

# Towns County Herald

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Publication Number 635540 Volume 80 Number 52

Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2009

## Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Sunny	59 30
Fri: Sunny	58 32
Sat: Sunny	62 36
Sun: Cloudy	63 40
Mon: Cloudy	64 44
Tue: Showers	62 44
Wed: Showers	63 42



Upstream Elevation Predicted 11/4/09	
Lake Chatuge	1920.70
Lake Nottely	1766.80
Blue Ridge	1677.40

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### Youth gridiron teams advance

The Towns County Indians 9-year-old Junior Pee-Wees and the 5- and 6-year-old Termites both advanced to the second round of the Conference Playoffs.

Coach Jimmy Smith said the 9-year-old Indians will play in Rabun County at noon on Saturday against Rabun County. The 5- and 6-year-old Indians face Dawson County at 4:30 p.m. at Chastate High School in Gainesville.

If both win they advance to the championship round on Nov. 14 at Union County.

Coach Smith asks that locals come out and support these two hard-working teams as they continue their quest for a championship.



### X-Country Ladies head to state

It's that time of year again and the Towns County Cross Country Ladies are headed back to Carrollton in search of Cross Country glory.

The Lady Indians will compete at 3 p.m. in Carrollton at the Carrollton High School Cross Country Course.

Come out and support the Lady Indians.



### Conrad stars in School House Rock Live!

Towns County High School alum Nicole Conrad will play *Shulie in the Theatre* Young Harris presentation of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*

The production will be Young Harris College's children's show for the 2009-2010 season.

More than 4,000 students in first through fifth grades will see the show this week, free of charge. YHC will host students from Gilmer, Rabun, Towns, Union and White counties in Georgia, Clay and Cherokee counties in North Carolina and Polk County in Tennessee.

## Mathis reelected; Smith wins seat; tax break passes

By Charles Duncan  
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Voters in the city of Hiawassee have selected Barbara Mathis to serve four more years as their Mayor and have chosen a new council member, Stephen Smith. Also, Towns County homeowners will be the only citizens of Georgia with a \$10,000 residential tax break.

Mathis claimed victory with 177 votes to 110 votes over political newcomer Chris Swett.

The 14-year incumbent Mayor breathed a sigh of relief as the final votes were tallied.

"I want to thank the residents of Hiawassee for having the confidence in me to serve them for four more years," Mathis said Tuesday night. "I think we have accomplished a lot during my tenure and I'm looking forward to the accomplishments we'll achieve in the next four years."

Swett congratulated Mathis following the final count, acknowledging her victory and showing respect for his opponent.

"All you can do is offer your service," Swett said. "These are my neighbors; I went around to my neighbors and offered my service. That's the best I can do."

Smith, a long-time Towns County educator and former school superintendent, was ecstatic to learn during a telephone interview that he had won his race over incumbent Council member Annie Johnson. Mathis broke the news to Johnson in a telephone conversation.

City voters elected Smith by a count of 182 votes to 89 votes for Johnson.

"I'm happy to have won and I'm happy that the residents of Hiawassee saw

fit to elect me to public office," Smith said. "I have nothing but respect for Annie, I admired her eight years of service to the city. She has been a true public servant."

"I've always been a public servant myself, I've just never been elected to serve until now," Smith said. "I plan to be open to serving the people of the city of Hiawassee."

Only 17.98 percent of the county's 7,810 registered voters turned out to vote to become the only county in Georgia with a \$10,000 homeowner tax break. Of those who turned out, 1,344, or 96.87 percent said 'yes' while 43 residents voted 'no' to the tax break.

The state passed the inaugural homestead exemption in 1937, saving homeowners from having to pay taxes on the first \$5,000 fair market value, or a \$2,000 tax assessment on their

home. Sixty-two years later, lawmakers passed another law to increase the original \$2,000 exemption to \$10,000, and to reimburse local governments for the amount of tax revenue that impacted their local tax digests.

During the 2009 session, state lawmakers took \$8,000 away. The state homestead exemption reverted back to the original 72-year-old \$2,000 break for the 2009 tax bills mailed to homeowners.

Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall asked the local legislative delegation to seek legislation to allow Towns County voters to vote on whether to restore \$8,000 to the \$2,000 break provided by the state.

Only Towns County homeowners with local homestead exemptions qualify for the \$10,000 tax break.



Mayor Barbara Mathis



Councilman Stephen Smith

## Willie sends fans home smiling

By Jessica Keaton  
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Willie Nelson rocked a packed Anderson Music Hall at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on Saturday night and sent the capacity crowd home smiling with autographs in hand.

Willie's fans ignored the rain clouds looming overhead and flocked to see the legendary singer/songwriter perform such hits as *On the Road Again*, *Georgia*, and *Blue Eyes Cryin' In the Rain*.

Willie took the stage at The Hall around 7:20 p.m. and ended his show around 8:45 p.m. Afterward, Willie meandered through the crowd signing autographs and accepting a bottle of "Rebel Yell" with an appreciative smile.

Nelson broke out in a huge smile as he autographed a copy of a bumper sticker that read:



The Red-headed Stranger, Willie Nelson gets a kick out of autographing a copy of a bumper sticker entitled: 'Don't blame me, I voted for Willie.' Nelson performed Saturday night at Anderson Music Hall. Photo/Reggie Shook

"Don't blame me, I voted for Willie."

"It was absolutely fantastic," said Towns County native Reggie Shook, one of the lucky ones with front row seats. "Willie was Willie. It was everything we expected and more. My wife got an autograph on her ticket. We were well

pleased with the show. We wouldn't have missed Willie for anything."

Before the show, legendary Country Music radio personality Moby, a special guest from 106.1 FM WNGC radio's *Moby in the Morning* greeted and

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## Halloween on Square thrives

By Matthew Jarrard  
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This year Halloween on the Square in Hiawassee proved to be a night on the town like no other.

Hundreds of locals and out-of-towners lined up for the chilly, pre-Halloween warm-up Friday night as local government, businesses, churches, and charitable causes emptied barrels of fun and candy for the jubilant children.

Businesses and organizations weren't just trying to advertise. One group admitted to purchasing more than 850 bags of candy, blending in with the lively and benevolent affair on the square.

"We're giving out candy donations. We do this

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Hundreds of children flocked to Downtown Hiawassee over the weekend to celebrate the annual Halloween on The Square. The event allowed the community's small children to safely partake in the Halloween holiday, which included the annual *Dunk a Cop*. Cinderella needed a little help to accomplish that task. Photo/Matthew Jarrard

## Local students get a sneak peak

By Jessica Keaton  
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Towns County High School students got a jump start on their futures last week.

The school played host to a Career Expo Day, an event geared toward students from the eighth grade to the 12<sup>th</sup>.

Almost 400 students took part in the event as representatives from 51 col-



TCHS students gather around the Bank of Hiawassee table at Career Expo Day. Almost 400 students grades eight through 12 took part in the annual event that allows them to interact with representatives from local businesses and colleges as they focus on the future. Photo/Jessica Keaton

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## Sheriff Clinton, deputies, detectives staying very busy

By Charles Duncan  
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Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton, his deputies and detectives are staying busy.

Solid police work by Sheriff's detectives Pat Williams and Brian Wilson led to the arrest of three men on charges that include burglary and theft by taking, according to a release by the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Deputies, detectives and K-9 Dexter assisted the Rabun County Sheriff's Office in the recovery of more than a pound of pink methamphetamine from a residence in neighboring Rabun County.

The burglary occurred in the daylight hours of Friday, Oct. 23, on Chapel Circle in Towns County. A forced entry into the residence caused damage of more than \$1,000. Two guitars and two amplifiers valued at more than \$500 were taken, according to the



Sheriff Chris Clinton

sheriff's release.

The burglary was discovered the following day detectives Williams and Wilson were assigned to the case. They began interviewing victims and suspects.

Billy Ledford, 20, and Damien Moody, 23, were arrested on Oct. 30 and charged with Party to a Crime, according to the sheriff's release.

Active arrest warrants have been secured for a third individual, Donovan Duvall, 20, on charges of

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## NGTC's Chicken and Grits a hit

By Matthew Jarrard  
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North Georgia Technical College kept the tradition going as they rolled out the red carpet for the school's 11<sup>th</sup> Annual *Chicken and Grits* event.

The event, held in the conference center at the school last week for the school's Committee Advisory members, once again was a rousing success.

The Blairsville Conference Center hosted more than 80 people on the evening.

NGTC Director of Campus Operations, Larry Culpepper, explained the ins and outs of the annual tradition at the Blairsville Campus.

"The Committee Advisory members and Community partners, such as Chamber members, commissioners, developmental authorities, hospitals, and banks are people in the community that advise us as how to better design our programs, make changes in our programs, offer different programs," Culpepper said. "Every year we have a Fall meeting, as well as one in the Spring, and

the advisors look at the year so far and what the entire program is doing."

Advisory members dined on *chicken and grits* prepared by six select students from the school's Culinary Arts Department, which is American Culinary Federation Certified, led by the program's instructor, Chef David Drake.

While dining, the guests learned about the history of the Blairsville Campus and how it first opened its doors to students just a little over a decade ago when the land on which the campus is located was donated by Union County. The school is a branch of the Clarksville Campus, the first trade and vocational school in Georgia dating back to 1943.

As the Advisory Members and other guests flipped through their 2009

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