

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

To the Editor:

Climate Treaty Agreement--America's Golden Opportunity
The climate agreement just agreed to by the UN in Paris by almost 200 nations certainly offers hope for a better world for future generations. However, it also offers great hope for us now. Like the innovations in the space race and in the high tech and internet revolution, the clean energy future offers a great chance for America to once again lead the world in the great clean energy revolution. America is called to greatness once again. Let us seize the moment! We are the United States of America! This is our time, this is our opportunity, and we will once again rise to the challenge of leading the world.

Many people have objected to our country acting on climate change, saying the United States cannot do much alone, and it would be too damaging to our economy. Now, we are joined by almost 200 countries, including China, India, and Russia. A very innovative idea developed by the Citizens Climate Lobby, called the carbon fee and dividend plan, would place a steadily increasing price on carbon at the production site and return it all to us, the citizens of the United States. The well respected REMI plan shows that, over the next 20 years, it would add an extra 2.8 million American jobs as well as saving 230,000 lives due to improved air quality, and real incomes would increase by \$500 per person by 2025. It would also decrease greenhouse gases by 53%. George Shultz, former Secretary of State under President George Bush, strongly endorses the plan. Now, I would call that a WIN/WIN plan! So, why do we not act?!!

Vernon Dixon

Letter to the Editor:

On December 17th both Republican majority houses of Congress passed a trillion dollar budget deal that was widely praised by Barack Obama and Democratic leaders. Chuck Schumer, Democratic Senator from New York praised it as "a great victory for the principles Democrats stand for." Real conservative voters should take note that both Georgia Republican Senators, Isakson and Perdue voted for this budget as well as our 9th District Republican Congressman Doug Collins. All three of these men ran on a conservative platform. This omnibus bill contained a whopping \$1.1 trillion for funding the entire government for the remainder of fiscal year 2016. This bill gave away the final opportunity for Republicans to wield the power of the purse over a number of lawless executive policies for the rest of the Obama administration. This omnibus bill fully funded Obama's amnesty programs as well as Planned Parenthood. In addition, this bill stripped out every rider halting Obama's environmental agenda. Finally it increased spending by \$53 billion relative to the previous year. Conservative voters, please keep this in mind when election time comes around. In the meantime, put some coal in their stockings for Christmas.

Tim Groza

Dear Editor:

Questions that need to be answered:

(1) Why is it legally permissible for our schoolchildren to be taught about the influence of Martin Luther King, Jr. on our society, but not that of Jesus Christ?

(2) Regarding the refugee "crisis", which is more important: the worrisome show to the world of political correctness by our so-called leaders on behalf of those who are not U.S. citizens, or the safety of the American people? If the former, who decides which of us should be the first or last to die at the hands of terrorists? Is it still true, as Benjamin Franklin said, that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"?

Claude Spears

Dear Editor,

I was shocked to hear of the sudden passing of Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright. Although my wife and I live in unincorporated Hiawassee, I had considerable interaction with Chief Jimmy during my tenure with Georgia Gold Buyers.

Several times, while opening the store, I entered an incorrect alarm code and Chief Jimmy came to investigate. He was always kind and considerate while still being very professional. Additionally, after Dave Trueblood, the managing partner passed away in June, Chief Jimmy was very helpful to Nancy Edwards, the wife of the supervising partner as we closed the business.

Even though there were times he caught me driving "slightly" over the speed limit, he would give me a warning while we talked about the weather and the people we knew.

That's not to say Chief Jimmy was a consummate professional. Many times I heard of Chief Jimmy involved in criminal investigations and witnessed him pulling over vehicles with multiple people inside.

Good-bye Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright. You will be missed.

Chris Mazur

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

When January approaches each year and the old calendar runs out of pages to turn, we are again reminded that the presence of change is unchanging. It's not as if we don't have constant reminders of this fact of life. The clock moves; the sun travels across the sky and the moon changes its face every night. But when January 1st arrives we celebrate change; we take stock of it, and we all become a bit philosophical in the midst of our reverie and Auld Lang Syne. In a world where money is time, time is measured in ever smaller increments and the rate of change is always increasing, something about the holiday season gives us pause.

For some of us it is the empty seats around the table that catch our attention and stop time in its tracks. Isn't that the ornament dad gave mom a few years ago? Has it been that long? Those empty seats remind us of our own mortality. We may linger a bit longer in front of the mirror, mystified, or terrified, at the evidence we see there of time and gravity, evidence which has somehow appeared overnight.

For others, the holidays may be the first and only time of the year when the grueling routines of commute-work-commute and collapse are broken. Why didn't I notice how fast the kids are growing? Before long they'll be off to college and we'll be lucky if they can make it home for Christmas.

Whatever the reason, for many of us the holidays become touchstones, or mile markers in our lives, and if we are looking to the past on December 25th, by January 1st it is the future that concerns us. So like many people embracing the holidays, I, too, have been contemplative of the changes I have seen in the world this year as well as the changes I see in myself.

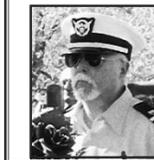
Once again I am shocked at the number of empty seats around the table. It still seems unreal, as if I should be able to wake up at any moment and hear the phone ringing with my mother and dad on the line asking when I'll be coming home to celebrate the new year with a full complement of aunts, uncles, cousins and friends. Many of you are familiar with this feeling, but for me this was the year that grief finally turned to sadness, and the good memories were once again able to bring a smile, even during the holidays. This was the year that the family and friends who remain became so much more precious, and the practice of taking nothing and no one for granted became a habit.

This was also a year when a bit more disillusionment crept into my perception of the world. The manipulation and control of the economy and the political arena by wealth and corporate interests and the responsibility of those interests in fomenting death, destruction, fear and hatred, spilled out into plain sight for all to see. This was the year that the words "democrat" and "republican" lost any remaining practical value. This was the year that Congress demonstrated all too clearly that whatever integrity and idealism which still exists there is overwhelmed by corruption and greed. Unfortunately, too many of us are self-absorbed, distracted by the struggle to make ends meet, uneducated (or stupid), consumed by fear or, in a word, unprepared to resist the continuing monetization of human life and the digestion and excretion of the planet and its inhabitants.

While disillusionment came on like an incoming tide this year, I was also reminded that hope floats, and there were a number of seaworthy vessels that appeared on the horizon. I met a number of young people who were bright, energetic, and technologically savvy;

young people who still read books and ask questions, whose ideals are not waterlogged. There is a generation of skeptics out there prepared to question authority, resist social engineering and deny the continued growth of the coercive power of government. There is particular hope in this generation of veterans returned and returning from all of our wars; strong, matured beyond their years and anything but gullible.

Finally, this was the year I ran across an interesting statistic which contributes to my ever increasing gratitude for being able to live in this, our mountain home. Only 20 percent of Americans now live in rural areas. In 1900 that number was over 60 percent. Small communities of people who know each other, places where you can still see the stars at night, land that grows trees, where clean water flows, where natural beauty is the backdrop for daily life; places like ours are becoming scarce. Those of us who love this place need to remember this, because we are certainly not immune to that widespread hunger to develop, to digest and to profit. The empty chairs at the holiday table remind us that what is loved can be quickly lost, but unlike the loss of those dear ones, when it comes to our mountain home, we can still protect it, preserve it and prevent it from becoming just a memory.



The Veterans' Corner

By Scott Drummond, USCG Veteran

A wonderful Christmas thanks to those who serve

Friday, 18 December 2015 was a wonderful Christmas experience for Hiawassee and all of Towns County provided by those who serve us all. Yes, they too are veterans of sorts. Some of them are charged with carrying firearms for local defense against aggression, just as were those of us who served in our nations military. Some of them have highly specialized skills in their dangerous pursuit of fighting fires.

Many others possess a passion for and are highly trained in providing first responder lifesaving techniques for those who may be injured or acutely ill.

We even have a fine lady, a K-9 specialist, with two of the sweetest, most lovable bloodhounds, a special one named "Sister" assisting on SAR cases in our rugged mountain wilderness, as well as other very tough searches. All these local folks who do their duty each and every day plus private businesses, Towns County School System, and so very many residents combined forces as volunteers to make a real Christmas dream come true for some very special, beautiful, and very bright middle school kids. These boys and girls are America's future!

A Christmas event of this magnitude, in the true spirit of giving, would not happen minus financial support. Today's weakened

economy, our hurting middle class, resulting from possibly the worst ever excuse for leadership in our nation's history, did not deter individuals as they sacrificed even more and dug deep into their pockets, wallets, and checking accounts to provide funding. That speaks volumes and reflects why those of us who did not grow up here, moved here and humbly call it home. There's no way I can provide a complete list of volunteers or those who donated money but I'll mention a few who deserve thanks: HPD, TCFD, TCSD, TC EMTs, VFW/American Legion Post 7807 and its Auxiliaries, SERVPRO, USCG AUX Flotilla 23, Towns County School, many other private businesses and all the leadership from Towns County government and Hiawassee City Hall. The many individuals who gave from their pockets are the foundation of why we love our North Georgia Mountain home. This is truly Americana and projects a shining example of what our military Veterans served, sacrificed, fought and even died for, to defend and preserve.

America wouldn't have Christmas, or much of anything else without our men and women of our United States Armed Forces.

Don't ever forget, those who serve locally, in uniform, mentioned above do the same thing each and every day!

Semper Paratus



"Happy Election Year..."

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!
VFW Fish Fry April - October on 2nd & 4th Fridays each month from 4:30 - 7. \$10 per plate.
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.
Democratic Party of Towns County meets 2nd Tuesday of each month at 5 p.m. at new Senior Center. Newcomers welcome. Questions please contact the T.C. Dem's at Townscountydemocrats@gmail.com.
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.
School Board Meeting, 2nd Monday each month at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.
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 Unicoy Masonic Lodge #259 meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m.
Stevens Lodge #414 F & AM meets the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM in Young Harris. Sat. morning breakfast 2nd Sat. of each month from 8 - 10:30 AM. \$6 adults, \$3 12 & under.
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 old Rec Center in Hiawassee at 5:30 p.m. 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 & Crafts Guild meets 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Calvary Chapel on Hwy. 76 in Hiawassee. All local artists and crafters are welcome, for information call 706-896-0932.
Mountain Computer User Group meets the 2nd Monday of each month. Meetings start at 6 p.m. and visitors are welcome. Details can be found at www.mcug.org.
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 Gary at 706-896-4308 or visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridgemountains.
Alcoholics Anonymous: meets every Friday and Sunday evening at 7 at Red Cross Building at 1293 Jack Dayton Circle. 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.
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.
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 PM at the Shrine Club, Industrial Blvd., Blairsville.
GMREC Garden Tours every Monday 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Shooting Creek Basket Weavers meets 2nd Wednesday of every month at 10 a.m. at Shooting Creek Fire Hall Community Center. For more info www.shootingcreekbas-

ketweavers.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 evening at 7 PM at the Red Cross building 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.
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.
The Board of the Towns County Chamber of Commerce meets the second Monday of every month at 8 a.m. at the Chamber office, 1411 Jack Dayton Circle, Young Harris.
The Quilting Bee at McConnell Memorial Baptist Church in Family Life Center, Room 216. 1st & 3rd Wednesday of each month from 10 AM - 3 PM. Bring a sack lunch. For more information call Kathy at 706-835-6721 or Marilyn at 706-897-4367.
Mountain Coin Club meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the North Georgia Tech campus in Blairsville. Guests are welcome. For more info, call 706-379-1488.
Monday morning BINGO at Brasstown Manor every Monday morning at 9:30 a.m. 108 Church St., Hiawassee. Players meet in the Bradford. Questions 706-896-4285.
Towns County Lions Club meets 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Daniel's Restaurant, 273 Big Sky Drive, Hiawassee.

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Deadline for the Towns County Herald is Friday by 5 PM

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