

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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Wednesday, March 31, 2010

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Sunny 75 41
Fri: Sunny 76 45
Sat: Clouds 75 47
Sun: Rain 71 44
Mon: Clouds 71 44
Tue: Sunny 67 45
Wed: Clouds 67 44



Upstream Elevation Predicted 3/31/10
Lake Chatuge 1921.60
Lake Nottely 1766.10
Blue Ridge 1678.00

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For a limited time, the Towns County Herald will offer \$8 subscriptions for one year to new subscribers.

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

The newspaper is making a difference during hard times.

For more than two months, the newspaper has offered those currently unemployed, Senior Citizens and U.S. Military veterans \$5 subscriptions for 1 year. That's a savings of \$21 off the newstand price.

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

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



Food Pantry

A free food distribution is scheduled Tuesday, April 5th. The distribution will be at the Towns County Food Pantry from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. All in need of food are encouraged to attend. If you're unable to pick up food please call (706) 896-4783, prior to distribution day.

All clients and inquires are kept strictly confidential.



Fund Raiser

The Towns County Booster Club will host a Car/Truck/Motorcycle Show on May 15 in the Towns County High School parking lot. Admission to the event is \$5. Entry fees are \$20 for a car or truck and \$10 for a motorcycle. No awards will be given; this is a fundraiser event. The event benefits athletics in grades six through 12 in Towns County Schools. Deadline for entry is May 1. Call (706) 781-8763 for more details.



Spring Sale

The VFW Thrift Store is having yet another whale of a sale. All clothing, shoes, and purses are listed at 50 cents each. The sale lasts through Wednesday. Don't wait, hurry on down before these fabulous bargains become history.

Former Sen. Schaefer murdered in Habersham

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
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Nancy Schaefer, the former state senator in Georgia Senate District 50, representing Towns County, is dead, the victim of an apparent murder-suicide.

Georgia Bureau of Investigation spokesman John Bankhead said that the investigation into the death of Sen. Schaefer, 73, and her husband, 74-year-old Bruce Schaefer concludes that it was a murder-suicide.

The GBI and Habersham County Sheriff's Office conducted the investigation, Bankhead said.

The couple was discovered in the bedroom of their home in Turnerville, in rural Habersham County by relatives late Friday afternoon. A gun was found near the body of Bruce Schaefer,



State Sen. Nancy Schaefer Bankhead said.

The investigation by the Habersham County Sheriff's Office and the GBI into the deaths of Nancy and Bruce Schaefer indicate that Bruce Schaefer shot his wife once then turned the gun on himself, Bankhead said.

Several letters written by Bruce Schaefer to family members were found in the home including a suicide note, Bankhead said.

A GBI Medical Examiner determined that Sen. Schaefer died from a single

gunshot wound to the back and that Bruce Schaefer died from a single gunshot wound to the chest. To date, the investigation and autopsy results have not uncovered any evidence to dispute that the tragedy is anything other than a murder-suicide, Bankhead said.

Authorities have reported that financial problems were mentioned in the suicide note left behind by Bruce Schaefer.

Sen. Schaefer's death was first announced on the floor of the Georgia House of Representatives Friday evening.

Sen. Schaefer, a two-term state senator in Georgia Senate District 50, was first elected to the state senate in 2004. She lost to current District 50 State Sen. Jim Butterworth in 2008.

Sen. Butterworth was shocked and extremely sad-

dened by the news of Sen. Schaefer's untimely death.

"This news hits the hearts of many in our community and I want to be among the first to express my deepest condolences to the family of Nancy and Bruce Schaefer," Sen. Butterworth said.

"The Schaefer's were a blessing to many who were privileged to know them. We are reminded that the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and as the Schaefer family mourns their loss, they can be assured that Amy and I will keep them in our prayers."

During her tenure in the state Senate, Sen. Schaefer sponsored legislation that supported retirees, families and educators. She also sponsored legislation that limited the sale of pseudoephedrine, a drug used in the manufacturing of meth-

amphetamine.

The legislation put products that contained pseudoephedrine behind retail store counters and limited the amount purchased by individuals to help crack down on the manufacturing of methamphetamine.

Sen. Schaefer and her husband Bruce Schaefer had been married 52 years and had five children. Funeral services were scheduled for 1 p.m. Wednesday at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Toccoa, Acree-Davis Funeral Home announced on Monday.

A private burial will follow at Tallulah Falls Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the Schaefer family requests donations be made to the Nancy and Bruce Schaefer Scholarship Fund that will provide scholarships for under privileged youths.

Health Department jobs at stake

By Charles Duncan
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Towns County Public Health workers are faced with the likelihood of some losing their jobs if the Georgia General Assembly calls for another cutback in public health budgets.

The Towns County Public Health Board of Directors met last week with District 2 Public Health Director Dr. David Westfall in Hiawassee to discuss the county's Fiscal 2011 budget.

Workers already are facing a loss of 10 percent of their annual salaries with another round of proposed furlough days per employee for the entire upcoming Fiscal year. Employees have already been furloughed one day a month. For the past three months, they've been furloughed two days a month. A proposal of continued two furlough days per month is on the table.



School Superintendent Dr. Richard Behrens and Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall look over budget projects for the local health department. Photo/Charles Duncan

The cost savings for FY 2011 from two days a month of furloughs is expected to be \$22,405 for Towns County.

However, the county, which has increased its local funding of the Health Department by \$40,000 to \$178,000 for Fiscal 2011, is exhausting its existing health department fund balance because of the economic downturn.

Another bad year and

the county could be faced with a health department budget shortfall of \$68,579 by June 30, 2011, Dr. Westfall told Towns County board members last week.

That would leave Towns County with a fund balance of \$92,321, or one and a half months of operating cash flow entering Fiscal 2012. Health depart-

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Butterworth fights teacher furloughs

By Charles Duncan
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District 50 State Sen. Jim Butterworth is fighting to protect Georgia's teachers from additional furlough days.

A measure cosponsored by Sen. Preston Smith (R-Rome) and Sen. Butterworth (R-Clarksville) would protect Georgia teachers from additional furlough days. The proposal prevents school systems with more than six percent funding in its reserve accounts from furloughing teachers, when funding is readily available to prevent the furloughs.

The state has exhausted a reserve account of almost \$1.8 billion over the last two years. Most of the reserve funding went to education spending.

"If funding is available on a local level that can protect our teachers from fur-



State Sen. Jim Butterworth

loughs, it seems common sense that these rainy-day funds should be used," said Sen. Butterworth. "Across the state there is more than \$1.2 billion sitting in local school system reserve funds. Simply put, that money should be used to support Georgia teachers."

Sen. Butterworth's presence and impact at the Gold Dome is increasing. He recently was appointed

See Furloughs, page 7A

Stars do shine at Fairgrounds

By Jessica Keaton
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Elvis was alive and well at the Third Annual Stars Shine for Cancer at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

Towns County saw a little bit of Las Vegas during the event that benefits Relay for Life for Towns and Union counties.

The event kept guests of all ages entertained with Vegas-style games in the lobby of Anderson Music Hall, a live auction of local gift certificates and items ranging from food gift certificates for a month to vacations and getaways to places both near and far.



TCHS Principal Roy Perren lights up the stage at Anderson Music Hall. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

After the live auction, the Master of Ceremonies, Rick Siefken, took the stage, announcing the performers in the Las Vegas showcase. Performers included Elvis, AKA Towns County High School Principal Roy Perren, to Aretha Franklin, AKA Shelia Ruud. The duo left

the crowd in awe with their renditions of beloved songs from those historic artists.

Their performances received both applause and laughter. When Ryan Acree took the stage as a very young Neil Sedaka, the

See Stars Shine, page 5A

Girl Scout sleep over a huge hit

By Jessica Keaton
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Girl Scouts from Towns and Union counties broke in their sleeping bags last week at the Towns County Recreation Center.

The annual Girl Scouts Sleepover at the Towns County Recreation Center once again was a huge success.

Local Girl Scouts of all ages brought their pajamas, sleeping bags, and toothbrushes to the Recreation Center on Friday night to learn a bit more about the importance of recycling through activities and arts and crafts.

Local Senior Scout Kristin Dahncke, 15, organized the event in an effort to earn her Silver Award, which is the second highest award given to Girl Scouts. Dahncke, a local freshman at Towns County High School, chose to do recycling for her project because it is something she feels strongly about.

She wants to get her fellow Girl Scouts to be creative about recycling, acknowledging the fact that they already know what the general term means.

The evening focused on crafts, with Dahncke demonstrating how to make paper beads at one station. Other stations included a sta-



Emma Champion

tion with many recycled goods where the girls have free reign over what crafts they want to make, and a station where the girls can make their own games from recycled goods.

After the girls created their crafts, they came back together as a large group and shared what they made throughout the night.

Although the evening's purpose is to focus on recycling, it was a chance for the girls to bond together and reflect on the mission that makes the Girl Scouts a revered organization: "building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who will make the world a better place."

Easter Weekend is upon us

By Charles Duncan
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A full weekend of Easter activities is in store in Towns County.

Churches throughout the community will host Easter Services on Sunday in remembrance of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Also, those colorful eggs will be plentiful as the Countywide and the First Ridges Resort Easter Egg hunts get underway on Saturday and Sunday respectively.

The Towns County Recreation Department,

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The Easter Bunny is expected to make at least two guest appearances this weekend in Towns County. He is expected at the Countywide Easter Egg hunt and the Easter Egg hunt at The Riges Resort. Photo/ Lowell Nicholson

TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

