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giant boulder early Friday morning, his first thoughts were of the wellbeing of the people in the area and the ones who would be handling the removal.

"My biggest concern is safety for employees," said Bradshaw. "When the phone rings late at night, I'm just hoping and praying that nobody's hurt."

"Whether they're out cutting down trees, or on the road with the fire department or the sheriff's department, safety and keeping everybody safe is my main concern."

Fortunately, no one was hurt as a result of the boulder falling, and Bradshaw set about figuring out how to get the thing out of the way.

First, he had the County Road Department come out and clear the trees away from the boulder, which made the road passable over the weekend.

That following Monday, the Road Department returned with the county backhoe, and county workers tried to get the boulder across the road, but the giant rock wouldn't budge.

Then the county contacted someone to bring two trackhoes to tackle the boulder, and they were able to move the rock a little bit – just enough to jut out in the road.

At this point, the commissioner realized he was going to have to hire a specialist, so he shut down the road and got in touch with Anderson & Son Grading and Clearing of Shooting Creek, North Carolina.

"They're that big everywhere around here, but you hardly ever see them falling off in the road like that," said David Anderson, whose grading and clearing business is also known for busting rock.

Anderson used a Volvo Excavator with a hydraulic hammer to bust the rock, and the entire process took about 10 hours to complete on Tuesday,



The cleared boulder before being busted up by Anderson & Son.



The boulder after being busted up by Anderson & Son.

Feb. 13. When Anderson's crew finished busting the big boulder, they cleared the scene by pushing the fresh rubble well back from the far shoulder of the road, and the county reestablished thru-traffic on Owl Creek Road that Tuesday evening.

Aside from a smoother mountain face and all the Georgia Red Clay, the area there at Owl Creek Road is none the worse for wear. Bradshaw said he first wanted to use county resources

to save money on getting rid of the boulder, but when he found out they couldn't move it, he was thankful to have discovered Anderson & Son, which was able to get the job done for \$3,000.

"When things like this happen, you can't go shopping – you've got to do something," said Bradshaw. "I feel very good about what was done, how it was done, and the timeframe in which it was done."

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Johnson...from Page 1A



Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Friends Steven Aft and Michael Borkman in the Mountain Movers and Shakers meeting on Friday, Feb. 16.

this mountain region up here that we live in."

Johnson was the honored guest of the Mountain Movers and Shakers that Friday, Feb. 16, and he joined them to speak about the Iwo Jima remembrance event that occurred on Monday, Feb. 19, after press time.

The event at Foster Park commemorated the 73rd anniversary of the first landing in the Battle of Iwo Jima, and Johnson was accompanied by

five other Iwo Jima survivors for the remembrance.

"We saved 24,000 lives just by taking that island," said Johnson on Friday. "It's hard to believe when you look at history and say, I thank God I was part of that. I thank you for being Americans and supporting our military."

Added Johnson: "Being in the military has many opportunities, and if you all have grandchildren who are interested, the opportunity is

there for them."

Former Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall commissioned the one-of-a-kind Iwo Jima flag-raising memorial, which was dedicated on Veterans Day 2015 at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center at Foster Park.

Kendall announced the statue in October 2015, during a county meeting attended by artist Al Garnto and Iwo Jima vets Bud Johnson and Todd Kimsey, both retired U.S. Navy.

"This is what freedom is about," said Johnson then. "It's not so much about us who are survivors, but those who didn't make it back."

Michael Borkman emceed last week's meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers, and he embraced the group's regional mission by inviting his friend, Steven Aft of Murphy, North Carolina, to address those gathered.

Aft spoke on the defining qualities of community service, and the importance of community outreach, youth development, and maintaining a focus on leadership in these mountain communities.

To contact Aft and learn how to get involved in the many community service initiatives he's got his hands in, visit www.StevenAft.com.

Phillips is particularly excited about the new 3D printer that is coming soon to the Towns County Library.

"It's mesmerizing," said Phillips, who has seen 3D printing machines in action. "We got it because the state bought every region in Georgia a 3D printer."

For more information on the new technology, visit or call the local library.

And don't forget, the Young Harris library will be hosting its annual Dr. Seuss Day Celebration on Saturday, March 3, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

There will be live storytelling, and every family will get a free Dr. Seuss book.

"We've got a full movie shown here in our community room, it's got a 70-inch television with surround sound, and we'll be serving popcorn," said Stone.

So, mark those calendars and remember to be at the library on March 3. Who knows? Residents might even get a chance to meet the Cat in the Hat.

Also be sure to visit MountainRegionalLibrary.org, where residents can find all sorts of useful information about the libraries and catch up on the MRLS Connection Newsletter.

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compensation policy effectively caps director pay at \$5,400 per year for meeting attendance.

The policy also addresses pay for director attendance at workshops and training programs, resulting in pay of \$200 per day, but only when attendance at those workshops or training programs is required.

New directors are given two years to complete five required training classes, and no additional classes are covered by the EMC, excepting extra training for directors who assume special roles on the board, i.e. secretary or treasurer.

Costs associated with director travel for required training and meeting attendance are also paid by the EMC.

"About the most a board member can make now would be somewhere around \$6,400 or \$6,500 a year," said Henson,

taking into account training and meeting attendance. "If we can stay below \$6,600 per director a year on average of the nine (directors), we will be below the '09 cost to run the board."

Added Henson: "It'll save us somewhere around \$40,000 a year, and that is a lot of money. We're trying our best to cut expenses up there, and this just shows you we're not afraid to cut our own."

State law mandates that EMC directors be compensated for their time.

Also in the board meeting, retired educator and local resident Dr. Jounida Bradley asked the board to do something about high electricity bills, which tend to spike for full-time residents in the winter time.

BRMEMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms touched on some key figures

in the meeting concerning the EMC's broadband services, highlighting the fact that the broadband take rate increased nearly 5 percent between 2016 and 2017.

In the past, Nelms has stated that it was his goal to increase market saturation of current EMC infrastructure before spending money on newer infrastructure.

The EMC is striving to meet and subsequently maintain a 50 percent take rate for its broadband services, and right now, the broadband take rate is sitting at around 33 percent.

Board members welcomed high school seniors Chase Williams of Towns County and Jacquelyn Stewart of Clay County, North Carolina, in the Feb. 13 meeting, and they spoke on their time as delegates in the EMC's annual Washington Youth Tour.

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Towns County Elementary School is one such recipient.

"Last year, we received the Georgia Shape Grant," said Elementary School Principal Dr. Sandy Page. "This is a program that was started by Gov. (Nathan) Deal in 2015.

"We applied for it and received the \$5,000 grant to use this year between the elementary school and the cafeteria. It is to increase the amount of physical activity and encourage lifelong health with our students. So, we have a Wellness Council now at the elementary school who are in charge of this aspect of our school."

The Wellness Council is divided into two concerns, nutrition and exercise.

School Nutrition and Cafeteria Manager Becky Lusk is in charge of the nutrition portion of the grant, while Tamara Sandler is handling the physical activity aspect of the grant.

"With our grant, for the physical education side, we purchased the GoNoodle software," said Sandler. "What this allows the teachers to do is incorporate physical education into their classrooms while collaborating with their core subjects.

"This gets the kids up and moving around. They can do math problems while exercising. They can learn so many different things while being physically active at the same time. So, instead of sitting in a chair for seven hours a day, these kids get to get up and be active while they're still learning."

And to promote continued use of the GoNoodle software, Sandler offers monthly competitions to see who is using the program the most, and she awards prizes for the winner, such as being featured on the morning announcements.

TCES will have the



Photo by Lily Avery

Towns County Board of Education Members Laura Banister and Dr. Kilee Smith.

GoNoodle program for two years.

The Wellness Council has also used other opportunities to promote physical activity among the students, such as a hula hooping and jump roping booth during the homecoming festivities, and a Walk Day last November where students walked two miles.

As for the nutrition portion of the grant, Lusk used the monies to purchase more healthy, inspirational advertisements for the lunchroom, naturally flavored water cups, and a cart for the "Breakfast on the Go" program.

"Breakfast on the Go" is designed for students who may not have time to eat breakfast at home or make it to the cafeteria before reporting for school. But now, with this program, students can get breakfast quickly while still remaining healthy.

"We wanted to increase our breakfast participation and encourage kids to drink more water," said Lusk. "Our participation has increased from 41 percent in August to 61 percent in October, and January was still at 61 percent. We want to encourage all



Photo by Lily Avery

Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong

students to eat breakfast.

"We also encourage water at lunch. We cut up fresh fruit and add it to the water each day, and try to switch it up every other day. We go through six to eight gallons of water a day just in the elementary. I think the kids are catching on and liking it more as we go."

That is currently the extent of the Georgia Shape Program at TCES, but both Sandler and Lusk hope to continue to promote health and wellness throughout the school so that students can live long, healthy lives.

Senate passes bills to aid local Law Enforcement

Lt. Governor Casey Cagle and Senate Republicans advanced a package of four bills on Wednesday that will strengthen support and compensation for Georgia's local law enforcement officers. With bi-partisan support, the vote was nearly unanimous on every bill.

The legislation – Senate Bills 366, 367, 368 and 369 – follow the recommendations of the Compensation of Police and Sheriffs (COPS) Task Force, which Lt. Governor Cagle and the Senate launched last year to investigate and address compensation, benefits, and retention of Georgia's police officers, sheriff's deputies, and jailers. The task force was co-chaired by Lt. Governor Cagle and Sen. Greg Kirk (R – Americus). Members included Sens. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla), Jack Hill (R – Reidsville), Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonega), Tonya Anderson (D – Lithonia), and John Wilkinson (R – Toccoa).

"Whenever Georgians are asked about the most important issue they face in their lives, invariably public safety is at the top of their list of concerns," said Senate Majority Leader Bill Cowser (R – Athens). "I am amazed at the sacrifices our local law enforcement officers make with the long hours they work, with the perilous duties, and for the low pay that they receive. I'm surprised that we are able to find anyone to do their jobs – and the Senate wants these brave men and women to know that we appreciate them."

Lt. Governor Cagle said state efforts to ensure local law enforcement officers are compensated fairly will continue.

"Today is an important first step for our local law enforcement officers as we work to acknowledge their sacrifices and selfless service to the people of Georgia," said Lt. Governor Cagle. "We owe our full support to the men and women who keep our communities safe, and that's why the Senate has advanced a comprehensive set of solutions that will lead to higher salaries and better benefits for local law enforcement officers. I'm proud of the work we have accomplished alongside so many of Georgia's dedicated officers."

This legislative package includes SB 366, which would require cities and counties to report salaries for local law enforcement officers to the Department of Community Affairs, which will compile the data and will compare regional pay scales to encourage competitive compensation levels. SB 367 increases support for families of fallen officers by allowing indemnification funds to be paid to an estate. SB 368 provides technical assistance to rural police departments and sheriffs' offices. Finally, SB 369 makes necessary updates to enhance retirement and disability payments provided through the Peace Officers' Annuity and Benefit fund.

"All we have to do is turn on the news to see the dangers our law enforcement officers confront day in and day out," said Sen. Greg Kirk. "I would like to thank Lt. Governor Cagle for his strong leadership and support for our law enforcement officers. This is only the beginning of our efforts to reward our officers for their tireless service."

"Thanks to Lt. Governor Cagle for his leadership. Our officers place their lives on the line for our communities every single day," said Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell), Chairman of the Public Safety Committee. "It is vital they have all the necessary resources to serve our communities."

"Law enforcement officers all across this state put service before self on a daily basis. I'm proud to join my Senate colleagues and Lt. Governor Cagle in leading the fight to ensure our law enforcement community has our full support," added Sen. Tyler Harper.

"It was an honor to serve on the COPS Task Force and to carry SB 366 in the Senate," said Sen. Steve Gooch. "This legislation will assist local governments with retention, recruitment, and competition within law enforcement. Raising salaries for people who put their lives on the line every day is simply the right thing to do. I look forward to working with the House of Representatives to secure final passage of this legislation." NTF#B21.Z13JCA

Mountain Sounds Dulcimer Club

We meet every 2nd & 4th Tuesday from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Senior Center. No matter if you just started playing the dulcimer or if you are experienced, come join us for a good time playing your favorite songs and learning new songs. For more information call Roxanne at 386-561-0593 or email roxannejill47@gmail.com. Hope to see you at our next meeting! NTF#B21.Z13JCA

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Digital, which has replaced the OverDrive app for digital e-book and audiobook checkouts.

People looking to access the new digital service can go to RBDigital.com to register their library card number, after which they'll be able to access the app for use on their phone or tablet.

RB Digital allows access to up to 20,000 books, and "there are 112 of the best-selling magazines on it," according to Stone.

Stay tuned to the local library, because Stone is planning a class to teach people how to navigate the program.

Another new addition to the Towns County Library is a phone and tablet charging station, where folks can "get charged free of charge" as they

take advantage of everything else the library has to offer.

Of course, the libraries are always looking for ways to expand the educational horizons of the county's children and others, which is why they are now offering new devices called Playaway Launchpads for checkout.

"Those are great for kids who want to have something educational to take home with them," said Stone. "They can keep them for up to two weeks."

The Launchpads are durable tablets that come pre-loaded with educational content on a variety of subjects, and they are "100 percent secure" with "no download time" or need for Wi-Fi access, according to Playaway.com.