

Work Ready... continued from page 1

ment," he said. "If everybody does their role, it will work, we've seen it happen."

Towns County already is a certified Work Ready Community in progress, one of 99 counties statewide with the same designation.

Being a Work Ready Community means a county has the skilled workforce needed to meet business demands and drive economic growth, as well as the educational foundation to build a pipeline of workers ready to create ongoing success, Everson said.

The goal, Everson said, is to make every sector of the business community Work Ready Certified.

To become Work Ready Certified requires a three-hour test that examines each individual's skills in applied math and science, locating information and reading for information, Everson said.

There are four levels of skills grading: platinum, gold, silver and bronze.

For those scoring a bronze, silver or gold grading, there is skills gap training available at North Georgia Technical College's Blairsville campus to provide cost-free skills improve-

ment, Everson said.

Georgia Work Ready was launched in August 2006 by then Gov. Sonny Perdue and the Georgia Chamber of Commerce to improve the job training and marketability of Georgia's workforce and drive future economic growth for the state.

It is the only initiative of its kind to be conducted through a partnership between a state government and state chamber of commerce, independent businesses, and the education community ensuring that companies can more reliably match the right people with the right jobs.

Work Ready is based on a skills assessment and certification for job seekers and a job profiling system for businesses. By identifying both the needs of business and the available skills of Georgia's workforce, the state can more effectively generate the right talent for the right jobs.

Everson said the assessment of workers' skills was developed by the same group that developed the SAT and ACT tests.

Once counties attain their Certified Work Ready Community goals, they are

able to maintain their status by ensuring that their available workforce continues to earn Work Ready Certificates, engages local businesses to recognize and use Work Ready, and continues to increase their public high school graduation rate.

To continue their work, each county will receive a \$10,000 grant. Their Work Ready Community teams also will receive a two-year membership to their local chamber of commerce and a budget for additional Work Ready outreach materials. Counties that are fully certified receive road signs and a seal denoting the year they achieved certification.

As for Georgia's unemployed job seekers, there's the Be Work Ready program where they can gain a valuable competitive advantage for their job search - a Work Ready Certificate, powered by ACT's nationally accredited WorkKeys assessment system. The opportunity to earn a Work Ready Certificate is offered at no cost via the state's network of technical colleges, validates and individuals' skill and knowledge levels to potential employers.

Birthday...continued from page 1

tionist Carey Waldrip. The dignitaries spoke of the changes to the Towns County landscape, the challenges ahead, trials and tribulations that our forefathers may never have imagined. The community, now 155 years old, obviously is well into the 21st century.

"There are going to be challenges, growing pains, so to speak," Mayor Gibby said. "We still like to see our mountains; we still enjoy the natural treasures. It's a good place to be; I'm happy. We celebrate our history, but we look forward to define our future."

Commissioner Kendall praised the Towns County Historical Society for keeping the event an annual festive occasion. He spoke about history, challenges of growth and the efforts to make the future somewhat brighter for the next generation.

"Certainly, to know where we're going in the future, we need to know where we've been," he said. "We've had controlled growth over the last decade. The U.S. Census Bureau says we've grown about 12 per-

cent over that time period. "It's a lot better to have trees and grass than it is to have too many people," Commissioner Kendall said. "Lumpkin County has more than 40,000 people and they're about the same geographical size as Towns County. That county is having a lot of traffic problems and congestion issues that have come with that growth.

"We're committed to controlled growth in Towns County," he said. "Hopefully, we can get some jobs in the future. We've got some challenges ahead but we're working to build our infrastructure through capital outlay projects funded by the recently passed Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax.

"What the Historical Society is trying to do is preserve these mountains," Commissioner Kendall said. "I remember how much my folks loved these mountains. The old time folks knew every branch, creek and hollow in Towns County.

"Our history is an im-

portant part of who we are and it's important to preserve our history for future generations," he said.

Waldrip, who knows a good bit about history, stressed the preservation of the historical Unicoy Turnpike remnants in Towns County.

The Unicoy Turnpike Trail predates written history. The Turnpike follows ancient trails that ran through the lands of the Cherokee Nation.

It has been a major corridor for human travel for thousands of years and was the original gateway for early settlers into the frontier of the Appalachia.

The trail runs through Georgia, into North Carolina and ends in Vonore, Tenn. It follows an ancient trade path that includes Towns County, better known as the northernmost end of the old Unicoy Turnpike.

"We want the whole trail preserved," Waldrip said. "It all has to be one unit. It's our greatest historical treasure. What we're trying to do is simple, preserving Unicoy Turnpike remnants. It's not as easy as it sounds."



Hundreds came from all around to take part in annual Arts & Heritage Festival in Downtown Hiwassee on Saturday which featured some really good square dancing. The annual event attracts a crowd, young and old alike. Below, the Class of 1951 celebrates Festival weekend with a 60-year class reunion. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Shortfall...continued from page 1

ues, the Tax Digest and revenues for local governments. The large number of citizens out of work have had a hard time finding money to pay their taxes and the recession cycle continues to feed on itself.

"Over the past three years we have experienced the worst recession since the Great Depression that started in 1929," he said. "I have worked very hard and am pleased that by careful monitoring of expenditures and eliminating recurring expenses and by using attrition, not replacing non-emergency employee vacancies, have not had to lay off any employees.

"Hopefully, I will be able to manage the upcoming 2012 budget in a similar fashion," he said. "However, the large decrease in the Tax Digest, which is just now hitting us, is going to make it very difficult. As I have done all through this

recession, I will carefully balance the needs to provide essential county services while looking after the taxpayers who foot the bills."

Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax dollars approved March 15 by local voters cannot be used to eliminate revenue shortfalls in the general revenue budget for employees' salaries and benefits.

"SPLOST Funds, as required by law, will be spent for the capital outlay projects listed on the ballot as approved by the voters," Commissioner Kendall said.

Those projects include roads, fire hydrants, water, sewerage, fire equipment, libraries, recreational and community facilities.

Commissioner Kendall said that as county employees move forward, it's time to look at the positive side of the local economic situation.

"Unlike the millions of citizens who have lost their jobs, homes, and retirement, we are fortunate to have jobs, and benefits," he said. "We are in many, many ways more fortunate than many of our friends and neighbors. One of the most troubling aspects of my job is the many citizens that come by the office daily looking for and wanting to work and having to tell them I have nothing available at the present time.

"May is the month that millions of students will graduate high school and college to enter the workforce," he said. "They no longer can look forward to being assured of a good job as was the case in the past. It should not be that way in America; however, we will endure this economic storm. Things eventually will get better and there will be a brighter future.

Park Ceremony...from page 1

will be a perpetual memorial to the memory of Ralph and Johnnie," Nancy said. "It will be a benefit to Towns County for years to come."

Commissioner Kendall said that the purchase of the Foster property was an historic moment in Towns County history.

"We needed it," he said, referencing the property's purchase. "We had tried every conceivable way to develop Parks and Recreation here in Towns

County over the years to no avail.

"The young people here have never had adequate facilities for athletics and the older generation doesn't have the walking trails that other communities around us have," he said. "We'll have a park to build and grow our local athletic programs and have a place for the families in our community to enjoy. The children of this county deserve that much. The residents of

Towns County deserve that much."

The bulk of the proceeds from the property's sale to the county by the Johnnie Irene Foster Charitable Trust went to Young Harris College for scholarships, Kendall said.

"The county money that we spent for that property will go toward future scholarships for our children and our grandchildren," Kendall said. "It was a win-win for Towns County."

Come out to see "So You Think We Can Dance"

Brasstown Dance Academy will be presenting their Annual Spring Recital on Saturday, May 21, 2011 at 6 p.m. at Glenn Auditorium in the Clegg Fine Arts Building at Young Harris College. The theme this year is "So You Think We Can Dance," showcasing a variety of dance styles in the manner of the popular TV show. Dancers of all ages will be performing for their families and friends. The recital will also feature several pieces from The Fusion Dance Company, a project of Brasstown Dance Academy, which has just completed an award-winning third season. We hope that you will be able to join us for this exciting program!

Tickets will be available at the door or in advance at the BDA Studio and Head 2 Toe Dance Supply, both located across the street from BRMEMC in Young Harris. The cost is \$12 for adults and \$5 for students.

If you are considering dance classes for your student, this is a great opportunity to preview what Brasstown Dance Academy has to offer. Summer is coming fast...call for information about our exciting summer programs; Prin-



cess & Superhero Camp for ages 3-5 and Dance With the Disney Stars Camp for ages 5 and older. Private and small

group classes are also available. Registration is now open for summer and fall classes at Brasstown Dance Academy. NT(May18,3)CA

Avita Board of Directors meeting

Avita Community Partners will hold the monthly meeting of the Board of Directors Tuesday, May 24, 2011 at 7 p.m. at the Avita Community Partners' Administrative Office at 4331 Thurmond Tanner Parkway, Flowery Branch, GA.

The public is invited to attend. For further information or directions, please contact Regina Grisham at 678-513-5748 or 1-800-525-8751 or by email regina.grisham@avita-partners.org. NT(May18,22)CA

Recruits...from page 1

their loved ones spent away from home," the chief said, adding that each firefighter will complete 200 hours of training.

"Tonight culminates a long grueling process for these outstanding recruits," Chief Floyd said. "Here they sit tonight, ready to go to work."

The Towns County Fire Corps hosted the event at the Senior Center, providing the group of public servants with an outstanding meal and a Graduation Class cake.

Commissioner Kendall did the honors of swearing in the new firefighters.

"I want to congratulate each and every one of you for your commitment to Towns County," he said.

The night was also spe-



Division Chief Doug Mills

cial for the group's lead instructor, Doug Mills, who was named Division Chief for the fire department.

"Doug is a state certified fire instructor," Chief Floyd said. "Without Doug's dedication and certifications, we wouldn't be able

to provide these in-house certification programs in Towns County.

"Every night those classes were going on, there was a cadre of assistant instructors that were there helping Doug out," Chief Floyd said. "I want to say a well deserved thank you to each of those folks."

Commissioner Kendall said certified volunteer firefighters are necessary in Towns County.

"That's because we're not big enough to be able to have and afford a paid, full-time fire department," he said. "That's why the dedication of each and every one of these individuals should be greatly appreciated by everyone in Towns County."

Superintendent...continued from page 1

and their families. I'll continue to do that, I just won't be superintendent."

Dr. Behrens has accepted a teaching position with Truett McConnell College in Cleveland.

The BOE has set a tentative goal of naming the next Superintendent of Towns County Schools by mid-June. The BOE hopes to have a new superintendent ready to begin work in July.

Qualifications and traits identified by the BOE include enthusiasm, strong leadership, and ability to work closely with the system's current employees. The BOE also seeks a superintendent who will function as a member of the local community and work closely with Towns County parents and business leaders.

Overall, the BOE hopes to select a new superintendent who has a proven track record as a strong educational leader and who has a strong working knowledge of curriculum and instruction.

The Board is particularly interested in a leader whose primary focus is continued improvement of student achievement.

The BOE has advertised the superintendent's vacancy across Georgia by posting notices with the Georgia School Boards Association, with the Georgia School Superintendents Association, and by mailings to all school systems and Regional Educational Service Agencies throughout the state.

These postings and mailings are typically moni-

tor by aspiring superintendents both within the state and across the nation. The BOE believes that the desirable living environment of Towns County and the already strong school system will help to attract applicants from both the immediate area and from outside the region.

BOE members have expressed that the board is proud of the achievements made under the leadership of Dr. Behrens and the administrators, teachers, and support staff members of the county.

It is the BOE's hope that the next superintendent can build on the system's strengths and move Towns County Schools to even higher levels of student achievement.