

## Volunteer Firefighter recruit training class starts



On Thursday, January 13th (after two delays due to severe weather conditions) the Towns County Fire Rescue Department kicked off its first NPQ 1 (National Professional Qualification 1) Basic Firefighter Training course for 2011. The course, which will last approximately 4 months, will teach basic fire and rescue skills to 18 eager new recruits. Fifteen of these students are from Towns County and will become official "certified" members of the Fire Rescue Department once they complete the training and pass the state examination. The remaining 3 students are from

the Union County Fire Department.

The program consists of classroom instruction and practical field work, covering a variety of fire service principles and practices. Oversight and Lead Instruction for the program is provided by the Fire Rescue Departments Training Officer, Volunteer Captain Doug Mills. Captain Mills is a State Certified Fire Service Instructor and Paramedic who's full time job is a Captain/Paramedic with the Hall County Fire Department.

The Department's goal is to conduct two recruit classes in 2011 in an effort to

increase the number of certified members needed to meet the increased calls for service. In 2010 the Department responded to almost 1,400 calls for service as compared to just fewer than 1,000 in 2009.

If you think you would like to become a Volunteer Firefighter and have a sincere desire to protect the lives and property of your fellow citizens, you can pick up an application and get additional information at Fire Station 1 located at 156 Sims Circle, Hiawassee, (Behind the Georgia Mountain Restaurant) Mon. - Fri. 8AM - 5 PM or call 706-896-2090.

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## Dermody...continued from page 1A

His goal was to have students become life long learners, creative problem solvers, and competent decision makers. Students, parents, staff, and community all worked together to provide the best learning opportunities.

Over the years, Dermody cherished the support the school received

from the Towns County community.

"Don has meant a lot to every Towns County student he's had the pleasure of knowing," Dr. Behrens said. "He's an amazing individual and a very effective administrator.

"We're going to miss him," Dr. Behrens said.

"Without a doubt."

Anderson agreed.

"He's just so consistent," Anderson said. "After you get to know him and watch him perform, it's just amazing the knowledge of education that he brings to the table. His consistency is his trademark. He will be missed."

## Any and all addictions

A new open 12 Step Recovery Program to help suffering people regardless of the particular addiction or addictions. Starting November 9th, we will meet Tuesdays at 7 p.m. at the Fellowship of the Hills Church, Pinebrook Drive and 129 S, Blairsville, GA. For information email: recoveryieff@gmail.com, or call 706-835-1855. N(Jan26,Z1)CA

## Legislation...continued from page 1A

into a chat about the personal life of Cooley, Paulette Harper's boyfriend at the time of her death.

"The anonymous posters had a field day kicking Gene Cooley around with allegations of child molestation, extensive criminal background, drug rehabilitation attempts, drug use and drug dealing," said Stookey, who represented Cooley in his defamation suit against the anonymous posters.

"Gene Cooley went to Florida to the funeral of Ms. Harper and was soon asked to leave her parents home due to a call from 'some woman' in Blairsville, Georgia," Stookey said.

The woman from Blairsville told Harper's parents all about Cooley, Stookey said.

"Gene went to the local sheriff's office, had a background check done which proved he had never been arrested for anything," Stookey said.

Cooley returned home to Blairsville to find that his name had been blasted all over TOPIX, Stookey said.

"When he went to work, he was fired since 'some woman' came to the hair salon and told the owner that she and her friends would never use them as long as Gene Cooley was employed there," Stookey said.

Supposedly, the postings about Cooley were to "pro-

tect" Paulette Harper's young daughter from Cooley, who the anonymous posters had labeled as a "pervert" and "child molester" in the TOPIX chat room, Stookey said.

Eventually, the embarrassment, ridicule and lack of employment forced Cooley to move away from Blairsville and take up residence in Augusta, Stookey said.

Stookey filed suit on Cooley's behalf against an anonymous poster named "MOUTH", which Stookey said was the leader of the pack bashing Cooley.

Stookey subpoenaed TOPIX for the identity of "MOUTH" using the IP address, which is basically the fingerprint of personal computers. TOPIX was more than happy to oblige.

The legal pleadings determined that "MOUTH" was Sybil Denise Ballew of Blairsville, Stookey said.

It also was determined that Ballew also had the aliases of "Calvin," "Mountain Man," "Yuck," "Bugs," "Pete," "David," and "Slim," Stookey said.

During the trial, Ballew admitted making each of the defamatory posts about Cooley, Stookey said.

Basically, Ballew was carrying on a conversation about Cooley with herself, disguised as each one of the anonymous names on TOPIX. She declined legal

counsel during the trial and refused to apologize to Cooley for making the remarks, Stookey said.

The civil complaint was amended to include the true identity of the anonymous poster, Stookey said and the case went to trial on Jan. 12 before the honorable Judge David Barrett. A six person jury was selected to hear the case, court records show.

"The six-member jury was very heroic in awarding \$404,000 in damages to Gene Cooley," Stookey said. "This was not only vindication for Gene Cooley, but it was the first case of DEFMACAST tried in Georgia and the largest award ever in Union County or the Enotah Circuit."

Stookey said that cases in Texas and New York were keying on the case before they went to trial.

"There is no criminal statute governing this kind of activity in Georgia," Stookey said. "It should be a crime to attack someone like that on the Internet.

"This was not an assault on the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which bars only Congress from making laws to abridge free speech," Stookey said. "I hope this case will stop the libel which takes place on TOPIX and return it to being the market place for the exchange of discussion and ideas."

## Concerts...continued from page 1A

Mountain Fairgrounds promoter from working on a reschedule date

Regretfully he was unsuccessful at rebooking a 2010 date.

Now, Williams, a Country Music Hall of Famer, is booked for March 26, much to the delight of his fan following.

Williams, who has 17 No. 1 hits to professional credits, is one of the most legendary sounds in Country Music. He was named

Male Vocalist of the Year in 1978 and his iconic hit *Tulsa Time* has crossed genres and has been featured in major Hollywood motion pictures.

However, his most memorable No. 1 hit is *I Believe in You*, a song, recorded in 1980, that reflects on the times we lived. It is a telling tale of the things in life that aren't genuine and the things that really mean the most.

Williams, originally a songwriter for Jack Music

Inc., signed with JMI Records as a solo artist in 1971. His 1974 song, *We Should Be Together* reached No. 5, and he signed with ABC/Dot Records. His first single with ABC/Dot, *I Wouldn't Want to Live If You Didn't Love Me* became a No. 1 hit, and was the first of a string of Top 10 hits for the "Gentle Giant" between 1974 and 1991. Only four of his 46 singles didn't make it to the Top 10.