

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thu: Clouds 82 60
Fri: T-Storms 79 54
Sat: Clouds 79 53
Sun: Sunny 80 57
Mon: Clouds 81 60
Tue: Clouds 82 61
Wed: T-Storms 83 62



Upstream Elevation Predicted 05/21/14
Lake Chatuge 1,925.72
Lake Nottely 1,775.84
Blue Ridge 1,687.37

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Kaila Reece named TCHS Valedictorian

Ansley Vardeman named Salutatorian; Courtney Marshall is Historian

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

It came down to the wire when trying to determine a Salutatorian and Historian for Towns County High School's Class of 2014.

However, there was little doubt who the Class of 2014 Valedictorian would be.

Kaila Reece is the top student in the Class of 2014, claiming the honor of Class Valedictorian.

"This is an amazing class of students," Towns County High School Principal Jonathan Gibson said. "Roy Perren, even before he decided he was stepping down as principal, said that the Class of 2014 was the best class he had ever been associated with.

"This class is such a good group," Gibson said. "They work hard, they're good kids, they do what you ask, and they're a fun group to be around.

"I couldn't ask for a better group to have as my first year as principal," he said. "They are tremendous kids to



Kaila Reece

be around."

Reece will follow the speeches of Salutatorian Ansley Vardeman, and Historian Courtney Marshall when 75 seniors walk the aisle at 7 p.m. on Friday at Bill P. Kendall Gymnasium in Hiawassee.

"I'm telling you, the Salutatorian and Historian went right down to the wire," Gibson said. "Like I said, this class is special."

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Ansley Vardeman



Courtney Marshall

Gibson: 'Our Indians have a new head football coach'

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

Billy Barnhart was hired last month as an assistant coach with the Towns County Indians.

A month later, Barnhart is now at the helm of the Indians' Wing-T attack.

Barnhart comes to Towns County from Whitwell High School in Whitwell, Tenn.

"I did the due diligence on Billy Barnhart," TCHS Principal and Athletic Director Jonathan Gibson said. "I checked out his references, talked with Whitwell's principal, and the thing I came away with was Billy Barnhart is a Godly man.

"He was turning the corner at Whitwell High School," Gibson said. "I think he's a perfect fit here in Towns County."

When Barnhart first arrived at Whitwell, he was the sixth head football coach in eight seasons.

His first two seasons, Barnhart's Tigers went 2-18. Last season, his Tigers finished 5-5. Following the season, Barnhart surprisingly resigned and decided he would work his way back home to Georgia.

With 36 returning underclassman on a .500 football team, Barnhart's decision stunned Whitwell's administration and community.

Whitwell Principal Josh Holtcamp said Barnhart was building the Tigers' football



Billy Barnhart

program to be a winner.

He added that he never saw Barnhart's resignation coming - he was floored.

Barnhart was introduced as Towns County's head football coach on Sunday during open workouts at the Indians football complex.

Barnhart replaces Blair Harrison, who left after one season as Indians head football coach.

Barnhart was all smiles as he talked with his players on Sunday.

"I put everything in God's hands," Barnhart said. "I didn't know if I would ever have the opportunity to be a head football coach again.

"I prayed about it and decided if the Good Lord was willing, that moment would

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Towns County voters have spoken

By Charles Duncan
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Jerry Taylor is the only familiar face returning to the Towns County Board of Education.

Taylor, the District 3 representative, defeated Penny Norton Ledford by a narrow margin of 46 votes in Tuesday's Primary Election at press time.

Ledford took Hiawassee and Macedonia precincts; Taylor took Young Harris.

The two tied 5-5 in Tate City to close out the race.

The Towns County Board of Education is non-partisan.

Taylor returns to the BOE and joins Cliff Bradshaw who was unopposed in District 1. Mike Anderson did not seek reelection to that post.

In District 2, Robert Williams and Dodie Ledford Thomas will face off in a runoff election.

Stephen Green brought up the rear in that race. Emily Phillips



Jerry Taylor

did not seek reelection.

In other races, House District 8 State Rep. Stephen Allison will return to his House seat after handily defeating challenger John Crumpton.

In the 9th Congressional District race, incumbent U.S. Rep. Doug Collins took more than 80 percent of the vote in handily defeating Suches Republican Ber-

nard Fontaine.

In the race to fill the seat of retiring U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss, David Perdue and Jack Kingston are headed to a runoff in the GOP Primary.

Democrat Michelle Nunn coasted to victory in her U.S. Senate primary and can save her money for November.

In the GOP Primary for Governor, Incumbent Nathan Deal had no trouble at all with challengers John Barge and David Pennington.

In the most contested race of the night, nine Republicans and six Democrats tried their luck at becoming State School Superintendent.

Mike Buck and Richard Woods appear headed for a runoff in the GOP Primary.

On the flipside, Democrats Valerie Wilson and Alisha Morgan appear headed for a runoff.

Election night didn't go smooth in Towns County as work-

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Green EggFest draws a crowd

By Colleen Collins
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Almost 2,000 visitors at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds braved the elements to enjoy the Fourth Georgia Mountain EggFest on Saturday.

The EggFest is a gathering of Big Green Egg fans and experienced cooks. This year's event featured 119 cooks and 18 vendors from all over the country, some from as far away as California, and Ontario, Canada. Despite intermittent rain that fell throughout the day, some 1,800 people attended to taste the delicious food served at this year's EggFest.

Cooks could come into the Fairgrounds as early as 7 a.m. the day of the event to sign in and set-up. Then, at 9 a.m.,

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Memorial Day Services on Saturday

By Charles Duncan
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Capt. Steven Evans, USN Retired, will be the Keynote Speaker at the Memorial Day Service on Monday, May 26 at 11 a.m. at Towns County Veterans Memorial Park.

Capt. Evans' military honors include the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, and the Navy Achievement Medal. He also earned a Meritorious Unit Commendation, the National Defense Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, and the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon.

Following retirement, Capt. Evans remained in Washington, DC working as an engineering and technical consultant for the U.S. Navy. Among his

job assignments to various U.S. Navy units, he supported weapon effects testing on decommissioned U.S. Navy ships, and worked on the design of the new Littoral Combat Ship.

In 2007, Capt. Evans retired a second time, moving to Blairsville, with his wife Mary Jacquelyn Carlisle Evans, of Ackerman, Miss.

The Memorial Day Service is hosted by VFW Post 7807 of Hiawassee.

The observance will include the North Georgia Honor Guard, invocation by the Rev. Richard Holbratten, National Anthem performed by the Towns County High School Band, and an introduction of Capt. Evans by CPO C.E. "Bud" Johnson, of Hiawassee.

The observance also in-

cludes Laying of Wreaths by VFW Post 7807, VFW Post 7807 Ladies Auxillary, American Legion Post 23 of Hiawassee, American Legion Post 23 Ladies Auxillary, Sons of the American Legion Squadron 23, Marine Corps League, Unicoi Detachment 783, and Army-Navy Squadron 66.

Taps will be performed by MMI Brian Ingersoll, USN Bugler.

Memorial Day commemorates U.S. men and women who died while in military service. Currently, our nation is engaged in a war with terrorism; one that it cannot afford to lose. Put aside for the day any foreign policy issues and honor our fallen heroes. A large turnout is expected with a sincere display of patriotism.

Correction from TCSO

In the May 7, 2014 edition of the *Towns County Herald*, arrest reports showed Shanda Bree Womble being charged with "Altering, Modifying or Changing Voting Equipment

without approval of Secretary," along with other charges.

This information was wrong, and was sent to the *Herald* in error. Womble was in fact charged with the other

listed charges, but not "Altering, Modifying or Changing Voting Equipment without approval of Secretary." The Towns County Sheriff's Office apologizes for this error.

Proposed Towns County Schools budget on the rise

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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The Towns County Schools budget is projected to increase by \$713,586 in Fiscal Year 2015, according to the advertised budget in this week's *Towns County Herald*.

The Towns County Board of Education has a tentative budget set for FY 2015 of \$12,337,661, up from \$11,624,075 in FY 2014.

The schools budget will be considered for final adoption by the Board of Education at the meeting at 7 p.m., June 9, in the Towns County Schools Auditorium.

The budget includes increased revenues from state funds of \$280,223, and a projected increase in property taxes of \$962,004, according to the advertised budget.

The school system's be-

ginning funds balance is projected down \$528,641, according to the advertised budget.

The cost of teaching is on the rise as Instructional Services costs are up \$302,693; pupil services also are up by \$279,327. Improvement of Instructional Services rises by \$8,644.

Educational Media Services are down \$3,400; General Administration is up \$10,908; School Administration costs are up \$23,134; Business Administration costs are up \$8,430; maintenance and operation costs are up \$37,580; Student Transportation costs are up \$26,400; other Support Services are down \$3,340; Food Services are up \$225.

A healthier Tax Digest could offset the increased costs. The Tax Digest has been on the decline in recent years.

The public is invited to attend the June 9 meeting.

Phillips, Riley headline Shakers' Friday meeting

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Those in attendance at last week's Mountain Movers and Shakers meeting took a trip back to the early days of education and were praised for their present day success at preventing fires along Towns County's Wildland Urban Interface.

Betty Phillips was on hand to provide insight on Towns County schools' past. Phillips' Great-Great Grandfather J.M. Gibson was the first superintendent of Towns County Schools, and served for 33 years (1870-1903).

"He was the superintendent of Towns County when Young Harris College was chartered," Phillips said.

Phillips touched on some strange enrollment numbers at Towns County schools. In 1931 there was approximately 1,350 students in Towns County. In 2011, enrollment had dropped to 1,145 students.

"The reason it became fairly smaller was because the TVA came through in the 1940s and a lot of families had to move out," Phillips said. "And most of the people that we have moving into the area are retirees, and because there is no industry here."

Phillips also noted that the Towns County Historical Society is looking for volunteers for oral histories.

"We are looking for not only locals, but anyone who lives here," Phillips said.

Anyone interested in contributing to the oral histories can contact Leeann Wildman at (706) 896-3456.



Betty Phillips

Frank Riley, Executive Director of the Chestatee-Chatahoochee Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) was on hand to promote their "Ready, Set, Go!" project in Towns County, which is a Fire Adapted Community, and one of only eight communities in the United States chosen to be a pilot community to help develop the Fire Adapted Communities Wildfire Learning Network.

"This is a wildfire education program," Riley said. "We started this program in (2009) and it is ongoing. It's to educate the public on the dangers of where we live."

According to Riley, in the rural, wooded areas of Towns County, a small fire can quickly escalate into a major wildfire event.

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TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

