

### EMC...from Page 1

paper, the only board member who knew about Taylor's debt was Taylor himself. Nevertheless, BRMEMC's administration knew about the debt and kept it secret from the board of directors, according to the documents.

Nine days before the North Georgia News first published the story of Taylor's debt, the EMC Board of Directors reprimanded BRMEMC General Manager Matthew Akins. However, Akins remains as GM of the cooperative because board members acknowledged that he had inherited the debt situation from the previous administration, according to the documents.

However, there's another debt, according to documents obtained by the newspaper BRMEMC loaned Taylor money to pay for equipment designed to lower his electric usage.

He owes \$62,354 on that loan. That leaves a balance of \$107,998.43 owed to the cooperative, according to the documents, which includes 1.5 percent interest on a monthly basis.

Taylor also must keep his current electric usage paid up to date, the document shows.

Taylor resigned as president of the Board of Directors on April 17. The EMC Board appointed Julie Payne to serve Taylor's unexpired term on the board of directors

for Towns County.

BRMEMC Board Vice President, Lenny Parks of Suches, is the acting board chair for the nine-member board.

Meanwhile, the financial aftermath of Taylor's debt doesn't stop there. The BRMEMC Board has hired an attorney, Steve Minor of Tisinger Vance, PC to determine how the debt happened in the first place. That investigation will cost the membership up to \$30,000.

Minor is no stranger to EMCs having assisted cooperatives in areas that include the revision of bylaws and policies, appeals of ad valorem tax assessments, and conducting board meetings, member meetings, and other public meetings.

It's unclear how long Taylor's bill has been overdue, overlooked and gone unpaid. That information should come from Minor's investigation into the debt.

The utility company has more than 43,000 customers with more than 49,000 electric meters serving a five-county area that includes Union, Towns, and Fannin counties in Georgia and Clay and Cherokee counties in North Carolina.

The election of a new president of the Board of Directors is expected to take place in September.

sixth head football coach in eight seasons.

His first two seasons, Barnhart's Tigers went 2-18.

Last season, his Tigers finished 5-5. Following the season, Barnhart surprisingly resigned and decided he would work his way back home to Georgia.

With 36 returning underclassman on a .500 football team, Barnhart's decision stunned Whitwell's administration and community.

Whitwell Principal Josh Holtcamp said Barnhart was building the Tigers' football program to be a winner.

He added that he never saw Barnhart's resignation coming - he was floored.

Barnhart's Indians have two scrimmage games this month and the season opener at Hayesville on Aug. 22.

All the while they wait for their home opener against Union County on Aug. 29 at Frank McClure Stadium.

### Schools...from Page 1

Meanwhile, a new lab has been added within the schools to work with students who would work well with extra educational tools, Williams said.

"There are some new Internet-based programs to facilitate some of the students," Williams said. "The Department of Education is providing additional bandwidth, and a new testing system will be 100 percent online. We've been doing online assessment up here already, and more has been added to that program to be conducive to the new infrastructure. A new voiceover IT system for telephone access is in each room, due to some funds that were made to update a semi-antiquated system."

Open House was scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 5th from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. as Towns County schools open their doors to the presence of both students, parents and educators.

to the continued growth and success YHC has seen over the past few years. Since earning its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in 2008 to grant bachelor's degrees, YHC has been adding baccalaureate majors and academic programs at a rapid pace.

As of 2014, the College now offers 20 innovative baccalaureate majors as well as a full array of minors, pre-professional programs and teacher certifications.

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### YHC earns Colleges of Distinction Accolade

classroom size, Colleges of Distinction honors colleges and universities excelling in key areas of educational quality.

In order to qualify, YHC was required to demonstrate excellence in four distinctions: engaged students, great teaching, vibrant communities and successful outcomes.

The goal of Colleges of Distinction is to provide students, counselors, and parents with information about colleges and universities that excel in these four areas. Featured schools take a holistic approach to admissions, consistently excel in providing undergraduate education and have a truly national reputation.

This achievement adds

to the continued growth and success YHC has seen over the past few years. Since earning its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in 2008 to grant bachelor's degrees, YHC has been adding baccalaureate majors and academic programs at a rapid pace.

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### Towns County Fire Adapted Citizens Coalition

The nationally acclaimed Towns County Firewise program started in 2008 during an 800-acre fire on Cedar Knob Mountain in Young Harris. When Billy Snipes told a group in Colorado that our biggest fire was 800 acres the comment was made that it would be a camp fire out there, but to us it was a big deal that we want to try to prevent here in the future. A one acre fire can be a major disaster if your house is sitting in the middle of that acre! After that "camp" fire, local, state and federal agencies began working with community members to get them involved at a grassroots level. They did this by telling the people who live in the Wild land-Urban Interface (WUI) the story about the risks of wildfire in the neighborhoods where they live.

The fire agency representatives who started Firewise, Ready-Set-Go & Fire Adapted Communities in Towns County soon realized that they were the only ones pushing the issue and if they quit pushing, the momentum would roll to a stop, no one would notice, and people would

go back to business as usual assuming that the wildfire was something that won't happen in their community and they would worry about it when it happened. These fire agency representatives recognize that the risk is very real and could happen anytime, so in 2013, they passed ownership of these programs to the newly formed Towns County FAC Citizens Coalition that is made up of the very people who are at risk and the programs are designed to protect.

The coalition has taken ownership of the programs and has begun to develop the grassroots network and leadership to keep the programs alive well into the future. The Fire Adapted Communities program is as one of our members put it, "a way of life and an attitude" and is a never ending process that will continue to grow and evolve as long as people live in the WUI. The Towns County FAC Coalition consists of six citizens and three agency representatives, all dedicated to wild land-fire safety and public education. The citizens represent various communities, businesses, and institutions in the county. Members of the Towns County FAC Coalition are: Billy Snipes, Chair - Scarlett's Way Community, BJ Peters, Vice Chair - Lake Forest Estates, Ann Atchison, Secretary - Woodlake Subdivision, Angi Smith - VP Young Harris College, Marsha Elliott - Asheland Cove Community, Eric Barrett, Barrett Insurance, Harold Koppel, Captain Station 1 - Towns Fire Rescue, Jason Demas, FMO - Blue Ridge Ranger District US Forest Service, and Tony Harkins, Chief Ranger - Towns, Union, & Fannin counties Georgia Forestry Commission. Supporting the

### Webb...from Page 1

a certified Georgia Peace Officers Standard and Training (POST) instructor, providing training to DNR cadets on bear hunting laws.

As a regional investigator, Webb took part in a long-term investigation named Operation Something Bruin, a three-year cooperative fed-

eral and state investigation that targeted illegal bear hunting and guiding activities on U.S. Forest Service properties along the Georgia and North Carolina state line.

The violations included hunting bears out of season, hunting bears over bait, failure to tag bears, taking protected wild-

life (heron), taking an alligator out of season and others.

In January 2013, he began working on case reports, spending 264 hours organizing reports, evidence and obtaining search/arrest warrants. At its conclusion, the operation documented over 900 state and federal charges, which in-

cluded 139 state charges against eight defendants in Georgia and 110 state charges against 26 defendants in North Carolina.

The *Towns County Herald* congratulates Ranger Webb for his dedicated service protecting and preserving wildlife and enforcing the laws that protect nature.

### Anglers...from Page 1

"Look out there," Parker said, pointing to the crowd. "They all came out here to support us."

Rounding out the final five teams that made it to the final weigh-in were the University of Louisiana-Monroe's team of Brett Preuett and Jackson Blackett with a total of 32-12 with a 13-3 total on Day 2 being their big bag of the tournament.

Fourth place went to Tennessee Tech's Robert Giarla and Bentley Manning who brought in 13-7 on Day 1 but struggled during the final two days for a total of 26-0.

New Mexico State placed fifth with a 25-8 three-day total.

When the final weigh-in concluded, Whitaker and Helms each received a \$2,500 check from Carhartt to cover their fishing expenses. They also spoke about what a national championship will mean to their fishing program at UNC-Charlotte.

"This is big for us," Helms said. "We have about 15 members (at UNC-Charlotte) and maybe this will get more people interested and our club will grow."

The Carhartt Big Bass honors went to Nathan Martin and Michael Gullette of the University of North Alabama and Garrett Cates and Graham Howard of Kansas State University, with each team catching a 6-pound, 7-ounce bass on Day 1.



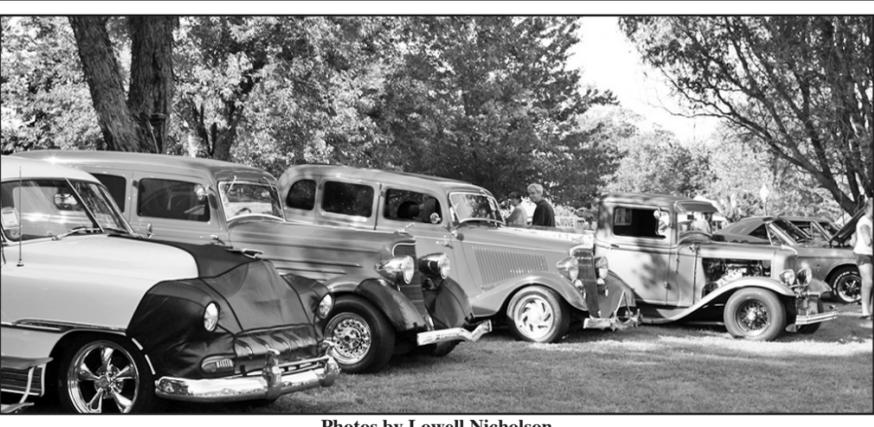
Photos by Lowell Nicholson

### Cruiz-In...from Page 1

meet, as well as cash prizes at 4 p.m. and a Downtown Hiawassee Street Dance at 6 p.m.

A new addition to the Cruiz-In other than new cars; breakfast, hotdogs, BBQ, ice-cream and other delicious fare won't be far from the Music Hall as entertainment and provisions go hand-in-hand.

For more details, registration information, or any available RV sites, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds can be reached at (706) 896-4191.



Photos by Lowell Nicholson

### Market ...from Page 1

her vegetables plucked akin to the sunrise.

"Picked just this morning," said Patterson. "It's this or my husband says I don't do anything with the gardening I do," she joked as she divvied up a batch of rattlesnake green beans of the heirloom variety, some measuring up to seven inches.

"My grandmother always had a garden and my cousins always had a garden. One of our chores would be to go and pick, shell, or snap," she said as she reeled in customers with her sought after produce as well as refurbished fishing poles for fun.

"My dad, who is 90, enjoys fixing and 'Rehabbing' them. I finally talked him out of a few. The thing is, the gears in these are made with metal. These will go for the long haul."

A long haul is what Craig Pietz is in for with the Market, even if he doesn't have a long haul.

"Even though I live in North Carolina, my heart's in Georgia," said Pietz. "We only live 500 feet across the state line so it was easy enough for us to do some pretty flowers this year with some zinnias and begonias, both annuals. The last of perennials for the day sold quickly this morning, my dahlias, which, in my opinion, is one of the prettiest flowers."

Pietz was quick to point out that they grow pesticide-free corn, tomatoes, beans, peas, and canned jams.

"This is the last of my sweet corn and I also have some traditional harvest yellow corn, which has the lower sugar content," he said, going through the reminder of his harvested compilations left after the morning's sales. "We don't spray. If a bug don't eat it, I don't want to eat it either."

Sheleila O'Neal, one of the vice presidents of Master Gardeners of Towns County, proudly explained her history with the world of horticulture.

"I've been gardening since 1970. The first year I started teaching I needed an outlet," said O'Neal. "I started with tomatoes. Then I bought some cucumbers and bought a



tiller. Since then, it's all home-grown. We use what I grow to make the jams and jellies. Every week I'll have a little something different. I've had kale, which I just sold out of, and I try to have squash every week. It might phase out soon, but the grape tomatoes are really coming in now. I can tell you that this Spring was a little off and on with the cold weather, especially with the okra. This year the lima beans took over."

The love patrons had for the Market took over as well. Agriculturists ran low on provisions to take back home to the farm for canning, but one thing can not be diminished at the market was the laughter in front, all purely organic.

"Come and look around," encouraged Crothers. "We have fun."

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**Executive Director of RC&D**

**Frank Riley**

coalition is an ex-officio group providing technical expertise, resources and funds as needed.

The Chatstee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council has been awarded several grants to fund the activities and is administering the grants for these programs. Most of these national grant funds originate with the US Forest Service because the agency believes that it is cheaper to prevent wild fires than to try to put them out and a forest where a fire didn't happen looks a whole lot better than one where one did.

The development team will take the lessons learned here to start new Fire-Adapted Communities in surrounding areas using the FAC, RSG, and FW learning network to build the programs in these at-risk areas. Plans are to spread the programs all across the south and it all started here in Towns County.

Each new community is a unique challenge but the essentials are the same so development in each new community becomes easier. Help us fuel this fire, become the spark and get involved and be Firewise! Your life may depend on it!

For more information on Firewise, Fire Adapted, or Ready-Set-Go! Contact the FAC Coalition at [www.townsfireadapted@gmail.com](http://www.townsfireadapted@gmail.com). NTAug6,210/CA