

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thu: Sunny	50 32
Fri: Clouds	56 35
Sat: Sunny	56 40
Sun: Rain	59 53
Mon: Rain	65 45
Tue: Clouds	58 37
Wed: Sunny	46 30



Upstream Elevation Predicted 11/19/2014	
Lake Chatuge	1,916.30
Lake Nottely	1,760.70
Blue Ridge	1,668.62

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Thursday, Nov. 20
10 am - Noon
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Sponsor a Foster Child for Christmas
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Varsity Baseball Fundraiser
Sat. Nov. 22nd
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Shop Small Saturday
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Basketball
TUESDAY
NOVEMBER 18TH
6 & 7:30 PM
@ BANKS COUNTY

It's Dr. Berrong

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education has named Towns County Middle School Principal Dr. Darren Berrong the single finalist for the Towns County Superintendent of Schools position in a called meeting Friday, Nov. 14.

"I'm humbled and I'm honored that they've named me the finalist, and hopefully after 14 days they'll still feel the same way and I can get to work with them," said Dr. Berrong of the board of education and their decision.

The position has been held in interim by former Towns County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Richard Behrens, who took over after Superintendent Melissa Williams decided to take the same position in Rabun County at the start of the school year.

Now that Dr. Berrong has been selected as single finalist, the selection must undergo at least a 14-day period for public comment as required by state law before he can be officially hired, though the board has announced its intention to name Dr. Berrong as superintendent after the 14-day period.

"We had 46 applicants," said Board Member Donna Hedden. "We interviewed a number of those applicants - some we interviewed a second time. And we decided that Darren Berrong was the best person to name as finalist for



Dr. Darren Berrong the job."

Those 46 applicants applied from the state as well as across the nation, and the board developed a profile using input from school employees and members of the community.

"The board also considered each applicant's potential to continue the outstanding work of the recent Superintendent, Melissa Williams, while moving the school system forward in areas of student achievement and financial efficiency," according to a board of education press release.

Dr. Berrong officially applied for the position on Sept. 11.

"My 17 years in education has provided me with unique experiences that have molded my leadership abili-

ties in which qualify me for this position," according to Dr. Berrong's formal letter of application.

Among his leadership attributes are several coaching stints, including a year as Head Boys Basketball Coach for Towns County, in which he led the team to the state tournament for the first time since 1983. He also served as athletic director for the high school while assistant principal of the middle school.

Dr. Berrong spent many years teaching secondary mathematics, and administratively, he has served as assistant principal for both Towns County High School and Towns County Middle School.

He has also spent time abroad, studying foreign education processes in England, Argentina and China.

As principal of the middle school, Dr. Berrong led his students and staff to be named 2012 Georgia School of Excellence for Highest CCRPI score in the congressional district.

Just this year, Towns County Middle School, under the leadership of Dr. Berrong, was named Title I Reward School for both Highest Progress and Highest Achievement on Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests. Towns County Middle School was one of only two schools in the state to be named Title I Reward School for both progress and achievement.

"The Board anticipates

See State, Page 10A

BOE approves 2015 Meeting Schedule; hears about TKES

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County's Board of Education held its monthly meeting in the school auditorium Monday, Nov. 10.

The board approved the 2015 Board of Education Meeting Schedule.

"If you'll look through this schedule, it mirrors the one that we had this year," said Interim Superintendent Dr. Richard Behrens, noting that the schedule takes into account holidays that take place on a Monday.

Next, the board heard from Towns County Elementary School Principal Dr. Sandy Page on the start of a new program.

"The students are excited because we started the WOW program, which is on Wednesdays - we're off on Wednesdays, no homework," said Dr. Page, who credits feedback as part of the reason for implementing the program, as well as Wednesdays typically being church nights and family time.

"The kids are really - grades 3-5 are excited about not having homework. And 21st Century has some special activities that they wanted to do on Wednesday night, just a catchup night."

Dr. Page also noted that the elementary school is "catching up on our TKES," and are "right on track with that."

TKES stands for Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, and is a teacher evaluation program that is just now being rolled out statewide this school year.

This system, TKES, replaces the older system Georgia was using called Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program.

"The new Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) consists of multiple components, including the Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), Surveys of Instructional Practice, and measures of Student Growth and Academic Achievement," according to the Georgia Department of Education website. "The overarching goal of



Dr. Richard Behrens

TKES is to support continuous growth and development of each teacher."

Part of TKES is a mid-year conference with teachers, which are currently being scheduled at the elementary school. Since the system is new, several teachers have gone to Pioneer RESA for special training in the new system, and have come back to the school to share their knowledge.

"I couldn't be more happy with my teachers about TKES," said Dr. Page. "They realize it's for improvement, it's not a 'gotcha.' I'm really happy about it. The platform is working really well - I'm just excited about it."

Middle School Principal Dr. Darren Berrong, soon to be Towns County Schools Superintendent, reported on the start of basketball season and several recent scrimmage games, as well as the opening of wrestling season.

Dr. Berrong, too, touched on TKES.

"As Dr. Page said, TKES evaluations are still in progress," said Dr. Berrong. "Just kind of a reminder of what we're having to do with this new process, I have roughly 20 teachers - before Christmas, I have to have two 10-minute walkthroughs done on each teacher, one 30-minute formal observation done and one mid-year observation done."

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North Mt. Zion hosts Thanksgiving

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The North Mt. Zion Church of God hosted a Thanksgiving luncheon for patrons of its House of Manna Food Ministry on Thursday, Nov. 6, in Hiawassee.

"Today is a pure day of just making a special day for our clients," said Sally Varao, who helped to coordinate the event.

Those who attended the luncheon were treated to turkey and all the fixings: gravy, mashed potatoes, green beans, bread and cranberry sauce. Tea, both sweet and unsweet, cleansed the palate, and everyone looked thankful for their

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30 years and counting at Veterans Park

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Tuesday, Nov. 11, Towns County residents turned out in force for the annual Veterans Day Service at Towns County Veterans Park in Hiawassee.

The event, held in honor of Towns County veterans, also marked a special occasion in and of itself - the 30th anniversary of the park.

"Today we celebrate the 30th anniversary of Towns County Veterans Park," according to the service program. "In 1984, the Board of Education and Bill Kendall, then School Superintendent, and Student Council formed the Towns County Veterans Park. Monument panels are dedicated to 'those who served in defense of our country.' What began in 1984, we continue today to honor the next group of Towns County Veterans on a monument panel."

Ten Towns County veterans who have passed were



represented Tuesday by loved ones, mostly widows, who submitted the names of their veterans to be placed upon a new wall panel at the park.

The 10 veterans whose names were added to the wall were:

Joseph S. Bartley, U.S.

Marine Corps, represented by friend Louie Mitchell; Harold K. Beadle, U.S. Army, represented by his wife, Elizabeth Beadle; Donald R. Beeman, U.S. Navy, represented by his wife, Mary Jo Beeman; William P. Carlisle, USN, rep-

See Veterans, Page 10A

Lee talks Chamber at Council Meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Mayor Barbara Mathis and the Hiawassee City Council met Tuesday, Nov. 4, for their regular monthly meeting.

Candace Lee, president of the Towns County Chamber of Commerce, gave an update on the chamber, which has been quite busy advertising for the city of Hiawassee.

"I'm going to give you an update on what we've done so far in the use of the marketing money from the city for advertising and promotion of the city and downtown," said Lee.

Lee and the chamber of



Mayor Barbara Mathis

commerce have advertised by creating city maps, as well as utilized the North Georgia Farm

Trail, which is a 12-month publication, Points North Magazine out of Atlanta, Smoky Mountain Living Magazine, Southern Living, Healthy Lifestyles, Food Traveler Magazine and Chefs of America.

"This was a feature publication that featured the chefs that have been voted by other chefs as the best chefs in America, and they featured Rabun and Lake Chatuge," said Lee. "So, that included our ad, and it's a big ad on the inside cover of that. That's a three-month publication."

The chamber has also advertised in Georgia Magazine,

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BOE removes interim from Barnhart's title

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Billy Barnhart has been named the official head coach of the Towns County High School Indians Football team.

Coach Barnhart was acting as interim head coach following Blair Harrison's departure at the end of the 2013-2014 school year, but the Towns County Board of Education voted unanimously to remove the interim distinction on Monday, Nov. 10.

"We're excited about being here at Towns County, and we're really happy with the move and with all that's happened so far this year," said Coach Barnhart. "We're excited and just glad that this interim tag was lifted and that I'm the official head coach."

Towns County High School Principal Jonathan Gibson, who also is the athletic director, fully supported Barnhart's appointment as head coach. Coach Barnhart teaches business at the high school.

"I appreciate Mr. Gibson and the board showing that confidence in me and what we've done so far," said Coach Barnhart. "It was a nice gesture on their part to go ahead and do it, and I appreciate it."

The Indians finished the season 2-8, but Coach Barnhart clearly sees potential in his up and coming group of Indians.

"I felt we did some good things in the program," said Coach Barnhart. "And I've heard nothing but positive things all year from the community and from parents, from administration."

Coach Barnhart served as head coach at Whitwell High School in Whitwell, Tenn., from 2011-2013, but he started his coaching career at Union County High School in Lake Butler, Fla.

Following Union County High School, he coached 11 years at different high schools in Georgia.

Coach Barnhart graduated from University Christian



Coach Billy Barnhart

School in Jacksonville, Fla. He received his bachelor's degree from MidAmerica Nazarene University, where he was a four-year letterman and two-time All-Conference Center. Coach Barnhart received his master's degree from Florida State University, where he also served as a volunteer assistant strength and conditioning coach.

He married Paula, his high school sweetheart, and the two have three boys together: Will, age 14; Hunter, age 12; and Seth, age 8.

And Coach Barnhart doesn't want to mince words - he's here to stay.

"I told Mr. Gibson, matter of fact, last spring when I came and interviewed for the assistant job that I wanted to come here and settle down," said Coach Barnhart. "We want to stay here. I want to see my three boys graduate from Towns County High School, and we want to build this program up and get it to be where it's one of the best in the state."

One of the reasons the Barnharts are enjoying Towns County so much is the welcome they've received.

"Everybody's been very welcoming and nice to us, and

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