

Ambulance...from Page 1

right here would cost about \$160,000 to build, where we're in the truck for \$102,000," said Floyd. "This truck actually completely replaced a truck. We took a truck completely out of service, took the box off of it, built this truck, and went from there. They completely upgraded everything on it, put all brand new LED lights all the way around it.

"It has no strobes, it's energy efficient type stuff for the lighting, where it doesn't draw too much off the truck itself. We added a 3,000-watt inverter to where it can supply power to anything that we need - IV pumps from the hospital, cardiac monitors, LUCAS Chest Compression Systems, it controls it all."

And residents should feel extra safe knowing this ambulance is traveling Towns County roads, as all of the equipment, and now the vehicle itself, is state-of-the-art, like the other vehicles in Towns County's EMS fleet.

"This makes our fifth running truck," said Floyd. "We have five that are licensed through the state of Georgia that will be operational if need be. We've got 15 full-time EMS workers and six part-time."

One of the many assets on the new truck is a recently acquired ZOLL Cardiac Monitor, which has the capability of linking up with a doctor from the ambulance to monitor the condition of a patient's heart as



Joey Floyd with LUCAS Chest Compression System in new ambulance

they commute to the hospital.

Another tremendous life-saving asset is the LUCAS Chest Compression System, which performs constant and steady compressions on individuals in need of CPR. The LUCAS even suction to the chest, creating better blood flow to the heart by pulling up on the chest between compressions.

Also on board are fluid warmers for keeping fluids closer to body temperature so as not to shock a system with cold, refrigeration units for items that need to stay cold, as well as Laerdal Suction Units to help paramedics adapt to any situation necessary, and much, much more.

All in all, Towns County

ambulances are like little hospitals on wheels, and the county's paramedics save many lives each year thanks to the techniques they are able to employ with up-to-date technology.

"The community needs to know that we've got the best equipment here that money can buy," said Commissioner Kendall. "And I think we've got the best EMTs and paramedics, second to none. People need to know that when they make a call, they're getting the best."

The truck was prepared by Custom Truck & Body Works out of Woodbury, a company that has worked on several Towns County ambulances in the past.

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today. It was rotten in the center. It's rotten to the core," said Hiawassee City Manager Rick Stancil.

"So as old as the tree was, we certainly didn't want it taking out the gazebo, and we certainly were mindful of protecting the public, especially children, and folks gathering on the square. So when everything was over with, we went ahead, and the mayor called the EMC and they were kind enough to come and take a look at it, and then they removed it. So we were positive toward their efforts," he said.

Stancil said that next on the list of priorities would be to replace the tree, which has stood in the square for decades.

"First, the stump will have to be ground down and then it'll have to be smoothed out. That

should be done this week. Then we'll look at what's the proper time and what's the proper tree to go in, and then we'll replace it," he said.

This is not the first time that the City of Hiawassee has taken steps to ensure that the square and people in it are safe from the potential of falling trees or limbs.

"This will be the third pine tree we've had to remove from the square, because they were rotten in the center, but one of the limbs we had to remove two years ago was from this tree. One that actually came down and almost hit the gazebo four years ago, was from a different tree, but it was removed several years ago," he said.

This particular tree has shown signs of age and ruin for some time now.

"We've already had a

situation where a major limb had cracked and fallen several years back. Luckily, it was not during any event. But that put us aware that we have a problem, and then about a year ago we took a major limb off of the same tree in order to try to save it once again. It had cracked and was ready to come down. And when I say limbs, these limbs were the size of small trees, falling from fifteen or twenty feet, so they had some impact," Stancil said.

"So in this case, the entire tree was looking like it was ready to go, since the core was rotted out. If that tree had went, it would have taken most of the square with it. As large as that tree was, it would have cleared the gazebo power lines. It was a major safety concern," he said.

are supposed to do a robot that will cover rough terrain, so they picked treads. And they have to design it and build it and then program it. This year they have a new programming language. They're using Java. They have a new communications system. They're using smartphones. And they use gamepad controllers," said Van Vliet.

"It turned out pretty well. They were not the top team, but they were the fifth team in the ranking, but the top team in the final rounds. The top two teams are the captains, and they get to pick the team they want to compete with them, and they picked these guys because they liked their robot and they had liked working with them," she said.

Next, the team will compete on Jan. 30, 2016, at Clayton State University.

On Jan. 14, the team will host an Open House, in which the public is invited to come and find out more about the robotics and computer programs at Towns County Schools.

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sponsors, their community, and demonstrates success in designing and building a robot that performs well," explained Van Vliet.

The Connect Award is presented to the team that does outreach in order to teach their community about the expanding Science, Technology, Engineering and Math fields, robotics included, and is best able to give back overall to their community.

Towns County's Engineering Notebook took the Second Place Think Award.

"In the Engineering Notebook, the team documents their step-by-step journey through the engineering design process to define the problem to be solved, the requirements for the robot, the design, build and programming for the robot. The notebook also includes the team's business plan and game scoring strategy," explained Van Vliet.

Towns County's success

is all the more inspiring because the team was, according to Van Vliet, not exactly prepared for the competition.

"It was amazing because they weren't planning on going until Dec. 11. That was going to be their original date. We got a call on Tuesday, Nov. 17. You have to have 12 teams for it to be an official competition qualifier. They had 11. So they called and asked if we would go to competition on Saturday. We managed to get a bus driver, and we said 'Yeah, even though we'll probably just have a piece of metal that sits there, we'll be there,'" said Van Vliet.

The challenge involved a task called 'The Mountain,' in which the robots were required to maneuver rough terrain while completing objectives.

"There are two pretty steep angles that they have to climb, and then above that is called the cliff, and they have to do a chin-up. The robot is supposed to pull itself up. So they

Fire Department...from Page 1

you that," he said.

The additions of new thermal imaging cameras will help reveal danger that might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

"Thermal imaging cameras - finding fire behind walls, finding hotspots, finding downed people or finding our own brothers. So this is absolutely the bomb, it's the best. We appreciate it," said Chief Copeland.

One aspect of the fire department's job that some may not realize is its search and rescue capabilities and missions into wilderness to rescue Appalachian Trail hikers.

The fire department got new gear to deal with this eventuality as well in what Chief Copeland described as a "pack mule" of sorts, able to carry water, first aid kits, flashlights, compasses and other gear into rescue situations.

In addition, the Fire Corps provided the fire department with command kits in case of disaster.

"If we have a tornado, if we have an active shooter, if we have any issues where we have to set up a command post, this just helps identify who's in what segment. Anything from logistics to command to water safety officer, the whole nine yards," said Chief Copeland.

Having the most high-tech gear may be exciting,



but gear alone is not enough to make a Fire Department. Chief Copeland's presentation emphasized the "three F's": fun, family, and future.

To Chief Copeland, family is not only the fire department, but also everyone who works to help the fire department - from the Fire Corps to the Red Cross.

"Fun" is just as important.

"Some of the things we see in the field, with the big crash up on the mountain, that's no fun. The first fire we had when I became Fire Chief was a fatality fire. The things we see in car wrecks aren't fun. But we have the ability to shake it off and go about our business. We still try to have fun," said Chief Copeland.

Finally, Chief Copeland talked about the future of the Towns County Fire Department with the Explorer program,

which trains teens to become firefighters.

"They turn into the best recruits we can have. One Thursday out of the month, they get out there and they work their fannies off. And when it comes time for them to graduate, if you will, they're way ahead of the curve. They've learned how to tie their knots. They've learned how to crawl down and get in the dirt," said Chief Copeland.

This has been Chief Copeland's first year as fire chief, and he said that he's looking forward to continuing to grow into the role.

"This has been a huge transition, starting this year, for me. Being a rookie fire chief is no different than you guys being rookie firemen. You get better with age, kind of like wine. Well, I will, too," he said.

Three Dog Night rocked Anderson Music Hall

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Three Dog Night rocked Anderson Music Hall on Saturday, Dec. 12, and it was not the band's first time performing at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

Danny Hutton, founder and member of the group since 1968, explained that even though he has performed in front of hundreds of thousands of people, sometimes smaller venues are the best.

"They're all different, and sometimes it's not about its size. It's about the room and the room's character and who's played in the room. The bones of the place. It's not the size," he said.

"We've played to over half a million people at one time at the Washington Monument in the '80s. So size is not it. And there's just magic venues, there's just places that combine it all," he said.

Although Three Dog Night has historically played a variety of styles during their live sets, ranging from their light, poppy ballads to more rock-oriented songs, tonight was all about its new heavy, funky, bluesy set.

The band played songs such as "Joy to the World," "Mama Told Me (Not to Come)," and "Old Fashioned Love Song."

"What happened is we'd do an album, and half the album would be rock, heavy songs, funky. Then the hits off the album would be the pop, light, the ballads or the soft songs. So now it's heavier, and funkier," explained Hutton.

He said that the change in their live show came from a lineup change, as following the death of vocalist Corey Wells in October, the band brought in David Morgan as a replacement.

"Corey would get bored. He'd want to do a song because



he could play harmonica on it, or a deep cut from an album that no one kind of knew. But the set would go downhill. Some people would get up and go to the bathroom. So I decided to do all hits, and we haven't done that for 24 years. So this is a new set," said Hutton.

The new set is, for Hutton, representative of the seemingly new band that Three Dog Night has become since the addition of Morgan.

"You can do that thing where you're so good doing a set because you know it so well. But your head kind of goes off somewhere else. We've only done four shows with the brand-new unit, and it's like when we get offstage now we're high-fiving. We used to get off and say where's the food," recalled

Hutton. "That's what it all gets down to. You can do all of those tricks in the studio, but they'll come to see you once, but they're not going to come back. You have to have great songs. Otherwise it's a musical exercise. You get five great musicians and singers out there, and if they're not singing anything memorable, and arranged in a good way - if you go to music school, you can say 'wow, they're all great.' But it's not going to hit you emotionally, I don't think," he said.

Hutton insisted Three Dog Night, which has existed since 1968, will continue to tour and record.

"What else would I do? I love it," he said.

Library...from Page 1

temporary location, we will be there as a fully functional library, with probably 85 to 90 percent of our collection available to the public," said Vince Stone, director of the Mountain Regional Library System. "We'll still have Wi-Fi, we'll still have all the public computers and everything else available to the public, and we'll probably be down there eight months while this place is renovated."

The \$1 million renovation comes on the heels of the Towns County Public Library's own renovation, which was completed in 2014 using the same funding formula.

Mountain Regional Library is taking advantage of a \$900,000 grant secured several years ago with a local match of \$100,000 in a voter-approved SPLOST referendum.

As far as its temporary lodgings, the old EMC building will be more than adequate to serve Young Harris residents until the renovated building reopens.

"The groundwork for (using the EMC building) was laid down before I took over, and I just moved it forward," said Stone. "I went down there and met with them, and they remembered making that kind of commitment to us, so I just started up the conversations with the management down there."

"We've signed an official lease that they're giving it to us at no cost. Of course,

we're paying for all utilities and everything while we're there."

Designs have been drawn up for the renovations in Young Harris, and Stone said they plan to release schematics at some point in the near future to give residents a good idea of what's in store for them.

The Mountain Regional Library has already begun advertising for contractor bids, and the process will begin to move forward once a bid is awarded, hopefully by the second week of January.

And not only will the library be renovated - it will also be expanded, to include a "brand new addition for the community room, about a 2,000 square foot addition going forward," said Stone.

"A community room is where you can have board meetings, where you can have programming for children, meetings for the public, you can have classes in there," said Stone. "It'll be a beautiful space with a glass enclosure to look out on the vistas, and it'll have a fireplace in there. It's going to be nice."

Stone and his staff have been looking forward to the renovation for quite some time.

"This building was built in 1978, and it's got lots of problems," said Stone. "It's not efficient, it's not well lit, it's not inviting. I think once we have a new face in here as far as the design and the colors and

the community who were not affiliated with the church.

She said that it was important to minister to children even outside the church.

"Just reaching outside the church walls where children may not be involved in the church with our families at this time. And giving them the opportunity to be ministered to and get involved and learn more about Jesus and the true meaning of Christmas and the holiday season," she said.

Danny Byers, associate pastor at McConnell Baptist, agreed.

"What we want to do as a church, we want to get involved and partner with our community. So we do that in several different ways, and this is just another way we can do that, support and encourage other kids to come to the library, but also provide craft time," he said.

"We have ongoing children's ministries, everything from choir to recreational things, Bible study things, we've got Bible school going on, so there's stuff going on all the time. The biggest reason we want to do stuff like this is to partner with our community

the carpeting and the ceilings, it's going to make a world of difference."

Parking will also be increased from around 30 spaces to 50 spaces, and Wi-Fi capabilities will be enhanced to reach into the parking lot for people who like to park after hours to use the Internet.

Stone and his associates want the public to know that during this moving period, when the library will be closed until it reopens on Jan. 4, the Towns County Public Library in Hiawassee will be able to handle all patrons' needs in the meantime, including checking out and returning books.

"We preset the computers a week ago that anything that's being checked out here is not due back until Jan. 4 right now, so they don't even have to do that if they don't want to," said Casey Hunley, interlibrary loan supervisor at Mountain Regional Library. "They don't pay any fines, they can just wait until we're open. They don't have to fool with the book drops, because those will be moved, too."

The Towns County Public Library in Hiawassee will be closing for Christmas, from Wednesday, Dec. 23, through Sunday, Dec. 27, and will reopen on Monday, Dec. 28. Also, the Towns County Public Library will be closed on Friday, Jan. 1, and will reopen for regular operating hours on Monday, Jan. 4, the same day that Mountain Regional Library will reopen to the public in the EMC building.



and encourage kids to come out and come to the library and give this an opportunity. We have some ladies who are very gifted with crafts, so they can make themselves a craft to hang on the tree," he said.

As far as community involvement, Byers said that the church has also been partnering with the City of Hiawassee on certain events.

"We try to do things like the Christmas parade, and we're working with the mayor, we wanted to partner with them and help them with that. And Halloween on the Square, candy on the square, we like to do stuff like that. We like to partner with things that they're doing to help them succeed. It's just a way of giving out and being visible in the community," he said.