

Coach...continued from Page 1A

County High School. Indians Athletic Director Jonathan Gibson feels that Harrison was the right fit for the football program.

"We had a lot of applications for the job and it was tough to make a decision, but when you look at his resume, you see it is just what we need at TCHS.

"We are honored that he is willing to come here and take over the program and we are all excited about the future of Indians' football with him taking the helm this fall," Gibson said. "He will work in the physical education department and will also be responsible for the weight room, which puts him with the athletes on a daily basis. This will be a big asset for our team."

Harrison comes to TCHS with a reputation of rebuilding high school football programs. He'll pick up right where Coach Langford left off. He has nearly 20 years experience as a coach and has led his teams to region championships many times during his tenure as a head coach.

However, his biggest victory was overcoming cancer during the 2010 football season, while at Brookstone. For this he won the 2010 Sports Visions "Profile in Courage" Coach of the Year.

Before his one-year stint at Kingston, Harrison was head coach at Brookstone School in Columbus from 2003-2011. He became the winningest coach in the schools history compiling a solid record of 73-29 and leading the team to three consecutive region titles from 2006-2008.

The year before he took the coaching position at Brookstone, the Cougars were 1-9 and hadn't won six games in a season since 1993. The second season with the Cougars, Harrison coached Brookstone to seven wins and followed that with eight wins the next season.

He also led the team to a pair of 11-win seasons in 2007-2008. He was named Region Coach of the Year from 2006-2008 and was named 2004 and 2008 Georgia and Phenix City, Ala. Bi-City Coach of the Year. Also, in his first year as head coach at Kingston, he was named the 2012 Tri-County

Football Coach of the Year. Towns County School Superintendent Melissa Williams is excited to have Harrison coming on board this fall as the new leader of the Indians gridiron program.

"I think Coach Harrison will be a valued member of our school system family and a wonderful asset to our community," Williams said. "His resume is quite impressive. I am confident Coach Harrison will build on the foundation that has already been established in our football program and I look forward to our upcoming football season."

"From my conservation with him, I am sure he will work hard with all our athletes and will help them focus on developing life skills that will translate to success both on and off the athletic field," she said. "We are proud to welcome Coach Harrison and his family to our Towns County Schools family."

Harrison's philosophy is simple and requires a lot of hard work on the part of the athletes that play for him.

"I believe in fundamentals and conditioning so we will work on blocking and tackling every practice as well as getting in shape and staying in shape," he said. "We will play four full quarters of football I guarantee you that."

"I will play the athlete that best suits the position both physically and mentally, even if that means playing a freshman. I am not afraid to play freshman as my leading tackler last year was a freshman."

Harrison has played football all his life and was a 1995 graduate of the University of Tennessee, where he majored in political science.

He is following in the steps of his grandfather and father as a football coach and his move to Towns County was based on the benefits for his family, just like Coach Langford's move to Cook County.

Harrison runs a Wing-T style offense, which is a momentum type offense that provides a lot of options from the line of scrimmage.

The pace is fast and the kids will have to react, so look for some exciting football at Towns County this fall.

Grads...continued from Page 1A

Dillon Diehl, and Historian Jennifer Chinnici.

Ledford told the crowd that the Class of 2013 was ready to begin the next chapter in their lives. The senior, who is headed to Dahlonega and the University of North Georgia, hit a home run.

"While tonight is the end of one chapter in our lives, tomorrow we will wake up and begin a brand new one," she said. "As we enter the next chapter, we will be faced with adversity and freedom at the same time. No matter where we go or what we do, challenges will lie ahead of us."

"What I am asking of each of you and of myself, is to meet these challenges straight on with your head held high and your heart wide open," Ledford said. "It is not enough to try and simply get by in life. That does not move the world forward. We must try to excel in everything we do; strive for excellence in every task, large or small. Excellence is never an accident. It is the result of hard work. Class of 2013, it is up to us to make a difference. Society is counting on us."

Ledford also expressed her appreciation to the faculty and staff of TCHS.

"Thank you for unselfishly sharing your time, talents, and knowledge with us," she said. "We know it is your job to do it, but what you did for us went well beyond the call of duty. You demanded excellence from us whether or not we wanted to give it."

"You set the bar high and challenged us to live up to it," she said. "Without the support and direction from each and every one of you, most of us would be lost to say the least. Your encouraging words lifted us up, which enables us to learn at our greatest potential. Thank you for all you have done for us over the years."

Diehl challenged his fellow classmates to "think outside the box" and to be a free thinker rather than accepting the ideas of others "at face value." He also told his classmates, "We are the new future."



Dillon Diehl

Chinnici shared her 15 minutes of fame with a fellow classmate, Kayleigh Castonguay, the fourth-ranked student in the Class of 2013.

"I was given the option of giving this speech myself, but I decided to share it with Kayleigh because our GPAs are practically the same, and I thought she deserved the recognition as well," said Chinnici.

The two girls took the graduates on a trip down memory lane as they shared the fondest memories of their classmates from "Senior Leadership Day" to "the Wax museum in fifth grade when we became historical figures" to their "eighth grade graduation when we couldn't believe we were becoming high-schoolers."

"We hope everyone leaves here tonight feeling inspired to follow their dreams now that our first journey is over," Chinnici said. "We will have many adventures in our lives, but today, we end our first one together. So go confidently in the direction of your dreams, whatever they may be, but always remember this starting point."

The 2013 Graduation Commencement Program was bitter-sweet for Perren. This night was extra special and somewhat emotional for him as he stood behind the podium for the last time as principal of Towns County High School. This would be his ninth and final graduation address.

"Well, here we are. You have made it. Wow, how the years have gone by. It seems just like yesterday you were coming



Kayleigh Castonguay and Jennifer Chinnici take students back through the years. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

into the ninth grade and now you sit in front of me preparing to take the next great step in your life," Perren said. "Today is your day; you are off to great places. I am proud of each and every one of you. Yesterday I signed these diplomas. As I signed them, I saw each of your faces. You are off to do great things."

Perren told the crowd that he had pondered what he could say that will be useful to the graduates.

"I am going to share with you my own personal rules that I have used in my lifetime," he said. "My first rule is one that we are all familiar with, you reap what you sow. Another is never take away another person's dignity. Keep your commitments and don't make a commitment you can't keep."

"Be careful with your words. Words are powerful and once spoken, they cannot be recalled. Try not to speak in anger. I have found that the words I regret most in life are the ones I spoke when I was angry. Another rule is to forgive others. One of the most powerful lessons that I have learned in life is that when I forgive someone, I free myself."

"Don't take things too personally. I also have a rule about drama - avoid it," said Perren.

Perren also shared what he considers his most important rule - attitude.

"It's your choice," he said. "Morality can't be legislated. It all goes back to choice or attitude."

He referenced several important people in regard to attitude including Abraham Lincoln and Norman Vincent Peale. The most powerful quote he used came from Ralph Waldo Emerson.

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us," Perren said.

"The last rule I will leave you with, you are already familiar with - The Golden Rule," he said. "Treat others the way you want to be treated yourself."

"As we say goodbye, I say that wherever you go, whatever you do, God be with you. Class of 2013," Perren said.

As the students lined up row-by-row to receive their long-awaited diplomas, the students one-by-one pinned a signed clothes pin to Perren's gown and some, male and female, gave him a bear hug.

Perren found himself touched by this effort and had a difficult time maintaining composure.

With each added pin and hug, another tear ran down this gentle and beloved principal's face.

He knew he would miss these special moments with his students and he knew that he too, would be missed by them as well.

Underclassmen...continued from Page 1A

attitude, and pride in a job well done," Perren said.

"I am very proud of the accomplishments of our students," he said. "They continue to excel at each grade level. They have worked very hard and dedicated many hours to their studies to be sitting here tonight."

"They have given 100 percent to their academics, but they have not only excelled academically," Perren said. "These students also are involved in extracurricular activities and they have given 100 percent to those as well."

"Whether they are involved in one of the many school clubs, band, chorus, drama, or athletics or a combination of these, they give all they have in everything they do," Perren said. "That's what makes them successful; that's what makes them worthy of these honors; and that's what they will take with them into the future as they go on to graduate and pursue their post-secondary goals."

Perren said told the students that it has been a pleasure and honor to serve as their principal.

The moment everyone

had been waiting for had finally arrived.

The large crowd witnessed the awarding of the A-B Honor Roll for Grades 9-11, the All A's Honor Roll for Grades 9-11, and numerous individual awards by TCHS teachers recognizing the academic achievements of select students.

Perren recognized those students with the highest grade point average (GPA).

Ninth graders recognized were Lexi Stephens, Shea Underwood, and Kevin Reardon; 10th graders recognized were Danielle Diehl, Stephanie Patton, and Michael Austin; last but certainly not least, the 11th graders recognized for having the highest GPA were Kaila Reece, Courtney Marshall, and Ansley Vardeman.

"I am extremely proud of our students and their academic achievements," Perren said. "The large crowd present tonight is evidence of the great support of our students by the community."

"We appreciate this great turnout. We look forward to great things continuing to happen at Towns County High School," said Perren.

Perren ...continued from Page 1A

have had one of the highest graduation rates in the state of Georgia at Towns County High School.

"We have never been below state average and have had only one year below 90 percent in my years here, if I remember correctly," Perren said. "The thing that disappoints and saddens me the most in my nine years is that we were not able to graduate 100 percent each year."

Perren said that he does not take any credit for the accomplishments of the students and teachers of Towns County High School. He did, however, readily elaborate on the major accomplishments during his tenure at TCHS.

"We have had many special things happen at our school during the time I have been privileged to serve as principal," Perren said. "Towns County High School has excelled academically, with many of our graduates going on to college."

"We won the Governor's Cup for the greatest increase in SAT scores among

Class-A schools in 2007 and 2008, and twice we earned the Platinum Award for greatest increase on our graduation tests," said Perren.

Perren said that TCHS' Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) department has had numerous national winners during the past nine years.

He also said that the FBLA program is one of the finest in the nation with national winners each year.

He also praised the FFA and HOSA programs, saying that they have competed well at the state level as well the national level, and have had winners at both levels.

"Our music program is fantastic," Perren said. "The band performs great each year, and they had the opportunity to perform in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Savannah this year thanks to the efforts of Frank McKinney."

"The chorus and drama programs have allowed students to develop and showcase their talents," he said. "It is great to see how our students

have blossomed in these programs."

Perren continued reminiscing as he talked about the accomplishments of the high school athletic program.

"The Lady Indians basketball team has been in the state tournament eight of the past nine years, including two Final Four appearances, one Elite 8, and four Sweet 16's."

"The Lady Indians Cross Country team has been in the state cross country meet eight of the last nine years including winning the state championship this year," Perren said. "The Lady Indians Golf team finished third in the state tournament this year. The wrestling program has produced top five in their weight classes for many years and have been invited to compete at Disney World in December."

"The football team has had the most success over the past six years than ever before," he said. "Coach Kyle Langford has left the program in good shape for the future."

"I feel sure that I have left someone or something out," he said. "If I did, it was unintentional. I am extremely proud of all our programs and extracurricular activities."

"But none of this would have been possible without the hard work of the students, the excellent staff, the support of the school board, and the support of the community," he said.

"I want to thank the people of Towns County for the support they have given me over the past nine years," Perren said. "I realize that the taxpayers of this county do pay my salary and I have strived to make sure that our taxpayers received their money's worth from me."

"While I know that I have not pleased everyone, I have always tried to do what I believed was right," Perren said. "I have been and remain a servant of the people of this county."

Roy Perren, thank you for your dedication and service to the students of Towns County High School.

Is there bacteria in this stream?

Have you ever wondered, "is there bacteria in this stream?" Well, come and learn how to test for E. coli yourself! We will be holding a bacterial training workshop at the Union County Farmers Market (148 Old Smokey Rd., Blairesville) on Wednesday, May 29th from 1-4. Even if you have already participated in a workshop and just want to brush up, please reply and let us know you'd like to attend for all or part of the training. Additionally, Commissioner Lamar Paris has supported the Coalitions efforts to identify streams that truly do have a bacterial issue. Many streams in Union (and other counties) are listed on the Georgia Environmental Protection Division's list of "impaired" waters. Much of this data is old and outdated and new data is needed. However, without volunteer help (and training) the state has limited resources to conduct the regular monitoring that local volunteers can and so the Coalition is training folks in

Adopt-A-Stream's methods for chemical and bacterial testing of our waters. This workshop is JUST bacterial training. We can hold a separate chemical training in the future for those interested in doing both types of monitoring.

The farmers market is located off of Hwy 76 in Blairesville at Weaver Road. Weaver Road is located next to the Home Depot. From Weaver Road, take a right onto Old Smokey Mountain Road and the farmers market will be on your right.

Please let me know if you'd like to attend so that I can prepare enough handouts. It'll be a great time and you'll learn how to test for E. coli so YOU can know what's really in our waterways! Hope to see you there!

Please pass along to any of your friends or neighbors who may not be associated with the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition and therefore may not hear about the workshop. Thanks.

Freedom ...continued from Page 1A

"We are here today to honor our fallen comrades and their families. To our living veterans, we give thanks that they gave of their time and effort to protect us that we may stand here today, free men and women. Let us never forget that we are free because ordinary men stepped up to the challenge," said Flaig.

VFW Post Commander Marty Mynatt said many Americans have forgotten the true meaning of the holiday.

"The true meaning that we as veterans hold close to our hearts," Mynatt said. "For many, Memorial Day signifies the start of summer, shopping sales, and trips to the lake."

"We pray that they will reflect upon all the luxuries we have today - like the freedoms Americans enjoy daily because of their sacrifice."

"As proud veterans,

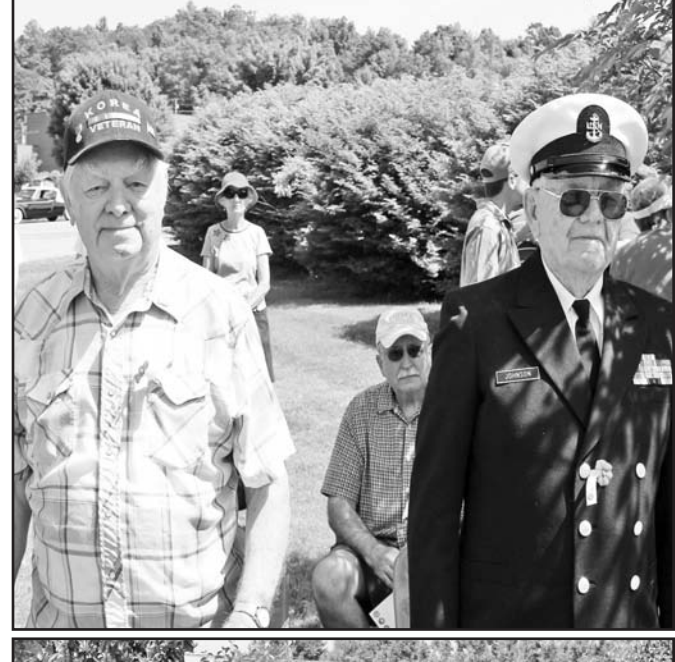
we know the true meaning of Memorial Day," he said.

The Laying of Wreaths was ceremoniously conducted by VFW Post 7807, VFW Post 7807 Ladies Auxiliary, American Legion Post 23, Sons of the American Legion Squadron 23, American Legion Ladies Auxiliary 23, Marine Corps League Unicoi Detachment, and Army-Navy Squadron No. 66.

It was a beautiful grand finale as the North Georgia Honor Guard provided a Rifle-Volley salute in honor of our fallen heroes.

The ceremony closed with the traditional playing of *Taps* by North Georgia Honor Guardsman and Bugler Grant Ingersoll, followed by "the retiring of colors."

Following the ceremony, guests were invited to a free luncheon courtesy of VFW Post 7807.



Above, veterans Bud Johnson and Vince Miller; below, the North Georgia Honor Guard at Veterans Memorial Park. Photos/Lowell Nicholson