

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| Thurs: Snow | 42 21 |
| Fri: Sunny | 43 21 |
| Sat: Clouds | 44 30 |
| Sun: Rain | 51 43 |
| Mon: Rain | 64 47 |
| Tue: Rain | 57 39 |
| Wed: Rain | 53 32 |



| | |
|---|----------|
| Upstream Elevation Predicted 02/25/2015 | |
| Lake Chatuge | 1,915.76 |
| Lake Nottely | 1,761.60 |
| Blue Ridge | 1,670.65 |

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Food Distribution N. Mt. Zion Tues. March 3rd 10 AM - NOON

on Page 6



AARP Driving Course

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Head Start Pre-K Registration begins March 2nd

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Baseball Mar 2 @ Lumpkin 5:30 PM Mar 3 vs. Fannin 6 PM

Soccer Feb 26 @ Rabun Girls 4:30 Boys 6 PM

Tennis Mar 3 vs. Woody Gap 4 PM

Chambliss delivers Miller Lecture at YHC

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Young Harris - Retired U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss of Moultrie, delivered the 2014-2015 Miller Lecture, now in its 40th year, in the Suber Banquet Hall of Young Harris College on Thursday, Feb. 19.

The former senator's lecture served as a retrospective on his political career, with an eye toward the future.

Sen. Chambliss retired from office earlier this year on Jan. 3, and has since joined a law practice in Atlanta.

During his last four years in the U.S. Senate, Sen. Chambliss served as the top Republican member of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

While in office, Sen. Chambliss enjoyed a reputation as a conservative willing to embrace bipartisan relationships.

"We have a 60-vote filibuster rule on the Senate side, which means that you have to have 60 votes in order to go on to a bill, before you can even debate it," said Sen. Chambliss. "Then, you have to have 60 votes to pass any amendment. And then, you have to have 60 votes to get off the bill, to ultimately vote on it as to whether it's going to pass or not."

And because of the need for those 60 votes, Sen. Chambliss said that, between Republicans and Democrats in the Senate, "you have more camaraderie, you have more working together to try to achieve that middle ground that's going to generate votes from both Re-



YHC President Cathy Cox, retired U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss and retired U.S. Sen. and former Gov. Zell Miller at Young Harris College last week. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

publicans and Democrats."

Sen. Chambliss also spent a fair amount of time discussing his earlier work in intelligence, when he served on the Intelligence Committee in his last two years in the House of Representatives.

"Serving on the Intelligence Committee kind of changed my focus from a legislative perspective," said Sen. Chambliss. "And really from a worldwide perspective, because all of a sudden, I went inside the room, and I was privy to all the secrets that were going on around the country and around the world. I knew who was spying on who. And you also learn where the pitfalls are, where the bad guys are."

"And you learn about the fact that there are an awful lot of people around the world

who wake up every morning thinking of ways that they can kill and harm Americans. We're the greatest nation in the world, we're the freest nation in the world, but we're also the envy of a lot of people out there."

To Sen. Chambliss, America projects symbols of freedom and democracy — symbols that those who would do America harm wish to destroy.

"The last two years I spent on the House side as a member of the Intelligence Committee really opened my eyes," said Sen. Chambliss. "I was chairman of a newly created committee on terrorism and homeland security. Now, back then, nobody was all that concerned about terrorism."

Up to that point, America
See Lecture, Page 10

More winter weather on the way



By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Last week may turn out to be only the most recent round of winter weather for Towns County, as the weather service is now predicting snow through Thursday.

On Monday, the weather service issued a winter weather advisory that was to remain in effect from midnight Tuesday until 1 p.m. Tuesday. It also canceled the winter weather advisory for Monday.

The weather service points out that the highest potential for winter weather is for the higher elevations, as well as the far western tier of

counties along and northeast of a line from Cohutta to Jasper to Cleveland.

The hazard types were to include a rain and snow mix changing over to all snow, with accumulations between 1 to one and a half inches of snow Tuesday.

The weather service warns that accumulating snow may result in slick roadways and travel difficulties, advising motorists to expect snow covered roads and limited visibility.

As of press time Monday, approximately one inch of snow is being called for on Wednesday as well, with snow turning to rain on Thursday.

Hiwassee adjusts midyear budget

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Mayor Barbara Mathis and City Manager Rick Stancil held a public hearing concerning the city's 2014-2015 amended budget at City Hall on Tuesday, Feb. 17.

This midyear budget amendment acts like a progress report, allowing the city to see where its financials stand halfway through the budget that was adopted at the beginning of the fiscal year, and to react to the figures.

Currently, the city is operating under the 2014-2015 fiscal year, which runs July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2015.

When the budget was passed last year for the current fiscal year, the total anticipated expenditures for the year were projected to be \$736,950.

At the midpoint of the fiscal year, Mayor Mathis and Stancil have decided to revise the budget downward.

The newly revised total of expenditures that is anticipated come time for the year-end review is \$712,966, or \$23,984 less than previously anticipated.

"What we're trying to do is, when half the year is over, is to make a midyear adjustment, and either beginning January or February, start looking, how



Rick Stancil

is the income coming in, are expenses up, have there been any unusual expenses. Because, when we prepare a budget, it's our best guess based on history and experience," Stancil said.

The budget can be thrown off for any number of reasons during the fiscal year, which is why the city — namely Mayor Mathis, Stancil and the city's CPAs — like to get a snapshot of sorts for where things stand, and then report to city council.

One item in the budget that can fluctuate is the price of electricity, for example. Or old systems, like water and sewer lines around the city, could need repairs for problems that

See Budget, Page 10

Towns County schools brace for more bad weather on the way

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County students received some very welcome — for them, at least — time off from school recently.

The days off began Thursday, Feb. 12, when students and teachers started a long weekend by taking off that Thursday and Friday in an effort to use up two makeup snow days that the schools, up to that time, hadn't had to utilize.

"What has happened to us in the past is, we didn't have any of those days built in," said Towns County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Darren Berrong. "And we had two bad years in a row where we missed about 10 days of snow days each year. And what would have to happen, we would have to take spring break, we would have to push the year back."

"So, they decided to start putting those makeup days in so that if we lost two days, we could make them up and then you would still have your spring break, graduation would still be on time, and you wouldn't have to worry about changing graduation dates," said Dr. Berrong. "Unfortunately, we skipped over two of those days in February and didn't have any weather. We do have two makeup days built in before spring break as well, so we had four total days built in."

The way the math works, two of those four makeup days were used on Thursday, Feb. 12, and Friday, Feb. 13. That



Dr. Darren Berrong

left two more days to be used in case of snow that would not have to be made up after the fact.

But the winter weather has been such that students actually missed three days of school last week — Tuesday, Feb. 17, Wednesday, Feb. 18, and Thursday, Feb. 19. Monday, Feb. 16, was a school holiday for Presidents' Day, and didn't count against any totals.

This meant that, of the two makeup days left, three days were missed due to bad weather. Luckily, the state has a policy in place that will allow Towns County to hold on to its two remaining makeup days.

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TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

TCES fifth grader justifies Bee

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Austin Fairless' winning word was "justify," something he won't have to do when discussing his victory at the Towns County Spelling Bee on Wednesday, Feb. 11.

Fairless, a fifth-grader at Towns County Elementary, outlasted his opponent, seventh-grader Tori Anderson of the middle school, in a harrowing dash to have the last word.

The two squared off for 35 words until Anderson committed a misstep with the homonym of the defined word "altar," spelling the word "alter."

In order to stage this competition, two finalists were selected from each grade level between third and eighth grades, and the contestants had to stand up in front of an audience of their peers and parents to spell each word.

"It's kind of nerve-racking at first, but once you do the first couple of words, then you get the feel for it," said Fairless, a point on which Anderson concurred.

Fairless will be heading to district competition later this month, and Anderson, who won the spelling bee when she was in the fifth grade, will act as



an alternate for achieving first runner-up.

Overall, bee contestants spelled 228 words, with humdingers like vacuousness, hyphenated words like terra-cotta and nitty-gritty, and representative words such as wunderkind.

Contestants were: third graders Grace Green and Mason Barrett; fourth graders Hallie Vicknair and Christian Russell; fifth graders Dustin Anderson and Austin Fairless; sixth graders Chantel Clemons

and Abby Mauldin; seventh graders Tori Anderson and Mackenzie Wallace; and eighth graders Ella Bury and Cara Wheeler.

"I can say as an eighth-grade teacher how impressed I am with all of our students' spelling," said Julie Thompson following the bee. "I am just so excited — in a world where I see r and u daily in children's writing, it's such a pleasure to me and brings me hope to see such wonderful spellers. To all

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A weather week to remember

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

As winter weather blanketed Towns County in varying degrees of snow and ice last week, causing schools to close and delays of opening the courthouse, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall monitored the situation from his home and office.

"All our groups worked well together," said Commissioner Kendall, speaking on the worst day of ice, Tuesday, Feb. 17. "The roads superintendent reported that there were patches of ice in the western part of the county, over in Young Harris and Gum Log, and they got those salted down. But they got hit the hardest in the eastern part, up on Hightower. There was two inches of ice up there. They scraped it off and got it salted down."

Residents also reported several trees down in roads around the county, which were promptly cleared.

One example of how well different departments worked together under the stressful weather conditions occurred between the Emergency Medical Services and the Georgia Department of Transportation.

"We got an emergency transport call dispatched in from Chatuge Regional Hospital to



Northeast Georgia, and the EMS director had called and asked if I could get the Georgia DOT Maintenance Crew, to ask for a salt truck to cross the mountain with the ambulance," said Commissioner Kendall.

That emergency status of that particular transport call was downgraded, so the trip was not made that night, but this example highlights the level of preparedness of both the county and the state, as well as the abilities of both to work together.

"We had a DOT truck ready at the hospital within five minutes from the time it was requested," said Towns County EMS Director Ricky Mathis. "To me, that was just wonder-

ful. It was better than what I expected."

And while Gov. Nathan Deal declared a state of emergency for Towns County and 14 other counties at the beginning of last week, the situation remained under control for each of the emergency agencies in the county.

"We haven't activated our EOC yet, that's our Emergency Operations Center," said Mathis. "And what we base that on is if we have three or more agencies that are involved and overtasked — road department, fire department, ambulance service, sheriff's department,

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