

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Clouds	74 48
Fri: Clouds	81 53
Sat: Clouds	84 56
Sun: Rain	85 58
Mon: Rain	86 58
Tue: Rain	85 59
Wed: Rain	87 60



Upstream Elevation Predicted 05/18/11	
Lake Chatuge	1925.19
Lake Nottely	1776.34
Blue Ridge	1670.78

INDEX

20 Pages

Arrests.....	3
Church/Obits.....	8,9
Classifieds.....	17
Editorial.....	4
Calendar.....	4
Legals.....	18
Sports.....	14
Television.....	6

Chamber Chronicles

Page 12

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.



Kris

Kristofferson

On Saturday, May 21, at 7 p.m. at Anderson Music Hall, the legendary of the artist known as Kris Kristofferson will perform in Hiwassee. Tickets go on sale Friday at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. The cost of admission: \$42, handling fee included.

Kristofferson was inducted into the Songwriters' Hall of Fame in 1985.

His career has spanned more than 40 years as a singer, songwriter and actor, having performed in 91 motion pictures, either on the big screen or television. Don't get caught on the outside looking in.

Call (706) 896-4191 for more details.



Rabies Clinic

The Annual 4-H Rabies Clinic is taking place on Saturday. See the advertisement inside today's edition for more details.



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.

Groundbreaking for Foster Memorial Park on Friday

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Groundbreaking for the first phase of construction on the Ralph and Johnnie Irene Foster Memorial Park is scheduled for Friday, May 20, at 3:30 p.m. at the development site on Mining Gap Road.

The construction of Foster Memorial Park is one of many projects funded by the March 15, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum, approved by Towns County voters by an overwhelming 90 percent margin.

"The public is cordially invited to attend this historical event of upgrading multipurpose parks and recreational facilities for Towns County's children and adults," Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall.

The property, which comes from the Johnnie



Towns County will pay tribute to Ralph and Johnnie Foster by naming the new county park and recreation facility in their honor.

Irene Foster Charitable Trust, will be used for recreational ball fields, hiking and walking trails and will be Towns County's version of Meeks Park in neighboring Union County.

"They could have sold this property for a lot more money to developers," Com-

missioner Kendall said. "Nancy felt that this is what her sister Johnnie would have wanted; doing something for all Towns County."

The park is named Foster Memorial Park in honor of its owners, Ralph and Johnnie Foster.

"At my sister's pass-

ing in 2009, she had no idea what would become of the property," said Nancy Broshears, Johnnie Irene Foster's sister.

In the spring 2010, Jean Kendall, Commissioner Kendall's wife, approached Nancy Broshears about the property for Towns County to use as a park.

"I knew immediately that would have been what my sister would have wanted - something beneficial to many people for years to come as a memorial to her and her husband Ralph," Nancy Broshears said.

"They held onto this property for so many years," she said. "It will be used for young people and all who choose to use this park."

"Ralph and Johnnie both loved Towns County, they grew up here," Nancy said. "They lived in Akron, Ohio for 33 years. Their dream was to retire and

move back here permanently. They purchased a small brick house next to the Fieldstone Inn in 1971. Ralph retired in June 1980 and passed away September 1980."

Johnnie Foster was never truly happy again after her husband's death. She and Ralph had dreamed of building a log home on the Foster Farm and being active in Towns County as well as traveling in their later years.

"She gave up on their plans but she was still very much interested in Towns County," Nancy said. "She subscribed to both papers and read them both cover-to-cover. Her health began to fail and she could not become involved in many activities. "What makes me feel good is that this park

See Park Ceremony, page 16

Firefighter recruits say 'I do'

County welcomes 10 firefighter recruits to the rank of certified firefighter

By Charles Duncan
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A pilot program by the Towns County Fire Department has yielded 10 rookie firefighters.

Fire Chief Mitch Floyd welcomed firefighters, their families and relatives and Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall to the Senior Center on Monday night for graduation ceremonies for the rookie volunteer firefighters.

"This is the first time the department has recruited members from the public," Chief Floyd said. "The bulk of this class answered our recruitment advertisement and here we are tonight."

The rookie firefighters, each having completed four months of instruction, will be assigned to stations closest to their neighborhoods to make it most efficient for



Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall administers the oath of public service to the county's 10 newest firefighters. Photo/James Reese

them to operate, Chief Floyd said.

"They are officially part of the fold," he said, adding that each firefighter will receive navy blue uniforms to replace the power blue uniforms of a firefighter recruit.

"I think most of our members that have been through this program know

what a commitment this has been," Chief Floyd said. "This particular class was a pilot project. It's the first time that the department has formally recruited members of the public."

"I think the spouses and the relatives can certainly appreciate the time

See Recruits, page 16

Search underway for Dr. Behrens' successor

Search could be completed by mid-June, early July

By Charles Duncan
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The search for Dr. Richard Behrens' successor as Towns County Schools Superintendent is well underway.

Over the past three weeks, the five members of the Towns County Board of Education have developed vacancy announcements, advertised the position, and applications are being received.

The deadline for applications is Friday. The BOE will then review all applications, followed by interviews with prospective, qualified candidates.

Dr. Behrens submitted his retirement letter to the BOE during its April meeting, a move that was reluctantly accepted by the five-member board. Behrens had two years left on his contract as schools superintendent



Dr. Richard Behrens

that he signed last year to stay on as the school's top educator.

"The Board was gracious enough to let me out of my contract," Dr. Behrens said. "It was a decision that took a great deal of thought. I love Towns County; I love the students

See Superintendent, page 16

County celebrates 155th birthday

By James Reese
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Mother Nature was smiling on Towns County on Saturday.

One might say that the dissipation of threatening rain clouds was a gift from above, a birthday gift that is.

Towns County celebrated its 155th birthday underneath blue skies.

The event featured old-time music, square dancing, food, fun and of course, a big birthday cake.

Local dignitaries included Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall, Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby, City Manager Rick Stancil and Unicoy Turnpike preserva-

See Birthday, page 16



Lynn Marshall of the Towns County Historical Society and Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall slice the traditional celebratory birthday cake at the county's 155th birthday party in Hiwassee on Saturday. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Kendall expects large 2012 revenue shortfall

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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With the 2012 Towns County Budget in the early planning stages, Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall finds he's faced with some extreme challenges in the months ahead.

A 10 to 15 percent reduction in the 2011 Tax Digest is expected due to a continued slack economy and massive bank foreclosures, Commissioner Kendall said.

If that's the case, it could result in a revenue shortfall of \$500,000 to \$750,000 intended for the 2012 County Budget, Commissioner Kendall said.

The county also is bracing for a more than 32 percent increase in employee health insurance premiums, he said.

"Health insurance open enrollment will begin very soon. I received information yesterday that there would be a 32 and a half percent increase in employee health insurance premiums," Commissioner Kendall said. "I am immediately trying to find some type of plan that will help ease this burden."

Towns County isn't alone in facing monetary challenges as neighboring counties are facing similar financial woes. White County's tax digest dropped by 12 percent, Commis-



Commissioner Bill Kendall

sioner Kendall said. "White County is on a fiscal year July 1 to June 30 Budget. White County is eliminating the county's share of employee retirement to save \$350,000 to balance their budget," he said. "Towns County is on a calendar year budget, Jan. 1 to Dec. 30. We are just beginning to prepare for the upcoming severe revenue shortfalls for the 2012 budget."

"This recession has been very cruel to most everyone including homeowners who lost their jobs and homes due to bank foreclosures," he said. "These properties are selling at very low prices driving down other property val-

See Shortfall, page 16

Towns County is Work Ready

By Charles Duncan
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The executive director of Georgia's Office of Workforce Development met Monday with county and city leaders to explain the state's Work Ready program.

Executive Director Melvin Everson told the group that the program is all about getting the economic development on track in Georgia.

"The stakeholders in your county are your business community, your employees and your govern-



Georgia Workforce Development Executive Director Melvin Everson came to Towns County on Monday. Photo/James Reese

See Work Ready, page 16

TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

