

Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, December 16, 2015

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Rain	59 38
Fri: Sunny	45 30
Sat: Sunny	47 31
Sun: Sunny	56 36
Mon: Rain	57 45
Tue: Rain	58 50
Wed: Rain	63 56



Upstream Elevation Predicted 12/16/2015	
Lake Chatuge	1,919.19
Lake Nottely	1,761.41
Blue Ridge	1,670.39

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Kinship Care Program

Thursday, January 14th

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Meals On Wheels Holiday Gift Certificate Program

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Christmas Show at Peacock Performing Arts Center

Dec. 18th

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SPORTS

BASKETBALL

Tues. Dec 15 @ Social Circle

6 & 7:30 PM

Sat Dec. 19 vs. NW Whitfield

4 & 5:30 PM

WRESTLING

Tues. Dec 15

@ Home 5 PM

Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright dies; region mourns

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It is with great sadness that the *Towns County Herald* reports the death of Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright.

Chief Wright was discovered dead in his home on Sunday, Dec. 13.

It is believed that Chief Wright suffered a heart attack, though because he was found unattended, his body has been taken to a medical examiner with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, which is leading the investigation with the Towns County Sheriff's Office acting in a support capacity.

As of press time Monday, the medical examiner with the GBI had not yet determined Chief Wright's cause of death due to a probable backlog of cases.

Chief Wright served the Hiawassee Police Department for more than two decades, and

recently received an award from the City of Hiawassee for his many years of service during the annual Christmas dinner for Hiawassee employees.

"Jimmy was well known for his love of the city, his appreciation of his fellow officers and camaraderie with his coworkers," said Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis. "Jimmy will be missed by all who knew and loved him."

"All city employees would like to express their sympathies to Jimmy's family. While no words can take away the pain of this loss, we stand with the family at this difficult time and we are united in our grief. As mayor, I have ordered that the Hiawassee city flags be flown at half-staff for a week in memory of Jimmy."

Friday, Dec. 18, will be the annual Hiawassee Shop With a Cop, during which time Chief Wright usually gathers his hoard of volunteers and heads to

the Blairsville Walmart to take underprivileged children of the county Christmas shopping.

Shop With a Cop has always been one of Chief Wright's favorite times of the year, because he loved to see the smiles on children's faces after receiving such special treatment.

But they'll have to do it without him this year.

"This year's event will be dedicated to Jimmy's memory," said Mayor Mathis. "No one has worked harder than our Chief during the holiday season to bring joy to homes across Towns County, and he will be remembered in this worthy program."

Hiawassee City Councilwoman Janet Allen has served on the city council for eight years, but she has known Chief Wright much longer than that. The chief used to stop in to the restaurant she and her husband ran in Downtown

Hiawassee 20 years ago.

"We've been very fortunate and blessed to have Jimmy serve," said Allen, who considered Jimmy a personal friend. "He's been extremely faithful, dedicated and hardworking, and he did an excellent job. He was a good man, and the community and the city have lost a tremendous asset."

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton said that he will never forget the chief he worked with for many years in law enforcement, adding that he, too, had the privilege of calling Chief Wright a friend.

"He was a very generous, kind-hearted man," said Sheriff Clinton. "He'd do anything in the world to help somebody, and I know he's going to be greatly missed by the police department, by the community as a whole, and certainly by us at the sheriff's office. We always had a friend in Jimmy Wright."



Chief Jimmy Wright

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family. We will miss him."

Funeral arrangements for the larger-than-life police chief were still pending as of press time Monday. Also, at press time Monday, the Herald learned that longtime Hiawassee Police Officer Arvel Walls had been named Acting Police Chief by Mayor Mathis.

A New ambulance a boon to community EMS

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County EMS just got a nice Christmas present from the county – a new ambulance joined the fleet on Friday, Dec. 11.

The new truck, which replaces a high mileage ambulance more than a decade old, came at a budgeted cost of \$102,000 appropriated by Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall, though with all of the equipment included in the ambulance, the actual value of the vehicle is more than \$250,000.

"We bought the chassis from Jackie Jones Dodge in Hayesville through a government purchasing program," said Joey Floyd, paramedic supervisor with Towns County EMS. "It is a med-unit designed truck. That's what it's designed for. It was built for us – it took us three months just to get the chassis in,



L-R: EMT Jason McNabb, Matthew Tyler of Custom Truck & Body Works, Commissioner Bill Kendall, Paramedic Supervisor Joey Floyd

it was built just for us."

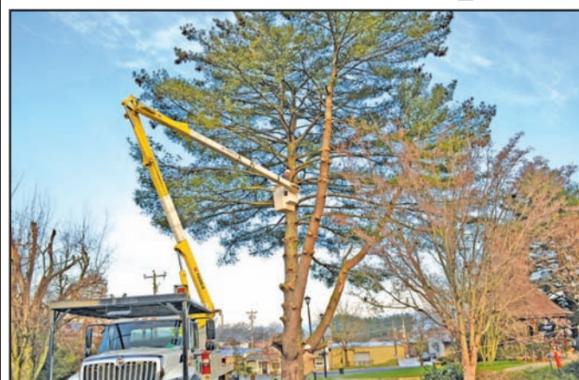
Looking at the vehicle, one wouldn't know that the big box on the back of the truck was recycled and made new from the last decommissioned Towns County ambulance, a

process that saved the county nearly \$60,000 over buying a brand new box.

"Normally, this truck

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Old pine tree removed from Hiawassee Square



By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The City of Hiawassee cut down a large pine tree in the square on Thursday, Dec. 10, citing safety concerns.

City officials were made aware of the fact that the tree might be a safety hazard during the Hiawassee Christmas tree

lighting ceremony on Saturday, Dec. 5.

"When we were out there for the Christmas tree festivities, several people pointed out that you could see the crack in the limbs running down, and they expressed concern over safety. And we got EMC to take a look at it, and they looked

See Tree, Page 10A

Towns County Robotics team wins multiple awards



L-R: Kyle Buel, Connor Kelley, Kaitlyn Crowder, Devin Wheeler, Dr. Connie Hobbs, Troy Hatfield, Taylor Underwood, Miranda Queen, Chad Jones

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Saturday, Nov. 21, the Towns County High School Robotics Team, Dragons and Tiaras, won multiple awards at the Douglas County High School Jungle Rumble.

The team was competing

in a FIRST Tech Challenge, a robotics contest in which teams compete head-to-head using custom-built robots to perform certain tasks.

Mentored by Jo Ray Van Vliet, a volunteer at the school, the Towns County team won the Second Place Inspire Award, the First Place Connect Award, the Second Place Think Award, and

Fifth Place Overall.

"The Inspire Award is presented to the team that is a role model FIRST Tech Challenge team, a gracious competitor, able to communicate their engineering, coding and development experiences and knowledge to other teams,

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Fire department enjoys family time together



By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Fire Department held its annual Christmas party on Monday, Dec. 7, in the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center.

Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland treated those assembled to a slideshow and a

presentation.

First, he announced some of the new gear that the Towns County Fire Corps volunteers had helped to provide the fire department. Chief Copeland said the gear could potentially be much in demand this coming storm season.

"The Fire Corps bought us some chainsaws. Back in the middle of the summer, we

had the windstorm. I can tell you the Road Department was overwhelmed. We cut trees for I don't know how long. Lord willing, we won't have ice. Maybe we won't have any tornadoes. But I can tell you here in a couple of weeks, the weather's about to change. And I'll tell you this. I dream about power lines and trees, I'll tell

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Mountain Regional Library temporarily closed



By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

In preparation for its 2016 renovations, the Mountain Regional Library in Young Harris is moving to its temporary location in the old Blue Ridge Mountain EMC offices just down the street.

Friday, Dec. 12, was the

last day of full service at the home location of Mountain Regional Library, at least until construction is complete next year, and the library's temporary location will remain closed until Jan. 4, where it will reopen that Monday morning in the old EMC building.

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County Library hosts crafts, Christmas story



By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Friday, Dec. 11, McConnell Memorial Baptist Church held a Christmas Craft and Story Event at the Towns County Public Library.

This event is part of McConnell Baptist's ongoing efforts to get involved in the community.

reach out to the community through events, ministering to families and children, and this is just one of them, using the library here, and it's opened up to the whole community.

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