

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY
OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

TCCS Sports

Recently I submitted a letter to this newspaper criticizing the lack of a meaningful feeder system for TCMS and TCHS athletics. That criticism was not directed at the TCMS and TCHS Coaches, whom I regard as capable and said so in that letter, but rather was directed at our community leaders and youth programs. I do not withdraw that criticism but write today to address another (but correctable) community shortcoming: a poor mindset.

Please allow me to share two examples:

The TCHS ladies' crosscountry team finished 18th in the state meet. We all compliment and congratulate them (and their committed coach) on that significant accomplishment and encourage the to keep up the good work. But all we heard from their supporters and both local newspapers was the whiny "They'd have done better had they not had to compete against private schools."

Folks, so what? does the clock as the runners cross the finish line, really know of, or care about, the particular runner's school affiliation?

I attended several youth football games. I often heard after the locals lost, "Well the other team has black players."

Again, so what? Do Peyton Manning, Drew Brees, Bret Favre or Tom Brady care about such matters?

Bottom Line: Reason ("They out played us.") are ok, excuses ("It rained.") are not. Worry about what you can control: always truly give your best and always truly try to improve. And this carries over to everyday life for all of us.

Claudos D. Spears

From the desk of Senator Jim Butterworth

The future of Atlanta's water supply has once again turned the focus to Northeast Georgia. The Governor's Water Contingency Task Force recently viewed a presentation which offered several scenarios to close the 350 million gallon per day (MGD) shortfall. As any Atlantan knows, U.S. District Judge Paul Magnuson has passed down a self-professed "draconian" ruling that Atlanta has no right to draw water from Lake Lanier. While there are no easy answers, when it comes to Northeast Georgia water, the Governor's task force should be more about the "task" and less about the "force."

Water is the life blood of any thriving community. If a populace is to survive and grow, there must be an ample supply of available water. Plans for providing this natural resource must take place decades before industry is recruited or a housing development is envisioned. For Northeast Georgia, that plan does not include losing 150 million gallons of this precious natural resource every day to Atlanta.

Among the concerns associated with the proposals are inter-basin transfers of raw water. One instance seeks 50 MGD from Lake Burton and the other seeks 100 MGD from Lake Hartwell. These transfers of raw water are illegal in Georgia. Their merits have been debated at length over the years, and some requests have been accommodated, the current proposal far exceeds anything considered reasonable by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division.

Lake Burton's inter-basin transfer specifically calls for water to flow through an existing river, the Soque River, which flows into the Chattahoochee River. In order to accommodate Judge Magnuson's ruling, it must then be transferred to a holding reservoir before it actually reaches Lake Lanier. The desperation of this proposal appears to be a quick reaction to the ruling. In digging deeper into the reality of this proposal, it becomes even more difficult to comprehend.

Lake Burton is an energy producing Georgia Power lake. It is used for the same purpose

three more times as it passes through Lakes Seed, Rabun and Tugaloo. If 50 MGD is drawn out of Lake Burton for drinking water, it can't be used to generate electricity. The decision does not ultimately lie with convincing Georgia Power that the water would be better used for drinking water. The ultimate decision lies with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). While serving as Chairman of the Habersham County Board of Commissioners, I was personally told that this process would take years to get approval essentially because the lake was never intended to be a source for drinking water. Sound familiar?

The last time Northeast Georgia counties tried to gain access to water from the Savannah River basin, the South Carolina legislature got involved. It seems they also envision themselves as part owner of that water which creates yet another dilemma. We'll add another state to the list that will take issue over "Atlanta's water."

Where do we go from here? In reality it's anyone's guess. The Governor's office has a multi-pronged plan of attack executed on 4 fronts. Litigation is one front that should be pursued aggressively. At the risk of overstating the obvious, the Judge's ruling is ridiculous.

Those of us in Northeast Georgia are not asking for a seat at that table. It's actually quite the opposite. We apparently are the table and someone is trying to add a few more chairs. Georgia, along with the Governor's Water Contingency Task Force, must seek to resolve Atlanta's water problems collectively. In these trying times we can't afford to have a divided Georgia over this valuable resource. We don't want our solution to Atlanta's water problems to create problems for future generations of Georgians.

Sen. Jim Butterworth represents the 50th Senate District which includes Towns, Rabun, Habersham, Stephens, Banks, Franklin, and Hart counties along with a portion of White County. He can be reached by phone at 404.463.5257 or by email at jim.butterworth@senate.ga.gov.

Extension Tips



by
Robert Brewer

Christmas trees Safety tips

When decorating Christmas trees, always use safe tree lights. (Some lights are designed only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.) Larger tree lights should also have some type of reflector rather than a bare bulb and all light should be listed by a testing laboratory.

Never use electric lights on a metal tree. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use tree lights. Any string of lights with worn, frayed or broken cords or loose bulb connections should not be used.

Always unplug Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to sleep. Never use lit candles to decorate a tree, and place them well away

from tree branches. Try to keep live trees as moist as possible by giving them plenty of water daily, do not purchase a tree that is dry or dropping needles.

Choose a sturdy tree stand designed not to tip over. When purchasing an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-retardant. Children are fascinated with Christmas trees. Keep a watchful eye on them when around the tree and do not let them play with the wiring or lights.

Store matches and lighters up high, out of the reach of children, preferably in a locked cabinet. Make sure the tree is at least three feet (one meter) away from any heat source and try to position it near an outlet so that cords are not running long distances do not place the tree where it may block exits.

Safely dispose of the tree when it begins dropping needles. Dried-out trees are highly flammable and should not be left in a house or garage, or placed against a house.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Towns County Extension Office Robert Brewer and Marlene Pendergrass.

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

There are among us gentle souls whose generous and loving nature carries with it a spirit of celebration throughout the year. For the rest of us there is Christmas. This is a time when, perhaps more than any other time during the year, the best of our ideals become action. This is the season when we take the extra time and go the extra mile for someone else.

It has been my good fortune in life to have been able to spend time and many holidays with old folks as I, in spite of my best efforts, slowly and inexorably become one of them. I have seen those from whom time has taken career, friends, family and good health, but among that number are some who can still find a great deal of joy in life. It seems that the people who are best able to do so are those who have been able to preserve their best memories like pearls on a string. When they relive those memories the twinkle in their eyes, the laughter and the vigor that returns to them suggests that time travel is indeed possible, if but for a moment.

I was visiting my father recently in my childhood home and while down in the basement going through some boxes I came across Christmas decorations which had been painstakingly labeled and packed away for the next year. Like many families we have certain ornaments and keepsakes that we treasure over the years and each special one is rich with layer upon layer of memories of times past. Every box I opened was a time capsule as the memories came flooding back. These

ornaments were last used two Christmases ago in the year that my mother was stricken with the illness that would eventually take her life. I remember that season very well, though at the time we had no idea that it would be the last Christmas our little family would all be together on this earth.

We never really know when those "lasts" will come; the last family vacation, the last Thanksgiving turkey at home, and the last wave goodbye as we pull out of the driveway to return to our busy lives. On this morning 68 years ago, 2345 sailors, marines and soldiers breathed their last breath at Pearl Harbor, and as we once again send our children, our fathers and our mothers off to war, many last goodbyes have again been spoken.

Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, whatever our favorite event is during this season, the holidays mark the passage of time in broad strokes. They reveal another year of change in the faces around the table more personally than any calendar. The empty chairs whisper a sweet and poignant reminder that time is precious, that we should seize the day but hold it gently, for no matter how we try to cling to it, when night comes all too soon it will slip from our grasp as we, in our own turn, become someone else's Christmas memory.

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Questions and Answers

from the desk of
Commissioner Bill Kendall



Citizens must apply by April 1, 2010 for new additional homestead exemption

I requested that a referendum question be put on the Nov. 3, 2009 election ballot to allow Towns County voters to approve or reject my request that Towns County homeowners receive a \$10,000 exemption on the property tax they pay on their homes. Citizens voted by an unprecedented 97.2% yes.

In order to get this increased exemption on their tax bill citizens must apply by signing. I am attempting to get this word out through the print media, civic and homeowner associations and by word of mouth. Citizens are signing up in large numbers; still I am concerned that some who are eligible will fail, for various reasons, to apply to get the tax break to which they are entitled. I am asking that you tell your friends and neighbors of the legal requirement to apply by signing in order to receive this tax break. Below are some questions citizens are asking.

Q. If a person has already applied and is receiving the \$2,000 Homestead

Exemption; do they have to sign for the additional \$8,000 approved by the voters?

A. Yes – You must apply and sign for the additional \$8,000. I attempted to have the legislation written so that those already receiving the \$2,000 did not have to re-apply, however; due to legal requirements, citizens must apply for the increased homestead exemption.

Q. My spouse, a child and I are on the deed to our home. Do we all have to come in and apply for the additional homestead exemption?

A. No – Only one of the persons on the deed can apply to receive the entire \$10,000 homestead exemption.

Q. When is the deadline to apply for the additional homestead exemption for 2010 tax bill?

A. April 1, 2010.

Q. If a homeowner does not apply by April 1, 2010 can they apply later?

A. Yes – However, they would not receive the exemption until their 2011 tax bill.

Q. Where do we go to sign?

A. The Tax Commissioner's office at the Courthouse Annex across the street from the main Courthouse.

GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE EMAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@brmemc.net. Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc.

Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*

Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

Towns County Water Board Meeting 3rd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the TC Water Office Building.
Towns County AARP Chapter 1859 meets the second Thursday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 2 p.m. Luncheons are held at 1 p.m.
Towns County Democratic Party meets at 6:30 every 2nd Thursday of the month at Crossroads Restaurant. Meeting begins at 6. Please call Julie Miller, (706) 896-6076.
Towns County Republican Party meets the 1st Tuesday of each month from 5 p.m.-6 p.m. Dinner at Daniels Steak House, 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. meeting, 896-7281.
Towns County Planning Commission is held the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Courthouse.
Towns County Commissioners meeting is the 3rd Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in the courthouse.
School Board Meeting, 2nd Monday each month at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.
Hiawassee City Council 1st Tuesday of month 4 p.m., at City Hall.
Young Harris City Council, 1st Tuesday of month at 7 p.m., Young Harris City Hall.
The Hiawassee River Valley Kennel Club meetings are held at 7 p.m. the 1st Monday of each month at Brother's Restaurant on Hwy 64 in Murphy, NC. Call President Kit Miracle: 706 492 5253 or Peggy Moorman: 828 835 1082.
The Unicoy Masonic Lodge



Community Calendar

#259 meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m.
Board of Voter Registrars meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 4:30 p.m., Courthouse.
Towns County Board of Elections holds its monthly meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 4 p.m. at the Elections Office (Old Rock Jail).
Towns County Historical Society meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 5 p.m. Annual dues \$15, PO Box 932, Hiawassee, GA 706-896-1060, www.townshistory.org
Bridge Players intermediate level meets at 12:45 p.m. on Mondays & Fridays at the Towns County Health Dept. Call Eden at 706-896-6921.
Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild, Inc (MRACG) meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at ArtWorks Artisan Centre, located at 308 Big Sky Drive (behind the Holiday Inn), Hiawassee. Refreshments at 6 p.m. & the meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Contact us by calling 706-896-0932, mtngarts-craftsguild.org. mtngarts-craftsguild@hotmail.com.
VFW Post #7807 Fish Fry will be 2nd and 4th Friday of the month, 4:30-7 p.m., \$9 a plate, all you can eat.
Mountain Computer User Group meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the Goolsby Center at YHC. Q & A at 6 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m.
FPL Retirees Breakfast will meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Hotel in the Wall

Restaurant on the square in Blairsville at 9 a.m.
Chattahoochee-Nantahala Chapter, Trout Unlimited meets 2nd Thursday of each month at Cadence Bank in Blairsville. 5 p.m. Fly Tying - 7 p.m. General Meeting. Everyone welcome. www.ngatu692.com.
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) meets the 3rd Monday of each month at various area restaurants. For information call John Quinlan at 706-896-2430 or visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridge-mountains.
Alcoholics Anonymous: 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.
Mothers of Preschoolers meets on the third Thursday of each month at First Baptist Church of Blairsville from 6 - 8 p.m. Call the church office at 706-745-2469 for more information.
Chatuge Regional Hospital Auxiliary on the 3rd Monday of each month, except the months of July, October and December, in the hospital cafeteria at 1:30 p.m.
Old Fashioned Square Dance Lessons each Mon. in Hiawassee, GA, 6 p.m. at the Senior Center (2 blocks south of the town square, beside the Courthouse) Hiawassee, GA 706-896-1060
Mountain Magic Table Tennis Club meets every Monday at 6 p.m. at Pine Log Baptist Church in Brasstown, NC on Pine Log Rd. (in reception hall.) For more info call Lee at 828-389-0924

Towns County Herald

Dedicated to the promotion of Towns County

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