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It was truly amazing to see the look of awe and delight on the beaming faces of the little kids as they finally made their way up to their destination, Santa's lap.

It was equally amazing to see the look of joy on the faces of the parents as they watched their child stare into the face of the legendary Jolly Ole Saint Nick.

NTP store manager Noel Wilson said, "It was great see-

ing the children's faces light up when they saw Santa. I am very glad that we are able to give back to the community in this way and that everyone is so supportive."

"I want to thank everyone that came out to join us and helped make our first Breakfast with Santa such a huge success. We are already looking forward to doing this again next year," said Wilson.

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took the position of Cross Country coach.

"I came into it with this goal in mind," said Ledford.

"To win the state title shows the work ethic, perseverance, and the sheer will to win attitude this team has," said Ledford.

"Many days, I stare at the State Championship banner and still can't believe it. We are just a team who wanted a fair chance to fight with the many other talented programs for the title on that day, they won that fight," said Ledford.

"To me, they have had the hearts of champions for many years, but on that day at state competition, they showed me and everyone there, what champions looked like. Against all odds, they have never backed down," bragged Ledford.

Ansley Vardeman finished in first place at the Area and State Competition. She is the Class A Public School Individual State Champion.

Ansley Vardeman finished in a time of 21.34.

Ansley Vardeman's teammates were honored as All -State for being in the Top 10: Caitlin Sheffield came in

third, Sierra Nichols came in fourth, and Taylor Vardeman came in sixth.

"Winning State is an experience that will stay with me, not only through high school, but my life. I am thankful to have the opportunity to experience it with such a close knit team-family," said Ansley Vardeman.

Towns County Superintendent Melissa Williams said, "We are extremely proud of our ladies' Cross Country Team and their Coach, Jeannie Ledford. It is rare for one school system to win a State Championship, but for one our size, it is a most impressive accomplishment. These girls have worked hard and that hard work has paid off."

"We all appreciate the way they represent our county and our school system. We appreciate the dedication and support of their parents," said Williams.

Team members that could not be at the BOE presentation, but were an integral part of this honor include Sierra Nichols, Alana Calhoun, Caitlin Sheffield, Rachel Barnard, Sam Quijada, Karie Albach, and Kristi Hamill.

Seniors...continued from page 1A

state-of-the-art facility.

With the a beautiful view of Lake Chatuge in the background, it was the perfect setting of this festive event.

The tables were beautifully set and the food sampling was extensive, complete with entree, many delicious homemade desserts, and beverages.

Everyone received a goodie bag to take away with them and Betty Pedigo won the lovely poinsettia that had been used as a center piece.

Chaplain Jean Kendall read a very heartwarming poem of "the true meaning of Christmas" and provided the invocation as she spoke softly and blessed the wonderful food that had been placed before them.

This was a joyous occasion for the Mountain Seniors as they had the opportunity to visit with old friends, make new friends, and share a Christmas meal that meant a great deal to this amazing group of county residents who have so many interesting stories to tell of the long and fruitful life they have lived.

These folks are a walking history book and have such great memories of life experiences that today's generation will never know without their combined knowledge being preserved and shared.

Commissioner Bill Kendall was recognized by Stallings "for his efforts in getting

the grant for the senior center and his vision for the new facility."

Stallings asked Commissioner Kendall to share with the group the account of how the Mountain Senior Center went from being a vision to a reality for the seniors of Towns County.

Commissioner Kendall said, "First of all we worked with the Georgia Mountain Fair to get this property back from them. The former commissioner had leased it to them with a 99-year lease. It was slotted for recreational purposes, and I feel like this is recreational."

"I felt like the new senior center was something that Towns County definitely needed and that our seniors certainly deserved," said Commissioner Kendall.

The seniors are proud of their new center as they now have the opportunity to come together for meals, social activities, games, crafts, and many more scheduled activities in this spacious facility.

Stallings challenged the seniors to "reach out to your neighbors during the holiday season and be receptive to somebody reaching to you too."

She also challenged everyone to visit someone in the nursing home or a shut in that might be in need of some holiday cheer.

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phy, NC, Dawson County, and Hokes Bluff, Ala, will be to cement their place as a BOTS Champion.

Action tips off at 10 a.m. Thursday between the Dawson County Lady Tigers and Hokes Bluff, Ala Lady Eagles.

Dawson's boys meet Piedmont, Ala at 11:30 a.m. Gordon Lee and Hayes-

ville, NC will square off at 1 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., while Union County and Polk County, Tenn. get after each other at 4 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

The Lady Indians and Indians will participate in the night cap, looking to end Day One on a positive note as they play host to Murphy, NC at 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

Elvis...continued from page 1A

many community-based events that the Lions sponsor for Towns County area residents.

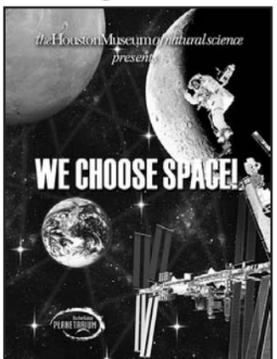
Preparation and planning begins in the early fall as they start making preparations to bring a smile to the faces of children of the county at Christmas.

They serve elementary

school aged children from ages 5-12 years and all members greatly enjoy the chance to do their part in bringing Christmas to the kids.

This is just one of the many ways they strive to live up to the Lions Motto, "We serve."

We Choose Space! coming to Rollins Planetarium



Young Harris College's O. Wayne Rollins Planetarium will present the all-new, full-dome show "We Choose Space!" during January and February. The shows are scheduled for 8 p.m. on the following Friday evenings: Jan. 11, 18, 25, Feb. 8 and 15. Planetarium admission is \$3 for adults, \$2 for students and free with YHC ID.

Open House...continued from page 1A

"I have been with Millard, Inc. for more than 12 years now and this is one of the most memorable projects I have worked on. It has been a pleasure working with the employees of the EMC throughout the entire process. There were numerous challenges to work through and we all worked together as a team to resolve them."

"I can't say enough good things about the architects and engineering team that was assembled for this project," said General Manager Matthew Akins.

"Mr. Robin Millard and his team did an excellent job from designing and planning as well as management of the project from start to finish," said Akins.

BRMEMC brought one of their former employees, Mike Kelley, back out of retirement to oversee the project.

Kelley retired as Director of Operations after 36 years of service.

"Mike was our eyes and ears on the project and he made sure that we got what we paid for," said Akins.

In keeping with the notion of 'going green' the following have been implemented at the new site: geothermal wells for the HVAC system for the Administrative and Operations buildings which include 143 deep vertical wells located under the employee parking lot. Byers Well Drilling installed the geothermal wells during Phase I of the project; a rainwater collection system which involves an underground concrete tank sized to hold at least 38,000 gallons of water and collects rainwater from the Warehouse/Materials Handling building.

The rainwater is used for the irrigation system and for flushing the toilets and urinals in the Administration and Operations building. During dry months, a water well supplies water to the tanks as a back-up.

The BRMEMC has cut the cost of water purchased from the City of Young Harris by up to 50 percent; a daylight harvesting system using clerestory windows provide natural lighting into the open office



The Grand Tour was available last week at BRMEMC facilities. Photo/Libby Shook

areas and auditorium.

When the natural lighting increases, the artificial lighting decreases in order to conserve energy; and finally, a geothermal HVAC system made of 59 water-source heat pumps which provide multiple zones of heating and cooling and are supported by the geothermal wells.

This HVAC system does not require a chiller or a boiler. The system takes advantage of the moderate temperatures underground to improve efficiency and reduce the operational costs of the HVAC system.

Some additional features at the new site include lavatories, toilets, and urinals which are controlled by sensor-operated faucets and flush valves to promote a sanitary environment; a sound masking system has been added to the open office areas which covers up unwanted sounds; an access flooring system with recessed floor slabs and removable floor panels is used in the open office areas and in some of the private offices and provide flexibility for future growth and rearrangement of the cubicles; and last, but certainly not least, is the safety and security systems which allow dispatch to monitor the HVAC system, fire alarm system, access control/security system, emergency generators, fire suppression systems, etc. throughout the site.

The dispatch monitoring center is set up to monitor

inclement weather and can pinpoint power outages as well as issues with broadband services even before a call comes in. When a customer calls in, the overhead computer screens let them know if the issue is isolated or widespread and they know exactly where the problem originated.

According to Akins, the old EMC building was originally constructed in 1955. At that time, they had approximately 7,800 members and only 32 employees. The old building was renovated in 1971 and again in 1995.

"By 1995, we had occupied the old building for 40 years and we had approximately 29,400 members and 125 employees. Today, we have 42,000 members and 195 employees," said Akins.

During the renovation of the old building in 1995, all of the operations and engineering employees were relocated into an old sewing plant building. Initially this was supposed to be a temporary move until a new building was constructed. The construction of the operations and engineering building was postponed and those employees continued to work out of that facility, Akins said.

"In late 2006, early 2007, BRMEMC management, with approval from the Board of Directors, began making plans for a new headquarters facility," said Akins.

"Initially the plan was to construct a new administration building adjacent to the old office building and then renovate the old office building and convert it into an operations and engineering building," said Akins.

Akins said that due to the fact that the BRMEMC did not own enough real estate adjacent to the old building, "the initial conceptual plan involved the construction of a new two or three story administration building and a two-story parking deck."

"We also did not have real estate to build a new larger warehouse facility. Another issue we were facing at the old location was the fact that Brasstown Creek Road split the property in half," said Akins.

"Our pole and transformer lot, fuel station, and truck shed was located on one side of Brasstown Creek Road and the buildings were on the other side of the road. This was a safety concern with the vehicles crossing back and forth across Brasstown Creek Road every day," said Akins.

Akins said that after spending considerable time evaluating all of the options and issues involved with the construction of new buildings at the old location, the BRMEMC management decided to search for a larger tract of property in the Young Harris area.

"We knew that we wanted to keep our headquarters located in Young Harris because it is centrally located in our service territory and the EMC has always called Young Harris home," said Akins.

"I believe we have a new headquarters facility that we can all be proud of," said Akins.

"We are all very proud of the fact that a lot of local laborers, subcontractors, and suppliers were part of our project. BRMEMC committed early in the planning for this project to do everything we could to ensure that locals were given the opportunity to participate and we even included language in the contracts that encouraged local participation and required bidders to list local suppliers and subcontractors that they planned on working with," said Akins.

County Mounties host First Annual Rodeo

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
libby.tcherald@windstream.net

Blairsville - Wayne Dutton Livestock and the County Mounties held their 1st Annual Ranch Rodeo on Saturday, Nov. 24th, at the Union County Saddle Club Arena in Blairsville.

About 75 spectators braved the extremely frigid temperatures to witness this newly formatted event.

Some of the visitors brought portable propane heaters and most had wool blankets over their knees and around their shoulders. The cowboys and cowgirls had to brave the elements as they waited their turns in the bitter cold.

According to County Mountie Publicist Bonny Herman, "The County Mounties provided three mounted volunteers on their well-trained horses to monitor the gate and provide security and visibility for the event."

There were five teams entered and each team had to have one cowgirl to participate in the calf branding, wild horse race, wild cow milking, and "cattle doctoring" to win the \$1,250 jackpot.

The overall first place team consisted of Kristen Miller, Pepper Ledbetter, A.J. Hamilton, and Reid Wood who were sponsored by Wayne Dutton Livestock and the County Mounties. All riders were from Blairsville and Hiawassee.

First place prizes were also awarded to teams who won an event, but not overall. They were: Wayne Dutton Livestock/County Mountie for team doctoring; Lone-some Dove for wild horse riding; Wayne Dutton Livestock for calf branding; and Shooting Creek Ranch Riders for the wild horse race and barrel race.

"Wayne and Samantha Dutton of Wayne Dutton Livestock are well known in the rodeo circuit for putting on rodeos, ranch sorting, team roping, and barrel races at various locations throughout the year as well as providing the cows," said Herman.

The Duttons are based in Blue Ridge and Madison, Georgia.



Top, the winners of the County Mounties first annual Rodeo; bottom, live action at the Rodeo. The County Mounties are a volunteer based association who ride their well-trained horses to provide security, assist in search and rescue, provide community service, and participate in parades.

According to Herman, "Riders go through extensive de-sensitivity training with their horses and must pass various levels of performance tests before being designated as a certified County Mountie."

The County Mounties who helped with parking lot security and ticket sales were Lawrence Beal, Paula Palmer, Nanci Tarrant, Clay Beaver, Carl Miku-

lan, and Henley Corcoran. The concession volunteers were Dotti Carter, Monica Beavers, Kathleen Corcoran, Tracey Nickolson, Mickey Dressel-Tomczak, Carlton

Williams, Nancy Cobb, and Bonny Herman.

For more information on how to participate, contact Director Lawrence Beal at (828) 361-4669.

Special Called Meeting

Towns County will have a special called meeting on Dec. 31, 2012, at 2 p.m. in the Towns County Courthouse for the purpose of adopting the 2013 Budget. The public is invited to attend.