

# Towns County Herald

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## Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Rain	66 57
Fri: Rain	73 51
Sat: Clouds	62 38
Sun: Sunny	65 46
Mon: Rain	66 56
Tue: Rain	73 58
Wed: Rain	74 56



Upstream Elevation Predicted 04/01/2015

Lake Chatuge	1,919.41
Lake Nottely	1,765.57
Blue Ridge	1,679.53

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### Rec Department Easter Egg Hunt April 4th



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### Hiwassee Annual Plant Affair on the Square April 11th



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### Apply now to have Veteran's name added to Monument Panel

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### City of Young Harris Celebrates 20 YEARS as a TREE CITY!

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## SPORTS

### Baseball

Apr 2 @ Athens Christian 6:30 PM

Apr 3 vs. Athens Christian 5 PM

### Soccer

Mar 31 vs. Hebron 5 PM

Apr 2 vs. Providence 5 PM

## Gibson: 'blessed to be a part of this community'

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The 2014-2015 school year will be Jonathan Gibson's last year as principal and athletic director at Towns County High School.

Gibson has accepted the position of principal at Rabun County High School to start the 2015-2016 school year.

"It's very bittersweet," said Principal Gibson. "Why is that? Because this place has been so good to me. These kids, these teachers, this community - it's like I've tried to make very clear, I'm not leaving here because I feel I have to. I'm not leaving here because of anything negative or bitter. I love the people here. The relationships I've built here with these teachers, these kids, this community - it's tough."

For Gibson, the relationships he has built in his two years as TCHS principal are a big reason he considers himself and his family blessed to have been a part of this community, and looking forward, the Gibsons are excited for what Rabun will bring.

"We're excited because it's another challenge," said Gibson. "It's a step up, so to speak, as far as an opportunity for me. There are more students, more faculty and staff. I think professionally, it's a



Jonathan Gibson

move up for me that continues for me to track the way that I want to track."

And since he told them a couple of weeks ago, the teachers and students at the high school have been supportive of his decision to go to Rabun.

"I've had kids walk in the office, and I've said, I want you to know that Mr. Gibson is always here for you," said Gibson. "No matter if I'm in Towns County, Rabun County - you pick up the phone, you call me. Once you're a kiddo of mine, you always are. And I truly hope they feel that way. I'll do anything to help this school, this community, these kids because of that."

Gibson started his career student teaching out of college, where he received a bachelor's degree in health and physical

education. He would go on to receive a master's degree and a specialist degree in educational leadership, and is currently working on his dissertation to complete a doctorate in the same, but right out of student teaching, he felt the need to explore other avenues.

Both of his parents are educators, and Gibson spent much of his childhood in schools, even after his classes let out. His father is also a preacher, and Gibson taught Sunday school to younger children much of his adolescent life.

After student teaching, he went into remodeling for a while, but said that, though the money was good, after a few years he felt a void in the work he was doing.

That void was the calling of being an educator, one that he answered by applying for and becoming the assistant principal of Pacelli Catholic High School. He served that role and coached multiple sports there for two years before moving on to nearby Hardaway High School in Columbus.

He taught health and coached at Hardaway for five years, where he and his wife, Kelly, were happy with their young daughter, Kayla. But a series of homicides near his home moved him to begin

See Gibson, Page 8

## GBI investigates unexplained death



By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Hiwassee Police Department and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation were at the Hiwassee Budget Inn on Wednesday, March 25, conducting a death investigation at the motel.

The GBI Special Agent

at the scene said that as of right now the GBI is ruling this an unexplained death.

The body was sent to the GBI Crime Lab for an autopsy. The name of the victim was not released because next of kin had not been notified.

No further details were available at press time.

## Libraries closed April 3-10

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Towns County Public Library in Hiwassee and the Mountain Regional Library in Young Harris will be closing from Friday, April 3, through Monday, April 6, to observe the Easter holiday.

The libraries will remain closed Tuesday, April 7, through Friday, April 10, in

order to knock out their four remaining furlough days.

This will allow the libraries to open for normal business hours following these furlough days until at least the beginning of the next fiscal year that starts July 1.

The timing of the furlough days coincides with spring break at the schools, which would likely mean a drop in attendance, regardless.

## Lab/hound mix deemed potentially dangerous

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

On Friday, March 27, the Towns County Board of Health met in the 911 Conference Room to conduct a Dangerous Dog Hearing, only the second of its kind in the county.

Board of Health members present were Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall, Dr. Robert Stahlkuppe, Diris Farmer and Dr. Darren Berrong.

The hearing occurred at the request of John and Becky Landress, who were appealing the classification of their two dogs as potentially dangerous dogs by Towns County Animal Control Officers Odell Garrison and Daniel Wayde Nicholson.

Towns County's ordinance on dangerous dogs was developed in 2009, with categories including potentially dangerous and dangerous. The state passed a stricter law in 2012 that changed the terminology of potentially dangerous to dangerous, and dangerous to vicious.

"In the situation where the state law is stricter than the county law, then the state law supersedes it," said District



The scene at last week's Dangerous Dog Hearing at the Towns County Health Department. Photo/Shawn Jarard

2 Public Health Director Dr. David Westfall, who is the chief executive officer of the health board, but not a voting member. "We as a county have a right to have a stricter law than the state - we can't have a more lenient one."

Under the local ordinance, a classification of potentially dangerous simply means that a dog has bitten a human without provocation on public or private property.

"Under the state law, dangerous dog, which is in our ordinance potentially dangerous dog, means any dog that causes a substantial puncture

of a person's skin by teeth without causing serious injury, provided, however, that a nip, scratch or abrasion shall not be sufficient to classify a dog as dangerous under this subparagraph," said Dr. Westfall. "That's Item A."

"Item B: aggressively attacks in a manner that causes a person to reasonably believe that the dog posed an imminent threat of serious injury to such person or another person, although no such injury occurs, provided, however, that the acts of barking, growling or show-

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## Towns' voting machines tested

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Elections conducted an elections equipment inventory on Saturday, March 21.

"We are doing it to test the equipment to make sure that it's all working properly, and to see if there's anything that needs repairs that needs to be sent off," said Board Chair Janet Oliva. "This is an off year, so it's a perfect time for us to do an inventory."

Every voting machine was pulled out of storage and set up in the old Senior Center, just down from the Board of Elections Office, in order to conduct the tests.

The majority of the voting machines were provided by the state in 2002, and last year, the board sent four machines to be repaired and re-certified. This latest effort is to ensure that the machines run smoothly through the 2016 election cycle, which will feature a presidential election.

Election Systems & Software is the company authorized by the secretary of state's office to work on the machines, and the company was on site that Saturday to test the equipment.

A strict chain of custody must be followed when any equipment leaves the board of elections. If a machine should require repair, it is mailed to ES&S and removed from the inventory. Once ES&S completes any repairs, the company must send the equipment to the Kennesaw State University



Center for Election Systems.

KSU's Center for Election Systems is contracted through the Secretary of State's Office to certify the equipment, which is then shipped securely back to the board of elections with a dated sticker certifying the equipment as ready to be used in elections.

Once received by the board of elections, the equipment is reentered into the inventory.

And on that Saturday, ES&S helped the board test each machine to determine what needed to be sent off for repairs and what could be fixed on site.

"It's something that I don't know if any other county has ever done before," said Oliva. "It's something that, historically, I'm not aware we've ever done before, but it's just good practice."

The Board of Elections was given the go-ahead by Towns County Sole Com-

missioner Bill Kendall to test the machines and to have any in need of repair sent off to ES&S.

All voting equipment is stored within the Board of Elections Office, behind a dead-bolt locked door within the building, and the building itself is armed with an electronic security system to ensure that no one can tamper with the machines.

"Most importantly, roughly three weeks before the next election, they go through what's called L&A, which is Logic and Accuracy testing," said Board Co-Chair Mark Dehler. "That's what we all have to come in and do, and we as a board have to certify each piece of equipment has passed the Logic and Accuracy testing."

"And then, even the night of the election, the first thing that happens is what's called a zero tape. When the machine

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## Hiwassee Council creates special projects fund

By Mason Mitcham  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Hiwassee Mayor Barbara Mathis has announced a new Hiwassee Project Fund with the goal of raising \$10,000 of private donations. The city, which plans to use the fund for activities or projects not generally the responsibility of local governments, will not use taxpayer dollars.

The fund generally will be used in beautifying city streets and public property. Specific plans for the money include the purchase of Christmas decorations for the City Square and the sponsorship of a Hiwassee Christmas Tree Lighting and Community Celebration.

"We hope to have a community celebration, have the choir from Young Harris or the high school come in and put this on as a community event," city manager Rick Stancil said of the celebration.

When the Christmas parade comes through town, Stancil hopes that people gravitate toward the Square, which will be a little bit more festive than it has been in previous years.

For instance, the big city Christmas tree will need more decorations come Christmas time. So will the Square and the gazebo. But to deck the halls of an entire city takes time and money, and it's notoriously difficult for government to use taxpayer money to fund religious holidays celebrations.

"Decorations, celebrations, are hard to fund, because you have people that will object to use of taxpayer money, that type of thing, and in many cases rightly so," explained Stancil. "It's always an issue with government with spending



Janet Allen

taxpayers' money for Christmas decorations."

Another idea among the City Council is to have the special projects account fund the celebration of patriotic holidays like Veteran's Day and Memorial Day. Stancil envisions flags depicting each branch of the military hung in Mayor's Park and other public spaces in support of those holidays.

"It's not permanent, but it will add something to the city," he said.

Council member Janet Allen, the owner of Mountain Realty, donated more than \$5,000 toward the \$10,000 goal. The money was the sum of Allen's commission for selling the old Hiwassee City Hall on March 4.

"Janet did not want to take the commission," Mayor Mathis recalled. "She said that she wanted to turn her commission over to the city for us to use in some way. It wasn't a conflict of interest whatsoever. She did it strictly on the business side."

At the time the city approached her to sell the property, Allen didn't own Mountain Realty, so part of her com-

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## FBLA sends 18 to nationals

By Bricanna Shook  
Towns County Herald  
News Special

Georgia Future Business Leaders of America held the State Leadership Conference and Competitive Events at the Atlanta Hyatt Hotel and Conference Center on March 20-22.

Thirty members from Towns County FBLA competed in 27 different individual, skill and performance business events. TCHS was very successful with 18 competitors finishing in the Top 10 in their events.

From those, a local record number will represent Georgia at the National Leadership Conference in Chicago on June 28 - July 3.

In Friday night's opening ceremony, senior member Mia Manto was awarded the Georgia Who's Who in FBLA Award.

Manto was also selected to interview for the Who's Who Scholarship.

She placed second in the Who's Who Event, where she received a \$500 scholarship, presented by Monty Rhodes, Execu-

tive Director of Georgia FBLA.

Towns County FBLA Adviser Melissa McConnell was also presented Georgia Adviser of the Year Award during Friday night's opening session.

Additionally, Towns County FBLA was awarded the Market Share Award with 42 percent of its high school population serving as members of FBLA.

Towns County FBLA received a Business Achievement Award - third place in state - for having many students participate in the Business Achievement Awards Program in 2014-2015.

The Business Achievement Awards (BAA) are an aggressive, self-directed, results-based business and leadership program designed to complement and integrate into

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