

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur:	Clouds	54	32
Fri:	Sunny	59	31
Sat:	Sunny	63	32
Sun:	Sunny	66	35
Mon:	Sunny	69	38
Tue:	Clouds	69	40
Wed:	Clouds	66	39



Upstream Elevation Predicted 10/19/11	
Lake Chatuge	1920.38
Lake Nottely	1765.32
Blue Ridge	1671.86

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Appreciation Day

Eastgate Church in Hiawassee is hosting an Elected Officials Appreciation Day on Sunday from 10 a.m. to noon. The event includes speakers, music and lots of singing.

Dr. Rick Austin, the former state representative from Georgia House District 10, will be the keynote speaker. Also expected to be on hand, Eastgate Founder Greg Roberts, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall, Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis and Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby. The event is a special thank you to local officer holders for keeping our community safe and the local budgets balanced.

S.A.F.E. Sale

Young Harris College is sponsoring a yard sale to benefit S.A.F.E. on Thursday, Oct. 27 and Friday Oct. 28 in the basement of the Pruitt/Barrett Building at YHC.

Reward

Recently the Tree Tops Chevron on Bell Creek Road was burglarized. The Towns County Sheriff's Office, along with the store's owner, is seeking help from the public in an effort to quickly solve this crime. Any information which leads to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for this crime will be treated confidentially, and a reward is offered by the owner of the store.

Driving Safety

AARP hosts a driver safety course at the Family Life Center at McConnell Baptist Church from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Oct. 27.

New Fiddle King crowned

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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They laid the Golden Fiddle on the ground at Johnny's feet.

Johnny Ray Watts, who as a young boy, legend has it, had a very famous song written about him, was crowned the 2011 Georgia State Fiddle King at the state championships held Saturday night at Anderson Music Hall.

Yes, this is the Johnny of *The Devil Went Down To Georgia* fame, well, we believe it is.

Watts, 45, of Delta, Ala., the state champion Junior Fiddler, topped a performance by state champion Senior Fiddler Sharon Wenson, to become the 2011 Fiddle King.

Watts also won the award in 2003, and hasn't performed at Anderson Music Hall since 2007.



Johnny Ray Watts returned in style to Anderson Music Hall last week. The veteran fiddler, who has sat out since 2007, is back on top of the world again. Photo/Lowell Nicholson.

"It is truly an honor," said Watts, a rare southpaw fiddler. "I feel truly blessed that I'm even able to be here. This is what I love. I've been playing since I was 4 years old. I drug my Daddy's fiddle all over the house. They tried their best to hide it from me, but I always found it.

"I'll say this, I'm proud of all these young fiddle players," he said. "When I was coming up through the ranks, there were no young fiddle players. It's truly a blessing to see all the young fiddle players."

Watts had high praise
See Fiddle King, page 15A

Kendall plans to cut county millage again

Commissioner says it's time to tighten belt another notch

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall will cut the county's millage rate from 5.570 mills to 5.320 mills, the commissioner said on Monday.

The 2012 Budget is in the midst of preparations, but includes a 30 cents per hour increase for county employees (elected officials excluded), Commissioner Kendall said.

"The (county) employees have not received an increase in the previous two years," Commissioner Kendall said, referring to the across-the-board raise for county employees. "This budget also includes a millage decrease for the taxpayers. Both of these were ac-



Commissioner Bill Kendall

complished without increasing expenditures for the projected 2012 budget, which is still in the process of being developed."

The Oct. 20th County Meeting has been rescheduled for Oct. 27th at 5:30 p.m.

A public hearing is scheduled for 5:30 p.m., Oct. 27 in the Courthouse to set the millage rate.

Commissioner Kendall said that the 2011 Tax Di-

See Millage, page 15A

Fall Festival thrived on cool weather

Fall weather was a blessing for Georgia Mountain Fall Festival

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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The 2011 Georgia Mountain Fall Festival is history, but boy what a memory.

Enthusiastic crowds, good food, good music, amazing vendors and great attractions were in abundance. The Oct. 10th crowd (Monday if you're keeping score) just kept coming through the aisles. Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason said that day's gate receipts were up \$9,000 over 2010.

"You know, we had a little rain in between, but it was a solid, very solid crowd," Thomason said. "It was a really good Fall Festival."



Fall Festival goers didn't have trouble finding a bargain. The crowds, like the bargains, were abundant. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Cooler temperatures played a significant role, as did the rapid changing of the color of the fall foliage.

Music acts like Gene Watson, Diamond Rio, John Anderson and T. Graham Brown followed the power-

ful music acts from the weekend that brought the crowds inside Anderson Music Hall. The Georgia State Fiddlers' Convention packed the Hall on two con-

See Fall Festival, page 15A

Early voting underway

Mulkey has challengers for Post 3 in Young Harris

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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There's a city council race in Young Harris, homestead exemption votes impacting three local governments and oh, yes, a special election for Senate District 50.

Just head on down to 91 Berrong Street, better known as the Old Rock Jail, and cast a ballot.

Early voting is underway in Towns County with more than you would think on the table for an off-year election, scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 8th in Towns



Registrar Irma Nichols

County.

Early voting began Tuesday at 9 a.m. Ballots can be cast from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. through Thursday,

See Early Voting, page 15A

Trunk-or-Treat at The Ridges

Halloween comes early as new owners celebrate first year at the helm

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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What do you get when you mix a Fall-A-Bration event with Trunk-or-Treat?

A whole lot of fun packed into three hours at the Ridges Resort & Marina. On Sunday from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. it all comes together.

Many local businesses and civic groups will take part in the Fifth Annual Fall-A-Bration and 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



Chad Hooper

themes to give out holiday candy and treats to local children.

"It's been a success every year," said the Ridges Resort & Marina 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 con-

tinue that," Hooper said. "We want to be an impact to our community."

The Ridges' owners, Alicia and Mitch Jones are thrilled to be a part of the Towns County community for more than a year now. Businesses is up more than 30 percent from the time they took over and that's after putting more than \$600,000 into the facilities.

"We've spent a year working with the management team, making some organizational changes, making some changes for the betterment of our customers," Mitch Jones said. "We travel, and many of the amenities that we enjoy

See The Ridges, page 15A

Campers sign up for camping spots

Regulars and newcomers alike sign up for annual camping spots

By Charles Duncan
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For the second year in a row, the campsites at Chatuge Woods were dealt out on a first-come, first serve basis.

The scene once again was held on Saturday at the Towns County Courthouse as campers came in droves about 3 a.m. Friday morning to line up for their campsites that they've held for years.

Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall opened the campground up to the public last year following years of annual renewals by seasonal campers.

On Friday, those same campers came and got in



The crowds were tired and weary on Saturday. Hundreds waited until the 1 p.m. cutoff time. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

lined on Friday, they knew the stipulations. Those included one reservation per person of legal age, with reservations made for the entire camping season,

See Campground, page 15A

Nowak heads indictments

By Charles Duncan
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A Towns County Grand Jury has handed up an indictment of felony murder against a 60-year-old Hiawassee man in connection with the February prescription drug death of 49-year-old Daniel Clifton Moore.

Charges against Terry Joseph Nowak include charges that include possession of a Schedule II controlled substance, false report of a crime, false state-



Terry Joseph Nowak

deaths of Moore, a native of Murphy, NC.

See Indictments, page 15A

Phillips: 'Music a lifelong passion'

Opens for Lee Greenwood on Nov. 14th in Franklin, NC

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Steven Phillips has loved music since his mother introduced him to the art when he was a small boy.

He loves it just as much today, maybe, even more.

Phillips and his band Midnight Express are making waves in the local music scene. They're opening for big-name acts, most recently Diamond Rio at the Georgia Mountain Fall Festival.

Next month, they'll open for Lee Greenwood at the Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts in Franklin, NC.

One day, Phillips looks forward to the day he'll be singing full-time. That would be music to his ears.

A comedian and singer all rolled up into one, Phillips said he loves performing in front of large crowds, making people smile and sending them home with a song in their heads.

"It's a blast," Phillips



Steven Phillips

said. "Everybody up here at the Anderson Music Hall is real nice, the crowds respond and like I said, it's been a blast."

Phillips hails from Hiawassee so naturally, he loves Anderson Music Hall.

"We always have a good time when we get up there on stage," he said. "Having fun, enjoying your-

See Midnight Express, page 15A

