

# Rec Center...from Page 1A

room. That's not to say that the project hasn't faced some obstacles.

Multiple times, the job had to be postponed because of seemingly never-ending rain.

But on the day of the opening, Kendall could only be positive.

"We've had some setbacks and delays," he admitted, but also added that in spite of the hardships, the construction crews worked hard and fast.



The celebration was a festive one on Saturday at the Recreation and Conference Center grand opening. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

# Fire Adaptive...from Page 1A

Ex-officio members include Mike Davis, Fire Manager Officer, U.S. Forest Service Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest, Frank Riley, executive director Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council, Towns County Fire Chief Mitch

Floyd, Eric Mosley, Georgia Forestry Commission Wildfire Mitigation Specialist, Roy Fortenberry, Georgia Forestry Commission Ranger for Towns, Union, and Fannin counties, and Towns County Assistant Fire Chief Harold Copeland.

# Robitics...from Page 1A

and their presentation to the judges.

They also record their community outreach efforts and their programs to educate other students and adults about robotics and technology. Finally, judges watch throughout the day to observe teamwork and "gracious professionalism" - assisting other teams, playing fairly, doing your best to win but never trying to cause problems for other teams.

Each team had five rounds of competition with different alliance partners each time. It was an exciting day with lots of well-designed robots and great matches. The Dragons and Tiaras enjoyed meeting the other teams and competing with them to try to accomplish all the challenges.

During the Awards Ceremonies, the Towns County High School team was thrilled to be awarded with the Judges' Trophy. This is a special award that isn't presented at every competition. It is only awarded if the judges think there is a team that merits it. The award is given if judges find "a team whose unique efforts, performance, and dynamics merit recognition beyond the existing award categories. The team placed second for the Motivate and Connect awards.

Team members of the Tiaras include Mia Manto, Taylor Underwood, Raven Anderson, and Dragons, Devin Wheeler, Kyle Buel, Troy Hatfield, Zach Sewell, Chad Jones, Dakota Anderson, and A. J. Reynolds. The students had a great day.

The game challenges included autonomously sense

the signal from an IR beacon and place a block in a goal basket above the beacon and then find and go up the correct side of a ramp.

During the remote control portion of the round, team's drivers had to maneuver their robots to scoop up as many yellow blocks as possible and put them in baskets on a pendulum.

For end game teams' robots could go to a pole and raise a flag or robots could try to hook on an iron bar over the ramp area and hoist themselves off the floor - basically, do a robot chin up.

In other school news, during National Computer Science Week, the TCHS FTC robotics team and FBLA members and the TCMS FLL robotics team taught coding in classes taught by Dr. Darren King, Judy Rogers and Melissa McConnell and in the 21st Century Program after school to some of the students in grades 2 through 12.

The classes were part of the international Hour of Code project to have 10 million students try coding for an hour. Some students programmed robots to do a "wave" or respond to sound and sonar sensors while others programmed mazes for Angry Birds characters or programmed animated Christmas greeting cards, using Scratch.

The students did very well in the classes. Many asked for more classes so the robotics team members will offer weekly after-school programming classes during February and March.

# Barge...from Page 1A

And he did not. He started working at 9 years old to help pay for food and clothes for himself and others in his family.

All the while, doing the best that he could in school, and after he graduated, he was the first person in his family to go to college.

Barge said that he decided to attend Berry College in Floyd County because "the Berry campus was not too far from home, but not close enough to home that he would be expected to go home every weekend.

"I didn't have anybody to help show me the way through school, or to guide the way, and while attending Berry College, I saw so many kids who were just like me," he said. "The same home lives, dysfunctional families, poor, and they too had no one to guide them, so I decided to go into teaching, so that I could be there for the kids who did not have someone helping them along the way."

During the meeting, Barge was asked about his reasons for deciding to run for governor in 2014.

"The three main reasons I decided to run for governor is education, ethics, and economic development.

As a career educator,

Barge feels strongly that public funding must be returned to Georgia's schools.

"Because there are schools that have earned millions of dollars that they have not received," Barge said.

That's because Barge feels that the current politicians in Georgia's state government, have no intentions of developing or ever having a public school funding agenda.

It infuriates Barge, that school calendars are being cut short, and teachers are having to be furloughed when the Georgia's revenue has increased monthly for the last three years, yet there has been no initiative to distribute any of these revenues to where they are needed for public schools.

In addition, to his distress regarding the public funding of Georgia schools, Barge clearly and confidently declared that his main goals are to adequately fund Georgia schools to ensure the best education possible, ensure that those in charge of state agencies have hands on knowledge equivalent to the position they are heading, and that no one will "ever have to question my ethics." Barge added that he is "pro-life, a Christian, and supportive of traditional family values."

# Excellence...from Page 1A

struggling and encouragement for every student to be successful," TCMS Principal Dr. Darren Berrong said.

TCMS has definitely risen to this occasion because out of the 14 Congressional Districts in Georgia, only two schools from each of those districts was selected for inclusion into the exclusive group of Reward Schools.

Barge addressed the assembly, reminiscing about his prior visit to the school, which was last spring, and at that time he said that he would like to return to this area.

He didn't realize how soon he would be back to the area.

"And it is all due to the hard work and continuous support for the middle school and for the success of the students," Barge said.

This award is an honor when a school receives one distinction, but TCMS received "a tremendous honor" by receiving both distinctions



Dr. Darren Berrong, Superintendent Melissa Williams and State School Superintendent Dr. John Barge celebrate TCMS' School of Excellence Award last week. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

declared Barge.

Not to mention the fact that TCMS received the "highest report card in the 9th Congressional District with a score of 99.4 percent.

"All of you should be exceptionally proud of yourselves and all that you have done,"

Barge said.

Barge encouraged all of the students "to keep pursuing and furthering their educations.

To all of the teachers, Barge expressed his deepest gratitude.

"Thank you for all of the

work that you do, you never know the impact you have, or will have on students, because it is an on-going cycle, and always remember that you have the ability to change the outcome, to change the story of each and every student you teach," Barge said.

# Love Light Tree marks Christmas at CRH

By Azure Welch  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Monday evening, Dec. 9th, the Chatuge Regional Hospital Auxiliary hosted their annual Love Light Program which includes the lighting of the "Love Light Tree.

The Love Light Tree stands out in front of Chatuge Regional Hospital on Main Street.

Prior to lighting the tree outside, the hospital auxiliary hosted a brief ceremony which was followed by some light refreshments which were also provided by the Chatuge Regional Hospital Auxiliary group.

Chatuge Regional Hospital Administrator, Lewis Kelly thanked all of the auxiliary members, and, praised them for "all the hard work that you do for the hospital and for your scholarship efforts.

Kelly wanted to make sure that each and every member of the auxiliary knew how much they were appreciated, and also thanked them for the great volunteer work that they do inside and outside of the hospital.

In addition, to thanking the various hospital volunteers, Kelly took the time to also speak about the board



The Love Light Tree at Chatuge Regional. Photo/Azure Welch

approved, "substantial renovations" that the hospital is expecting "to start after the first of the year," in addition to the "renovations on the geriatric unit which are set to begin next year, around the first of May.

The Love Light tree lighting program "is in memory and/or honor of someone, and it is simply part of the on-going Love Light Program, which allows dedication's throughout

the year."

The Women's Hospital Auxiliary utilizes the funds collected to provide allotments toward scholarship monies, and typically earmarks them for award "to someone seeking a career in the medical field."

The Rev. Ken Fuller, who volunteered to be a speaker during the event, is an interim pastor at the Church of the Nazarene in Blairsville.

Rev. Fuller read the story of the Birth of Christ from the scriptures in the bible, and then he varied his scripture readings, by also reading three of his own original poems, which he has worked on throughout the years.

The first poem he read was entitled "Merry Christmas," and he wrote it in 1979; this poem spoke to the need for God's children to "receive his comfort through the glory of the Lord."

Before the program moved outside to light the tree in front of the hospital, Dr. Robert F. Stahlkuppe, chief of staff at the hospital thanked, "the Rev. Ken Fuller for his inspirational words, the Women's Auxiliary for the hard work and dedication they continually commit to this hospital, and coming from the entire faculty and staff at Chatuge Regional Hospital, we truly appreciate everything you do within this hospital and within the community."

Even though the tree lighting event is over, if anyone would like to donate to the Chatuge Hospital Auxiliary, you can stop by the hospital during the week to personally drop off your donation, or you can mail in your donation to: Chatuge Regional Hospital, PO Box 986, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

# Decreased student numbers costs \$180,000

By Azure Welch  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Schools will lose \$180,000 in funding due to decreased student numbers, Superintendent Melissa Williams told the Towns County Board of Education at its Dec. 9th meeting.

Williams told board members announced that she thought "about waiting until after Christmas" to pass on the following news, but decided that this was something the employees should hear about.

Due to recently released statistics, there is a total loss of 48-50 students, which will result in a loss of \$180,000 in state funding.

However, Towns County Schools will receive an increase of approximately \$50,000 because of the training and experience factor.

On the other hand, "local fair share will cause a \$30,000-\$40,000 reduction" and the teacher retirement and insurance program fees will also increase in the coming year adding to the decrease in school funds.

As Williams so aptly put it, "due to the aforementioned

budget issues, we are constantly struggling to keep the budget balanced, but we are already starting in the "red" next year.

In other business during the BOE meeting in the Towns County Auditorium, the agenda for this meeting, in addition to the minutes from the previous month's meeting were approved unanimously by the board members.

Following the approvals, the topic turned to issues regarding members of the faculty.

The first issue was in regards to the need to hire three additional substitute teachers, the names were read to those present.

These three candidates were unanimously approved by the board for progression to the final, official approval which consists of simple background checks in accordance with state policies.

Besides approving new people for possible job opportunities, the board discussed two current employees, a teacher and a Parapro who have submitted letters of resignation, and one of those resignation letters was accompanied by an official request of the board and its members to relieve this educa-

tor from their originally signed contract of employment.

After some additional information provided by Towns County Schools Superintendent, Melissa Williams and Towns County High School Principal Jonathan Gibson, all agreed that due of the nature of the situation in regards to Kathy Shook, the Business Education teacher at TCHS, it is only fair to approve her request.

Shook has accepted a job offer to teach in Fannin County, which is where she is from, where her son attends school, and where her husband coaches at the school.

After the faculty discussions, Roy Perren provided those in attendance with a brief facility report and federal program update.

Perren announced that "we are trying to get ready" for some of the impending budgetary issues to finalize.

The Elementary School Curriculum report was presented by Aundrea Wilson, and according to Wilson, "after the first of the year, the Elementary School will be starting assessments to determine who may or may not be invited into the

Gifted Program."

Furthermore, Dr. Sandy Page, principal at Towns County Elementary School, provided the Elementary School Report, and discussed the current efforts the Elementary School has been making in regards creating a new schedule for the elementary school, which is time consuming and painstaking.

According to Williams, "it is a real challenge to develop such an extensive schedule in response to the recent changes made to the state guidelines.

"However, by adjusting the schedules to meet requirements, we will cut down on possible missed funding opportunities," Williams said.

In order for schools to obtain needed funding, the superintendent clearly explained that "it is really important that we accurately reflect what is going on with our students and teachers, and this importance transcends to the programming schedules that are due out by the beginning of the year.

Principal Gibson provided the High School Report and reminded all that grades will be due by Jan. 3, 2014, and the actual report card will be sent home on Jan. 8th.

# Barge, Ledford speak to Shakers

Emma Ledford, a 9th grade Towns County High School student led off the weekly Mountain Movers and Shakers meeting last week with a talk "Is our Country still a Christian nation."

The Court ordered removal of Christian and Bible related symbols and values from our Government buildings and Schools has eroded the values established by our Forefathers.

Several examples of this were given such as the removal of the Ten Commandments from court rooms and banning of prayer in schools. Ledford feels that her generation has the ability to turn this trend around and renew the values that our country was built on.

In other business, Dr. John Barge, state school superintendent, has announced his candidacy in the race for Georgia governor. Barge seeks

the Republican nomination for governor and will oppose incumbent Gov. Nathan Deal in the Republican Primary.

Barge has been Georgia's State School Superintendent for nearly three years. His background is in education. He is running for governor because he feels that leadership should be ethical and honest.

He feels Georgians do not have a revenue problem; rather, they have a spending problem.

Also, there is a moral obligation to protect the weakest in our midst and make sure they are taken care of medically.

The Mountain Movers and Shakers is a non partisan group that has been established to address the needs of our Community and to do something about them. Meetings are held each Friday at Mary's Southern Grill in Young Harris, GA at 8 a.m.



Gary Meier, far right, introduces Dr. John Barge and Emma Ledford at the Mountain Movers and Shakers meeting.