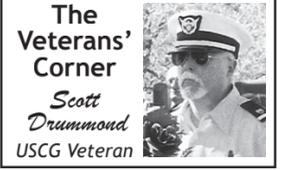


DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## USMRA Open House April 2016

Many of us were truly blessed on the weekend of 22-24 April 2016 to be the guests of our North Georgia US Army Rangers and our all volunteer USMRA over in Dahlonega, GA. Please allow me to open with the undeniable fact that these great Americans are amongst the most humble, generous, good humored, family oriented, decent, peace loving American patriots, and as a unique brotherhood, the friendliest I have ever known. Make no mistake they are also very smart, skilled warriors who accept the harsh realities of a world filled with bad actors, those many who would have no mercy on any of us; those who hate the freedoms and liberties of our Sovereign Republic, and as such are dedicated warriors who defend all of us, when needed. This very limited description applies to each and every Ranger I have ever met over at Camp Frank D. Merrill, from the oldest retiree down to the lowest ranked active duty enlisted trainee. The all volunteer USMRA (US Mountain Ranger Association) fully supports our active duty Rangers, as well as a plethora of community activities and projects.



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

I would estimate there were over a thousand guests and family members Saturday alone, when we were amazed by demonstrations of helicopter assaults, ambush demonstrations, hand-to-hand combat skills, a ten thousand foot HALO skydiving demonstration, a swearing in of new trainees, and all sorts of smiles, gentlemanly hospitality, surrounded by families, children and several dogs, as if one huge loving family. Never, ever a harsh face or unkind word, even from those who'd suffered and sacrificed much in the harsh unforgiving arena of combat was exhibited. Not an ounce of any sort of negativity from those who live by common sense, old school realities and a love of our nation and each other.

We were also humbled by a ceremony to sincerely honor America's Fallen Rangers. We, each and every American, owe all we are blessed with to those who have given so much, up to and including their lives for others. From my humble perspective, every day is Memorial Day. Finally we were treated to a Wild Game Dinner on Saturday afternoon, prepared by volunteers and their families who worked hard for several days dedicated to this entire event. Many of us tried to sample everything, not knowing all of the food sources, but it was all excellent and we left away fully nourished, and somewhat stuffed! In fact they were running out of these tasty dishes.

At a midpoint in the many amazing activities two college scholarships were presented to high school students, the funding donated by the USMRA who only ask for and survive on donations. (Hint!) Go here: [usmountainranger.org/activities/scholarship\\_fund.htm](http://usmountainranger.org/activities/scholarship_fund.htm). Please do yourself and family a favor and go here to learn more about the USMRA: [usmountainranger.org/index.html](http://usmountainranger.org/index.html). Try to make a donation, if possible and make plans to attend their annual open house next year.

*Semper Paratus*

## Letters to The Editor

**To the Editor:**  
*High Handed political tactics result in a Special Called City Council meeting to be declared illegal by city executives.*

Council members were informed via e-mail on April 4, 2016 that officials from TISHCO would be making a presentation concerning a proposed low-income housing project during the regular scheduled Council meeting on April 5, 2016. This notification was only 24 hours prior to the regular Council meeting and did not provide time for Council Members to study or research the project. The proposed site is next door to the Georgia Vision Center on Main Street. This project was originally proposed in 2012. TISHCO failed to obtain the required application for funding.

The TISHCO presentation was relatively short and lacking in detail. TISHCO made it clear that this presentation was only the first step in obtaining an application seeking funding for a low income project. Several Council Members and attendees questioned and reaffirmed the purpose of TISHCO'S presentation.

Begin high handed tactics here. The official minutes of the April 5 City Council Meeting, published by the City Manager, reveal that the City Council approved the low in come project.

Council Persons, Liz Ordiales, Anne Mitchell and Kris Berong requested a Special Council Meeting to clarify and discuss the issues. It was scheduled for April 14 at 5 p.m.

Mayor Barbara Mathis, after receiving a call from Ms. Angel Ledford, recruited her to speak in support of the low income housing project and allowed her 30 minutes at the opening of the meeting. As Council Members and other attendees attempted to speak with questions or in rebuttal to the "facts" in favor of the project, the Meeting was declared illegal. Robert's Rules of Order were referred to as justification for the ruling.

Loud voices, confusion and pointed fingers from all corners of the packed Council Chambers erupted for a short time. When order was somewhat restored, Liz Ordiales was very reluctantly granted 5 minutes to speak by Mayor Barbara Mathis. It was agreed that further discussion would take place at the next Council Meetings. Please note that until recently the time limit for presentation by the public has been a total of 15 minutes. Three speakers mean 5 minutes a piece. The new time limit is 30 minutes total. A person wishing to speak must apply by a letter to get on the agenda the Friday before a Council meeting or sign in prior to the beginning of the work session.

It is up to the executives if and when you will be allowed to speak. Ms. Ledford did not request to speak but was invited to speak by Mayor Barbara Mathis and granted the total 30 minutes. Technically, no more time was available...even though the meeting was "illegal." If people are speaking to the Council at the behest of the Council they need not be on the agenda.

Why was it "illegal?" It seems Council Members can not call a Special Meeting for a reconsideration of a referendum after a 24 hour period of time. It seems that our highly paid City Manager was unaware of this guideline when he scheduled the meeting. He conveniently found that verbiage in the Robert's Rules of Order 5 minutes before the meeting start, yet he allowed the meeting to continue, allowing Ms. Callahan-Ledford to speak in favor on the project and restating TISHCO'S requirements for living in those apartments. Then, with his book of Robert's Rules of Order in hand, he called the meeting "illegal". Great timing!

In the past the City Executives have told Council Members they have to get on the agenda in order to discuss issues of concern. It's their job to discuss all matters concerning the community, pro and con or whatever. Get on the agenda to do so? I think not. By the way, we do not have a shortage of low income housing in Hiawassee. We do have potable water, sewer capacity and other infrastructure problems that our new Council Members are aware of.

Come see them in action. Do we have high handed political tactics at work at City Hall? Please attend your City Council Meetings and see for yourself. It's more exciting than anything you will see on TV... and far more important.

John L. Holmes  
Taxpayer, Property Owner  
Hiawassee Resident

## Cultural Literacy

A fortune cookie once told me, "You like Chinese food." By the same token it requires no mystical power or skill at prognostication to conclude that reading this newspaper suggests you are among a declining population of literate Americans.

This belief relies, however, on the classical definition of the word, "literacy." Since the dominant means of communication is now electronic, smaller thoughts are abbreviated onto even smaller screens, and the definition of literacy now begins to include the use of the "dominant symbol systems of a culture." (At this point I might text "LOL," but Facebook reports that "Haha" is currently more popular.)

Language evolves over time, as anyone who has read Shakespeare knows, and if you've watched Ken Burns' "Civil War" series or read any of the companion literature, you also know that a college graduate of today would have trouble matching the eloquence demonstrated in letters written by ordinary soldiers 150 years ago.

"Cultural literacy" is a term coined by academic, E.D. Hirsch. It refers to an ability to participate fluently in a culture, to have an understanding of that culture's history, idiomatic expressions or, in the age of the internet, to understand its "memes."

Just fifty years ago, culturally literate high school graduates would be expected to have mastered a broad range of information. They would have understood basic scientific concepts, mathematical principles and grammar. They would have been able to name their representatives in government from the local to the national level. They would have had a basic understanding of geography and history and civics.

Not so today. The "dominant themes" of popular culture today include intimate information about one-name celebrities, what they are wearing, with whom they are sleeping and the lyrics (such as they are) of their latest hits. Today's youth can recite this information in detail from memory. But ask someone under forty to name their representatives in Congress, list any of the Bill of Rights, or find Finland on a map, and chances are they will have to rely on their smart phone for an answer. So many lives today are filtered through those tiny screens that are our constant companions from morning to night. These little screens are becoming our eyes and ears for perceiving the world. They are replacing our memories. They are our social lives.

The technology which enables this virtual life is phenomenal. The ability to access vast libraries of information at a touch has remarkable potential, and there are certainly individuals who are using that potential to better themselves and the world in which we live.

From a physiological perspective our brains all have roughly the same capacity for processing information, and while young people today are certainly no less intelligent than our forebears, the information so many of us choose to process today, the minutiae of our day-to-day lives and the vacuous noise of popular culture, does nothing to educate or empower us. In this age of information, ignorance is a choice, and it is a choice that is being made, in my opinion, far too often.

## The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

## Fire Adapted Communities and Fire Learning Network

This week's RC&D News is brought to you from Jacksonville, FL where I am attending the 4th annual Fire Adaptive Communities (FAC) Learning Network conference. It seems just like yesterday (2013) that I was writing this from Boise, ID where we kicked off the national FAC program and Towns County was chosen as one of the eight FAC Pilot hubs across the United States with Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D (ChestChatt) as the administrator.

The FAC mission is to develop and implement the FAC program and spread it across the land, or at least around north Georgia in the beginning. ChestChatt has very successfully guided the Towns FAC hub for the past 3 years and we have been successful beyond our expectations with our Firewise, Ready Set Go and FAC program in Towns County, all due to our citizen's involvement. Our work has garnered national recognition and I have presented our success story many times across the US and with many more to come.

FireWise is a program that is part of FAC and here in Towns County we have developed the leading FireWise Communities program in Georgia with 19 recognized Communities out of the 91 total in Georgia. FAC encompasses FireWise, Ready-Set-Go, forest management, fuel mitigation, local fire capacity, wildfire education, and other wildfire related programs.

Fire Adapted Communities are communities with people, structures and landscaping that are prepared to withstand the effects of wildfires. A Fire Adapted Community is one where "the population understands the threat posed by wildfires and takes the personal actions necessary to help minimize the risk. Ideally a Fire Adaptive Community is one that can stand on its own, with no intervention from outside fire services, against a wildfire. To help achieve the FAC goal we have created a Citizens Coalition that has: held yearly community clean up days to lessen the fire risks in the neighborhoods, trained the emergency responders with live exercises, taught the citizens about the wildfire risks around their homes, educated citizens about when, where, and how to evacuate neighborhoods when a wildfire threatens, identified internal safety zones for evacuation, entertained our students with Smokey Bear, and attended many local events to spread the FAC/Firewise word.

A Fire Adapted Community has a combination or mixture of similar characteristics some of which are listed below: The community exists within or adjacent to a fire-prone ecosystem and has a defined geographic boundary. Residents possess the knowledge, skills, and willingness to properly prepare their homes before a wildfire threatens, prepare to evacuate, and safely evacuate when necessary. Local fire suppression forces have the adequate skills, equipment and capacity to manage wildfire (training). Residents and the local fire agencies have met and understand the local fire suppression capability and related fire-response expectations (RSG exercise Lake Forest Estates 2015). Landowners are aware of fuels threats on their property and have taken action to mitigate the danger (Firewise). A community wildfire protection plan (CWPP) is developed and implemented (first one in Georgia). The community has embraced the need for defensible space by creating fuel reduction zones and internal safety zones, where treatments have been properly spaced, sequenced, and maintained over the long term (USFS Lands). Property owners have an understanding of their responsibilities before, during and after a fire (Ready-Set-Go).

Public expectations are realistic and not based on reliance of government to provide all answers. Individuals accept personal responsibility for their property. The public understands that fire authorities cannot provide protection for every structure affected during a wildfire; and understands that it is dangerous for firefighters to attempt to protect a structure where owners have not taken the appropriate measures to make it defensible (defensible space). A community that achieves the FAC designation gives its residents satisfaction in knowing that when wildfire threatens the first responders are trained to help the citizens survive with all of their stuff intact and the citizens know what to do.

For more information on Firewise, Fire Adapted Communities, Ready-Set-Go, or your local emergency response capacity, contact Frank M. Riley, Jr. (706) 894-1591 email [info.ccrd@gmail.com](mailto:info.ccrd@gmail.com) or visit the web site [www.chestchattred.org](http://www.chestchattred.org).

### RC&D

Frank Riley  
Executive Director



## Carpenter Bees and Bumble Bees

The warm weather has finally brought the familiar buzz of pollinators such as hummingbirds, insects, and various other nectar-loving critters. As many of us know, some of the most important of these assets to your garden are the busy little bees we see zipping around sipping the sweet nectar and catching pollen on their fuzzy bodies. This includes honey bees, bumble bees, and even those pesky carpenter bees. Because carpenter bees can be such pests, it is important to be able to distinguish them from other pollinators such as bumble bees.

Carpenter bees are large bees that burrow into dry wood to create a shelter for themselves and their young. Unfortunately, their favorite hangout spots tend to be our porches, outdoor furniture, and any other wooden structures located outside. The carpenter bees that we currently see outdoors are the surviving generation from last fall. These bees will hover around whatever wood they can find until they find a suitable spot to burrow. They will chew a perfect circle about half an inch in diameter. Once the hole is about an inch deep, bees will then burrow sideways to create corridors with the grain of the wood. The female will fill this burrow with a paste of pollen and nectar for her future young to eat. This paste can sometimes be seen leaking out of the hole. After she mates, she will return to her burrow to deposit her egg which will hatch and develop throughout the rest of the year. These bees will survive throughout the winter and cause more damage the following year. Carpenter bees do not form hives like honeybees, but they are somewhat social in that they will often expand their burrows to connect with those of other carpenter bees. This forms a network of tunnels that can, in time, cause considerable structural damage.

At first sight, carpenter bees look almost identical to bumble bees. However, the abdomen (back portion) of carpenter bees is black and shiny with almost no hair, while the abdomen of the bumble bee is covered in mostly yellow hairs. Bumble bees are also somewhat social, but they do not burrow into wood to create their communities. They prefer soil. Bumble bees construct nests underground and, unlike the carpenter bees, usually have a single queen whose main purpose is to reproduce and is cared for by other members of the community. Their hives are typically anywhere from 50 to 400 individual bees, which is far smaller than their cosmopolitan honeybee cousins who form hives of around 50,000 or more.

Carpenter bees are tricky to get rid of. They are highly effective burrowers, so even if you treat one hole, they can easily make another. One effective way to combat these pests is to treat their burrows in the evening or at night by spraying a bee and wasp aerosol insecticide into their burrows. While male carpenter bees cannot sting, the females can sting if provoked so exercise caution when treating burrows. Do not repair the carpenter bee damage until the bee has had a chance to exit the hole and come into contact with the insecticide. Typically, one treatment in spring and one in summer will greatly reduce carpenter bee numbers, and once the population is culled, you can repair the damage using wood putty or dowels.

To prevent future damage, paint or varnish outdoor wooden surfaces. Carpenter bees are less likely to chew through this treated wood to create burrows. However, these bees have no problem chewing through wood that has only been stained.



## 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
	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
	Second Monday of each month:	
Chamber Board	1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
Historical Society	Old Rec. Center	5:30 pm
Mtn. Comp. Users	<a href="http://www.mcug.org">www.mcug.org</a>	6 pm
Planning Comm.	Courthouse	7 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoy Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
	Second Tuesday of each month:	
Caregiver support	Brasstown Manor	3 pm
Arts & Crafts Guild	Calvary Alliance Chapel	6 pm
Liions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Mtn. Coin Club	N. GA Tech	6 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	Civic 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

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## Towns County Herald

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