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First ever Homegrown Concert raises money for local student-athletes

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Touchdown Club partnered with the Softball Booster Club to put on the First Annual Homegrown Concert at the Anne Oliver Mitchell Auditorium on school campus Friday, Sept. 13.

Three local music acts volunteered their time to help support the event for the benefit of Towns County's Football and Softball Programs: Roy Perren as Elvis Presley, the Andrew Chastain Band, and Steven Phillips & Midnight Express.

The event acted as a fundraiser for the two sports teams, with a goal of reducing costs faced by coaches every season to ensure that players have what they need to take the field.

"All the money we raise goes back to help pay for meals, away games, any miscellaneous equipment like clothes for warmups and that kind of stuff," said Touchdown Club Treasurer Touchleen Woods. "The support that we receive through the community from the ticket sales goes right back into the program."

"It is very important that people know that there are things that the school pays for and there are things that they can't pay for. That's what our booster clubs are about, is paying for those little extras."

The first of the three artists to perform that evening was Towns County High School Principal Roy Perren, who donned his black rhinestone jumpsuit to take on his famous Elvis persona.

Perren opened the

concert singing "Blue Suede Shoes," and he continued to bring the house down with hit after Presley hit as the crowd whistled and cheered through his set.

He didn't just stick to Elvis songs, however, as he put on his cowboy hat to mix it up with some country classics.

Following Perren was the Andrew Chastain Band out of Murphy, North Carolina, and they were happy to be at the event.

"I was a part of athletics growing up, and it really meant a lot to me," Chastain said. "This is a great cause that is being supported, and I want to thank everybody for coming out to support it, because you guys are the reason this is going on."

Andrew Chastain and his band added to the energy

kickstarted by Perren with performances of several original songs such as "Roots," for which the group recorded a music video earlier this year.

Attendees also made song requests and took part in some of the jokes to make the performance a more involved experience that everyone could enjoy.

After the Andrew Chastain Band finished, High School junior Summer Rahn played two songs as an intermission for the show, one of which was an original she wrote that had the crowd cheering as she hit her high notes.

"We are really proud of Summer," Perren said. "She has a lot of talent, and I'm glad she got to perform in front of an audience tonight."

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Towns County High School Principal Elvis Presley performed at the Homegrown Concert in the Anne Oliver Mitchell Auditorium on Friday, Sept. 13. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

School board sets millage, welcomes student speakers in meeting

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education accepted the 2019 rollback millage rate of 7.477 mills in its regular meeting on Monday, Sept. 9, inside the Anne Oliver Mitchell Auditorium on campus.

Each year, the school board must set its millage rate for the purposes of levying the school system's portion of countywide property taxes, which go toward maintaining school operations.

The millage rate was 7.671 mills in 2018 and was expected to generate \$5,793,266 in total tax revenues last year at 100% collections.

And even though the 2019 millage rate is lower than

last year, it will still generate a total of \$5,825,640 at 100% collections, which is actually \$32,693 in additional tax revenues compared to 2018 expected collections.

Collections are up despite a lowered millage rate of 7.477 mills because the total value of property in the county has slightly increased over the last year, due largely to modest growth.

"That is the lowest millage rate for any school system in the state of Georgia," Berrong said, adding that he was staying true to his pledge when first hired to do everything in his power to keep property taxes from increasing.

In the nearly five

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Area student Noel Hyatt presented a \$662 donation to the Towns County Middle School Athletic Department on Sept. 9. Photo by Chad Stack

Elections Board hopes to consolidate Tate City Precinct with Macedonia

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Board of Elections members voted to begin the process of consolidating the Tate City Voting Precinct with the Macedonia Precinct in their Sept. 11 regular meeting.

In June, Board Chair Janet Oliva, Elections Supervisor Tonya Nichols and Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw visited Tate City to discuss with voters the possibility of merging the Tate City Precinct with Macedonia.

There, they went over several issues regarding the Tate City Precinct, including the necessity of new training for local poll workers on the brand-new voting machines, plus expected new transportation

procedures and heightened security requirements for equipment in the field.

Further complicating the matter was the fact that – at the time and still – the Secretary of State's Office had yet to release the new election rules regarding equipment pickup, storage and drop-off.

Nichols explained in June that closing the precinct and having Tate City residents travel to Macedonia to vote would make the overall election process more efficient with an added benefit of reducing costs to the county.

The 43 registered voters of Tate City discussed the idea of closing the longstanding precinct among themselves, keeping in mind that, should they decide against consolidation,



Janet Oliva

the county would do whatever it could to make it possible for them to continue voting in Tate City.

Ultimately, the Tate City Board of Elections will decide against consolidation, See Elections, Page 8A

LandFest brings Bluegrass, Gospel and Classic Country to Fairgrounds

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Dailey & Vincent LandFest returned to the Anderson Music Hall inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds Thursday, Sept. 12, through Saturday, Sept. 14.

Multiple industry top acts perform alongside Dailey & Vincent for the annual three-day concert series, with each day enjoying a different lineup.

Many of the shows were sold out, as The Hall repeatedly filled to capacity for performances that included the Oak Ridge Boys, the Bellamy Brothers, Josh Turner, Flatt Lonesome, the Malpass Brothers, Terry Baucom & the Dukes of Drive, the Primitive Quartet, the Chuck Wagon Gang, and, of course, Dailey & Vincent.



The dynamic duo of Jamie Dailey and Darrin Vincent speaking with audience members at their namesake LandFest on Friday, Sept. 13. Photo by Derek Storm

Like other concerts at Anderson Music Hall, the event attracted people from all over the country – people

like Arnold Crawford from California.

"I have been traveling like Arnold Crawford from California. Photo by Chad Stack See LandFest, Page 8A

Area residents remember 9/11 in ceremony on Hiawassee Square

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

When 19 terrorists murdered 2,977 people using four civilian airliners as weapons of mass destruction on Sept. 11, 2001, America vowed to "Never Forget."

And that's exactly what area residents and first responders gathered to do last week, on Wednesday, Sept. 11, at a special event on the Hiawassee Town Square commemorating the 18th year since those senseless attacks.

The event was a coordinated effort between the local governments of Towns, Hiawassee and Young Harris, and featured a giant American flag raised by the Fire Department's Ladder Truck.

"Today, we come together to remember what happened, to pay tribute, and never to



A patriotic crowd gathered on the Hiawassee Town Square for the Sept. 11 memorial event. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

forget that horrible things can happen," Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby said. "And we can still come together as a community, and hopefully not only remember those that we lost, but prevent something terrible from happening

again." Added Gibby, "May we never allow fear to take away freedom, even in tragedy, even when we're scared. So, today, let's come together, let us stand

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Chief Judge Gunter to retire from Enotah Judicial Circuit at end of month

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Superior Court Chief Judge N. Stanley Gunter is retiring, with Sept. 30 serving as his last day helming the Enotah Judicial Circuit.

And though he'll be leaving the circuit at the end of the month, Gunter said he has exciting plans that he looks forward to announcing publicly in the near future.

"It's kind of like when you graduate from high school, you know, what's the next phase in your life – that's kind of what this is," Gunter said. "I'm ready to retire from what I'm doing now, but I'm still pretty young, relatively speaking, and I have a lot of experience, so I plan to use that."

Gunter swore in as a judge of the circuit in 2012, and he became chief judge last year following the resignation of Chief Judge Murphy C. Miller on July 1, 2018.

The circuit consists of

three Superior Court judgeships currently held by Judge Gunter, Judge Raymond George and Judge Joy Parks.

George also came aboard the circuit in 2012, and he will succeed Gunter as the next chief judge of the circuit.

Gov. Brian Kemp is expected to appoint Gunter's replacement before the end of the year, and senior judges of the Remainder of Gunter's calendar of cases in the meantime.

The office of Superior Court judge is an elected position in Georgia, only filled by appointment when necessary. And though he swore in to a new four-year term in January, Gunter said he learned in late May that he was eligible for retirement and the timing just worked out.

"I was looking at the retirement statute, and it spelled out that I had enough time as district attorney and judge to go ahead and retire," Gunter said. "I turned 60 in May, so that



Chief Judge N. Stanley Gunter makes me eligible to collect my retirement.

"And the reason for looking at all that was, I have 27 years in a 24-year retirement system. I'm paying into a system and not getting anything else out of it, so, economically, it made sense to go ahead and retire."

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Historical Society plans for Haunted Jail in 2019, hears from Sam Ensley

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Members of the Towns County Historical Society announced in their Sept. 9 regular meeting at the Civic Center that they are once again planning to host a haunted house experience at the Old Rock Jail.

After the great success of the Haunted Jail last year, the Historical Society is looking forward to putting it on for Halloween next month.

Society Board Members Tyler Osborn and Mary Ann Miller are working on ways to revamp the Haunted Jail in 2019, and high school students involved with Future Business Leaders of America will be included in helping out the effort this year.

The society is also considering charging \$1 for admission with hopes of generating funds for the Historical Society.

"So, we'll be working on that in the weeks to come, and I'm sure as creative as they are that they'll come up with some great ideas," Green said. "We also are having picking on the porch in early October, so we're going to have more about that coming out, and that will be up on the porch at the jail."

"And if it rains, we've already got this room (at the Civic Center) reserved, so there's no problem with the weather."

The Historical Society will be hosting a brand-new event at the Old Rock Jail to finish out 2019.

"We're also doing something new this year, and I can thank Tyler Osborn, our secretary, for coming up with this idea," Green said. "We're going to have an Old-Fashioned Christmas Open House at the jail in December, and we're going to do that in conjunction with the city when they have a lighting of the tree on the square."



Sam Ensley delivered his presentation on "Growing Up in Jacksonville" at the Sept. 9 meeting of the Towns County Historical Society. Photo by Chad Stack

"And so, we're going to decorate what it might have looked like during the '30s or '40s when the jail was actually a jail."

The guest speaker for the Sept. 9 meeting was Sam Ensley. See Historical Society, Page 8A

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