

# Firefighters complete Fire Ground strategies and tactics class

Special to Towns County Herald  
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Nineteen members of the Towns County Fire Rescue Department spent the weekend of Feb. 4th and 5th in the classroom completing the first phase of a 32-hour program designed to enhance their incident command skills.

The firefighters and officers reviewed basic fire ground and emergency incident strategies, building construction and incident command principles, in order to prepare them for the second phase of the program that were taught Feb. 18th and 19th.

The course, Fire Officer Strategies and Tactics, is taught by David Alexander and Jason Powell from Johnson City, Tenn., and is designed to help the department members understand the thought process and skills needed to handle a wide array of dynamic emergency situations.

The second phase of this training provides each participant the hands on opportunity to manage an incident with the assistance of the other students. Computer graphics and local pic-



Nineteen Towns County Fire Rescue Department members complete important safety course

tures of buildings and businesses in Towns County assured that incidents were as real as possible.

The environment utilizes a process that forces the students to employ the "thinking" process and knowledge learned in phase 1. The students' decisions had simulated consequences to help illustrate that no decision made on the emergency scene is made without a cause or effect on something else.

If the student uses the proper process and tactics, the incident will improve and stabilize. If the student is not following the proper process, or delays decisions, the situation will deteriorate.

"This training is very similar to computer simulation training that is used by the military," Towns County Fire Chief Mitch Floyd said. "The military learned long ago that computer simulated training is more cost effective and far safer, than live exercises.

"We can simulate fires, in buildings that are familiar to our members, in a safe environment, yet they will experience the stress related to making critical decision on a live incident," Chief Floyd said.

"This gives our members an opportunity to experience an incident at a Target Hazard facility before a real incident occurs there," Chief Floyd said. "You can't get any better or safer training than that."

## Ballroom dance classes at Brasstown Manor

The Bradford Club is pleased to announce ballroom dance classes for anyone 50 and over during the months of February and March, with a dance to be held in April. The first class will be February 28, 3 p.m. in The Bradford Club located in Brasstown Manor. Former Author Murray Dance Director, Laurel Adams, will be teaching Swing, Foxtrot,

Waltz, Rumba, Cha Cha and Tango. Singles and couples are encouraged to enroll in advance by calling 706-896-4285. Cost is \$15 per couple and \$8 for singles. Wear shoes, not sneakers or sandals and get ready for a good time. For more information, visit us online at [www.thebradfordclub.com](http://www.thebradfordclub.com) or find us on Facebook. TFeb22.F1)SH

## Calling all actors and singers

Licklog Players' is looking for 5 men, 1 women, 1 young man and 1 young woman to audition for the musical comedy, "The Fantasticks" written by Harvey Schmidt with lyrics by Tom Jones. Auditions will be held at Licklog Players' new venue at 34 Creek Side

Circle, Suite 15, Hayesville, NC (across from the ABC liquor store on Hwy 69).

Saturday, February 25th @ 10 am and Monday, February 27th, @ 7pm.

Show opens Friday, April 13th and runs until Sunday, April 22nd, 2012.

## Letters from the Mountains

Deborah Burford  
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### Mrs. Perkins' piano lesson

Mrs. Perkins has settled nicely into our house. I try to keep her inside because she is small, though certainly not as small as she once was. Every now and then she will poke her nose through the cat flap. I creep around to the other side and make horrendous noises, flailing my arms wildly. She darts back into the house and she's good for another few weeks. I know when spring really arrives I'll have a tougher time, but for now she's safe. (Zinger and Caylee have their own views regarding the Great Outdoors and winter, which don't bear airing in a family newspaper. Suffice it to say that, barring the occasional warm rock or the top of the well covering, they prefer hearthside.)

This morning she thought she'd like to attend the student piano lesson. She sat, statue-like, on the lid of the piano and watched in fascination while the dampers and hammers inside jumped up and down. She looked at the student, then the dampers, then the student. We think she could feel the vibrations on her paws.

The mechanisms flew faster and faster and she was mesmerized. "How do you do that?" she wondered. The student wagged her fingers. Mrs. Perkins looked at the human hand and then her paw. "And how do you do that?!" she asked, trying unsuccessfully to separate her toes from one another. More bouncing north and south of hammers and dampers preceded by east and west motions of flying fingers and hands.

Mrs. Perkins leaned over to sniff the strings, reaching out a tentative paw. Instantly the damper bumped her nose, and the vibrating strings tickled her pads. "Now that's just not nice," she muttered, shaking the tingling mitt vigorously. She shuddered once from nose to tail and retreated to the piano lid. More music, more dancing parts (piano and human.) "Fascinating," she purred. "It's no wonder that humans could invent canned tuna when they can make something like this."

She sat all morning never losing her fascination.

When the student left, Mrs. Perkins pounded upstairs to tell her animal friends about her new discovery. They were mildly interested but when she came to the part about the human separating her "toes" from one another, they said she was making it all up and scoffed at her. "Now you've gone too far," they said. "We know they can do amazing things with what they call hands—although they are pitiful tree-climbers and hole-diggers—just pitiful!—but we don't know of a single animal that can separate its front toes."

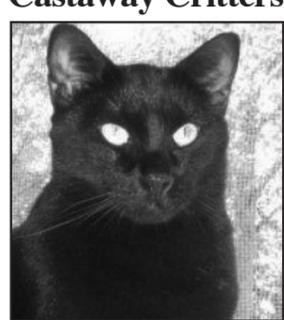
"Oh, yeah?" said Mrs. Perkins indignantly. "What about squirrels?" And with that she turned her back and stomped over to her pillow.

There was a brief silence. When I last saw the non-believers, they were sitting with their noses pressed to windows waiting to see squirrels.

"You don't suppose...?" they said in whispers.

Love From the Mountains, D.  
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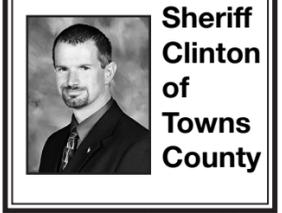
## Pet of the week at Castaway Critters



Meet Cindy, a big, beautiful, sweet and loving girl. She was rescued along with look-a-like brother Charlie during the peak of kitten season several years ago, but they both remain at the shelter. Why? Black cats are just more difficult to find homes for, people often overlook them. While the other kittens were adopted, the two black siblings just didn't catch anyone's eye. Cindy has a gorgeous glossy coat and striking yellow eyes. She is mellow and would be a nice companion and she can match any cat for sweetness and gentle nature.

If you are interested in giving Cindy a home of her own, call Nancy at 706-835-1828 and go to our website to see more pictures of Cindy and brother Charlie at [castawaycritters.org](http://castawaycritters.org). NTFeb22.M2)CA

## From the Desk of:



**Sheriff Clinton of Towns County**

Aggressive driving, speeding, alcohol, and sleepiness remain the primary causes behind automobile fatalities, according to research conducted by an array of federal agencies and consumer groups. Statistics gathered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, for example, show that 43,443 people were killed in automobile accidents during 2005, the most recent complete survey year. Despite a 3% decrease, the number nationally remains unacceptably high and reveals the challenges faced by local and regional law enforcement agencies.

With that in mind, the Georgia Sheriffs' Association has some practical advice to help keep you and your family safe on the roads:

1. Drinking and driving don't mix. According to the NHTSA study, three in every ten Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point. Have a designated driver or refrain from drinking.
2. Always travel with a first-aid kit. It can offer a quick bandage, tweezers, antiseptic wipes and other first aid supplies.

## Enotah Mental Health Court funding approved

The Judicial Council of Georgia's Accountability Courts Committee has awarded a grant to the Enotah Mental Health Court for fiscal year 2012. In January 2012 the Enotah Mental Health Court (EMHC) was established by Superior Court Judge Murphy C. Miller with the encouragement of the County Commissioners, District Attorney, Sheriffs and other elected officials and constituents serving Lumpkin, Towns, Union and White Counties.

Mental health Courts are needed in response to diminishing mental health treatment resources and an overrepresentation of non-violent offenders with mental health issues languishing in Georgia's jails and prisons. Mental health courts divert these low risk defendants with mental illness into judicially supervised, community based treatment.

Defendants are invited to participate following a specialized screening assessment and they may choose to decline participation. For those who agree to the terms and conditions of community based supervision, a team of court and mental health professional's work together to develop treatment plans and supervise the participant in the community.

## NGTC students learn about living with diabetes

When renowned Southern Chef Paula Dean was recently diagnosed with diabetes, the media immediately turned the spotlight on this very serious disease. But in many ways, the focus of the stories missed the mark, falling short of the true need to educate the public on the demands of living with diabetes on a daily basis.

However, students in the Practical Nursing program at North Georgia Technical College were able to learn about the impact of diabetes as well as the constant care required to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The college's Blairsville Campus Receptionist, Jessica de Ruise, stepped up to the front of the classroom to explain and demonstrate her daily routines.

Diagnosed about 20 years ago, Ms. de Ruise has become a local expert on the subject. Beginning with an explanation of her situation, she discussed the various stages and levels of the disease. She also described a variety of lifestyle changes that were far more involved than just dietary restrictions. She further explained the importance of having a good team, including her doctors, nutritionists, and family. Her presentation included handouts and a demonstration of how she monitors her blood sugar levels through the use of an external insulin pump. With a little demonstration for the class, she showed how pump settings are changed every three days with a new IV set that is attached via a needle subcutaneously.

"The pump is actually a computer that logs in regularly taken statistics," she explained, showing them the wallet-sized apparatus she keeps discretely attached to her waistband. "I

3. Children 12 years or younger should ride in the back seat of the vehicle in age appropriate restraints. In 2004, there were 495 passenger vehicle occupant fatalities among children under five years of age. Of those 495 fatalities, an estimated 173, or thirty-five percent, were totally unrestrained.

4. A cell phone can save a life, but it can also cause a collision. It is best for you to pull off the road when you need to dial a number or converse with someone.

5. Use the three-second rule -- the suggested time interval that keeps you from tailgating another vehicle too closely and causing an accident.

6. Keep a vehicle safety kit in the trunk. It should include jumper cables, reflective triangles, a blanket, nonperishable food, flashlight, and other important tools. Even if you do not use many of the items, it will provide you peace of mind.

7. Don't fall asleep at the wheel. According to the NHTSA study, most crashes happen when people are alone. Drowsy drivers cause 56,000 crashes annually.

8. Be prepared for law enforcement road checks with driver and vehicle information (GSA).

Our goal at the Towns County Sheriff's Office is to help you and your loved ones stay safe. We believe that an informed community is a safer community. For additional information and safety tips, you can follow the Sheriff's Office online at [www.townscounty-sheriffsoffice.com](http://www.townscounty-sheriffsoffice.com). TFeb22.K1)SH

### Dear Consumer Ed:

I purchased four speakers for my husband and paid \$911.60 for them. At the time of purchase the store owner told me the item was not in stock and that it would be 1-2 weeks before the product would arrive from the manufacturer. I paid for the product in full. It has been 3 weeks now and I still have not received the speakers. The store cannot give me a definitive date as to when they will be in. I contacted the manufacturer to see if they could tell me when they shipped the items to the store, and they said that the store never placed an order with them for the items. I asked the store to refund my money so I can purchase the items elsewhere. The store is willing to give me my money back minus a 20% restocking fee. Is it legal for them to take \$182.32 from me for restocking an item even though the company never placed an order for the item?

**A:** In Georgia, retailers are allowed to set their own policies regarding refunds and exchanges, including those related to "restocking fees". Restocking fees have become increasingly common in today's market, particularly when a return involves an electronics purchase. However, while the collection of these fees is permissible, there may be circumstances where a retailer should not enforce such a fee, or circumstances where charging it would be unfair or even deceptive.

First, the retailer should adequately disclose the existence of these charges before the purchase becomes final (this requirement is not met by retailers who print their return policies on the back of their receipts, which are issued after a purchase is made). Second, with regard to the delay in delivery, if delivery cannot be made within a reasonable time of the promised date, federal law requires the seller to give timely notice of the delay, giving the consumer the option to cancel and receive a full refund. In states that do have laws addressing restocking fees, it's illegal to charge them in the following situa-

tions: They are being charged in connection with the return of defective merchandise; they are being charged because the retailer delivered the wrong merchandise; they are being charged because the retailer failed to deliver the merchandise within the promised time period; they exceed 50% of the purchase price of the merchandise; or the restocking fees are not adequately disclosed to the customer.

Finally, a "re-stocking" fee implies, by its very name, a fee imposed to cover costs associated with placing merchandise back into the store's stock. You don't say whether you had any advance notice of your retailer's restocking/cancellation policies. However, if you can show that the store owner not only failed to deliver your order when initially promised, then failed to give you a specific delivery date, but also never placed an order with the manufacturer, there doesn't appear to be a reasonable basis for the retailer to have charged you a restocking fee. A restocking fee in such a situation may violate Georgia's Fair Business Practices Act.

In a situation where the store owner may be charging unfair restocking fees, there are several options. First, you should try to get written corroboration from the manufacturer confirming that the store owner never placed the order. You can then try to dispute the charge with your credit card company, and submit this corroboration with your dispute. You could also submit a complaint to the Better Business Bureau to see if they can help mediate the situation between you and the retailer. Finally, you can submit a complaint to the Federal Trade Commission at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) or to the Governor's Office of Consumer Protection at [www.consumer.ga.gov](http://www.consumer.ga.gov) or by calling 404-651-8600 or 1-800-869-1123.

Got a question for Consumer Ed? Go to [ConsumerEd.com](http://ConsumerEd.com) to submit your question and read additional consumer tips. Remember... we do not give legal advice. Always consult a lawyer about legal issues. NTFeb22.M3)CA

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**Visit Our Office Anytime... or Call to arrange a private appointment in our office or at your bank**

**All Transactions are Strictly Confidential**

## Humane Society Mountain Shelter monthly meeting

The Humane Society Mountain Shelter Board of Director's meeting will be held the last Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Cadence Bank in Blairsville. NTFeb22.J2)SH