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Mathis named full-time EMA director in county meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw hit the ground running in his Feb. 21 county meeting, which featured both a full house and a full agenda.

For years, the monthly county meetings have taken place on the third Thursday of each month, but in Bradshaw's first meeting as commissioner in January, he changed the regular meeting day to the third Tuesday of every month for administrative reasons.

And apparently, everyone got the memo.

Dozens of county residents packed into the Towns County Courthouse that Tuesday, some just to attend as they usually do, others to see the execution of specific agenda items.

After calling the meeting to order, Bradshaw delivered his

Commissioner's Report to kick off the meeting.

"I just want to let you know that we have been working a lot of hours," said Bradshaw. "We're doing a lot of work, and everything is going very smooth. The financial state of the county is very good."

"Our financial director, Andrea Anderson, we're working together. Every week, we sit down and look at what we've spent, where we're at, and we look at the budget to make sure we stay in budget. I want to assure everybody that that's one of our top priorities, that we're making sure that we're spending your tax money as wisely as we possibly can."

Bradshaw announced a couple of big personnel changes in the meeting.

Up to last week, Rickey Mathis had been director of Towns County EMS since 1984, as well as part-time EMA director.

"When this came about that I decided to go to Commissioner Bradshaw and say, 'Commissioner Bradshaw, it's time that we look at a full-time EMA director,' it wasn't just based upon the workload," said Mathis. "It was based on a financial decision as well."

For years, the state has reimbursed the county \$5,000 a year for having a part-time EMA director, said Mathis.

But last year, the state made a change to that reimbursement level for counties with full-time EMA directors, bumping that level of reimbursement up to \$17,000 a year.

In order to take advantage of this increase in reimbursement, as well as embrace the need for a full-time EMA director within the county, Mathis approached Bradshaw about passing on his duties as EMS director.

Both he and Bradshaw
See Mathis, Page Back of A



Rickey Mathis was honored in the Feb. 21 Towns County Commission Meeting, for his 40 years of service to Towns County EMS. L-R: Greg Taylor; Barbara Mathis, mother; Hannah Gladfelter, daughter; Robin Mathis, wife; and speaking, Rickey Mathis.

Life Force visits to talk air medical services

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Life Force Air Medical representative Jimmy Morse paid a visit to Hiwassee City Hall to hold an open forum for residents on the Friday, Feb. 24.

The AirMedCare Network is the largest alliance of air ambulance providers in the country. Life Force is an air ambulance provider based in Chattanooga, Tennessee, at Erlanger Medical Center.

It began in the Midwest more than 30 years ago, and now covers 32 states in the continental U.S.

The city voted to approve AirMedCare coverage in 2015, if anyone with or without health insurance in the city needs to be taken to a hospital by helicopter, they are



Jimmy Morse, Life Force Membership Sales Manager covered free of charge.

Any patient who is under the AirMedCare program within the city limits will not receive a bill for the services

See LifeForce, Page 6A

Chief Copeland educates public on fire department

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland shared the ins and outs of his career and the ropes of the Towns County Fire and Rescue Department with residents at the Mountain Viewers and Shakers meeting at Mary's Southern Grill on Friday, Feb. 24.

Chief Copeland moved to Towns County in the mid '80s after working as a UPS delivery driver in the area for nearly 10 years. At the time, he had no previous experience working as a fireman.

When Chief Copeland made his way to the area, the only state certified fire department was in Young Harris, which just so happened to be near a family business that he worked at. Because of this,



Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland

Chief Copeland felt this was no coincidence.

"I felt like God brought me to this valley," said Chief Copeland. "Back in those days, it was a way to give back to the community. So, when I joined the fire department, we

served the entire county from Young Hill."

The rest, as they say, is history. Chief Copeland has been giving back to Towns County by way of firefighting for 33 years, first as a volunteer fireman, then an assistant fire chief, and finally as fire chief of Towns County.

Chief Copeland went on to explain the various divisions of the fire department, the contributions of each department and how those who work for each station are compensated for their time and efforts.

"We run four full-time people on Monday through Friday," said Chief Copeland. "We're a paid on-call department. All of our firefighters make money per hour, and they all receive W-2s."

Within the fire department, there is also the



Carolina Owens, a 10th-grader from Eastgate Life Academy

water rescue department. The water rescue department is comprised of both firemen and officers from the Towns County Sheriff's Office who patrol Lake Chatuge and assist

See Copeland, Page 6A

HRWC holds annual gala, honors Towns leaders

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Watershed preservation enthusiasts gathered on Thursday, Feb. 23, at the Brasstown Valley Resort and Spa for the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition's 9th Annual Watershed Gala.

This year, the coalition honored former Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall and Hiwassee Mayor Barbara Mathis.

Guests were treated to a three-course meal, catered by the resort, and enjoyed a slew of raffle opportunities before the ceremony began.

Each year, the coalition honors one recipient with the Holman Water Quality Stewardship Award, given to a person or group who has gone above and beyond to protect and sustain water quality in the lakes, rivers and streams within the watershed.

Before presenting the

awards, HRWC Executive Director Callie Moore shared information on Bill Holman, for whom the award is named and given in honor.

"Throughout his career in the environmental field, Bill Holman has demonstrated persistent, constructive leadership in legislative, administrative and educational roles," said Moore. "His accomplishments have facilitated water quality improvements throughout North Carolina, and his personal commitment to the environment and water is clear."

"It is similar characteristics put into action in the upper Hiwassee River Watershed that the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition seeks in Holman Water Quality Stewardship recipients for years to come."

Typically, this award is a single-recipient honor. However, according to Moore, based on the extreme efforts

of both Kendall and Mayor Mathis, the coalition could not justify only recognizing one of the two, making Thursday's gala the first of the eight prior to present multiple Holman Awards.

"The board really struggled this time with being able to make a decision," said Moore. "Finally, we just decided to award two Holman Water Quality Stewardship Awards tonight."

"These both carry the full weight of one of these awards. This is not a joint award. Each of these people is very deserving for the leadership roles that they took in the protection of the Lake Chatuge watershed."

Moore introduced Kendall by explaining how the start of his career as commissioner correlated with a four-year study on Lake Chatuge conducted by the coalition.

At that time, the Lake Chatuge watershed was



HRWC Executive Director Callie Moore and HRWC Board Member Jason Chambers present Bill Kendall with the Holman Water Quality Stewardship Award at the 9th Annual HRWC Gala, which took place on Thursday, Feb. 23.

exhibiting signs of impact from the recent economic boom in both Towns County and Clay County, North Carolina.

Moore met with Mayor

Mathis, followed by a meeting with Kendall, to discuss measures that would be taken to improve the ecological health of the watershed.

From the study, the coalition determined that the primary cause for concern was an increase in nutrients found

See Gala, Page 6A

Area veterans gather to remember Battle of Iwo Jima

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Area veterans met Monday, Feb. 20, at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center to commemorate the 72nd anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of Iwo Jima on Feb. 19, 1945.

Six local Iwo Jima veterans were honored at the event: Todd Kimsey, U.S. Navy; Jack Rhodes, U.S. Marine Corps; Clarence "Bud" Johnson, U.S. Navy; Phil Gamache, U.S. Marine Corps; Mack Drake, U.S. Marine Corps; and Joseph Tedder, U.S. Marine Corps.



Todd Kimsey of Towns County, Jack Rhodes of Murphy, North Carolina, and Clarence E. "Bud" Johnson of Towns County – all are survivors of the Battle of Iwo Jima. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

See Iwo Jima, Page Back of A

ZZ Top to rock Anderson Music Hall on March 7

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

ZZ Top is headed to Hiwassee to play a rare weekday concert at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, on Tuesday, March 7.

Of course, legendary Rock band ZZ Top is a musical act in need of no introduction, with hits like "La Grange," "Sharp Dressed Man," "Cheap Sunglasses," "Got Me Under Pressure" and many more.

It will be the first time ZZ Top has performed at Anderson Music Hall, and Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomas hopes the entire region shows up to give them a big mountain

See ZZ Top, Page 6A



ZZ Top Legendary Rock band

2 Sections 16 Pages
Lake Levels
Blue Ridge 1,670-16
Chatuge 1,917-53
Nottely 1,762-12

Inside
Arrests 2A
Chamber 5A
Church 4B
Classifieds 6B
Opinion 4A
Legals 7B
Obits 5B
Sports 2B

HeadStart
Pre-K
Registration
begins
March 1st
See page 5A

Enotah CASA
Open House
March 6th
Sharp Memorial
Church
See page 8B

CRH
Auxiliary
BOOK
SALE
See page 5A

Baseball
Wed. Mar 1 @ Tallulah Falls 4:30
Fri. Mar 3 vs. Bryan Co 5:30
Sat Day at the Diamond @ Lumpkin Co Time TBA
Soccer
Thurs. Mar 2 @ Union Co 5 &