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tions for all students. "While I am pleased to see an increase in the majority of the exams, I am concerned about those where we saw decreases or no change at all," Dr. Barge said. "As we begin teaching the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards next school year, we know the curriculum and the tests will be more difficult, so

we must continue to focus on successfully implementing the new standards. We have been offering, and will continue to offer, teachers the necessary professional development to ensure they are equipped to deliver these new, more rigorous standards and to prepare our students for the next step."

Happy Together...from page 1A

Lady Willpower, Young Girl, and Woman, Woman. The audience appeared entranced and hung on every lyric as they sang along with him, but when Puckett recognized the veterans in the audience by having them stand and dedicated the song Home to them, the crowd stood and applauded in appreciation and respect for those who had fought so valiantly for our country. It was indeed a very moving highlight of the tour. "It is because of you

veterans that freedom lives. It is my honor, my privilege, and my duty to honor you," said Puckett. Just when you thought it couldn't get any better, it did. The entire lineup returned to the stage with an encore group performance of earlier hits that truly lived up to the showcase title of "Happy Together." It was a night to remember for the Shriners, 1960s Pop fans and veterans from all tours of duty.

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ence FFA makes in the lives of students," he said. "Rodeo is a great family activity and it was an opportunity for me to spend some quality time with Gavin, my 6-year-old grandson.

show their support and enjoy a great show, and they weren't disappointed as the action began quickly after Elvis (Perren) opened the show by performing a special rendition of The National Anthem.

"The great support provided by the community will make it possible for FFA members in Towns County to travel, compete, and meet new people during the upcoming year," said Wilkinson.

A huge "atta-girl" goes to Towns County agriculture teacher and FFA Advisor, Sabrina Garrett. Not only was she instrumental in getting everything organized, she was also brave enough to enter the arena in the "Cowgirl 16 and older Calf Scramble." She single handedly ran down a 300-pound steer and removed a flag from its tail to take the prize. If you don't think rodeos are fun, then you haven't seen that.

Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black enjoyed last year's event so much that he welcomed the opportunity to return this year.

"We'd like to thank everybody for coming out and supporting our second annual rodeo and FFA. Agriculture is the basis of life and we need to instill those qualities in our young folks," said Garrett. "This was another huge success for the FFA and FFA Alumni and excitement is already growing regarding next year's event."

"I come from an FFA background," Black said. "I was a state officer and both my children were. Any time I can support the FFA, I do so."

Riley said for the plan of the FFA is to use the rodeo as an outreach as well as a fundraiser. They hope that the action and thrills of the rodeo and all its livestock will get the kids' attention and hopefully draw some of them toward agriculture. Garrett would like to thank all those who helped in any capacity to make the rodeo a success. A very special thanks goes to Junior Bridges for allowing the FFA to hold their event on his land. Estimated attendance was around 1,600 folks for the two-day event.

Towns County FFA Alumni President Frank Riley said the rodeo keeps young people active during the summer months.

This was the second annual rodeo sponsored by the FFA Alumni and plans are already on the table for the third rodeo in 2013.

"This rodeo is a really good way to get the young folks out and off the couch," Riley said. "We are trying to invest in our future through agriculture and hopefully plant a seed in some kid's heart to have an interest in farming or get involved in agriculture as a career."

Live entertainment was provided by Steven Phillips and Midnight Express took center stage on a tractor pulled trailer out in the middle of the rodeo arena, but that was not the end of the excitement. Even Elvis came out to show his support for the Towns County FFA and he rocked the arena with Heart-break Hotel and Blue Suede Shoes. He bore a suspiciously striking resemblance to Towns County High School Principal Roy Perren.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall and wife Jean were there to

Highlands...continued from page 1A

It was a good thing they had plenty of napkins on hand, as you could almost see the salivating occur right before your eyes.

their mission of improving the lives of the families and children in the county. "The proceeds help to continue the operations of our many local programs and activities. The event continues to get better and better. Our participants always put on such a great event and the generosity and hard work from every one is so appreciated. We are so blessed to live in such a great community," said Family Connections' Coordinator Amy Rosser. "This is our biggest fundraiser of the year. We are just glad to have such a good turn out. We really appreciate everybody that gets behind this and all the sponsors that help make it possible."

There was something to please every palate from Cafe' Portofino's seared Ahi Tuna with pickled ginger, mandarin oranges, and teriyaki vinaigrette, The Dining Room at Brasstown Valley Resort's lobster and crab meat salad, The Copper Door's seafood gumbo, The Chop House's New England Little Neck Clam chowder, Brothers Restaurant at Willow Ranch's braised beef short ribs, and Jim's Smokin' Que's famous barbecue.

Once again, Cafe' Portofino took home The People's Choice Award with their shrimp, corn, and bacon risotto. They won in 4 additional categories including, Gourmet Category, Most Unique; International Category, Most Unique; Gourmet Category, Best Entree; and International Category, Best Entree.

Most of them offered several other selections, as well, including delicious desserts.

The remaining winners included The Copper Door, Best Booth Overall and Best Booth International; The Chop House, Gourmet Category, Best Use of Theme and Most Unique Table Top for Booth/Table Presentation, The Dining Room at Brasstown Valley Resort, Best Booth Display, International Dessert, and Gourmet Award, and Brothers Restaurant at Willow Ranch, Most Unique in Southern Category.

The evening was a wine connoisseur's delight, as event goers ambled close to the fine wine samplings offered by Bachus Wine Shoppe, Crane Creek Vineyards, High Tower Creek Vineyards, or The Wine Cottage. For those of with that insatiable desire for sugary treats, The Sweet Tooth and Here's the Scoop were on hand to make sure you weren't disappointed.

Crane Creek Vineyards won the Tipping the Scales award. The biggest win, however, went to Family Connections and the families and children of Towns County.

Shriners...continued from page 1A

Boat House. All net proceeds went to the Shriners' Children's Hospital.

"I know we've got a three-year deal with the Shriners, but I'm hoping we get to keep them for a very long time," he said.

"Our motto is having fun and helping kids. When a kid needs help, we get busy," Potentate Rager said. "It's all about the kids."

It was a very busy three days in Hiawassee. Restaurants were full, there were heads in every bed in local hotels, and local merchants were smiling like they haven't smiled in a year.

"This is our Summer Ceremonial. The whole purpose of the parade is for the creation of new Shriners and to thank the public for supporting us in our hospitals and circus," Potentate Rager said. "We have 30-plus new members being inducted into the Masonic Shrine."

"We've been hurt by the economic recession," Commissioner Kendall said. "Having the Shriners in town for three days meant the world to our local economy."

Walt Swafford was this year's Honoree.

Once again, the Shriners appeared well pleased with the venue and look forward to next year's event.

"Swafford was chosen for his work with the Shriners. He's been very generous with his assets and time," said Grand Master Jerry Moss of Jonesboro.

The Yaarab Shrine is located in Atlanta. It covers North Georgia from Washington to LaGrange northward.

According to Chief Rabban Chuck Pittman, of Hiawassee, "Walt Swafford has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Shriners."

"We currently have over 4,500 members," explained Richard Burke, Assistant Rabban.

Meanwhile, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall said that Hiawassee and Towns County once again had done itself proud during the second Shriners' Convention held here.

Shriners' Hospitals for Children is a health care system of 22 hospitals dedicated to providing pediatric specialty care for children aged 0-18. There is never a charge to the families. There are currently 20 in the U.S. and one each in Canada and Mexico.

Head Start...continued from page 1A

Gainesville State College, Spring 2011; Who's Who Among Students in Universities and Colleges Nominee, 2011; Activities Coordinator for C.H.I.L.D. (Childhood Educators Helping Individuals Learn and Develop), Gainesville State College, 2010-2011.

sional Development Registry, has volunteered as an Upward 10 and under Girls' Basketball Coach for the Towns County community, and volunteered as a 12 and under Girls' Towns County Recreation Basketball Coach.

She is an active member of the Professional Association of Georgia Educators, a Legacy Registrant of Profes-

"I am honored to have received this award and for the opportunity to fulfill my lifelong dream of teaching young children," said a very humble Cox.

City receives \$300,000 grant for utility upgrades

Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis recently received word from Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Mike Beatty that at the recent One Georgia Authority Board meeting, the City of Hiawassee's request for \$300,000 in Equity funding for utility improvements was approved.

and expressed the city's appreciation to Engineering Management Incorporated for their work on the application.

The Mayor was advised that the award package was being prepared and would be in the mail shortly to the City. The announcement was made by Brian Williamson, Assistant Commissioner for Community Development.

When paired with other grant and local funding, this award will allow the City to construct a Water Storage tank to benefit the Towns County Comprehensive Schools and the Baptist Retirement Communities of Georgia. The Tank will ensure adequate water storage for fire protection and drinking water reserve for our school children."

Mayor Mathis said the city would like to thank Commissioner Beatty and Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal for their support of the city's project,

Improvements to Hiawassee utilities will also encourage expansion of new and existing businesses including Chatuge Mountain Enterprises (medical services) and the proposed Mountain View Apartments (multifamily apartments).



Photos by Lowell Nicholson



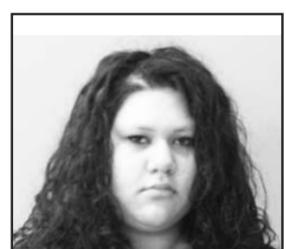
Mayor Barbara Mathis

Sheriff's deputies make big local busts

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Brian Lonzo Samples



Stephanie Torres

The Towns County Sheriff's Office has been busy.

Deputy Brandon Barrett arrived on the scene and assisted in the investigation, sheriff's reports show.

On Tuesday, June 12, around 9:30 p.m., the Towns County Sheriff's Office received a call to be on the lookout for a stolen truck missing out of Rabun County, sheriff's reports show.

Following the investigation by sheriff's deputies, it was discovered that this was the stolen truck out of Rabun County, according to sheriff's reports.

At approximately 10 p.m. Towns County Deputy Ken Kelly observed a truck traveling at a high rate of speed on Highway 76 near Papa's Pizza. Deputy Kelly attempted a traffic stop on the vehicle, sheriff's reports show.

Brian Lonzo Samples, 35, of Buford, was arrested and faces charges of Driving Under the Influence, possession of stolen property, fleeing/attempting to elude, speeding, and failure to maintain lane, sheriff's reports show.

The driver of the vehicle took off in an apparent attempt to elude Deputy Kelly. The driver allegedly continued to flee from Deputy Kelly and turned into a parking lot. The driver exited the vehicle and began to run into a wooded area. Deputy Kelly pursued the man on foot and he was apprehended soon afterwards, sheriff's reports show.

Samples also faces charges in Rabun County when he is

FFA String bands reunite

By Janice Boling
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

the first time in 46 years.

Larry Berrong, Dennis Miles, Jimmy Hooper, Lamar Sampson, with special guests Dale Nicholson, Billy Nicholson, and Jerry Nichols, recently graced the Mountain Home Music Theater stage for an evening of great music. The house was packed and anticipation was high as the audience waited for the band to play.

With Saturday night entertainment like this right here in Towns County, there's no need to drive to Nashville for the Grand Ole Opry.

They were not disappointed.

Owner Stella Berrong greets everyone at the door and never lets anyone feel like a stranger. The atmosphere is family orientated with lots of smiling faces. Mountain Home Music Theater is a little gem located in the red building on Highway 76 between Hiawassee and Young Harris beside Total Auto Parts (Parts City).

The FFA State Championship String Band Reunion put on a great show that had feet tapping and hands clapping. The special reunion performance brought together the 1965 and 1966 State String Band Champions. They were reunited for

If you like country, bluegrass, gospel, and the oldies, this is the place to be at 8 p.m. on Saturday evenings. The line up for June and July includes Cleveland's Freedom Band on June 23; Gilmer



FFA String Band Reunion at Mountain Home Music was a weekend treat for locals. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

County's Cartecay River Band on June 30; The Berrongs and all the Crew on July 7, featuring Larry Berrong, Dale Nicholson, Wayne Satterfield, Danny Burch, Kevin Kendall; they're back on July 14 with special guest guitar player Jimmy Hooper and featur-

ing Stephen Williams from Valdosta; Ray Nichols and the Hiawassee Opry Band on July 21; The Berrongs and all the Crew are back on July 28.

Also, the Snyder Family is booked for Aug. 11. For more details, visit the Web at mountainhomemusic.webs.com.