

School...from Page 1A



Chewbacca visited the Towns County Elementary School Open House on Tuesday, Aug. 2, to the delight of Towns County school children

morning back, the volume of kids dropped off was higher than other times throughout the school year, but TCES Assistant Principal Shannon Moss was prepared for that.

Otherwise, the first day went off without a hitch, and Moss said he was excited about the upcoming school year.

"Generally, the first two days are very crowded with kids being dropped off, and this year was no different," Moss said. "But we have a great staff this year with some new additions that will work well with the talented staff that we already have in place."

According to fourth-grade science teacher Shea Taylor, it takes a lot of work to get ready for a new school year, but the first day runs more smoothly as a result of solid preparation.

"We had three days of pre-planning where we'll get our rooms organized and get all of the paperwork caught up, then we have Open House, which provides us with an opportunity to meet everyone, students and parents. So when Thursday morning gets here, we're ready to rock 'n' roll."

Beginning the school year on a Thursday allows students and teachers a much easier transition than if school began on a Monday.

"Those first two days allows us to get to know our kids and let them learn a little bit about us," Taylor said. "It



TCES educators Lisa Ledford and Debi Williams welcome the "Jedi" children - aka Padawan learners - back on the first day of school in Towns County, on Thursday, Aug. 4



TCES Assistant Principal Shannon Moss greets a car rider who is more than ready to get back to learning after a long Towns County summer

also gives us the weekend to relax and look forward to coming back for our first full week."

On the evening of Tuesday, Aug. 2, the elementary school hosted an Open House to allow students and teachers the opportunity to meet each other. It also let the teachers inform the parents on what kind of supplies they will need to bring the first day to prevent any surprises when class gets underway two days later at 8 a.m.

The Towns County Parent, Teacher, Student Organization (PTSO) was on hand during the Open House to encourage parents to sign up for "Tools for School."

The "Tools for School"

program allows parents to register their Ingles Advantage Cards, so whenever they make purchases using their Advantage Card, Ingles will give back to the school a portion of those sales. The portion can be used by the school to purchase computers and school supplies.

According to Towns County PTSO President Stacy Calhoun, the PTSO donated \$7,500 to all three schools last year.

"We do a lot of things to help the schools," Calhoun said. "All the fundraisers we do, all of the money goes directly back to the general fund for the teachers, principals and the students."

new experience for sure, but I can't wait to do it again."

The Awards of Excellence Program is part of a comprehensive national competitive events program sponsored by FBLA that recognizes and rewards excellence in a broad range of business and career-related areas.

For many students, the competitive events are the capstone activity of their academic careers. In addition to the competitions, students immersed themselves in educational workshops, visited an information-packed exhibit hall, and attended motivational keynotes on a broad range of business topics throughout the conference.

The 2016 National Competitive Events Team from Towns County would like to thank everyone for their tremendous support throughout their journey, including Towns County Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong, TCHS Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs, Assistant Principal Jim Melton, Counselor Lana Parker, the Towns County Board of Education, parents and families, teachers, corporate sponsors, and the Hiawassee community.

Students would also like to offer a very special thank you to FBLA adviser Melissa McConnell "for her unwavering dedication and commitment to the members of Towns County FBLA."

Corporate sponsors for Towns County FBLA include: Towns County PTSO; Blue Ridge Mountain EMC; Stephanie W. McConnell, Attorney; Susan De Vries, State Farm Insurance; and the Towns County Lions Club.

Congratulations to Towns County High's FBLA chapter, its members, adviser and national winners!

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to earn their places at the national conference: Adam Penland, Alyson Nelson, Shea Underwood, Nick McConnell, Nick Shook, Jackson Taylor, Kyra Tallent and Sara Beth Hobbs.

These young business leaders worked tirelessly the entire year to make it to this level of competition, advancing from region to state to national level. Their dedication and strong work ethics paid off as the results were calculated.

Towns County can now boast to having a First Place national winner for the fourth year in a row, as Alyson Nelson once again claimed first in the nation, this year in Computer Applications.

"FBLA has helped me to realize that with hard work and dedication, anything is possible. I am very grateful for the many opportunities FBLA has given me," said Nelson, who finished first last year in the Spreadsheet Applications competition.

Sophomore and first-time competitor Sara Beth Hobbs competed in Word Processing, where she finished Second Place overall.

"Competing in Word Processing at NLC was a great experience for me," said Hobbs. "I learned so much about Microsoft Word and word processing that will be very useful in my future."

Junior Jackson Taylor also made it onto the big stage, placing 10th in Database Design and Applications.

Taylor stated: "My first FBLA NLC was a fantastic experience. I met new people and learned more about FBLA, all while having fun. I am so glad that I could be part of it."

Adam Penland

Register now for third annual Dash to the Vineyards

The Third Annual Dash to the Vineyards 5K Race will be held Saturday, August 27, 2016. This fun foot race will begin at beautiful Crane Creek Vineyards by Holly Hill Event Center and finish back at the vineyards beginning at 8 a.m. Racers will have the opportunity to compete on roads with hills, twists and best of all, beautiful scenery. And, what a great time of year to be racing to a vineyard - September is normally harvest season for wine growers so the vines will be bursting with grapes! T-shirts will be given to all pre-registered racers. Trophies will be awarded to 5K runners

as follows: Top Overall Male and Female and Top Male and Female Masters (40 and over). Ribbons will then be given to the top 3 male/female in a variety of age groups. And, this year, it's all about the swag! We are loading racers' swag bags with lots and lots of goodies. We want everyone to turn out - runners, walkers, stroller-racers, walkers with pets - we want everyone to come out and have a good time!

Crane Creek will even prepare a carb-loaded Tapas dinner for the evening before the race (at a very affordable price). Each registrant will also receive a certificate for a

free wine tasting (must be 21 yrs. of age). Don't miss the race - lots of fun, lots of goodies, lots of friends!

Registrations are available at the Towns County Chamber office located at 1411 Jack Dayton Circle, Young Harris (directly across the street from the entrance to The Ridges Resort) or visit the Chamber's website www.mountaintopga.com and look for the link on the homepage. Cost is \$25 for pre-registration (before 8/12/16) and \$30 (after 8/12/16).

For more information, call the Chamber at (706) 896-4966

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one for Towns County and one for your respective city, because they both personally relate to you.

"The purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is that it somewhat guides the county commissioner as well as the city government as to what the public input is and what the community has to say.

"What your concerns are, what projects you want to see happen, what you want to see addressed or what you don't want to see addressed. They are required, by law, to seek input from the public, hence the survey."

The surveys can be found at Hiawassee City Hall, and McPeak said people can pick one up at TATA On Main.

Hiawassee, Young Harris and Towns County had a public hearing concerning the Comprehensive Plan on Thursday, July 21. Hiawassee will host a separate meeting for the city's Comprehensive Plan on Aug. 23, at 5:30 p.m. at city hall.

Also at this month's meeting, city council approved to engage in a renegotiated Wholesale Water Agreement with the Towns County Water and Sewer Authority.

Through this agreement, the City of Hiawassee will be increasing certain charges applied to the water sold to the county through the Towns County Water and Sewer Authority.

Up until five years ago, the county only received 40 percent of the overall capacity



Hiawassee Councilwomen Liz Ordiales and Anne Mitchell in the August regular meeting of city council and Mayor Barbara Mathis

but was granted a bump up to 45 percent usage. However, if the county exceeds that percentage, there will be a surcharge added to their regular payment.

Currently, the Towns County Water and Sewer Authority pays \$1.50 per unit.

"The county used to use 60 percent of the capacity of the plant," said Hiawassee City Manager Rick Stancil. "It wasn't until we renegotiated that deal to include a penalty on there, because they were eating into the city's portion."

"Anything above 45 percent, the county will have to pay a 20 percent surcharge to use our capacity, and that was proposed under the current agreement. Generally speaking, the county uses more capacity than the city.

"Their concern, also reflected in the document, is that in any future expansion, since they would help pay for it, that they receive that 45 percent allocated for future expansion. Again, while they're entitled 45 percent in terms of allocation, they paid for close to 50 percent of the cost of the plant because of the water use and the surcharge."

Also included in the new negotiation, the county requested commitment from the Hiawassee City Council that the third filter at the Hiawassee Water Plant would be implemented, of which the county will pay a percentage.

The City of Hiawassee agreed to these terms and will continue supplying the Towns County Water and Sewer Authority usage of the Hiawassee Water Plant.

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Jasmine Forrester, who gave a speech she recently delivered in a national competition. Forrester is a past Youth Leadership Development Public Speaking Competition participant.

The competition and workshop held a reward for each participant, which included a newfound confidence in speaking to a large crowd. Four participants received substantial monetary prizes for their placement in the contest, while the remaining contestants received a smaller monetary participation reward.

The Mountain Movers and Shakers were the primary sponsors of the event, which received an astounding \$1,950 donated toward prize and participation money - 21 business leaders, civic leaders and elected officials served as sponsors in providing the money.

The overall winner for the competition was 12th-grader Emma Kate Ledford, who was awarded the Grand Prize for her wonderfully crafted speech concerning the Legends of the Appalachians.

Ledford is the first female grand prize winner of the annual Youth Leadership Development Public Speaking Competition, for which she received a \$600 cash prize.

Kendall Floyd, a 10th-grade student at Towns County High School, won Second Place and \$400 in the competition



Members of the Mountain Movers and Shakers Development team with all ten contestants of the 2016 speech contest

for his speech that provided insight into the Republican Party phenomenon known as Donald Trump.

Eighth-grade student Vanessa Floyd received the honors of Third Place in the contest, rounding out her evening with a \$300 prize. Floyd's presentation taught the audience how to make a proper basketball rebound, commonly known as a "block out."

Seventh-grader Bazya Smith topped off the winner's club with her enlightening speech concerning Tourette Syndrome. Smith received a \$200 award for her speech.

The remaining six competitors - Peyton Barrett, Colin Zuber, Gabby Patrick, Blythe Smith, Haley Zuber and Jade Ledford - each received a participation award of \$75.

According to the credo

of the Mountain Movers and Shakers, they exist to make Towns County a better place to live. Their passion is the youth of the county, and working with the local school system and residents to foster a better local climate, all while providing increased opportunities for the people of the county - especially students - to be better prepared in life.

The Youth Leadership Development Public Speaking Program is one of the programs the Movers and Shakers use to accomplish their goals.

"The (2016) competition, I feel, was the strongest that we've ever had," said group co-founder Sam Fullerton. "These students did a terrific job. We packed out the new senior center, and it was a good show. We appreciate everyone who came out for it."

Lawrence...from Page 1A

process of securing a new label deal for me, so we're planning on going back into the studio in September to begin working on another project," Lawrence told the Towns County Herald. "I've got a syndicated radio show titled 'Honky Tonkin' that I've been doing for almost two years, and we're in 52 markets around the country. We primarily play Honky Tonk Music from the '80s, '90s and early 2000s."

In 2009, Lawrence released a Christian Music album titled "The Rock." While he admits that releasing a Christian album has been a goal of his for a long time, Gospel and Bluegrass Music weren't a major influence growing up.

"That is something I've wanted to do for a while, and I would like to do another gospel album in the future," he said. "I'm a Christian believer and have been since I was a kid, and have really gone back to it more at this stage of my life. I drifted away for a long time, but now I'm very engaged in my church and have a very strong faith.

"Believe it or not, Gospel really didn't have a big influence on my life, because the way it was arranged, it was not always comfortable for my voice."

However, Lawrence's voice was suited for traditional Country Music, which resulted in a natural gravitation toward Haggard.

of my life."

Other influences include Gosdin, George Strait, Willie Nelson and Vince Gill.

Keith Whitley was another major influence on Lawrence, and though he never met the Kentucky-native, who passed away in 1989, he was able to perform Whitley's "I'm Over You" on the 1995 album "Keith Whitley: Tribute."

Lawrence also covered the Rolling Stones' 1966 hit "Paint It Black" on a Stones tribute album titled "Stone Country."

"I listened to a lot of Rock growing up, although it was more Southern Rock like Skynyrd and ZZ Top," he said. "I was more of a Beatles fan than a Rolling Stones fan, but when you get an opportunity like that you have to grab hold of it."

When fans attend the show later this month, one thing they can be sure of is that Lawrence takes great pride in his live shows, which will include his hits from the early '90s, all the way up to his most recent album, and even a few covers.

"I love playing live, I love the interaction and the response you get from the crowd," he said. "I try to play as many of the hits from my era as I possibly can, since that's what the fans come and see me for, and I'll weave a few new things in there, along with some covers from guys that influenced me along the way."

"It probably doesn't mean that much to this newer generation, but I take pride in the fact that what you hear coming out of the P.A. is all live by the guys you see standing on that stage. There are no computer-generated tracks, no computer background vocals. It's just six guys standing on the stage playing the music that you're hearing. It all comes from us, and I don't think you can get that much anymore."

Lawrence will be joined that Friday evening by Jana Kramer. Kramer is relatively new to the Country Music scene, and many may know her from her acting in the hit TV series "One Tree Hill."

Tickets for the 7 p.m. show are on sale now - Level 1 seating costs \$46 plus \$2 handling, and Level 2 seating costs \$36 plus \$2 handling.