

## EMC...from Page 1

...during that time, currently, I'm on the board of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce.

"I think I have the integrity to do what's right for the vast majority of the membership," Malone said. "And I

have no special interests, I'm just a residential customer; I don't have a business interest tied into the EMC.

"Those are the reasons I'm running, and those are the reasons I believe I am qualified," Malone said.

Malone would need approximately 105-110 signatures to get his name on the Board of Directors' ballot for Union County.

"If people would like to sign the petition, they can e-mail me at ptm4936@gmail.

com, or they can call me at (706) 835-1308," Malone said.

Malone joins Towns County petition candidate Roy Perren, and Fannin County petition candidate Larry Williams as they try to do what Phillips, Charles Jenkins and Chris

Logan did last year – become directors by petitioning to be placed on the ballot.

Also, on Friday, at the Mountain Movers & Shakers meeting at Mary's Southern Grill in Young Harris, Charles Rich will announce he is a

petition candidate for the Union County director for BRMEMC Board of Directors.

Rich was a Republican candidate for Union County Sole Commissioner in 2012. He lost to Incumbent Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris.

## Health...from Page 1

Health Department Deborah Burrell will be retiring at the end of May, which opens up an opportunity for the board to simply not replace her position.

This would allow the board to save money in the budget, but would potentially cut into services offered by the health department, as Burrell is one of only two nurses on staff – the other is County Nurse Manager Roxanne Barrett, RNP.

"We've been making hard choices here for a number of years," said Dr. Westfall. "Back when we were furloughing two days a month,

that meant that there were no services available in the community on those days. We moved a little bit beyond that to where we at least were able to restore services, but the hard choices now are the level of staffing that we can afford for the county.

"Ideally, it would be good to have two nurses that could work together, but it looks like, because of funding, we may drop down to one nurse," said Dr. Westfall. "And if we don't have backup when that nurse isn't available, services wouldn't be available. But that's just a reality of the funding."

On that Thursday, the board decided to recommend that Burrell not be replaced in order to save money in the budget.

"The motion is for Dr. Westfall to explore the backup nurse from either Rabun and/or Union County, and no furlough days, and not replace Deborah, and for clerical staff to be assigned for Tony, the environmentalist," said Board Member Diris Farmer.

The backup nurse from Rabun or Union would come into play if Barrett could not be at work, or if demand was too great on any given day, but as it currently stands, there is

no reserve of backup nurses sitting at the ready from other counties.

"Typically, we will have two nurses," said Dr. Westfall. "But again, this is our smallest county, and so the demand is less because we are the smallest county. We've got 10,000 people, Rabun's got 16,000. Many of our other counties are 25, 30, 40,000, something like that, so it's easier to make the case that they need more staffing.

"If you just look at the size of the county, it might be easy to say that on an average, we only have X number of people, and one nurse should be able to handle that. But that's

like that old saying, if you put one foot in boiling water and one foot in freezing water, on the average you're comfortable."

The board will hold a called meeting to finalize the budget after Dr. Westfall explores what options are available after the April 23rd board meeting, with a final budget to be submitted no later than July 1, 2015.

Employees of the Towns County Health Department, as well as representatives from the main office for District 2 Public Health, gave reports on the status of the health department and its functions.

According to the latest annual report by Dr. Edie Parsons, 20 percent of the population of Towns County was served directly by the health department, with important health services including vaccinations, family planning, dental, child and adult health, as well as various areas of women's health.

Also in 2014, Tony Berrong, the county's environmentalist with the health department, conducted 1,518 services, including food permitting and restaurant inspections, as well as on-site sewage management services, which include permits, inspections and site evaluations, and other services.

## Prom...from Page 1

Manto, even though both of them brought different people as dates.

"We've been in the same classes throughout the grades and we've never been separated, and we've always been really close and we've always been there for each other," said Manto.

They agreed that the best thing about prom was being with friends.

"And eating," added Manto.

Moss is going to Kennesaw in the fall for electrical engineering, and Manto is attending Mercer for marketing.

After the senior walk, in which all the seniors lined up and were announced by the DJ, Zach Sewell and Karlie Albach were announced as prom king and prom queen.



## Rabies...from Page 1

of vet visits in between are those that get vaccinated annually," he said. "It'll actually cut down on your veterinary expenses in the long run, because they're not getting sick as much."

Of course, rabies affects both cats and dogs and can come from as nearby as your backyard.

"It's very dangerous," Vardeman said. "There are treatments for rabies if you catch it in time, but it is a virus that attacks the nervous system and eventually the brain, and once it gets in there it's very difficult."

"Rabies is out in the wild-life," said Vardeman. "The most common wildlife for rabies is raccoons, skunks, foxes, bats, maybe some of the coyotes and the bobcats that might be out there."

Dr. Vardeman said that animals most often contract rabies by fighting. Rabies occurs when an infected animal bites another infected animal. "It's not something that is necessar-

ily airborne," he said. "We're lucky in this area that we don't have a lot of reported cases, but with all the wildlife we have, we know it's a threat."

Humans can get rabies as well. "The most common way for people to get rabies is from a dog or a cat that has it. Might be their own pet, might be a stray that they're help out and they get bit," said Dr. Vardeman.

"Anybody who gets bitten by a stray animal that might be sick or diseased or just aggressive for no reason, most hospitals and doctors will strongly recommend a rabies treatment," he went on.

Around Towns County, Vardeman mentioned, are several "hotbeds" of stray cats that consist of tomcats and females. Around spring they begin to reproduce, and people start to feed them.

"There's certain backyards and neighborhood where people have been feeding these

feral cats, and they can't catch them and they keep growing. After a few years, these hotspot areas just explode with cats," said Vardeman. More feral animals mean more of a risk to domesticated animals.

Luckily, there are several local organizations that find feral animals and help vaccinate and rehabilitate them. Organizations such as Katz and Dawgs, Wholly Cats, Castaway Critics, Pet Rescue, and Operation Pup are helping to make sure that animals don't harm themselves or others out in the wild.

Dr. Vardeman said that he doesn't necessarily want people to turn away a starving animal for fear of rabies, just to be careful. "Everybody's got a big heart, and you just don't want to see them starve to death," he said. "But we just try to make every effort that we can with these rescue organizations to try to catch these cats. The main thing is not to let it get out of hand."

## Law Suit...from Page 1

presence and input in this case will likely be mandatory."

The Waites lawsuit asks for a "Writ of Mandamus," which would require the city "to issue a stop work order against Stines and to otherwise abide by the County Ordinances and/or the 2010 plan."

The lawsuit also contends that city defendants are in violation of the Georgia Open Records Act, and wishes

the court to find them so, and fine each of them \$1,000 "and assess against them Plaintiffs' reasonable attorney's fees."

A hearing was held on Thursday, April 30, at the Towns County Courthouse, to address "why Plaintiff's demands for temporary relief should not be granted."

Enotah Judicial Circuit Superior Court Judge Raymond George recused himself from

the case, as Towns County is listed as a defendant, and he cannot hear cases in which the county is listed as a defendant, as he is an elected official of the county.

Judges Murphy Miller and Stan Gunter, both superior court judges in the Enotah Judicial Circuit, are expected to follow Judge George's lead, and the hearing will take place at a date to be determined.

## Shakers...from Page 1

reached out in a letter to commend the students who chose to undertake public speaking with the group.

"The group, under the leadership of Mr. Sam Fullerton, is committed to helping the students of Towns County succeed, and they are appreciative of the generous support they have received from the entire community," read the resolution. "The Movers and Shakers of Towns County have speakers from around the county and state come address them at their weekly breakfast meetings, helping them stay up to date with the issues facing this country and allowing them to effectively educate their peers."

Following Sen. Wilkinson's formal reading of the resolution in the meeting, Fullerton thanked the senator for his efforts on the group's behalf.

"Thank you so much," said Fullerton. "One thing I'd like to say about Sen. Wilkinson if I can, I've been living in Towns County 15 years, and I've never seen a man that actually cares about Towns County like he does, especially for the school kids."

Along with the resolution, Sen. Wilkinson discussed the latest legislative session of

the Georgia General Assembly, which concluded at the end of March.

Two of the many topics he covered were the controversial Transportation Bill and the Medical Cannabis Bill, both of which he voted to pass.

"We're going to an excise tax," said Sen. Wilkinson. "The excise tax is going to be, at the end of the day, what you're concerned about when you fill your car up, the increase is going to be about 6 cents a gallon. And if you fill your car up once a week, and you put 15 gallons in your tank – I'm not real good in math, but I think that's a little bit less than \$1."

"So, it's about \$50 a year. I think you've got to decide how much it's worth to you to drive on a safe road, to have your children and grandchildren safe when you travel. For me, if it's \$1 a week, I can handle that."

Moving on to talk about the Medical Cannabis Bill, Sen. Wilkinson said that there has been much misunderstanding over the issue.

"If you really look at the drugs that our doctors prescribe to us, and you look at cannabis and you compare it to other narcotics and everything, I

really don't think that cannabis is nearly as strong as some of the other things that we have prescribed to us," Sen. Wilkinson said.

"And when we have those children coming down there, and some of those children are having those epileptic seizures, and you look in the eyes of those little boys and girls, and some of them are having 30 seizures a day. And then they're moving to Colorado, their parents are taking them out there because they can take that, and it does away with those seizures, I just think that was a real positive thing for young people," Sen. Wilkinson said.

Towns County High School junior Adam Penland attended the meeting, and expressed his appreciation for Sen. Wilkinson, with whom he has worked closely in the political arena.

"We were down in the FFA State Convention, and he awarded me with the Warren Wilkinson Scholarship," said Penland. "Every year, he sends one student from his district to Washington D.C. for seven days, and this year, I was the recipient of that. I would just like to give Sen. Wilkinson a hand, and truly thank him for all he does for us."

## Emergency Drill at Lake Forest a success

By Mason Mitcham  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

On Saturday, May 2, the Towns County Public Safety departments converged on Lake Forest Estates for a training exercise on Ramey Mountain. Emergency Medical Services, the Sheriff's Department, the Fire Department, and the Forest Commission all took part.

In the simulated emergency, a Lake Forest house was on fire. The fire department was attempting to keep the fire from spreading to the nearby woods, while being graded on their performance.

"This is a practice exercise for the Ready, Set, Go! Program," said Frank Riley, Executive Director at Chestnut-Chattahoochee RC&D Council. "It's a full-blown practice exercise that we put together over the past eight months to train our guys."

The Ready, Set, Go! initiative is part of the Fire Adapted program. It seeks to develop and improve the dialogue between fire departments and the residents they serve. Like every other part of the Fire Adapted program, it is aimed at prevention rather than reaction to emergencies.

"This is a test of a multi-agency command system," Riley went on. "So if we had this house on fire, and it spreads to the woods, this becomes a problem for the forest commission. So the idea is to see how these guys can put it all together with multiple problems within minutes of each other."

In the simulated exercise, the fire jumped from the house and spread to the surrounding forests. At that point, it became a wildfire, and the forest commission got involved.

The best measure would be to contain the fire if possible, but Riley said that the Towns County Fire Departments didn't have enough men to fight fires in multiple structures, especially because the fire department consists mostly of volunteers.

At that point, the fire department would call in help from other counties. "Mutual aid, we call it," said Riley.

"If it gets like that, you're not going to save it all," he



added. "You can't. There's not enough people. Not enough equipment."

If the Public Safety Departments have to choose what to save, they always choose people over property. "Save the ones you can save," said Riley. "The first priority is getting people out. The houses can be replaced. People can't. Our goal is to keep them safe and get them out of here."

Assistant Fire Chief Harold Copeland added, "If the situation is so far gone that we're worrying about another house or a structure next to it, or the risk of another wildfire starting, we protect against it from expanding."

Copeland's first priority, after getting people to safety, is making sure the lives of his men aren't in danger. "The worst thing's always that any fireman gets injured," he said. "That's why we got med units up here. We're going to take care of our folks."

Even though the department consists mostly of volunteers, Copeland said that they were more than up to the task

of preventing, containing, and fighting fires that could damage property and lives.

"We meet all the state requirements and then we go above that," he said. "Our training division here is one of the best. We log hundreds and thousands of hours a year training."

For instance, to help prevent loss of life, the firefighters practice a buddy system. "Nobody goes off on their own we're always in teams," said Copeland. "We call it two in, two out. Sometimes it's three in three out. Nobody's ever by themselves."

Now is one of the riskiest times for fire. "When school lets out, all the campgrounds get full, the lake gets full," said Copeland. "When school lets out and vacation time comes, our population grows immensely."

He also added that, despite heavy rainfall, any place is still susceptible to fire. "We just had a fatality a few days ago," he said. "You never know. That's the thing about our business. We never know."

## SC woman faces drug charges following City traffic stop

The Hiwassee Police Department, Towns County Sheriff's Office and Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement Office (ARDEO) arrested Tonya Marie Boulter, 32, of Rock Hill, SC following a traffic stop in the City.

The Hiwassee Police Department conducted a traffic stop on Boulter after noticing a motor vehicle violation.

Boulter gave consent to search the vehicle and approximately three ounces of methamphetamine, marijuana, \$1,110, three sets of digital scales and other drug packaging materials was found in her car.

The illegal narcotics were found in two magnetic boxes located underneath the car.

The street value of the narcotics was \$5,000.

Boulter was charged with trafficking methamphetamine and possession of marijuana with intent to distribute and transported to the Towns County Detention Center.

Numerous different pharmaceutical pills were collected and sent to the GBI Lab for analysis.

Additional charges are



**Tonya Marie Boulter**  
pending the ARDEO investigation.

The Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement Office is a multi-agency unit that consists of the following Sheriff's Offices: White County, Lumpkin County, Towns County, Banks County, Habersham County, Stephens County, and Rabun County, along with the Georgia National Guard Counter Drug Task Force, the Department of Public Safety, and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

## BOE names new principals

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education has named the school's new high school principal, and middle school principal.

Erica Chastain will replace the departed David Turner at Towns County Middle School, the board announced Monday night.

Turner accepted a position with the school system in Villa Rica, Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong said.

Villa Rica is Turner's hometown, and his elderly parents still live there. It was a personal and professional move for Turner, Dr. Berrong said.

Also, Dr. Connie Hobbs will lead Towns County High School as the new principal.

Dr. Hobbs replaces the departing Jonathan Gibson, who announced last month that he has taken the principal's job at Rabun County High School.

The additions of Chastain and Dr. Hobbs to the roles of principals, gives Towns County three female principals. Dr. Sandy Page leads the elementary school.