

# Towns County Herald

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## Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Rain	83 56
Fri: Rain	76 50
Sat: Rain	76 50
Sun: Rain	74 49
Mon: Rain	74 53
Tue: Rain	76 52
Wed: Rain	77 52



Upstream Elevation Predicted 05/11/11	
Lake Chatuge	1924.67
Lake Nottely	1775.99
Blue Ridge	1668.64

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## Chamber Chronicles

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## Garden Tour

The Towns County Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring its first Spring Garden Tour. The theme: Garden Rambles, A Tour of Mountain Gardens in Hiwassee and Young Harris. The tour will include self-guided tours of area gardens on June 4th and 5th. Tickets are \$10 each and are on sale now. Call (706) 896-4966 for details about the tour.



## Happy 155 Towns County

A beautiful handmade quilt will be on display at the square in Hiwassee from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, May 14, at the annual Arts & Heritage Festival sponsored by the Towns County Historical Society. The quilt depicts events and items of interest in the past history of the county beginning with the Cherokees' Trail of Tears. Other historical items and pictures of schools and classes of long ago will also be on display in the gazebo. Events begin at 11 a.m. with welcomes by county and city dignitaries, live music, gospel singing, square dancing, and poetry and old time stories will lead up to cutting of the birthday cake around 3:30 p.m. This will be followed by a performance of our own Elvis impersonator (Roy Perren). Don't miss this day-long event with all kinds of food, music and fun.



## After Hours

The Towns County Chamber of Commerce's Business After Hours for June will be held at Deb Collins Signature Gallery and the Tangerine Frog on Thursday, June 16th. Please plan to attend and don't forget your business cards. For details, call (706) 896-4966.

## Residents have mixed feelings about GA 515 project

By Charles Duncan  
Towns County Herald  
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A crowd of more than 120 people showed up at Young Harris College's *Old Gym* last week to attend an open house by the Georgia Department of Transportation to discuss a proposed expansion of GA 515/U.S. 76 in Young Harris.

GDOT engineers and consultants were on hand Thursday to discuss multiple proposals for the 8.3-mile widening project from Young Harris Street in Blairsville to Timberline Drive near Brasstown Valley Resort. Right-of-way funding for the federal/state project is expected to be available in 2014, with construction slated to begin in 2017.

The plans in Union County follow the existing roadway and widen the existing footprint. The Young



Diris Farmer (pink sweater) points to the property where a bypass around Young Harris would begin. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Harris phase is a little more difficult.

Possible alternatives in or around Young Harris include a two-lane bypass around the north side of the city to minimize impacts to the downtown area and the Young Harris College campus.

Other alternatives in-

clude a two-lane bypass through the northern part of the Young Harris City Limits, a two-lane bypass through the center of the Young Harris City Limits and a four-lane divided roadway through Young Harris along the existing path of Georgia 515.

Robert Mahoney, GDOT District Preconstruction Engineer, said he gathered mixed reactions from his discussion with locals on Thursday.

"People are looking at the options and some are for one, others for another," he said. "Some are saying, don't do anything at all.

"We'll just have to go through all the comments and try to develop what the synopsis is from all the comments from this meeting," Mahoney said. "We've still got a long way to go in the process - we're at the very beginning of the environmental process.

"Once we understand what the feelings of the public are, and get the weigh in from the federal highway administration, then we can make a decision on which is the next step in the process."

Part of the process of vetting through the community includes the "no build"

option, which leaves the existing roadway infrastructure in place without any improvements, Mahoney said.

All the factors developed through community meetings and input from local residents must be weighed before the actual engineering process can begin, Mahoney said.

Towns County resident Diris Farmer was there with her son Greg Howell, who owns a tract of land that would be the starting point of one of the multiple options for a bypass.

"I would hate to see the historical part of Young Harris affected," she said. "It's a small town; I realize the college would be affected."

She's glad she's not making the decision.

"I guess all-in-all, it's a position I'd rather not speak

See Widening, page 14

## Zell: 'always remember YHC IOU'

Young Harris' native son delivers YHC Commencement Address

By Charles Duncan  
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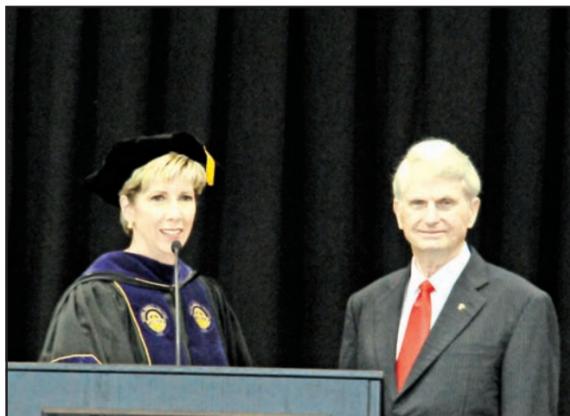
From small-town mayor to Georgia State Senator to Lieutenant Governor to Georgia Governor to United States Senator, there isn't much that Zell Miller hasn't accomplished.

For 35 years, he served the public good of the citizens of Georgia.

On Saturday, Young Harris College President Cathy Cox told the school's graduates and their family members that there is no one more associated with the image of YHC than Zell Miller.

"He is Young Harris College and Young Harris College is Zell Miller," she said.

As he stepped to the podium, the man who gave HOPE to every Pre-K student and graduating high



YHC President Cathy Cox presented the former Georgia Governor and U.S. Senator with the honorary degree of Doctor of Public Service at Saturday's ceremony. Photo James Reese

school senior, told the 127 graduates of Young Harris College that YHC is a major part of who he is today.

He told the graduates that the road to success has bumps in the road. He told them that more than likely rejection will be a part of their future. He also said that rejection was a huge part of

his success and their success.

"Remember always that you can reject the rejections," he said. "No one knows that more than I. Three times I was rejected in elections; I rejected those rejections and you see, they

See YHC, page 14

## School year finally coming to a close

Almost official: Schools achieve AYP for eighth straight year

By Charles Duncan  
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It's that time of year when Towns County High School Principal Roy Perren begins to watch how his seniors carry themselves.

The school year is winding down and seniors are in a mad dash to make sure all the finalities of their last high school year are in order. They're making sure the caps and gowns fit, that the invitations to graduation are in the mail and last, but not least, that their grades are in order.

TCHS Graduation is May 27<sup>th</sup> in the high school gym.

"Every day in May is a full day," he said.

Perren watches closely as a small group of honor students battle for the school's highest academic



Principal Roy Perren

honors. As usual, it's a tight race, right down to the wire.

A tenth of a point can make the difference this year, Perren said.

"Yes, it's that close," he said.

Bottom line, Perren is as proud of this group of seniors (80 strong) as he has ever been of a graduating class.

"This is the third group

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## Tomato Plant Day a hit again at UCB

By Charles Duncan  
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It was quite a day. United Community Bank gave away 14,000-plus tomato plants, served up more than 3,000 hot dogs and around 4,000 Cokes - regular and the diet variety.

It was UCB's 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Customer Appreciation Day in Hiwassee and folks turned out.

"It's been busy all day," said Chris Holloway, a Towns County High School senior and member of UCB's Junior Board of Directors.

Free tomato plants at UCB Hiwassee in May is a tradition that dates back to 1992, said UCB's Matt Miller.

See Tomatoes, page 14



Scenes like this were familiar all day long on Friday at United Community Bank's Hiwassee Branch off U.S. 76. The bank handed out 14,000 tomato plants, served 3,000 hot dogs and 4,000 Cokes - regular and the diet variety. Photo/James Reese

## Mock Prom crash delivers message



Towns County High School junior Ali Bleckley is cuffed by the Georgia State Patrol during last week's Mock Prom Crash. Photo James Reese

By James Reese  
Towns County Herald  
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Every 30 minutes, someone dies in an alcohol-related crash in America.

Towns County Schools Student Resource Officer Darren Jones wanted to make sure that message was loud and clear as juniors and seniors prepared for Saturday's prom.

The scene was all too familiar, a drunken student, already blitzed during partying earlier on Prom Night, was headed out for more party supplies (alcohol). Along the way, the impaired

See Prom, page 14

## Vince Gill electrifies Anderson Music Hall

By James Reese  
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Vince Gill brought a packed Anderson Music Hall crowd to its feet on Friday night.

Gill, an Oklahoma native, who began his career in Bluegrass in the 1970s, and later became a pop star as a member of Pure Prairie League, is best known for his heart-wrenching solo ballads that led him to the top of the Country Music charts beginning in 1983.

He shared several of his more than 40 Country Music Billboard hits with the partisan Vince Gill crowd at Anderson Music Hall.

Gill, 53, gave the crowd their money's worth on this night, playing a two-hour set that featured his high energy Bluegrass, his more somber, heart-wrenching songs and the cross-over hits that made him a music legend.

Gill has charted more than 40 Country Music Billboard hits, brought home 18 Country Music Association awards to go along with 20 Grammy Awards, more than any Country Music male artist in the world. He's also sold more than 26 million albums.

He's played Carnegie Hall, the Grand Ole Opry and many more nationally renowned music halls. However, on this night, he felt like he was back home on the front porch picking a Coun-



Vince Gill

try melody that he most likely would share with a group of friends.

That's how Gill treated his Anderson Music Hall audience, like a close-knit group of friends over a jam session. The playlist included *High Lonesome Sound*, *One More Last Chance*, *If You Ever Have Forever in Mind*, *Pocket Full of Gold* and *Pretty Little Adriana*.

He also sang the song that his late father said would make him bigger than Elvis, *It's Hard to Kiss the Lips at Night*, a song that he performed as a member of the Notorious Cherry Bombs.

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