

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Military Ball March 5

Be advised that on March 5th, 2022 at the Ridges Resort, Young Harris, GA there will be the 7th Annual Military Ball for ALL services and civilians. If you are a member of any of our VSOs, as the American Legion, American Legion Aux., American Legion Riders, VFW, VFW Aux., your presence would add to the ambience. All Veterans from Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and even our USCG are more than welcome! This will be a fun event and is organized and sponsored by our U.S. Navy Seabees of Island X-3, Blairsville, GA.



The Veterans' Corner  
Scott Drummond  
USCG Veteran

Also come join in and help celebrate the Seabees 80th birthday. Personally, I know several of those Seabees and they are some of the finest Americans you could ever meet. Yes the Navy has engineers too!

Social hour begins at 1730 (5:30 p.m.); Dinner at 6:30 p.m.; Ceremony at 7:30 p.m.; Dancing 8 p.m. till 11:30.

If military please come in Dinner Dress. If civilian, Black tie is optional and ladies evening wear. A great guest speaker will engage your thoughts with some historical facts and other informational issues. Speaker: CMDMC (SCW) James McKinney USNR

Take Note: There may be a great surprise guest who may say a few words, also! Not to be missed!

There will be a cash bar, dinner buffet, and Hotel available: Contact The Ridges Resort on Lake Chatuge (706-896-2262); www.theridgesresort.com, Young Harris, GA; ask for the Seabee rate!

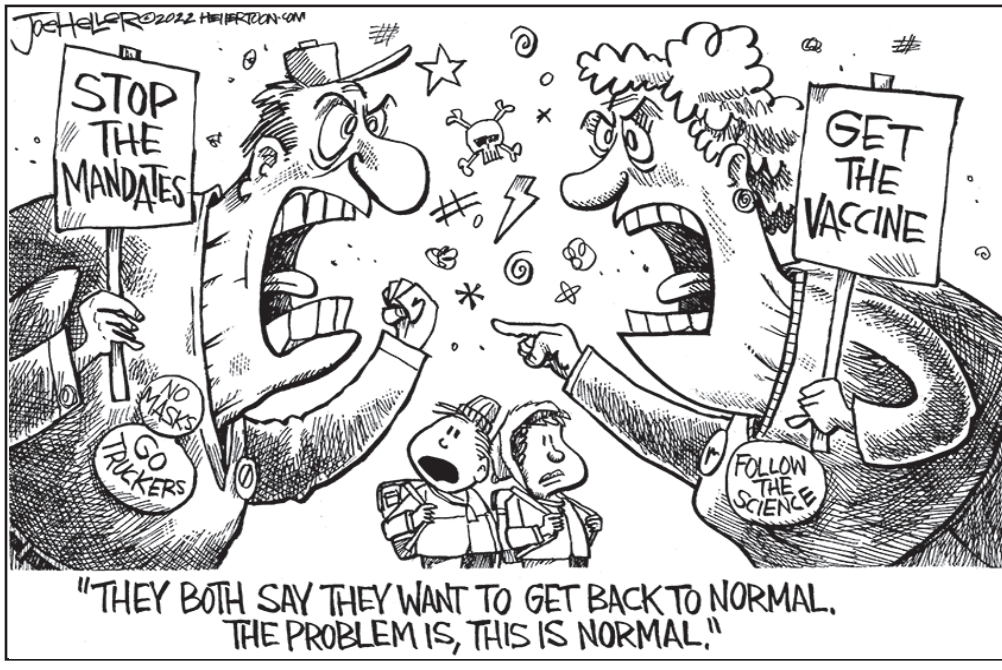
Nominal cost will be \$50 or \$30 for active duty military E1-E5. Same cost for guests with escort. If paying by check, make payable to NSVA Island X-3 Blairsville. From personal experience this event will be well worth it! There won't be anything else like it in this area until next year, so plan to attend and make acquaintance with some really wonderful folks, representing the best of America.

Contact Ed Crenshaw (706-897-2649) cecbret@windstream.net or Bob Ramay (706-400-9245) bobramay@windstream.net.

Please, please either send in your checks to Bob by 02/25/2022 or at least notify one of the two contacts listed above to facilitate an accurate head count for these fine folks.

If you have notified Ed or Bob and wish to pay at the door please bring your check Saturday evening. Of course cash is accepted.

Please plan on attending and have a wonderful evening with some wonderful folks. -Semper Paratus



"THEY BOTH SAY THEY WANT TO GET BACK TO NORMAL. THE PROBLEM IS, THIS IS NORMAL."

## Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition

The Chestatee/Chat-tahoochee RC&D Council (Chest-Chat) is a non-profit organization located in North-east Georgia whose original work area was the 13 counties in that corner of the state, but in the past few years Chest-Chat has grown to cover all 159 Georgia counties plus 59 counties in western North Carolina, South Carolina, and Southwestern Virginia. Included in our work area outside Georgia are the Appalachian mountain chain stretching from Georgia into North Carolina, Southwestern Virginia, and northwestern South Carolina.



RC&D  
Frank Riley  
Executive Director

Chest-Chat administers grants and contracts funded by the USDA Forest Service and USDA NRCS in the communities in these areas. Our focus is Wildfire education and helping small farmers with programs and assistance.

In 2013 Chest/Chat was chosen as one of the original 8 Pilot hubs for the Fire Adapted Communities network and since then has collaborated with partners to make the program the best in the state and now has 24 Firewise Communities in Towns County, the leading Firewise program in Georgia which has 124 total. Georgia is 5th in the nation for number of Firewise Communities only 2 behind Texas.

Our Wildfire education program (Firewise) is driven by a group of dedicated citizens that make up the Towns County Firewise Citizen's Coalition. This group meets monthly and is dedicated to making this area safer from wildfire. The results of the Towns Coalition's efforts over the past 5 years are a 75% drop in wildfire calls and the years since have shown similar trends. These results prove that the Fire Adapted Communities (FAC Net) Learning Network concept, which uses Peer to Peer communication, works and our results prove that citizens must drive the programs to be sustainable.

In 2015, Tony Tooke, the new USFS Region 8 Forester and soon was Forest Service Chief, visited Towns County to see for himself what we had been doing with our programs. For the previous 9 years Mr. Tooke had worked with the US Forest Service in Washington DC and when he saw what our group was doing, his comment was "this is exactly what Washington wants to see happening out in the field and I would like to see this program move all the way up the Appalachian Mountain chain to Virginia, can you do it?" Our answer was, "Yes Sir, it only takes money and a lot of dedicated people." The dedicated people are in every community in the Appalachian area and the trick is to find them and organize them into what we have here in north Georgia.

There were other RC&D Councils in the Appalachian area fit the bill perfectly to develop and spread this concept in the areas where they live and serve. RC&D councils have several things that make them a natural fit for our program development in the Appalachians; they consist of local citizens who are public servants, business owners, farmers, and with diverse and varied backgrounds; they are established in the areas where they serve; and they are all eager to find community service projects for funding to keep the doors open. These citizen-run organizations can make Firewise happen in the local community just like they have in Towns County.

There are six RC&D councils along the string of Appalachian Mountains from Georgia to Virginia. That was 7 years ago, and our work has been so successful that the US Forest Service has just re-funded our group for the third time since our start in 2015. These RC&D councils have met Mr. Tooke's challenge and are now recognized as the wildfire education "experts" in their areas. This area from Georgia to Virginia covers a continuous area of Appalachian Mountains where everybody lives in the Wildland Urban Interface and need what Firewise and Fire Adapted Communities have to offer, a safer place to live with nature in the forest. Chest/Chat RC&D developed the concept and has been the administrator for the group since the beginning.

We distribute the funds to the other RC&Ds and are the liaison between them and the US Forest Service. The good news is that our work has been successful and the agencies that are charged with protecting citizens from wildfires recognize the good work that our group has done.

Smokey's message that "Only You can Prevent Wildfires!" holds true because we cannot do it, only YOU can. In 2021 our team's results are: 258 presentations, 166 community assessments, 60 Firewise USA communities, 96 Mitigation projects, 215 Fairs and events, and spoke to 7,582 citizens with our programs and events and all this under COVID protocols. No telling what we can do when the pandemic is over, and we can get back to meeting in person eating fried chicken and BBQ!

For more information on Fire Adapted Communities check out: fireadaptednetwork.org.

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## Chill Hours

This week I'm going to talk about chill hours and the affect that cold has on plants. The cold weather can feel very dreary and like there is no life with plants not growing, trees without leaves, and wildlife holing up for the winter. However, winter is a very important and necessary time of the year for plants. Without it there's a number of important fruits and flowers that would not bloom every year. Let's talk about the effect that cold weather can have on plants and why it's so important.



Watching and Working  
Jacob Williams

For some plants they are not just responding to the cold, but they are also responding to the change in day length as the days grow shorter in winter and then longer into the spring. These kinds of plants are called photosensitive, because they are responding to the changes in light. Mums and poinsettias are some common examples. A change in the day length can trigger blooming or leaf drop in plants.

Many fruit plants require chill hours to be able to put on blooms. Chill hours is a count of the number of hours where the temperature is 32 and 45 degrees Fahrenheit. After a satisfactory number of chilling hours has been reached, the plant will break into bloom. This chilling process is called vernalization. Without vernalization, we wouldn't be able to enjoy apples, peaches, tulips, foxgloves, blueberries, and many other plants. Different varieties of plants require different numbers of chilling hours, so it's always best to pick varieties that are well adapted to our climate so that you have the most success with your fruits and flowers. For example if you select a variety of apples that requires too many chill hours, the apple tree will not bloom. However, if you select a variety of apples that has a chill hour requirement that is too low, it could bloom too early, and the flowers would be killed in a late frost.

In these plants, a repressor gene is keeping the plants from blooming. The cold causes that repressor gene to be altered so that it's no longer controlling the blooming of the flower. That way when warmer temperatures arrive the flowers can bloom out.

The timing of when cold happens is also critical. Oftentimes in the mountains, we'll have a late freeze after many of the apple or peach trees have already bloomed. Freezing temperatures after bloom can result in flowers dying and falling off. If the blooms fall off a fruit tree, that tree won't be able to bear any fruit that year. For a freeze to damage blooms the temperature usually needs to be 28 or lower. Early freezes can be damaging to plants as well. They are forced into freezing temperatures before being able to harden off properly, and can be severely damaged.

Some plants are able to tolerate cold weather while others can't. Scientists believe the ability to tolerate cold weather comes down to the makeup of the cell membranes in the plant. Cell membranes are made up of fat molecules. Some of them are saturated and some unsaturated. Similar to what you read on the nutrition facts label for packaged food. Scientists think that plants with a higher ratio of saturated fats can freeze more easily.

Winter can seem like a dead time of the year, really it's Mother Nature's way of preparing for spring. If you have questions about the effect of winter on plants contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

## Habitat begins work on new home

We are in the beginning stages of building our newest Habitat home and we could not be more excited! Brandy Snow and her family are so deserving of a home, and we will be working closely with her and her family to make sure we build a functional, and efficient home suitable for them and their needs.



Habitat Happenings  
Madelyn Bailey

Brandy wrote how excited, and blessed she is by the construction of a new home: "My name is Brandy Snow; I am a Blairsville native. A mom to two sons, Wyatt and Elijah, who are 10 and 8, respectively. Habitat for Humanity has made the victory of owning a home possible for us; much faster and smoother than anticipated. With that we are overwhelmed with joy and gratitude as owning a home will address many of the challenges our family faces. Wyatt will have wheelchair access to every area of the home. Elijah will get a new puppy like he has always dreamed. For me, I will have a safe and functional home to raise my boys. I will be able to plant as many flowers as I please. Thank you to each of you who has a hand in this process whether donating time, resources, or prayers for our family. We are truly blessed."

If you are interested in volunteering to be a part of this home build or donating, please contact us at 706-745-7101. We would love to have our community come around Brandy, and our organization, in making this a successful build.

I previously mentioned we will be partnering with the Marina Station in raising funds for Brandy's new habitat home. We will be having a dinner benefit sponsored by the Marina Station and a silent auction. A percentage of the funds from the spaghetti dinners sold and all proceeds from the silent auction will support the upcoming Habitat home build for Brandy Snow and her family.

This event will take place on Wednesday, March 2nd from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., and the cost for the spaghetti dinner will be \$12. Mark your calendars, we hope to see you there!

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor  
P.O. 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.

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# Towns County Herald

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