

# Some 1,400 BRAG bike riders to arrive Friday morning

By KIP BURKE  
news editor

Some 1,400 bicycle riders will arrive Friday morning as the 2009 Bicycle Ride Across Georgia (BRAG) comes to Washington for an overnight stay.

Live music and extended shopping hours are planned downtown to welcome the BRAG riders, said Washington-Wilkes Tourism Director Ashley Barnett. "Come downtown Friday night to welcome all of the BRAGers and their families. This is a family-oriented event, that Washington is proud to host as an overnight stop."

Most riders will be spending the night camping at the now-former high school complex, with buses running to help the visitors to town. "We will be shuttling them from the school to downtown, to the B&Bs and hotels, and out to the

Kettle Creek Battleground. All the restaurants and lodging in the city are preparing for a large number of visitors Friday night," she said.

Vendor sites are available at the BRAG campground for church, youth, and civic groups. "If you would like to be a vendor at the school that Friday, you can set up for free," Barnett said. "Just call the Chamber of Commerce at 706-678-2013, and please be set up by 10 a.m. and there until 6 p.m." In 2006, fund-raising vendors like the youth of First Methodist Church sold hot dogs, hamburgers, onion petals, and drinks to the arriving riders and reported that they cleared more than \$1,000.

W-WCHS Principal Steve Echols said volunteers are preparing the Gordon Street high school complex, now being vacated, to prepare for Friday's visit. "We now have lots of empty classrooms for riders to camp



Some 1,400 riders are expected to arrive here Friday morning as the BRAG comes for an overnight stay in Washington.

in Friday night," he said, "and they really prefer air conditioned spaces rather than the gym."

During their 2006 visit, hundreds of riders slept on air mattresses and pads on the high school's gym and

hallway floors. Others slept in tents and motor homes on the school grounds, and all made use of the shower facilities brought in on a semi-trailer parked by the school. Vendors of bike gear, clothes, and other useful items filled the middle school parking area.

The week-long BRAG covers 381 miles at an average of 54 miles a day. The BRAG 2009 route starts next week in Hiawassee and goes through North and Central Georgia to Clarks Hill Lake on the South Carolina border.

As before, motorcycle-mounted Wilkes County EMS units will meet riders at the county line. In 2006, riders commented on the four Wilkes County paramedics who rode the course on their personal motorcycles to be able to reach injured riders quickly. Shawn and Jeff Hackney, Tina and Bruce Bailey each covered a section of the course on their bikes.

"I was so impressed that y'all had your EMTs meet us at the county

line," one rider said. "And on their own motorcycles. That's just unheard of."

"That was really top-flight professionalism on their part," said Dave, a doctor and rider from Atlanta. "None of the big counties thought to take care of us this well, and it means a lot."

Wilkes County deputies, Tignall Police, and Washington Police will provide assistance with traffic. The ride is not a race, so riders will be arriving throughout the morning, and leaving beginning early Saturday morning.

Friday's "Battle of Kettle Creek Ride" will take riders from Elberton to Washington, with visits to the Norman community, Tignall, Rayle and the Kettle Creek Battle site. "You will see the little BRAG markers painted on the route coming in from Elberton. It would be great to have all of our citizens along the route to give them a big warm

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### Tiger athlete shot, treated, released after gunfire at Athens basketball tournament

By SPARKY NEWSOME  
editor

A star Tiger athlete was shot in the foot while attending a basketball camp tournament at Cedar Shoals High School in Athens last Friday night. He was treated and released at an Athens hospital and is now recovering at home. He is expected to make a full recovery.

Teverius "Poodie" Jones, a starter on the Tiger basketball team and the starting quarterback for the football team, is still on crutches and said, "In eight more days I go back to the hospital to get my stitches out and I guess then the doctor will tell me how long my recovery will be."

He and the rest of the Tigers had just beaten Oglethorpe County in the tournament and had gone into an adjoining gymnasium to see the outcome of a game between Athens Academy and Commerce. A Commerce player was injured and the gym was relatively quiet as he was being attended. The Tigers took their seats to wait for the game to finish. They were anxious to see the winner because that team would be their opponent in the championship game.

Tiger Head Coach Don Keiser said he was sitting next to Jones on

the second bleacher, surrounded by the other team members.

"All of a sudden we heard a big boom," Jones recalled, "and a few seconds later I grabbed my leg and told one of my friends that I thought I had been shot. I told him to get my coach."

Keiser said he wasn't quite sure where the shot came from but it might have been from a balcony above where they were sitting. "Everyone jumped and some people headed for the exits," he said. "I jumped up and looked around thinking that there might be more shots. Thirty seconds later I smelled smoke and then Poodie said, 'Coach, my foot is burning.'"

The coach said he could see where the bullet went into Jones' shoe but didn't know the extent of the injury until he took the shoe off and saw that Jones' sock was dripping blood. At that point he said, "Call the police. My player has been shot."

Investigation determined that the shot ricocheted off a metal step in the nearby bleachers before it hit Jones.

"It hit the bleachers and came up and went into the shoe," Jones reported. "If it had been a straight shot, it would have hit the bone and



TEVERRIUS JONES is a regular starter for the W-W Tigers in both football and basketball.

I wouldn't have been able to play sports for the rest of my time." The quarterback was scheduled to attend

a training camp this week and does not think he will have the opportunity to go to another one.

"Coach Keiser and a nurse that was there helped me and then two of my friends helped me into the trainers room," Jones said. After about 20-25 minutes, paramedics arrived, treated Jones for about 20 minutes, and then transported him to St. Mary's Hospital off Baxter Street in Athens.

"The Cedar Shoals coach never asked me if he could do anything or if he could help in any way," Keiser said disappointedly. "In fact, he went ahead and played another game in the other gym and as far as we knew, the shooter could have still been in the building."

Keiser said that he and the rest of his players were detained for about an hour and a half while statements were taken and all their book bags were searched. "It was almost like they were accusing us of something," he said.

"We were finally allowed to leave," Keiser continued, "but I never heard anything from anyone on Cedar Shoals' staff and the coach never said a word to me. I took our players and we all went to St. Mary's to see Poodie."

The investigation is still ongoing and Athens authorities have not reported any arrests at this time. However, it was reported that the gun was recovered at the scene but yielded no fingerprints. No suspects are as yet identified.

Considering that Jones will make a complete recovery, Keiser said, "We were all extremely blessed. I like what Mario [Gresham] said that night, 'Now we know this team is destined for something special.'"

### City council discusses seniors, vets, DDA at regular meeting

By KIP BURKE  
news editor

The Washington City Council discussed a variety of subjects at Monday night's regular meeting, including the Wilkes County Senior Center, an extended outreach to

veterans, and appointments to the Downtown Development Authority.

Continuing a discussion that began at a meeting last week, council members finally learned that the "Senior Center board," that one council member wanted a seat on,

was in fact an advisory council. Maceo Mahoney said that the "senior center board" had not met in a year, and wanted the city to be able to appoint members to this board.

Wilkes County Senior Center Advisory Council member Cindy Bounds pointed out that there was no "board" and that the advisory council had met regularly and reported to the county.

Mayor Willie Burns said that city participation in the senior center governance would be brought up in the upcoming Service Delivery Strategy meetings with the county.

Representing the Department of Veterans Affairs at the Charlie Norwood Veterans Medical Center in Augusta, Marilynn Jones said she was visiting rural counties as part of a new strategy to enroll veterans. "There are 1.5 million veterans in Georgia not using their benefits," she said. "We want to be their primary choice for health care, not a secondary choice."

Mayor Burns made his appointments to the Downtown Development Authority after considering requests for certain minority candidates to be considered. Rejecting those requests, Burns appointed Karen Carter to an unfilled term, and Deborah Rainey and Pam Eaton

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#### Cobb is state's Employee of the Year

Ricky Cobb, Superintendent of the Wilkes Pre-Release Center (right), was awarded the Georgia Department of Corrections Employee of the Year award by GDC Operations, Planning, and Training Division Director Arnold Smith. The statewide award was presented during the Center's fifth annual awards presentation during which local organizations and individuals were also recognized. (More pictures on page 12A)



A GBI bomb squad expert (just left of center) suited up to set off a small charge to disarm the suspected device.

### GBI, FBI, BATF investigating connection between Tignall bomb and an arrested felon

Investigators from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the FBI, and the BATF are continuing to investigate last week's discovery of a suspected bomb in a Tignall neighborhood.

The bomb disposal squad from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation was called to Wilkes County last Wednesday, June 3, after an unrelated search turned up suspected explosive material in the bed of a pickup truck in Tignall.

Gary Nicholson, special agent in-charge of the region office, said, "It was a powerful explosive device, capable of blowing up the pickup truck and damaging other areas, too," he said.

Sheriff Mark Moore said that the discovery was made subsequent to the arrest of convicted drug dealer Tony Harris on a Federal probation warrant. Harris lived at a home on Church Street in Tignall, and while on the property deputies noticed a suspected explosive device, he said. The Wilkes County Sheriff's office contacted the GBI, Tignall Police, Tignall Fire Department, and Washington's Rescue 2 also responded to the scene, and Church Street and several surrounding blocks were blocked to traffic.

By 11:30, a bomb disposal technician had suited up and set off a small charge to disarm the suspected device, and a second technician set off a second to ensure it was safe.

The device was then transported by the GBI for disposal.

The property was thoroughly searched to ensure that no other dangerous material remained on the property in the quiet Tignall neighborhood.

State and federal agents, along with county investigators, were on the scene of the disposal interviewing the owner of the truck Wednesday afternoon. This week, investigators are continuing to look into the connection between Tony Harris and the explosive device, but were not available for comment at press time.

#### County budget to be acted on at meeting set for June 24 at 5

There will be a called meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 24, 2009, for the purpose of considering and acting on the 2010 Wilkes County budget as proposed for the fiscal year of July 1, 2009, through June 30, 2010.

It is expected that the current 2009 budget will be amended at the same meeting.

The proposed 2010 budget may be examined on weekdays at the commissioners office during regular business hours beginning on Friday, June 12.



#### Drama Camp kids ready to put on 'Jungle Book'

Campers from Washington Little Theater's Summer Drama Camp rehearse for their production of "The Jungle Book" set for Friday and Saturday, June 12 and 13 at 7 p.m., and in Saturday and Sunday afternoon matinees at 2 p.m. Make reservations by calling 706-678-9582.