

Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, February 11, 2015

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Clouds	36 17
Fri: Sunny	40 24
Sat: Clouds	43 10
Sun: Sunny	29 15
Mon: Sunny	47 31
Tue: Rain	46 30
Wed: Clouds	45 25



Upstream Elevation Predicted 02/11/2015	
Lake Chatuge	1,915.29
Lake Nottely	1,761.97
Blue Ridge	1,670.39

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SPORTS

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No Greater LOVE to benefit
 5K RACE & 1 Mile Walk
 February 14, 2015
Tricia Spear
 Feb 14th

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Food Distribution
TC Food Pantry
Tues, Feb 17th
2-5 PM
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Relay For Life Valentine's Fund Raiser

We care about finding a cure for cancer! The following restaurants are supporting the Towns County Elementary School's Relay For Life Team by participating in their Valentine's Day Fundraiser. Please go out and support Relay for Life. Asiano's, Dairy Queen, Papa's Pizza, Georgia Mountain, El Cancun.

SEE THE NASCAR

RACING SCHEDULES
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Basketball
Region 8-A
Tourney
@ Prince Avenue
GIRLS
vs. George Walton
Wed. Feb 11 7 PM
BOYS
vs. Providence
Wed. Feb. 11 8:30 PM

Stone signs on as new MRLS director

By Shawn Jarrard
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

Welcome to the Mountain Regional Library System, Vince Stone.

"The MRLS Board of Trustees would like to announce the hire of a new director of the three county library system of Fannin, Towns and Union Counties," said the board in a statement. "Mr. Vince Stone from Cleveland, Tenn., has accepted the position effective March 1, 2015, with his first day of work being March 2."

Stone accepted the position following the MRLS Board of Trustees quarterly meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 4.

"Mr. Stone comes to the MRLS with over 15 years of experience owning his own business in the Cleveland, Tenn., area," according to the statement. "He has a bachelor's degree from Lee University in communications, and two master's degrees from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in communications and information science."

Stone is a successfully published author, and his best-selling book, "Embracing Your Inner Mediocrity: Making Peace With Reality," landed him a couple of interviews on the Fox News Channel, including the show Fox and Friends.

He has also written several novels based on the prophet Elijah from the Old Testament aimed at young adults.

"He has worked for the last three years as a school me-



Vince Stone

dia specialist in Cleveland and Chattanooga, Tenn.," according to the board's announcement. "An open house will be scheduled before the end of February so the community can meet Mr. Stone."

This will be the second time the board has offered the job to a potential candidate since beginning the search following former Director Donna Howell's retirement announcement, and this time, the board and its candidate were able to see eye to eye.

"He had some questions about leave time and date of hire and things like that that we all discussed at the meeting yesterday," said Interim Director Susie Brendle of the meeting. "After discussion, I brought it back and emailed Mr. Stone back with the board's decision about how many vacation days, sick days and things like that."

"He did accept the

board's decision, and we are getting the paperwork ready at the moment to send to him all of the human resources paperwork that he'll need, because he will need to submit paperwork to the state in order to get certified in the state of Georgia, and that will determine his salary," said Brendle.

The board and those at each library are excited about finally being able to name a permanent director.

"I'm very relieved to have this process over with," said Brendle, who is the branch manager of Union County Public Library. "It's been a long process as far as all of the interviews and navigating through all of the resumes, interviewing people, being turned down. We went through this process in October, were turned down. We had other candidates that we were interested in, put out feelers with them, they turned us down."

"So, it's a lot of disappointment along the way of being turned down and having to start over and start over and start over. I'm very relieved that finally, hopefully, this process is over so we can get back to what we're here to do - run libraries and keep the public happy with their books and materials."

Brendle referred to her time as interim director as an eye-opening experience.

"It's not a 40-hour a week job," said Brendle. "It's a time consuming position, and when

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Tourism tops in Towns County

By Shawn Jarrard
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

The numbers don't lie - tourism is big business in Towns County.

According to the latest data from the Georgia Department of Economic Development, tourism in Towns County brought in \$42.01 million in direct tourist spending for 2013.

Also in 2013, tourism supported 410 jobs, generated \$1.72 million in state tax revenue and created \$1.21 million in local tax revenues.

This number has been on the rise since the start of the recession, increasing to the \$42 million mark from around \$34 million in direct tourist spending in 2009.

Furthermore, each household in Towns County received \$649.67 in tax relief thanks to the 2013 figures, a direct result of the taxes generated by tourism economic activity, according to GDEd reports.

Towns County is part of the Northeast Georgia Mountains Region, and neighboring counties have also fared well.

However, in terms of tax relief per household for 2013, Towns County won the day. Rabun County brought in \$491.15 per household in tax relief; White County, \$344.73; and Union County, \$163.45.

Hilda Thomason, general manager of the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, visited the state capitol for Tourism, Hospitality and Arts Day, which



Hilda Thomason

took place Monday, Jan. 26, and Tuesday, Jan. 27.

There, she discovered just how much of an economic impact the tourism industry had on the local economy.

"I just wanted everybody to see that so they could see how much the tourism dollars, the tourism industry in Towns County, how much our county is benefitting from all of the tourism attractions and the things that we have going on here in the county," said Thomason.

Thomason was one of the Georgia tourism industry representatives who presented Gov. Nathan Deal with a check this year - a whopping \$2.8 billion in state tax revenues generated from 2013 tourism-related expenditures.

"With an overall economic impact of \$53.6 billion, tourism in Georgia spurs

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Third graders get an upclose look at Towns

By Shawn Jarrard
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

The entire third grade class of Towns County Elementary School took a field trip to the Towns County Public Library and the county courthouse on Friday, Feb. 6.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall and many department heads were on hand to speak to the children in the courtroom, including Marty Roberts of 911 Mapping, Clyde Shook with the road department, Clerk of Court Cecil Dye, among others.

Fire Chief Harold Copeland went over fire safety, while Towns County EMS' Joey Floyd walked the children through a live demonstration of how to properly conduct a 911 call.

"Our curriculum standards in both social studies and in reading and language arts deal with the court system, they deal with our branches of government, and they deal with those things at all three levels - federal, state and local," said third grade teacher Sue Sutton. "They're difficult concepts for third-graders, but that is part of our Georgia state standards."

"What we've found over



Towns County third graders got an up close look at the public library and local government last week. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

the years is that the children do grasp fairly well the federal and the state government and the branches, but when it gets to the local government, even though it's what's right here, they get confused."

And what better way to educate the children on local government than to take a field trip to the county courthouse?

"We did that for social studies and for reading, and we wanted to take them, of course,

to the new library, because literature is very important in third grade," said Sutton. "Many of them do not have a library card. Many of them have never had the opportunity to go to a public library, so we wanted to expose them to that also."

Another element of third grade social studies is taxes.

"It was important for

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McConnell now a Buccaneer



By Shawn Jarrard
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

Congratulations to Towns County High School senior Kevin McConnell, who signed to play football for a full athletic scholarship with East Tennessee State University on National Signing Day, Wednesday, Feb. 4th.

"ETSU is a great school," said McConnell. "They have a great program started up, their coaches are passionate about what they're wanting to do there. The players I met there, they all loved it, they all told me how they liked it. I fit in pretty well with a lot of the ones I met. Just, overall, it's a great

school, and I feel like I'll be a great fit there."

The ETSU Buccaneers are returning to the fold of college football after a long hiatus. At the end of the 2003 football season, ETSU decided to discontinue its football program for financial reasons.

McConnell will be part of the new era of Buccaneer football, as the team will play its first game in many years against Kennesaw State University - another brand new college football program - this fall.

"Excellence, that's their motto, in every area," said Sherri, McConnell's mother. "Sports, academics, extracur-

ricular life - excellence is what they expect."

Standing tall at 6'9" and weighing a respectable 270 pounds, McConnell will surely be a force to reckon with on the field. He won't really know until he starts training at ETSU, but his new coaches have shown interest in his abilities as an offensive tackle, and maybe even at tight end.

And he's got a lot of work ahead of him, like 6 a.m. workouts five to six days a week. McConnell is looking to bulk up to 325 pounds to make him an even more formidable opponent.

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Election time in Hiawassee

By Shawn Jarrard
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

Mayor Barbara Mathis and the Hiawassee City Council met for a Special Hiawassee City Council Meeting on Monday, Feb. 2.

The purpose of the meeting was to ratify key election dates and qualification requirements for the upcoming 2015 election regarding three city council seats.

These three seats are currently being held by Joan Crothers at Post 3, Janet Allen at Post 4 and Pat Smith at Post 5.

Qualifying fees for any of the three seats were set at \$72. Qualification for the three councilman positions can be filed in the office of the city clerk/elections superintendent at Hiawassee City Hall, with Cenlya Galloway, during regular office hours from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., beginning Monday, Aug. 31, through Wednesday, Sept. 2.

The Hiawassee Municipal General Election will be



Mayor Barbara Mathis

held on Tuesday, Nov. 3, and those elected will begin their terms on Jan. 1, 2016. The terms of these councilmembers will expire on Dec. 31, 2019.

Further determinants of eligibility require a person be 21 years of age or older, a resident of Hiawassee for at least one year immediately prior to that person's election date, "a registered and qualified voter in the municipal election and they must continue to reside in the city during their term of office," according to the ratifying resolution.

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Growlers are almost in Hiawassee

By Shawn Jarrard
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

After the regular meeting of the Hiawassee City Council on Tuesday, Feb. 3, Towns County is one step closer to growlers.

But what is a growler? "Here in Georgia, a growler is defined as a 32 or a 64 ounce alternative to traditional bottles or cans for the package sale, for off-premises sale of beer," Ed Kountz told city council.

Kountz co-owns Bacchus Wine Shoppe with Linda Pallone, his wife, in downtown Hiawassee. He made a presentation to city council explaining the filling and sealing of growlers, and asked that the current ordinance be amended to allow for the sale of growlers.

"Growlers were approved at the state level in Georgia about five years ago," said Kountz. "And since that time, they've been approved in a number of cities and towns across the state as well."

Nearby Blairsville, Helen and Blue Ridge already sell growlers, and allowing for the sale of this particular packaging of beer in Hiawassee would help the city to keep up with current trends around the state.

Authorizing the sale of growlers within city limits would also enable the city to pick up additional tax revenues from this new form of packaged beer.

"We had a first reading of an amended ordinance to authorize the use of growlers," said City Manager Rick Stancil.



Rick Stancil

"The second reading and approval will be on the agenda for the March council meeting."

A typical operation has growlers being filled by employees from kegs. The bottles are sealed with a heat-sensitive shrinking plastic and labeled right in the shop, so that customers can take their beverages of choice home for consumption.

Growler bottles can be made of either glass or plastic, and there will be a means of thorough sanitation available at the site of purchase.

"This is going to require a little bit of infrastructure development, we're going to have to put in a cooler," said Kountz. "But at the end of the day, growlers are simply a dif-

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