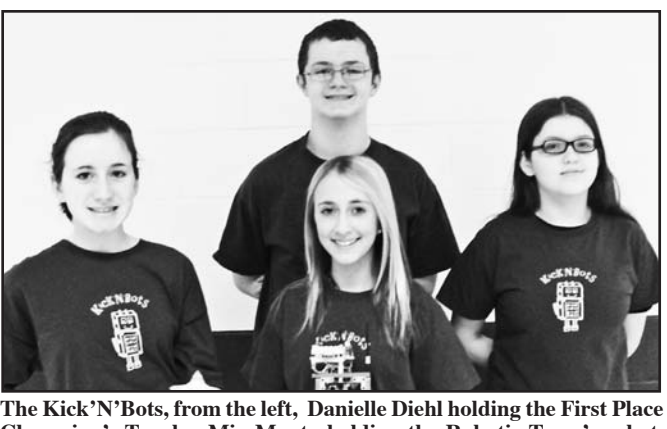
Middle School wins Robotics Team competition



The Kick'N'Bots, from the left, Danielle Diehl holding the First Place Champion's Trophy, Mia Manto holding the Robotic Team's robot, Sunshine Wood, and in the back Michael Austin.

Four students – Michael Austin, Danielle Diehl, Mia Manto and Sunshine Wood – from Towns County Middle School came up big winners Saturday, December 4, 2010, in the qualifier tournament of the Georgia FLL Robotics Team Competition held at the Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center located in Buford, Georgia. The robotics team competition is part of the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) LEGO League (over 9,000 teams worldwide). The Robotics Team Competition included students from 22 schools in Georgia. The purpose of the competition was to teach students basic computer programming principles, how to use sensors, and the designing and building principles of robots.

Kick'N'Bots (the team name selected by the students) was the overall winner, winning the First Place Champion's Award. To participate, each school's robotic team was required to compete in three categories – (1) the operation of the robot the team had designed and built, (2) a research presentation, and (3) a technical presentation. The theme of the competition was the use of biomedical engineering to assist doctors and hospitals in the treatment of their patients. [Biomedical engineering combines the fields of chemical, mechanical, electrical and other forms of engineering and mixes them with biological and medical sciences to advance healthcare.] The fourth element of the competition was teamwork ("gracious professionalism" – how team members work with each other and relate to other teams, visitors, and others during the day). Judges' comments about the team included: "Great team effort." "Gracious professionalism flows through you guys naturally." Teamwork scores count as much as the robot performance and project scores because FIRST believes the teamwork skills are critical to the success of any scientific or technical endeavor.

Each student on the robotics team had specific responsibilities. Michael Austin was the Lead Strategist, Danielle Diehl was the Lead Programmer and Captain, Mia Manto was the Lead Operator and Co-Captain, Sunshine Wood was the Lead Researcher, Wikispaces Manager and Photographer, and Gabe Gilliland was the Lead Builder. Plus, each student had secondary responsibilities in each of the other areas, making the participation a true team event. Their robotics coach, Mrs. Jo Ray Van Vliet, provided the professional guidance and encouragement to lead the Towns County Middle School team to their first victory.

The robot the team had built was operated on a course designed to mimic parts of the human body and had to be built and programmed by the team to complete as many of the 14 specific tasks as it could in under two and a half minutes in order to score points. The team's research presentation, titled "iMemory" was a skit about how they wanted to invent an app for the iPhone to be used by people with Alzheimer Disease. Their presentation skit explaining how the app would be used to provide daily reminders, memory stimulation games, phone contact info, photo memories with captions, and GPS location capabilities to Alzheimer Disease patients and their families was greeted by the science judges as "very innovative" and "extremely interesting". The presentation on the technical aspects of the robot by Michael Austin had the judges nodding their heads in agreement while they were asking detail questions about how the robot operated, why the students had chosen the particular chassis and attachments designs and builds, how they had used sensors, and their strategy for combining the programming of the tasks and order selected for the robot to accomplish the different tasks.

As a result of winning the Robotics Team Competition on Saturday, the robotics team will now be eligible to participate in the Super-Regional robotics competition in January.

While the Towns County Schools may have trouble competing against larger schools in some sports, the Robotics Team proved very clearly that other schools have trouble competing against the Towns County Schools when it comes to bright, creative and intelligent students. The Robotics Team's hard work in preparing for this event led to their success.

County receives grant for ambulance

Left to right front: Linda Hedden & Commissioner Bill Kendall. Back row: E.M.S. Director Ricky Mathis, Ray Giles and Jim Barnes

Commissioner Bill Kendall announced that the Towns County Emergency Medical Service has received a $73,275.87 grant from the Georgia Trauma Care Commission to purchase a new ambulance. The grant will be matched with $40,364.13 of local funds for a total price of $113,640.

Commissioner Kendall commended E.M.S. staff for their professional service provided to Towns County, and that on going training was being carried out to continue to improve the response time and professional attention on emergency calls. T(Dec15,F5)SH

Jail Debt...from page 1A

lease purchase agreement, or Certificate of Participation.

Through this method the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia constructs and owns the jail, financing it through a bank.

The county in turn, then leases the jail one year at a time which bypasses the constitutional requirement of voters having to approve a bond referendum, thus putting property owners in debt with voter approval of general obligation bonds.

"The down side of a lease purchasing agreement is property owners have to payback for a project over many years without voter approval and generally the interest rates are higher than voter approved bonds," Commissioner Kendall said.

Towns County Board of Education

67 Lakeview Circle, Suite C
Hiawassee, GA 30546
2011 Pre-Board Work Session Dates & Times
(first Monday of each month)
(except for April, July and September)
To be held at the Towns County Board of Education Office

January 3, 2011	**7 PM**	**July 5, 2011 (Tues.)**	**7 PM**
February 7, 2011	**7 PM**	**August 1, 2011**	**7 PM**
March 7, 2011	**7 PM**	**Sept. 6, 2011 (Tues.)**	**7 PM**
April 11, 2011	**7 PM**	**October 3, 2011**	**7 PM**
May 2, 2011	**7 PM**	**November 7, 2011**	**7 PM**
June 6, 2011	**7 PM**	**December 5, 2011**	**7 PM**

2011 Regular Board Meeting Dates & Times
(second Monday of each month)
(except for April and July)
To be held at the Towns County School Auditorium

January 10, 2011	**7 PM**	**July 18, 2011**	**7 PM**
February 14, 2011	**7 PM**	**August 8, 2011**	**7 PM**
March 14, 2011	**7 PM**	**September 12, 2011**	**7 PM**
April 18, 2011	**7 PM**	**October 10, 2011**	**7 PM**
May 9, 2011	**7 PM**	**November 14, 2011**	**7 PM**
June 13, 2011	**7 PM**	**December 12, 2011**	**7 PM**

Board Approved 12/13/10

T(Dec15,Z19)CA

Weather...continued from page 1A

steady approach to climb a slick, icy hill. The moment you take your foot off the gas, you're going in four different directions."

It wasn't any better on Young Harris Mountain on Sunday as more than a dozen vehicles went ice skating as they attempted to make the steep mountain grade. The icy road conditions kept Towns County sheriff's deputies out in the cold.

It was early monitoring of road conditions that led Dr. Behrens to cancel classes for Monday on Sunday at 5:30 p.m. He made the call for Tuesday classes at 5 p.m. on Monday.

Dr. Behrens made his decisions due to the unmerciful weather conditions and horrendous road circumstances throughout the county.

"Every report we received was bad news," Dr. Behrens said. "This is starting to remind me of the weather conditions we experienced in January and that's not good news either."

During the second week of January, snow started on a Thursday, leading to early closing of classes at midday. Classes also were closed on Friday, the following Monday and Tuesday. It was Wednesday before classes resumed at Towns County Schools as ground temperatures finally rose above freezing allowing secondary roads to thaw.

"I'm not sure if we're going to make it to classes this Wednesday," Dr. Behrens said.

The inclement weather conditions on Sunday prompted the usual mad rush to the stores to stock up on staples that included sandwich bread and milk.

Ingles and Dill's Food City had their share of customers as did Fred's and Dollar General Store in Downtown Hiawassee.

Those who didn't make it Sunday, made it on Monday.

Alexis, Sierra and Lisa Oakes of Hiawassee braved the freezing temperatures to shop at Dollar General Store on Main Street. It didn't take long for the store to sell out of milk and bread.

"We might be considered crazy for being out in this weather," Lisa Oakes said. "But if you don't know how long this weather is going to last, you got to have the basics to make it through."

Kenny, Alisha and Selena Silvers of Hiawassee also braved the elements to get some needed supplies before dark.

"I'd rather be out here in the daytime than at night," Kenny Silvers said.

At press time, the uninvited winter conditions persisted throughout the region. A decision on whether classes at Towns County School would be in session on Wednesday was not available at press time.

If the weekend was an indication, it could be a very white winter. Photos by Charles Duncan

Students received master's degree in nursing education

Students were presented their master's of science in nursing education on Dec. 11 at North Georgia College & State University. From left to right: Janita Mastin, Cumming; Suzan Paxton, Lake Geneva, Wisc.; Kim Naab, Woodstock; Maryanne Russell, Hiawassee; Carrie Snead, Alpharetta; Pam Noonan, Buford; Dr. Michelle Byrne, program coordinator; Brittany Smith, Toccoa; Sue McGill, Alpharetta; and Anne Jest, Stone Mountain.

While it's no secret that the state and the nation are facing severe nursing shortages, couple that with the lack of educators to train new nurses and the situation becomes even more difficult.

According to figures from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Georgia is expected to face a shortage of 37,700 registered nurses by 2020. While the University System of Georgia produces 80 percent of the new registered nurses in Georgia, hundreds of applicants to nursing programs are turned down each year because of an insufficient number of nursing educators. At North Georgia College & State University, the master's of science in nursing education program aims to help lessen both shortages.

"There is a shortage of nursing faculty and I think if you look at the demographics, most full professors and associate professors are in their late 50s and even 60s and a lot of them are going to be retiring," Byrne said, adding that nurse educators with master's degrees also are needed in hospitals and businesses.

This Saturday, nine additional nurse educators will receive their degrees and two already have accepted job offers. Even before graduation, the group taught and mentored hundreds of undergraduate students at North Georgia, Brenau University, Emory University, Kennesaw State University, and North Georgia Technical College.

"It's not just nurses I want to teach," Snead, who was recognized as the top graduate in the program, said. "One of my favorite things about being a nurse is teaching somebody how to take care of themselves, making something really complex really simple so they can understand it."

Those who will be receiving their master's degree Saturday are: Anne Jest, Stone Mountain; Janita Mastin, Cumming; Sue McGill, Alpharetta; Kim Naab, Woodstock; Suzan Paxton, Lake Geneva, Wisc.; Maryanne Russell, Hiawassee; and Brittany Smith, Toccoa. The group is the fourth to graduate from the nursing education program that started in 2006.

Applications for entry into the master's in nursing education program are taken each semester. Though the program is taught mostly online, one face-to-face class meeting is held each week. The program takes four semesters to complete on a full-time basis, but also can be taken part-time.

For more information or to apply, visit the Department of Nursing website and the Master of Science in Nursing Education website. North Georgia also has associate's and bachelor's degree programs in nursing. T(Dec15,F4)SH

Men's Morning Coffee Group

Regency Hospice Men's Coffee Group has a new meeting place. Grinds-n-Glazes at 233 Hwy. 515 in Blairsville on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month from 10 to 11:30 AM.

For more information please call Jan Deveraux, Chaplain at Regency Hospice in Hiawassee at 800-577-8791 or 706-896-1251. NT(Dec15,Z1)CA

Bagpipe instruction

The Appalachian Saint Andrew's Pipes and Drums Bagpipe Band is offering free instruction to all who want to learn how to play the Great Highland Bagpipe or to learn Regimental Drumming.

The band meets each Saturday from 9:30 a.m. until 12 noon in the Parish Hall of Saint Clare's Episcopal Church for instruction and practice.

For further information, call 706-781-3382 or 1-828-557-3812. NT(Dec15,Z1)CA