

Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, January 21, 2015

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Clouds	52 34
Fri: Clouds	48 33
Sat: Clouds	49 31
Sun: Rain	49 34
Mon: Snow	35 21
Tue: Clouds	41 28
Wed: Clouds	48 34



Upstream Elevation Predicted 01/21/2015	
Lake Chatuge	1,913.48
Lake Nottely	1,760.62
Blue Ridge	1,667.56

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Director of the Towns/Union Humane Society Thrift Shop
Mon. Jan 26th
Spaghetti Dinner
Union Community Center

VFW Thrift Store SALE
Stop in for Details
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Brasstown Valley Resort to host Marketplace Jan 24th
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Sheriff Clinton and TCSO will offer a new CLEA class in February
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Basketball
Tues. Jan 20 @ Tallulah Falls 6 PM
Fri. Jan 23 vs. Commerce TBA
Sat. Jan 24 @ Providence 3 PM
WRESTLING
Tues. Jan 20 @ Fannin Co
Fri. Jan 23 vs. Rabun Gap 6 PM

Copeland to become first full-time Chief

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald Staff Writer

Towns County Fire and Rescue Assistant Chief Harold Copeland will become the new fire chief on Feb. 1, the same date current part-time Fire Chief Mitch Floyd will retire.

"I'm humbled and I'm honored to be promoted to this position," said Copeland. "My job is to keep my people safe, keep them equipped as well as possible, and to take care of safety issues for the citizens of this county and the visitors."

Copeland, affectionately known as Big H around the county, will be Towns County's first ever full-time fire chief, and he said he is ready to lead the volunteer fire department.

"I'm very ready," said Copeland. "I've been fighting fires in this county for 30 years. I was the first assistant chief back in 1984. I went back to a volunteer, I went back to a lieutenant, then a captain, then a part-time assistant chief, then the assistant chief full time. In 30 years, I think I've covered the whole gauntlet."

In preparation for taking on this position, Copeland visited some of Floyd's former departments to gain experience from outside sources. He also took classes at the National Fire Academy and attended the International Society of Fire Service Instructors conference in Indianapolis.

And last year, Copeland spent 160 hours becoming a state certified fire investigator. Constant training will be



Towns County's first full-time fire chief, Harold "Big H" Copeland, Harold takes the reins on Feb. 1. Photo/Marty Roberts

a central focus for Copeland moving forward in order to keep his firefighters prepared for any and all situations.

Floyd has been the Towns County interim fire chief for more than seven years. He moved to Towns County in 2007 from Florida, after retiring from fighting fires full time for 34 years. He has served as fire chief four different times in his career.

In retirement here, Floyd began serving on the Towns County Fire Board in an interim capacity. This position on the board was only supposed to be a temporary stint out of retirement from fire services.

However, Floyd ended up applying for the part-time

fire chief position on an interim basis, as then part-time Towns County Fire Chief Doug Mills received a promotion in his full-time position with the Hall County Fire Department. Because of the added responsibilities of this promotion, Mills did not think he would be able to adequately fulfill his duties as Towns County fire chief.

"Doug Mills did an outstanding job in the time that he was here," said Floyd, giving Mills credit for consolidating the various volunteer departments in the county into one organization.

Floyd helped to establish

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New coaches highlight BOE meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald Staff Writer

New was the theme of the first Towns County Board of Education regular meeting of the New Year, held on Monday, Jan. 12.

Cliff Bradshaw and Robert Williams took part in their first official meeting as board members, and Dr. Darren Berrong served as superintendent of Towns County Schools for his first meeting.

And Towns County High School received a couple of new coaches.

Tucker Blackmon, the new English teacher at the high school this school year, was voted on and approved as the new head coach for Lady Indians soccer.

"We had an English opening, and we hired Tucker from, I believe Bradley High School in Tennessee," said Towns County High School Principal Jonathan Gibson. "He'd been there eight or nine years or so, and Tucker also coached soccer."

And initially, Blackmon was hired on strictly as an English teacher, not as a coach.

"I wanted to see him in the classroom and make sure that that was the priority and how he did in there," said Gibson. "And he has handled it like a champ and done a great job in the classroom."

Bradley coached soccer at Bradley Central High School before coming to Towns County, and played soccer in college.



Jonathan Gibson

And Gibson said he could see Blackmon's passion for the sport.

"So, a few weeks ago, I approached him," said Gibson. "I said, what do you think about taking the girls program over? He was very excited about it, and so I sent a recommendation to Dr. Berrong and the board saying that's who I wanted."

Prior to Blackmon becoming the girls soccer coach, Michael Huwe was to helm both the boys and girls programs.

"I hated asking him to do both, but we didn't have anybody else, and he was willing to do that," said Gibson.

"Tucker's a blessing, and he's a soccer guy. He'll do a great job. Coach Blackmon will assist Coach Huwe, and Coach Huwe will assist Blackmon, and they'll work together."

Coach Huwe is also new to the school system this year. He teaches economics, and is the defensive coordinator for the football team. Like Blackmon, Coach Huwe has past experience coaching soccer.

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Abrahamson, Moss now royalty at TCHS

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald Staff Writer

The King and Queen of Towns County High School's 2015 Basketball Homecoming are seniors Trace Moss and Ashley Abrahamson.

The duo were crowned during halftime of the boys' game on Friday, Jan. 16.

"I feel like it's an honor, and I feel surprised, but I appreciate all the votes," said Moss.

And Abrahamson feels the same way.

"It's awesome, and I'm really thankful for everyone who voted for me," said Abrahamson.

Moss thought there was at least a possibility that he might win, but Abrahamson said she thought her chances were "zero."

"I really thought that I wasn't going to win," said Abrahamson.

The two modest seniors were handsomely dressed for the event, and made a good couple that night. As it turns out, they even voted for each other to win.

Abrahamson plans to attend the University of North Georgia to major in pre-dentistry, followed by dental school.

And Moss is excited



Seniors Trace Moss, and Ashley Abrahamson are the 2015 Basketball King and Queen for Towns County High School. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

about his future goal of becoming an editor.

In a moment of reciprocity, Moss' friend and fellow senior Alejandro Lemus-Gomez charged him with a huge hug as he was announced Basketball Homecoming King - Moss did the same to Lemus-Gomez in the fall when Lemus-Gomez was announced as Football Homecoming King.

Eryn Cochran, last

year's Basketball Homecoming Queen, crowned Abrahamson to continue the passing of the torch.

Cochran currently attends Columbus State University, where she is majoring in biology.

Xavier Hogsed and Lacey Abrahamson represented the freshman class on Homecoming.

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Manto leaves a lasting legacy at TCHS

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald Staff Writer

You never really leave a place without leaving a part of yourself behind.

At least, that's how Towns County Elementary School Principal Dr. Sandy Page feels, and Towns County High School senior Mia Manto decided to leave a very special part of herself with the elementary school before she graduates.

For her Senior Project and to the delight of Dr. Page, Manto turned an unused classroom designated for storage at the elementary school into a full-fledged STEM Lab - that's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Students will be able to learn the basics of programming and engineering in the STEM Lab, with Bee-Bots to start and incremental steps in sophistication of programming with the eventual use of WeDo robotics kits and LEGOs. Computer science will be tackled head on, as students will be utilizing multiple programming languages to tell robots what to do.

Manto is a member of FIRST Tech Challenge at the high school, but started out in the middle school with FIRST LEGO League, where she and



Mia Manto, center, teaches Dr. Sandy Page and Jo Ray Van Vliet the magic of LEGOs. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

her robotically inclined cohorts advanced all the way to national competition their first year with the program.

"But we have nothing in elementary school," said Manto. "It was hard to get kids interested in middle school and high school, so if we started the program younger, and they're learning the fundamentals for engineering and robotics and programming, it would hopefully inspire them to go on with technology and engineering."

And now that she's heading off to college, Manto wishes there had been something like her STEM Lab available when she had been in elementary school.

"They're learning things that I had to learn in middle school and high school, and

they will be learning them in elementary school, which is mind blowing to me," said Manto.

To gather inspiration and guidance for her STEM Lab, Manto traveled to Cherokee County to meet with Teresa Bailey. Bailey developed the STEM Lab for Clark Creek Elementary School, and has aided many schools in Cherokee County to create STEM labs.

The beauty of the lab is that it is made up of mostly repurposed items that were available in the school, but that had fallen into disuse. Manto dug up old lessons plans and science kits that hadn't seen use in maybe a decade, and cleaned and organized the entire room

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Towns schools hit home run with state results

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald Staff Writer

CCRPI scores are in, and Towns County Schools performed exceedingly well for the 2013-2014 school year.

The principals of each school presented the scores at the Towns County Board of Education meeting on Monday, Jan. 12.

"I'd like to begin by just kind of explaining what the CCRPI is, just to refresh us on that," said Dr. Sandy Page, principal of Towns County Elementary School. "It's the College and Career Readiness Performance Index, and it's been around now going on three years. And it replaced the AYP, which is the Adequate Yearly Progress, and it's our accountability system in the state of Georgia."

Dr. Page focused on three main parts of the CCRPI that go into the aggregate score for a



Dr. Darren Berrong

school: achievement, progress and achievement gap.

According to the Georgia Department of Education website, the achievement component of a school's CCRPI score measures "absolute student performance on a range of indicators." These indicators vary between school levels.

For example, the achievement portion of the

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Wilkinson to chair of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee

News Special
Towns County Herald

Atlanta - District 50 State Sen. John Wilkinson (R-Toccoa) has been named chair of the Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee for the 2015-2016 legislative term by the Senate Committee on Assignments.

Sen. Wilkinson has served as chairman of the committee since 2013.

"After countless years in the agriculture business, this topic remains near and dear to my heart; for that reason I am continuously grateful to my colleagues for this appointment," said Sen. Wilkinson. "I look forward to legislation that ensures our lands and commodities are sustained so Georgia can continue to lead the industry throughout the country."

The Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee's jurisdiction encompasses agricultural land use, commodities, commissions, fairs and expositions, marketing law, pest management, and pesticides. This committee may also review laws around consumer protection.

Sen. Wilkinson was also selected as the Vice-Chairman of the Education and Youth Committee and will serve as a member of the Appropriations and Natural Resources committees. He is an Ex-Officio to the Rules Committee and was appointed to one of the two seats available on the Committee on Assignments by Lt. Governor Casey Cagle.



Sen. John Wilkinson

"I appreciate Sen. Wilkinson taking on these critically important leadership roles in the Georgia Senate. Like all of us, he is committed to building a better Georgia. I look forward to working closely with Sen. Wilkinson during the upcoming session to move our state to a stronger and more prosperous future," said Lt. Gov. Cagle.

"The Committee on Assignments worked hard to match every senator to positions where they could best serve the people of Georgia," said President Pro Tempore David Shafer (R-Duluth).

"I have great confidence in our new committee leadership team," Shafer said.

Once a piece of legislation is introduced in the Senate,

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