

Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2010

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Cloudy	52 25
Fri: Cloudy	53 34
Sat: Showers	46 34
Sun: Showers	43 32
Mon: Cloudy	49 32
Tue: Showers	52 32
Wed: Showers	51 35



Upstream Elevation Predicted 1/13/10	
Lake Chatuge	1917.70
Lake Nottely	1761.50
Blue Ridge	1667.60

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Chamber Chronicles

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The Towns County Herald wants to make a difference during hard times.

For those currently unemployed, Senior Citizens and U.S. Military veterans, the Herald offers \$5 subscriptions for 1 year. That's a savings of \$21 off the newstand price.

This offer extends to residents of Towns and Union counties in Georgia and Clay County, NC.

Simply bring proof of unemployment status; a simple Photo ID will suffice for Senior Citizens.

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The Herald also offers \$10 subscriptions for new subscribers from Towns and Union counties in Georgia and Clay County, NC.

At the end of one year, those subscribers can renew at a rate of \$15.

Again, we hope to make a difference when folks need it the most.

Warmer Weather

The National Weather Service reports we're about to get a break from Old Man Winter.

Temperatures are expected to warm up slightly with highs in the low 50s, and lows hovering in the mid-30s by Thursday. However, don't get too excited. Rain takes the place of frozen precipitation.

The National Weather Service calls for a slight chance of a wintry mix in the Towns-Union area on Sunday, with temperatures reaching 32 degrees.

Food Distribution

The monthly mobile food distribution for families in need will be held at North Mt. Zion Church of God on Friday, Jan. 15th from 10 a.m. to noon. This outdoor food distribution will be held in the rear parking lot of North Mt. Zion Church of God on Scataway, rain or shine. The distribution was rescheduled due to inclement weather last week. We look forward to seeing you there.

Schools closed for third consecutive day on Tuesday

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
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Dr. Richard Behrens is at a loss for words.

The Towns County Schools Superintendent has never seen his schools closed for more than two days in a row because of severe weather.

Dr. Behrens called off school for the third consecutive day on Tuesday, citing icy conditions on secondary roads.

The veteran educator used his handy laser temperature tool, which incidentally looks more like a pocket flashlight, to measure the ground temperature. It's still freezing, Dr. Behrens said.

The temperature got up to 38 or 39 degrees in the atmosphere on Monday, he said. That didn't do anything for the ground tem-

peratures, especially in the areas that the sun didn't hit.

On Monday afternoon, Dr. Behrens and Transportation Director Scott Hamilton went riding through the Gum Log community to determine road conditions in that area.

Gum Log got hit pretty hard, he said, noting that it's one area of the county that collects ice in bad conditions. We monitor those areas that collect ice sooner than others. The last few days, it's just been ice.

After determining that the main roads were clear on Monday afternoon, Dr. Behrens took into account that some secondary roads still had major problems.

We just didn't want to take a chance on Tuesday, he said.

Dr. Behrens said the current cold snap is unprecedented.

In 1989 when I was in White County, we had an

extended period like this, he said. This is the coldest I've seen it up here and I've been here 25 years.

Dr. Behrens keeps in close contact with superintendents in neighboring counties to evaluate the weather in those communities. He also stays in touch with local Emergency Services and monitors the weather on local radio and television.

As far as snow days go, the school system has a couple of days built into the school year. The state also includes snow days into the school calendar that the system includes for a grace period in the event of inclement weather. He says the school board will wait until the cold weather plays out to determine how to move forward with any make up days, if any.

We'll look at everything considered in a month or so, he said, noting



A Georgia Department of Transportation snow plow clears Highway 76 during the height of last week's snow storm in Hiawassee. Ice and snow brought chaos for local motorists trying to get home before road conditions deteriorated. Photo/Matthew Jarrard

that there is still a long way to go until springtime arrives in Towns County.

Behrens made the call for Towns County students to head home at noon on Thursday. He did so after much deliberation and calculation.

Snow moved into the region Thursday afternoon

and sparked a mad rush to the grocery stores and a barrage of salt trucks and snow plows.

The storm system left behind more than an inch and a half of the white stuff in some parts of Towns County and up to three inches in other areas of the community.

Crimespree brought to a halt

By Charles Duncan
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The snow played a pivotal role in the arrest of two North Carolina residents alleged to have gone on a crime spree in the Pine Crest subdivision in Young Harris late last week.

On Friday evening, deputies stayed busy answering calls of two suspicious vehicles in the community.

Within hours of the first report, Deputy Carson Rhoton wrapped up his shift with two felony arrests related to a series of break-ins from the previous night, Towns County sheriff's reports show.

Rhoton arrested and charged Zachery Frady, 20, of Murphy, NC and 19-year-old Alexa Azevedo, also of Murphy, on charges that included entering an auto; criminal trespass; theft by taking and possession of



A red-tail hawk watches over the Pine Crest subdivision on Saturday. Sheriff's deputies used hawk-like instincts to track down two alleged thieves in the subdivision. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

controlled substances, sheriff's reports show.

During a follow up of the alleged crime spree Deputy Joe Long was injured when he slipped in the icy conditions as he responded to a victim's residence, sheriff's reports show.

Long, who injured a knee, was transported by ambulance to Chatuge Regional Hospital's emergency room. He was treated and later released, having suffered a knee injury, sheriff's reports show.

By Sunday night, Towns County's Criminal Investigations Division investigators had gathered enough evidence to secure 13 additional felony warrants to bring the total number of felony charges against the two North Carolina residents to 22, sheriff's reports show.

Detective Brian Wilson brought the charges against the two, with detectives expecting more charges to come, sheriff's reports show.

See Crime Spree, page 2A

Cold Weather offers economic jolt

By Matthew Jarrard
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The Weather Channel was not the only form of entertainment in Hiawassee during the snowy weekend as folks flocked not south, but east and west to check out a bounty of entertainment that was still being offered.

Oh gosh, we were slammed, chuckled Dianna Bogardus, a supervisor at Movie Gallery in Towns County as she spoke of the icy, three-and-a-half day weekend.

I don't know what it was but it was crazy busy, and we closed early on



The recent cold snap sent locals into the grocery stores, Movie Gallery, Fieldstone Cinemas and FunWorld. Photo/Matthew Jarrard

Thursday. But we didn't close early because it was super slow, we closed early because management wanted us to make it home without risking our lives.

Of course weekends are Movie Gallery's busy occasions, but a busy Thursday last week, especially for

the weather conditions, was surprising.

Weekends are our busiest times, weekends and Tuesdays, because that's when new rentals come out, but Thursday night, the day it snowed, we went 33% over our goal. People still

See Cold, page 3A

Chief Floyd offers safety tips

By Matthew Jarrard
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At the dawn of a new decade Georgia temperatures have hit record lows, recently dipping into the single digits, sliding down to 2 degrees by Saturday morning in Hiawassee.

There are two common types of fatalities in the winter months; house fires and hypothermia. As Hiawassee citizens attempt to stay warm, it is also crucial that safety and health not be sacrificed.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), October through February is the most frequent time for house fires and temperature related



Fire Chief Mitchell Floyd

deaths, not counting automobile accidents hailing from the slick, icy roads.

Towns County Fire Chief Mitchell Floyd, a professional firefighter for more than 35 years, explained a bit of the science behind some of the most easily prevented, yet often overlooked winter dangers; electric space heaters.

Electrical devices, such as space heaters, emit radiant heat to household objects, causing them to spark and ignite, he said.

The radiant process is when heat radiation passes through the air, being absorbed by virtually anything close to the device. This happens often with combustible objects such as blankets, couches and drapes.

Manufacturers now create some of the safest, most efficient, advanced and economical portable heating devices. Nearly, if not all, portable heaters made include automatic safety switches which turn off the appliance if it is accidentally knocked

See Fire Chief, page 2A

Chief Jimmy Wright honored for bravery

By Matthew Jarrard
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Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright was honored at City Hall last week for his unselfish act of bravery as he attempted to rescue Ivalee Burrell and her son Ernest from their burning home on Dec. 7th off Scataway Road in Hiawassee.

Wright was presented Commendation for Meritorious Service and Valor by Towns County Fire Chief Mitch Floyd.

The daybreak saw tragedy as mother and son were the victims of the tragic house fire at 581 Scataway Road in Hiawassee. Ivalee Burrell was 82 years old. Her son Ernest Burrell was only 56.

Fire Chief Floyd and Towns County firefighter Travis Gibson presented Police Chief Wright with the commendation.

He kicked in the back



Chief Jimmy Wright

door and searched the home until the fire drove him out of the house, he said.

They don't make many like him. In a former life he was a firefighter.

Police Chief Wright accepted the award with humble gratitude.

I just simply went to the aide of my neighbors, he said. I didn't do anything any one of us or any other public safety official wouldn't do.

Having recently spoken of the incident, Fire Chief Floyd expressed both optimism and grief.

See Wright, page 3A

Mayor, councilmen sworn into office

By Matthew Jarrard
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The first Hiawassee City Council meeting of 2010 was special to newly-elected City Councilman Stephen Smith, Incumbent Councilman Junior Chastain and Mayor Barbara Mathis.

Chastain and Mathis were sworn in for four more years of service on the council. For Smith, it was his first oath of office.

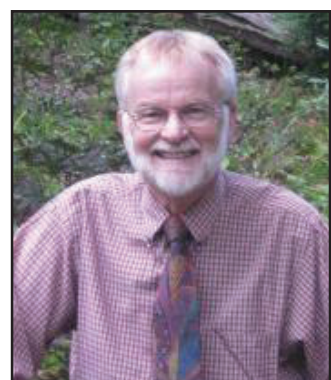
City Clerk Wylene White did the honors.

Thank you for all of the support we've gotten the past year, he said Mayor Mathis as she addressed the council. We will also need it this year. There is a lot to be done.

Moments later, Councilman Chastain, now in his second term, and Councilman Smith were sworn in as members of the Hiawassee City Council.

Smith, a retired educator, principal and school superintendent, took the seat once filled by Annie Johnson.

Annie did very well, he said. After all, she was elected three times. But I enjoyed my first meeting as a council member. Of course there was a lot of big business to discuss but I



Councilman Stephen Smith

studied up before the meeting and was able to contribute. I think the Council is going to work well together.

Smith is, as he's said it before, happy, energetic, motivated and believes in integrity and high moral values. Most of all, I care for the well being of others. I like to think that I put people before myself.

Smith is well known for his tenure in the Towns County Schools System, where he once served as superintendent.

Smith spent his entire career in the Towns

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TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

