

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## What Christmas means to veterans

Being well aware that not 100% of all Veterans may think or feel the same way, no one "group" of people all do. However I've never met a Veteran who didn't appreciate this time of year to some degree or another.



**The Veterans' Corner**  
Scott Drummond  
USCG Veteran

Not only do we celebrate and honor the "reason for the season" the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we celebrate with giving, sharing our fellowship, love of each other and love of our Sovereign Republic, our USA and all our other blessings at this time of year.

Those many Blessings include each other, and the unique bond most of us share. Many of us, as we did when were in uniform, still continue to volunteer and do what we can to serve our various communities. Our Veterans Service Organizations such as the VFW and American Legion, along side the Marine Corps League and our outstanding women's Auxiliary groups continually work and strive to find ways to assist each other and community, in general with various projects. Don't forget our American Legion Riders and North Georgia Honor Guard who work tirelessly and are dedicated to honor those who leave this earth, as we all will one day. These are only a few who give of themselves, time, effort, miles and money as gifts, just like Christmas gifts, the year round.

I can only speculate, but the gift of giving, just like Christmas giving may have been ingrained in many of us, when we were young, and had our "can do" attitude for giving of ourselves to and for something far greater than just "me". Those who have never been there may not understand that statement. Yes! Most of us are proud, but humbled by what we did and what we give.

Another reason we love Christmas is finally we are home. What a gift! And home in the North Georgia Mountains of Hiwassee and Towns County, well what's better than that? Point being, all of us, Veterans or not have a lot to be thankful for and to celebrate this Christmas. Even as we lose our older brothers and sisters as they depart this earth and go home to be with our Supreme Commander, we celebrate that too. Our painful loss is certainly not a loss for those loving souls, our friends and family who have lived full lives.

Lastly, the supreme gift of giving one's all, just as our Lord gave Himself, the ultimate sacrifice, those who never came home gave all for us, and their brothers and sisters in uniform, that elusive gift of freedom, liberty and opportunity in order to celebrate many more Christmases together. Let us never forget them on Christmas, we have this Christmas as an opportunity to give to others as a reminder why we have this occasion. Without our men and women in uniform who have done their part, small or extreme, neither Christmas nor anything else we often take for granted in America would exist.

*Semper Paratus*

## Letters to The Editor

### To the Editor:

Regarding the 5 story building that the Members of the Young Harris City Council are considering granting a variance for, I've learned that the structure is planned for the intersection of 66 and 76, right in the center of town. I also understand that members of the council have proposed a lower height structure with perhaps a larger footprint, but the developer has refused. It makes one wonder if the height is an intended feature of the property, perhaps to ensure unobstructed mountain views for top floor residents?

I understand that the college would get from this project free additional housing for its students, but at what cost to it and the community? One wouldn't think twice about seeing a 5 story building in Norcross or Marietta. But in a small town in a rural mountain setting? Most people who drive hours to visit our area do so because they are looking for something they can't find back home - a small town in a beautiful setting that reminds them of the important things in life, such as simple living in a tight knit community that values its traditions and history. I suspect that many of the parents who send their children to Young Harris College are looking for much the same. With a 5 story building in the center of town, wouldn't our community look a lot more like the places that these folks are trying to leave behind for a day or a semester, and a whole lot less like what they are searching for?

It seems to me that a 5 story structure at such a prominent location would totally change the character of the town, and potentially the entire area. Whenever a building is constructed, you can assume it will be around for a very long time. Once you sell your character it's not that easy to get it back.

*Gil Bullard*

### Dear Editor:

We all have a lot to be thankful for especially our natural resources. We take for granted that clean water is a given. In 2016, over 20 states reported toxic algae blooms this year as a result of excess nitrogen, phosphates, sewage, and runoff, notwithstanding the severe water quality issues which occurred in Michigan and Ohio. Without the vigilance and best practices of the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition (HRWC) we too could experience a decline in our water quality. The HRWC is a volunteer, grant and donor driven independent group, currently with 47 volunteers monitoring 55 sites monthly in Clay, Union, and Towns County. The data gathered is submitted monthly to a government website ([www.georgiaadoptastream.com](http://www.georgiaadoptastream.com)) which establishes baseline information. There are no government agencies providing monthly monitoring of our water resources. The HRWC is the "Canary in the coal mine", our only early warning system to detect any changes in water quality.

We all have a stake in this. Drinking water, recreation, and fishing are critical to our health and economy.

Please make your donation to: Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, Inc., 90 Tennessee Street, Ste D., Murphy, NC 28906 or [www.hrwc.net](http://www.hrwc.net).

*Noel Turner, President  
Towns County Homeowners Association*

### Dear Editor,

I am very concerned about the apparent direction of the Trump administration when it comes to caring for creation. Mr. Groza obviously believes that using every means possible to extract as much carbon fuel as possible is to our advantage. I disagree. If we extract and consume all the fossil fuel that is still in the ground, the planet will implode! My faith tradition tells me that we are to care for this planet, not destroy it.

*Sincerely,  
Joseph Mahon*

## Christmas Tree fires and falls

The Christmas holiday season is a joyous time of year, but the joy can change quickly to sorrow if we aren't careful with our holiday decorations. Certain types of fires and injuries associated with holiday decorating are much more common during this season. Here are some statistics from the NFPA that should make you think about the old Christmas tree.



**RC&D**  
Frank Riley  
Executive Director

NFPA estimates that Christmas trees, both natural and artificial, were the item first ignited in an estimated average of 230 reported home structure fires per year during 2010-2014. These fires caused an estimated average of six civilian deaths, 22 civilian injuries, and \$18.3 million in direct property damage per year. These estimates are based on data from the U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA's) National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) and the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA's) annual fire department experience survey.

During the same period, holiday lights and other decorative lighting with line voltage were involved in an estimated average of 150 home structure fires per year. These fires caused an average of nine civilian deaths, 16 civilian injuries, and \$8.4 million in direct property damage per year. Although these fires are not common, when they do occur, they are unusually likely to be serious.

On average, one of every 40 reported home structure Christmas tree fires resulted in a death compared to an average of one death per 142 total reported home structure fires. Similar shares of home Christmas tree structure fires were in December (43%) and January (39%). Christmas tree fires are more likely after Christmas than before. For example, none of the ten dates with the largest shares of home Christmas tree structure fires were before Christmas. Electrical failures or malfunctions were involved in one-third (32%) of the home Christmas tree structure fires. One in six (17%) occurred because some type of heat source was too close to the tree. Decorative lights on line voltage were involved in 12% of these incidents. Candles started seven percent of home Christmas tree fires.

The risk of fire is higher with natural trees than artificial ones. Researchers found that dry natural trees burned easily but trees that had been kept moist are unlikely to catch fire unintentionally. Holiday lights and other decorative lighting with line voltage were involved in an estimated average of 150 home structure fires per year in this same period. Fifteen percent of these fires began with Christmas trees. Electrical failures or malfunctions were factors in nearly two-thirds of the fires involving holiday or decorative lights.

In a study of fall-related injuries during the holiday season, it was estimated that an annual average of 5,800 fall injuries related to holiday decorating were treated at hospital emergency rooms between November 1st and January 31st in recent years. Sixty-two percent of those injured were between 20 and 49 years of age, compared to 43% of the population in this age group. 43% of the injuries resulting from falls were from ladders and 13% caused by falls from the roof, it appears that most of these falls occurred during outdoor decorating. Falls from furniture, typically inside the structure, accounted for 11% of the injuries. Some falls occurred when people tripped over or slipped on tree skirts or other decorations.

A lot of us leave our trees up for weeks after Christmas; we don't want to let the season go, or family members visit after Christmas, or we just don't get around to taking the tree down as soon as we should, so we must take extra precautions to prevent injuries and fires.

Some safety tips for dealing with old Christmas

trees are number one; Remove the tree from your home when it begins dropping needles and dispose of it properly. Dried-out trees burn easily and should not be left in a garage or placed against the home. Unplug or switch off all holiday lights before leaving home or going to sleep, and take holiday lights down soon after the holidays. Letting the excitement of the season go is hard, but losses or injuries due to fires or injuries can change your life forever. The Christmas season can be a dangerous time so be extra careful and don't spend the holiday in the emergency room or with the fire department or worse. Holiday safety tips such as this are the kind of fire prevention information that our Firewise Citizens Coalitions have available to help keep our citizens safe from any kind of fires around their homes.

For more information on Fires, Firewise, Ready Set Go or wildfire education contact Frank Riley, Executive Director, Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council at [www.info.ccrd@gmail.com](http://www.info.ccrd@gmail.com).

### 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 E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:** Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiwassee, GA 30546. Our email address: [tcherald@windstream.net](mailto:tcherald@windstream.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.*

## Christmas Trees

While some opt for the ease of an artificial tree that can be used year after year and passed down to kids and grandkids, there is just something about a real tree that brightens up the home at Christmas. If you choose to purchase a cut tree, make sure you follow steps to keep it as healthy as you can for as long as possible.

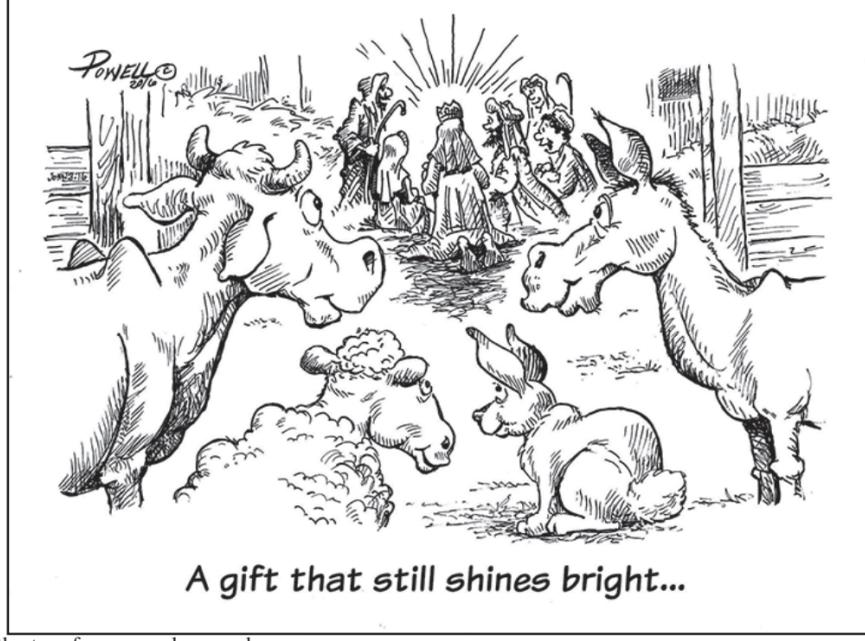


**UGA extension**  
UNION COUNTY  
From the Ground Up  
Melissa Mattee

First, decide on where on an appropriate place to put the tree. Do you want it to be seen from all sides or would you rather it against a wall or window? Always make sure that heat sources, such as TVs, fireplaces, radiators and air ducts are not where near the tree, and put the tree in an area that doesn't interfere with doors or common foot traffic. Always measure the height and width of the space you have available in the room where you want the tree to go. Nothing is worse than picking and paying for the perfect tree and hauling it home on top of your car or in your truck, only to find it will not fit anywhere in your house. Have a tape measure handy to determine the height of the tree you want, and always bring some extra cord to tie the tree down with in case the tree farm does not have any extra.

Many trees sold on retail lots may have come from out of state and been exposed to harsh conditions on the journey to their destination. They may have been cut weeks prior to when they are sold, and they are probably stressed by the time they are sold. It is always good to know whether the trees are delivered once at the beginning of the season or are they delivered at different times during the selling season. The earlier and fresher you can get a tree, the better. Fresh trees need a healthy green appearance with very few brown needles. The needles should be flexible but not fall off if you run them through your hand. You can also raise the tree off the stand a little and let it drop. If a bunch of needles drop off, it might not last as long as you want it to. However, it is totally normal for a few needles to fall off and some near the trunk may be brown. The majority of the tree should always be bright green and fragrant, though. Don't forget to check for little hitchhikers as well! Bagworm moths and scale insects are common on Christmas trees.

When choosing your tree, keep in mind the place you've decided to put your tree and choose a tree that's appropriate. For example, if you want to place your tree against a wall, it is okay if some branches on one side are a little damaged, or there is a bald spot. If you place it in a corner, you may even want more branches to be toward one side or another. This approach can help you save time and money, because it can take a long time to find the perfect tree, and prettier trees are almost always more expensive. Once you've decided on a tree, make sure that the bottom of the trunk has at least six to eight inches of clean bark with no branches. Always make sure it is watered to make it last longer. The more water a tree has, the less dry it is, and the less of a fire hazard it is.



A gift that still shines bright...

## Towns County Community Calendar

| Every Monday:                   |                          |          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Bridge Players                  | Village Condos Clubhouse | 12:30 pm |
| Bingo                           | Brasstown Manor          | 9:30 am  |
| Every Tuesday:                  |                          |          |
| Free GED prep.                  | Old Rec. Center          | 4 pm     |
| Every Wednesday                 |                          |          |
| SMART Recovery                  | Red Cross Building       | 7 pm     |
| Every Thursday:                 |                          |          |
| Free GED prep.                  | Old Rec. Center          | 4 pm     |
| Every Friday:                   |                          |          |
| Bridge Players                  | Village Condos Clubhouse | 12:30 pm |
| Alcoholics Anon.                | Red Cross Building       | 7 pm     |
| Every Sunday:                   |                          |          |
| Alcoholics Anon.                | Red Cross Building       | 7 pm     |
| Second Wednesday of each month: |                          |          |
| Basket Weavers                  | SC Fire Hall             | 10 am    |
| Board of Elections              | Old Rock Jail            | 4 pm     |
| Second Thursday of each month:  |                          |          |
| Mtn. Comm. Seniors              | Senior Center            | 1 pm     |
| Democratic Party                | City Center              | 5 pm     |
| Second Friday of each month:    |                          |          |
| Square Dance Club               | Rec. Center              | 7 pm     |
| Third Monday of each month:     |                          |          |
| Hospital Auxiliary              | Cafeteria                | 1:30 pm  |
| Water Board                     | Water Office             | 6 pm     |
| Third Tuesday of each month:    |                          |          |
| YH Plan Comm.                   | YH City Hall             | 5 pm     |
| Third Wednesday of each month:  |                          |          |
| Quilting Bee                    | McConnell Church         | 10 am    |
| MOAA                            | Call Jack @ 828-321-2896 |          |
| Third Thursday of each month:   |                          |          |
| Co. Comm. Mtg                   | Courthouse               | 5:30 pm  |
| Friendship Comm.                | Clubhouse                | 6 pm     |
| Third Saturday of each month:   |                          |          |
| Goldwing Riders                 | Daniel's Restaurant      | 11 am    |
| Fourth Monday of each month:    |                          |          |
| Red Cross DAT                   | 1298 Jack Dayton Cir.    | 5:30 pm  |
| Fourth Tuesday of each month:   |                          |          |
| Lions Club                      | Daniel's Restaurant      | 6 pm     |
| Fourth Thursday of each month:  |                          |          |
| Republican Party                | New Senior Ctr.          | 6:30 pm  |
| Fourth Friday of each month:    |                          |          |
| Square Dance Club               | Rec. Center              | 7 pm     |
| Last Thursday of each month:    |                          |          |
| Humane Shelter Bd.              | Cadence Bank             | 5:30 pm  |

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## Towns County Herald

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