

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Letter to the Editor:

Anybody watching President Obama's latest address to the nation regarding the slaughter of defenseless Americans in San Bernardino by Islamic terrorists would be under the assumption that we should all fear a backlash of hate crimes against Muslim citizens. What Obama never tells the American people is that according to the 2014 FBI statistics on hate crimes based on a person's religion, only 16.1 percent were victims of anti-Islamic (Muslim) bias out of a total of 1,140. The FBI reports also reveal that 56.8 percent of religious hate crimes were against Jews. The Jewish people are clearly the people under attack which is way outside their percentage of the population in the U.S. But Obama doesn't care about Jews. The guy is clearly an anti-Semite. Instead he wants more people to immigrate to the U.S. from countries in the Middle East that hate Jews.

Tim Groza

Chest/Chatt RC&D activities, programs, and projects 2015 - 2016

I have written each week of the past year about some project, meeting, or event that Chest/Chatt was involved in that week. As you have seen over the year, we are involved in many activities that touch your lives in one way or another. This week is a summary of 2015 and 2016 activities for Chest/Chatt.

The past several years since the National RC&D program was defunded by the NRCS have been lean and uncertain for Chest/Chatt, but now due to a lot of hard work, good leadership by our current Executive Board, and support from our many partners, Chest/Chatt is now on the upswing to more financial stability. Frank Riley, Executive Director has operated Chest/Chatt alone for the past 20 months, but now will add a staff member to help administer these programs and projects.

Here are some of our current programs: 1. Seasonal High tunnels - Chest/Chatt is one of two RC&D organizations in Georgia authorized to market the Wiregrass Seasonal High Tunnel house. This High Tunnel is designed for small fruit, flower, and vegetable growers who want to extend their growing season for their crops. 2. NRCS field days - Chest/Chatt received a grant from NRCS for 12 field day events over the next 3 years in North Georgia. These events will be: Forestry, Soil health, Alternative/organic farming, High Tunnels, Row Crops, Pasture management, Agritourism, Small farm Conferences and other related topics. 3. Georgia Firewise Liaison - Chest/Chatt has contracted with the Georgia Forestry Commission to assume the role of Georgia Firewise Liaison and will administer the national Firewise program throughout Georgia for people who live in wildfire prone areas or anyone who is concerned by risk of fire on their property. 4. Fire Adapted Communities - Chest/Chatt was chosen in 2013 to develop one of the 8 national pilot FAC Hubs in the east. The pilot project was started in Towns County and with a purpose to build a fire education and prevention program and to spread the concept across the Southeast. Chest/Chatt is now in the third year of the project and has started another FAC program in White county. 5. Appalachian RC&D Coalition - Chest/Chatt was asked by the US Forest Service Regional forester to spread the FAC concept up the Appalachian Mountains from Towns County to Virginia to help reduce the risk of wildfires in and around US Forest Service lands. Chest/Chatt and its partners have developed a coalition in this area made up of Chest/Chatt RC&D in Georgia, 3 RC&Ds in North Carolina and 1 in Virginia. 6. Town/Testatee Creek watershed EPD 319 grant - Chest/Chatt will administer an EPD 319h grant for agriculture BMPs in White County in the Town/Testatee watershed. The cost

Executive Director of RC&D

Frank Riley



share funds will assist landowners with projects that improve water quality and reduce erosion in the streams. 7. Rented office to Disability Resource Center - Chest/Chatt owns a 2,500 sq. ft (plus a 2500 sq. ft. basement) office building in Demorest and we rented it to the Disability Resource Center, an organization that assists people with disabilities in the 13 counties of Northeast Georgia. We retained one office for our use. 8. UGA/USDA Rural Development Energy Audits - Chest/Chatt is under contract with UGA for collecting field data for REAP energy audits with poultry producers. The REAP program is administered by USDA Rural Development and supplies cost share funds for producers to improve energy efficiency in poultry houses. 9. NC REAP Farm audits - Chest/Chatt will perform farm energy audits that will allow farmers to apply for cost share assistance with energy saving projects in North Carolina. 10. USDA Forest Service/NRCS Joint Chiefs Land Restoration Proposal - A wildfire mitigation grant project around the Chattahoochee and Sumter National forests in North Georgia and South Carolina. The proposal is for mitigation crews to help Forestry agencies reduce the wildfire risks in the Wildland Urban Interface and also develop Fire Adapted Communities in the area. Chest/Chatt will be the administrator of the grant with our partners; US Forest Service Chattahoochee and Sumter NF, The Nature Conservancy, Georgia and South Carolina Forestry Commissions, Georgia and South Carolina NRCS, and other partners for wildfire education. The goals of this project are to: 1. Reduce and mitigate wildfire threats to communities and landowners, 2. Protect water quality and supply for communities and industry, 3. Improve habitat quality for at-risk or ecosystem surrogate species. 11. Cooperative Agreement between GACDS and Chest/Chatt RC&D Council - This is similar to the agreements many counties have with NRCS to share an employee in the NRCS county office. Chest/Chatt will share an employee with the NRCS office in Eastanolie and is the first agreement between an RC&D and NRCS in Georgia with this program. This will allow Chest/Chatt to add staff to help administer our programs and we need the help!

For more information on Chest/Chatt and its programs contact: Frank Riley @ frank.ccrd@gmail.com.

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

The decorations are up, the tree is trimmed and the Christmas lights are casting a colorful glow on the front lawn, but I'm not quite ready for the holiday. It doesn't feel like Christmas yet. For one thing, the weather is more in line with the end of September than the beginning of winter.

It's not that the stores, beginning also in September, have not done all they could do to put me in the mood, at least for the retail version of Christmas. Almost military ranks of identical decorations and sale items are duplicated at every Walmart and every Big Lots. At least the amount of glitter imported from China seems to have diminished somewhat this year.

The stockings are hung by the chimney with care, but lately I would stuff those socks in my ears if it wasn't for the mute button. The letters have worn off that vital piece of technology in my recent attempts to avoid the butchering of another classic Christmas song re-sampled to make it "relevant for today's audience," (who these people are I do not know) and conducive to my urge to shop.

If you've read this column you know of my intense dislike for network television. We cut the cord long ago, but in recent weeks away from home, I made the mistake of dipping into the flow to try and enjoy some old favorites and perennial holiday classics, hoping to recapture some of the spirit of the holidays that once was carried, even imperfectly, over the airwaves.

That spirit is not even a ghost of Christmas past now. If you love, for example, the classic, "It's a Wonderful Life," then rent or buy the movie, because "edited for television" today means that entire scenes will be deleted for more commercials and the continuity of the story will be constantly interrupted and mangled by a yammering, clawing, probing sense of urgency scientifically designed to grab your attention and stimulate a response.

I'm not kidding about commercials being scientifically designed. Some marketing companies wire up their test subjects like they were in an intensive care unit for brain surgery in order to monitor the response to their ads.

None of this comes as a surprise, but I do confess a bit of nostalgia for the more primitive days of network television. Television, for a while, was something that brought us together. Our parents' generation trusted network news and the

iconic characters that brought us the world every evening. Holiday specials were indeed special, and anticipated, and when we were watching we knew that we were in the company of many more Americans watching the same thing at the same time. Today we have "media," and it is ubiquitous, relentless and almost inescapable. Six companies control most of what we see and hear, and herd our fragmented opinions and animosities while everyone with a phone is a reporter and everyone who can click or swipe is a commentator.

I know what you're thinking, and you're right. None of this is what Christmas is about, except perhaps, in a small way, that feeling of community we used to get from enjoying the same thing at the same time. If I'm not feeling the holidays this year, then I'm simply not yet looking in the right places. I'm not going to find Christmas staring at a screen. I'm not going to find it in any store. I'm only going to find it with the people I care about, or by caring about the people I find. What I need to do is to pick up that sense of gratitude we talked about during Thanksgiving and carry it forward, and we have much for which to be thankful in our small mountain community.

I'm confident that my Christmas spirit will return in force as soon as I am able to return home and stay there, to walk to a neighbor's house for a visit or drive a short distance to see a friend, to see the mist on the mountain and hear the babble of the creek, and to look at the sky at night and actually see the stars and imagine what that Star of Bethlehem looked like so long ago. If you're not yet grateful to be home for the holidays this year, then leave for a while. Go fight some traffic and breathe some foul air and elbow your way through a few crowds, and when you return, I think that Christmas spirit will be a lot easier to find.

This year, there are many in our community who will have a difficult time embracing the holidays. Though we are blessed with the quiet fellowship and intimacy of our small town ways, these very same qualities make it that much harder when we lose one of our own. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of Jimmy Wright, who helped make Hiawassee a place we want to come home to for Christmas.

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 E-MAILED 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.



The Veterans' Corner

By Scott Drummond, USCG Veteran

Thank you Veterans

'Tis the season for giving, as Christmas is nearly here. From my practical knowledge of our precious American history, our Veterans have given greatly and continue to be solid Americans, possibly because they received a unique and precious gift of serving our nation, thus learning lessons not available anywhere else. A special bond, brotherhood, if you will, exists forever between those who have served, and will always go into our Supreme Commander, our Lord God's eternity. Something very special, yet humble, and inexplicable. Make no mistake; many combat Veterans today quietly suffer as we have seen.

Opinions may vary, but it would be very easy to give the gift of kindness, love, decency and honor to any Veteran, as a gift of "Thanks, Friend, for what you've done, and what you tried to do." Wouldn't cost a penny, but priceless, especially in our nation, today. You might just make a friend for life, and you may just save a life.

Sadly, by weak and perhaps corrupt leadership, ignorance, apathy, misinformation, and distortions where hatred abounds, we have been lead into an arena, much like pre-WWII by a similar type political mindset which preceded that not so long ago era. Our Veterans and active duty military people, men and women alike, understand this perhaps better than anyone else.

As has been proven, a strong military, respected and supported by a grateful nation, is actually the best deterrent to war. Those who have been there will testify to that fact, not opinion. Sometimes, it seems, the evils of the world, determined forever to destroy us, determines armed conflict as inevitable.

So, once again, this

Christmas, give the gift of "Thanks" and a prayer, in an effort to bolster our nation's spirit, in hopes of something better for all of us. I copied this from a skilled writer and poet, Jamie Badour, with his permission:

Thank you veterans of the Red, White, and Blue, Our heroes Who defend America, We proudly salute you! You are the Rock and foundation, The reason America is a Proud and free nation. Thank you Veterans... For answering Your country's call, America owes you, For your gift of freedom To us all. Thank you Veterans... For putting your life on hold, So another can be born, And we have a chance To grow old. Thank you Veterans... For sacrificing your life To guarantee, Our freedoms so that We can live in liberty. You are America's voice, Because of you We have the option, To make a choice. Thank you Veterans... For being brave And taking a stand, Keeping us safe Here on our home land. You make the difference for The world to see, That you paid the price, For our freedom That isn't free. Thank you Veterans... For all you've done, Your duty, Honor and commitment, Is how freedom is won. You are the proud, The brave and the few, Not just today but everyday. America salutes you! By Jamie Badour Copyright 2007 *Semper Paratus*

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