

# Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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## WHEN YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, WE ARE THERE WITH YOU.

As the United States faces the worst public health crisis in a generation, we want you to know we are here for you – and with you. Whatever happens, whenever it happens, your newspaper will be there for you. We'll be there to let you know how our community will be through this crisis – from business to government to the health care system and schools to the drastic impact on individuals and families. And we'll be there to let you know about the good and extraordinary things happening in the

midst of this crisis: the school employees working tirelessly to provide meals for kids learning from home, the volunteers bringing food to homebound seniors, the health workers putting themselves in harm's way to care for the sick. Amidst the sadness and anxiety, there are uplifting moments that remind us of the resilience of the human spirit, and we'll be there to document those, too. We are here to help you make sense of the situation and to help you navigate it. Having fact-based, reliable reporting that provides

public scrutiny and oversight is more important than ever. Together, across the decades, this newspaper and its readers have navigated horrific events – natural disasters, terrorism, financial downturns and more. This challenge, in its scope and penetration into individual communities like our own, is greater than any of those, but rest assured, we'll be here for you. We are a resilient community where people come together to build and rebuild. Let's stick together, and we will come through this, too.

## Local governments declare states of emergency over COVID-19

**By Todd Forrester**  
Towns County Herald Staff Writer  
Citing advice from public health experts and Gov. Brian Kemp's recent public health state of emergency declaration, on Tuesday, March 24, Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw declared a countywide state of emergency to run March 26 through Monday, April 6. Following a recommendation by the Georgia Municipal Association, Hiwassee Mayor Liz Ordiales declared a state of emergency effective March 24, and Young Harris City Council members followed suit with their own Friday. "We want to do everything we can to protect our citizens from this virus

and to keep it from spreading," Bradshaw said. "I've been in contact with commissioners across northeast Georgia. We're sharing information and ideas every day, and I feel like it's come to the time to declare an emergency administrative order for Towns County." Bradshaw's declaration applies to restaurants and all establishments that require close proximity located within the unincorporated areas of Towns County, with the cities' emergency orders applying to restaurants. Restaurants countywide are allowed to provide drive-through, delivery, takeout or curbside services only, though cafeterias located in hospitals, nursing homes or other similar facilities are not subject to these restrictions.

"We're all adapting and changing from day to day, so we're trying to do all the right things," Bradshaw said. "We will beat this and it will pass, but we all have to work together. So, I'm asking all the folks of Towns County to do the social distancing, wash your hands and stay home. "If you have a reason to leave, we understand that, but please be respectful of other people and stay 6 feet away. We have a large elderly population here, and we want to do all we can to keep them safe." All body care establishments requiring physical contact between providers and clients have closed for business, including but not limited to barbershops, hair salons, tanning establishments and nail care. These restrictions do not

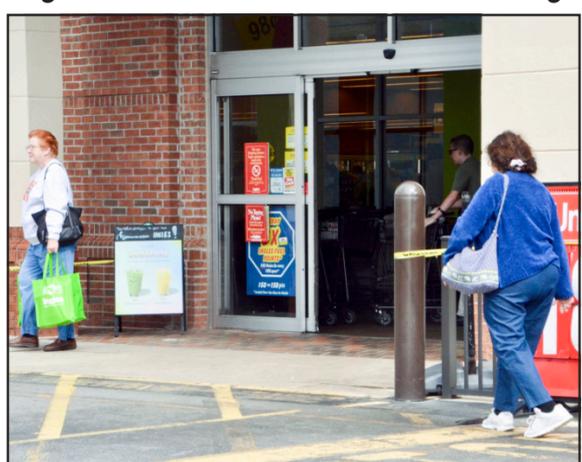
apply to services performed by or under the direct supervision of a licensed medical doctor, nurse, dentist, physical therapist, chiropractor or other health care professional. Each violation of the provisions in the county's declaration will be punishable by a misdemeanor fine and/or imprisonment. "I'm confident that the Sheriff's Department and other law enforcement agencies will use appropriate discretion in trying to warn people," Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley said. "But if someone obstinately refuses to comply, it does provide for a \$1,000 fine and jail and a \$1,000 fine, which we will enforce. "People need to understand that violation of this declaration is a violation



Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw declared a local state of emergency last week, to last at least through April 6. Photo by Todd Forrester

## Residents voice viral concerns, say it's 'OK' to worry

**By Jarrett Whitener**  
Towns County Herald Staff Writer  
As COVID-19 makes its way through communities across America, Towns County residents are preparing to stay indoors and help prevent the spread of the virus in this area. And for many people, it's OK to worry. "The virus has impacted our lives just as it has anyone else that you see out here," said Rob Burt during a supply run last week. "My wife and I are tired, so we don't really worry about working like a lot of people are right now. "I feel bad for them, though, and seeing these families struggle really breaks my heart. I wouldn't say that I am much more afraid as anybody else out here, but it



Ingles in Hiwassee has become one of the most frequented locations in town as people resupply their homes during a period of extended social distancing. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

does get a little scary to think that it is spreading around Georgia. "For older folks like us, we are told that this is

## Small businesses, public adjust to pandemic challenges

**By Todd Forrester**  
Towns County Herald Staff Writer  
For some in Towns County, business is steady, and for others, it's been a struggle. But the one thing everyone seems to have in common right now is this: nothing is business as usual. In the midst of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, and in the name of public safety, Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw and the cities of Hiwassee and Young Harris have declared local states of emergency, closing businesses that require close physical proximity and forcing restaurants to change the way they operate. Some restaurants have closed completely, while others, like Hawg Wild BBQ and Catfish House, have remained



Chef Manager Andrew Smith of Hawg Wild BBQ and Catfish House serving a drive-through customer. Photo by Todd Forrester

## Schools, students continue adapting to online learning

**By Jarrett Whitener**  
Towns County Herald Staff Writer  
To slow down the spread of the novel coronavirus, school systems nationwide have moved to online learning, which will last at least through April 24 following Gov. Brian Kemp's most recent executive order. In Towns County, this has led to a change in curriculum plans and keeping up with students by delivering the majority of school materials virtually. "The challenge is our communication to students," School Superintendent Dr.

Darren Berrong said. "Not all students have the same internet access that other students do, and not all students have the same technology that other students do. "That is definitely a challenge for us. We are trying to do the best we can to get paper packets to students without that access or who cannot get to one of the public areas with free Wi-Fi. We are attempting to do that and figure out how to pick those up and deliver them to students. "One thing that is very difficult for the schools is the special education population that we have to deliver services

to, and we are trying to do those virtually through online meetings. The school system is also making meals for students to ensure the new online instruction setting is sustainable for families that rely on school meals during the year. "As everyone knows, we are trying to provide the meals every day to students that need those," Berrong said. "Our principals are sending out emails to the teachers to keep up with how things are going with them, and I know that the high school is even sending out announcements every week. We are attempting to make this



Screenshot from a recent video update by School Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong. Updates are posted to the "Towns County Schools" Facebook page. See Schools, Page 3A

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Lake Levels	
Blue Ridge	1,681.37
Chatuge	1,922.26
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	3B

**CENSUS 2020 Complete Forms Now**  
See page 2A

**Historical Society Cancels April Meetings**  
See page 2A

**Clay County, NC Resident Tests Positive COVID-19**  
See page 3A

**BUILT OF VALOR RECIPIENT HONORED**  
See page 6A