

Cummings...from Page 1A

power, better known as the membership," Cummings said. "The EMC has a great core group that work there - the employees.

"I think it's real important for board members to represent the people they represent in the

five counties," he said. "I think we need to do everything we can to make it as good of an organization as we can.

"We need to do everything that we can to help the people that work there and we need to do everything that we can to

help the membership," Cummings said. "The customers that pay the bills, the common, everyday people, we need to make sure those folks are truly represented.

"When you have to make hard decisions, you have to look

at every angle of the situation," Cummings said. "Those decisions have to be a reflection of the people that you represent. When I make a decision, I'll be thinking about the person that has to scrape up money to pay their electric bill. You can't put special

interests above the customers' interests. The Board of Directors is the people's board."

Cummings is one of four candidates that will be on the ballot representing Union County. Danny Henson, Patrick Malone and Charles Rich also

will be on the ballot.

"I'm going to have to get out and meet some people," Cummings said.

Cummings is married to Lauren Childers Cummings. They have two sons, Will and Wade.

Response...from Page 1A

Judge, Sheriff, Tax Commissioner, and the Clerk of Court.

However, Towns County does have an annual audit performed on all county offices by an independent certified accounting firm (Alexander, Almand, and Bangs out of Gainesville) within six months of the close of the year (Dec 31) as required

by the Georgia Department of Audits. The audit is submitted to the Georgia Department of Audits by the June 30th deadline for their review. Once the Department of Audits accepts the audit via a letter, the Towns County finance department publishes it on the University

of Georgia Carl Vinson Institute of Government website at <https://ted.cviog.uga.edu/financial-documents/>. The Georgia Department of Audits also publishes each audit on their website. A hard copy is available for review in the Commissioner's Office.

Second Recommendation: The Grand Jury found the Commissioner's budget report to be confusing and recommends that every Grand Jury be presented a budget detail that is comprehensible to the Grand Jurors, so that they can understand the sources of revenue and expenditures.

Response: Published on pages 6A and 7A is the same detailed preliminary Revenue and Expenditure Statement for the 2014 calendar year, which was printed straight from the county software system and presented to the Grand Jury on Jan. 2, 2015, and is the same type report that has been presented to the Grand Jury since 2013 when the new software was implemented. No past Grand Jury has had a problem or has been confused with the format of the new software. This software is owned by one of the largest governmental software sup-

pliers in the U.S. The county sought references from other surrounding governmental entities before purchasing this software three years ago and the software meets all the Georgia accounting standards for local governments. This report shows a detailed summary of the revenues received by the county and has a line item detail of each department's expenditures with totals at the end of each department. We were unaware that this same Grand Jury was confused by the financial report presented to them in January as the January recommendations given to our office made no

note of any confusion or the need for clarification from our office before reconvening in May. We are always available to meet and explain any questions to jurors or any interested citizen.

Third Recommendation: The Grand Jury recommends that the Commissioner investigate the availability of federal financial assistance to the County through CAFR (Comprehensive Annual Financial Report).

Response: The auditor explained that a CAFR report is an extension of a financial audit, which includes statisti-

cal, geographical, and demographic information. The auditor also stated that CAFR reports are used mainly for larger entities who seek large amounts of bond funding, (i.e.: \$200 million or more) to improve their rating and that a CAFR report would be of no benefit to a county government of our size and would only succeed in raising the cost of our audit by up to \$10,000 a year of the taxpayers' money.

Andrea Anderson is Towns County's finance director; Linda Hedden is Towns County's Deputy Finance Director.

Memorial...from Page 1A

ing to fight and, if necessary, die for the sake of freedom."

He added that Memorial Day is not only for veterans of Vietnam, Korea, and the World Wars, but also the Gulf War and the Bush Administration's War on Terror. He insisted also that we not only honor veterans, but also their families.

"We continue to lose American heroes every day on our global War on Terrorism and on military training accidents and missions around the world. The loss of these brave men and women are painfully great to the families, and remembering our fallen once a year is certainly not enough. The families need to be remembered every day," he said.

"Today we enjoy together with families and friends Memorial Day, but it's because of the sacrifices that others have made that we can do these things in America," he added.

After giving a brief history of Memorial Day, Barnett moved on to share stories about specific veterans who have sacrificed their lives or limbs in war. His most personal story involved a young man named Lt. Daniel Collins.



"Lt. Collins was a special young man. I served with his mother and his father while they were career military officers. I saw him grow and develop and, I can remember the pride that mom and dad had," he recalled.

"He went off and graduated from the U.S. military academy in 2008 and he wanted to carry on that family tradition of military service to our nation," he went on. "Unfortunately, Lt. Collins' vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device in April of 2010."

He said that although

the community came together to escort and honor the body, no amount of posthumous honors could return what the family lost.

"The honors that we gave to Lt. Collins and his family can never replace the loss of a son, and today let all of us remember not only the Collins family, but those families across this great nation that have lost a loved one," he said. "Let us all dedicate ourselves this Memorial Day to doing everything that we can to helping veterans in need in our community."

Seniors...from Page 1A

"I would like to also welcome you to the Senior Honors Day Awards," said TCHS Assistant Principal Erica Chastain, who was the driving force behind organizing the event. "I would like to say how proud we are of these students for all of their accomplishments, and thank you parents for what you've done to get your students to this point. I would also like to say thank you for the community members for the scholarship opportunities that you bring to our students."

Nearly 100 scholarships were awarded to the class of 82 students that day, from both local groups and area colleges, as well as businesses and churches.

The high school also announced its Top 3 in class, and the Class of 2015 Valedictorian is Danielle Diehl, Salutatorian is Michael Austin and Historian is Alana Calhoun.

Diehl is also the 2015 STAR Student and was recognized during the awards day for the accomplishment, along with STAR Teacher Brent Lance.

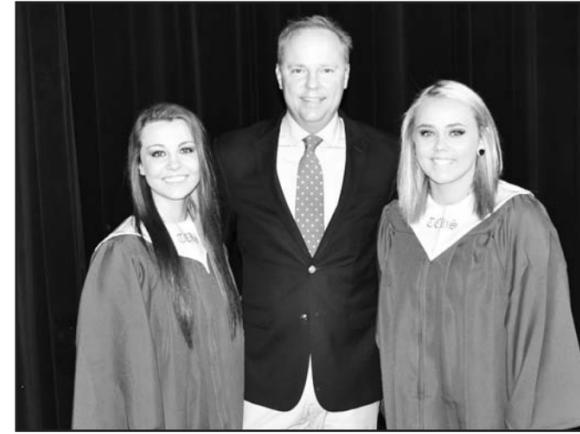
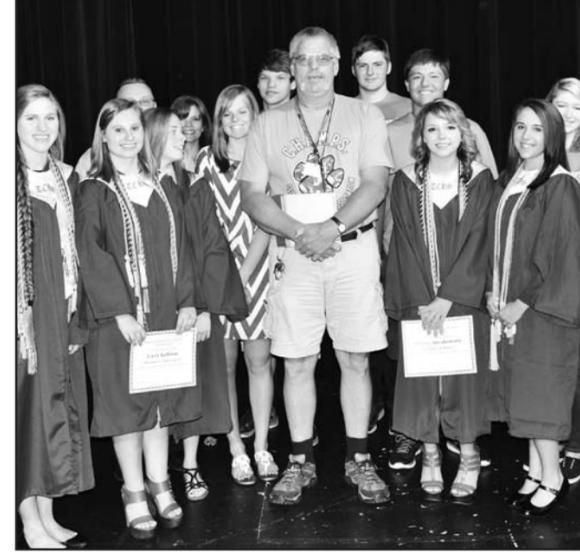
Many cords were awarded to students for participation in a variety of student groups, from Beta Club to Band and Chorus, and quite a few students were top-heavy with corded loot by the end of the ceremony.

"Congratulations to our soon-to-be graduates for all your hard earned rewards and honors that you received today," said TCHS Principal Jonathan Gibson. "Senior Honors Day is always an exciting day where we can sit back and celebrate such amazing accomplishments and such amazing students, and their dedication to community service and academics. I'm so proud of each and every one of you, and again, congratulations."

The Yearbook Staff, composed of Mrs. Dionne Berrong, debuted the 2014-2015 school yearbook, "The Indian," which had been dedicated to Towns County Elementary School teacher John Butler.

"Towns County Schools thank Mr. Butler for making Social Studies fun, igniting interest in learning, connecting with his students, telling them stories of his life, and, of course, his love of Tinkerbell," read the yearbook entry. "Teachers are essential in helping students reach their full potential. That is why we are proud to dedicate 'The Indian' to Mr. John Butler."

The yearbook contained yet another surprise for students and those in attendance - a special page dedicated to classmate Jessi Patrick, who would have been graduating with her friends this year, but



passed away in 2010 after a battle with cancer.

Jessi's parents made their way on stage to thank

the students for the inclusion of their daughter, whom none could forget, in her senior yearbook.

TOTY...from Page 1A

reated for her students? The answer is simple - she has a clear and sincere passion for teaching.

One of the many ways in which Thomas-Bradley expresses that passion is by individualizing student study to maximize interaction, instead of just throwing problems up on the board for everyone to solve before moving on.

"You've got to care about them," said Thomas-Bradley. "That's my main thing. My whole everything is geared toward the old adage that nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care. And it doesn't matter what you can do or how bright you are or what I can stand up here and teach, if they do not have a connection with me and I with them, then most of it is null and void. There has got to be a connection - they have to know that I care."

For the past several years, elementary students have been performing exceedingly well in English Language Arts. Math just needed some extra attention to bring up scores.

Thomas-Bradley and Curriculum Director Stephanie Moss worked together to create

an emphasis on math that has shown dramatic results at the elementary school level.

"My fifth-graders have mastered fifth-grade and gone on into sixth grade," said Thomas-Bradley. "I have two fourth-grade students who have mastered this year fourth grade, fifth grade and part of sixth, and I'm thrilled. I have third-graders who are inching into fifth-grade material in the last couple of weeks, so I'm very proud of them."

With students performing math that is two to three grades above their current levels, the question becomes, what happens when these children reach a certain point of learning? If fourth-graders are mastering parts of sixth-grade math, when they move into fifth-grade and start mastering even higher levels, what will they study when they get to middle school if they have mastered those subjects as well?

"And that's my charge to Towns County School System: what will happen then?" said Thomas-Bradley. "Will you make them go through those classes, or are we going to set up something special for those students?"

A challenged mind is a thinking mind, and a thinking mind can accomplish anything, especially given the proper tools and encouragement in the early stages of development.

The study of etymology, which is essentially the history and origin of words, is an important tool in Thomas-Bradley's English Language Arts teaching kit.

By teaching children the Greek and Latin roots, prefixes and suffixes, students can readily decipher words they have never before encountered by breaking them down into sections and putting the pieces together like puzzles.

"My goal is to make sure that by the time they leave fifth grade, that they know at least 300 prefixes and roots, and they do, and to show how many words that that extends their vocabulary and empowers those students," Thomas-Bradley said.

Thomas-Bradley is a TCHS graduate who went on to earn both a bachelor's and a master's degree in early childhood education, as well as her specialist in leadership.

Stone...from Page 1A

library based in Kennesaw might deliver it.

"As soon as we get it, we send you an e-mail, and you come in and you get it and you don't pay a thing," said Stone.

"The PINES system, because it's in Georgia, doesn't cost anything for anybody to use," he went on. "So basically anyone here who has a library card has access to any book in the entire state of Georgia. It's really fascinating. Tennessee does not have anything like this. Matter of fact, there's only three states in the entire country

that have this available to their patrons."

The other subject Stone touched on was the planned renovations to the Young Harris Library.

"We were granted \$900,000 for us to use, still in a bond, from the state," he said. "Commissioner Kendall has got us \$100,000 sitting in an account that he raised from SPLOST. We had to raise that \$100,000 to get that \$900,000. So we've got our \$1 million. It strictly has to be used for renovation. Our budget is still

tight, but it looks a lot better for next year."

Planned renovations include new furniture, a new carpet, and new lighting.

"The look and feel is dated. We're hoping to do a nice fireplace reading area for people to come and sit and relax. We're going to keep it a nice cozy place," said Stone. "Construction may take 6-8 months. We'll do a grand opening and move back into the new facility, and it's going to be wonderful. Everybody's really excited about that."

Reunion...from Page 1A

that's a pretty good average." He thought the reason might be clean living.

"Our generation is different from maybe the next generation after this," he said. "The lifestyles are different. I think things are faster now. We didn't have the advantage of everybody having a car at school. Nobody had a car, or very few. I only remember one or two in our class having a car at school. Of course, no electronic communication. We

didn't even have telephones all over the county back then. Especially not cell phones."

As time has gone on and technology has advanced, it's gotten easier for the class of 1955 to keep in touch, although they see one another only rarely.

"A big majority of us live around here and we see each other occasionally downtown. Other than that, we just get in contact by phone or whatever, but I would say we

don't socialize together a lot. Just on occasion like this," said Nicholson.

One of the planners of the event, '55 alum Ann McClure, said that although keeping in touch is easier, getting people together is harder.

"It's just hard to get everybody back together," she said. "You never know for sure how many will show up. At this age you don't know what everybody's doing or if they're able."

Speech...from Page 1A

speaking classes get the instruction they need to succeed.

"I just want to be sure we meet their needs and make that okay," said Dr. Aubrey Sanford. "Some of the things I would say to Adam Penland wouldn't make sense to some of those kids in there. They just wouldn't understand it, and they shouldn't. I'm here to help them, whatever skill level they are."

"What I think, what this really does, is cause kids to take this opportunities to help them through life, because it doesn't make any difference what line of work you go into or what you do, being able to stand in front of a group of people and speak is going to be beneficial to you," said President Sam Fullerton.

Even though planning is only in the preliminary stages, what is known is that the program will be slightly different

than previous years. "There's a lot of excitement about it, and it's going to be outstanding," said Fullerton.

For example, the invocation this year is certain to be unique.

"The invocation this year will be by a second grader," said Fullerton. "You'll look at him and can't believe what he's doing. His name is Gabriel Moody."

Further, the national anthem will not be sung, but played. "A young lady, one of the most talented young ladies in North Georgia, or maybe in the state of Georgia, who won first place out of 50 schools on the violin, is going to be playing the national anthem," said Fullerton. "Her mother said to bring Kleenexes with you, because you'll have tears in your eyes."

Preparations are under-

way, but there's still a lot to be done. Donations are welcome. "As far as going out and collecting the money we need, I've taken care of it. I'm not asking anybody else to do it. But I would like, if you get a chance, if you have some friends of yours that would like to donate, then let them donate to it and we'll up the ante," Fullerton told the development team.

The amount of winnings in the pot has already been raised from \$1,000, to \$1,200, to \$1,300. There will be a cash reward for high school participants in 1st through 4th place in the amounts of \$500, \$300, \$200, and \$100. Each the 1st place 7th grade finisher and the 1st place 8th grade finisher will each receive \$100.

For more information, contact Sam Fullerton at (706) 994-4658.