

# Alderman...continued from page 1

Judge Alderman signed the consent order at the end of the day on March 26th, in Towns County. JQC Investigator Richard Hyde was in the courthouse parking lot all day, the Towns County Herald has learned.

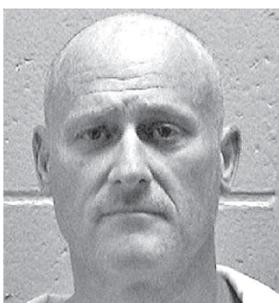
According to Judge Alderman's letter of resignation to Gov. Deal, she had discussed her resignation with her colleagues on the Enotah Circuit bench over the past few months. However, the untimely resignation of Enotah Circuit Senior Superior Court Judge David Barrett delayed Judge Alderman's resignation.

Judge Alderman asked Gov. Deal to quickly appoint two well-qualified judges to the Enotah Circuit to fill the void left by her departure and Judge Barrett's departure.

Gov. Deal accepted Judge Alderman's resignation on March 27th, according to a copy of the letter obtained by the Towns County Herald.

The consent order resolves any charges in the JQC investigation, according to the JQC Web site.

Judge Alderman will not seek, request, or accept an elected or appointed judgeship, she does not qualify for senior judge status, and the prohibition begins



Charles Steven Stringer

immediately and carries forward permanently, according to the JQC Web site.

The resignation became effective on Friday, March 30th, at 11:59 p.m., according to the consent order and Judge Alderman's letter of resignation.

Stringer was convicted in 2006 of possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute in Lumpkin County and sentenced to 10 years in state prison - he served two. He was convicted in Forsyth County for trafficking methamphetamine and sentenced to 15 years in state prison. He also was convicted of violating motor vehicle law and possession of firearm during the commission of a felony, according to the Georgia Department of Corrections Web site.

Stringer was mistakenly freed in 2008 after serv-

ing two years of the Lumpkin County sentence related to his Forsyth County conviction. The Forsyth County paperwork never reached the Georgia Department of Corrections. He was remanded back to state prison by Forsyth County Superior Court Judge Jeff Bagley last April, who handled the original sentence.

The resentence of Stringer followed contact with Judge Bagley by Judge Alderman and several politicians, Judge Bagley disclosed in open Court in March 2011. Alderman denied trying to influence Judge Bagley, stating that she was merely informing Judge Bagley of Stringer's progress.

The politicians linked to speaking with Judge Bagley on Stringer's behalf include State Rep. Carl Rogers, R-Gainesville, State Sen. Steven Gooch, R-Dahlonega and State Sen. Butch Miller, R-Gainesville.

According to the Georgia Department of Corrections Web site, Stringer was paroled from state prison on Sept. 7th, 2011, just months after Judge Alderman spoke with Judge Bagley.

# Faux Pot...continued from page 1

Chris Clinton said that the use of these types of drugs is on the rise, as young people think they are a safe alternative to marijuana.

However, there have been many cases of drug overdoses and serious medical issues attributed to the use of synthetic marijuana, the sheriff said.

One of the street names of this category of drugs is known as 'Spice.'

Spice, which may look like ordinary household potpourri, grasses, or stems, commonly contains a 'synthetic' version of THC, intended to mimic the effects of THC, the major illegal component of marijuana.

Besides the laboratory produced synthetic THC, spice also contains other sometimes unknown ingredients, many of which are harmful or could even be deadly if consumed by humans.

It is illegal to use, possess or distribute any item containing the compound "THC."

On March 22, 2012, Towns County sheriff's deputies received information from several concerned citizens that possible illegal drugs and paraphernalia were in one of the rooms of a local motel.

Towns County sheriff's deputies and Towns County's Appalachian Drug Task Force agent, assisted by Hiawasse Police, served a search warrant at that location and discovered multiple plastic baggies of alleged synthetic marijuana or 'Spice.'

These items were seized and charges are pending in this case, sheriff's reports show.

Georgia banned synthetic marijuana in 2010, but manufacturers tweaked the formula to skirt the law. The bill that Gov. Deal signed on

March 27th was designed to close that loophole.

"These synthetic substances pose an enormous risk to our public safety," Gov. Deal said. "As the usage has dramatically increased, instances of violence, bodily harm and even death have risen with it. I applaud the GBI and the General Assembly for their fast work on this legislation, which addresses a pressing need."

Synthetic marijuana is now a Schedule I drug under the new law and possession and sale of the drug is now punishable by two to 15 years in prison.

The Appalachian Drug Task Force asks that any retailer or individual possessing synthetic marijuana turn the drugs over to the Task Force for destruction. To contact the Task Force, call (706) 348-7410 or (800) 497-6121.

# Clean up...continued from page 1

nity Club, and the Towns County Commissioner's Office.

Event committee member, Grace Howard was amazed at this year's sponsorship.

"We had gifts given to us by The Ridges, Crane Creek Vineyards, Fieldstone Resort, Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, Michelle's Hair Salon and of course the (Towns County) Chamber of Commerce."

"Our prize gifts, we had a cash prize from Citizen South Bank for most trash picked up," she said. "We had dinner for two at The Ridges for the weirdest item that anybody finds."

The weirdest item: goes to BRMEMC, one of the volunteers from the EMC actually found the 'bedroom suite' as a part of her team's pick-up.

The most trash picked up: This prize goes to the Girl Scout troop. They really worked hard, and the Young Harris College Bonner interviewees finished the job at the East boat ramp, for a total of 30 bags.

People involved on the Love Our Lake Committee include the Chamber, the U.S. Forrest Service, Department of Natural Resources, TVA, Young Harris College and the volunteers, Howard said.

DNR worked hard to identify the worst areas impacted by debris.

One of the worst areas was Cable Island out on the lake almost on the North Carolina line, and the Reece Inlet has campsites that boaters use.

"They manage to get all there stuff in; they just don't manage to get it all out," Howard said.

Other problem areas include the boat ramp east of town at Osborn Cemetery, the public access area at Lower Bell Creek, and the primitive campsites off Mull road and Lower Bell Creek that belong to TVA.

"People get in there and leave their stuff," Howard said.

The Love Our Lake Committee is serious about the cleanup effort that was started years ago at The Ridges. Currently, they're working to establish an initiative similar to 'Adopt A Highway.'

"It would be 'adopt a mile of shoreline,'" she said. "If we could get local businesses and interested volunteers like those here today to 'adopt a mile of shoreline' twice-a-year when the waters are down, then we wouldn't have these massive cleanups."

# Hydrants...continued from page 1

Mapping Director, who helped oversee the project along with Towns County Fire Chief Mitch Floyd.

The first hydrant was installed on July 7th.

"If we'd had pretty weather, we could have finished a lot sooner," Roberts said.

Close proximity to a new fire hydrant has saved four homes since the project began in July.

"If those homes hadn't been as close to a hydrant as they were, they would have been gone," Roberts said. "It was good work by firefighters and I'm glad they had plenty of water to

work with."

The city of Hiawasse installed 29 of the 151 hydrants and the city of Young Harris installed two of the 151 hydrants, Commissioner Kendall said.

Towns County Assistant Fire Chief Harold Copeland said that the additional hydrants will save local homeowners thousands each year in homeowners' insurance premiums.

"That's because the closer your home is to a fire hydrant, the lower the cost of homeowners insurance," Copeland said.

Also, the better ISO rat-

ing the county has the more money in homeowners' pockets. Infrastructure items like fire hydrants make ISO ratings take a dive. Bottom line: the lower the ISO rating, the better it is for homeowners.

Towns County now is believed to have 300 more hydrants than neighboring Union County.

"We've got more than 700 hydrants now," Commissioner Kendall said. "We've got some conflicting numbers, but we believe we've got almost double the number of hydrants than Union."

# FBLA...continued from page 1

and Eryn Cochran (second in Desktop Publishing).

It all came about at the Georgia Future Business Leaders of America conference held at the Atlanta Hyatt Hotel and Conference Center on March 23-24. Thirty-five members competed in 18 individual, skill and performance business events. TCHS was very successful with 15 competitors finishing in the Top 10 in their events.

During Friday night's opening ceremonies, TCHS senior Lexi Via was called to the stage to receive one of the prestigious *Who's Who in FBLA* Awards. Lexi has served as local chapter officer, Region 15 president and has competed at the region, state and national level.

TCHS FBLA also was recognized at the opening ceremonies as a Gold Seal Chapter of Merit and received a national award for the Largest Market Share in the Southern Region.

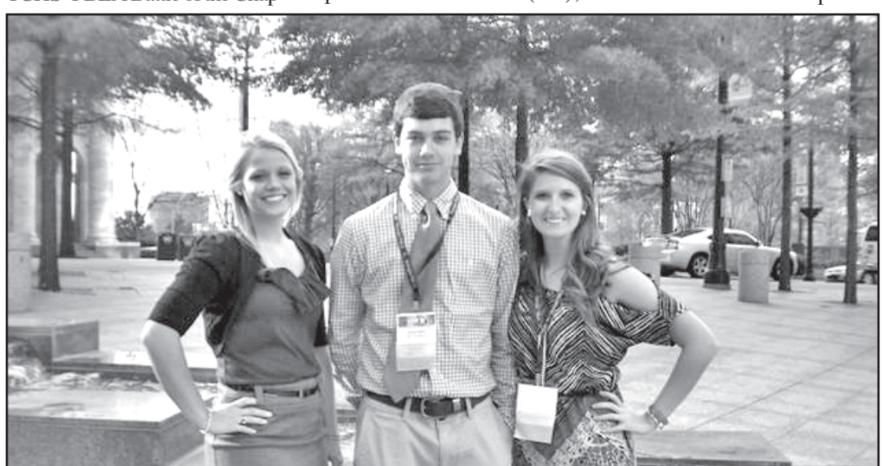
Claire Wilson, Lesleigh Irvin and Harrison Hobbs, TCHS' FBLA Battle of the Chap-

ters team placed in the Top 10 at Fall Conference which led them to compete in finals at the State Leadership Conference. The team battled to the end and to a great finish on stage at the conference, placing third in the state.

Members competing at the State Leadership Conference were, Ali Bleckley in Spreadsheet Applications, Claire Wilson in Client Service, Lesleigh Irvin in Principles and Procedures, the team of Courtney Farmer and Thanh Duong in Digital Design and Promotion, McKenzie Moss in Word Processing I, Courtney Marshall and Eryn Cochran in Desktop Publishing (2<sup>nd</sup>), Jasmine Forester in Public Speaking I (finished 5th), the team of Johnny Arrowood, Noah Calhoun and Jordan Woodward in Banking and Financial Systems (finished 5th), Danielle Diehl in Intro to Business Communications (finished 6th), Allison Page in Principles and Procedures (8th),

Courtney Marshall in Intro to Business Communications (finished 10th), the team of Austin Wood and Luke Parker in Business Ethics, Christa Hamill in Public Speaking II, Kayla Taylor in Job Interview, Harrison Hobbs in Principles and Procedures, Bradley Smith in Sports Management, Kyle Patterson in Intro to Business, Alicia Williams in Intro to Business, Amber Williams in Intro to Business, Lindsay Patton in Economics, Diane Mouangkham in Economics and Business Law, Rylan Albach in Business Law, Walker Guss in Business Law, Kara Harris in Business Law, Lexi Via and Kindle Moss in Digital Video Production, and Lindsay Patton, Rylan Albach and Walker Guss in Community Service Project.

The Towns County Herald wishes the eight participants in national competition the best of luck in San Antonio this summer. Our community is blessed to have such a wealth of talent on our doorstep.



Battle of the Chapter Team: Claire Wilson, Harrison Hobbs and Lesleigh Irvin



2012 FBLA State Competitors after Awards of Excellence Program.

# Wilkinson...continued from page 1

purchase a vehicle between now and February 2013 would have the option of choosing between the current system and the one-time title fee system. All vehicles purchased after March 1, 2013 will use the new title fee system.

In addition to eliminating the "birthday tax," HB386 would also reduce the marriage penalty in the current Georgia income tax code. By increasing the personal exemption for married couples by \$2,000 on joint income tax returns and \$1,000 on separate returns, HB 386 will eliminate an imbalance in the tax system that inadvertently punishes married couples with a higher tax rate. HB 386 will also close a loophole in our tax code that currently provides out of state retailers a competitive advantage over in-state brick and mortar retailers that directly or indirectly employ more than 1,000,000 Georgians. HB 386 will require out-of-state sellers to collect and pay the Georgia

state sales tax if they have certain relationships with affiliates in Georgia, just like their in-state counterparts. Not only will this end an unfair tax policy that puts small businesses in Georgia at a disadvantage, but it will also stop incentivizing out-of state retailers to keep their facilities and jobs out of Georgia. Sales tax holidays on school supplies and energy efficient items will be reinstated for the next two years and the energy sales tax on manufacturers will be eliminated. The elimination of the energy sales tax on manufacturers will make Georgia a more attractive environment for business, which ultimately provides more jobs for Georgians.

Finally, the Senate unanimously passed an agreement reached by a legislative conference committee regarding metal recycling with fewer than 90 minutes remaining in this year's session. The bill's

key provision prohibits metal recyclers from giving cash payments to sellers of scrap metal. Metal thefts have been on the rise in recent years. The most frequent targets of metal thieves include copper ground wire from electric substations and home air conditioning units. Law enforcement officials say the perpetrators are often drug addicts looking for quick cash. Turning off that access to cash should go a long way toward addressing the problem.

Obviously, there is not room here to detail all of the significant legislation that passed during the session. If you ever have questions regarding specific legislation or you have any ideas for specific legislation or issues you would like for me to address over the next few months, please contact me. We must work together to build a brighter future for our state and nation. May God bless you and the great state of Georgia.

# TSPLOST...continued from page 1A

home heating oil and other necessities of life.

"The purpose of this meeting is to discuss ways to inform citizens of the upcoming vote," Commissioner Kendall said.

Commissioner Kendall is calling all political parties, asking Independents, TEA Party members, Republicans and Democrats - to join together to defeat this 1-cent sales tax increase.

The commissioner said the tax is loaded with well-funded Special Interest exemptions extracted from state lawmakers by highly

paid lobbyists, who succeeded in getting those exemptions that will mostly use the infrastructure, paid for by the tax, and put the cost of building that infrastructure "on the backs of those who are retired and living on a fixed income."

A similar meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. on Thursday at the Blairsville Civic Center. Local taxpayers will present details as to why the 1-cent transportation tax is a bad tax for the economy, an unfair tax, an unbalanced tax, and a bad tax altogether.

On April 17th, at

Towns County High School, the president of the Towns County Homeowners Association, in cooperation with the Towns County Chamber of Commerce, has invited Todd Long, Director of Planning for Georgia's Department of Transportation to speak on the merits of the tax. That meeting is at 7 p.m. next week.

Commissioner Kendall opted not to go to that meeting, rather, setting up a meeting at the Senior Center to discuss why voters should oppose the proposed 1-cent tax.

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