

# Puppets...from Page 1A

overwhelmed when something goes wrong with "Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons" by Eric Litwin.

In between each book production throughout the 35-minute show was a smaller sideshow, such as a singing, piano playing grandpa and a talkative Big Foot, both of which had the children and parents alike smiling, laughing and having a grand ole time.

Thursday's show was the third one the puppet company has performed this summer, the first being at the Fannin County Public Library earlier in June and the second at the Mountain Regional Library on June 28. And, so far, Stone says that the crowds have only gotten bigger since last year.

"We had a huge crowd at Fannin," said Stone. "This is a great crowd today and we had a nice crowd at Mountain Regional. Our goal was to develop a reputation for the

show and I think we're on our way toward that.

"My goal is to let people know that, when the company is coming, it's not going to be your average puppet show. We have video techniques and things of that nature.

"So, the more we do, the bigger reputation we get and within a year or so, maybe we'll be traveling to other library systems. We're just excited about where it's headed."

With all the puppetry excitement, snacks were in order and thankfully the Friends of the Library of Towns County had just the thing set up for parents and kids to munch on before, during and after the show.

Homemade brownies, gluten-free cookies, breads, small cakes and more filled the long table set up for the Friends of the Library Bake Sale. Typically, the friends host at least three bake sales a year,



Friends of the Libraries of Towns County Bake Sale. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

all to raise funds to support the two local libraries in Towns County.

"All of the money raised, along with any other money we raise, goes toward purchasing books, materials and summer reading stuff for our libraries in Towns County," said Suzanne

Carter, FOLTC President. "We try to do a couple of bake sales a year and we try to do this a lot with the summer reading program because of the kids.

"We're going to have a book sale in October, so we'll probably have another bake sale then as well."



Arrgh! Pirate puppets! Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Along with bake sales, the FOLTC is also giving away raffle tickets for a basket donated by Crane Creek Vineyards and sells books regularly at the Mountain Regional Library in Young Harris.

To round out the

summer vacation, the Mountain Regional Puppet Company will be performing one final show for the season at the Union County Public Library on July 17, at 11 a.m.

# MRLS Board approves budget, elects new chair

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
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YOUNG HARRIS – The Libraries of Towns County are vibrant community partners serving residents of all ages.

Right now, children of the county are taking part in the summer reading programs at Mountain Regional Library in Young Harris and the Towns County Public Library in Hiawassee, with literacy activities focused on bridging the summer school break.

Senior citizens have access to several programs at the libraries to keep them active within their communities, and the libraries house a variety of resources to assist residents who have vision and hearing impairments.

Families can take advantage of "ParkPasses" to get free parking at state parks, and the libraries even offer a Zoo Atlanta pass for families to get in free to the zoo.

These programs and more are available to Towns County residents thanks to local and state funds appropriated through the annual budget process.

In its most recent meeting on June 21, the Mountain Regional Library System Board of Trustees passed its

fiscal year 2017-2018 budget.

The library fiscal year mirrors the state fiscal year, and will run from July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018.

MRLS Director Vince Stone is responsible for preparing the budget each year, and he reported expected revenues of \$1,048,607.79 from all local, state and other funding sources, and projected expenditures of \$1,034,214.

Towns County will be chipping in a total of \$112,000 from local taxes to go toward those revenues, with a further \$45,000 coming from the school board; the Towns County Challenge Grant set up between the county and the Friends of the Libraries of Towns County will be providing \$5,000; and the cities of Young Harris and Hiawassee will be contributing \$3,000 each.

The rest of the revenues in the budget will come from local tax dollars and other local monies out of Fannin and Union counties, as well as money raised by the Friends of the Libraries of Towns County.

There's about \$14,000 in contingency funds built into the budget to cover unexpected costs in the new fiscal year, though Stone said they'd prefer closer to \$20,000 in contin-

gency.

These funds can be utilized to make up for additional payroll expenses due to employee sick time, repairs, and more.

"If we get down to the end of the year and still have contingency funds, we try to spend those on materials and programming, which are the most challenged areas financially," said Stone, adding that the budget typically zeroes out after the use of contingency funds.

In terms of size, the budget is roughly \$20,000 more than the 2016-2017 fiscal year budget, which Stone said had to do mainly with additional funds from the state and a budget increase from Fannin County.

"The one thing that has put a pinch on us this coming year, and it's going to pinch us again next year, is the increase in the amount that we have to contribute to TRS, that's the retirement program," said Stone. "It jumped for this year, and it's jumping again next year."

Stone, who received a glowing evaluation report from the regional board in the June 21 meeting, spoke briefly on the system's new newsletter called "Mountain Regional Connection."

"We hope to do this on a quarterly basis," said Stone. "It gives me a chance to communicate to the community with an editorial, and that'll change from issue to issue.

"It allows us a feature on the front, which could be any number of things, plus a feature article. It could be whatever we wish to do. Once we cover those items, then we've got full-page promotions for all the scheduling of every branch."

The newsletter is especially helpful in the Mountain Regional Library System, said Stone, as this area caters to an older demographic of residents, many of whom may not use computers.

Also in the meeting, Regional Board Member Karan Harper of Fannin County became the new board chairperson after an election held by her fellow board members.

Normally, the board holds its officer elections in the August regional meeting, according to its bylaws.

However, the board elected a new chairperson in the June meeting because Chairperson Ron Bolin, also of Fannin, was up against the end of his second full term, which coincided with the end of the fiscal year on June 30.



2017-2019 MRLS Board Chair Karan Harper. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

A single term on the MRLS Board of Trustees is three years, and board members can only serve two consecutive terms before they must come off the board.

Harper will serve as chairperson for a term of two years, at which time another chair will be elected from within the board's ranks.

The regional board is composed of local board members from each of the libraries in the three-county system of Union, Towns and Fannin.

Regional Board Member Ernie Seckinger, representing the Towns County Library Board, was the other chairperson nominee.

Harper and Seckinger received nominations from a board committee after showing interest in the board chair seat.

Peggy Deyton and Peggy Callaway, both of Union County, were elected vice chair and secretary respectively in the August 2016 regional meeting, and the two will serve in those positions for another year.