

Paris...from Page 1

Dick Paris is fondly remembered as a man who devoted much of his time and energy to the Fairgrounds over the years. He was there in the beginning. His support went beyond simple sweat equity, and he donated money frequently.

"That was one of the things that I always appreciated about Dick," said Director of Fairgrounds Hilda Thomason of the Fairgrounds. "Every year he'd always make a donation to the Georgia Mountain Fair, and he'd give me money to go towards the Gardens, or he'd give it to me to go on the Fairgrounds, and he'd say, 'You can go ahead, you just use it for whatever you need to.'"

Dan Paris, Dick's son, spent much of his youth working in and around the Fairgrounds that meant so much to his father.

"I've got great memories from working in the cafeteria and the hospital booth," Dan Paris said. "And as a kid, you learned what volunteerism was about and what community was about. And we did a lot with the Garden Club and the old cafeteria up there, and the old high school. You just learned to work and to be part of the community, and to support an event that helped put our community on the map."

The Fairgrounds has played a central role in Hiawassee for years by bringing business to the area.

"In the early days, the Fair served as Chamber of Commerce and did a lot to start tourism in the community," said Dan Paris. "And I think that, of course, the Hamilton Gardens has been a real asset to the community, too."

For the past few years, the Fairgrounds has focused on bringing people to town by trying to fill weekends not taken

up by the Georgia Mountain Fair and Fall Festival.

"We're trying to be more of a diverse Fairgrounds, and to concentrate on tourism to help the community," said Dan Paris. "We're going to have to continue to depend on tourism a lot here."

One way the Fairgrounds continues to attract business to the community is with live music shows. The process of organizing these events can be an art form in and of itself.

"Of course, you have your ups and downs in the music business, and it's a lot more difficult than it used to be," said Dan Paris. "And the cost of talent's a real problem, and what kind of talent to book, and it's just a real challenge with the music."

Like father, like son, Dan Paris has a vision for things to come in keeping the historic Fairgrounds relevant in an ever-changing Hiawassee.

"I think we need to carry on and evolve, focusing more on tourism," he said. "And focusing on special groups and special events at the Fairgrounds will help us utilize it more so. Of course, want to continue with the Fair and the Fall Festival, and carry those events on, but I think the challenge is year round usage of the facility."

Part of Dan Paris' vision is to grow Hamilton Gardens to rival some of the larger gardens in the state. The \$5,000 gifted by his father will definitely further that goal. At the same time, Paris remains realistic about the obstacles ahead.

"The potential is there if you had the funding to do it. But it's been a challenge with what the economy's been through the last five or six years, certainly, for all of us," said Dan Paris.

EMC...from Page 1

EMC headquarters' construction project.

The newspapers have learned that Taylor and Taylor purchased stone from Chester White Construction for use on the EMC project. Chester White Construction never received money for the sale of materials to Taylor and Taylor Construction.

According to the default judgment, Chester White Construction will receive no pre-judgment interest, no attorney fees. However, Chester White Construction will receive future interest on the original principal as provided by law.

Taylor and Taylor also was ordered to pay accrued court costs of \$103.50.

The case went to default because of the failure of Taylor and Taylor Construction to file an answer to the suit, or exercise other defensive pleadings, Towns County Probate Court records show.

Taylor and Taylor Construction until recently, had not paid their electric bill since March 22, 2012.

Documents obtained by the newspapers show EMC paid Taylor \$16,869.16 from March 2012 to May 2014.

Those documents also show that in that same time frame, Taylor and Taylor Construction was paid \$869.47.

Taylor, the former president of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors owes more than just his unpaid utility bill, documents obtained by the

North Georgia News and *Towns County Herald* show.

The *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald* reported on April 30 that Terry Taylor was in arrears on his stone crusher company's utility bill in the amount of \$48,643.53.

Taylor was offered and accepted a consent agreement with the EMC Board of Directors to pay a minimum of \$1,000 each month, in addition to current electric charges. That bill is down to \$45,643.53. Prior to Taylor's most recent payments, the last payment he made to BRMEMC was March 22, 2012.

In the court-ordered consent agreement between Taylor and Taylor and Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, the EMC sought and received a judgment of \$47,643.53 with post judgment interest, Towns County Superior Court records show.

EMC also was awarded the cost of the action, with Taylor and Taylor agreeing to foot the costs, Towns County Superior Court records show.

A copy of Taylor and Taylor Construction's bill for June 10, 2014 obtained by the newspapers shows that the company owed the EMC \$107,998.43.

The newspapers have yet to determine what happened to the remaining \$62,354 from the June bill.

The BRMEMC Board hired attorney Steve Minor of Tisinger Vance, PC to determine how the Taylor debt happened in the first place. That investigation, which will cost the membership up to \$30,000, is concluded and

expected to be made public in the weeks ahead.

It's unclear how long Taylor's bill has been overdue, overlooked and gone unpaid. That information should come from Minor's report on the history of the debt.

The utility company has more than 43,000 customers with more than 49,000 electric meters serving a five-county area that includes Union, Towns, and Fannin counties in Georgia and Clay and Cherokee counties in North Carolina.

The EMC will hold its annual meeting Sept. 13 at Anderson Music Hall in Hiawassee.

Among the items to address, the election of three members to the EMC Board of Directors.

Online voting is available at www.brmemc.com until September 10th at 4 p.m. Login information (identification number and verification code) is provided on the front side of each member's bill.

There are three members nominated by the Cooperative's Board of Directors. Brian Trout of Clay County, NC, Julie Payne of Towns County, and Lenny Parks of Suches are seeking reelection to the Board of Directors.

There are four persons nominated by petition of the Membership. They are Chris Logan of Brasstown, NC, Steven Phillips, of Towns County, Charles Jenkins of Blairsville, and Mike Patton of Blairsville.

Members from the five-county service area can vote for all three Board member seats.

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors appointed Trout as a Clay County, NC director in April 2014. He fills the unexpired term of the late Elois Anderson.

His opponent, Logan, currently is on the Board of Directors for the North Carolina Forestry Association, serving as Western Vice President of the North Carolina Forestry Association.

Payne was appointed by the EMC Board of Directors to fill the unexpired Towns County term of former Board of Directors' President Terry Taylor. Payne is a closing assistant for a local attorney's office.

Her opponent, Phillips, is the owner of Benny's Sanitation in Hiawassee, and also serves as a local radio personality in the Towns County area. He has served on the Board of Directors of Towns County FFA Alumni Board, and Towns County Food Pantry.

Parks has been an appointed Union County director for the past 11 years, and has been elected by his peers on the EMC Board of Directors to serve as Vice-President for the past five years.

His opponents include former State House District 8 State Rep. Charles Jenkins, also of Blairsville, and Mike Patton, also of Blairsville, the owner of Patton Excavating, who has served on the Board of Directors for the Union County Board of Health, and Coosa Water Authority.

Williams...from Page 1

wonderful to me. The support from the community and the school system has just been overwhelming."

And Williams remains optimistic as ever about the future and direction of Towns County Schools.

"I feel good about the position that the system is in, and I feel the wonderful employees that are over here are going to continue to do that good work," she said. "The friendships and the relationships that I've developed are the most precious memories

and gifts I'll take with me. And that saddens you a little bit to leave those folks behind."

Looking ahead, Williams seems humble, yet ready to take on the challenges of Rabun County's larger school district.

"The system does extremely well, as do most of the systems in our area up here. They've been led by a wonderful administrator, Matt Arthur, and it's quite an honor to be able to follow behind him in that system," she said.

The Towns and Rabun Boards of Education have been

working in concert to make a smooth transition, but until her replacement is found, Williams will remain in Towns County as superintendent.

"They would like me to start as soon as possible," said Williams. "But right now, the timeline is still a little flexible because they are very gracious in working with this board, as this board was gracious in working with them. And until this board can find an interim, then I'm going to need to stay on over here until an interim is named."

Reflecting on her career with Towns County Schools, Williams lists her accomplishments as being shared by the people she knows and works with within the county.

"The opportunity to be of service in this community, receiving the support that I did from the school and from the community, and continuing to see our students' success—both in the classrooms and on the playing field—continue to grow in those aspects," she said.

Moonshine...from Page 1

last name of his grandfather, Hooper, and moved the family around every four or five months to avoid law enforcement.

"I think he was afraid that they were after him, but I don't know if they ever even looked for him when he ran," said Cannoy.

Where Cannoy's grandmother found public work as a seamstress in factories, Hooper laid low by working for himself.

"Grandpa was a peddler. He would sell vegetables, pears, whatever was in season," said Cannoy. "And he even opened up an old stove business right there in town, and on the front porch of his house, he would repair wood stoves and set them up there and sell them to people."

In his 60s, Hooper finally settled down in Martinsville, where he remained until he passed away in 1974. But several years before he died, Hooper was reunited with his long lost Georgia family.

"In 1962, my aunt got to checking around, and she found one of grandma's sisters that lived in South Carolina," said Cannoy. "And that put us all back in contact with the families again. And my grandpa was real mad about it—he was scared to death. He was afraid he was going to have to go to jail."



James Cannoy, left, and his moonshine buddy Rakes Parrish. Photo/Charles Duncan

Hooper's days of running from the law, his constant fear of being caught, were coming to an end.

"They came back down here to Hiawassee, and he went to see the judge," said Cannoy. "And at the time, the judge that sentenced grandpa, he had died."

In a simple twist of fate, Hooper found himself facing the son of the judge who had put him on a chain gang and changed his life forever.

"And he wiped his slate clean," said Cannoy. "He said if anybody could stay gone that long and keep their nose clean, that they didn't deserve having anything on their record. So, they wiped the record clean, so that's how we got back with the family."

CLEA...from Page 1

we intend to keep this, is—we're going to shoot it to you straight, and y'all shoot it to us straight."

Sheriff Clinton started the graduation with a special thank you to the Holiday Inn for hosting classes throughout the 10-week course before introducing retired Hall County Sheriff Steve Cronin.

"He's been kind of a mentor to me as well as a friend," said Clinton. "And any time I've ever needed him, I've picked up the phone and called, and he's always been there."

Sheriff Cronin is all too familiar with the Citizens Law Enforcement Academy, having implemented the program in Hall County years ago. He expressed his appreciation for the good work of Clinton and his staff.

"When you see a department willing to put everything out there, give you access to every area, it's really something unusual, and it speaks volumes for the Sheriff and his staff," said Sheriff Cronin.

He went on to thank graduates for donating their time to learn about the Sher-



Retired Hall County Sheriff Steve Cronin speaks to Towns County's first CLEA graduates last week in Hiawassee. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

iff's Office and Towns County, and entertained the room with "dumb crook stories."

Sheriff Cronin also shared some favorite quotes from the likes of Thomas Jefferson and Putnam County Sheriff Howard Sills, and gave an overview of what was learned throughout the course, stressing the importance of the experience.

"I would encourage you to stay involved with the department," said Sheriff Cronin in closing. "Don't be afraid to ask questions."

The Towns County Sheriff's Office presented a slide

show of memories set to music. Graduating members got to re-live their time in the class, and friends and family saw what the course had to offer. People laughed when Copper the bloodhound came on screen, being extra friendly, and pictures at the gun range drew hearty reactions.

Graduates received a certificate and special badge for course completion, and Sheriff Clinton closed the ceremony with a round of thank yous.

Several alumni expressed their mutual appre-

ciation for the Sheriff's Office, and the feel of the room was overwhelmingly positive.

"Where I was impressed was that the culture of the unit is to help the people, rather than go and get people for driving too fast or something like that," said graduate Bill "Scotty" Scott. "It's not to arrest people, but it's to help people become better citizens. And I feel a lot safer living here by being a part of this unit."

The next CLEA class will begin Aug. 26th, and will be a daytime class.

Inquiry...from Page 1

is considered an inquiry, not a criminal investigation.

"The GBI did what is often referred to as 'an assistance rendered' response, which means a Special Agent with the GBI met with and interviewed a complaining witness and received documents about the allegations in this matter, but at this time they have not initiated a criminal investigation," Langley said.

"Likewise, to my knowledge the Attorney General's Office has not opened their own investigation, but I have

sought their advice regarding the matter," Langley said. "I have also requested a copy of the EMC's internal investigation upon it being completed."

"I rarely comment to the press about matters at this stage, but I understand the public's concern and interest," Langley said. "Therefore I want to be very accurate in explaining that steps are being taken to inquire into this situation, but these steps should not be taken to suggest any determination has been made as to any criminal action."

Superintendent...from Page 1

Schools Superintendent Williams was pleased with the decision to name Dr. Behrens, and maintained the positive attitude for which she has come to be known.

"I followed him, so it's only fair that he turns around and follows me," said Williams. "I think we've left the system in an extremely good spot. I have no doubt that he'll just continue to keep it between the ditches, so to speak, until they get somebody in here full-time."

And according to Dr. Behrens, the feeling is mutual. "I think she's done a good job, so I'm glad to come back and help out," said Dr. Behrens.

The next item on the agenda, approval of the search team looking for the next Towns County Superintendent. The BOE approved a proposal from King-Cooper & Associates,



Photo by Lowell Nicholson

a firm that works specifically with smaller Georgia schools systems with budgets to consider in conducting searches for superintendents.

Sandy Addis, formerly of Pioneer RESA, presented the

proposal from King-Cooper & Associates in the meeting. Addis had previously assisted the Rabun County Board of Education in the search that landed Williams.

Addis has spent his ca-

obtained by the newspapers. BRMEMC denies that it loaned Taylor money to pay for equipment designed to lower his electric usage. Documents obtained by the newspaper show that BRMEMC discussed the loan in executive session in April.

Also, a bill dated June 10, 2014 shows Taylor owes \$62,354 in additional debt. That leaves a balance of \$107,998.43 owed to the cooperative, according to the documents, which includes 1.5 percent interest on a monthly basis.

reer working as an educator and school administrator, with more than 40 years in the field of education. He retired last year as director of Pioneer RESA in Cleveland, and currently works at Clemson University as well as King-Cooper & Associates.

The fee for using King-Cooper & Associates will be \$6,000, with a maximum travel reimbursement of \$750, and a maximum of \$250 for postage and printing materials.

"We think that we could get you ready to review applications by Oct. 24," said Addis. "We think that you could probably have interviews maybe the week and a half of Nov. 3-14. That would leave you some time in late November, middle November for second interviews, and probably make a decision and name one, two or three finalists by Dec. 1."