

# Towns County Herald

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## Veterans, residents gather for annual Iwo Jima commemoration



Iwo Jima Veteran Bud Johnson sitting with Cindy Coker, daughter of late World War II Veteran Jim Coker, in the Feb. 17 commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Chad Stack  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Patriot residents gathered at Foster Park in Towns County on Monday, Feb. 17, to honor

the 6,821 Americans who lost their lives during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

Now in its 10th year, the annual event coordinated by local veterans' organizations marked the 75th anniversary

of the battle, which took place between Feb. 19 and March 26 in 1945.

Local Iwo Jima Veteran Clarence "Bud" Johnson of the U.S. Navy, along with other veterans and residents from Towns and surrounding counties, attended the ceremony at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center.

The Rec Center is home to a one-of-a-kind Iwo Jima Memorial commemorating the iconic flag-raising by U.S. Marines atop Mount Suribachi.

Wayne Roshaven of the U.S. Marine Corps League Unico Detachment #783 called the meeting to order, followed by the posting of the colors by fellow league members Walt Scott and Sal Laratta, who then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

U.S. Navy Veteran Richard Hoibraten, who as a Seabee is a life member of the Marine Corps League, called for a moment of silence to honor America's war dead at

Iwo Jima, after which he led the opening prayer.

During the ceremony that Monday, Roshaven acknowledged all veterans, local veterans' organizations, Iwo Jima survivors and all first responders, law enforcement officers and guests of dignitaries.

Marine Veteran Ash Todd and U.S. Air Force Veteran Brandy Creel served as honored guest speakers for the ceremony.

Todd recited a poem he wrote while stationed in Washington, D.C. titled "It's Not Just an Iron Monument," inspired by the Iwo Jima monument in the nation's capital, and he asked those gathered to pray for troops who have given and are willing to give their lives for their country.

"Please pray for our troops that live in murderous places around the world," Todd said.

Creel delivered a story



Walt Scott and Sal Laratta of the U.S. Marine Corps League Unico Detachment #783 posted the colors in the Feb. 17 Iwo Jima ceremony. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

titled "A Final Tribute to Gallant Marine," about a U.S. Marine named Carl Strong who died March 14, 1945, in the Battle of Iwo Jima.

"Strong of Bulan, Kentucky, died fighting for Iwo Jima along with nearly

7,000 other Marines," Creel said, adding that, after three years, Strong and his fellow Marines were brought back to the United States to be buried at home.

Many years later, after  
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## Students to fight cancer with Fishing Tournament senior project

By Chad Stack  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County High School seniors Chase Reece and Sophia Shook are organizing a Lake Chatuge Fishing Tournament on Saturday, March 28, to benefit CURE Childhood Cancer.

The two students are hosting the tournament fundraiser as their joint senior project, which is a graduation requirement at Towns County High.

Fortunately, students can choose to do their projects by themselves or with others, with the added option of undertaking a community-involved project or one that is in line with their career field of choice.

Reece and Shook both have plans to attend college and pursue degrees in the medical field, and as proud Towns County students, they wanted their senior project to include the



TCHS seniors Sophia Shook and Chase Reece are hosting an upcoming fishing tournament fundraiser for their joint senior project. Photo by Chad Stack

community in helping them benefit a medically impactful charity.

"Both of us are passionate about fish, so we wanted to do something that would

bring the community together to support a good cause," Reece said. "Some of the specific things CURE does is, they provide funding for cancer

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## County, cities plan SPLOST projects ahead of May vote

By Chad Stack  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The upcoming May 19 General Primary Election ballot will feature a referendum calling for a SPLOST, which will be used to fund various "capital outlay projects" for the county and her cities should voters approve the levy.

A SPLOST is a 1-cent optional sales tax collected countywide for the purpose of paying for "major projects which are of a permanent, long-lived nature, such as land and structures," according to the Association County Commissioners of Georgia.

SPLOST funds can also be used, without limitation, on "roads, streets, bridges, police cars, fire trucks, ambulances, garbage trucks and other major equipment," though they can't be used on basic maintenance and operation of local governments.



As proposed by Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, much of the SPLOST would go toward financing renovations at the Towns County Courthouse, which dates to 1964.

Voter approval of the

\$12 million SPLOST would pave the way for the county to issue a "general obligation bond" not to exceed \$8 million, which would be used to start

See SPLOST, Page 6A

## Bradshaw talks Junior Board, SPLOST renovations and census



Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw welcomed the Junior Board of Government Officials, composed of local students, to his Feb. 18 county meeting. Photo by Chad Stack

By Chad Stack  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Back in 2016, when Cliff Bradshaw was running to be the next Towns County sole commissioner, his youngest son Trenton asked him what a commissioner did.

It was a good question,

one that got Bradshaw thinking about the many kids who probably didn't know the varied roles and responsibilities of elected officials and local government.

So, once elected, he hit the ground running, contacting Towns County High, and later Eastgate Life Academy and

the parents of homeschooled children, to find students who would be interested in forming a Junior Board of Government Officials.

It's been a few years now, and Junior Board participation is still going strong, as showcased by Bradshaw's

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## Retired Fire Capt. Sellers presents Fire Department history

By Chad Stack  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County's first fire chief, David Sellers, presented a program on the history of the Fire Department in the Towns County Historical Society's February meeting inside the Old Rec Gym.

Sellers is a longtime Young Harris resident who owns Appalachian Gallery on Thomas Town Road, and many people know him from his longtime role as Towns County fire captain, a position from which he retired three years ago.

And with 37 years of service as a first responder in the county, he was more than prepared to offer some historical insight in the Feb. 10 meeting after being invited to do so by Historical Society Vice President Jerry Taylor.

Local fire department history dates to the mid-20th



David Sellers

Photo by Chad Stack

century, Sellers said, when a group of local men formed the county's first fire department in Hiawassee using an old civil defense firetruck.

Unfortunately, because they didn't have any money, their

equipment fell into disrepair, and several of the men lost interest in fighting fires.

Years later, in 1979, there was a massive fire that destroyed a Young Harris home, prompting

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## Early voting starts Monday, continues through Friday, March 20



By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Three weeks of early voting for the March 24 Presidential Preference Primary will begin next week starting Monday.

Every weekday between

March 2 and March 20, registered Towns County voters will be able to cast their votes at the Towns County Board of Elections & Registration Office next to the courthouse from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., even during lunchtime.

Voters who find themselves too busy to vote during the scheduled weekdays will be able to take advantage of one weekend day of early in-person voting on Saturday, March 14, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., also during lunchtime.

As this is a primary, voters will need to declare a political party to receive a ballot, and

they will be able to declare a different political party when voting in the May 19 General Primary Election.

Election Day for the Presidential Preference Primary, in which voters will be selecting a presidential candidate to lead their party of choice, will be on Tuesday, March 24, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. That day, voters should report to one of the three pre-assigned Towns County precincts.

Registered voters who will be at least 18 years of age by Election Day will be eligible

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## Qualifying begins next week, runs Monday through Friday

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Qualifying for public office candidacy to participate in the 2020 elections begins next week, running Monday, March 2, through Friday, March 6.

After qualifying, candidates for each party will square off in a May 19 General Primary Election, and, if necessary, in a July 21 Primary Runoff Election. The General Primary victor from each political party will proceed to the Nov. 3 General Election to face opposing party candidates.

A Nonpartisan General Election will run concurrently with the General Primary on May 19, and winners there will be sworn into office in 2020.

Republican Party candidates running for county office will need to submit their completed candidacy paperwork to Towns County Republican Party representatives, who will be stationed in the upstairs Jury Room of the Towns County Courthouse between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. next Monday through Thursday, and from 9 a.m. to noon on Friday, March 6.

Democratic, Independent and Nonpartisan candidates

for county office will file their paperwork at the Towns County Board of Elections & Registration office next to the courthouse starting at 9 a.m. next Monday, with qualifying continuing through the week during business hours and ending at noon on Friday. The board office will close each day for lunch.

All paperwork must be notarized, and fees should be paid when filing for candidacy.

Qualifying fees for the following elected county offices were set by Towns County Sole

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**BASEBALL**  
Feb 26 @ Greene Co 4:30

**SOCCER**  
Feb 28 vs. Rabun 5:30 and 7:30

**North GA Honor Guard Information**  
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**March 24th**  
**VOTE**  
Sample Ballots  
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**New Regional Library Director Named**  
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