

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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Thursday, July 2, 2009

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Cloudy 85 60
Fri: Sunny 85 62
Sat: Cloudy 84 62
Sun: T-Storms 84 63
Mon: T-Storms 84 61
Tue: T-Storms 84 63
Wed: T-Storms 84 65



Upstream Elevation Predicted 6/29/09
Lake Chatuge 1925.17
Lake Nottely 1776.50
Blue Ridge 1686.42

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Hiawassee Council Meets

The City of Hiawassee will hold its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, July 7 at 4 p.m. in their city hall building. To reach the City of Hiawassee, call 706-896-2202.

Young Harris Council meets

The City of Young Harris will hold its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, July 7 at 7 p.m. in their city hall building. To reach the City of Young Harris, call 706-379-3171.

Food Pantry Time Change

The Towns County Food Pantry will have a free food distribution for Towns County residents on Tuesday, July 7 from 9 a.m. to noon. Please note the time change. There will not be an afternoon distribution. Those that are in need are encouraged to come. If you are unable to pick up your food, please call us at 706-896-4783 prior to distribution day so arrangements can be for food to be delivered to you. As always, all clients and inquiries are confidential.

Young Harris Fireworks

A free fireworks display will be held at Brass-town Valley Resort starting at 7:30pm with free parking on Highway 76. Fireworks begin at dark. Bring your blankets, lawn chairs, frisbee's, footballs, etc. and plan on having a great family outing. Fireworks viewing will be at the Brasstown Valley Golf course, use the underpass to access the viewing area. Sponsored by City of Young Harris, Young Harris College & Brasstown Valley Resort & Spa. Please Note: personal coolers are not permitted on the Golf Course Grounds. Beverages, popcorn, cotton candy, and ice cream will be available for purchase on the golf course. For more info, call 706-379-4606.

Kendall nixes Lowe's \$1 million tax break request



Kendall
By Charles Duncan
TOWNSCOUNTY HERALD
charlesduncan@brmeme.net

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall has rejected a request by Lowe's Home Improve-

ment Store to grant the retail giant approximately \$1 million in tax breaks.

After doing his homework, Kendall scoffed at the notion of giving tax breaks to attract the retail giant to Towns County.

He checked with commissioners in neighboring counties in North Georgia and North Carolina to determine if officials in those communities had given tax breaks when attracting Lowe's, Home Depot and Wal-Mart.

"I especially talked with Lamar Paris in Union County about Home Depot and Wal-Mart," Kendall said. "Lamar didn't give any breaks to those huge corpo-

rations for building in Union County.

"Likewise, I just didn't see giving tax breaks to Lowe's to get them in Towns County," Kendall said.

Kendall discusses Lowe's interest in Towns County in his weekly column shared with the Towns County Herald. Kendall's column for this week's newspaper was inspired by a recent Letter to the Editor asking what incentives if



See Lowe's, page 5A

From the desk of Sheriff Clinton

I would like to take a moment this week to praise the hard work being performed by the detention officers at the Towns County Sheriff's Office. I have mentioned several times the progress made and it has been mentioned by previous Grand Juries, as well as by local service clubs including Rotary and Lion's.

Even though we are understaffed, detention officers have pulled together as a team and are working very hard to give you the most functional operation of a detention center possible.

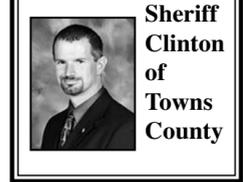
Last week, Tonia Welch, training director for the Georgia Sheriff's Association, informed me that

Georgia Peace Officer's Standards and Training Council requires that the Georgia Sheriff's Association assemble assessment teams to assess training. This is done as part of the requirement for the Sheriff's Association maintaining an academy status with POST.

Mrs. Welch called specifically to request that our own Jail Administrator, Lieutenant Tully Griggs, be allowed to serve on the assessment team. Mrs. Welch said that Bill Hallsworth, who is responsible for jail services and court security for the Georgia Sheriff's Association, recommended Lieutenant Griggs by name.

I feel that it is a great honor that out of Georgia's 159 Sheriff's Offices, our Jail Administrator was chosen to serve on this assessment team. I feel this is a testament to the professional standards being displayed by Lieutenant Griggs and the detention staff.

From the Desk of:



I also want to remind everyone of the trap shoot benefiting the Georgia Sher-

iff Clinton of Towns County

See Desk, page 2A

New Italian restaurant to open holiday weekend



Dana Merritt
By Charles Duncan
TOWNSCOUNTY HERALD
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Sam Collins stared out the windows high above Georgia 515 and imagined

he was sitting in the "City of Bridges" in northern Italy.

One look at the gorgeous, brilliant green countryside and the bright blue waters of Lake Chatuge from the cozy window settings inside Café Portofino and the villas in Venice don't seem a far stretch of the imagination.

"It only takes one look to realize that this restaurant has a beautiful lake view with an incredible Tuscan atmosphere," said Collins, the manager of the eatery at 3295 Dogwood Lane.

After many long hours of preparation of the interior décor, which include authentic Italian artwork, Collins is excited about the future of Hiawassee's inspirational new Italian restaurant.

"It really does remind

one of a villa overlooking the countryside in Italy," Collins said. "Café Portofino isn't just another restaurant; it's the ultimate Italian dining experience."

The region's newest "dining experience," Café Portofino, at the Shoppes at Fieldstone is the vision of owner Dana Merritt.

"I love Italian food," she said. "A restaurant I ate at in Hawaii actually is the inspiration for Café Portofino. It was wonderful food, great atmosphere. It made me feel at home. I thought it would be nice to offer the people who come to Hiawassee the same experience."

Interior Designer Jacquelyn LeFevers of

See Café, page 2A

Georgia Mtn Fairgrounds enjoys music revival

By David Seckinger
TOWNSCOUNTY HERALD

The Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is presently experiencing a musical renaissance, of sorts. In the last few months, the venue has hosted musical legends such as Merle Haggard and Percy Sledge, as well as rising stars like Josh Turner.

Last Saturday, a musical called The Conway Twitty Story was performed at the Anderson Music Hall.

The resurgence of concerts at the fairgrounds, which is now in its 59th year, can mostly be credited to promoter Mike Blackwell. A native of Columbus, Blackwell has been promoting concerts in the Southeast since the 1970s.

Even though Blackwell has promoted concerts in over 40 Georgia cities, he said this is his first year doing so in Hiawassee. Some might say it was fate that brought Blackwell to

the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, but Blackwell said it was Merle Haggard who brought him here.

At the time, Haggard was scheduled to do a show in West Virginia, so he was looking for another nearby venue for the tour. Haggard called Blackwell and suggested the fairgrounds, so Blackwell drove to Hiawassee to meet with Hilda Thomason and the fairground's board.

Blackwell rented the Anderson Music Hall and paid for the advertising, which was handled by Thomason. After the Haggard concert sold out, Blackwell said it left him with a good feeling about the fairgrounds. "The people at the Anderson Music Hall were wonderful to work with," he said.

Thomason, general manager for the fairgrounds, said their promoter had already tried to get Hag-



Blackwell

gard to play the fairgrounds, but the board had turned the offer down.

In fact, the fairgrounds had decided not to promote any concerts because of some very tough financial years. Thomason said 1996 through 1999 were great years for concerts, but the fairgrounds had suffered its worst year in 2005.

See Concerts, page 5A

Towns County prepares for 4th

By David Seckinger
TOWNSCOUNTY HERALD

Once again, Towns County is gearing up for the July 4th weekend, one of the biggest holidays for the county.

The festivities will begin on Friday, July 3 on the Recreation Department's ball fields, where the hardest will compete in sack races, horse shoes, and homerun derbies.

In addition, they will also have their Little Miss Recreation contest, for girls ages two through six. The winner of the contest will serve as the flower girl for the Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Beauty Pageant on July 20.

Recreation Department director Wes Hooper said they will have their activities day on Friday so the fairgrounds will have time enough to set up the fireworks show on Saturday.

Nevertheless, he believes many people may be-

gin their holiday weekend a day early, so he hopes for a good crowd. Hooper said last year about 150 people participated, which was a little slower than most years, but he thinks the hot weather might have kept people indoors.

The Recreation Department has been holding its activity day for at least 25 years. There is no charge to participate in the games, whether you are a local or a tourist. And there will be trophies and plaques for the winners.

"It is a fun day of enjoyment and low cost excitement," said Hooper.

Of course, no Independence Day is complete without a parade. However, the parade that Towns County throws is a little different because it floats.

Towns County Chamber of Commerce adminis-

See July 4th, page 5A

More than 90 children attend Camp Hosanna



Camp Hosanna

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Charles Duncan
TOWNSCOUNTY HERALD
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Other 90-plus happy campers have completed a week of old fashioned camping fun at Camp Hosanna.

Nestled in the mountains of rural Towns County, Camp Hosanna hosts children ages 8 and up at the rural campground off Pope Road. The Christian-based ministry recently hosted more than 90 children dur-

ing Junior Week 2.

Camp Hosanna is a Christian camp for kids and teens located in rural Towns County. Its mission: to reach children with the gospel of Jesus Christ, that they would receive Him as their Savior, and to help those who know Him to grow in their relationship with Him.

The camp was founded in 2003 by Stan and Spring Wood because of the

See Camp, page 5A

Michael Jackson: dead at 50

By Tonisha Shook
TOWNSCOUNTY HERALD

On Thursday, June 25, at the age of 50, Michael Jackson collapsed in a rented home and died just hours later of what is believed to have been cardiac arrest.

Michael was an American recording artist, entertainer, and businessman. He debuted on the professional music scene at the age of 11 as a member of The Jackson 5 and began his solo career in 1971 while he was still a member of the group. With his 1982 hit *Thriller* being the world's best-selling record of all time, there is no wonder why he was such a dominant figure in 1980's popular music.

Some aspects of his personal life, like changing his appearance and his behavior, generated controversy that damaged his public image. Although he was accused of child sexual abuse, the criminal investigation was closed due to lack of evidence and Jackson was not charged. He was married twice and fathered three children, all of which caused further controversy. Jackson was tried a second time with further sexual abuse allegations and several other charges, but was acquitted.

Talented is not the only



Jackson

adjective used to describe Michael Jackson. Many people remember him as a very generous man. He donated millions of dollars for beneficial causes through his foundation, charity singles, and support of 39 charities.

Frank McKinney, band director at Towns County High School, remembers growing up in segregated schools but still loving the Motown sound of The Jacksons. "Jackson was such a perfectionist, every song was a new hit," McKinney said. "He was the

See Jackson, page 5A

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