

Henson...from Page 1A

board – my petition had more than 300 signatures,” Henson said. “I was asked to interview for the board vacancy and I did. I feel like if I’ve got the support to get elected, it won’t matter if I was appointed to the vacancy or elected – one way or another.

“I was going to be on that ballot – one way or another,” Henson said. “I can say this about myself, what you see, is what you get. I can be brutally honest. If you don’t

want my opinion, don’t ask. The only person that will make a decision for me is me.

“The decisions by the board should be made with the best interests of the membership in mind,” Henson said. “Decisions have to be made for the membership as a whole. I’m not there to serve the board, I’m there to serve the membership.”

Henson said he’s very much aware of the problems the boards of directors have

experienced over the last year or so. He said he thinks the Terry Taylor debt is a moot point anymore because an agreement has been reached to repay more than \$48,000 that Taylor owed in unpaid utility bills.

“But, I can tell you this, Terry Taylor should have never been allowed to accumulate that much debt to the EMC,” Henson said. “If I had been on the board and known about it when all that

happened, I would have been raising cane about it.

“Moving forward, I’ll raise cane if something like that ever happens again,” he said. “I think there are circumstances when people who pay their electric bills on time and come into a hardship situation – I think we should be able to find a way to help those people.

“We’re still in a rough economy and people still need help financially. I think we can help people through customer

service.” Henson said the 200-plus EMC employees have taken the brunt of criticisms since the Taylor debt was revealed.

“We’ve got some good folks working for the EMC,” he said. “When there is a snowstorm, they’re out at 2 a.m. making sure the power stays on. Those employees are the backbone of the EMC. The sad part is the employees took the brunt of the criticism. It’s

kind of like shooting the messenger. The employees didn’t have a dog in the fight.”

Henson said he’s not connected to any special interest groups.

“My opinion is my opinion,” he said. “I’ll serve with an unbiased opinion and do what’s best for the membership.”

Next week the Towns County Herald profiles Union County EMC Petition Candidate Mickey Cummings.

Moss...from Page 1A

in the classroom 19 and a half years.”

Another of Moss’ passions is coaching, and he has spent many years coaching various levels and sports in his career.

“I spent several years at Blairsville coaching basketball from middle school girls and boys all the way up to high school girls and boys,” said

Moss. “And when I came here, I coached middle school boys basketball. I also coached high school baseball for 15 years. I was the head coach here for six years. For the last three years I’ve been an assistant softball coach.”

Add past athletic director to his long list of leadership roles, and Moss seems ready and willing to learn and lead

in his new position to start the next school year.

“I have briefly talked to Dr. Hobbs,” said Moss. “I have also talked to Mr. Jonathan Gibson, our principal, about the transition. I have already warned Dr. Hobbs that I will be asking her many questions. My wife was in that position for a few years before she moved to the central office, and so I’ve

already warned her that I will be calling her and asking her several questions.”

Moss’ wife, Stephanie Moss, has been an educator for 20 years as well. She and her husband will have been married for 20 years this June.

Mrs. Moss started her career in Hayesville, NC, before transitioning to TCES, where she became assistant principal

and served the students there until this past school year, when she moved over to the central office to head up curriculum and personnel.

The Mosses have two children, and one will be a senior next year, the other in ninth grade, which furthers Moss’ commitment within the school system.

“I hope I have made a

positive impact the 20 years I have been in the classroom, and I’m looking forward to making a positive impact at the elementary school,” said Moss. “I’m very thankful to Dr. Berrong, the board of education and Dr. Page for allowing me this opportunity, and I will try my very best not to disappoint any of them.”

Chatuge...from Page 1A

retire from his fulltime post on June 2. “We completed the renovation. We brought a large bore MRI online. It’s in-house, it’s doing well. We’re coming on board in about two or three weeks with a new low-dose 64-slice CT scanner. For a small hospital, that’s really, really good, because a lot of the large hospitals use 64-slice.”

Another addition to the hospital is the geriatric/psychiatric unit.

“We started in May of 2014, so essentially, it took about a year to accomplish everything,” said Kelley. “We’ve been up and running with the facility like it is for about a month and a half. Everything has come together. We added the 10-bed Geriatric/psych unit at the top here, which will identify behavioral problems. It’s for older adults, diagnosis and evaluation, and then to help them adjust their medicine to the appropriate places.”

Also on site Saturday were 28 vendors, each handing out information on their various goods and services available to the community.

Those who had blood drawn for the Comprehensive Lab Panel and Prostate-Specific Antigen Test, as well as the Vitamin D Test, can expect

results mailed to their homes in week or two.

Free screenings at the event included blood pressure, EKGs, weight, BMI and body fat percentage, breast exams, prostate exams, diabetic screenings and O2 saturation.

Charlie DeFrancesco, director of respiratory therapy at Union General Hospital, educated the public on the dangers of smoking and promoted the Better Breathers Program.

Tammy Lester with S.A.F.E. Inc., a domestic violence and sexual assault awareness program serving Towns and Union counties, spoke to people about the importance of educating young people about abuse.

Dyana Costello Banks, involved in training and outreach for the Mountain Regional Library System, educated individuals about the benefits of the local library, including specialized books on tape provided for older citizens, free of charge, who cannot see well enough to read standard books.

This program is available through GLASS, which is the Georgia Libraries for Accessible Statewide Services, and those who qualify for the service can also download a free app to access the many

thousands of books available online.

Dietitian Rhonda Collins gave out a diabetes checklist to help people learn their risks for acquiring the disease, and Brenda Hitchcock and Golda Sanders of the Chatuge Regional Hospital and Nursing Home Auxiliary helped people find their way around the venue.

George Ordway with the North Georgia Heart Foundation was on hand to give people lessons in bystander CPR, as one of the goals of the foundation is to teach as many people as possible hands-only CPR, as well as how to use Automated External Defibrillators.

“It’s important for us to be here, because doing this bystander CPR is critical for a patient to survive before EMS gets there, and before EMS can get them to the hospital,” said Ordway. “With bystander CPR, you don’t have to worry about breathing, just do chest compressions about 100 times a minute until EMS can get there. You’ll not do any harm. The only harm you’ll do is if you don’t do anything.”

The event was well attended Saturday, and several hundred area residents were served.

Lake...from Page 1A

based on current lake levels, normal rainfall should make up the roughly 3 feet of difference needed to get the lake up to full pool.

Lake Chatuge is already close to full pool, with less than a foot to go to reach its June 1 target of 1,926 feet.

Full lake levels bring more recreational opportunities to the area, not to mention better looking lakes.

“In your area, you’ve got Blue Ridge, Chatuge and Nottely are the three reservoirs that we have,” said TVA Recreation Manager Jerry Fouse. “And of course, typical of the work we’ve done across the system, we’ve done partnerships there with the U.S. Forest Service, Georgia DNR and the communities in developing and having community parks.”

Fouse mentioned a number of community parks that have camping facilities in the area, as well as boat ramps and trail projects that TVA has been assisting with. There are also

stream access sites available on the Hiwassee and Toccoa rivers.

“And you’ve got the Po-teete Creek recreation area that was formerly a TVA project that Union County has taken over and operates,” said Bowling. “They’re in the process of expanding that and adding some additional camping facilities there. There are a lot of opportunities for families to get out and enjoy these reservoirs and these lake areas during the summer season, so I’m excited about that and excited about the expansions that are going on there in North Georgia.”

For the first time ever, TVA will be hosting a summer photo contest via social media, of people having a good time out on the lakes.

“This is exciting, because we’ve really never done anything like this before, and we’re really excited to see if folks take advantage of this, send their photos in and win some prizes, possibly,” said

Travis Brickey with TVA Public Relations.

“The way that would work, the contest actually starts on Monday the 18th, the week before Memorial Day. It runs through Labor Day, so all summer long, and folks can get out and they can take a photo and tag it with #TVASummer. They can post that on their Twitter account or Instagram, or they can upload it by Facebook, and then they’ll be entered into the contest. So, that’s a really fun thing for folks to participate in.”

First prize will be a Go-Pro Hero4 Extreme Camera Kit; second prize will be a Fitbit Surge Fitness Superwatch; and third prize will be an Eton Hand Turbine Rechargeable USB Battery Pack.

Even before the contest started, people had already begun using the #TVASummer tag, leaving TVA representatives optimistic about the eventual overall success of the campaign.

BOE...from Page 1A

“Quilla Thomas-Bradley was awarded teacher of the year for the elementary school, Jennifer Moss was recognized for the middle school teacher of the year, and Walter Justus was recognized for the high school teacher of the year,” Dr. Berrong said.

Each of the teachers of the year received a glass plaque in recognition, and they will also be moving on to possibly compete for the title of State Teacher of the Year.

“All three of those will go forth and fill out a packet,

and we will name a System Teacher of the Year from their answers to those questions,” said Dr. Berrong. “They will then represent Towns County in the state, and they could possibly be State Teacher of the Year. That is usually done in September.”

The board also voted to add two days back to the academic calendar.

“The teachers were working on a 186-day schedule and the kids were on a 180,” said Dr. Berrong. “Students will stay at 180 and teachers will

be at 188.”

Typically, school schedules consist of 190 days, but several years ago, when schools started furloughing for budgetary reasons, Towns County at one point had eight furlough days.

“Now we’re back up to where we only have two furlough days,” said Dr. Berrong. “The majority of schools in Georgia are back to 190 days. We haven’t gotten there yet with our budget, but we’re working on it.”

Justus...from Page 1A

last in the RESA, and in a matter of one year, our scores were second in RESA,” said Principal Gibson. “So, we went from second to last to second from the top. And Mr. Justus’ scores individually were the highest scores in the RESA. That alone speaks volumes to what is going on in Mr. Justus’ class.”

One of the innovations that Justus has brought to math learning in Towns County is his incorporation of college-level technology in the classroom.

He uses an interactive whiteboard known as a Smart Board, in conjunction with a CPS Response System that enables students to take exams and answer questions digitally from their desks. Justus also has an InterWrite Mobi Board, with which he can monitor individual student activity from his desk.

These enhancements allow his classroom to gain instantaneous feedback on how well students have performed on tests, and what students need help in which areas.

Conducting class this way helps to quickly diagnose other issues also, such as how well the students have digested material presented by Justus.

“If I have 50 percent or more of my class miss a problem, either A, there’s something wrong with the way I taught it, B, there was something wrong with the way the question was asked, or C, there’s a combination of misunderstanding and miscommunication, so I’ve got

to go back and re-teach that,” said Justus. “That allows me to be a more effective teacher, because I know what my students do and do not understand about any concept.”

In Justus’ words, his classroom setting is “totally differentiated for individual learning – that’s the only way you can do it now.”

“We’re competing with technology that would mesmerize me in my day,” said Justus. “They’ve got everything from the Snapchat, Facebook, instantaneous connections across the world, instant access to technology. We’re trying to compete with that in a classroom, and if we don’t adapt our methodologies and our pedagogy to the changing environment and changing landscape of education, then we’re all going to be lost in the dust.”

Justus, known affectionately by his students as “Papa J,” is a firm believer in incentivizing performance. If a person works hard in the world to achieve their goals, that person is justly rewarded for his or her hard work.

The same thing applies in Justus’ classroom.

“Table Leaders are determined by the students who score the Top 6 scores on scheduled tests and quizzes and are awarded corresponding titles related to the position they finished on the test,” said Justus.

Table Leaders can be

ousted or advance to higher places, and these students get perks associated with their titles, such as special treats like popsicles and juice boxes. Also, they get to cast votes on when tests are scheduled and how much certain content sections will weigh in the overall test grade, among other benefits.

Justus taught at Rabun County for seven years, and has also taught at Crisp County, Dawson County and Habersham Central.

“I think it’s a great privilege to be teacher of the year, but I think just being a teacher to me is of a higher calling,” said Justus. “When I read the Bible, I see that the name teacher is used more in the New Testament – they call Jesus by teacher – than any other name they call him. And I think there’s no higher honor than to be a teacher. So, just being a teacher to me is enough. To be singled out? Sometimes it’s good to be patting on the shoulder, but these kids right here make my job worthwhile.”

He has a daughter named Sally who was the Valedictorian, STAR Student, a Georgia Scholar and International Baccalaureate Graduate at West Hall High School in 2011.

Justus is proud of his daughter, who is about to graduate from Harvard University, having attended on a full scholarship, and she is entertaining offers from dozens of medical schools to start in the fall.

Kelley...from Page 1A

and Ralph Twiggs he opened and established the Towns Union Training Center which was later named Track Rock Industries.

In 1980 Kelley was employed by Wesley Homes, Inc. and he opened Branran Lodge in Blairsville and later developed the Wesley Mountain Village Cottage.

In 1989 he left Wesley Mountain Village and was attending the University of Georgia working towards a graduate degree in Counseling Psychology

when he was hired to work for Towns County Hospital and Nursing Home. He has been at Chatuge since that time.

Kelley would like to express his appreciation to all employees present and former who have contributed to the success of Chatuge Regional Hospital and Nursing Home.

“Without great employees little can be accomplished,” Kelley said.

A special thanks to all the members of this community who

have supported the Hospital and Nursing Home.

A special thanks to Union General Hospital who purchased the hospital at a point when it was struggling. Sixteen years later one can now see the accomplishments with a newly renovated facility.

The staff at Chatuge are proud they worked hard over that period of time to generate and provide operational revenues that have enabled the development of this renovation.

Eggfest...from Page 1A

Eggfest of the year. This one boasted more than 2,000 people, making it the largest Eggfest in America, according to John Hall.

“What makes it the best is we’ve got this tremendous venue,” said Hall. “Most of these Eggfests are put on in a dealer’s parking lot with no cover. But we’ve got this fantastic venue and we’ve got everything here.”

If not for Hall, a self-described “egghead” and longtime Big Green Egg cook, the Georgia Mountain Eggfest would never have happened.

“I’ve been to a lot of Eggfests,” he said, the number of which he puts at somewhere north of 30. “They really depended on me to do this and bring this Eggfest in.”

The “eggheads” have their own online community, allowing them to stay connected and current on events. To start the Eggfest tradition at the fairgrounds, Hall put the word out to his fellow cooks.

“We’re connected on Facebook and different kinds of Big Green Egg forums, and we all know each other,” said Hall. “We

haven’t always met somebody, but we know somebody. We’re all connected, all around the country. Anytime one of us does something, everybody knows about it.”

“The cooks – it’s like a cult, almost,” joked Fairgrounds Manager Hilda Thomason. “They’ll come from all over the United States and even Canada. They’re coming from everywhere.”

Cooks from as far away as Texas, Wisconsin, and even Canada, all converged on the Fairgrounds Saturday. Even people who weren’t cooking on the Big Green Eggs came to sell related goods.

“Vendors come and sell their accessories, their rubs, their barbecue sauces and things like that,” said Thomason. “My favorite thing is just seeing people so happy when they’re eating all this food, because food makes people happy, and it’s a huge tourism attraction for Towns County and North Georgia. It brings money to everybody here in our community.”

John Hall, who has been cooking on Big Green Eggs for eleven years, was glad to have

such a turnout.

“We really appreciate the cooks here because they buy their own transportation and lodging, they buy all the food, cook it and give it away, and they give us \$10 to do all that,” he said.

Two of the cooks from Texas, Hotch and Shelly van Blarcom, have been participating in Eggfests for about two years. They said that they loved coming to this particular Eggfest because of the area.

“This is probably one of the best venues there is for an Eggfest,” said Hotch. “It’s probably one of the best venues for doing this. And the area, this is a fantastic area.”

They also loved the social aspect of it all.

“Just meeting people, and people enjoying the food that you cook, is great,” said Hotch. “And the camaraderie – there’s four or five of us here today from Texas, so we all cook here together.”

At this point, Shelly added her philosophy: “good food, good friends, and good fellowship.”

Hospital auxiliary looking for volunteers

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer



Brenda Hitchcock are going to be okay,” she said.

In Chatuge Regional Hospital in Hiwassee is a small but indispensable army of volunteers who quietly work to make sure the day-to-day activity in the hospital runs smoothly. They call themselves the Chatuge Hospital Auxiliary.

Brenda Hitchcock, the president of the small volunteer group, has been in Towns County for almost a decade and calls the volunteer staff near to family. “I felt like it was a way I could meet people, and I had always wanted to volunteer, I’ve met lots of people. My husband died not quite two years ago, and this hospital has been like a family, they’ve been very supportive,” she said.

As for the actual work, the volunteers provide valuable assistance not only at the hospital, but also at the nursing home. “They have singings at the nursing home every Wednesday, and we assist taking the residents to the singings, and any activities that the nursing homes need, we go up and assist them,” she said.

As a volunteer group, they rely largely on money from fundraisers, and with that money they can help provide to the hospital or nursing home.

“Our major fundraiser is the fudge booth at the Georgia Mountain Fair, and we make the

fudge and cookies there. We buy equipment for both the nursing home and the hospital that the budget doesn’t cover. We bought two ice machines this year, we bought a couple of blanket warmers for the gastrointestinal lab, and we furnished a room in the nursing home for patients who were at the end of their life,” she said.

They also provide scholarships.

“At Christmas, we have our love light tree where people can give money in memory of a loved one or in honor of someone,” Hitchcock said. “We do that all year long, but normally with the money for that, we give scholarships. This year we’ve given five scholarships to Towns County students who are going into the medical field.”

Applications are available to those interested, but they have to be willing to put in work.

Applicants must also be 21 years old or older.

Those interested in volunteering, contact Hitchcock on Mondays or Tuesdays at (706) 896-7146.