

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Letter to the Editor:

The Towns County Herald's front-page report describing the use of the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center for Christian prayer meetings flies in the face of the church-state separation clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It is a violation of my and all other citizens' civil rights when facilities of government supported by all tax payers, are then permitted to promote one religious set of beliefs over all others. As a non-believer, by definition, this subjects me and other different-believing individuals, to a lack of respect from the dominating religious group and is per se a form of discrimination.

Local, state and federal governments need to stay out of the business of promoting Christianity as the only path for the betterment of human society, whether by prayer, or other means. A history of religious strife, killings and wars over the centuries, has shown that religion, in fact, is not the answer to preventing human suffering, quite the opposite, religious division has caused and is causing conflicts across the globe. Besides, Christian churches are well established to provide facilities for religious practices. Towns and surrounding counties attests to the over abundance of these worship centers. Secular conference centers supported by tax dollars, but turned over to religious purposes, represents an abuse of the separation clause and needs to be put to a stop.

Lance G. Jobson

Guns in Bars - A Bad Idea?

I am a gun owner, combat veteran and hunter and proud of it. Furthermore, I firmly believe in a citizen's right to defend, as a last resort, life, person and property. But I have some common sense questions regarding those aspects of Georgia's recently enacted gun law that would allow guns in bars: Why if alcohol and motor vehicles don't mix, do alcohol and guns mix, especially considering, I believe we can all agree, alcohol impairs one's judgment? We're not, even in the Wild West days, folks entering saloons required to check their guns at the door? Are not bars widely acknowledged as places where one thing often leads to another and the situation worsened when readily accessible alcohol collides with readily accessible guns?

Would any responsible hunter hunt with someone who is then drinking? Why are even law enforcement officers required to disarm themselves prior to entering a jail? Why are guns not typically allowed in courthouses? If smoking is banned in bars, shouldn't guns be?

How many of us, whether in a bar or elsewhere, wish, in retrospect, we'd merely walked away from a simple fist fight over a trivial matter, the worst outcome of which (unlike a homicide) usually is a bruised face and/or a bruised ego (limited to the participants), whereas in a gun fight somebody (even innocent bystanders) could get killed? And who among us (to include those of us who think it couldn't happen to us) will attend the funeral or mourn or make it up to the spouse, children and parents of a man or woman who simply stopped to have a beer with friends but got caught in the deadly crossfire between two (or more) besotted hair-triggered harebrains?

Although the new law allows bars to "opt out," realistically what bar owner will "opt out" when his competitors will label him "anti-gun and anti-Second Amendment," the scarlet letter of which is a dominant subject of current political ads? To potentially include a claim for punitive monetary damages, how many plaintiff's trial lawyers (as I once was) are drooling over the opportunity to sue, not only the shooters, but also the bar owners (and their operators, employees, and insurers) who allow guns, when someone is later hurt or killed on the premises? How expensive will the applicable insurance be to the owner under those circumstances?

As one who, again, is not anti-gun, but rather one who urges common sense, I invite from the remaining state-wide candidates serving Towns County their logical, safety-first, well-reasoned, intellectually honest, non-subjective, non-political pandering thoughts on this issue.

Claude Spears



RARE KIDS; WELL DONE
By Don Jacobsen

I find it very interesting that just at the time nearly a dozen and a half states are making pot users more comfortable by relaxing their marijuana laws, researchers are making them more miserable by describing the effects of its use. According to a new study just released by Northwestern University in Chicago and reported in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, even casual use of marijuana - that is, even once or twice a week - causes significant, measurable modifications in two key portions of the brain. So much for the "recreational use" of pot. Remember, the purpose of recreation is to rebuild, to re-create.

One of the two brain functions affected is memory. Memory is the Grand Master of the Parade, of everything we do. Decision-making, cause-to-effect reasoning, value judgments, virtually every kind of learning is memory-dependent. This new research shows that marijuana use, even casual use remember, causes measurable changes in the memory portion of the brain, making it more difficult to get information in, and then more difficult to retrieve it.

The other worrisome discovery in the study is the change marijuana makes to that portion of the brain that deals with motivation, the intensity with which a person moves toward

achieving a goal, even a purpose in life. The troublesome term that appears time and again in the study is the term "abnormal." Even once- or twice-weekly use of marijuana creates measurable, functional changes in how well the brain works to energize us toward intended outcomes. The immediate experience may be pleasurable; the long-term effect is devastating. Only those who can set goals and move toward them become leaders.

So, do we really want to enable a generation of unmotivated, lethargic, non-focused, forgetful young adults moving into position as our teachers, our judges, our surgeons, our law makers, our pilots, our moms and dads?

The human brain is an astonishing 3-pound mass of 86 billion (+/-) neurons; there is nothing else like it. A dog has a better sense of smell than we do, but he can't do surgery on other dogs. A leopard has a keen sense of hearing, but he can't write music. A Canadian goose can fly due south, but he can't send an email on ahead to tell them he's coming. What an amazing gift the Creator has given us. Why would we intentionally do something to mess it up? Seems like we ought to be smarter than that.

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

Towns County Herald

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The Middle Path

by Don Perry

The issue of net neutrality is a question of whether the Internet should be treated as a utility, where all have equal access, or a tiered service where providers can control access, slow down or block traffic of competitors and charge restrictive rates to suppress competition.

The idea of net neutrality may be foreign to those of us who live beyond the so called "last mile" service area, limping along on the shoulder of the information superhighway with a 3MB or slower connection. Then there are many of us who could not afford \$60 per month for a 50 MB fiber optic connection even if it were available to us.

Arguably, net neutrality is primarily an American issue, a disagreement between corporate behemoths and smaller companies. It is not so much an issue in those European nations we feel are inferior, such as the Netherlands, where a connection - including phone and television - costs less than \$100 per month. The US ranks 31st in the world in average download speeds, behind Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia, and Uruguay. While Comcast swallows Time Warner and ATT gobbles up Directv, Americans endure Third World service.

It can be argued that the uniquely American aspect of the net neutrality issue is an outgrowth of our hybridized system of business and government where the leading edge of economic and even social change is the permanently entrenched system of lobbying and targeted interest that moves Washington. Since 2003 the NCTA, a group that represents Internet Service Providers and favors a monetized Internet, has spent about 95 times more money lobbying the FCC than consumer groups and the Internet Association, which represents tech companies and favors net neutrality.

For several years as Internet connectivity spread around the globe, it seemed as if this new technology represented a great hope for humanity: Hope that with the widespread dissemination of knowledge would come an increase in freedom and an elevation of the standard of living around the world.

To some degree this did indeed happen, but there is a blight on the human condition that drains the vitality out of every advance of civilization. That blight is the institutionalized greed that we in the western world and particularly the American led portion of that sphere of influence have perfected. What we have perfected, the nexus of the seamless integration of government and business, is nothing less than the monetization of the human condition.

Less than a generation ago television was broadcast over the public airwaves freely, or at

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.



"IT'S ON MY MIND.."
Danny H. Parris

A tree lover

Have you noticed how thick and luscious the foliage is on all of the trees? It looks like a tree surgeon has given them a shot of botox. Well, the Creator has provided abundant rain that has quenched the thirst of this majestic creation. This year God has blest them and us with ample rainfall. If you listen carefully the trees of the field are probably clapping their hands unto the Lord.

Since childhood I have been a tree lover. Mind you I am not a "tree hugger." Worshipping trees is not my thing, but I do worship The God who created the trees. Not only do trees provide food, shelter, fuel, oxygen, privacy, serve as a sound barrier, dust collector, produce healing products, paper products and help regulate the earth's temperature but they provide some of the greatest beauty that the human eye can behold.

Trees are not only necessary to maintain human life, but trees are essential in maintaining all forms of animal and plant life. All of these things are important but think what it would be like to grow up as a little boy or little girl and never experience the joy of a tree swing, made from a discarded old tire and a strong rope tied to a sturdy tree limb?

Even worse, would be to grow up and never have a sense of accomplishment by building a tree house and learning to climb a tree.

I am thankful that I don't live in a treeless neighborhood. It is sad to say, but there are areas that once were beautiful forests but they have been denuded and reveal only barren naked soil.

The Bible emphasizes the importance of trees and how we should be caretakers of His creation. The Bible begins in Genesis with the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life (Gen 2:9). It closes in Revelation with the Tree of Life (Rev. 22:2). Between these two tree bookends of the Bible, Jesus, God's Son is crucified on a tree outside the city walls of Jerusalem.

Some of you who are reading this are like Zachaeus, you are up a tree. You are troubled. Life has been disappointing. You need for life to take a new direction. You need a Friend indeed. The One who was lifted upon a tree calls you out of your tree to become part of His family tree so you can enjoy the fruit of the Tree of Life forever. The Psalmist said, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful..... and he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper (Psalm 1:1-3) KJV.

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THEIR TRUE MONUMENT IS FREEDOM



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!
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.
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.
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 Hiwassee River Valley Kennel Club meetings are held at 7 p.m. the 1st Monday of each month at Brother's Restaurant in Murphy. Call Kit: 706-492-5253 or Peggy: 828-835-1082.
The Unicoy 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 7:30 PM in Young Harris.
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 Senior Center in Hiawassee at 5:30 p.m. Annual dues \$15, PO Box 1182, Hiawassee, GA. We do oral family histories of residents. 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 ArtWorks Artisan Centre, Hiawassee. Refreshments at 6 p.m., meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Call us by 706-896-0932 or mtngarts-craftsguild.org.
Mountain Computer User Group meets the 2nd Monday of each month in Young Harris. Meetings start at 6 p.m. and visitors are welcome. A "Q & A" session follows. Details can be found at www.mcug.org.
FPL Retirees Breakfast will meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Hole in the Wall Restaurant on the square in Blairsville at 9 a.m.
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/blueridge-mountains.
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 last 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.
Georgia Mountain Writers Club meets at Cadence Bank the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 10 AM.
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 evenings at 7 PM at the Red Cross building (up the hill from the chamber office 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.
VFW Post #7807 will be hosting a fish fry they 2nd & 4th Fridays of each month April - October. \$9. all you can eat from 4:30 - 7 PM.
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.