

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Rain	73 42
Fri: Sunny	58 32
Sat: Sunny	48 30
Sun: Sunny	56 42
Mon: Rain	64 40
Tue: Sunny	67 45
Wed: Sunny	70 49



Upstream Elevation Predicted 03/25/2015	
Lake Chatuge	1,918.87
Lake Nottely	1,764.74
Blue Ridge	1,678.53

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Hiawassee Annual Plant Sale
Hiawassee Square
April 11th



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SPORTS
Baseball
Mar 24 vs. George Walton
5 PM
Mar 26 @ George Walton
5 PM
Mar 28 @ Mt. Vernon
1 & 3 PM (DH)

Gibson leaves TCHS for Rabun County

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County High School Principal and Athletic Director Jonathan Gibson has accepted the principal position at Rabun County High School, and the decision was not an easy one to make.

"It was very difficult," said Principal Gibson. "And the number one reason why is relationships – the relationships that I've built here with these students, with these teachers and with this community. I've had several sleepless nights over this. This town has been great to me and my family. They have embraced us, and we have been so blessed to be here. It was a very tough decision."

Principal Gibson broke the news to his staff and students at the high school on Friday, March 20, the day following the meeting in which the Rabun County Board of Education voted unanimously to hire Gibson as principal of Rabun High to start the 2015-2016 school year.

The student population of RCHS is roughly twice that of TCHS, and this opportunity affords Principal Gibson the chance to advance and grow in his career for himself and his family.

"It's been an honor and



Jonathan Gibson

a privilege to serve this school and this community," said Principal Gibson.

Principal Gibson will finish his contract in Towns County before moving on to Rabun.

The Towns County Board of Education held a called meeting on Monday, March 23, to accept Principal Gibson's resignation in order to open the position immediately for potential candidates.

The job went live on Tuesday, March 24, with the intention of filling the position before the end of this school year.

"It would be nice if I could start some interviews that first week of April, and then we will be off spring

break – I might could get some interviews done over spring break, and then possibly have those recommendations by the April 20th board meeting," said Towns County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Darren Berrong. "If we wait later than that, you're getting so far into the end of the year that the pool of candidates are so small. So, we're in a window here of about a month that we have to try to get this done if we're going to get quality candidates."

The rumor mill is already turning as to who may take Principal Gibson's place at the high school, but it's still too early to tell.

"We have no idea," said Dr. Berrong. "We're going to open the position up and just see who wants to apply. Right now, literally, I have no idea who is intending on applying or who his replacement may be. We're just going to have to go through the interview process and try to find the best person for our system."

RCHS Principal Joi Woods recently accepted the position of assistant superintendent to Rabun County School District Superintendent Melissa Williams for the 2015-2016 school year, opening up the principal spot at the high school.

Williams transitioned

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Stone takes reins at MRLS

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Vince Stone began his tenure as director of the Mountain Regional Library System at the beginning of March, and so far, he is enjoying the job.

"I love it," said Stone. "It's real different from being at a school library, but I like the administrative part of it, and I'm getting a lot of good help here in the beginning. Change is never easy, but everybody is being very cooperative and helpful, and everybody wants the library to succeed – we want all the libraries to succeed."

Much of Stone's career has taken place within the business realm, where he served as marketing director for an audio/visual company for many years before starting his own audio/



Vince Stone

visual company with friends.

The rise of digital downloads put pressure on his industry because he worked mainly with CDs and DVDs, so he

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Beth Wood heads to MECHS to serve as that system's Registrar

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Beth Wood has spent the last 10 years serving the children of Towns County Schools with an open heart and an open mind.

She worked with Family Connection for two years before taking a position as secretary of the superintendent, a role she has helped for the past eight years with three different superintendents.

Now, she is on her way to Mountain Education Charter High School to serve as the school's registrar in Rabun County.

Her last day as an employee of Towns County Schools is Friday, March 27.

"I've enjoyed my time here, and I take nothing but happy memories, good memories of the friendships I've developed here," said Wood. "I wish Towns County Schools and Dr. Berrong and everyone here the absolute best, and I think that they would do the same for me, so you can't ask for anything more than that."

Wood has worn many



Beth Wood

hats throughout her tenure with the school system. When then superintendent Dr. Richard Behrens created the full-time position for her eight years ago, she also became the secretary to the transportation director of Towns County Schools, Scott Hamilton.

She has been secretary to the board of education and served in a support role for principals, school staff, teachers, parents and students.

Between filing papers and preparing board presentations to directing school traffic and issuing press releases, Wood has done a little bit of everything over the years.

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Warrior Hike returns to Hiawassee

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Each year around this time, veterans on the Warrior Hike make their way to Hiawassee for their first official stop of a six-month journey up the Appalachian Trail.

The Unicoi Detachment of the Marine Corps League, as well as the VFW and American Legion Posts of Towns County, split the cost to treat these veterans to a meal and overnight lodging in a show of support for the hikers.

This year, the 11 hikers and a small group of local veterans dined together at Daniel's Steak House in Hiawassee on Saturday, March 21. The hikers were then transported to their hotel rooms for the night by Towns County Transit, to sleep indoors in what was likely a welcome break from the rainy trail weather of late.

Veterans hiking the trail this year are: Nathan Bliss of Framingham, Mass., Army; Nathan Buchholz of Clarksville, Tenn., Army; David Buckley of Midlothian, Va., Army; Gabriel Golden of Cedar Park, Texas, USMC; Olaf McCreary of Worthington, Ohio, Army;



Robert Mencia of West Carrollton, Ohio, Army; Nathan Mori of Chuckey, Tenn., USMC; Caitlin Murphy of Farmington, Maine, USMC; Dennis Newton of Ozark, Ala., Army; Michelle Revoy of Charleston, SC, ASAF; and Joel Strait of Spring Lake, NC, Army.

These 11 warrior hikers represent veterans of deployments to Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Qatar, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Warrior Hike is part of the "Walk Off The War" Program, which was started by veteran Sean Gobin.

"In 2012, after returning home from three combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, Warrior Hike founder Sean Gobin hiked all 2,185 miles of the Appalachian Trail," according to the program website, warriorhike.org. "Recog-

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BOE takes on special training

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education and Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong took part in a special board training session following the regular monthly board meeting on Monday, March 9.

This training session lasted three and a half hours, and covered the direction the school system will take in regards to performance standards moving forward.

"We've got three different options we can choose by June 30," said Dr. Berrong. "One is status quo, which means you're not changing anything, one is IE2, which is the Investing in Educational Excellence, and then there's the charter school system."

That first option, status quo, is not likely to find many, if any, takers around the state.

"The state pretty much set it up that way, because what's the community going to say to a school that chooses to be status quo," said Dr. Berrong. "The language in itself says: well, I'm going to be mediocre. The word status quo kind of falls into that same category, so no school is going to choose that, just because of public perception."

The other two options, IE2 and charter, offer greater flexibility when it comes to how funds are utilized around the schools.

"You can waive things such as class size, because there's all these regulations from the state on how many



students can be in a classroom with a teacher," said Dr. Berrong. "Well, there's class size that can be waived, there are funding things that can be waived. The way it's currently set up, we get certain funds for certain areas. Well, if you get funds for this area, you can't spend that money in another area."

"If you do these waivers, then they say, well, you as a school system know where you really need the money more than what we're saying you need the money for, so if we do these waivers, we can spend that money the best way we feel fit to run our school system, because obviously, we're a completely different situation than Hall County would be in. So, that's going

to help us out."

This flexibility, however, comes with a price – the state will require certain criteria to be met by the schools, much of which will have to do with student achievement.

"If you go IE2, the state chooses what your goals are that you have to meet for the next five years, and those goals are going to be set off of the CCRPI scores," said Dr. Berrong. "So, what they'll do is go back and look at your CCRPI scores in the past, and then they'll determine what then is going to be your increase every year for the next five years. And the state will actually do that, the Office of Student Achievement will do that for you."

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Young Harris prepares for Great American Cleanup April 18-25

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby and city council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 3.

Towns County Resident Vernon Dixon spoke in the meeting concerning the Great American Cleanup, which will run from April 18 to April 25. The cleanup is being sponsored by the Towns County Chamber of Commerce, Towns County Homeowners Association and GreenFaith Lake Chatuge.

The goal of the effort will be to clean up the county, the shoreline, the roads, the subdivisions and other places around the county, with cash prizes of \$200 for the most bags of litter/trash collected by people in each of the following categories: Individual, Church and Organization/Business/Club.



Mayor Andrea Gibby

Shirley Jarrard gave an overview of the February financial reports, and Councilman Dr. John Kelley asked that a three-month comparison with the budget be prepared for the next meeting, which will coincide with the end of the first quarter of 2015.

Dr. Kelley cited the need

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Clinton speaks to Shakers

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton spoke at the weekly meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers at Mary's Southern Grill on Friday, March 13.

Sheriff Clinton attended the early morning meeting with his wife and children, and spoke to those gathered on gun laws.

"Any of y'all who have known me very long know where I'm coming from," said Sheriff Clinton. "I'm an original intent constitutionalist, and I make no apology for that at all. I think if we're going to talk about concealed carry and the carry laws in Georgia, I think we have to go back a little bit further."

The sheriff offered his position regarding the origins of the right to bear arms.

"I always ask people, where do we get our right to carry firearms, the number one answer being the Second Amendment, and I say no," said Sheriff Clinton. "The Second



Sheriff Chris Clinton

Amendment recognizes our right. Our founders believed we got our right to bear arms from the good Lord himself. We are all endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights, and one of those is keeping and bearing arms."

One limitation on the Second Amendment is that felons are not allowed to bear arms, which Sheriff Clinton said he understood.

"If you're incarcerated,

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