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It's official – students are back in class

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It's that time of year again. On Thursday, Aug. 4, the day for which parents and teachers have been prepping finally arrived, a day students have feared since the end of May.

At Towns County Elementary School, close to 500 students, faculty and staff filled the halls on Thursday morning for the first of 180 days during the 2016-2017 school year.

As expected on the first See School, Page 6A



One of the first things to take care of during Open House is making sure you can get into your locker, all in preparation for the first day of school

Hiawassee City Council Post 1 qualifying begins Monday

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Qualifying for the Hiawassee City Council Post 1 seat will run Monday, Aug. 15, through Wednesday, Aug. 17, from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. at Hiawassee City Hall.

The qualifying fee for the seat has been set at \$72.

Currently, the five-seat council only has four members – Liz Ordiales, Anne Mitchell, Jay Chastain and Kris Berrong.

The special election was discussed in the July meeting of Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis and city council, in which the

council held a second reading and adoption of the election ordinance to fill the seat of former councilman Stephen Smith.

"The ordinance sets a special polling times of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.," said attorney David Syfan in the meeting. "Polling precinct will be here at (Hiawassee) City Hall."

"Any registered and qualified elector within the city that's a resident of the city – they're pretty much synonymous there, but you've got to be a registered voter – can qualify to run for the seat."

"It will be to fill the remainder of the term of Post 1, which would be approximately for one year, one month and 16 days."

Hiawassee embracing upcoming changes

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Hiawassee City Council discussed an upcoming water agreement with Towns County, as well as the new update for the city's Comprehensive Plan at the regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 2.

Towns County Chamber of Commerce representative Lynn McPeak, owner of TATA On Main, gave a presentation on the updates to the Hiawassee Comprehensive Plan in the meeting, explaining how citizens can be more involved in the process of writing the new plan.

As with any Comprehensive Plan, Hiawassee's and Towns County's will be required to establish community goals, a general vision statement, policies, and character areas and defining narratives.

The latter two items



Lynn McPeak of TATA On Main speaks on the Hiawassee Comprehensive Plan in the Aug. 2 Hiawassee City Council meeting

refer to specific goals that the city or county see happening sooner, rather than later. The plan itself will be a 10-year plan that is updated every five years.

"Our community is broken into three composites

or three groups," said McPeak. "Towns County, which affects all of us, Hiawassee and Young Harris. There is a survey out that asks you to identify which group you're from. I would encourage you to fill out two,

See Changes, Page 6A

Emma Kate Ledford wins speech competition

Towns County Herald
NEWS SPECIAL

Snakes, ticks, Legos, softball and marching band – these are just a few of the topics impressed upon a standing-room-only crowd during the annual Youth Leadership Development Public Speaking Competition held on Monday, Aug. 1, at the new Towns County Senior Center.

Ten local students, ranging from seventh-graders to high school seniors, impressed the audience and the judges with their presentations and masterful speaking abilities.

Master of Ceremonies Terry White began the festivities by introducing Troop 125 of the Boy Scouts of America, which led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Former Youth Leadership Development winner and recent Towns County High School graduate Adam Penland delivered the



Winners of the 2016 Youth Leadership Development Speech Competition: L-R, First Prize Emma Kate Ledford, Second Prize Kendall Floyd, Third Prize Vanessa Floyd, Fourth Prize Bazya Smith

invasion. Kaylee Hamilton roused the spectators with her rendition of "God Bless America," followed by Sully Vanattia, who then blessed the group with her presentation of "God Bless the U.S.A."

Both Hamilton and Vanattia received standing ovations for their moving performances.

The keynote speaker of the event was none other than

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Tracy Lawrence to play The Hall Friday

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Tracy Lawrence is one of the most recognizable voices in Country Music.

With such songs as "Time Marches On," "Alibis," and "Find Out Who Your Friends Are," Lawrence will be bringing his brand of Merle Haggard and Vern Gosdin-inspired Country Music to Anderson Music Hall in the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on Friday, Aug. 26.

The multi-platinum Country Music Association and Academy of Music award-winning artist has helped shape the sound of Country Music for two decades.

Having recently celebrated 20 years in music, Lawrence has served as an inspiration for a whole new generation of entertainers and fans.

Jason Aldean and Luke Bryan frequently pay tribute to Lawrence during their live



Tracy Lawrence

shows by performing any number of his double-platinum hits, including "Time Marches On" and "Alibis," songs that make Lawrence one of the most played artists on Country Music radio.

Despite performing 90-plus live concerts a year, Lawrence also stays busy

hosting his own radio show.

He recently released an album titled "Evolution," which includes remakes of his greatest hits. His last studio album was the critically-acclaimed "Headlights, Taillights, and Radios" from 2013.

"Management is in the

See Lawrence, Page 6A

TCHS FBLA students win at nationals

Towns County Herald
NEWS SPECIAL

ATLANTA – More than 12,000 of America's best and brightest youths gathered in Atlanta this summer to showcase their talents as future business leaders, and to compete for a chance to make it to the national award stage for the opportunity to win over \$150,000 in cash awards.

Future Business Leaders of America, the largest and oldest business-oriented student organization, held its National Leadership Conference in Atlanta from June 28 to July 3.

Participants from around the country attended this conference to sharpen their core business skills, expand their networks, and participate in more than 60 business-related events.

Towns County FBLA proudly represented Georgia with eight competitors who advanced as state winners

See FBLA, Page 6A



FBLA National Competitive Event Team from Towns County: Back Row, Adam Penland, Jackson Taylor and Nick McConnell; Front row, Alyson Underwood, Kyra Tallent and Sara Beth Hobbs; not pictured, Shea Nelson and Nick Shook

Sen. Wilkinson saves \$80,000 grant for Towns County road improvements

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

When Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall hit a road block trying to acquire grant funds through the Georgia Department of Transportation, he knew exactly who to turn to for help – State Sen. John Wilkinson.

Commissioner Kendall had applied for the DOT's Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant in order to complete much-needed road striping in the county, and though the Gainesville office approved Towns County's application, the state turned it down due to insufficient funds for the total number of grant applications.

"Sen. Wilkinson worked diligently with DOT officials to get the grant reinstated and approved," said Commissioner Kendall, expressing his gratitude for the good work of the senator.



Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall looks over a striping contract as he signs it, with Deputy Clerk Andrea Anderson and Roads Superintendent Clyde Shook on Friday, Aug. 5.

The grant puts \$80,000 of state money toward striping 151 linear miles of county roads, and the county has to provide a 30 percent local

match, which is \$24,000, for a total of \$104,000 in available funds for the project.

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Mattee muses over mummy berry and more at Movers and Shakers

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Towns and Union County Extension Agent Melissa Mattee mulled over matters of lawn and flora care with the Mountain Movers and Shakers during their weekly meeting on Friday, Aug. 5, at Mary's Southern Grill.

This is not the conservative educational group's first encounter with the self-proclaimed "bug lady" – Mattee spoke with the Movers and Shakers for the first time back in March, when she introduced herself to the community and instantly became a hit among the members.

Mattee addressed the group on topics of current relevance at the extension office – proper care, black knot fungus, fire blight



Towns and Union County Ag Agent Melissa Mattee addressed a variety of common lawn care concerns at Mary's Southern Grill on Friday, Aug. 5

and mummy berry.

"It's really important, if you have any grass at all, to have upkeep to prevent erosion and maintain greenery around your home," said Mattee. "September is a

really important month for our grasses, whether you're establishing a lawn or just maintaining it."

According to Mattee, grass in the North Georgia

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Lake Levels

Blue Ridge	1,680-59
Chatuge	1,922-15
Nottely	1,770-29

An Evening Celebrating
Ronnie Milsap, '64
Thursday, Aug. 11 @
Young Harris College

Towns County Food Pantry
NEEDS your empty egg cartons!

NEW Hunting Seasons and Regulations

See page 2A

Friday Night Football!
Fri. Aug 12 vs. Butler High
7:30 PM