

Lions...from Page 1A

Noon, Clayton, Lawrenceville, Dawsonville, Clarkesville and Dahlonega.

"Today is a milestone for us, for the club," said Gene Little, who is the 2015-2016 president of the Union County Lions Club. "I'm just proud to be president of the club at this particular time."

Many are familiar with the little white canes handed out by Lions each October, and the long history behind the Lions Club tradition of aiding those without sight, dating to when Helen Keller in 1925 challenged Lions to become "knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness."

And with more than 46,000 clubs and greater than 1.4 million members, Lions Clubs International is the largest service club organization in the world.

"Our members do whatever is needed to help their local communities," according to lionsclubs.org. "Everywhere we work, we make friends. With children who need eyeglasses, with seniors who don't have enough to eat and with people we may never meet."

Blairsville's own Michael Thompson, for example, has given back to the community as a Lion for decades, and has benefited as well from his interaction with the Lions Club, having received two corneal transplants in his youth.

Myers Banister of Young Harris was the keynote speaker for the afternoon luncheon and anniversary bash, and he brought with him 46 years of experience as a Lion. He is a past international director for the organization, and has held many positions in the association, including president, zone chairman, council chairman and district governor.

Banister spoke on the history of the organization, both abroad and in Union County, and touched on the importance of getting people involved, both from a civic aspect to local leaders and residents within the county.

"Teamwork always makes things go better

when you're working one with another to accomplish the things that you want to accomplish within your own life, number one, and number two, within your community, and working with people within your community," said Banister.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley were special guests for the event, along with current Lions Club District 18-1 Governor Anne Mundy and Past District Governor Ed Hashbarger. History was on display that Saturday, as scrapbooks of years gone by were made available alongside the program and pictures of the first meeting of the Union County Lions Club.

The founding of Union County's Lions Club dates to a fortuitous evening in March of 1966, when influential members of the community gathered to charter a service organization to tackle the needs of the county.

On March 5, 1966, at the Milton Inn in Blairsville, the 35 charter members of the Union County Lions Club met with key members of their sponsoring club, the Towns County Lions Club, as well as Lions with various leadership roles within the district.

That first meeting started out with a call to order by then president of the Towns County club Ray Taylor, followed by Howard Cunningham with a version of "America." Towns County Lions Secretary Jimmy Taff led the Pledge of Allegiance, before Rev. David Robb offered the invocation.

Zell Miller, also a member of the Towns County Lions, was the Master of Ceremonies for that evening 50 years ago.

After an installation of officers by District Cabinet Advisor Sam Wilson and the presentation of the charter by District Governor Edgar Faulkner, the first president of the Union County Lions Club, Charles W. Conley (Mayor Conley's brother), accepted the charter, signaling the start of decades of good work and volunteerism by Lions in

Union County.

Charter members and officers from that night in 1966 include: Lion Tamer J. Larry Akins, Milton Akins, John F. Arrowood, W.C. Bowling, Clayton Brown, Randall B. Collins, Secretary W. Clyde Collins, President Charles W. Conley, Ronny L. Davenport, Dr. B.J. Davis, Second Vice President Olin J. Dean, E.S. Dockery, C.E. Foster, Tail Twister Leonard A. George, Charlie Gregory, Third Vice President M.H. Hamby, Neil V. Hamby, Robert L. Head Jr., Charles E. Hill, Kenneth F. Jenkins, Cecil Lance Jr., Jack Lance, John L. Ledford, Frank Merritt, Treasurer W.J. Nichols, Troy Phillips, Jake Plott, Karl Rowan, Carlton Shaw, Dr. Gary L. Smith, J.J. Turner Sr., Harold West, First Vice President Brannon Wilkinson, Bill Parker and Phillip Preiss.

Looking back nearly 100 years to the beginning of Lions Clubs International, members of Lions Clubs the world over have acted as ambassadors of volunteerism, taking their message of "We Serve" into their communities and to the people who need it most.

But membership has been down in recent years, and the Lions of Union and Towns counties would like to invite any and all residents to join their respective clubs, in order that potential Lions might do more within their communities, and become even greater stakeholders for a brighter tomorrow.

Current Union County Lions Club officers for 2015-2016 are: President Gene Little, First Vice President Mary Arnold, Second Vice President Louise Little, Secretary Jim Wentworth, Assistant Secretary Carol Neil, Treasurer Gerry Bailey, Assistant Treasurer Gene Little, Lion Tamer Roy McKee, Tail Twister Jack Gross, Assistant Tail Twister and Chaplain Paul Clark, Assistant Chaplain Karen Clark, First Year Directors Sam Weissberg and Arthur Gurr, Second Year Director Lisa Little, Third Year Directors Roy McKee, Carl Buser and Gray Williams, Membership Chairman Gray Williams, and Membership Assistants Louise Little and Carol Neil.

best experiences in my life. So hopefully my dad will be moving up from Florida to help me coach. He has coached high school football for over 20 years."

The rest of Cornett's staff is still up in the air. However, Coach Chris Vardo and Coach Jeff Stowers have already committed to Cornett's coaching staff.

"I have not met with the team yet," Cornett said. "That will probably happen after I get a complete staff together."

help each other out."

According to the agreement, "the state of Georgia is vulnerable to a wide range of natural and manmade disasters and emergencies. The Georgia Emergency Management Act as amended gives the local governments of the state the authority to make agreements for mutual aid assistance in emergencies."

"Any participating party requesting to render mutual aid shall take such action as necessary to provide and make available the resources covered by this agreement," said Anderson.

The agreement was adopted as presented.

The last item on the agenda, an update on the county website, will be postponed until the meeting in April.

Fire...from Page 1A

found the homeowners in the yard, and we could not detect any flames or smoke."

Firefighters/sheriff's deputies Travis Gibson and Jeremy Parker led a team of firefighters into the home, extending a line straight for the attic.

"When they got to the attic, Firefighter Gibson reported that he had fire in the attic," said Chief Copeland. "Capt. Royce Nicholson and Firefighter Justin Ledford took the backup line into the home, and firefighters Gibson and Parker knocked the fire down in the attic."

Thanks to the swift response of the Towns County

Fire Department, the home was spared major damage, including loss of life, from the fire that initially started in the chimney before spreading into the attic.

Chief Copeland is continually thankful for his diverse, skilled and devoted full-time and paid/on-call firefighters, and all that they do for the residents of Towns County.



A Korean War Veteran's car became stuck in his muddy driveway during some of January's late winter weather, and during the process of trying to become unstuck, his engine caught fire. Fire Station 4 responded to the call, dousing the fire before it could light the neighboring structure on fire. Fortunately, the man's neighbors responded to his plight and helped him out of the car before firefighters arrived.



This Summerwood Lane homeowner - and owner of Precious the Cat - accidentally started the fire while working on his motorcycle in the basement in late January. Fumes from his gas tank, which he'd removed, ignited when they came in contact with a space heater. The homeowner suffered second- and third-degree burns to his hands, arms and legs, and was airlifted to Grady Burn Unit from Station 2. Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton and one of his deputies assisted firefighters in stretching one of their attack lines. The homeowner is recovering nicely at home.

Cornett...from Page 1A

Cornett will be taking over for Coach Billy Barnhart, who recorded back-to-back 2-win seasons. Prior to Barnhart's arrival, then-Head Coach Blair Harrison elected to rejoin Region 8-A and play a full region schedule for the first time since 2005. Following a 4-6 season in 2013, Harrison jumped ship to return home to Louisiana, leaving the Indians high and dry just three months

away from the season opener.

Coach Cornett made it clear that he plans on being the Head Coach at Towns County High School for many years to come.

"I want to coach my sons who are coming up through the ranks," he said. "My wife and I have six children, so I will be here for a long time. I played for my dad in high school, which was one of the

BOE...from Page 1A

Plan, detailing maintenance and updates recommended for the school over the next five years. The plan also suggests ways to get reimbursement from the state and federal governments for undergoing these projects.

"The reality is that we're only getting that money now because of the work Mr. Perren is doing, but it's a tremendous amount of money that we can now be getting each year to replace some of these things, and we have not been doing that, and we've been losing a

lot of money because of it," said Dr. Berrong.

The board voted unanimously to approve the Five-Year Facilities Plan.

The board also voted to approve Dr. Berrong's recommendation that Coach John Cornett take the position as new head football coach.

"We put a committee together and there were a lot of parents involved in that committee," said Dr. Berrong. "What everybody wanted, the administration as well as the parents, was a football coach who was going to be here for

the kids. Someone who's going to be positive with the kids and someone who was really going to put his time and effort into it.

"I think everyone is tired of the continuous turnover in football. After that interview on Friday, it was unanimous that John Cornett held the qualities that everybody was looking for."

The Board also approved the recommendation for Alan Rogers to take over as Middle School Assistant Basketball Coach, as well as the recommendation to accept Jennifer Bell as a substitute cafeteria worker.

Meeting...from Page 1A

tolerance for that.

"It covers the drivers and the mechanics and anyone operating the bus," Anderson continued. "It lists the types of drugs they'll test for. It also covers, say one employee's out, and they call me to come drive, then if I'm a listed driver I have to disclose that I had alcohol yesterday, for example. So there's rules in there about that."

Commissioner Kendall said that the policy was strict to ensure compliance.

"Normally you can have hearings and things, but with this zero tolerance, you don't get a hearing or anything," the commissioner said. "If the drug test comes back

positive, you're just out. That's important for these drivers on our transit buses."

The policy was adopted as presented.

Finally, the county presented the Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement, which is presented and adopted each year.

"We're adopting this agreement where if the state has kind of a disaster, we will come and aid them, and also the same thing for Towns County," said Commissioner Kendall. "If we have a real bad situation here, they will mutually come and aid Towns County. That's pretty much like we have mutual aid agreements with Union County, Rabun County and Clay County, where we

YHC Concert Band and Young Harris Community Band presents a "Collage of Classics" Concert

The Young Harris College Concert Band and the Young Harris Community Band will present a "Collage of Classics" on Tuesday, March 29, at 7 p.m. in Glenn Auditorium of the Clegg Fine Arts Building on the YHC campus. Admission is \$5 for adults and free for students and children 12 and under.

Directed by Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Bands Mary Land, Ed.D., the YHC Concert Band will present a concert featuring the true "warhorses" of wind band repertoire including the famous Franz von Suppe's "Light Calvary Overture" and David Gorham's "Jubiloso." The Young Harris Community Band will perform several selections under the direction of YHC Adjunct Instructor of Music Alan Demmon including David Holsinger's "Haven-dance" and the famous Spanish march "Amarrito Roca" by Jamie Texidor.

The concert will close with "Espirit De Corps," a piece commissioned by the United States Marine Band. Based on "The Marines'



The Young Harris College Concert Band and the Young Harris Community Band

Hymn," the song is a tribute to the United States Marine Band and their conductor Colonel John Bourgeois.

Many YHC students will be featured as soloists during the concert. In addition to the featured student performers, the YHC Concert Band is comprised of junior education major Katie Rittenhouse, horn; freshman music education major Levi Jones, trombone; freshman music education major Donovan Anguelo, euphonium; post-

baccalaureate education major James Rhodes, tuba; freshman music education major Julien Fleming, tuba; freshman business and public policy major Kyle Wilkins, percussion, all of Blairsville, GA; freshman music education major Corbin Allen, percussion, of Hiawassee, GA; and junior music education major Nathaniel Arnold, percussion, of Young Harris, GA.

For more information, call YHC's Division of Fine Arts at (706) 379-5182.

Homestead...from Page 1A

value. If your home is valued at \$10,000, they would assess it at \$4,000, 40 percent. The constitution of Georgia exempts \$2,000 of that.

"That was set up in 1937. The intentions were that you didn't have to pay taxes on your home, except now the inflation went wild, so that was insignificant. So I had some legislation put in to increase that by \$8,000, making it \$10,000. Therefore, if you have a \$25,000 home, you wouldn't pay any tax on it, because it would be assessed at 40 percent, which would be \$10,000."

Anyone eligible has to sign up only one time to be

covered for the future.

"You've got to go over (to the Towns County Tax Assessor's office) and sign up to get that," said Commissioner Kendall. "And you have to do that by April 1 of this year to get exempt on next year's taxes. But once you sign up, you don't have to go back every year, just this one time. A lot of people have a home in Florida and then come up here and buy a home, but you can't get homestead exemption in Florida and up here too, so a lot of people have homes here that don't have homestead exemptions."

Perhaps more important is that April 1 is the last day to

sign up for the 3 percent cap on property assessment.

"Back before the crash (of 2009), people's tax assessment on their property was going up 15 to 20 percent a year, because the law says the tax assessors will assess your property according to what's being sold around it," said Commissioner Kendall. "If everybody is selling houses around here at an exorbitant price, it'll go up."

"So I had this legislation put in to cap that at 3 percent. So if you had your house, and some people around you or somebody came in and prices were going wild and they sold it for double, instead of running yours up, this caps it at 3 percent."

Penland, a Senior, is the son of Jeff and Angie Penland of Hiawassee, GA. Sabrina Garrett is Towns County High School's FFA advisor.

The FFA Extemporaneous Public Speaking Career Development Event is sponsored by Georgia Farm Bureau as a special project of the Georgia FFA Foundation.

Penland...from Page 1A

effect and response to questions by a panel of judges.

FFA is a national organization of over 600,000 members preparing for leadership and careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture. FFA is an integral part of

the agricultural education program in public schools. The FFA mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

Volunteers needed to save Anna Ruby Falls hemlocks

Millions of tiny but deadly invasive insects are attacking the beautiful hemlock trees at Anna Ruby Falls near Helen, and volunteers are needed to help treat and save them from almost certain death. The nonprofit organization Save Georgia's Hemlocks, in partnership with the U. S. Forest Service, will be conducting a volunteer project on Saturday, April 2 and again on Saturday, April 23 to treat these valuable trees for the hemlock

woolly adelgid (HWA), which has already killed hundreds of thousands of hemlocks across north Georgia.

The treatment process is easy, safe, and highly effective, and all participants will receive a brief initial training. Both work days will run from about 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., with a break at midday for a picnic lunch. These outings are always rewarding as volunteers get to enjoy a fun day in the woods, meet other good peo-

ple who care about protecting our environment, and gain the satisfaction of knowing that their efforts will help preserve the beauty and health of our natural resources for years to come.

To volunteer, please contact Bob Pledger at bob.pledger@windstream.net or 706-212-2833. Please come join the battle against the bugs - you'll be glad you did!