

Forestry closures...from page 1A

ers with more layoffs expected in the months ahead.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall was visibly upset at the news.

"The state is going to have to live up to its obligations and quit dumping those responsibilities on local governments," Kendall said. "There's already talk of more cutbacks at the health department and at the library because the state is cutting its budget. Those services have been placed on the shoulders of local governments."

The region's chief ranger, Tony Harkins, deferred comments about the closure of the Towns County forestry facility to Forestry Commission Manager Ken Masten in Gainesville. Masten was unavailable for comment on Monday due to the state holiday celebrating Columbus Day.

Towns County Fire Chief Mitch Floyd said that Ranger Harkins recently informed him of the news to close the Towns facility. Floyd said the county will have to keep its fingers crossed for a wet winter as the time for potential wildfires have arrived.

However, the possibility of a dry winter is most likely, according to the National Weather Service. The state already appears



Chief Mitch Floyd

headed for a drier, warmer than normal fall, circumstances that make conditions more apt for wildfires.

"Tony has told us that he's going to be running everything out of Pat Colwell so, it's going to be a delay as far as response time goes for our county," Chief Floyd said. "It's going to be one of those situations where if we don't have a bad fire season then it's not too bad."

The closure of the Towns GFC headquarters off Sunnyside will most definitely delay response time from Georgia Forestry Commission rangers in the event of a major wildfire, Chief Floyd said.

"If we do have a problem, that's going to affect us as far as getting equipment over here in a timely manner," Chief Floyd said.

"We'll have to act accordingly. In a nutshell, it'll mean a delay in their response, probably 20 to 30 minutes depending on where we have an incident."

Wildfires might get larger than normal given the Forestry Commission's delayed response time to provide firebreak equipment.

"The number of times we use them each year varies," Chief Floyd said. "If we don't have a bad fire season, then it's no impact at all. If we do, then it's that delayed response time that we'll have to deal with."

In the dry times of 2007 and 2008, Towns County Fire Services relied heavily on the Forestry Commission, Chief Floyd said.

"This past year was relatively mild so we didn't have a tremendous need for them," Chief Floyd said. "And we haven't really had that many calls this year. It's really a roll the dice situation."

Because of the circumstances regarding the lack of Forestry Commission equipment and ranger resources in Towns County, Commissioner Kendall urges residents who burn outdoors not to burn debris without first contacting the Forestry Commission for a burn permit and burn, don't burn information.

Fall-A-Bration...continued from page 1A

Fall-A-Bration, many local businesses and civic groups took part in the Trunk-or-Treat affair passing out free candy and other concession favorites from the trunks of their decorated vehicles.

The idea is for local businesses and civic groups to adorn their vehicles in fall themes to give out holiday candy and treats to local children.

"It's been a success every year," said The Ridges Resort General Manager Chad Hooper. "We're able to include a lot of different games and entertainment for children and their families to participate in."

"It's become a tradition for us here at The Ridges and we hope to continue that," Hooper said. "We want to be an impact to our community."

This year's events included live music, barbecue, games for the children and the annual Cornhole competition.

The event also benefited the local chapter of the Future Farmers of America as the group raised money through sales of barbecue plates to patrons of the event.

"We're excited about

that and we're tickled to be a part of that," he said.

The day's events also included lake tours.

"We took our tour boats and a couple of pontoons and gave free tours of Lake Chatuge," he said. "It worked out real well with the leaves turning and the fall colors for the children and families to see. It was really amazing giving people that experience, some of which had not experienced that before."

While some tried their luck at the Cornhole competition, others were enjoyed delicious Southern barbeque served up by members of the Towns County High School's FFA. Goodwill and strong, respectful character was on full display here as the handful of eager young FFA members worked diligently, happy to serve their community.

Relishing in these acts of literal sugarcoated thoughtfulness are the costumed young ones choosing from a smorgasbord of sweet treats. A bright red Towns County Fire and Rescue truck was parked on one end in support of the event.

This year's participants included Michael J. Aubrecht, president of Atlanta Executive Search, which specializes in renewable energy, Service Master, The Ridges Resort, The Ridges Marina, Towns County Fire & Rescue, Young Harris Water Sports, Barrett Insurance, Blairsville Dance, Hiwassee Pharmacy, and Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Service Master took home the title of Best Decorated Trunk-or-Treat participant. Brasstown Beef donated the meat for the FFA food sales and Sysco donated the buns.

Ridges Resort Marina's Al Craig took families on pontoon tours of beautiful Lake Chatuge. Others experienced hay rides through the beautiful grounds at the Ridges.

With music, children's games and plethora of scrumptious Southern delicacies, Fall-A-Bration came to a close just as lively as it began.

"It's all about having the community come together as one for a fall celebration. We're one community together here," Hooper said.



Pat from Service Master makes sure that all the Trunk-or-Treaters got plenty of candy on Sunday at the annual event at The Ridges Resort. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Early voting...continued from page 1A

U.S. Senator, and U.S. House representative in addition to their next representative in Georgia House District 8.

In the only local elections, Board of Education candidate Jerry Taylor, as well as Incumbent BOE members Michael Anderson and Emily Phillips are running unopposed for their respective seats.

Taylor is running unopposed to replace outgoing BOE member Bob Gibby,

whose term limits on the board have expired.

Opportunities to cast ballots are plentiful – Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

On Tuesdays, ballots can be cast from 8:30 a.m. until 7 p.m. Towns County voters also can cast ballots on Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The last opportunity to vote on Saturday prior to the Nov. 2 General Election is Oct. 30, from 9

a.m. to noon.

Early voting in the race for Hiwassee City Council Post 5 also is available.

Copies of the Sept. 29 Towns County Herald edition featuring a Sample Election Ballot in addition to a break down of the constitutional amendments and the statewide referendum on Freeport exemptions for businesses are available at the Herald office adjacent to the Huddle House in Hiwassee.