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## Easter tradition attracts hundreds of local families

By Shelly Knight  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

On Saturday, April 12, the Towns County Recreation Department once again hosted the annual Easter Egg Hunt at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Hundreds of children participated in the free event, laughing and screaming with excitement.

Rec Director Stuart Nichols organized the hunt that featured toddlers all the way up to kids aged 12 racing across the ballfields looking for and collecting as many eggs as they could carry.

And there were thousands of treat-filled Easter eggs to find, as well as some very special golden eggs that earned several lucky recipients a special prize – an Easter basket provided with help from local churches.

“We made up the baskets to raffle off for the adults,” said Enotah Baptist Church volunteer Hali Caldwell. “Mount Pleasant Church made up the children’s baskets for the golden egg winners.”

“I’m here to volunteer, but I’ve been to the hunt several times, and my 11-year-old Addie is here today. She comes home with lots of eggs; she’s very competitive.”

And the community had blast on Saturday. Brandon Smith of Blairsville was one of many repeat guests of the hunt, as he makes sure to bring his family “every year.”

“It’s such a good thing to get out and be involved in the community and to see if they can find the prizes,”

Smith said. Prizes or not, the experience itself was thrilling enough for children, as noted by 4-year-old Loreli Duffy, who proclaimed, “It’s Easter, and I’m finding eggs.”

“Carson here is doing his first Easter egg hunt; he’s only 2,” attendee Jordan Blakely said. “We live here, so we saw this announced on the Facebook page and decided to come.”

Adam Sanders brought his “very excited” kids for the second year in a row, expressing his appreciation by noting, “It’s a good thing the county puts on for us.”

But it wasn’t just local folks attending. Katie Johnson of Dawsonville said her child, Cameron, had so many eggs  
*See Easter Tradition, Page 14*



Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, and the Towns County Rec Department helps families get into the spirit of the holiday each year with a joyous egg hunt at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.  
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

## TVA irons out schedule for spillway fix feedback



Chatuge Dam has been judged safe for normal operations in its current condition, but a vulnerability found in the spillway of the dam has prompted TVA to plan a fix that will begin construction in about three years.  
Photo/TVA.com

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Residents, business owners and elected officials in Towns County have a raft of concerns about the Tennessee Valley Authority’s recently announced decision to fix a spillway vulnerability at Chatuge Dam.

That’s because all the initially proposed construction options include yearslong, re-

cord-low drawdown estimates for Lake Chatuge – 10 feet below winter pool to 1,908 feet in elevation – which people are worried will devastate the tourism-based local economy and even interfere with the ability to treat drinking water.

A yearslong drawdown would impact everything from fishing populations to boating safety, private dock use, public boat ramp access and property values, and bring economic

fallout to tourism-supported businesses like marinas, hotels, shops, restaurants, etc., with big implications for employment, too – at least for the duration of the drawdown, and perhaps beyond.

As background, a Dam Safety Modification Study commissioned in 2023 identified a key vulnerability in the spillway of Chatuge Dam that is not an emergency but is out-  
*See TVA Feedback, Page 11*

## City Special Election canceled; council conducts business

By Shelly Knight  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Now that the seven-day write-in period has elapsed with no additional candidates stepping forward beyond regular qualifying, the Hiwassee Special Election previously scheduled for June 17 has been canceled.

This paves the way for Mayor-elect Jay Chastain Jr. and Post 3 Councilman-elect Scott Benton to be sworn in this week, as each candidate qualified unopposed for the two open seats this month.

City Hall will also conduct a public swearing-in at either the April 28 council work session or the May 6 regular meeting.

In other news, council members unanimously agreed



(L-R) Hiwassee Mayor Jay Chastain Jr., City Clerk Bonnie Kendrick and City Attorney Thomas Mitchell in the March 24 council work session.  
Photo by Shelly Knight

to turn city property tax collections over to Towns County Tax Commissioner Michael Anderson during their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday,

April 1. As discussed in the March 24 work session, the decision stemmed from con-  
*See Hiwassee City Council, Page 2*

## Young Harris man aiming to summit Mount Everest

By Shelly Knight  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Part-time Young Harris resident Brian O’Malley will attempt to climb to the top of the world this May when he returns to Mount Everest, the highest mountain above sea level in the world.

He actually turned 61 near Mount Everest last month during a trip to test himself and prepare for the great summit challenge. That expedition featured a roughly 100-mile Himalayan hike culminating at Everest’s South Base Camp in Nepal.

O’Malley departed on Tuesday of this week to commence his expedition to reach the top, and he hopes to make the summit near or on Memorial Day 2025.

If he succeeds, he will be one of the oldest people ever to accomplish this feat, and the oldest Navy Veteran to do so; both O’Malley and his wife Shelley served as pilots in the U.S. Navy.

Collectively, O’Malley’s entire family is made up of first responders, from firefighters to police officers and nurses to active and veteran U.S. Military servicemembers, which gets to the core of his mission to summit Mount Everest.

“I am doing this as a personal challenge before I get too old,” O’Malley said. “However, mostly I’m doing this to do my part in trying to bring both awareness and charitable support for an organization dear to my entire family’s heart called the Tunnel to Towers Foundation.”

Tunnel to Towers, or T2T, is a nonprofit that supports military members, first responders and their families in times of crisis, such as life-altering injuries or fatalities. The foundation offers resources like mortgage payments and handicap accessible housing for those affected.

O’Malley is asking anyone who is interested in learning more about T2T or following his progress on this incredible journey to visit <https://dogood.t2t.org/cam->



Brian O’Malley celebrated his 61st birthday with fellow veteran and brother-in-law Steve McDaniel near Mount Everest Base Camp last month. In May, O’Malley will attempt to summit the rocky colossus.  
Photo/Submitted

aign/boomer-veterans-and-first-responders-mt-everest-summit-expedition-2025/c656936.

“With utmost humility and sincerity, I know that God has blessed me with so much, including some decent physical abilities,” O’Malley said. “I feel it is my obligation to use my abilities to do God’s work helping those in need.”

“I’m also hoping that what I’m doing will inspire others, especially our youth, to overcome fears and challenges

in their daily lives and go out there and make a positive impact on the world.”

Climbing Everest is a monumental challenge. Most everyone knows the basics about Everest, a mountain that straddles Nepal and China and reaches over 29,031 feet into the sky. The colossal mountain actually penetrates the stratosphere and sits in the jet stream.

Winds commonly attain a speed of 100 mph, though  
*See Mount Everest, Page 6*

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# Sheriff helps residents form Neighborhood Watch

News Special

On Tuesday, April 8, Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson met with residents of Clarence Nichols Road and West Union Road to help them

begin a Neighborhood Watch in that area.

"Neighborhood Watch encourages citizens to communicate with each other about what is happening in their neighborhood and to watch for

suspicious activities," Henderson said. "It teaches citizens what to watch for so they can better communicate what is happening when calling 911."

The greatest benefit of Neighborhood Watch is residents being the "eyes and ears" of their neighborhoods to report hazards and possible crimes in a timely manner, which can assist law enforcement in the apprehension and prosecution of criminals.

The April 8 meeting was a success, and the Sheriff's Office is eager to work with other citizens who want to start a Community Watch program.

Residents who have questions about starting a program in their area may contact TCSO Community Relations Coordinator Tabitha Sellers at 706-896-4444.

In other news, the Sher-

iff's Office would like to invite people to attend a Blood Drive during Law Enforcement Appreciation Week in May.

Noting that one donation can save up to three lives, TCSO wants everyone to "come together to support our community and local law enforcement."

The drive will take place from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Wednesday, May 14, at the Towns County Sheriff's Office located at 4070 State Hwy 339 in Young Harris.

Donor perks include a \$30 e-gift card of choice and a commemorative challenge coin.

All donations stay local and help save lives - children fighting cancer, new moms and patients with blood disorders are just some of those donors will be helping.



Sheriff Ken Henderson speaking last week with residents interested in starting a Neighborhood Watch chapter.

Photo/Facebook

## Young Harris Main Street Events for April 2025

Save the dates for two April events, both free and open to the public. On Wednesday, April 23, Main Street will host the Rotating Art Reception from 2 PM - 4 PM. Meet artists and view the work at Mountain Regional Library and Peach State Federal Credit Union while enjoying community and light refreshments, along with some 130th Anniversary giveaways!

On Saturday, April 26, 11 AM - 3 PM, enjoy Enchanted Spring Fling hosted by Main Street Young Harris, the Enotah Garden Club, and Mama's Concierge. Purchase spring plants and enjoy community, live music, food trucks, and arts & crafts in downtown Young Harris.

Main Street Young Harris is collecting goods and financial donations at Enchanted Spring Fling for the Towns County Food Pantry. Bring your donation to the booth of sponsor Jo Ellen Thornton, Century 21, Black Bear Realty. Her booth will be located in the Union General parking lot.

Top items needed: Toilet Paper, Coffee, Hand soap, Dish Soap, Laundry detergent, Shampoo, Juice, Canned Pasta (ravioli, spaghetti, etc.), Canned meat/meal, Cooking Oil (any kind), Flour, Toothpaste, Pet Food (dog and cat), Misc. items (mayonnaise, mustard, salad dressings, etc.), Supplemental nutrition such as Boost, Ensure, Glucerna, Fresh fruits and vegetables

All food donated should

be in its original packaging, unopened and in date.

Make checks payable to: Towns County Food Pantry 1294 Jack Dayton Circle Hiawassee, GA 30582.

# Hiawassee City Council...from Page 1

siderations both practical and in response to good working relations between the city and the Tax Commissioner's Office.

"Michael Anderson has bent over backwards to help us out and to communicate with us," Councilwoman Amy Barrett said. "If Anderson does the tax collection for the city, it would cost about \$6,200 for everything."

"This is not just processing payments. It's not like handling water accounts. This comes with huge liability. With the time it takes us to do it and the software it requires, it costs us about \$2,000 a year anyway."

"This would free (Municipal Court Clerk Sheryl Branson) up to do other things that are much needed in this office. Anderson has a 97.7% success rate for (collections in) the county. I think we should consider turning it over to the county." And so they did.

Also in the April regular meeting, Councilwoman Nancy Noblet officially resigned from her position as chairperson of the Hiawassee Building and Planning Committee in light of her role as the city's mayor pro tempore, and Committee Member Ken Pollard was made the new chair.

Additionally, council members unanimously approved the new Public Assembly Ordinance as well as repair work for Bel Aire Drive April 1.

City Attorney Thomas Mitchell introduced the idea of enacting an ordinance regarding public assemblies in the March 24 work session after the recent tragedy on Bell Mountain in which twin brothers were found deceased.

"As everybody in this room is familiar, Towns County, and by extension Hiawassee, has made national news in the last few weeks due to an unfortunate event on Bell Mountain," Mitchell said. "There was some concern, I think, that there would be some assemblies here in Hiawassee, and the city does not have an ordinance that requires folks to register or let the city know that they're coming."

"What I've proposed is an ordinance that is consistent with the First Amendment and simply requires that, under certain circumstances, if folks want to do some type of organized assembly or parade, they have to file an application with the city."

"There is a minimal application/administrative fee. Effectively, it is a tool to

# Arrest and Fire Reports

Local law enforcement provides the following information for publication. Names are spelled as they were when received from the law enforcement agencies. It is important to remember that the following individuals have been charged only and are presumed innocent until such time as they are found guilty by a court or enter a guilty plea. Addresses of persons under arrest are no longer available from Sheriff's Office.



## ARREST REPORT

Towns County Jail  
Sheriff Ken Henderson

- 04/12/25 Jessica Marie Fernaays, age 34, Lafayette, NY Failure to appear for fingerprintable charge-felony
- 04/07/25 Michelle Renee Harper, age 45, Homeless Probation violation (when probation terms are altered) for fingerprintable charge (2)
- 04/08/25 Craig Lamar Meaders, age 55, Hiawassee, GA Failure to register as sex offender/ failure to comply with requirements provided
- 04/10/25 Alan Louis Brown, age 83, Peachtree City, GA DUI-driving under the influence of alcohol, failure to drive within single lane
- 04/08/25 Nathaniel Jerome Edwards, Jr., age 48, Hiawassee, GA Possession and use of drug related objects, possession of methamphetamine
- 04/07/25 James Jeffery Ferguson, age 70, Cleveland, GA Contempt of superior court, for fingerprintable charge-misdemeanor
- 04/10/25 Codylee Andrew Hamilton, age 28, Young Harris, GA Serve 48 hours
- 04/08/25 Adam Charles Trotman, age 29, Demorest, GA Financial transaction card theft, identity theft fraud using/possessing indentity information concerning a person- felony

## FIRE DEPARTMENT

RESPONSE REPORT

From: Fire Chief Harold Copeland



- 04/04/25 Motor vehicle accident with injuries Dispatched and cancelled en route (2) Medical assist, assist EMS crew (3)
- 04/05/25 Dispatched and cancelled en route False alarm or false call, other Medical assist, assist EMS crew (3) Setting up LZ for Air Evac/EMS
- 04/06/25 Medical assist, assist EMS crew (3)
- 04/07/25 Medical assist, assist EMS crew (2) False alarm or false call, other Assist police or other governmental agency
- 04/08/25 Dispatched and cancelled en route (2) Medical assist, assist EMS crew (3) Gas leak (natural gas or LPG)
- 04/09/25 Dispatched and cancelled en route Medical assist, assist EMS crew (4) Motor vehicle accident with no injuries
- 04/10/25 False alarm or false call, other Dispatched and cancelled en route Medical assist, assist EMS crew (3) Brush or brush-and-grass mixture fire
- 04/11/25 Medical assist, assist EMS crew

let the city know this kind of event is coming so they can make arrangements for increased fire, safety protection and sanitation, if necessary. If Hiawassee's small department is insufficient to handle the expected crowd, the chief can coordinate with other agencies and jurisdictions.

"If there is going to be any kind of assembly, it will most likely be in the City of Hiawassee. One, it is the county seat, and two, you have the public square. Young Harris doesn't really have a site like the one here in Hiawassee. You use your public square for events."

"So, something you don't want is for there to be a parade or assembly that interferes with one of your events. This ordinance and the permit requirement would help you control that. It's a good idea to put this kind of thing in place before you need it."

Police Chief Jeremy Parker added that "law enforcement would be able to protect those people who are exercising their First Amendment rights against those who are coming to counterprotest against them."

In terms of the Bel Aire Drive repair that was approved this month, Chastain relayed in the work session that "a big piece of steel is covering a rotten culvert that needs repairing," with an estimated price tag of about \$11,500.

"Worst case scenario is we would replace 100 feet of 18-inch culvert pipe," Chastain said. "Of course, it means cutting and removing asphalt, replacing the culvert, replacing the gravel and the asphalt, the machinery and the labor."

Police Chief Parker shared multiple pieces of department news in the work session, including that the new police report software company contracted in November was behind schedule in implementing much-needed updates to local police computers.

"This is moving a lot slower than I would like; we are concerned," Parker said. "Our software is in end-of-life stages. I'm working now to implement a recording system where we can still do our reports and enter that into the system later. The company is backlogged. They tell us our go-live date is July 7."

Parker also revealed that Officer James Murray had submitted his resignation, with his last day set for April 20: "We appreciate his service and will miss him. We are accepting applications for a replace-

ment right now."

Furthermore, he presented a budgetary quote for two TASERS in the amount of \$14,000, one for night shift and one for the day shift.

"The TASERS we currently have are also at the end of life; the software is out of date, and if we don't upgrade, they will be useless," Parker said. The council voted to approve the TASER purchases the following week, in the April 1 regular meeting.

Responding to a question about how often the police use TASERS, Parker said that "it doesn't happen often," noting that in the two years he has been with the city, he has yet to deploy his. Regardless, the officers are happy to have the non-lethal option.

"Tasers are a deterrent," Parker said. "Just because we deploy it does not mean we use them - we present it. In the old days, it was racking the shotgun. We don't do that anymore because a shell goes on the ground. The taser is a good tool to deter improper behavior."

"Right now, if we have to subdue somebody, we have to physically hold them. Officers get injured, there are worker's compensation issues, the civilians can get injured, it creates liability, and it doesn't look good in the news or on a mugshot."

Attorney Mitchell concurred, saying, "Most of the time the police pull a taser, they never use the cartridge, but it gets people's attention, and it has the desired effect."

The April 28 work session at 6 p.m. will be a can't-miss meeting in which a Tennessee Valley Authority representative will attend to discuss the Chatuge Dam spillway fix, which the city believes may imperil its ability to treat drinking water due to extended lake drawdown estimates.

All city meetings take place inside Hiawassee City Hall at 50 River Street.

## Free Adult Education Classes by NGTC

Free GED classes are being offered in Towns County. Please drop by to register and begin classes anytime from 2-7:30 PM on Tuesday or Thursdays at the Towns County Recreation Center, 900 N. Main St., Hiawassee.

For more information please contact deanne.oppermann@northgatech.edu or 706-970-3101.



# Mount Everest...from Page 1

they can climb much higher. The average temperature is 19 degrees below zero, however, when O'Malley will be climbing, he can expect a balmy minus 13.

Certainly, people know about the dangers of hypothermia and frostbite. Frostbite can occur within 30 minutes when the temperature is 5 degrees and the wind is blowing at 30 mph, though touching

metal can initiate frostbite within seconds.

Avalanches, falling ice or rocks, severe fatigue or exhaustion, and the possibility of plunging into a crevice are just a few of the other deadly risks associated with climbing Everest, all of which increase near the top.

To prepare for the physical, psychological and technical challenges, climbers typi-

cally undertake extensive and expensive preparation that can last months, and even years.

Often, they acclimatize by sleeping in specialized tents that simulate high altitudes at home and/or by training in chambers that simulate low-oxygen environments. They also climb other peaks higher than 19,000 feet.

Climbers typically stagger their ascent to base camp, which sits at 17,589 feet above sea level. Then, they complete further treks to higher altitudes on the Mount Everest summit route itself over time.

O'Malley has been preparing, too.

"I've always been an athlete, and I've always trained," O'Malley said. "My cardio has always been very good. I began to incorporate some more exercises related to climbing, working the lower legs, the core and the upper body.

"About six months ago, I bought a mask that limits my oxygen intake and makes it very hard for me to breathe while I am working out. It forces me to concentrate on my breathing.

"Every day I run 5 miles, and on Sundays I run a half-marathon. I've been sleeping

every night in a hypoxic tent, which simulates 22,000-foot oxygen levels.

"I'm in my 60s now, and since I was a little kid I've read books about Everest, and I've always been interested in it being the top of the world. I did not understand, as I do now, the intense commitment physically, mentally and financially it takes to do something like this.

"About two years ago I got the bug in me to do something significant like climb Everest. I have zero climbing experience, and that doesn't scare me, but it does make me nervous.

"Last month, I went out to the Himalayas to trek around the mountains there and ended up at Everest Base Camp. I felt like I had a lot left in the tank there. I didn't get altitude sickness, and during the whole trek I felt very good.

"When I got back, my wife and kids said, 'OK, you made it to base camp, dad, you're done.' One of the reasons was obviously because of the risks, but another was because of the expense. It costs \$25,000 just to get a permit, and then you join an expedition team.

"Overall, it costs about



**Brian O'Malley of Young Harris is hoping to pull off the unthinkable next month by becoming one of the oldest people ever to summit Mountain Everest.** Photo/Submitted

\$75,000. And the equipment isn't cheap. Remarkably, a buddy of mine agreed to sponsor me, and I'm going back."

Interest in climbing Everest dates to the early 1920s, though some controversy exists over who climbed it first.

George Mallory and Andrew Irvine attempted to summit in 1924, but they never returned. Officially, Edmund

Hillary and Tenzing Norgay claimed the title for the first successful ascent and descent in 1953.

Each year, between 700 and 1,000 climbers attempt to join that elite club with success rates at about 60%. Realistically, that is mostly because of the advances in mountaineering equipment, and the journey remains perilous to this day.



The Hiwassee Downtown Development Authority (DDA) announced First Fridays in 2025 will run May 2, June 6, August 1, September 5 and October 3. Each event runs from 5-9 p.m. and features live music and artisans crafts and products.

Vendors can find the booth application at <https://www.downtownhiwassee.com/night-market/>. The goods must be made by the vendors -- no resales or non-artisan products will be approved for sale at the night markets.

The Hiwassee Downtown Development Authority was formed by the Hiwassee City Council in 2019 and was established for the purpose of furthering the economic development of our lake and mountain paradise while preserving Hiwassee's history and serving its citizens and visitors alike.



# TVA Feedback...from Page 1

side TVA's risk tolerance. To address this issue, the federal corporation has come up with four preliminary construction designs that correspond with "reasonable upper-bound" estimates on how long the lake would have to be lowered to ensure the safety of workers fixing the spillway.

TVA has stressed that the massive project is in its early planning stages, which means lake levels could return to normal sooner than currently estimated because, as the project progresses, TVA will know more and be able to refine its estimates downward.

Still, what has been revealed is disquieting many members of the community, as the options range from eight years of construction with a drawdown over the entire project length to six years of construction with a four-year drawdown.

Any construction is about three years out, and TVA has issued only "relatively crude" design concepts at this time, with concept selection and a detailed design phase awaiting several rounds of public feedback - which is why it is so important for people with concerns to voice them.

On April 21, TVA will be posting its Notice of Intent to act on the project to the Federal Register, with a public comment period to run April 22 to May 28. When the time comes, people may find the posting at <https://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/tennessee-valley-authority>.

And TVA has firmed up dates, times and locations for upcoming public meetings and scheduled an additional virtual meeting to coincide with the originally announced slate of feedback opportunities.

The first virtual meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 6, from 5:30-6:30 p.m., to feature "subject matter expert presenters" and a question-and-answer session. A link to join the meeting will be available at [tva.com/nepa](https://tva.com/nepa).

Then, on Thursday, May 8, TVA will host its first in-person open house on the spillway fix from 5:30-7:30 p.m. inside the Clay County Community Services Building at 25

Riverside Circle in Hayesville, North Carolina.

Informational booths and materials will be made available, as well as access to subject matter experts, though there will be no formal presentation.

TVA will host a second in-person open house for residents of Towns County on Tuesday, May 13, from 5-7 p.m. inside the Towns County Recreation Center at 150 Foster Park Road in Young Harris using the same format as the Hayesville open house.

Thursday, May 15, will provide the community yet another opportunity to hear from TVA and offer feedback in a second virtual meeting, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Again, the link will be available at [tva.com/nepa](https://tva.com/nepa).

People may also attend the Hiwassee City Council work session at 6 p.m. on Monday, April 28, to hear a TVA representative discuss concerns that an extended drawdown would interfere with the city's ability to treat lake water for consumption by thousands of customers in the county.

According to TVA, a drawdown to 1,908 feet should not impact drinking water treatment in the lake, and Hiwassee officials have been wondering who with the city informed TVA that this would be the case.

Mayor-elect Jay Chastain Jr. told the newspaper this month that a recent meeting he attended with TVA was the first time he had heard about the dramatic drawdown, which would increase the turbidity, or cloudiness, of water being treated, making it harder to meet treatment standards.

"Our TVA district representative told me that the city had been consulted a few years ago, and that the TVA was told the city would be fine with the lake being so low," Chastain said. "I talked with the water plant superintendent after the meeting, and he told me that he spoke with the TVA two years ago and told them it would have to be researched.

"So, I don't know who with the city told them that we would be fine. I have reached

out to the city engineer at EMI and discussed this in depth with him. The engineer is very concerned. I can go more in depth with this after I have more information from EMI."

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw is concerned as well, telling the newspaper last week: "I think they can come up with a different plan, a shorter timeframe to do repairs. The choices I've seen are totally unacceptable."

Many questions remain to be asked and answered regarding the project. One question in particular that has cropped up in the community is why this project will take so long to complete, especially in light of past construction mobilization efforts.

The entire Chatuge Dam took about six months to complete in the early 1940s, and California's much larger Oroville Dam spillway - which broke apart in 2017 during a catastrophic flooding event that prompted this industry-wide search for similar vulnerabilities - took just five months to rebuild.

So, it's only natural for people to wonder why a multi-year project is needed to reconstruct the spillway at Chatuge Dam. Fortunately, people will have plenty of chances to ask why - and push for meaningful plan revisions - during upcoming public comment opportunities.

For its part, TVA remains eager to work with the impacted communities in addressing their concerns before settling on a construction path, with the hope of worried residents, business owners and elected officials being a major reduction in the expected drawdown time.

"It is important to recognize that, given the uncertainties in project plans at their current level of detail, TVA judges it responsible to report potential durations of various alternatives in terms of reasonable upper bounds on those durations," said Chris Saucier, the Senior Project Manager for Special Projects at TVA.

Continuing, "It is our intent to manage these durations downward to the extent possible during implementa-

tion, and further information regarding estimated durations of construction and pool drawdown will be shared at key future points of design and construction plans.

"Beyond that, there are significant differences between the Oroville Dam repair and those to be undertaken at Chatuge Dam. When compared to conventional dam remediation project timelines, the schedule of the Oroville Dam spillway repair was expedited due to the unusually high level of life safety risk which existed at the spillway after the damaging event.

"In contrast, the existing spillway at Chatuge Dam has not been compromised by extensive damage from an emergency event and does not exist in an emergency condition today. For this reason, TVA has developed its remediation plans in a way which maintains current levels of life safety protection for the downstream public provided by the existing spillway as well as the life safety of project laborers throughout any construction effort."

In the last decade, a similar multi-year drawdown went into effect at Lake Boone in northeast Tennessee to address a different issue at that dam, and TVA prepared an economic report prior to construction that detailed temporary yet substantial negative impacts.

In regard to some of the negative impacts, TVA "worked with the community on actions such as new ramp extensions, a new swim beach and other activities to help mitigate the extended drawdown and allow local residents to enjoy the water while work continued on Boone Dam."

At press time, TVA was working to provide answers to additional questions from the newspaper, including what it would take to enact an expedited construction alternative here and how TVA might assist the communities that rely on Lake Chatuge in the event of an extended drawdown.

For more information and to sign up for alerts, people may visit <https://www.tva.com/newsroom/regional-mountain-dams-safety-initiative/>.

# A new Chair in charge at TCGOP

Please join us on Thursday, April 17th at the Towns County Senior Center and meet the new TCGOP Chair, Sheila McDevitt; hear what she has to say about her goals for the Party as we head into a very important election year cycle, 2026. Our doors open at 5:15 P.M. and the meeting begins precisely at 5:45 P.M.

Sheila comes to us with a very impressive resume. She has worked in politics in several states and has held multiple positions both in business as well as politics. In fact, Sheila has a 40,000 ton "dry bulk carrier" vessel named after her when she was General Counsel for TECO Energy, a diversified energy company. Not many can claim this!

Sheila is active on several boards and is on the local Board of Directors of ARFS (Animal Rescue Financial Support Inc).

We, the TCGOP, invite you to come to meet and greet Sheila. Ask questions and en-



Sheila McDevitt

joy a small reception for our monthly meeting.

Caleb Taylor will also enlighten us during Caleb's Corner about his experience as a Page under the Golden Dome; what it meant to him, what he learned and how it might influence his life.

Be sure to stay for the reception. Sheila will be around to shake hands and getting to know everyone. For further information, contact the office at 706-514-6437 or Nancy 229-938-9349.

# Towns County Schools Fine Arts Night



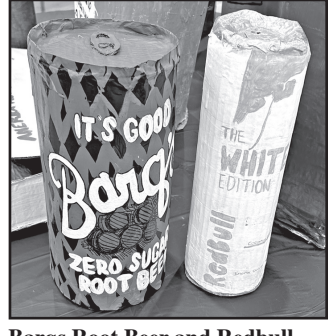
Mountain Mug



Beanie Babies Painting



Van Halen Ablum Painting



Barqs Root Beer and Redbull

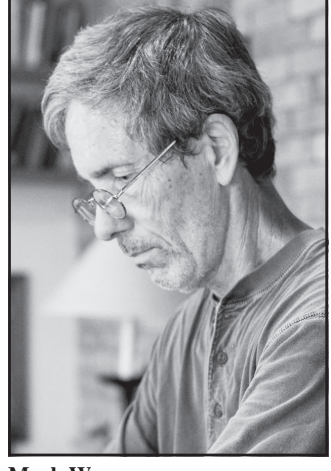
The Towns County Schools Fine Arts Department invites the community to its annual Fine Arts Night on Thursday, April 17th in the Middle School Gym. This inspiring event will feature a variety of student-created artwork, including paintings, sculptures, and mixed media pieces.

The show takes place from 5-7 PM with a band concert in the auditorium at 6 PM, featuring performances by talented student musicians. Don't miss this special evening celebrating the creativity and dedication of our young artists and musicians! Admission is free.

# Edible Wild Plants of Southern Appalachia Seminar

The Towns Union Master Gardener Association, Enotah Garden Club of Young Harris, and Hiwassee Garden Club are hosting the Award-Winning Author and Naturalist Mark Warren, who will present a program on Edible Wild Plants of Southern Appalachia at the Pat Haralson Memorial Civic Center in Blairsville on April 22, 2025. Coffee and light refreshments provided at 10 am with the program beginning at 10:30. There is no fee to attend.

This will be a lecture and photo presentation to learn about the nutritious wild plants of our region, including native species and those introduced (from other countries) that are now naturalized as part of our environment. Techniques for preparing



Mark Warren

foods will also be discussed. Mark Warren is owner/operator of the nationally renowned Medicine Bow Wilderness School in Dahlonega, GA. He has been teaching about native plants, trees, and survival

skills to adults and children for over half a century. Warren is the author of 18 traditionally published books. His Secrets of the Forest book series will be available for purchase at this event as well as his other award-winning titles. Quote from Mark: "Most folks today have reduced nature to a backdrop of scenery. The great deficit in this scenario is our lack of understanding that we still depend upon nature. Air to breathe, water to drink, energy to consume for our daily actions. These are commodities that are easy to take for granted, and, if they are, future generations will have no reason to respect and conserve the pieces of the puzzle we call ecology." For more information call 706 439-6030 or 706 897-6515.

# Auxiliary Book Sale May 13-15

Chatuge Regional Hospital and Nursing Home Auxiliary is having a book sale in the hospital lobby, May 13-15. Sale will be 8 AM- 3 PM each day. Hard Cover books \$1 and soft cover books \$.50. Come by and support your local auxiliary. We will be selling our fudge also. TApr16,A2JH

# VFW VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS. VFW Karaoke

Karaoke on Wednesdays from 4PM until 8PM at the VFW Post on Sunnyside Rd in Hiwassee. Come join us for some fun! It is open to the public.

# VFW Fish Fry

Come join us for the new season of Fish Fry at the VFW post in Hiwassee. We have fish, coleslaw, beans, hushpuppies, fries, and a drink, and remember no tax and no tip all for \$12 and \$15 for all you can eat. Starting April 11, 4:30 to 7 PM and every 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month. TApr16,A1JH

# Board of Health Meeting

The Towns County Board of Health will hold its quarterly meeting on Thursday, April 24, 2025 at 9:30 AM in the 911 Conference Room located at 1100 Jack Dayton Circle, Young Harris, GA 30582. TApr16,A4JH

# Georgia Mountain Pregnancy Center

The Georgia Mountain Pregnancy Center offers free first Trimester ultrasound, pregnancy test, and counseling. The center is located at 136 Hospital Drive Road, Suite A, GA; (706)745-0051; gmpc-medical.org NTApr16,Z1CA

# BINGO

Pat Haralson Civic Center  
165 Wellborn Street  
Blairsville, GA  
Every Wednesday  
Doors Open - 6 PM  
Games Start - 7 PM  
Benefits  
Castoff Pet Rescue

# DAR Inducts Livingston, Honors United States Navy



Lindsey Livingston of Blairsville was inducted in the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution by Regent Barbara Weaver and Secretary Pam Matthews of the local Old Unicoi Trail Chapter. Lindsey is a third generation Daughter. Recently relocated from Fort Pierce, FL, she now resides in Blairsville with her husband and daughter. Daughters met April 12th at the Union County Community Center.

The day's program was presented by John Emit Mays, III, of Jefferson, GA, a member of the Blue Ridge Mountains Sons of the American Revolution. Mr. Mays shared the adventures of his patriot, Captain John Cutler Braddock, who was engaged in numerous sea and backwater encounters of the American Revolution occurring around the current areas of Hilton Head, SC; Savannah, GA; and Jacksonville, FL. John Braddock served in numerous civic and leadership positions in SW Georgia with a highlight being his serving in the Georgia Legislature. The program was in observance of the 250th Anniversary of the U.S. Navy, October 2025. Pam Matthews gave a national



Pam Matthews, Lindsey Livingston and Barbara Weaver

defense report that included a brief history of the U.S. Navy and the Chapter's current project which is to send needed items to our U.S. patriots - sailors on the USS Dewey and the USS Theodore Roosevelt.

Sherry Bolin of Mineral Bluff won the state competition for American Heritage, Fabric Arts, Weaving and received a certificate of award from the Georgia State Society which was presented by Regent Weaver who said, "Old Unicoi Trail is so very proud to have Sherry, a talented weaver, represent our DAR Chapter in this important national competition." Sherry's husband, Ron, accompanied her to the meeting. Daughters raised funds and food for the Fannin County Snack in a Backpack program, donated white athletic socks for veterans at the Blairsville

VA clinic and donated items to raise funds among daughters in attendance for the Chapter's America 250 project. For the 250th anniversary of our nation, the Chapter will place trees decorated with patriotic ornaments and patriot information in public locations in Towns, Union and Fannin Counties. Pam Greene, Education Chair, of Young Harris, reported on the Chapter's geocache project which will feature local veterans of the U.S. military.

The DAR represents over one million Daughters. A woman 18 years or older who can prove lineal descent from a patriot of the American Revolution is eligible to join. If you are interested in DAR membership or to attend an Old Unicoi Trail Chapter meeting email [oldunicoitrail@gmail.com](mailto:oldunicoitrail@gmail.com).

# FOLTC FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARIES OF TOWNS COUNTY

# Foltc Bookstores Sale April 1st-30th

The Friends are having a Bookstore Sale at both FOLTC bookstores inside our libraries during the entire month of April. Every item on the shelves will be sold at reduced prices. The shelves will be restocked during the sale.

The Bookstores Sale will take place April 1st to April 30th during regular library hours. Mountain Regional Library, 698 Miller St., Young Harris, is open on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 10:00 - 5:00. Towns County Public Library, 99 S. Berrong St., Hiwassee, is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 10 AM - 6 PM.

This will be an "honor system" book sale. Exact change or checks written to FOLTC must be placed in each bookstore's red money box. Adult hardback books will cost \$1 each. Adult paperbacks will be \$.50 each. Juvenile and Young Adult books will be \$.50 each or 3/\$1. Children's picture books will be \$.25 or 5/\$1. CDs, DVDs, audiobooks, and jigsaw puzzles will be \$.50 each.

Book donations will not be accepted in April. Please visit the website at [www.foltc.com](http://www.foltc.com) if you wish to donate books after the sale. Click on the "Events" tab and then "Book Donations" for the list of the types of items that are accepted to be placed in the bookstores and those that are not accepted.

Friends of the Libraries of Towns County's bookstores are able to operate and raise funds for our libraries thanks to the generous donations of preowned books and other items by members of FOLTC and our communities. Every book that is purchased from the bookstores generates funds that are provided to Mountain Regional Library and Towns County Public Library to supplement their revenue for new books and other library materials, children's and adult programs, staff development, and other requests by library staff.

Please join Friends of the Libraries of Towns County (FOLTC) and help support your essential public libraries! The membership form can be found on the website. Follow on Facebook at Friends Of The Libraries Of Towns County.



# Movers & Shakers will not be meeting on Good Friday, April 18

Good Friday is a Christian holiday commemorating the sacrifice of Jesus on a cross to atone for the sin of the whole world. This event paved the way for mankind to have eternal life with God. After his death, Jesus rose from the dead, which Christians celebrate on Resurrection Sunday.

# Alcoholics Anonymous Meetings

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope that they may solve their common problem and help others recover from alcoholism.

There are three regular weekly AA meetings in Hiwassee every week. They are: Wednesday 12 Noon. Mountain Serenity Group, Hiwassee United Methodist Church, 1139 Highway 76,

Hiwassee Thursday 7 PM. Hiwassee Group, Red Cross Building, 1298 Jack Dayton Circle, Young Harris Sunday 7 PM. Hiwassee Group, Red Cross Building, 1298 Jack Dayton Circle, Young Harris

For more information you can contact [aamountainintergroup@gmail.com](mailto:aamountainintergroup@gmail.com) or [aamountainintergroup.org](http://aamountainintergroup.org) or 706-400-5531.



# Easter Tradition...from Page 1A



Children and adults alike won Easter baskets during this year's annual egg hunt.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

"I've started stuffing them in my sweater."

"We're camping and saw that this was going to happen, so we decided to come," Johnson said, adding that the event was "really cool."

"Grammy" Tammy Skinner came with her granddaughter Adeline, marking the 4-year-old's first time visiting the Towns County Easter Egg Hunt.

"She's been so excited - she's just going for it," Skinner said. "She's watching for that bunny though, because she wasn't sure about him. She's looking around and asking where he is."

"This is awesome that they do this. Her mom is a nurse and she's working, so I get to have all the fun!"

Hiawassee resident Daylen Paracuelles proudly helped 3-year-old Rosie, who found a golden egg, pose for a photo with the Easter Bunny, while Lisa Paracuelles remarked, "We appreciate it so much that they do this for us."

Mary Fox, a donator of eggs for the event, said this was the first year she'd been able to come to actually watch the kids pick up the eggs.

"I like to do this for them," Fox said. "I did it with my church before, and the kids

love it. My grandkids are all grown up, and I like to see the kids."

Elsewhere on the hunting grounds, Hannah Benedict escorted Gabriella and Haisley in their matching Easter outfits.

"This is our first time and it's fabulous," Benedict said. "They did a really good job, and the girls are having so much fun. We try to take in all the events here at the Fairgrounds."

Visit the Towns County Recreation Department website to learn about exciting events, adult classes and sports teams at [www.townscountyrec.com](http://www.townscountyrec.com).



Thanks to the availability of thousands of candy-filled eggs, all attending children got the chance to basket a tremendous haul at the Easter hunt on Saturday. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

# Sleczkowski, newest member on the Towns County Board of Elections



Charlotte Sleczkowski and Towns County Probate Judge David Rogers

Following her commissioning by Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, Charlotte Sleczkowski last week took the oath of office as the newest member of the Towns County Board of

Elections and Voter Registration. Administering the oath is Towns County Probate Judge David Rogers.

Along with John Bennett, Ms. Sleczkowski serves

as one of two Democratic members of the five-member board and was chosen for the position by the Towns County Democratic Executive Committee.