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H.O.G. Rally. From Day One, they were treated just like they had lived here all of their lives, H.O.G. members said.

And the twists and turns of the mountain roads sealed the deal.

"It doesn't matter which direction you go, there's not a bad ride," said David Foster, of Ringgold. "It's been top notch. We couldn't have picked a better spot to hold a rally. Everyone has treated us great.

"The people here have been phenomenal," he said. "You couldn't ask for a better riding location. I think this is the best of the last three rallies we've had. I know that this one was a lot better organized than any I've been to."

Hundreds of bikers from all over the world came to Towns County, from as far away as Australia and Scotland, to as close as from right here in Towns County.

Peggy Pardue, of Raleigh, NC said the entire Rally experience was incredible.

"The fireworks were very entertaining," she said. "The fireworks were great, the food has been great, and the people here have been great. You can tell that there was a lot of planning that went into this event. It really showed. I'm telling you, I've had a blast."

On Thursday night, H.O.G. members enjoyed the opening ceremonies at Brasstown Valley Resort. On Friday, they chowed down on barbecue, beans, cole slaw, Texas Toast and potato chips and later, they enjoyed live music played by Steven Phillips and the Midnight Express. The evening was topped off by a magnificent fireworks show.

"And they didn't go

cheap on the fireworks," said Bill Tyre, of Demorest. "It was first class."

On Saturday, they shopped for deals at the Pioneer Village and Saturday night, they danced their hearts out to the sound of Confederate Railroad.

"This is the first one we've been to, but from the stories I've heard, this one is pretty dang good," Tyre said. "We've been coming to Towns County for years. I love this area. We did some riding today and I stopped and thought to myself, that if we could pick anywhere in the world to retire, it would be right here in Towns County.

"It was a wonderful place for a rally," Janet Tyre said. "I love Hiawassee."

"Everything has been incredible," said Mary Willis of Cartersville. "The people here are wonderful."

"I hope they pick this place again for 2012," Bill Tyre said. "You can ride in any direction around here and find the best riding in the Southeast. That's what it's all about."

Bill Tyre got his wish and Eric Mauldin, of Marietta could be happier.

"We've had a real good time," he said. "I've gotten to see parts of Towns County that I hadn't seen before. I've eaten at some restaurants I haven't eaten at before. You can't say enough good things about the hospitality here.

"This is a great location; it's a great jump off spot for anyone that wants to ride in the mountains or if you want to stay here locally," Mauldin said. "The lake here is beautiful. The roads here are great rides. I was out in it all day long; I'm a bit wind-burned.

"Some of the other cities don't have as much to offer as Hiawassee and Towns County," Mauldin said.

Chad Hooper, general manager of the Ridges Resort & Marina, said that Towns County couldn't have hoped to host a more pleasurable event.

"The crowds were great, this is just a real down-to-earth bunch of folks," Hooper said. "We were excited to have them here with us on the grounds at the Ridges. We just wanted to show them what the mountain people are all about."

Coordinator Bobby Conway said the Rally's success was hinged on the hospitality of Towns County.

"Commissioner Bill Kendall has been a true blessing and he's done everything he said he would do," Conway said. "The people of Towns County are a fine bunch of folks. Hilda Thomason, the Tourism Board, Mr. Kendall and the people of Towns County have done themselves proud. Towns County is H.O.G. Heaven."

Dennis Cermaki, of Sheldon, Iowa summed it up best. Cermaki had an accident on Friday, broke some ribs and he had an up close and personal encounter with the good folks of Towns County.

"Towns County is the heart of the United States," Cermaki said. "The riding, the beauty and the waters make this a very special place. "The people here are probably the most kind and helpful people that you'd ever want to meet. Towns County will always hold a special place in my heart; it was a wonderful event and wonderful people to come and get to know."



Dennis Cermaki of Sheldon, Iowa accepts the first Mayor's Award from Bobby Conway during Rally ceremonies on Friday evening at the Ridges Resort & Marina. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Towns Schools reach AYP for eighth year

School system achieves rare air in Adequate Yearly Progress

Special to Towns County Herald
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The Georgia Department of Education has released information concerning the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status for school systems across the state. The Towns County School System has once again shown enormous success. Statewide, fewer schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for 2010-2011.

Approximately 75.9 percent of elementary schools, 56.4 percent of middle schools, and 30 percent of high schools in the state of Georgia made AYP. All three Towns County Schools met the criteria for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) during the 2010-2011 school year making this their eighth consecutive year to achieve this

accomplishment.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is an annual measure of student participation and achievement of statewide assessments and other academic indicators. The State of Georgia, each local school district, and each individual school is held accountable for the academic success of students. The federal law requires that each state set high academic standards and implements an extensive student-testing program that is aligned with standards and measures students' achievement. AYP requires schools to meet standards in three areas: 95 percent Test Participation (for both Mathematics and Reading/English Language Arts), Academic Performance (for both Mathematics and Reading/English

Language Arts), and a Second Indicator of attendance or graduation rate.

In any school system, but even more so in small, rural systems, success is contingent on several factors. Certainly the students and faculty are to be commended for their hard work. However, it takes strong support of parents and community to develop an atmosphere of sustained academic achievement present in the elementary, middle, and high schools at Towns County.

The 2011 Georgia reports for Adequate Yearly Progress can be found at <http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/ayp2011/739.asp>. If you need additional information about Towns County Schools and Adequate Yearly Progress, please contact the Towns County Board of Education at (706) 896-2279.

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many donations in the Lodge coffers. So they come out on a cool, brisk September morning to roll up their sleeves and do what they can to raise money.

The money is wisely spent; locals know where it goes.

Masonic endeavors benefit the community. The lodge not only uses its fundraising efforts on scholarships.

The group also helps

out with families at Christmas, they donate to local families in dire straits, they give to the Masonic Orphanage Home and they give to the needy on a moment's notice.

"You can count on the majority of the money we raise staying local," Past Master Trance King said. "The economy has been in the ditch and it is times like

these that keeping that money local that really means something."

Lodge members do their best to help families who are doing without and have kids that don't have anything to speak of. The Pancake Breakfast is all about making a difference in the local community and the Masons have been doing that for a real long time.

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adjutant general of the Georgia National Guard.

State Rep. Austin, who serves in House District 10 and represents parts of Habersham and White counties, is a biology professor at Piedmont College in Demorest. He told locals about being raised on a small farm in Habersham County.

"I'm a mountain boy, despite my education," Austin quipped. "I believe in mountain values and I understand what makes these mountains so special to the people that come here to call these mountains their home.

"Northeast Georgia needs a Senator who is a proven leader and a proven conservative. The issues are too important and the challenges too great to have a novice in the Senate representing us," Rep. Austin said. "I am running because I believe I am the kind of effective and experienced conservative leader that we need."

Rep. Austin was a member of the Habersham

County Commission, serving with Sen. Butterworth before they were elected to serve in the Georgia General Assembly.

"Throughout my service on the County Commission and in the State House, I have championed legislation that supports small businesses and I have consistently opposed tax increases. I have the experience to effectively lead from Day One in the State Senate and I'm ready to get the job done for all the people of the 50th District."

"I grew up with Jim Butterworth and I'd be honored to follow him as State Senator in District 50," said Rep. Austin, who was introduced by District 8 State Rep. Stephen Allison, who represents Towns County in the State House.

Wilkinson is a country boy too, growing up in Stephens County. He told the crowd he too understands mountain values.

"Some think that the

path forward is debt-funded stimulus spending, a departure from our traditional values, and a big government based approach," Wilkinson said. "But you and I know the opposite is true. "By focusing on our traditional values of hard work, smaller government, lower taxes, and free enterprise we can empower our private sector entrepreneurs to unleash their potential and create real jobs in real communities – not just stimulus jobs that exist only in some report up in Washington. As your next state Senator, I'm going to work every day to do just that," Wilkinson said.

Longtime Towns County Clerk of Court Cecil Dye, who attended the GOP meeting, said constituents of Senate District 50 have a win-win situation on their hands.

"I think that one way or another, we're going to come out of this special election with a solid state senator," he said.



Debbie Wilkinson and her husband District 50 Senate Hopeful John Wilkinson greet a Towns County supporter at the monthly GOP meeting in Hiawassee. Photo/Charles Duncan

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him a good friend and know that he will do a tremendous job leading the Georgia Guard.

"The brave men and women who are willing to step up and serve deserve the very best leadership and, simply put, they don't come any better than Jim," Lt. Gov. Cagle said. "While we will miss him here in the Senate, I look forward to continuing to work closely with him in his new role."

Sen. Butterworth said he doesn't take his final weeks as District 50 State Senator lightly.

"Since 2009, I have represented Senate District 50, which includes my home in

Habersham County," Butterworth said. "For the next few weeks, I will remain your Senator and I will continue the work I started when I first entered public service many years ago. I assure you that your Senate office will remain in order for whomever you choose to replace me."

Sen. Butterworth spent 12 years serving in the U.S. Air Force and flew B-1 bombers for the Georgia Air National Guard.

"It was through my military career that I learned about public service – including service to my state and service to my country," Sen. Butterworth said. "Not many people are asked to lead. I have strived, and will

continue striving, to follow my heart and to follow the needs of the people I represent."

The duties of adjutant general of Georgia include being responsible for more than 14,000 personnel in the Georgia Department of Defense, which includes the Georgia Army National Guard, the Georgia Air National Guard and the Georgia State Defense Force.

"This new opportunity brings the ability to serve all Georgia residents," Sen. Butterworth said. "I will truly miss working under the Gold Dome for my constituents in northeast Georgia but rest assured, I will continue to represent us at every opportunity."

Fairgrounds...continued from page 1

part with other grant funds to purchase two-way video conferencing equipment that will convert the Music Hall into a major Northeast Georgia Conference Center.

"This will make the facility more versatile and appealing to businesses and groups that can now use the facility for training," said Donnie Thomas, acting state director for USDA Rural Development. "That should translate into more business for the Georgia Mountain Fair, Towns County, the city of Hiawassee and the surrounding areas."

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall,

Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis, Chamber of Commerce President Candace Lee, Georgia Mountain Fair Inc. board members and Mike Annst, acting president of Georgia Mountain Fair Inc., were on hand to witness the ceremony.

Also on hand was Doug Canup, the Towns County Lions Club member who utilized his grant writing skills to help secure the grant funding from USDA Rural Development, and the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC will install fiber optic cable for the use of the

Internet and video streaming. They are providing in-kind labor of \$5,000 and a cash contribution of \$5,000 toward the project.

Georgia Mountain Fair Inc., will provide \$15,339 and the ARC will provide \$37,500 toward the project that is estimated to cost \$75,000.

"This is a really big deal for the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds," said GM Hilda Thomason. "It's great to have a two-way teleconferencing center in the Music Hall. I think it will bring more groups to Towns County that will help our economy and be a big boost to tourism."

Remembered...continued from Page 1

The community reflected on the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City, the Pentagon and the brave actions of Americans aboard Flight 93. Those aboard United Airlines Flight 93 overpowered their terrorist captors to force the plane down in Shanksville, PA, 20 minutes from Washington, D.C. Their heroic actions averted further tragedy in Washington.

"I am proud to be an American," Rev. Dye said. "I am thankful that there are people who are still willing to pay the price to serve others and that's what has made America great."

"I don't want to forget that we were attacked on our soil," Rev. Dye said.

He also didn't want to forget the men and women who died so needlessly on a day that they were just making it to work. Rev. Dye also didn't want to forget the brave firefighters, first responders and law enforcement officials that gave their lives to save others at the World Trade Center in New York.

"We are a nation that is

indivisible, a nation that is united by the Power of God," Rev. Dye said. "God is the only One that can bring something good out of a bad situation . . . Those that died, did not die in vain."

Roy McKee then sounded his bagpipes; the tune Amazing Grace filled the air. Tears flowed from the eyes of the almost 100 who came to remember.

Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright, Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton, Fire Chief Mitch Ingersoll and Paramedic Ken Nicholson then received American flags for their respective agencies of public service.

The ceremony of Remembrance concluded as Grant Ingersoll played "Taps."

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall said Sunday was a true day of reflection for America.

"Today renews our faith in America and what it stands for," Commissioner Kendall said. "Sept. 11, 2001 is an important day to remember and never forget."

Chief Wright said the past 10 years have been a healing process for America.

"This marks an anniversary that we'll always remember; some will never heal, some are still healing," he said. "This is something that I hope America never forgets."

Sheriff Clinton said Americans will never forget, but, America will move forward because that is what Americans do.

"We're resilient; we're Americans," he said. "It's great to see everyone come out today, because they do remember and they do appreciate the sacrifices that have been made. I appreciate the men and women who put their lives on the line every day for us. I'm proud to be an American."

Lee Holland said performing the National Anthem and America the Beautiful was a privilege.

"It's the only way I have of giving back, a blessing that was given me," she said. "It's a way I can let people know just how much we need to remember those who today are still giving their lives for our freedom. I'm proud to be part of this ceremony today."