

Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, November 25, 2015

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Clouds 60 49
 Fri: Clouds 61 51
 Sat: Rain 59 48
 Sun: Rain 53 46
 Mon: Rain 48 41
 Tue: Clouds 44 34
 Wed: Sunny 50 36



Upstream Elevation Predicted 11/05/2015
 Lake Chatuge 1,919.80
 Lake Nottely 1,764.53
 Blue Ridge 1,674.83

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Pet cat tests positive for rabies, vet workers treated

By Shawn Jarrard
 North Georgia News
 Staff Writer

A pet outdoor cat from the Swallows Creek area of Towns County died at Hiwassee Animal Hospital from what was initially considered and later confirmed to be rabies.

The cat was admitted on Wednesday, Nov. 11, and died within 48 hours, according to veterinarian Dr. Kirk Vardeman of the Hiwassee Animal Hospital.

It was determined that the cat had never been vaccinated against rabies, and before succumbing to the virus, the cat bit one of the hospital workers.

Fortunately, due to suspicion of rabies, the worker received treatment before



Dr. Vardeman

results were confirmed.

The cat's remains were sent in for testing in the Georgia Department of Agriculture's state-run labs in Atlanta, and on Wednesday, Nov. 18, the results of the lab tests confirmed rabies.

Since then, a total of 10 workers at Hiwassee Animal Hospital, including Dr. Vardeman, have received

a series of rabies vaccination shots to be on the safe side, and the 10 workers have either finished up treatments or will have finished treatment by the end of the week.

"This just means that rabies is here," said Dr. Vardeman. "We kind of knew it all along, but this is the first known positive case we have had in a domesticated cat or dog."

The Towns County Health Department released two statements earlier this year regarding incidents of rabies, one in June and one for a raccoon that tested positive for rabies back in September, bringing the total number of rabies cases to three in 2015.

But according to Tony See Rabies, Page 10A

Chesnutt/Diffie offer Black Friday ticket special



Joe Diffie

By Shawn Jarrard
 North Georgia News
 Staff Writer

In order to celebrate local shopping and to show appreciation to the community for its support, on Black



Mark Chestnutt

Friday, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds will be selling Buy One, Get One Free tickets for the Saturday, Nov. 28, Mark Chesnutt/Joe Diffie concert.

See Tickets, Page 10A

Newly formed Navy Seabees Island X-3 says 'thank you'



By Todd Forrest
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

Over the weekend, Navy Seabee veterans from Island X-3 (Blairsville) held their inaugural meeting at Daniel's Steakhouse in Hiwassee, where two of its members were surprised to find out that they were being recognized for their commitment and dedication to making Island X-3 a reality.

Commander Richard Hoibraten and Mike Ruback were unaware they were about to receive a special presentation

See Seabees, Page 10A

Mistletoe Market is a homerun for area



By Todd Forrest
 North Georgia News
 Staff Writer

With the Christmas season right around the corner, the 16th annual Mistletoe Market opened over the weekend at North Georgia Technical College in Blairsville with more than a thousand visitors

in attendance for the two-day show that ran Saturday, Nov. 21, and Sunday, Nov. 22.

The Mistletoe Market, presented by the Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild of Hiwassee, is the guild's third and final show of the year, coming on the heels of

See Mistletoe, Page 10A

Cupid Falls, water/sewer rates on agenda for Young Harris

By Mason Mitcham
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

At the Young Harris City Council Meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 3, the council approved a bid from Chandler's Carpentry Etc. of Young Harris to start work on a project at Cupid Falls.

"A couple of years ago, we got a grant from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and part of the grant was to purchase that land next to where we already are. So we were able to do that and finish it, and then there was a little bit of money left, and with that, Department of Natural Resources approved for us to at least start a kind of walkway, a raised wooden walkway," said Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby.

The walkway will extend from the parking lot into the forest and will end in a scenic viewing and sitting area.

"It's going to be Americans with Disabilities

Association accessible, and then there's going to be a viewing and sitting platform out there. And it's going to be big enough for a class, or that size," said Gibby.

After approving the bid, the council held the second reading of the Amendment to the City of Young Harris Water and Sewer Rate Ordinance, which calls for a 5 percent annual increase to both water and sewer rates within the city.

After the reading, Young Harris College President Cathy Cox, who has raised concerns about the water and sewer rates in previous meetings, asked to address the council.

"I found in the documents that it shows that you seem to have numerous customers that are past due on their water bills, and that if an effort was made to collect on those, there doesn't seem to be any calculation of what impact that would have on water rates, for those of us who are paying our water bills on time. I would hope the city



Mayor Andrea Gibby

would make a further effort to collect on past-due bills, to bring those folks into line," Cox said.

See Young Harris, Page 10A

Hiwassee residents weigh in on future of Mayor's Park



By Mason Mitcham
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

Following the special called meeting of the Hiwassee City Council on Tuesday, Nov. 17, Hiwassee City Hall employees held a public hearing to explain its current plans for the new Mayor's Park.

"We kept having people coming by, asking and pressing their support and interest in the park and trying to get individual status reports, and that takes a lot of time, it's inefficient, so why not have a public update on the park?" said City Manager Rick Stancil.

"We want your input into helping to rank the items that we'll be discussing. You can

start with, if the building is the No. 1 feature, then give it a one. If bathrooms are No. 2, then give it a two. If you like trails as No. 1, then you will give them that number," he explained to those assembled.

Stancil and City Engineer Don Baker passed out papers detailing different features of the park, asking those at the meeting to rank each feature according to importance.

"This is the original concept plan used for the Tennessee Valley Authority. It's changed some, but it's really just changed in dimensions. Department of Natural Resources wanted a little bit wider boat ramp area. It's going to have parking. DNR's paying for that," said Baker.

The plan for the space west of the parking area is to have a building pavilion with bathrooms and a paved trail for handicapped access as well as for anyone who wants to use it.

Baker mentioned the later possibility of adding fishing docks with handicap accessibility.

Stancil explained that the park will be built to suit public need.

"We want to get your input on what elements of the park are important to you, the public, because we're basically structuring a design that's appealing to at least three or more groups, and part of our pitch in some of these grant presentations is the idea that the ideal park is more than economic benefit to the merchants surrounding the park. It's more than just a playground for children," he said.

"We want it also to be for our elderly population, because we see the trend that we will be increasing as a retirement destination. So whenever we look at planning, we've always got to keep in mind who our target audience is, and try to build, not just for the future,

See Hiwassee, Page 10A

Footloose a terrific debut for TCHS theater



By Mason Mitcham
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

On Nov. 12 and Nov. 14, the new Towns County Theater Program performed *Footloose*, Towns County High School's first play under Director Jenny Stowers.

Although preparation for the performance had its ups and downs, Stowers said that the play found its strengths mainly

in the students.

"It was good. We have some really talented soloists. Cadence Nichols and Andrew Rogers were our two leads, and then Sarah Bastian did a really good job, as she played the mom, and then Jacob Owenby played the dad and he did a really fantastic job. So I'd say that some of our strengths were our soloists, we had a talent that

See Footloose, Page 9A

Iwo Jima speech immortalized in minutes

By Mason Mitcham
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

On Thursday, Nov. 19, at the regular county meeting, Towns County reaffirmed its commitment to honoring veterans.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall had the Foster Park Veterans Memorial dedication speech by Lt. Col. Ronald Gibson read and therefore memorialized in the Towns County meeting minutes.

Commissioner Kendall has historically been a friend to Towns County Veterans. Gibson's speech returned some of the honor by praising the people of Towns County.

"He just pointed out how patriotic our Towns County people are and how they supported Veterans, all through his speech, so I just wanted Andrea (Anderson) to read that tonight, and we're going to make it reflected in our minutes," he said.

"When we recall our American history, we find that since the first English Pilgrims landed at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, there's never been a generation of men who grew into adulthood without facing war in some form. This year,



Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall

when we send out our Christmas cards, wishing peace on earth and all those good things, it's still a work in progress, it's still somewhere out there in the future," Anderson read from Gibson's speech, which was delivered on Veterans Day to commemorate the new Iwo Jima memorial statue at Foster Park.

"Some of us have served at times and in places where our uniforms were not welcome. I recall the San Francisco

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