

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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Wednesday, February 6, 2013

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thu: Rain	51 42
Fri: Clouds	53 36
Sat: Clouds	55 36
Sun: Rain	53 45
Mon: Rain	58 43
Tues: Rain	56 38
Wed: Rain	51 31



Upstream Elevation Predicted 02/06/13	
Lake Chatuge	1922.63
Lake Nottely	1766.71
Blue Ridge	1671.40

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Sports Page 8A

Kiss-o-grams

Towns County High School Tennis Team is selling Hershey Kiss-o-grams to any teachers, students or staff on campus.

50¢ each
Kisses with messages will be delivered on Valentine's Day!



See page 8A

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Lunch and Learn

Fri. Feb. 8 • 11:30-1pm
@ Towns Co. Chamber Conference Room

for The Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act: What Every Business Should Know About the Healthcare Reform

Co-sponsored by Towns County Chamber & Blairsville Chamber

See page 5A

Spaghetti Dinner



The VFW, Post 7807 is hosting a FREE Appreciation Spaghetti Dinner for Towns County Employees & Veterans



Friday, Feb. 15
5-7 p.m.

See page 5A



Towns County Basketball

Tues., Feb. 5 • 6pm vs. Commerce

Thurs., Feb. 7 • 6pm @ Providence

Towns County Wrestling

Friday, February 8 & Saturday, February 9

Sectional Tournament @ Mt. Vernon

Flood, snow keeps Towns County busy

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
libby.tcherald@windstream.net

February came in like a lion as Towns and surrounding counties received their first substantial snowfall in more than two years as snow blanketed the mountain areas on Groundhog Day.

Towns County received four to five inches of snow and made traveling hazardous.

Many roads were impassable and had to be closed due to treacherous driving conditions. This occurred only a few days after torrential rains, heavy winds, and flash flooding caused power outages, fallen trees, and broken power poles.

Apparently, Georgia's famous weather prognosticator, General Beauregard Lee, got it right when he declared there would be six more weeks of winter after emerging from his plantation-style home at Gwinnett County's Yellow River Game Ranch on Saturday and seeing his shadow.

The Towns County High School basketball/homecoming



State and county workers had a time trying to keep Towns County roads clear of frozen precipitation. Photo/Libby Shook

came with Pinecrest High School was canceled and rescheduled for Monday evening at 6 p.m. and most area church services were canceled Sunday morning. State and county road crews were out in full force Thursday as they plowed and salted area roads and highways. They are to be commended as they worked around the clock to ensure safe travel for emergency vehicles and driver's who were traveling back and forth to work.

See Weather, page 9A

Housing market showing signs of life

By Joe Collins
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

A downturned economy continues to leave its mark on many businesses in Hiawassee, but none moreso than the local housing market.

But things could soon be turning around as the community has developed a new clientele interested in making Towns County their home full-time.

New home startups are on the rise in the early days of 2013. That's because the current market doesn't meet the needs of the new clientele.

It's good news for Towns County residents who have suffered since the housing market crash in 2007.

New home startups are one of the chief economic indicators in the local economy, and the lack there of has left many Towns County residents out of work and leaving the local economy in distress.

To understand the housing market crash, one must take a look at its history - before and after.

The "Housing Bubble" of 2004-2007 saw many private businesses, builders, landowners and real estate salespersons share in what became a very



A new home going up is a rare site in Towns County these days. Actually, this could soon be a sign of the times. Photo/Joe Collins

lucrative and unbelievable sales explosion.

Towns County saw a steady increase in its collected tax revenues due to the increased amount of home and property sales during this time.

Money was easy to obtain due to the unrestricted ability of banks and lending institutions to distribute loans to people, who did not qualify.

But with profits being made, the overall outlook re-

See Housing, page 9A

Iwo Jima vets reunite in Towns

By Libby Shook
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On Friday morning, Feb. 1st, the *Towns County Herald* office was honored to host a reunion of four Iwo Jima war veterans who shared their remembrances of this eventful era in history in recognition of the upcoming 68th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima.

The Battle of Iwo Jima was fought between the United States and Japan between February 19th to March 26th, 1945.

The battle took place in the Pacific Campaign of World War II and finished with the U.S. being victorious and gaining control of both the island and the Japanese airfields.

Those present were



Four Iwo Jima veterans gathered recently to remember the 68th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima. Photo/Libby Shook

Leon West, U.S. Navy, Pharmacist Mate, 1st class; Todd Kimsey, U.S. Navy, Fire Controlman, 3rd class; Clarence "Bud" Johnson, U.S. Navy, Chief Quartermas-

ter/Chief Petty Officer; and Phil Gamache, U.S. Marine Corps, Corporal, 5th Marine Division, 26th Regiment. Johnson acknowledged Carl

See Iwo Jima, page 9A

Movers and Shakers making a difference

By Libby Shook
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Towns County High School Agriculture teacher and FFA advisor, Sabrina Garrett, found herself in the unique position of being honored by the Mountain Movers and Shakers at Towns County High School on Friday, Feb. 1st.

She was presented a check for \$1,250 in keeping with their pledge to endorse and partner with the TCHS Agriculture Department.

Approximately 20 members of this community-minded organization were

See Shakers, page 9A



The Mountain Movers and Shakers present a check for \$1,250 to the Towns County FFA. The group has pledged \$5,000 in total support. Photo/Libby Shook

Three charged in goat torture in Union County

Two from Hiawassee, one from Blairsville

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Blairsville - The Union County Sheriff's Office has arrested three men in connection with the theft, murder and torture of a pet goat from Bunker Hill Road, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Sheriff's Investigator Daren Osborn went to Mt. Juliet, Tenn. in Wilson County last week and arrested Marty Carlton Johnson Jr., 20, originally from Hiawassee, Sheriff Mason said.

He added that Seth Richard Skinner, 21, of Hiawassee, and Eric Shane Dyer, 20, of Blairsville also were arrested and charged in the theft, aggravated animal cruelty of 15-year-old pet Percy, who belonged to Jo Anne Allen.

Skinner and Dyer turned themselves in to the Union County Sheriff's Office, the sheriff said.

"There were a lot of folks that were very disturbed about this case," Sheriff Mason said. "I don't know what makes a human being do something like this to an animal. It's something this department will not tolerate."

Osborn said that the three acted in concert, and thus all three were charged with party to a crime, in addition to aggravated animal cruelty and theft by taking.

Johnson also was charged with discharging a firearm on the property of another, Union County Jail records show.

The three are accused of aggravated animal cruelty for torturing and murdering the goat. Percy was then tied to the back of a pickup and dragged behind the vehicle at a high rate of speed, sheriff's reports show.

The incident began on



Eric Shane Dyer



Marty Carlton Johnson



Seth Richard Skinner

Jan. 4th when Johnson, Skinner and Dyer were drinking and watching a movie, *Men Who Stare at Goats*, sheriff's reports show.

"Alcohol was a factor in this case," Osborn said.

Men Who Stare at Goats

See Cruelty, page 9A

Bruce Sims shares his early days in Hiawassee

By Libby Shook
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Bruce Sims of Hiawassee was the guest speaker of the Towns County Historical Society on Monday, Jan. 14th, at the new Mountain Senior Center in Hiawassee.

He talked about the early days of Hiawassee where he grew up.

"It's a gloomy day and I am surprised that this many people turned out to hear an old man like me," said Sims. "When people ask me how old I am, I tell them I'm older than water because I was there before the lake was."

To the enjoyment and delight of the almost 50 people attending the gathering, he opened with a joke and then read them a poem he had written.

With a jovial style, quick wit, and a remarkable memory, Sims began his remembrances of what he referred to as "a walk through vintage Hiawassee."

Sims brought photos of the house where he was born, the house his dad built when he was 5 years old, the old school house, and an old map of the city from that era.

"I'm going to begin around 1950 as a point of reference because that's the year I left Hiawassee and didn't move back permanently until 1999," said Sims.

He did come back briefly in 1987 and put a trailer in the spot his grandmother used as a garden which was behind where the Georgia Mountain Restaurant is located now.

Sims explained how the Tennessee Valley Authority surveyed the property around his parents house.

"Dad had 12 acres in the little valley behind McDonald's. They told my dad that if he didn't sign they would have the property condemned and the government would take it. TVA gave my dad \$100 per acre for his land and \$600 for his house," Sims said.

"My grandmother owned the property where the Georgia Mountain Restaurant is now so we moved the house to that property," said Sims.



Bruce Sims

"On the corner of the square was Jimmy Hooper's Rexall Drug Store," Sims said. "When I was a teenager, I used to cut his grass for him. He owned the nicest house in town. He owned the nicest car in town too, a Hudson.

"He took me for a ride in it and said he wanted to see how fast it would go. We crossed the old Hayesville Bridge doing about 100 miles an hour," Sims said. "I enjoyed that ride."

Sims told the eager listeners that there were no buildings on the downtown square at that time.

According to Sims, a memorial to the veterans was built on the square.

There was a big oak tree that had a bench built around it.

"All the town kids carved their names in that bench," said Sims. "Across from the square, Uncle Jess Gibson had a hardware store.

"Dick Paris bought it from him and ran it until he could afford to buy another store," Sims said.

Sims described several houses and businesses that had been built in Hiawassee during that era. He was able to describe them in such great detail that listeners could almost envision them.

He explained that the old Courthouse sat back a little from where it is now.

"Behind the courthouse was the old Hiawassee Elementary School and they built a

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TOWNS COUNTY HERALD



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