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detectives then went to a property which later was found to not only contain other items allegedly stolen from local residences, but further led to multiple items being recovered which were inside the buildings on the grounds.

Towns County Sheriff's deputies worked together with Clay County, NC authorities and Appalachian Drug Task Force agents. Together, they believe they solved a long string of burglaries in both communities, according to sheriff's reports.

A search warrant was executed at a residence off

Shake Rag Road in Towns County where alleged stolen items were recovered that allegedly included various types of furniture, appliances, tools, automotive accessories, and a firearm.

These items were allegedly taken from residences in Georgia as well as North Carolina, authorities said.

Investigator Williams stated that some items are yet to be recovered and are believed to be as far away as Hendersonville, NC and Wilmington, NC.

Judith Roberts Jones was charged with theft by taking, burglary, possession of a firearm by a convicted

felon, and theft by bringing stolen property into state. Scott Larson Jones was charged with theft by taking, burglary, and theft by bringing stolen property into state, Towns County Jail records show.

A third person, Zachary Larson Jones, 30, also of Hiawassee, was also arrested at the residence on a warrant from the Georgia State Patrol for leaving the scene of an accident and driving on a suspended driver's license, Towns County sheriff's reports show.

The investigation continues, according to the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

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says if you vote no, you're out of luck on transportation funding. Well, you shouldn't force voters to support it."

Kendall also told T-SPLOST panelists that he made a commitment to Towns County voters that if they passed the local 1 cent SPLOST in March that he would not vote to raise the local sales tax percentage above 7 percent.

"I feel House Bill 277 is flawed in many areas and should be sent back to the

legislature," Commissioner Kendall said. "I am adamantly opposed to legislation that, instead of putting before voters issues to be decided on their merits, attempts to (force) officials and voters to vote for the tax or else.

"During the years that citizens have trusted me to serve them in public office, I have been very careful to not make commitments or promises that I could not keep, and once

made, be sure I told the truth and kept my word," Commissioner Kendall told the group. "As you are aware, almost daily public officials are asked to do things they cannot do. However, one thing that can be done is to not parse words and to tell the truth. Therefore, I cannot vote for the Regional Sales Tax proposed by House Bill 277 which if approved would increase the sales tax to 8 percent in Towns County."

District 50...continued from page 1A

Butterworth accepted the post of adjutant general of the Georgia National Guard early last month. He assumed his duties as Gen. Jim Butterworth on Sunday.

The District 50 state senator represents voters in Banks, Franklin, Habersham, Hart, Rabun, Stephens and Towns counties and a portion of White County.

Both Austin and Wilkinson were in Hiawassee last month to announce their candidacy for Senate District 50 during the September Towns County Republican Party meeting at

Daniel's Steakhouse in Hiawassee.

Austin, 45, a Biology professor at Piedmont College in Demorest, stepped down as Georgia House District 10 state representative to seek the seat left vacant by Butterworth.

Wilkinson, 56, is an educator and a native of Toccoa. Wilkinson has served not only as State FFA Advisor, but also as State Young Farmer Advisor and Chairman of the Georgia FFA-FCCLA Camp Administrative Committee.

The election is a non-partisan special election with

no party primaries. However, each candidate's party affiliation, if any, will be listed on the ballot. Austin, Wilkinson, Burger, and Strickland are listed as Republicans on the Secretary of State's Web site. Focer is listed as a Democrat.

The date for the special election is Tuesday, Nov. 8. Run-off elections, if needed, will be held Tuesday, Dec. 6.

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 8.

Voter registration for the Nov. 8 special election ended Tuesday.

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and English," he said. "Finally, I put those degrees aside and started doing what I knew I was supposed to be doing and that was writing."

The Goats is a book about young adults coming of age, also it deals with the pressures of being hazed and bullied, a topic that has become a hot button nationwide.

Caruso bought the book rights from Cole 10 years ago and wrote the screenplay for the movie.

Twelve-year-old Annalise Basso, who stars as *Grace* said she read the script and knew that she could identify with the character.

"I enjoy being outside and I'm kind of like Grace in real life," she said. "It has been fun being on set, we're like a family. Everyone is so nice; it's great working with D.J. and Emily. And it's a real honor meeting Brock Cole."

Basso, whose film credits include *Bedtime Stories* with Adam Sandler, *Alabama Moon*, and guest starring roles in *Desperate Housewives*, *Lie to Me*, and *True Blood*, said to be hon-

est, she's really afraid of goats.

"When I saw the title, I was like, 'oh no, is this going to be a horror film?' When I read the script and went in for the audition, I'm loving this script so much," Basso said. "I can relate to the character. She stands up for herself against being bullied. You don't let people push you around."

Her co-star, 13-year-old Chandler Canterbury said *The Goats* is an incredible story.

"I'm not a real loner like Howie (his character), but I'm not the real cool guy either; I'm in the middle," said Canterbury, whose film credits include *Knowing*, *Powder Blue* and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*.

Basso said that at her school, she's known, but she doesn't have a lot of friends.

"I'm very much like Grace," she said.

The movie has generated a buzz locally. A long list of local youths has been cast as extras in the film. Val Kilmer, of *Batman*, *Tombstone*, *Thunderheart* and *The Saint* fame has

been cast as a deputy sheriff in the film. Radha Mitchell, who played the wife of Johnny Depp's character "J.M. Barrie" in *Finding Neverland* will play Basso's mother and Kate Maberly, also noted for her role as "Wendy" in *Finding Neverland* will play a camp counsellor.

Veteran producer James Brubaker is the film's executive producer.

Drew Fuller oversees the film's movie props. If the name sounds familiar, it is, he graduated from Towns County High School in 1979.

"It's been wonderful to be back home spending time with Dad (Ken Fuller)," he said. "To shoot here is wonderful, we spend a lot of money when we're here and that's great for Towns County."

"This director (Caruso) is really well known and we've got some cast members that are really well known," he said. "I love what I do; it beats the heck out of working for a living (laughing). The people behind the scenes really make this job worthwhile."



Towns County's very own Drew Fuller acquaints himself with old football buddy Marty Roberts during the filming of *The Goats*, at Towns County Beach. Fuller has experienced a successful career in the movie industry. He said he never thought he would work on a picture filmed in Towns County. He's glad to be home, even for just a little while. Photo/Charles Duncan

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ploring every option and making sacrifices within the system first, shows our community that we are shouldering the burden with them."

Towns County government, the cities of Hiawassee and Young Harris and now the BOE have declared that even with a declining tax digest, they'll keep the status quo on taxes.

The BOE voted Monday night on a millage rate of 4.784 mills, the same as last year. The BOE balanced its budget by using its cash reserve funds to offset an approximate \$2.2 million budget shortfall.

The city of Hiawassee last week voted to keep its

millage rate at 2.270 mills, the same rate that the city has maintained over the previous eight years.

The city of Young Harris also voted last week to keep its millage rate at 2.493 mills, the same rate it has had since 2008.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall said last week that he will keep his promise to not raise taxes. Commissioner Kendall will advertise his 2011 Tax Digest and Five Year History of Levy in the Oct. 19 edition of the Towns County Herald.

Overall, the tax digest continues to drop, with no end in sight.

Commissioner Kendall said it's important to do everything possible to avoid putting additional burdens on the backs of local taxpayers.

"It's hard enough for local taxpayers to pay what they have to pay right now without burdening them with additional tax responsibilities," Commissioner Kendall said. "During the years that citizens have trusted me to serve them in public office, I have been very careful to not make commitments or promises that I could not keep, and once made, be sure I told the truth and kept my word. As a community, we can't afford to raise taxes."

Towns County BOE issues press release on millage rate

The Towns County Board of Education took action Monday night to establish its millage rate for maintenance and operations for the 2011-2012 school year. The current millage is 4.784. The Board of Education is proposing to keep the present millage rate of 4.784, even though the tax digest has decreased such that local tax funding for the school system will be reduced by approximately \$500,000.

On July 18, 2011, the Board of Education adopted a budget for FY12 that was built on revenue funds totaling \$8,690,000 provided by local, state and federal monies. This budget reflects efforts taken to reduce expenditures from the FY 11 budget while providing for the instructional needs of our students; thus, **no tax increase**. The Board has taken steps to balance the budget by using its cash reserve funds to offset the approximate \$2.2 million budget deficit.

With no relief in sight from either local, state or

federal sources, the outlook does not look any better in the coming months and years. "The board will work diligently to find additional ways to cut our expenses, conserve funds and preserve the integrity of the education we offer to our students," says Chairman Emily Phillips.

Board member Michael Anderson adds, "We really are putting off the inevitable. We are looking at a \$2.2 million dollar deficit each year. There is no way in our small system to cut that much money from our budget. Eventually, we will have to come back to tax payers."

Larry Kimsey, Vice Chairman of the Board stated, "We need to make every effort possible to cut expenses before we go back to our community for additional tax revenue. We will have to make some tough decisions but every household in this community is having to make tough decisions. Asking for additional taxes is never easy, but exploring every option and

making sacrifices within the system first, shows our community that we are shouldering the burden with them."

Superintendent Melissa Williams states, "As you are aware, there are new budget cuts being pushed down to our local system from the state that will only aggravate an already dire situation. Measures are being taken to absorb the cuts without having to go once again to the taxpayers. For example, positions have been eliminated, expenditures are being scrutinized, the school calendar was reduced by 8 days; bus routes were modified, field trips are being limited and class sizes are being pushed to maximum levels in efforts to maximize state funding. We are all feeling the pinch as layoffs are rampant, houses are in foreclosure and retirement accounts are shrinking."

In closing, Superintendent Williams says, "This is an opportunity for me, on behalf of the Board of Education, to say thank you for standing with us during these difficult times

Fall Festival...continued from page 1A

Saturday as the annual pilgrimage to the North Georgia Mountains continued over the weekend.

Mike Freeman of Demorest was excited to have seen Skaggs perform live again at Anderson Music Hall.

"He's as good as ever," he said. "I haven't seen him in several years and he's still good as it gets when it comes to Bluegrass and Country Music."

Percy Sledge, a longtime favorite of Music Hall goers, said he was proud to be back in Hiawassee.

"I love this town," he said. "The folks here love good music and I grew up on Country Music in Alabama. It's folks like y'all that have made me a success in the music industry."

Skaggs was just as appreciative. He talked about his early days and coming to the Music Hall with a then relatively unknown act opening for him.

"Reba and I have worked together for a long time," referring to Country Music legend Reba McEntire, then just a little lady with a big voice, whom

Skaggs thought would go far. "We'll be together in England in March."

On Wednesday, Country Music lovers get a treat when John Anderson takes the stage for two shows. Anderson is followed on Thursday by another legend, T. Graham Brown and on Friday by the Bluegrass sounds of The Quebe Sisters.

Also on Friday, the annual Georgia State Fiddlers' Convention kicks off, with the finals concluding on Saturday.

Daily crafts and exhibit hours are weekdays from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.



The Pioneer Village has been a hot spot for visitors at the annual Fall Festival. The Swampmaster also has been putting on quite a show demonstrating his mastery over alligators. Photos/Lowell Nicholson