

During an interview before the event, Crothers said they expected a good turnout because the Fire Corp had distributed promotional booklets in surrounding towns as far as Helen, Ellijay, and Franklin N.C.

Their efforts paid off because an estimated 2000 people attended the chili cook off, and many cooks ran out of chili shortly after noon. According to Crothers, the chili recipes were made from chicken, beef, buffalo, venison, bear, and alligator, as well as a vegetarian chili made with tofu.

Along with the chili, the event had games for the kids, a dunking booth, a country store selling donated goods, a safety demonstration by the fire department, and a book signing by Zell Miller, who sold out of his books in little over an hour and donated \$400 to the Fire Corp.

The Red Cross also had a booth selling chili and hotdogs for early birds, and Wolf Creek Radio WACF-95.1 broadcasted from the square.

Wyatt Espalin from Hiawassee and Cody Ferguson from Warne N.C. played music for the crowd.

Crothers said the Fire Corps hopes to make the cook off an annual event. "We are going to have another one next year, so get your chili recipes ready," she said.



Zell Miller and Fire Chief Mitch Floyd attend the chili cookoff.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

to operate its 96,000 square foot facility on 16 acres on Georgia 76 near The Junction. Lowe's had set a June 1 deadline for finding enough sewer capacity to build its first store in Towns County.

Lowe's projects first year sales at its Towns County store to reach \$18 million. The store will provide approximately 75 full time jobs plus additional part time employment opportunities.

"With Lowe's serving as the anchor, projections are that a number of other businesses and jobs will follow, which will result in significant positive economic impact and job opportunities for our citizens," Commissioner Bill Kendall said.

Kendall has worked closely with Lowe's officials for several months to iron out complicated issues that come with a project of this size.

All building permit issues are resolved, as well as all environmental protection issues both state and local, Kendall said.

Lowe's also has complied with all county laws related to signage on their property and on the highway,

Kendall said.

If everything goes as projected and all issues settled, the closing date for the property is February 2010, with construction starting soon thereafter. A grand opening date for business is projected in the fall of 2010, Kendall said.

Once the Lowe's project is brought to fruition, Commissioner Kendall said it is imperative that the county, the cities of Hiawassee and Young Harris and the Towns County Water and Sewer Authority develop a long-range plan to provide water and sewage for the next decade.

The county government is not affiliated with the Towns County Water and Sewer Authority.

"The county, the cities of Hiawassee and Young Harris and the Towns County Water and Sewer Authority are going to have to sit down and develop a long-term service delivery strategy to avoid water and sewer issues in the future," Kendall said.

Mayor Mathis agreed. She said it's time that all parties step up and work for the common good: "providing services to all our residents."

MECHS 2009 Graduates living in Towns County

Randy Barnes, Jr.
Chelsea Diane Barrett
Tyler Stacy Barrett
Cory Charles Collins
DeAnna Delores DeVane
Jeremy Scott Hedden
Jennifer Robin Helton
Kara Rose LaCroix
Amber Dawn Lear
Penny Lane Ledford
Douglas Kirt Martin
Chelsea Lynn McCabe
William Brett Nash
Tonya Renee Parker
Keya Cheyenne Peebles
Caleb Tyler Sellers
Sarah Melissa Stalvey
Hunter Page Williams
Willis Wesley Williams III
Tabitha Michele Wood
Katelyn Nicole Zielski
Amber Christine English

Carwash...from page 1

and towel-dried Dodges in the high school complex parking lot.

Senior Missy Conrad, who played as a forward, said the basketball camps are important because it lets them know how they are going to work as a team during the regular season.

Senior Kerri Abernathy, who played as a shooting guard, said she participated in every carwash since she was a freshman. "I like it because it is definitely interesting and neat. It gets a lot of team bonding," said Abernathy. "I love it because everybody is just like family."

Freshman Dadrion Blythe, who played as a center in middle school, is helping with the carwash for her first year. "This is really fun," she said, "the whole getting wet part." Blythe said she is looking forward to basketball camp because it will give her something to do instead of just being home this summer.

Chef...from page 1

pus is making its mark on the region's culinary market and restaurants throughout North Georgia and Western Carolina are reaping the rewards.

"Without a doubt, it's the flagship of the Blairsville campus and it's a very good ambassador for the school," said Larry Culpepper, operations director for North Georgia Technical College's college grounds in Blairsville. "It's the most visible program here and I would say that when people think about North Georgia Technical College Blairsville campus, this is probably what they're thinking about."

The program had a modest beginning 10 years ago in the Shirley Miller Building with 12 to 13 students taking part in the program. Chef Drake, the owner of Antoinette's in Blairsville, has been with the program for eight years.

"Basically, it's a two-year program," Drake said. "We have some students who come to take baking classes. Others come here to begin a career."

"I ask the students when they come here, 'why culinary?' You get a variety of answers. Some of them watch TV and they see the Food Channel and it's exciting to them," Drake said. "Others are here because they're ready to try their hand at a new career. The economic downturn has been a boon to this program."

The program, one of only eight culinary programs in the state, offers an Associate's Degree and an Applied Technical Science Degree, Drake said.

The program emphasizes technical and theoretical knowledge combined with practical application of cooking, serving, and managing food, Drake said.

The program is driven with a managerial perspective as graduates are prepared for

jobs as lead cooks, kitchen, and or restaurant supervisors. Through the American Culinary Federation Educational Institute, graduates are eligible to become certified cooks after one year approved work experience, Drake said.

The program now boasts more than 40 students from ages 18 to 70 and also has attracted the interest of many local restaurants.

"It has some definite possibilities for an internship program," said Chad Hooper, general manager of The Ridges Resort & Club on Lake Chatuge. "It's definitely something that we'd like to explore."

Jesse Lathrop, an adjunct instructor at the school, also is its most famous graduate. He began his career as a chef with ShoeBooties Café in Murphy, NC in 1999.

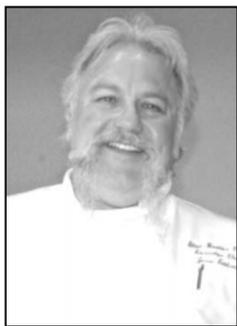
At the same time he attended North Georgia Technical College in Blairsville and graduated from the Culinary Arts program with honors in 2002, earning an Associate of Applied Technology Degree in Culinary Arts.

Chef Jesse competed in several culinary competitions during that time and took first place in the state. He went on to Kansas City to compete nationally.

Today, Chef Jesse is known as "the Biker Chef" as well as the executive chef at ShoeBooties Café in Murphy.

Jesse also serves on the Culinary Arts Department Board of Advisors. "I like to create art on a plate," Chef Jesse said. "Artwork that somebody could eat. That to me is very enjoyable and the fact that it tastes good."

"It's fun being a chef," he said. "and with the economy being what it is today, I know that I can go anywhere and get a job. Even when money is tight, people still go out to eat."



**Jesse Lathrop
"The Biker Chef"**



Dana Chastain