

Fair...from Page 1

photos. This time, however, management is considering lowering that number to 5, because of the large amount of people entering the contest.

Professional photographers will judge the show. Judging will take place on Monday afternoon, July 20th, and the show will open to the public on the following morning, at 10 a.m.

The first place winner will be awarded \$100, the second place winner will be awarded \$75, the third place winner will be awarded \$50, and 10 fourth place winners will be awarded \$25 each.

Clara Franklin, the director of the photography exhibit, has been director for the last 15 years and a volunteer for at least 15 years. She said that the most remarkable thing about the photography contest is that they receive submissions from all over the world.

"Our slogan is 'Photographs from all over the world,'" she said. "They come from Japan, China, and England."

That people from foreign countries visit the Georgia Mountain Fair is not unusual.

"We had people from 23 foreign countries visiting last

year, and all 50 states, so they come from everywhere," said Thomason. "I think they're in the Atlanta area visiting, and they read about the Fair and want to come to it. It's unique, and it's our heritage, so who wouldn't?"

Although people send in photos from as far away as Japan, Thomason said her favorite photos were of nearby spots.

"The lake, the mountains, the Hamilton Rhododendron gardens, just any place like that is beautiful," she said. "I like the mountain look. But there's lots of people who do all different kinds."

Bludworth...from Page 1

interned with the Arts Council in Murphy, NC. I was interning with the Greater North Fulton Chamber, so I was basically assisting the special events coordinator there. Greater North Fulton has Alpharetta, Roswell, Sandy Springs - it's a really huge area."

Bludworth heard about the Towns County position from one of her former colleagues at McConnell Baptist, and when she reached out about the job, the chamber was quick to extend an offer.

"With my degrees and everything I've tried in the past, I found out that my calling was working with people and doing something creative," said Bludworth. "These events position is hopefully going to be really good for Towns, and help commerce, grow businesses, and get some more people up here."

The new position will certainly allow Bludworth to flex her creative muscles, as the current outline of her

responsibilities is centered in developing both short-term and long-term plans for the county.

"I have a lot of tasks, but my main goal right now is starting up our new Matrix system, which is just the name that we have for it right now," said Bludworth. "Basically, it is kind of like we're selling a product to event hosts. So, someone can come to us who wants to host an event, or we can find someone who we want to host an event, and then we supply them with all of their resources to do so."

So far, Bludworth is off to a running start, helping to organize events that are already in motion, while thinking ahead to the next five to 10 years and growing chamber membership.

"The first day, they had me working on two events that are coming up within the next two months," said Bludworth. "And while I'm doing the long-

term plan, I'm also trying to just jump in and work on the existing events and fundraisers. I know it's going to take time, but I really am hoping to have businesses grow and have Towns known for all of its best resources - the lakes and the mountains and the people. And not just for one time, but for people to come back over and over."

If she had to pin down a single word that best described her feelings on joining the chamber, well...

"Excited," said Bludworth. "I'm excited about being here, I'm excited about what all we have planned, and excited to see how it follows out. I want to meet new people and try to represent them well, and find out Towns' needs and wants to target that for event-based things - growing existing events and hosting more chamber events, but also having the ability to help others host events here."

Club...from Page 1

The 2015 Youth Assembly is set to take place Nov. 15-17 at the State Capitol, and this year could see Towns County school children making differences to better the state and their home county alike.

Donations are important to the future of the Co-ed Y, as the nonprofit organization relies on funds raised by corporations and individuals to finance its educational outreach programs.

"It is funded by donations, by participants that are willing to donate, and we have probably not as many as we had maybe 10 years ago, but the economy is different," said Towns County's YMCA Finance Chairman Bob Gibby. "Young Harris College is quite supportive. Several people, including the president of the college, are supportive in realizing how important the program is for young people."

Gibby sees the Co-ed Y as an opportunity to encourage faith-based learning and leadership development.

"It's a school-based program that Co-ed Y uses to give a spiritual input into the schools," said Gibby, who is also chairperson of the Towns County Board of Education. "It's run by the children. They have to have a counselor, and usually a teacher will volunteer as a counselor."

Students meet regularly, elect their own officers, decide what issues they wish to tackle and send representatives to various Co-ed Y functions throughout the year, all in the name of leadership.

Gibby, who has been active in the community for decades both as a civic leader and business leader, has been finance chairman for the Co-ed Y effort for almost two decades.

The organization is one that has made a mark on the Gibby family, as all three of Gibby's daughters are active in nonprofit organizations, and were also involved in the Co-ed Y growing up.

"I really care about

young people and their upbringing and their foundation, and if they've got a good foundation, they can do a lot of things," said Gibby. "But if they don't have any foundation, it's really hard. I'm all for creating a good foundation. It gives them a choice. You've got a lot of choices when you have a good foundation and a good home life, and I'm proud of my children and I'm proud I gave them a good home life."

Donations can be hand delivered to Gibby Furniture and Appliance, or residents can make checks payable to the State YMCA of Georgia and mail them to Bob Gibby at P.O. Box 128 in Young Harris.

"When it comes to fundraising, there are so many fundraisers and so many people vying for money fundraising that, I'm not greedy and I don't try to press anybody or twist any arms," said Gibby. "I'll tell you what, it's a great organization, a great spiritual organization."

Tate...from Page 1

have access to it."

Another feature added was a call box on the outside.

"People don't get cell service up there, and in an emergency it would give them access to the call box, and especially the campers, because they have two or three campers."

"It'll help the emergency services, too," he added. "Really, the people over there, they don't get a lot of services the people over here do, due to their size, so we have an agreement

with Rabun County that they help us with our Fire Department and EMS up there."

"At one time when I was school superintendent, they had about six or seven school children in Tate City," he went on. "And we worked with Rabun County on that, we transported them out, and Rabun got the state money for them, so they went to school over there instead of having to come all the way over here."

In fact the old commu-

nity building in Tate City used to be a school at one time.

"When I was school superintendent, there was a group over there that wanted it, and the school board gave it to the Tate City community. There was another group that didn't like that, so they went to court, and the court made the school board take the property back. So the school board then decided it to Towns County, and that's why Towns County has it now," said Kendall.

Everhart...from Page 1

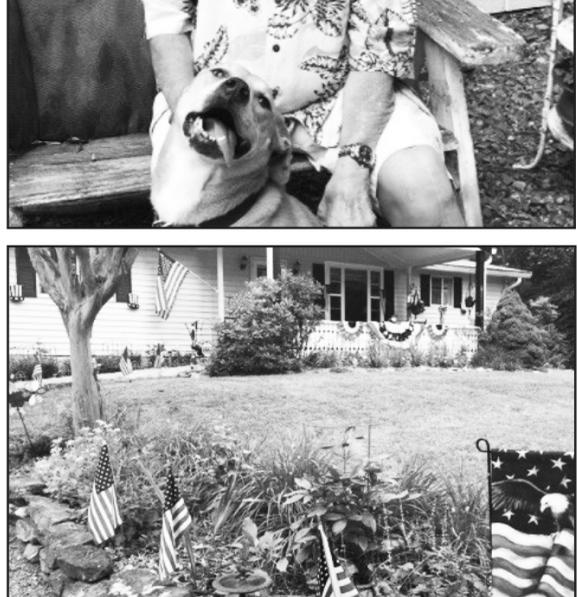
said.

As he grew up during World War II, Everhart's patriotism was strong from an early age. "In grade school, every day, they did all the patriotic songs and all that kind of stuff. So from day one, I always flew the flag and always decorated. When we had a three-story house, I went all the way up through the top story decorating."

Everhart has been all over the country. He only stayed in Ohio for 17 years before moving out.

"I've lived here in Towns County for 21 years. I've been here the longest, can you believe that? I lived in Roswell, GA for 14 years. I've lived in Michigan. I retired 21 years ago and from that point on I became a world traveler."

Everhart is a member of the American Legion. On national holidays like Independence day and Memorial Day, the American Legion throw celebrations, even if the city doesn't. "They always do something," said Everhart. "Just like in Memorial Day, I was kind of sad and everything, because Blairsville was all decorated, but in Hiawassee we did nothing. But we did have a deal at the American Legion."



Fourth...from Page 1

"yes, we are going to shoot them."

"The fireworks are wonderful," she went on. "It's a beautiful show and we have a lot of sponsors to help offset the cost for it, and we take up donations to help pay for it, too."

She also had a contingency plan to host the fireworks at a later date. If the event was completely a washout with no break in the clouds, the rain date would have been Sunday night, Thomason said.

Fortunately, that wasn't the case. The fireworks were managed by Atlanta Pyrotechnics based out of Marietta, and were launched from the Fairgrounds ballfield.

"It's just a standard, basic show," said Bruce Alison of Atlanta Pyrotechnics. "There's probably about 200 or so shells in this particular show, about three-inch shells to about 6-inch shells."

This is Alison's third year shooting fireworks in Hiawassee. He has shot shows all over the locality, including Helen and Ellijay. A cabinet-builder by trade, he picked up shooting fireworks as a side hobby and hasn't looked back.

"Based on what I shot a few years ago, this is a smaller show," he said. "The biggest show is a show we shoot around the middle of December in Guatemala. That's a very large show, that's about a 30 or 40-minute show. We shoot anything from two-inch up to 12-inch."

Fortunately, Alison was prepared to shoot even in the event of a heavy downpour.



His fireworks were covered in plastic and aluminum foil to prevent wetness.

"Once the shells are loaded, we can shoot the show," he said. "We cover them up and can actually shoot through the plastic. It's a little more aggravating. But we just covered them up for 10 minutes and after it quit we started loading the shells back up."

In addition to the fireworks, from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., local favorite from Nashville, Tenn., Raven and Red crooned for the crowd.

"We have all these people coming in here so I had to try to do something to entertain them," said Thomason. "I've worked with Raven and Red on several different occasions, and I wanted to bring them here. They're a good group. They have family that live in Blairsville."

While listening to the

entertainment, the audience ate hot dogs and barbecue sandwiches, got their faces painted or jumped in a bouncy castle.

"The Georgia Mountain Fair wants to sell food, because we want to be able to make money," said Thomason. "Then the North Mt. Zion Church of God, they want to do a church mission, and they called me asking me if I cared if they came down and set up, and they've been doing this for several years. And they just keep coming, every year, increasing their activities."

"I think we've got the same amount of people that we normally have," she added.

As it started to get darker, more and more traffic came into the Fairgrounds so that the campgrounds and all levels of the parking lot were crammed full. Anyone who came was treated to a spectacular fireworks show.

Firewise...from Page 1

happen here, and it may not. But if we burn one person's house it's accredited to him. If it burns my house, it's accredited to me. So they're trying to protect everybody's homes," said Riley.

"We're all in danger," he went on. "We're all living in a tinderbox when it quits raining, so that's what we're here for."

The Firewise preparedness program encourages local solutions for safety by involving homeowners in taking individual responsibility for preparing their homes from the risk of wildfire.

Preparation for fires includes making sure there are no flammable materials within 30 feet of a house and no leaves caught on the roof, and that the house is built of fire-resistant materials. It also is a good idea to locate a community's safety zone and have an emergency preparedness kit.

Towns County is a national leader in firewise communities.

"We've got a lot of attention for what we're doing here," said Riley. "People all over the country are watching what we're doing here. I've had several meetings out West lately, and they all want to come here."

The meeting centered



around two video presentations. One was simply a public service announcement that the RC&D put together to inform people of the necessity of doing basic things to strengthen your property's fire resistance. The next video illustrated how a fire from outside the home can quickly make its way inside.

The video of the fire entering a home demonstrated the importance of making sure a structure is fire-resistant. Some steps anyone can take to help ensure safety are to cover or enclose vents, so embers from a nearby fire can't get in, and to protect overhangs and other attachments, because those are especially vulnerable to outside flames.

"This is a big deal," said Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland. "It's huge. I

can tell you unequivocally that I've seen many, many brush fires on many, many different mountains on many, many hills. And we've been blessed with some wet weather, but you never know. Whether it's a lightning strike, or an arsonist, or an accident, or whether it's a structure fire. So we're doing a lot of wonderful work here, but it's a complete team effort."

Riley added that the number one goal of the fire department and the RC&D Council is prevention.

"That's our whole goal," he said. "We're here to prevent fires, and if we can't prevent them then our team will put them out. We have a very good fire department here in Towns County. We're well-equipped, well-trained, and if you need us we'll be there."

City Manager Stancil attends GMA Meeting

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

From Friday, June 25 through Tuesday, June 30, Hiawassee City Manager Rick Stancil attended the 2015 Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) annual meeting. Included in those five days were municipal training sessions, meetings, and exhibits.

Stancil attended courses on economic development, effective municipal operations, local government debt, and public policy development. These are all areas that are a part of his regular duties within the city.

As city manager, Stancil also served as the city's delegate to the General Business Session.

"Prior to attending the convention, I communicate with the council so each council member will be aware of pending issues and any item on which the GMA will hold a vote," Stancil said. "After attending the meeting, I report back to the council and go over key points from classes, new ideas, grant or loan availability, new laws, new services and new equipment that might benefit Hiawassee."

"The economic development course was basically a one-day course of basically models throughout the state of luring large businesses using tax structure, tax incentives, local incentives, and how you do that," Stancil explained. "Since I do most of the recruitment and talking to business prospects, that's more in tune to me than probably an elected official."

He said that the next course, effective municipal operations, has to do with everything ranging from accountability to customer service.

on debt, that's all more directed towards staff," he said.

"Public policy developments, since I write most of the initial drafts on all the policies, and the ordinances, resolutions, and motions, it gives me specialized training," Stancil went on. "And again, since I am an attorney, by going to the attorney's section, I learn the current issues that are affecting cities statewide, both in litigation and acts of the General Assembly, which was just adopted, and generally what's going on out there statewide."

"These classes that I go to are intended to improve my ability as city manager," said Stancil. "Now, there's some classes that are more tuned toward elected officials."

"As a result of these meetings, I'll be refining policies we've already adopted, and I'll be implementing, or at least recommending to the council that we implement, change. I take things back to the council, like here's the way another city handled another issue in order to become more effective," he said.

Also included are plenty of networking opportunities that Stancil can use in the future to bring money into the city.

In addition to being able to take specialized courses, one of the reasons Stancil went by himself has to do with budget constraints.

"Larger cities can afford to send council members as well as staff," he said. "However, this is not realistic for the Hiawassee budget. This meeting gives staff the opportunity to receive management training, legal training, and personally speak with state and federal funding agency staff and decision makers. Hiawassee has directly benefited from participating in years past."

"It's very useful for us as we begin financing projects, re-financing projects, as far as the do's and don'ts, and limitations on borrowing and limitations



Rick Stancil

"Again, it's more of a staff function," said Stancil. "I'll come back and impart some of the information, and then some of the things that we'll be doing in our employees training that I conduct, I integrate many of those course objectives into our local employee training."

The local debt courses will be beneficial toward the city as it begins to fund projects.