

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2010

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Showers	42 29
Fri: Rain/Sleet	38 31
Sat: Snow	39 24
Sun: Snow	38 25
Mon: Flurries	43 28
Tue: Flurries	44 28
Wed: Sunny	44 27



Upstream Elevation Predicted 2/03/10	
Lake Chatuge	1917.70
Lake Nottely	1762.10
Blue Ridge	1670.10

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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 newsstand 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.

Veterans must provide proof of U.S. Military service.

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.



Homecoming changes

Due to a wrestling conflict Homecoming has been moved to Saturday, Feb. 6. The event will be held at half time of varsity boys' game with the Lakeview Academy Lions.



Food

Distribution

The monthly mobile food distribution for families in need will be held at North Mt. Zion Church of God on Friday, Feb. 12th 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.



Planning Meeting

A community meeting is scheduled Thursday, Feb. 11 at City Hall in Hiwassee at noon to discuss renovation of the downtown square.

Historic Preservation planner Chip Wright will present plans related to downtown improvements.

CB&T purchased by South Carolina-based lender

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
charlesduncan@brmeme.net

Community Bank & Trust has new ownership and strong financial footing after it was acquired on Friday by Orangeburg, SC-based South Carolina Bank and Trust.

The Cornelia-based bank was closed Friday by the Georgia Department of Banking and Finance, which appointed the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) as receiver. To protect the depositors, FDIC entered into a purchase and assumption agreement with SCBT.

SCBT's purchase and assumption agreement includes loss share arrangements with FDIC to assume all the deposits and certain other liabilities and the purchase certain assets of Com-

munity Bank & Trust.

The deal came down just after business hours on Friday evening. By Saturday morning, Community Bank & Trust of Georgia's 36 branches, including the one in Towns County, opened as Community Bank & Trust, as subsidiary of SCBT.

The bank will continue to conduct business under the name Community Bank & Trust.

SCBT sent more than 70 of its employees to work closely with the employees and customers of Community Bank & Trust during the transition phase. Some of those employees were in Hiwassee on Monday and will remain here for approximately two weeks.

Community Bank & Trust depositors automatically become depositors of SCBT, and deposits will continue to be insured by the



The future looks bright for CB&T after it was purchased Friday by South Carolina-based SCBT in a loss sharing arrangement with FDIC. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

FDIC. Customers of both banks should continue to bank as they normally do at their existing branches, according to SCBT spokesperson Donna Pullen.

"This is a great step for our company," said Robert R. Hill Jr., president and CEO, SCBT Financial Cor-

poration. "The addition of Community Bank & Trust's 36 locations enhances our presence on the I-85 corridor from Charlotte to Atlanta. This 110-year-old institution has a long history of serving the financial needs of the citizens of Georgia. We look forward to helping them con-

tinue this legacy of service." The buzz in Hiwassee on Monday was one of relief for customers and bank employees alike. Gone are the rumors that Community Bank & Trust would close its doors as a failed Georgia

See CB&T, page 3

Forecast: more snow on the way

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
charlesduncan@brmeme.net

Brace yourself - Old Man Winter just won't give up.

The National Weather Service is calling for another storm front that includes snow and ice in the weekend forecast. Ice, snow and flurries are in the forecast from Friday through Tuesday of next week.

On Tuesday, 36-degree temperatures felt more like 32 degrees as a steady rain fell on much of the region. Fortunately, the mercury stayed above the freezing mark to avoid further nasty weather conditions.

The weather service is calling for a 20 percent chance of frozen precipitation for Friday night and Saturday morning. Snow showers are in the forecast for much of Saturday. The forecast for Super Sunday calls for rain and a 20 percent chance of snow showers later in the day.

The chances of frozen precipitation could increase as the week progresses as another front appears poised to pelt the Mid-Atlantic re-



A winter wonderland across Jack's Gap on Friday gave way to warmer temperatures on Saturday. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

gion again.

Towns County dodged an icy bullet for the most part last week. Most are keeping their fingers crossed as the National Weather Service calls for more frozen precipitation as the weekend approaches.

Much of Western Carolina was pummeled by ice and snow as the weather service's forecast of snow for Jan. 29th came to fruition. While Towns County received its share of snow on Jan. 29th and in the early morning hours of Jan. 30th, temperatures held steady

above the freezing mark for much of the weekend.

Towns County Schools closed at 1:30 p.m. on Jan. 29th, just as the snow began to pelt down over much of the county. For the most part road conditions didn't deteriorate. The ground temperatures were too warm for the white stuff to stick to the ground surface.

The school system's classrooms were full on Monday as only two school systems, Fannin and Rabun counties, called off classes due to inclement weather conditions.

Young Harris Mountain rock slide

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
charlesduncan@brmeme.net

The record rainfalls from 2009 and into 2010 appear to be the culprit behind the rock slide on Young Harris Mountain, according to the Georgia Department of Transportation.

A significant portion of the rock face at the top of the mountain broke loose as darkness fell over the region on Jan. 25. Towns County sheriff's deputies and emergency management workers cordoned off the area for the rest of the night.

On Tuesday, Jan. 26, GDOT crews responded and installed a concrete barrier to hold the hillside back should it continue to erode.

A GDOT spokesperson said that the rock gave way due to the unusual amount of rainfall experienced throughout the region. The weight of the rock versus the softness of the hillside equaled a rock slide.

For the time being, GDOT feels that the area is secure. However, engineers in Atlanta are still trying to determine what the next step is to prevent another overwhelming act of Mother Nature's wrath on the mountain, the GDOT spokesperson said.



Soil soaked by record rainfalls played a major role in last week's rock slide on Young Harris Mountain. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall said he is concerned about the rock slide, but feels certain GDOT's engineers will find a remedy for the future.

"It sure came down in a hurry," he said. "The Georgia Department of Transportation is taking a close look at that situation and I'm certain they'll come up with a solution. We've just had so much rain, things like that

are bound to happen."

The rock slide was in the same area where GDOT has had deterioration problems in the past with the passenger lane on Hwy. 76. GDOT solved that problem by constructing a retaining wall that supports the passenger lane.

GDOT will continue to work on a solution to resolve the potential problem of future rock slides in the area.

Voters could cast another ballot for extra tax break

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
charlesduncan@brmeme.net

House District 8 State Rep. Stephen Allison has introduced legislation to allow local voters to cast ballots for an additional \$8,000 exemption from school taxes.

Allison, a freshman representative from Blairsville, who represents Towns, Union and Rabun counties and part of White County, also introduced legislation to allow city of Hiwassee voters the same exemption.

County voters overwhelmingly supported the \$8,000 county tax break in November by a count of 96.87 percent in favor of the break.

If approved in the Georgia General Assembly, county voters and Hiwassee voters would return to the polls to cast ballots for an additional \$8,000 tax break on school and city of Hiwassee taxes.

The legislation to allow county voters to cast ballots for an additional \$8,000 homestead exemption was one of Allison's first pieces of legislation introduced in the Georgia House of Representatives.

The state passed the inaugural homestead exemption in 1937, saving homeowners from having to pay taxes on the first \$5,000



State Rep. Stephen Allison

fair market value, or a \$2,000 tax assessment on their home. Sixty-two years later, lawmakers passed another law to increase the original \$2,000 exemption to \$10,000, and to reimburse local governments for the amount of tax revenue that impacted their local tax digests.

During the 2009 session, state lawmakers took \$8,000 away because of failing state revenues. The state homestead exemption reverted back to the original 72-year-old \$2,000 break for the 2009 tax bills mailed to homeowners.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall asked the local legislative delegation to seek legislation to allow county voters to vote on whether to restore \$8,000 to the \$2,000 break

See Tax Break, page 2

Clinton pleased with Heat results

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
charlesduncan@brmeme.net

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton is well pleased with his department's joint narcotics operation with the Appalachian Drug Task Force.

More details have been released regarding the Jan. 21 Operation Winter Heat sting.

The sting, a collaborative effort involving the Drug Task Force as well as sheriff's deputies from Towns and Union counties, resulted in eight felony arrests and misdemeanor warrants served on seven individuals in Towns County. The arrests were the result of several months of investigation.

Those charged in the dragnet included:

- Adrienne Susan Demers, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon; misdemeanor possession of marijuana;
- Brian Wayne Demers, distribution of marijuana; mis-



Sheriff Chris Clinton

demeanor possession of marijuana;

- Linda Marie Dav-enport, distribution of a schedule II drug, one count;

- Dawn Marie Dav-enport, distribution of a schedule II drug, two counts;

- Devon Lynn Dav-enport, possession of a

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