothing is more important than the spirit of giving.

"We want to support the project of the Towns County Food Pantry," she explained.

"We all need to support each other and believe in giving. We are a service-based organization. And another reason is that we also take people in who are in need, and this is how we all work

together," she said. Enota Retreat is a non-profit, not-for-profit organization that encourages not just community involvement but also experiential learning.

"We're basically what's called an ecotourism site. We teach education on environmental issues and farming issues. Mainstream America right now has gotten so much into technology, they don't even understand where their food comes from. They don't understand how important it is to appreciate farmers and our nature," said Freed.

"We feel that we need to stay as close to what God created as possible. And people need to

See *Enota*, Page 5A

The Buchanan Lights continue to brighten the Christmas season



By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Anyone driving down Scataway Road at night during the winter holiday season is sure to get a breathtaking sight.

All you have to do is drive on past North Mt. Zion Church of God after sunset, and you will see a home not

only decorated with Christmas lights, but practically flooded with them. Not only Christmas lights, but also giant inflatables, nativity scenes, reindeer, and huge Christmas trees as well.

The lights are the work of Robert Buchanan. He and his family have decorated it for so many years he's lost count.

"Thirty-something years

ago we put up a string of lights, and each year just added to it and it's developed into this, I reckon. With this house, it's, what, 20 years? Somewhere around there, it's about 20 years, I guess," he said.

"People just come and enjoy it. And we enjoy it

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TCSO Empty Stocking Fund serves record number of children

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

As of Wednesday, Dec. 23, the Towns County Sheriff's Office had hit a milestone - the department had amassed 254 gifts for its Sheriff's Empty Stockings Toy Drive, a record number.

Those gifts will go to underprivileged children and children who are in a situation that doesn't allow them to receive many, or sometimes any, gifts for Christmas.

Normally, the sheriff's office serves around 200 kids. However, last year that number went up, and Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton and his deputies were able to serve 216 kids in 95 families. This year, of course, that number increased yet again.

"We're still actually picking up gifts," said Sheriff Clinton that Wednesday, just two days before Christmas.

The sheriff's office identifies needy children through parents, grandparents, neighbors, and sometimes teachers. Referrals and



TCHS students assist Sheriff Clinton with the Empty Stocking Fund program

gift recipients are kept anonymous.

Anyone was welcome to send in a donation. Gifts ranged from pajamas to books to whatever action figure or Disney princess was popular that year. The toys were targeted to kids from ages zero to 12 years old. If contributors weren't able to buy anything themselves, some were able to donate money for the cause.

One of the only stipulations was that contributors donate unused toys. That way the kids could open something new for Christmas.

Each year, to support the toy drive, the sheriff's office holds a Christmas Parade, and each participant is asked to make a donation. Participants in the parade this year included several churches and

See *Empty Stocking*, Page 5A

Chatuge Nursing Home residents shopping day



Chantal Cruz, Sonya McCulloch and Hannah Gavarrete are thankful for donations to Chatuge Regional Nursing Home

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Just before Christmas each year, Chatuge Regional Nursing Home has a "Shopping Day" for its residents.

The nursing home asks for small gift donations or money donations, but in a twist on traditional Christmas Giving, residents are allowed

See *Nursing Home*, Page 5A

Georgia Mountain Fair fruitful in 2015

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hilda Thomason and the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds said goodbye to 2015 with an employee Christmas Party on Dec. 16.

The Fairgrounds also hosted the Towns County Sheriff's Office Christmas Party at the Anderson Music Hall.

"I just let the sheriff's department use the music hall for their Christmas party. That was their Christmas party and they do that every year at the music hall. But the one I had for the employees, it was just about 25 people that were there. We just had a Christmas lunch at the music hall and fixed turkey and ham and everything that went with it, and just had a luncheon together. Just employees and volunteers," said Thomason.

"We've had a good year.



Hilda Thomason

We've had a lot more events going on this year than we had last year. I think a lot of that had to do with the economy coming back. Still not as good as we'd like it to be, and we'd like to continue having more events

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TOWNS COUNTY HERALD



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