Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Rain	**78**	**61**
Fri: Rain	**78**	**62**
Sat: Rain	**80**	**62**
Sun: Rain	**82**	**64**
Mon: Rain	**81**	**64**
Tue: Rain	**80**	**64**
Wed: Rain	**81**	**64**

Upstream Elevation
Predicted
05/27/2015

Lake Chatuge	**1,925.71**
Lake Nottely	**1,775.57**
Blue Ridge	**1,686.92**

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CONGRATULATIONS TOWNS COUNTY GRADUATES

Barrett: 'honor veterans and their families'

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Monday, May 25, the American Legion held its Annual Memorial Day service in Towns County Veterans Park.

The keynote speaker was incoming National Commander of the American Legion Dale Barnett.

Lt. Col. Dale Barnett, retired, graduated from West Point Military Academy. He has served 22 years in domestic and foreign locations. His service includes combat in the First Gulf War, and he has earned the Bronze Star, the Legion of Merit, and three meritorious service medals.

After retiring from the military in1996, he transitioned in to teaching and coaching in high school athletics. He is also an active American Legion member who advocates for veterans in the areas of employment, education, homelessness, and business development.

Lt. Col. Dale Barnett delivers the keynote address at Towns County Veterans Park on Monday. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

"Today we gather at Memorial Park to honor the memory of our fallen warriors who have given their life for their country," he said after taking the podium. "We are reminded this day that, in every generation, brave men and brave women have always stepped forward to take to oath of allegiance as members of America's armed forces, will-

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Cummings seeks EMC seat

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Mickey Cummings is tossing his hat into the ring.

Cummings will seek the Union County EMC board of directors' seat.

"I've had a number of people ask me to run for the EMC Board of Directors," Cummings said. "Folks cornered me in different places and asked me to run. I talked with my wife about it, and talked with some other folks about it. They said they thought it would be a good thing.

"So, I'm going to run," he said.

Cummings was raised during a time when television didn't have the influence that it has today. When he visited his Papa and Granny, the family turned the television off and spent evenings sitting around a pot-bellied stove listening to his Papa's tales about their family.

Cummings, the Market Manager at the Union County Farmers Market and Cannery,

Mickey Cummings

said he knows the difficulties that families have faced during the recent Great Depression, and he understands how to stretch a penny.

"You can look at the problems that the EMC has faced over the past couple of years," Cummings said. "I don't know all the details, but I do think the EMC is a good organization, but, some things need work.

"I think the people that are on the board need to represent the people who pay for

See *Cummings*, Page 12A

Seniors ready to walk the aisle

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County High School celebrated its Class of 2015 with Senior Class Awards Day on Friday, May 22, in Anne "Oliver" Mitchell Auditorium at the school.

Students wore their blue gowns, arrayed neatly on stage, while Alyssa Pyle captivated those in attendance with her stirring rendition of the national anthem, as she had for many sporting events throughout her high school career.

The event was a prelude to Friday at Bill P. Kendall Gymnasium as the Class of 2015 walks the aisle for the last time. Graduation is set for 7 p.m.

See *Seniors*, Page 12A

The Class of 2015 will bid adieu to Towns County High School on Friday evening in Bill P. Kendall Gymnasium. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Towns County's finance department responds to Grand Jury recomendations

Towns County Herald
News Special

The Towns County Finance Department has reviewed the latest Towns County Grand Jury report and feels it is necessary to address the recommendations dated May 18, 2015, and publish the detailed finance report that was provided to the Grand Jury. **See pages 6A and 7A.**

First Recommendation: The Grand Jury recommends that the Commissioner's Office have the annual audit prepared in a timely manner so that it is available for comparison with the budget detail presented to the Grand Jury.

Response: Towns County does have an annual audit performed on a timely basis. If a county government fails to submit this required audit to the Georgia Department of Audit in a timely manner, the state audit department will cause a prominent notice to be published in the legal organ and any other newspaper with general circulation within the jurisdiction of that county.

Each year in early January our department is presented with a request for the latest financial information for presentment to the Grand Jury. It appears that some members of this Grand Jury must be unaware that Towns County operates on a calendar year (Jan. 1, through Dec. 31), while some other governmental entities operate on a fiscal year (i.e. July 1 through June 30), therefore, we present the Grand Jury with the unaudited and preliminary financial statement of the preceding 12-month period. This year the Grand Jury met on Jan. 2, 2015, and our calendar year had closed two days prior on Dec. 31, 2014; it is not humanly possible to present a prepared audit report by the Auditors on a year that we had just closed. There will never be an annual audit of the previous year's operation available to the Grand Juries that convene in January to review or compare to the preliminary financial statements that they request from the offices of Commissioner, Probate

See *Response*, Page 12A

Stone excited about MRLS

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Friday, May 22, Mountain Regional Library Director Vince Stone came to speak at the weekly Movers and Shakers meeting at Mary's Southern Grill. He spoke at length about the future of the Young Harris Library, also known as the Mountain Regional Library.

Stone is originally from Tennessee. He holds two degrees from the University of Tennessee. "I know there's a lot of red and black around here, but I'm afraid my blood is orange," he joked at the meeting.

He and his family are in the process of moving from Tennessee to Georgia.

Vince Stone

"We've kind of enjoyed looking at these three or four communities, Towns and Union and Fannin, because we've got libraries in all of them," he said. "That's what the Mountain Regional System is. It's essentially your four branches, the one in Blue Ridge, the one on Blairsville, and the one on in Young Harris."

Stone told those assembled that the library system in Georgia gives its users unique privileges via PINES cards.

"This gets you a lot, and I mean a lot," he said. "It stands for Public Information Network for Electronic services. The PINES system is very unique in the county. It links 281 libraries thought the state of Georgia. You can go onto our computer system or the go to any library that is a member of the PINES system and look for whatever book you want."

The system works by ferrying books with trucks and vans from library to library. So a user can put in an order for a book at the Young Harris Library, for example, and another

See *Stone*, Page 12A

Thomas-Bradley TCES TOTY

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Nothing burns quite as bright as the curiosity of a child, and Towns County's brightest children have Quilla Thomas-Bradley to stoke the fires of their wonder and excitement in education.

Thomas-Bradley is the 2015 Teacher of the Year at Towns County Elementary School, where she is the gifted coordinator and teaches Advanced Content Mathematics and English Language Arts.

A native of Towns County, Thomas-Bradley has deep roots in the community. Her family has lived here for generations, and she, too, raised a family here, and so she is deeply invested in the community and its future.

Taking a tour of her classroom, one might notice the aesthetic quality of the environment – she taught K-12 art for 11 years, so that makes sense. There are hats and vibrant

Quilla Thomas-Bradley

colors and gizmos, a dissected clock that piqued the children's interest after it quit working.

There is both rhyme and reason to the structure of the room, including a whiteboard with the written question Thomas-Bradley tells her students they must always ask themselves and others: why?

So, what is most apparent about Thomas-Bradley and the learning environment she has

See *TOTY*, Page 12A

Class of 1955 celebrates 60 years

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Saturday, May 23, the Towns County High School class of 1955 held its annual high school reunion at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center.

The 60-year reunion drew 23 class members, more than half of the original 43.

For those that remember, that graduating class included Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall.

"Over the years, we were basically seniors for two years," said class president Doug Nicholson. "We got to be a real close class. We were always close to each other. And it's just good to see each other. We don't see one another other than once a year sometimes."

The reason the Class of '55 were seniors for two years is that they were the first graduating class in Towns County to graduate after 12 years of school.

"We were the first class

that graduated out of the twelfth grade at Towns County High School," said Nicholson. "In 1954 we didn't have a graduating class. We were seniors two years. We didn't like it too much. We were ready to get out."

"It was both good and bad having to go that extra year," said Commissioner Kendall. "But I think it was mostly good."

When Nicholson got up to speak to the assembled class before lunch was served, his words were bittersweet.

"Most of you have asked how many classmates we've lost. I know it's hard to keep up. We had 43 total in the class. And out of 43 we've lost 10," he told his classmates. "But I think we're all looking extremely well for a bunch of 70-year-olds."

"Not a lot has changed, except the ones that have passed away," he said later. "10 out of 43, over 60 years,

See *Reunion*, Page 12A

Shakers gearing up for speech contest

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It's that time of the year again.

The Towns County Mountain Movers and Shakers are holding public speaking lessons from July 6 to July 27, culminating in a speaking contest on August 3.

The Movers and Shakers had their first meeting on Tuesday, May 19, at the Towns County Chamber of Commerce in preparation for the event. Discussion ranged from lesson plans to selection of judges. The Movers and Shakers Development team, consisting of Dr. Amber Barrett, Brandy Creel, Sam Fullerton, Gene Moss, Dr. Aubry Stanford, and Ash Todd, were present. Also present was Adam Penland, a past winner of the speech contest.

The current plan is that Adam and C.J. Owens, also a past winner, will be judges.

"Our objective is to try to improve the capability of these kids to be able to get some confidence in speaking in front of a group of people," said Todd.

The Movers and Shakers seek to help empower middle- and high school-aged kids with the ability to affect change through speech, whether professionally or personally. To that end, they will make sure that the kids enrolled in public-

See *Speech*, Page 12A