

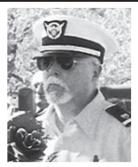
DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

What Freedom Means To Me

The following was written by a wonderful Towns County 8th grader, Audrey Goeltz, a credit to her teacher, Julie Thompson. The simplicity and yet profound message reflected herein reflects genuine American spirit.

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
 USCG Veteran



What Freedom Means to Me

By: Audrey Goeltz
 "Freedom is something that means a lot to me. Although many people in the United States and other free countries take freedom for granted because they do not even think about it, and in other cases they cannot imagine what it would be like to live under tyranny. As Ronald Reagan said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same." I am very thankful and blessed to have liberty.

In the United States, we are privileged with freedoms that people in some other nations do not have. For example, if I lived in a Communist country, like China, or in some countries in the Middle East that are controlled by ISIS, I would not have freedom of religion, of speech, to vote, or even the right to work. People who do not have these freedoms, do not have any say in who the leader of their country is, and do not get to have their own beliefs. Many citizens of free countries do not realize how lucky we are just to have these rights. I am very grateful for the people who fought in the past and are continuing to fight for our freedom. This would include people in the military and those who protested for civil rights, like Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks.

However, freedom is a big responsibility. It means that citizens have to be independent. It means that people have to be responsible for making right choices. Sometimes it means we even have to sacrifice things. For example, people who fight in the military. They risk their lives so we can have our freedom.

Freedom means something different to everybody. To me, freedom allows me to have my own opinions, and lets me live the life that I want to live. I am very proud of the freedom we have in the United States. In conclusion freedom is a right but it is also a privilege."

Audrey scored very high for our VFW nationally sponsored Patriots Pen award, District 2. Honored to be at Towns County School for the awards ceremony were Glenn Greenwald, John Richards, VFW Post 7807 Commander, District 2 Commander Richard Hack and of course Audrey's proud teacher, Julie Thompson.

For more information on this VFW sponsored annual essay writing contest please go to: www.vfw.org or call the Patriots Pen office at 816-968-1117. TCHS also had a winner, Sarah Bastian, in the VFW sponsored HS level, "Voice of Democracy". Please see related article by Mason Mitcham elsewhere in this edition of TCH.

Semper Paratus

Towns County Dodged Wildfire Bullet!

In spite of all of your good Firewise efforts Towns County had its first Wildfire in 2016 last Thursday. The weather conditions that day were just right for a fire... low humidity, steady easterly winds, dry conditions (something we are not accustomed to) and a fire in a brush pile at the base of a steep slope off Hooper Branch. Towns County Fire Rescue was on the scene quickly and immediately realized that because of the steepness of the slope, the attack would have to be made with hand tools, fire rakes, shovels and leaf blowers to clear a fire break in the path of the fire that was rapidly gaining ground on them. The slope was too steep for the Forestry Bulldozers to work on, so fire rakes were passed out and the work began to clear the leaves out of the way of the fire. The fire was moving rapidly up the slope and the fire crews realized that they could not catch it so they re-deployed to the top of the slope to set up defensive positions ahead of the fire. Fire engines from Station 1 and 3 were on the initial attack and Fire Engines from Station 4 and Station 5 also responded up Riverside Drive on the eastern flank of the fire to protect the homes in the path of the fire. When engine 5 and I arrived on the scene, the fire was already burning at the lower edge of the narrow road leading to the home at the end of the ridge. As I passed through the smoke, flames had jumped the road and were starting to spread on the upper side of the road. The race was on to try to stop it before it could go over the top of the ridge and head down the other side threatening more houses. GFC's wildfire crew arrived on the scene with a Bulldozer and quickly cleared a line in the fire's path and then the lit a back fire to remove the dry fuel in the path of the on rushing fire.

Meanwhile Towns County Firefighters used hoses from engines 5 and 4 to douse the flames at the bottom of the slope around the homes. A US Forest Service Crew arrived on the scene with leaf blowers and hand tools and built a fire line to help stop the fires advance. The Forest Service also called in their helicopter with a Heli-bucket slung below it to dip water from the lake and drop it on the rapidly advancing fire. Thanks to quick action by the Towns County Fire Rescue, the Georgia Forestry Commission, the US Forest Service, and mutual aid from Clay County NC Fire department, the 17 acre wildfire that could have turned into a disaster was extinguished in a few hours and potential damage to the homes in the area was avoided. Now for some good news! Firewise methods that we have been preaching for the past several years work! The Firewise Coalition's favorite line of: It's not a matter of IF a wildfire will strike, but When came true on Thursday! This is a good example of When. One of the homes that Town's crews were sent to defend was at the end of a long, steep, narrow, one lane road, but it had at least a 50 foot of defensible space around it and when the fire reached the cleared area it ran out of fuel and burned around it and continued into the forest where the ground crews, bulldozer, and helicopter attacked and extinguished it.

During the post-fire wrap-up, we noticed that snags about 50 feet up on two trees below the house were burning long after the fire had been extinguished. The fire was low leaf fire approximately 2 feet off the ground but the radiant heat had ignited these limbs 50 feet above the flames. This is a good example of how radiant heat given off by a fire can ignite combustible materials from a distance. This type of heat can easily ignite a home

under the right conditions if the flames get too close to combustible materials within what should be the home's defensible space. Firewood, gas tanks, leaves, and other combustible materials should be removed from around the house or out-buildings to prevent a fire caused by radiant heat. Firewise and wildfire prevention is not rocket science but just good old common sense, remove fuel to prevent wildfire. When our ancestors swept their yards they were practicing Firewise principles, so let's keep the tradition alive and be Firewise! If there is no fuel then there can be no fire!

For more information on wildfires, Firewise, Ready-Set-Go or Fire Adapted Communities, contact Frank Riley, Executive Director, Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D council at info.ccrd@gmail.com.

RC&D
Frank Riley
 Executive Director



Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Hemlocks are an integral part of our forest ecosystems. They provide shelter for animals in the winter, keep streams cool, and aid in maintaining unique plant communities. However, for almost 70 years, our native hemlocks have been under a heavy amount of stress from the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA). If you have seen small, white, fuzzy spots on your hemlock trees, they are undoubtedly infested with this little critter and, if the tree is left untreated, HWA will suck the life out of it.

HWA was first detected in the eastern part of the United States in 1951, though it had been on the West Coast since the 1920s. It is native to Asia, and it is thought it was introduced on an imported Asian hemlock tree. Since its detection, it has spread to 18 states, including Georgia, and has devastated hemlock stands throughout the Appalachians. In the native habitat, HWA populations rarely cause damage because Asian hemlocks have developed resistance to it, and it has many natural predators in this environment. However, our native hemlocks do not have the same defenses and it has no predators here, allowing populations to explode and drain the life out of trees.

This insect has a unique and complex life cycle with six stages: one egg, four nymphal (immature) phases, and one adult. Adult females that overwinter are oval-shaped, soft-bodied and black, but have a characteristic "woolly" appearance (hence their name). Newly hatched HWAs are reddish brown and readily crawl or disperse on the wind to find new places to feed. They will often spread to a new branch or tree and situate themselves at the base of the needles. They have specialized sucking mouthparts that are like needles which they inject into the twig to access the tree's nutrients. Once they insert their mouthparts, they stay attached to the tree for the rest of their lives as they mature and produce eggs of their own.

HWA is found most often on the newest growth because this is where the tree directs the most nutrients. However, as they feed, the tree senses the attack and blocks off affected area. This not only disrupts nutrients from getting to the insects but also to the rest of the tree beyond where they are feeding. This leads to branch death and, depending on the infestation, death of the entire tree. The greater the population of HWA on a tree, the more dramatic the hemlock's immune response, and the sooner it dies.

The best way to treat HWA problems is to prevent them. You can do this by treating your hemlocks with an insecticide (usually imidacloprid) that is injected into the soil. This allows the roots to take up the chemical and spread it throughout the tree, though it can take 6-12 months to fully protect. If you have previously treated a hemlock, after about 5-7 years, you may start to see HWA on the lower, older branches. This means that the treatment is running out and needs to be reapplied. To eliminate populations of HWA that may have established during the lapse in treatment, a tree and shrub pesticide spray containing imidacloprid may be applied to the infected branches.

In addition to pesticides, a powerful means of controlling these insects is releasing their natural predators. Several species of predatory beetles which specialize on HWA have been imported and evaluated for their ability to control these populations. Luckily, the results of these beetle trials are promising and provide additional hope for our hemlocks.

UGA extension
From the Ground Up
Melissa Mattee



Letters to The Editor

To the Editor:

Towns County representatives meet with GDOT:

The discussion was regarding maintenance and improvements of Hwy. 76, Hwy. 288, and Hwy. 339. Attendees were Commissioner Kendall, Rick Stancil (Hiawassee City Manager), Nicolette Wade (City of Young Harris), Liz Ordane (Hiawassee Council member), Brandon Kirby, GDOT, Shiale Giles, GDOT, Matt Needham, GDOT, as well as Noel Turner (President Towns County Homeowners Assoc), Ben Lilley (Towns Co. HOA), and Jack Miller (Towns Co. HOA).

Brandon, thanks for meeting with representatives from Towns County yesterday. I would like to sum up some of the salient points discussed and anticipate your follow up as we discussed. I may have left out some of the issues, so all attendees please add or correct comments below.

1. Repaving Hwy 76: you indicated that we did not rank in the top 10 for repaving based on the "Paces Rating (sp?)" Please let us know where we rank and a projection of when we can expect repaving.

2. Cross Walks: there needs to be serious consideration as a priority for life safety at numerous locations throughout Towns County for additional cross walks. A few locations were mentioned including one at the hospital, TCHS, Holiday Inn, Brasstown Valley, flashing light at PO.

3. Routine Maintenance: It was pointed out that Hwy 288 and 339 have a significant amount of trash along the shoulders on a consistent basis. You said that the new budget might allow for additional pickups beyond the minimum of 3 times per growing season we currently receive. Signage in the ROW was also addressed. A solution would be to post a sign at the intersection of Hwy 75 / Hwy 76, stating the code and fine. Or, fine the offenders. It's typically the same violators who will continue to abuse the law if not fined.

4. Bike Lanes: you can see that I put this as the last priority. The bigger concerns are 1-3, however, Senator Gooch promised he would look into this. Here again we are talking about public safety and in addition to tourism benefits. There is no consistency in the current lane, median, shoulder widths along the entire corridor, so it's not accurate to make a blanket statement that it can't be done. At minimum, reduction of the overlay of asphalt at various sections of the road as opposed to the reclamation process has created a 3 to 4" ledge which is dangerous for cyclists, pedestrians, as well as cars. This needs to be corrected. My terminology may not be correct, but the current status presents a serious hazard to public safety.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Noel Turner

Have something to sell? Let the Herald work for you!



Deadline for the Towns County Herald is Friday by 5 PM • 706-896-4454

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, 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.



Towns County Community Calendar

Bridge Players	Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Every Monday:		
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 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
First Monday of each month:		
Mtn. Amat. Radio	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	6:30 pm
First Tuesday of each month:		
Alzheimer's Supp.	McConnell Church	1:30 pm
American Legion	VFW Post 7807	4 pm
Hiaw. City Council	City Hall	5:30 pm
Young Harris Coun.	YH City Hall	7 pm
First Wednesday of each month:		
Quilting Bee	McConnell Church	10 am
First Thursday of each month:		
Stephens Lodge	Lodge Hall	7:30 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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