

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Dear Editor,
With Spring around the corner, and Summer time not far behind, that means sunny and warm to hot days ahead and more people to find themselves at the Beach and Playground area below town.

There are a few issues however, regarding this area that I feel really need to be improved as well as adjusted. I remember several years ago when there was a lifeguard and I felt more safe and secure with my child. Now I don't feel secure or safe with my grandchildren. Last year I noticed many boaters and jet skiers coming way close to the ropes, and often trying to walk across them like the great Wallendas, or untangle the swimmers and etc. on the other side. Very rude, unruly and not to mention dangerous. When there was a lifeguard, there was no such activity and it made swimming and beaching a pleasure.

Another problem is the gazebo and gathering area. When there is a special occasion, people on the outside who are not participants or family or whatever should stay their distance and respect the ones having their parties, etc. and when asked to leave, should do so peacefully and quietly as well as respectfully.

I don't know about bathrooms there but I am sure there are some available instead of porta potties. No one wants to really use those things.

I also think it would be nice to offer refreshments as well at the beach with of course affordable prices. Of course, free to bring own food and drinks always a welcome as well as long as it doesn't clutter up the beach or make a mess or leave stuff behind.

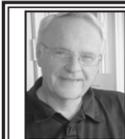
There are ways the beach and playground and pavilion can be improved to be used if the proper adjustments and considerations were made. To take it all upon one's own self and judgement is sometimes not the best way to go.

I would feel safer and more secure if there was a lifeguard or two, and rules and guidelines to follow towards to pavilion and bathrooms and refreshments.

There is plenty of time to work on these things to get established before Memorial Day especially and then for the Summer.

Let's please do it!

Thank You,
Mrs. D. Barnes



RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

I have a lot of respect for David Fagan. Not just because he and his wife have eight kids. But because he and his wife have a vision. A vision to raise eight high-energy, high-achieving kids who are not walking the streets looking for mischief or a handout.

Someone asked him how in the world he was going to come up with enough money to send eight kids to college. His response was a classic. He said in effect, "I don't intend to pay their way through college. Maybe all eight of them don't need to go to college. A lot of kids waste a lot of money and a lot of those kids waste a lot of time. But more than that, whichever of my kids decides to go to college will do so because they came up with the money. They are healthy, they are capable and it develops character in kids when they have to struggle to reach their goals."

My wife and I can vouch for the truth of his statement. From the time they were high school age our kids had decided to go to college. We encouraged them but made it clear that it would be largely at their own expense. During their college years they learned a lot, probably as much outside the classroom as inside. Both of them took a full course load in college; one managed the school bus fleet for a small rural school system near our

home and the other worked as a mechanic and handyman in a car dealership. They both graduated from college, then both went on to get Master's degrees; both graduated debt-free. They worked hard, had a lot of friends but not a lot of spare time, and developed into productive, responsible young adults.

It wasn't that we couldn't have helped them financially - actually we did, with small incentives on occasion. But our motive was that we wanted them to learn to be responsible, entrepreneurial, self-starters. It worked. We are thankful, and so are they.

A lot of families I talk to are in hock for tens of thousands of dollars for school loans - both the kids and the parents. Bad idea. Start an education fund for your youngster, maybe at birth, even if you can only put a few dollars in it. Discuss it with them when they're old enough to understand. Let them begin to add to it as they are able to generate some income; even small amounts. Help them set some goals. Agree to some kind of a match when they hit specific target amounts. Get them working on it early and they'll be a long ways toward an education - whether they go to college or not.

Send your parenting questions to: DrDon@RareKids.net.

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

Family business frequently takes me away from our beloved mountains. I like to travel, but I always miss home when I'm away. When you live in a place day after day, see the same people on a regular basis, sometimes changes can slip by unobserved. When you come and go frequently, change is often more noticeable. Once I came home from a long trip to discover that, seemingly overnight, my parents had grown old. I stopped making long trips after that, for as long as they both lived. I'll never regret that decision.

I am often surprised by the changes I see in Towns County when I return home from a long journey, and it seems that I notice those changes the most during spring. Summer covers us with a green canopy and fall, a coat of many colors. Winter enchants us with shades of gray and misty memories of brightly colored holidays.

Spring, itself, is a beautiful awakening of new life, but there is an undecided season between winter and spring when the cold weather begins to loosen its grip. The land can be stark and revealing during this time. Scars on the land from the previous year are highlighted in harsh detail, like an un-retouched photo of an actor without makeup. There are no leaves to hide the most recent scraping and road building on the mountains; no grass to obscure the unbroken stream of garbage along the roadsides.

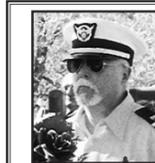
Yes, it appears that some trickle of economic activity still flows in our area. There are more houses in the high country, particularly on the North Carolina side of the mountains. There is some activity in and around Hiawassee. The handful of temporary jobs being created are certainly appreciated by those who need them, and jobs are sorely needed in our area.

What I do not see is any indication that we have learned much from our own economic history. We can build summer homes and houses for retired people to live in until every inch of private land in the area is developed. This will support a handful of itinerant construction jobs. It will line the same pockets that always get lined from the digestion of

land. It will give our children who want to stay in this area an opportunity to serve food and sell trinkets to an aging population with less money to spend as time goes by, but it will provide very little upon which our young people can build a career or a secure economic future.

Let's be honest with ourselves. That secure economic future depends on doing things differently than we have done in the past. We can no longer depend on tourism to sustain us. The lake, with very limited public access, is more of a private pond than a tourist attraction. We have spoiled much of our scenic beauty, even though over half of our county is public land. There are other places for tourists to go that are less trampled and which have more services and activities to offer. And because our private land is limited and much of that has already been developed, we will never see a return to the "glory days" of unplanned and unrestricted growth.

Some of our business and political leaders have long been of the opinion that the economic future of our county will depend on our ability to attract technology jobs to our area. We have had some modest success in doing that, but not nearly enough to move the needle on our economic indicators. We need more, and as we enter a new political season, we need to look for leaders who understand this.



The Veterans' Corner

By
Scott Drummond,
USCG Veteran

Written by Bob Norris

In response to a letter from an aspiring fighter pilot on which military academy to attend, Bob replied with the following:
Young Man,

Congratulations on your selection to the Army, Naval and Air Force Academies.

USAF Snapshot: The USAF is exceptionally well organized and well run. Their training programs are terrific. All pilots are groomed to meet high standards for knowledge and professionalism. Their aircraft are top-notch and extremely well maintained. Their facilities are excellent. Their enlisted personnel are the brightest and the best trained. The USAF is homogenous and macro. No matter where you go, you'll know what to expect, what is expected of you, and you'll be given the training & tools you need to meet those expectations. You will never be put in a situation over your head. Over a 20-year career you will be home for most important family events. Your mom would want you to be an Air Force pilot... so would your wife. Your dad would want your sister to marry one.

Navy Snapshot: Aviators are part of the Navy, but so are Black Shoes (surface warfare) and Bubble Heads (submariners). Furthermore, the Navy is split into two distinctly different Fleets (West and East Coast). The Navy is heterogeneous and micro. Your squadron is your home; it may be great, average, or awful.

A squadron can go from one extreme to the other before you know it. You will spend months preparing for cruise and months on cruise. The quality of the aircraft varies directly with the availability of parts. Senior Navy enlisted are salt of the earth; you'll be proud if you earn their respect. Junior enlisted vary from terrific to the troubled kid the judge made join the service. You will be given the opportunity to lead these people during your career; you will be humbled and get your hands dirty. The quality of your training will vary and sometimes you will miss many important family events. There will be long stretches of tedious duty aboard ship. You will fly in very bad weather and/or at night and you will be scared many times. You will fly with legends in the Navy and they will kick you until you become a lethal force. And some days - when the scheduling gods have smiled upon you - your jet will catapult into a glorious morning over a far-away sea and you will be drop-jawed that someone would pay you to do it. The hottest girl in the bar wants to meet the Naval Aviator. That bar is in Singapore.

P.S.: Air Force pilots wear scarves and iron their flight suits.

P.S.S. And oh, yes, the Army helicopter pilot program? Don't even think about it, those guys are completely crazy. (Edited for brevity and "G" rating, thanks to Bart, USAF)

March Madness



HOUSE

SENATE

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Community Calendar

American Legion Post 23 meets 1st Tuesday of each month at 4 PM at VFW Post 7807, Sunnyside Rd., Hiawassee. Call 706-896-8387 for details. We need your support!
VFW Fish Fry April - October on 2nd & 4th Fridays each month from 4:30 - 7. \$10 per plate.
Towns County Water Board Meeting 3rd Monday of each month at 6 p.m. in the TC Water Office Building.
Mountain Community Seniors meet the second Thursday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 1 p.m.
Towns County Republican Party meets at 6:30 PM the 4th Thursday of each month at the new Senior Center. For more info call 706-994-3919.

Democratic Party of Towns County meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 5 PM at the new Senior Center.

Towns County Planning Commission is held the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Courthouse.
Towns County Commissioners meeting is the 3rd Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in the courthouse.
School Board Meeting, 2nd Monday each month at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.

Hiawassee City Council 1st Tuesday of month 4 p.m., at City Hall.
Young Harris City Council, 1st Tuesday of month at 7 p.m., Young Harris City Hall.

The Unicorn Masonic Lodge #259 meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m.
Stephens Lodge #414 F & AM meets the 1st Thursday of each month at 1:30 PM in Young Harris. Sat. morning breakfast 2nd Sat. of each month from 8 - 10:30 AM. \$6 adults, \$3 12 & under.

Towns County Board of Elections holds its monthly meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 4 p.m. at the Elections Office (Old Rock Jail).

Towns County Historical Society meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the old Rec Center in Hiawassee at 5:30 p.m. 706-896-1060, www.townshistory.org

Bridge Players intermediate level meets at 12:30 p.m. on Mondays & Fridays at the Towns County Rec Center.
Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild, Inc (MRACG) meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at Daniel's Steakhouse, Hiawassee. The Board meets at 4 p.m., and the Guild at 6. Call us 706-896-0932.
Mountain Computer User Group meets the 2nd Monday of each month. Meetings start at 6 p.m. and visitors are welcome. Details can be found at www.mcug.org.
Chattahoochee-Nantahala Chapter, Trout Unlimited meets 2nd Thursday of each month at Cadence Bank in Blairsville. 5 p.m. Fly Tying - 7 p.m. General Meeting. Everyone welcome. www.ngatu692.com.

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) meets the 3rd Monday of each month at various area restaurants. For information call John at 706-896-2430 or visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridgemountains.
Alcoholics Anonymous: 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.

Mothers of Preschoolers meets the third Thursday of each month at First Baptist Church of Blairsville from 6 - 8 p.m. Call the church at 706-745-2469.

Chatuge Regional Hospital Auxiliary on the 3rd Monday of each month, except the months of July, October and December, in the hospital cafeteria at 1:30 p.m.
Mountain Magic Table Tennis Club meets 3 p.m. Thursdays at Pine Log Baptist Church Fellowship Hall in Brasstown. Ping Pong players welcome. Call Jerry (828) 837-7658.

The Humane Society Mountain Shelter Board of Directors meets the 1st Thursday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at Cadence Bank in Blairsville.

The Towns County Alzheimer's Support Group meets the first Tuesday of each month at 1:30 PM in the Family Life Center of McConnell Memorial Baptist Church. For more info call Carol at 706-896-6407.

The Appalachian Shrine Club meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM at the Allegheny

Lodge in Blairsville. For more info call William 706-994-6177.

GMREC Garden Tours every Monday 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Shooting Creek Basket Weavers meets the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 10 a.m. at the Shooting Creek Fire Hall Community Center. For more info www.shootingcreek-basketweavers.com.

Friendship Community Club meets the 3rd Thursday of the month at 6 PM at Clubhouse, 1625 Hwy. 76, 706-896-3637.

Goldwing Road Riders meets the 3rd Saturday of each month at Daniel's Steakhouse in Hiawassee. We eat at 11 and meeting begins at 12.

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meets every Wednesday evening at 7 PM at the Red Cross building on Jack Dayton Circle.

Caregiver support group meets 2nd Tuesday of each month, 3 p.m. at Brasstown Manor, located at 108 Church St., Hiawassee. Call 706-896-4285 for more info.

Enchanted Valley Square Dance Club. Dances 2nd & 4th Fridays at Towns Co. Rec. Ctr. from 7-9 PM. \$5/person to dance. Free to watch.
Brasstown Woodturners Guild meets 1st Saturday of month at 9:30 AM in HHS shop. For more info call J. C. at 706-896-5711.

Mountain Amateur Radio Club (MARC) meets 6:30 PM the 1st Monday of month at 1298 Jack Dayton Cir. (next to EMS), Hiawassee. For info call Al 706-896-9614 after 6 PM.

The Board of the Towns County Chamber of Commerce meet the second Monday of every month at 8 a.m. at the Chamber office, 1411 Jack Dayton Circle, Young Harris.

The Quilting Bee at McConnell Memorial Baptist Church in Family Life Center, Room 216. 1st & 3rd Wednesday of each month from 10 AM - 3 PM. Bring a sack lunch. For more information call Kathy at 706-835-6721 or Marilyn at 706-897-4367.

Mountain Coin Club meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the North Georgia Tech campus in Blairsville. Guests are welcome. For more info, call 706-379-1488.

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Publication Number 635540. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawassee, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points.

EMAIL Address: tcherald@windstream.net

POSTMASTER: Send change of address to:

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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 EMAILED OR MAILED TO: Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: 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.