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Wednesday, January 27, 2016

First responder teamwork gets county through snowy weekend

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer



Towns County EMS Director
Ricky Mathis

On Friday, Jan. 22, and Saturday, Jan. 23, Towns County received up to 8 inches of snow, causing a number of vehicle accidents and concerns over hazardous conditions within the county.

"We ended up with nine motor vehicle accidents with no injuries," said Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton. "We did one weather-related escort of a stranded person. With the first part of it, with the wind and the rain, we had 10 different trees that were down in the road. One of them actually went through a house. The rest of them were blocking the road.

"We had one Georgia Department of Transportation truck overturned. But the state DOT did a really good job, they worked through the night as far as keeping the roads as clear as possible. Everybody pulled together and really did all we could to keep people safe," he said.

Sheriff Clinton urged people not to attempt travel in inclement weather.

"Stay home and don't try to drive, because one thing we avoided, the most part was the ice. The problem with

ice is we can't get to them to help. We've had that situation occur in previous storms, and we ended up having to walk to people on foot, and that's hard to do. Four-wheel drive or, whatever, doesn't matter on ice," he said.

However, if travel is necessary, he said to take some precautionary steps to help insure safety in the event of ice.

"Response time was pretty quick for this storm. In the past, when we've had ice along with the snow, response time was limited because we couldn't get up certain roads. I encourage people in winter months, there's a lot of things that they can keep in their vehicle. Keep water, keep warm blankets, a fully-charged cell phone, in case you are stranded for a while," he said.

Towns County EMS/EMA Director Ricky Mathis said that people should keep calm and use common sense.



Georgia DOT hard at work during the winter storm / photo by Lowell Nicholson

"The main thing is being aware of the temperature and if it's frozen, and what we see. They go out on their porch or their driveway, they go to town, and they slip and fall, and that's what we see most with the elderly, and

with anybody. Be careful with falls," he said.

"Of course, when it comes to driving, don't hit your brakes and start sliding and simple things like that. Sometimes when you get in a situation you just panic and forget what to do. If you don't know

what you're doing, the best thing to do is to stay home," he added.

The other best thing to do, is to keep a level head in an event such as snow and ice.

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Schools close three days last week for weather

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Wednesday, Jan. 20, the first significant snowfall of the year fell over Towns County. As a result, Towns County Schools were closed for the day.

Although snow days are not common, Superintendent Darren Berrong said, certain allowances are given to schools that have to be closed due to weather. He expects that the weather will only worsen in the upcoming months.

"It depends from year to year how many days you may miss for snow. I think last year we had seven days. We've had years when we missed 10 or more days. And then there have been years where we may not miss any days. It just depends on the weather. From the El Niño weather pattern that's coming through this year, they've been expecting us to have worse weather this winter," he said.

He expects to get even more harsh weather this year.

See Schools, Page 10



TC schools closed due to inclement weather / photo by Lowell Nicholson

City manager: 'stay inside during winter storms'

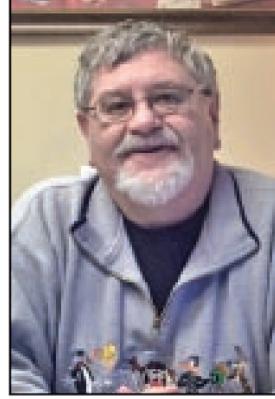
By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiawassee City Hall closed due to snow on Wednesday, Jan. 20.

And while the closure was short and due to only mild safety concerns, it may be the beginning of a trend in the coming months.

"It was one of those kind of things, what we always get into is we have several employees that live kind of off the main road," said City Manager Rick Stancil. "So we're always concerned about that, plus we don't want people traveling to City Hall if it's unsafe. So we kind of take our lead from the county."

Although the snowfall was light at first, prolonged



City Manager Rick Stancil

inclement weather can lead to electrical and water problems.

Our biggest concern

See Hiawassee, Page 10

Fire department rings in 2016 with new equipment, building improvements

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Fire and Rescue finished 2015 strong with equipment donations and building improvements, giving firefighters a confident start to the New Year.

Totaling about \$12,800, the top-of-the-line equipment includes two thermal imaging cameras, three chainsaws and eight pails of wetting agent - all made possible through the fundraising efforts of the Towns County Fire Corps.



Towns County firefighters Trey Moore and Sgt. Tyler Keyes with recently donated equipment worth nearly \$13,000

"This is a massive thank you from the fire department to our Fire Corps for the purchase of this needed equipment,"

said Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland.

SERVPRO, a big fire department supporter, also donated a thermal imager bringing the total for the county up to five imagers after the Fire Corps' purchase.

The biggest role of imagers is to help firefighters find people behind walls - either their own, if a firefighter a burning structure, or victims who have succumbed to smoke

See Fire Department, Page 10

50s Day brings back memories

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Chatuge Regional Nursing Home avoided last week's wintry weather by taking a trip down memory lane to the era of hotrods and Rock 'n' Roll.

Residents get the special treatment in the annual 50s Day Party, as employees and volunteers dress up in fashions made popular circa 1950, with refreshments and decorations heavy on the vinyl records and



Roy Perren, aka Elvis, brings back the 50s with the staff of Chatuge Regional Nursing Home / photo by Lowell Nicholson

Two more communities deemed 'Firewise'

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Tuesday, Jan. 19, Towns County added two new names to its list of Firewise Communities.

Jim Roberts of Bell Creek Estates and Bob Shepherd of Soapstone Community both attended the Towns County Fire Adapted Communities Coalition meeting to receive plaques and signs recognizing their communities' Firewise statuses.

"What this represents is a cooperative effort within their community to do those things that are necessary to have them meet the criteria to become a Fire Adapted,



Fire Adapted, Firewise Communities

Firewise Community," said FAC President Marsha Elliot to Roberts and Shepherd in presenting them their awards.

"So you're the spark plug in your neighborhood that has gotten things going, and you've been persistent. We want to

pledge to you that we're going to continue to be part of your community to promote fire safety."

Frank Riley, Executive Director of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and Development Council, said that adding new Firewise Communities is part of an ongoing effort to make the county and eventually the entire state "Fire Adapted."

"The Fire Adapted Communities concept is an overall concept that includes the Ready-Set-Go program, and includes Firewise and a whole bunch of other stuff. A Fire Adapted community like Towns County means we've

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Hiawassee hoping to move on bid for Mayor's Park

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The City of Hiawassee is accepting bids for contractors to put in installations at the new Mayor's Park, including the playground and the big central building.

"The City Council voted, they've authorized spending up to \$75,000 for a pavilion to go out in the Mayor's Park, and that's both for purchasing the building kit and doing the installation," said Hiawassee City Manager Rick Stancil. "So that will be a major effort, and Eric Hasley has a bid in on it, but we got another vendor, Eric Hasley, who is making a bid. And between those two we'll decide."

KorKat, Inc., has yet to put in



Eric Hasley is bidding for a contract to install equipment in the planned Hiawassee Mayor's Park.

a proposal, but has done work throughout the area.

"He's from Atlanta and works in the Northeast Georgia region, and has done work

See Mayor's Park, Page 10

Towns FBLA Competitors Advance to State Level



TCHS FBLA region winners show off their medals

By Alyson Nelson
TCHS Senior

The 2016 FBLA Region 13 Leadership Conference was held this year at Madison County High School in Danielsville on Tuesday, Jan. 19, and members of Towns County FBLA had 40 competitors in 17 contented business events who contended with competitors from other

FBLA chapters in Region 13 for a chance to advance to State Competitions.

The Awards Ceremony was exciting to say the least - a record number of Towns County High School competitors in nine events will be advancing to state level competitions.

The following region

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Weather
Thurs: Rain Hi 45 Lo 29
Fri: Cloudy Hi 47 Lo 30
Sat: Sunny Hi 59 Lo 39

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Rollins
Planetarium
Presents
STARS

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Mountain Air

Josh Turner
Anderson Music
Hall
March 5th

See page 5

AARP
Foundation
Tax-Aide

See page 2

SPORTS
BASKETBALL

Thurs. Jan 28 @ Providence 6 & 7:30 PM
Fri. Jan 29 vs. Lakeview 7 & 8:30 PM
HOMECOMING
Sat Jan 30 vs. George Walton 6 & 7:30 PM