

Elections...from Page 1A

everyone who voted yes, and appreciate all the parents and everybody who was in support of it. We're going to make sure that we use that money to the best of our ability, and make sure none of it goes to waste."

The E-SPLOST will push the total sales tax in the county to 8 cents on the dollar, but both the Republican and Democratic candidates have pledged to work with the school system to bring that back down to 7 cents on the dollar should either be the victor in the November sole commissioner's race.

Bradshaw said he is interested in getting legislation passed that would allow the county and schools to share the SPLOST, and both he and Hughes said that they would wait until the end of the E-SPLOST to attempt to renew the county SPLOST.

In the Board of Education races, Laura Banister defeated Jon Fullerton in Post 4 by a vote of 1,755 to 996, or 63.79 percent to 36.21 percent.

In Post 5, Kilee Smith will compete in a runoff with Nathan Noblet. Smith finished Tuesday night with 1,087 votes to 913 for Noblet. That's a narrow margin of 38.14 percent to 32.04 percent.

Matthew Parton finished with 850 votes, or 29.82 percent.

In Senate District 50, Incumbent State Sen. John Wilkinson was leading challenger Roy Benifield 14,715 votes to 6,768 votes, or 68.50 percent to 31.50 percent with three more counties to count.

In State House District 8, it was looking like a runoff between Republicans Matt Gurtler and Kent Woerner, both of Rabun County.

Gurtler finished with 4,015 votes in the four counties that make up District 8, including Towns and Union counties, while Woerner finished with 2,617 votes. Joshua Littrell, also of Rabun County, finished with 2,601 votes. Suches' David Barton finished close, with 2,351 votes.

In the 9th Congressional District race, U.S. Rep.



Nathan Hughes



Kilee Smith



Laura Banister

Doug Collins finished off a field of four challengers without a runoff. The closest to Collins - former U.S. Rep. Paul Broun.

Collins had 61.31 percent of the vote at press time, or 47,877 votes to 21.76 percent for Broun, or 16,991 votes. Suches' Bernie Fon-



Sen. John Wilkinson



Nathan Noblet



Cecil Dye

taine finished 5th with 2,170 votes at press time.

In the United States Senate race, Incumbent U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson won with 77 percent of the vote.

On the Democratic side, Jim Barksdale defeated Cheryl Copeland 53 percent to 43 percent.

King Ford...from Page 1A

King Ford Team's arrival and to show appreciation for his award-winning staff, King held a cookout luncheon just outside of the new King Ford building that Thursday.

Last month, on Friday, April 15, King Ford opened the doors to its brand new, state-of-the-art facility right across the road from its former location.

"Convenience is one of the big highlights, the access coming in and out," said King Ford Sales Manager Curtis King, who believes customers will appreciate the same-level layout of inventory over the tiered, terraced layout of the previous property across the way.

Curtis has been with King Ford since his father took over the business in 1997. He started out mowing the lawn, washing cars and working in the parts department, before moving up to selling cars and then managing the sales department.

"I just thank the community for all of their loyalty and dedication through the years, and their continuous support," said Curtis King. "They're the ones who helped us get here. This facility is for their enjoyment, that's what it was built for - for their convenience, for them to come in and enjoy it. Easier access to get in and out, to look at cars, to get cars serviced."

Chris' wife, Patsy King, also works hard behind the scenes to make sure King Ford continues to be one of the most successful dealerships in the Tri-State area. For this part, Chris said he felt fortunate to be working side by side with his wife and son.

"It's a family owned and operated business," said King. "It's not a chain store and it's not a group, a conglomerate. We're just family, and we're right here with it six days a week."

King moved to Union County with his family in 1971, and he got his start in the automotive industry working on his father's used car lot throughout high school.

Following graduation from Union County High in 1974, King married his high school sweetheart, Patsy, and she later became involved in Ford sales in 1985.

In 1996, with 11 years of experience in Ford Country under his belt, King entered into a business partnership with Union County native W.C. Nelson, and it was in 1997 that he first opened the



Chris King takes Ford Motor Co. executives on a tour of his brand new facility in Murphy, NC on May 19. Photos/Shawn Jarrard

doors to King Ford. His relationship with Ford Motor Company has grown ever since, with the company contributing substantially toward the cost of the new building on U.S. 64, which serves as a testament to Ford's faith in the King family and business model, as well as to Ford's commitment to the Tri-State area.

"I'm very proud to be a part of this organization," said Nelson, who visited King Ford on May 19 to join in the President's Award celebration. "This is well-run, and Ford is very happy with the performance here. I'm just extremely pleased that we were able to get into this new facility with the help from Ford Motor Company.

"Their stepping up to the plate really made it possible. It's a big expenditure for the market we're in - you really couldn't afford to spend the amount of money that was spent, but it's a partnership with Ford to get a facility like this here in this area."

The new facility houses the same extensive inventory as the former location, only now conveniently located on one level so customers can drive or walk around with greater ease to view any number of King Ford's truck, car, crossover and SUV inventory.

In back of the house, the shop area has been expanded, and moving forward King Ford plans to bring on more

service technicians to serve more customers faster.

Just inside of the new King Ford building sits every comfort available to customers, with an interior showroom and complimentary concessions area, where people can peruse inventory, make coffee, speak with customer service representatives, and enjoy plenty of reading material or view a live broadcast of work being done on cars in the shop.

"It's theirs," said King. "That's what it was put here for, the customers. Ford made the investment and we made the investment - it's for everybody to enjoy, and that's what I tell them. Come enjoy it and make yourself at home."

The new King Ford building is located at 2450 U.S. 64 in Murphy, North Carolina. For more information about King Ford and to experience the full suite of online customer service applications, visit KingFordSales.com.

Members of the Ford Team in attendance for the presentation of the President's Award that Thursday, May 19, were Giacomini, Malcolm Suttleff with Ford Customer Service Division, David Carnegie with Ford Sales Division, Molly Morris with Ford Sales Division, Chris Garrison with Ford Motor Credit, and Paul Szatkowski, Regional Manager for Ford Motor Credit.

Grads...from Page 1A

tions. The event was a preface to Friday's graduation at the Towns County Conference and Recreation Center at Foster Park, where seniors will take one last walk together. Graduation is set to commence at 7 p.m.

"They've worked hard, they've persevered, they've overcome difficult times," said TCHS Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs. "They're sitting here today, their last day of school - your last day of school - ready to reap the rewards of all those long hours of homework, studying for tests, putting in IXL hours, reading and completing projects.

"In life, you're always rewarded for your hard work, so seniors, sit back and relax. This is your big day. You've earned it. Parents, family and friends, this is your day as well. From the moment your child was born, you've been preparing them for this day, for this week, for their day of graduation.

"This is your reward, your big payday. Congratula-

tions on a job well done. To the community and its representatives, without your generosity and kindness, this day would not be possible and so we thank you for your contributions to today's awards program."

More than 100 scholarships were awarded to the class of 68 seniors that morning, ranging from local businesses and colleges, clubs and churches. Special scholarships were also given to five students in honor of their classmate, Jacqueline Crisp, who tragically passed last summer. The Crisp Family hopes to continue these scholarships annually.

Honor Cords, granted to students with a 90-plus cumulative GPA, were given to 58 students and 11 students received High Honor sashes, graduating with a 95 or greater cumulative GPA. Other cords were handed out to students who participated in a variety of student groups, such as Chorus, Band and Beta Club.

The Yearbook Staff de-

buted the 2015-2016 edition of the school yearbook, "The Indian," which had been dedicated to Towns County High School Coach Darren McClure. A special dedication in the form of a poem was also given to Jacqueline Crisp and her mother, Jennifer Ledford, who was presented with a copy of the yearbook in Jacqueline's honor.

The yearbook contained yet another surprise with a literal presentation of its theme, "moving forward and looking back, with a twist," where the book could be flipped and read from both the front and the back. This would also mark the first annual middle school and high school only edition of the yearbook.

"I'd like to express my utmost gratitude for the generosity of this community for these graduates," said Dr. Hobbs. "You've provided a means for many of these graduates to pursue their dreams. You've opened the door for the next phase of their life. Thank you."

Twist...from Page 1A

performing for his fans, and his fans still love to dance the night away.

As to why "The Twist" became as big as it did, well, it has to do with bringing people together. And when that happened with "The Twist," as it turned out, the people couldn't get enough.

"I'm looking at the girl, the girl's looking at me, and we're doing something - we're exploring our sexuality while being fully dressed," said Checker, commenting on the very real chemistry of "The Twist." "That is such great excitement - it never left the dance floor. The very minute it started, it never left the dance floor."

"The Twist" as made famous by Chubby Checker has

been recognized as the No. 1 record of all time, and as the No. 1 song in the history of the "Billboard Hot 100."

Checker has enjoyed commercial successes with his vast catalogue of other hits, including "Let's Twist Again," "Pony Time," "Limbo Rock," "Slow Twistin'" and many more.

Fans looking to see a different side of Checker should do an internet search for his brand new 2016 song entitled "Lookin' for Me," which features a fun story and tune sure to delight the hearts and ears of Country Music fans everywhere.

And come May 28, Checker looks forward to doing "The Twist" with fans from all over the North Geor-

gia Mountains and beyond, right in Anderson Music Hall.

"When I go out there, I twist with a lot of people," said Checker. "Sometimes I go right in the audience and dance with them."

"It's really all about the people. I'm just a good excuse for the party, but it's all about them. I have this fixation with the audience," he said. "I just love to go out and party with them and have a good time with them."

Tickets for the show are still available, and can be purchased at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds website for \$42 plus \$2 handling for Level I seating, and for \$32 plus \$2 handling for Level II seating.

RESA...from Page 1A

By comparison, Towns County outperformed nearby school systems Union County Schools, with its score of 78.5, and Rabun County Schools, which scored 75.3.

Each school within a system receives points based on certain CCRPI indicators.

The elementary school, for example, receives an achievement score based on 14 indicators within three specific areas: content mastery, which is student performance on state assessments; post-elementary school readiness; and predictors for high school graduation, such as the percent of test takers scoring at the "Exceeds" level.

This all-encompassing look at grades starting from kindergarten and moving through graduation aims to keep students on paths toward educational success, as progress is tracked from grade level to grade level and from school to school.

The Progress component of the CCRPI is another key factor when talking about the overall score of a school.

"Academic achievement only tells part of the story,"

according to GaDOE material. "Combining achievement with growth tells a more complete story about the academic performance of students. With both, we know not only where students ended up, but how much progress they made to get there."

"The Progress component of CCRPI utilizes student growth percentiles to determine the percent of students demonstrating typical or high growth. Students growing at these levels will likely maintain or improve their academic performance."

Last year, Towns placed second in the Pioneer RESA for its 2013-2014 CCRPI results. As always, the schools raised the bar, this time to the No. 1 spot with these latest results.

"What a tremendous school system we have, right?" said Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong following Moss' report. "Those are just fantastic numbers to look at, and we look at them every year. It's getting to where we're just used to getting good scores every single year."

Lights...from Page 1A

a Christ-centered Christmas display, to which Mr. Fulwood replied that they are more than capable of supplying Nativity scenes, as they have done so before.

The CVB Board voted to approve the \$150,000 bid - to be made in three payments by the end of the year - for Universal Concepts to bring its light show to the fairgrounds.

County attorney Boyd Pettit determined ahead of time that the bid qualified as a sole-source bid, though the county followed through with its due diligence out of caution to advertise for a bid proposal in the county's legal organ.

"I don't really know what you're going to do," said Mr. Fulwood, talking about tourism dollars to the area, "but I think you're going to be amazed at how it's going to work for you."

"Lake Lanier Islands, their numbers have gotten skewed because they've changed from the original light show that we set up years ago, but at one time their worst year was \$1.6 million in profit after everything was paid.

"So they're still netting out between probably \$1.1 million, \$1.2 million every single year of that light show. And almost everything they've got I sold them in 1994, so the product lasts a very, very long time. Gatlinburg, Smoky Mountain Lights, that's all original equipment that they're still using."

Commissioner Kendall said that his office is applying for state grant money to help

fund expansions to the light show next year.

A 2016 Winter Wonderland light show should be ready to open by Thanksgiving and remain open through the Christmas season.

"Looking at our tax records, Towns County in the winter months, the sales tax of the county drops about 30 percent," said Commissioner Kendall in the meeting. "And the reason for that is there's not many events taking place in the county."

Also in the May 20 Commission meeting Commissioner Kendall showcased the new county website for more than 275 attendees - the meeting took place in the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center in order to accommodate the expected larger than average crowd.

Michelle Hedden of Hiawassee designed the new site, found at www.townscountyga.org. The site highlights the beauty of the county as well as the many public spaces and other resources available to residents.

The information available through the new county website is extensive, with info on each of the county departments, as well as links to contact the other elected officials of the county.

There is also a clearly marked financial section of the site that houses the county's yearly audits and budgets, and a comprehensive selection of permits/applications made through

the county can be easily found at the top of the homepage.

Next, Faith Bryan with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission highlighted the work that GMRC has done over the past couple of years regarding the conversion of paper tax maps into a digital format.

The accuracy of the paper maps was many times hit and miss with regard to floodplain data, with some areas situated on hills very obviously above the floodplain being mapped as sitting right in the middle of one.

Prior to this digitization and modernization project, inaccurate paper floodplain maps were the only source of floodplain data for Towns County.

Thanks to the help of the GMRC, the county paid nothing to be included in a National Map Project conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey, which utilized laser precision technology to accurately map Towns County.

Because of this and continued work with GMRC, Towns County residents are now able to take advantage of accurate tax maps and records from the Towns County Tax Assessor's Office, which thanks to an arrangement by the county are available for all to view for free at qpublic.net/ga/towns.

The cost to the county of hosting the records at qPublic are \$8,800 the first year, which includes a one-time setup fee of \$4,000 and a prorated amount of \$4,800 for the service, and year after year, hosting the records will cost the county \$7,200.