

## State Bound Ladies...from page 1A

hole in their 2010 financial portfolio.

"We're going to have to raise the money to get to the state tournament," said Penny Ledford, one of the team's coaches. "We need money for travel, money for rooms and food. We could be there up to three days."

Team organizers are working on opening an account at United Community Bank where locals can donate money for the team. Also, money can be dropped off at Michele's Hair Design and CJ Outfitters in Hiawassee.

"The girls have

worked hard to get to this point, they did the hard part by earning a state playoff berth and we'd really like to make sure that they get there," Ledford said.

Read next week's Herald to see if the Lady Indians can raise enough money to go to state.

## Heroes honored...continued from page 1A

Smith, Jr. with awards for Heroism in the Line of Duty.

Their acts of heroism happened in March as Burrell and Norton worked a 12-hour shift monitoring Georgia 17/75 in Towns and White County. That's when they rescued a Towns County woman whose vehicle had slid off the roadway at Unicoi Gap.

According to a letter from Mrs. Forrest Nutting, driving conditions were hazardous when her vehicle slid off the roadway and rolled down a steep embankment. As she prayed for help, she saw a big, yellow, DOT salt truck and thought it was an angel sent to help because of her prayers.

Near the peak of the mountain, her vehicle slid off the roadway and rolled down the steep mountainside. Mrs. Nutting wrote that "she thought it was then end."

Just then a man's big

hand brushed the snow off her window and helped her from the vehicle. Another passerby joined the rescue and the three men formed a "human chain" and pulled her to the safety of the roadway.

"The DOT should be very proud of the professionalism their department displayed through Mr. Burrell and Mr. Norton during a most difficult situation," Mrs. Nutting wrote. "These men risked their lives clearing the very dangerous road, but also went beyond the call of duty to help me to safety. I commend DOT for doing such a fine job every day to keep Georgia Citizens safe on our roads and highways."

Burrell and Norton both described their actions as "just doing the job."

However, Commissioner Smith presented both men with a framed certificate.

"DOT is proud to honor these outstanding

employees," Commissioner Smith said. "We are thankful to have these men as friends and coworkers. William Burrell and Jody Norton are assets to Georgia DOT and to the citizens of Georgia."

Burrell, the Highway Maintenance Superintendent for Towns County, began his career with GDOT in 1999. He and his crew are responsible for the maintenance of all state routes in Towns County. Norton, is an Equipment Operator for that crew. He joined Georgia DOT in 2003.

The DOT is committed to providing a safe, seamless and sustainable transportation system that supports Georgia's economy and is sensitive to both its citizens and its environment.

Burrell and Norton are key cogs in that support system, maintaining highways and saving lives.

## SPLOST Vote...continued from page 1A

and approved by voters in November, the county would begin collecting a 1 cent sales tax by April.

The Board of Education's 1 cent Education Local Option Sales Tax will expire June 2011.

"That means that for approximately 12 weeks, the county's sales tax will be 8 cents," Commissioner Kendall said.

"That's not a long time. Folks planning a major purchase could either do that before the April collection date or after the ELOST

expires in June next year to avoid paying that extra penny," Commissioner Kendall said.

If he decides to move forward with the SPLOST referendum, Kendall said he would still have to reach an intergovernmental agreement with Young Harris and Hiawassee to allow the collection to continue for six years.

"If an agreement cannot be reached with Young Harris and Hiawassee, we can still move forward with a SPLOST for five years," he said.

"I'm confident that if we choose to move forward with a referendum, that we can reach a suitable agreement with the two municipalities," he said.

County estimates show that approximately \$12 million could be collected over a six-year period of SPLOST collections.

The city of Hiawassee supports a SPLOST referendum, Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis said on Monday.

## BOE cuts budget...continued from page 1A

which include 10 work days of staff development and planning. Six of those work days were cut by the Board of Education. Two additional days will be cut from the school calendar and include days off for teachers and students as well.

The school also will use two days set aside for snow days for economic reasons.

"We'll still have two snow days left," Dr. Behrens said. "The legislators really didn't give us any guidance. They told us they were cutting money and left us to figure out how to fit that into the school calendar."

Other school system budget cuts include general maintenance, using a part-time graduation coach, eliminating the assistant principal's position at the middle school and being creative with the bus routes.

"We promoted Darren Berrong to Towns County Middle School principal (Dr. Marian Sumner retired) and we simply didn't fill the assistant middle school principal's position," Dr. Behrens said.

"As for the graduation coach position, it's come



Dr. Richard Behrens explains 2010-11 budget cuts. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

down to a part-time position and we're going to use an experienced teacher in that position. This position won't come with benefits," Dr. Behrens said.

The transportation department also is looking to merge some bus routes once school gets started, Dr. Behrens said.

"We won't do anything until after school starts so that the kids will know what buses to get on," he said. "Scott Hamilton will be reviewing the bus routes and how many are riding the bus to determine ways to merge some bus routes."

"The number of students riding the buses on the east side has decreased over the last few years," he said. "On the West side of the

county, the number of students riding buses has increased. The Young Harris side of Towns County is growing faster than other areas of the county."

Dr. Behrens said that it's still likely that the school system will be able to deal with budget cuts without having to raise the local millage rate.

"We certainly think so," he said. "Until the preliminary numbers on the Tax Digest come in, we won't know for sure."

"The School Board is trying not to change anything with the millage rate. They understand what shape this economy is in and the financial difficulties that people are having right now," he said.

## Comp Plan...from page 1A

It's required by the state before a local government can achieve the status of Qualified Local Government, Hazell said.

"The state wants consistency from each community," Hazell said. "Your growth and future as a community is dictated by your Comprehensive Plan, which

must be approved by the state Department of Community Affairs.

"Your Comprehensive Plan is all about the future of your development and the future look and feel of Towns County," Hazell said.

"Know what you want, plan ahead. It's all about your future."