

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thu: Sunny	77 57
Fri: Clouds	75 57
Sat: Clouds	79 57
Sun: Clouds	81 61
Mon: Cloudy	80 56
Tue: Sunny	78 57
Wed: Sunny	76 55



Upstream Elevation Predicted 09/17/2014	
Lake Chatuge	1,920.67
Lake Nottely	1,768.47
Blue Ridge	1,678.85

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2014-15 Season Theatre Young Harris Schedule

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Class of 1953 REUNION

Sept. 20th 5 PM

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FREE Food Distribution

Mt. Zion Church

Thurs. Sept. 18th

10-noon



Softball

Tues. 9/16 @ Lakeview 4:45 PM

Football

Fri 9/19 vs. Hebron 7:30 PM

TCMS Football

Thurs. 9/18 vs. North Habersham 5:30 PM

Jenkins, Phillips and Logan sweep EMC directors races

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Change. That sums up the election of directors for Blue Ridge Mountain EMC in Union and Towns counties in Georgia, and Clay County in North Carolina.

Former House District 8 State Rep. Charles Jenkins, local radio personality Steven Phillips, and North Carolina Forester Chris Logan each have a seat on the BRMEMC Board of Directors.

Jenkins outlasted Mike Patton and Incumbent Lenny Parks to take the Union County seat on the board of directors. Parks, of Suches, the incumbent, and vice chairman on the EMC board, could only muster 17.6 percent of the 3,657 ballots cast in the election; 42.9 percent voted for Jenkins, of Blairsville, while 37.6 percent voted for Patton, also of Blairsville.

"This election means a lot," Jenkins said. "We have fought for what is right. I believe in doing what is right. There needs to be more trans-

"Members Serving Members"



Three historic figures in the 75-year history of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC - Chris Logan, Charles Jenkins and Steven Phillips. The trio are the first petition candidates elected to the BRMEMC Board.

"And it's supposed to be about the membership," he said. "I believe 3,600 members cast ballots and their voices were heard loud and clear." Phillips bested Incumbent Julie Payne with 69.1 percent of the vote to Payne's 28.1 percent.

"This election meant everything to me," Phillips said. "I think it's time for change and obviously so did the membership. People are upset; they are boiling over about the Board of Directors voting to have the membership pay for a superior health insurance plan for themselves and the EMC attorney."

"That insurance plan needs to be gone, absolutely," Phillips said. "The membership is paying good money for health insurance for the Board and the attorney when half the people in the membership don't have health insurance themselves."

"That is pure arrogance on behalf of the board," Phillips said. "With health insurance involved, you'll never get that board to vote for term limits. It's money in their pockets because health insurance is expensive."

Phillips said the fact that the Board is self-perpetuating, meaning it nominates its own members for director posts, is something else that must change.

"That nominating committee must go," he said. "We (petitioning candidates) had to work our rear ends off to get enough signatures to be in this election. If you're a member of the EMC and you want to run for the Board of Directors, you should be able to do that."

"People shouldn't have to go through an act of Congress to be able to run for the Board of Directors," Phillips said. "The nominating committee wouldn't nominate us to

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EMC Board, Akins get an earful

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Hiawassee - Members gathered at the 75th Annual Meeting of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC and called for the resignation of General Manager Matthew Akins and the 9-member Board of Directors at Anderson Music Hall.

EMC Member Barbara Heimanson, of Blairsville scolded the board of directors. "At the beginning of this meeting we heard that God is good to us," she said. "Well, the EMC is not good to us. All we get from the EMC is excuses for rate increases, excuses about the customer charge, excuses why we don't get capital credits."

"The EMC is raking in over \$850,000 a month just from the customer charge," she said. "We would like to know where it all goes. Probably to pay the interest for that mansion on the hill."



Karen Kelley explains what life has been like since her husband Chris Kelley was demoted after blowing the whistle on Terry Taylor.

"If it wasn't for the North Georgia News, we wouldn't know about Terry Taylor's debt, or that Chris Kelley was demoted for being a whistleblower or

that a 74-year-old woman had her power cut off, and had to pay a \$50 reconnection fee."

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Motorcyclist dies during chase with GSP Trooper in Towns

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Young Harris - A 27-year-old Towns County man died after he t-boned a F-150 Ford pickup in Young Harris while being pursued by the Georgia State Patrol.

The high-speed chase began in the Hiawassee City Limits and traveled through Towns County into Young Harris and the Jacksonville Community, Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton said.

Michael A. Cinquemano, 27, of Hiawassee was pronounced dead at the scene, according to Georgia State Patrol reports.

He was the driver of a 2003 Suzuki motorcycle being chased by Trooper First Class Joshua Hedden, Patrol reports show.

Patrol reports indicate that Cinquemano was driving the motorcycle in an erratic, negligent and reckless manner at the time the pursuit began.

Patrol officials say 40-year-old Derek Dwayne Taylor was the driver of the F-150 that pulled out from a private drive in front of



Cinquemano's motorcycle near Gibby's Furniture Store.

Taylor was charged with driving under the influence, Sheriff Clinton said.

Prior to the crash, the Union County Sheriff's Office was preparing to lay down stop sticks at the Union County line, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

"We were prepared to assist when the crash occurred," Sheriff Mason said.

The fatal crash remains under investigation, Sheriff Clinton said.

"Once all facts are known, the information will be released to the public," Sheriff Clinton said.

Towns County Fire & Rescue gets a gift

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Peggy Abrahams of Clermont has done a remarkable thing for Towns County - she donated the boat of her recently departed husband, Leon "Stubby" Abrahams, in his memory, to the Towns County Fire Department.

"He was a very generous man, and he loved it out here," said Peggy. "Stubby just fell in love with Lake Chatuge."

Stubby purchased the boat, a Sun Tracker Pontoon, in August 2013 from a person who had it docked at Lake Chatuge. He would drive up every other day if he could to enjoy the lake, and got to spend time with his grandchildren on the boat before he passed earlier this year in February.

Peggy and Stubby were married for 39 years. The couple met back in 1974, when Peggy saw him playing the drums in his band, Gerry & Stubby.



The late Capt. Leon "Stubby" Abrahams pilots the Sun Tracker Pontoon that his wife Peggy donated in his memory to Towns County Fire & Rescue last week in Hiawassee.

Stubby was an entrepreneur, with plenty of experience running businesses and being his own boss.

"He had the first Go-Go joints in Atlanta during the period of the flower children in the 1960s," said Peggy.

After they married, the couple owned and operated a

chicken house, which ended up burning to the ground. Stubby's next venture would make him a famous man.

"He became notorious when he opened the Top of Gainesville," said Peggy. "But he wound up winning every-

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Grants help pay for water upgrades

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The City of Hiawassee has recently finished two major water projects that were funded in large part with state and federal aid.

A 250,000 gallon water tank was installed at the Towns County Comprehensive School for fire protection, and the City of Hiawassee Water Treatment Plant received a new intake to ensure better water service.

"We were able to do it, to be quite candid, with a good partnership between the state and federal authorities, because just those two projects cost about \$1.2 million," said Stancil. "We lumped them together for grant request and were able to get \$300,000 free money from Georgia 1, and \$300,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission."



The City of Hiawassee's new water intake. It saves taxpayers' dollars.

Of the remaining \$600,000 for the cost of the projects, Hiawassee was able to get a low interest loan for

\$230,000, and the rest came out of reserves. "We borrowed that from

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BOE set to raise Millage rate for education

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education met for a called board meeting Thursday to discuss the best way of presenting the increased school millage rate at its public hearings in the coming weeks.

The millage rate is set to increase from 6.505 to 8.495, which will generate \$1,432,894 more tax dollars than in 2013.

Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Richard Behrens officially started work Wednesday, Sept. 10, and has been familiarizing himself with the numbers. Dr. Behrens is currently designing a PowerPoint presentation to explain the decision behind increasing the millage rate.

"What the board does - any board - is each year they look at their finances to see where they are," said Dr. Behrens. "What has happened here is they basically have kept the millage rate down for several years."

The Board of Education has kept the millage rate down by supplementing the school budget from a surplus that has lasted several years. A majority of that surplus has been used, so the millage rate must increase to fund the budget.

Examining the numbers, for example, the current budget for fiscal year ending June 30, 2015, is \$12,337,661, but taxes to fund the 2016 budget will not be collected until the end of the calendar year 2015. The school system must therefore rely on a surplus to pay salaries and other expenditures allocated in the General Fund to fill the gap between the end of the 2015 budget in June and when taxes are collected at the end of the year.

"Looking at it, they've done a very good job," said Dr.



Dr. Richard Behrens Behrens. "Melissa Williams had a pretty tight fist with the money. I think the kids got served well, so it didn't hurt the kids."

One area that's in need of greater funding is technology, and most computer systems in the schools are years out of date.

"Today, you have to have technology," said Dr. Behrens. "If the kids don't have the computers and the teachers don't have the support for that, you're going to have some issues. At one point, Towns County was exemplary in that area, but they've fallen behind, and so they're going to have to pick that up, and that's expensive."

It was easier in years past to keep technology up to date when the board had access to SPLOST funds.

But in 2011, the BOE decided not to renew the SPLOST because it had already completed many renovations and additions to the school system, like the soccer, baseball and

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