

# Towns County Volunteers gather to clean shores of Lake Chatuge

By Lily Avery  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Lake Chatuge is a vital resource for much of the area, providing both a water source as well as an economical asset. However, the lake will not be of much use to anyone, recreational or otherwise, if not preserved and cared for by those who frequent it.

To aid in this effort to upkeep the health of Lake Chatuge, the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition hosted its Sixth Annual Lake Chatuge Shoreline Cleanup on Saturday, Nov. 5.

"The Lake Chatuge Shoreline Cleanup started six years ago," said Callie Moore, HRWC executive director. "Georgia has an organization called Rivers Alive, and it is a statewide cleanup that happens all throughout the state at different times, and different groups schedule cleanups associated with Rivers Alive."

"So, when we had the Lake Chatuge Watershed coordinator, she had come to us from another organization and was familiar with Rivers Alive. She wanted to organize a cleanup here."

"People in Towns County in particular were very excited about the possibility of having a shoreline cleanup. So, we started it."

According to the website, Rivers Alive is Georgia's annual volunteer waterway cleanup event that targets waterways throughout the state, including streams, rivers, lakes, beaches and wetlands.

The mission of Rivers Alive is to create awareness and involvement in the preservation of Georgia's water resources, something in which the members of the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition feel strongly.

On Saturday, 71 area volunteers gathered at the Towns County Recreational Beach to learn which of the 13 possible locations they would be sent to. From there, volunteers were given two and a half hours to complete their cleanup before bagging the trash and heading back to the beach.

"Basically, what we do, it's kind of a unique situation but it works very well, since Lake Chatuge has so many little coves and places where trash can collect," said Moore. "We go around and look at these different sites and coves and see how much trash is there and how many volunteers we need to send to each site."

"Then, we recruit team leaders for each site and assign people into groups when they sign up to volunteer."

With the assistance of Chattahoochee National Forest Service technician Kevin Roper, the bags are picked up at the site via a dump truck from the U.S. Forest Service and taken to the dump, where Towns County waives the fees for the trash.

Volunteers were treated to lunch at the Towns County Recreational Beach, where they



Volunteers collect trash from TVA property along US 76 in Towns County. Photo/Callie Moore



One volunteer collected trash in his canoe and paddled in to the swim beach to be loaded on the trash truck. Photo/Raleigh Keagan



2016 Lake Chatuge Shoreline Cleanup Photo/Charlie Swor

mingled and shared "interesting trash pile" stories.

"We try to weigh it all so we can have a total by the end of the day," said Moore. "Though, I will say, this year there isn't as much trash at many of the sites. In fact, two of the sites that we cleaned up last year, we didn't even pick up on the list this year. We're making headway after only six years."

"The first few years we saw tons of tires and stuff like that, that had probably been there for years and years and years. After a while, after you do that year after year, then the trash goes down."

Since beginning the cleanup six years ago, volunteers have been able to collect 5.5 tons of trash just off the shoreline of Lake Chatuge. While the final total for Saturday's cleanup has not

yet been determined, Moore speculates that it definitely made a dent in the overall appearance and health of Lake Chatuge.

"It's a lot of fun," said Moore. "It's a good way for people to get out and contribute. Anybody can pick up trash - well, almost anybody can pick up trash. It works really well."

Moore hopes to continue to see a decline in trash at annual cleanup sites, hoping to one day push the cleanup to once every two years, and wishes to one day see Lake Chatuge free of trash for good.

For more information on how to get involved with waterway cleanups and the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, visit [www.hrwc.net](http://www.hrwc.net).

rain to gain better protection against wildfire, so residents should remain diligent and call 911 if they see any brush fires or open fire of any kind.

"For the last month or so, the Georgia Forestry Commission has not been issuing any burn permits," said Chief Copeland. "You can't burn on your own property without a permit."

Added Chief Copeland: "We're just a tinderbox. There's only three or four chances for rain in the month of November, and per the U.S. Forest Service, during that time period, our accumulation won't even be a quarter of an inch. So all burning is off limits."

Deadly wildfire can be sparked by any number of causes - from lightning, like the Rough Ridge fire, to a tiny ember from a manmade fire carried by wind to the dry, dry stretches of the North Georgia Mountains.

"We haven't had our leaf drop yet," said Chief Copeland. "When you look around right now, the leaves are all on the trees. When we have this leaf drop right here, it's just going to add more crunchy fuels to the ground."

"After this leaf drop, it's going to be even scarier, because the fuel load will be multiplied. So, if we stay dry through the winter going into next spring, it's going to be tough, and we'll be in bad shape."

Hence the Burn Ban.

Indoor chimney fires should be okay, but the chief urges residents to have chimneys inspected before starting an indoor chimney fire.

# CASA...from Page 1A

700 people.

Following the show was a Dancing with the North Georgia Stars Gala at the North Georgia Technical College, catered by Copperhead Lodge, where patrons could meet the couples and celebrate a night of dancing and fellowship.

Enotah CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates for children) is a nonprofit organization serving four Georgia counties: Towns, Union, White and Hall. Dancing with the North Georgia Stars acted as a fundraiser for Enotah CASA, with all proceeds going to help abused and neglected children within the four-county district.

CASA volunteers typically handle an average of two cases that they will work on for at least two years. In the last year, CASA members have served 219 children from the area, and most of these children are under the age of 12.

Initially, the projected goal for the event was \$20,000, but after an astounding amount of community support and outreach, the organization was able to raise over \$40,000 through the fundraiser, doubling the proposed target sum.

"This is better than I thought it would be," said Linda D'Angelo, Enotah CASA executive director. "I'm so appreciative and so proud of all the dancers and everyone involved. This is going to help so many children in our community."

"I just want to thank everyone who helped in any way throughout this whole fundraising event."

The dancers competed to win one of two awards, the People's Choice Award and Judge's Award. A combined score of each couple's costumes, choreography and technical performance decided the winner of the Judge's Award.

People's Choice Award was determined by which couple received the most votes. Votes were cast by either purchasing tickets from couples or donating money in the name of a couple to Enotah CASA before or during the show.

Kris Berrong and Dr. Claire Worthy won first place for the People's Choice Award with an exciting, toe-tapping clogging number. Runner-Up for the People's Choice Award was dynamic duo Renee Deibert and Rick Kmet, performing a ravishing classic dance.

Showcasing a heart-warming lyrical number, Andrew Smith and Aly Sanchez were awarded the Third Place



Kris Berrong and Dr. Claire Worthy showed off their clogging skills at the competition.



Steven Phillips and Candace Lee emceed the event, while Linda D'Angelo represented the Enotah CASA.

prize for the Judge's Award.

Berrong and Worthy took home another prize, staking claim on Runner-Up for the Judge's Award.

Finally, winning the coveted Mirror Ball Trophy was Jeff Davis and Martina Gibboney, showing their masterful skills as both dancers and actors with a rendition of characters from the classic TV show, "The Munsters," set to a modern routine.

"I'm very excited that we won," said Gibboney. "We put a lot of work into it and we raised a lot of money for a great cause. I'm just so excited about it. I definitely didn't expect to win."

For the dancers involved, while this event was fun and free-spirited, and competitive natures did come out, the most important thing was

raising funds for a most worthy cause.

United Community Bank was the presenting sponsor for the evening. Other sponsors for the event were Budget Blinds, Forever Truths, Total Body Recovery Paint and Auto, and Union General and Chatuge Regional Hospitals.

The Dancing with the North Georgia Stars couples were as follows: Harry Steiner and Molly Brendle; Mary Lynn McKenzie and Roy Perren; Bob Levy and Brett Taylor; Pat Griffin and Ron Proto; Andrew Smith and Aly Sanchez; Dr. Claire Worthy and Kris Berrong; Lee Knight and Angela Thompson-Puleo; Amy Harper and Kenan Olsen; Sam Hamby and Lynn Hayes; Jeff Davis and Martina Gibboney; and Renee Deibert and Rick Kmet.

# Halloween...from Page 1A

ages surrounded the square as they patiently waited in line to receive candy from the dozens of local businesses, churches and community groups that were in attendance.

The event may have been scheduled to end at 8:30 p.m., but most of the vendors stayed until well after 9 p.m., or until all of the trick or treaters were served.

One of the vendors at the event was Jeremy Hogsed of Hiwassee's Farmers Insurance, who was attending his fifth Halloween on the Square.

"I enjoy giving back to the community and love seeing how happy this makes all of the little kids," he said. "This year has been very, very good, we've had the largest turnout that I've seen since I began doing this event."

Peggy Eaton of North Georgia Dance Arts concurred, saying, "This is our second year here and the costumes are wonderful, the kids and their excitement are what (brought us back)."

Added Eaton: "It's amazing how many kids actually came out this year. It's a whole lot more than last year. We have more kids, more families, and that brings more excitement, and everything about it is just great."

At 6 p.m. a costume contest was held with three prizes awarded in three different age divisions. First Place received \$15, Second Place was awarded \$10, and Third Place was given \$5.

In the 2 years-and-under age division, First Place went to Gunnar Mills, Second Place was given to Syllas VanZee, and Third Place was awarded to Delilah Whidden.

In the 3 to 5-year age division, the Sailor to 5-year placed first, Jake Roberts came in second, and Lilly Beaver placed third.

In the 6 to 10-year-old division, Kenzie Beaver came in First Place, Camerson



Pollack was second, and Sofia Charbonneau was third.

Betty Jones, the Children's Minister at Hiwassee's McConnell Baptist Church, was also on hand at the event for the second-straight year.

"We enjoy coming to this event to reach out to the community, to invite them to come to our church, to show them God's love, and just be a part of all the fun" she said. "This year has been wonderful,

and we look forward to coming back. There is a much larger crowd than last year and definitely a lot more kids."

Jones was also inviting the community to an event that will be held at the church, following next month's Christmas Parade.

"There will be cookies, brownies, and hot cocoa after the Christmas Parade, and we would like for everyone to come and join us after the parade."

# Burn Ban...from Page 1A

burning."

Authorities in Clay County, North Carolina, discovered wildfire near Hayesville and Shooting Creek on October 25, and that fire still burns and is visible from Brasstown Bald, as does the Knob Fire near Rainbow Springs, North Carolina.

Union County suffered a bit of wildfire recently on its Chimneytop Mountain, though that fire was contained to a 3-acre area.

The U.S. Forest Service just Sunday discovered wildfire off the Richard Russell Scenic Highway in White County, and that highway was closed Sunday to through traffic so firefighters could concentrate on getting that fire contained.

Wildfire still rages in the

# GWRRA meetings

Chapter J of the Gold Wing Road Riders Association (GWRRA) meets on the third Saturday of each month (excluding December) at Daniels Steakhouse, Hiwassee. Fellowship/food at 11 a.m. with the meeting at noon. We welcome riders of all motorcycle brands located in the north Georgia area. We focus on friends, fun, riding safety, and knowledge. Check our website for ride schedule. For further information, you may contact Dave Hurd at 828-369-5918 or Jeff Overbay 706-781-4743. [www.chapterj.gwr-ra.com](http://www.chapterj.gwr-ra.com).

Cohutta Wilderness of Fannin County, where more than 4,000 acres have been consumed with fire.

And the list goes on. With the Burn Ban in place in Towns County, all outside burning and outdoor open flames are prohibited, including but not limited to bonfires, campfires with or without rings, burn barrels covered or open, fire pits with or without rings, fireworks, charcoal grills, cooking fires and chimineas.

Brush pile burns and agricultural fires are also strictly prohibited.

Outdoor covered gas grills are allowed, though there is to be no use of charcoal or other combustible material outdoors during the ban.

Consequences for violating the ban include the following but are not limited to: suppression charges by the Georgia Forestry Commission for escaped wildfires; responsibility for the cost of all fire suppression and property loss.

Union County also instituted a burn ban on Friday, and parts of the Appalachian Trail have been closed in North Carolina due to proximity of wildfire.

Currently, the U.S. Forest Service has a specialized firefighting helicopter stationed at the Blairsville Municipal Airport that is capable of dumping 2,000 gallons of water on wildfires.

What the mountains need is rain, and plenty of it.

Chief Copeland says it will take more than just a single