

Towns County Herald

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Safety of children No. 1 concern in local meeting

By Mark Novak
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

School safety was on everyone's mind at the Feb. 23 meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers.

Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong and Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton were invited to speak to the group about this hot topic, following the most recent school shooting in Florida.

"It's extremely sad that we would even have to have this conversation, that schools are put into a situation like this, where students are unsafe,"

said Dr. Berrong. "I would love to stand here and say this would never happen in Towns County, we're 100 percent safe, but the truth is nobody could say that."

And while it may be impossible to be completely prepared for an act of violence, the best way to safeguard against something like a school shooting is to keep it from happening in the first place.

"We have an anonymous tip line at the sheriff's office through the phone or email," said Sheriff Clinton, and Dr. Berrong added, "I would think that if our students were seeing

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Photo by Mark Novak

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton



Photo by Mark Novak

Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong



Photo by Shawn Jarrard

The Towns County baseball field looks okay to the eye, but it's actually unplayable due to groundwater that has made the field soggy like a marshland.

Groundwater makes TCHS baseball field unplayable

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Assistant Editor

The baseball field at Towns County Schools is in serious trouble, and both middle and high school teams might not be able to play a single game at home this season.

For reasons yet to be determined, the ground from centerfield through left field has become waterlogged, and the grass moves underfoot with a spongy quality.

"It's a marshland,"

said Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong.

Dr. Berrong and others believe it's likely that a natural springhead has appeared or moved under the baseball field recently, causing more and more water to travel downhill toward the field.

"It was the first day of practice, and my son is a ninth-grader on the baseball team, so I came up here," said Dr. Berrong. "Coach (Shannon) Floyd said, 'I need you to

walk out here in the outfield with me.'"

It's been rainy of late, but what Dr. Berrong walked on that day had nothing to do with rain – the ground was extremely soft and mushy, and it had been a couple of days since the last downpour.

Coach Floyd told Dr. Berrong that no official would ever allow a game to be played on a field in that condition because of the likelihood of a player turning their ankle

See *Baseball*, Page 6A

Ernie Seckinger remembered in county meeting



Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw celebrated the memory of Ernie Seckinger in the Feb. 20 county meeting. L-R: Debbie Phillips, Betty Seckinger, Barbara Hale, Jerry Taylor, Bradshaw, Sara Heidt and Janice Heidt.

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Assistant Editor

When Ernie Seckinger passed away suddenly on Sept. 2, 2017, he left behind a loving family and an untold number of friends in a community that misses him to this day.

Seckinger was honored in the Feb. 20 regular

meeting of Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw.

The commissioner presented Ernie's wife, Betty Seckinger, with a certificate of appreciation, "for his dedication to the citizens of Towns County shown through his tireless service on the Towns County Library Board of Trustees."

"I'd like to thank everyone," said Mrs. Seckinger

after accepting the certificate. "Ernie was passionate about the library, he loved the library, and he wanted the best for the library and the best for Towns County."

"He loved this county, and even though I grew up here, I was born here, he knew more people than me. So, thank you

See *Seckinger*, Page 6A

Veterans gather to remember the Battle of Iwo Jima



Photo by Lily Avery

Iwo Jima Veterans USMC Jack Rhodes, USN Todd Kimsey and USMC Joseph Tedder.

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Area veterans met Monday, Feb. 19, at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center to commemorate the 73rd anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of Iwo Jima on Feb. 19, 1945.

Six local Iwo Jima veterans were honored at the event: Todd Kimsey, U.S. Navy; Jack Rhodes, U.S. Marine

Corps; Clarence "Bud" Johnson, U.S. Navy; Phil Gamache, U.S. Marine Corps; Mack Drake, U.S. Marine Corps; and Joseph Tedder, U.S. Marine Corps.

Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7807 and Auxiliary, American Legion Post 23 and Auxiliary, American Legion Riders, U.S. Marine Corps League Detachment 783, and North Georgia Honor Guard also attended the event with members of their

families, all in the name of remembrance and honor for this 73rd anniversary.

The Battle of Iwo Jima would prove to be one of the most calamitous battles in World War II, as well as American history.

From Feb. 19, 1945, to March 26, 1945, American forces suffered more than 26,000 casualties on the island, and

See *Iwo Jima*, Page 6A

Watson, Lee and McDowell heading to The Hall

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Assistant Editor

Three Country Music legends will be performing at Anderson Music Hall inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on Saturday, March 3 – Gene Watson, Johnny Lee and Ronnie McDowell.

All three artists have played The Hall before in their decades-long careers, and all three men stay busy these days, traveling the country, making music and entertaining fans.

"We've got a Gospel

See *Watson*, Page 6A



Gene Watson

ATV accident claims life of Hiawassee man

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Assistant Editor

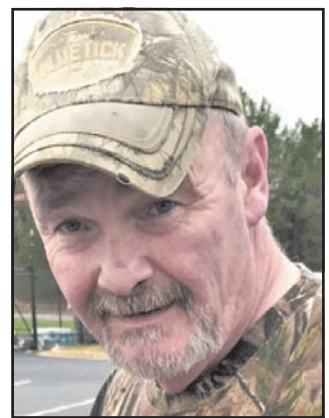
On the afternoon of Saturday, Feb. 24, a four-wheeler accident claimed the life of Rickie Lee Ledford, 59, of Hiawassee.

Ledford had been reported missing from his home off Jack Creek Road in Hiawassee, and he was last known to have left his residence on a four-wheeler just before lunchtime on Saturday.

He was reported missing after failing to return home.

Towns County Search and Rescue personnel were activated and began a search of the area off Jack Creek Road.

Searchers located the missing man and his wrecked four-wheeler off Jack Creek



Rickie Lee Ledford

Road.

The Towns County Sheriff's Office requested the Georgia State Patrol to assist them with the fatal accident investigation.

Sheriff Clinton asks the community to keep Mr. Ledford and his family in their thoughts and prayers during

this time of grief.

Banister Funeral Home provided services for Ledford.

"Rickie was born on Oct. 30, 1958, to the late Cloe and Ola (Burrell) Ledford in Habersham County," according to Ledford's obituary. "He was married to the love of his life, Mrs. Shirley Williams-Ledford, for 24 years before she passed last year."

"Mr. Ledford was the pastor at God's Lighthouse in Hiawassee for more than 16 years. He was a hard worker and had spent 25 plus years at Hanson Rock Quarry."

"He enjoyed fishing and hunting in his spare time. Rickie was a devoted father to his two sons and an exceptional grandfather to his grandchildren."

School board qualifying begins Mar. 5

Qualifying for the Towns County Board of Education begins next week.

The offices are Post 1 in Macedonia, Post 2 in Young Harris and Post 3 in Hiawassee.

Interested residents will need to fill out the appropriate paperwork to qualify for one of the three seats, and that paperwork is available at the Towns County Board of

Elections and Registration office next door to the Towns County Courthouse.

The qualifying fee for a board of education post is \$36.

Qualifying will begin on Monday, March 5, and will run from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. that Monday through Thursday, and from 9 a.m. to noon on Friday, March 9.

The board office will close

for lunch between 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. during the week.

The General Primary Election, Nonpartisan General Election and Special Election will be held in conjunction on May 22, and the General Election will be held on November 6.

For more information, residents can also visit the Secretary of State's website at sos.ga.gov.

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Blue Ridge 1,676.52	Church 4B
Chatuge 1,918.88	Opinions 4A
Nottely 1,762.41	Legals 7B
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Baseball
Feb 27 @ Lakeview 4:30 PM
Soccer
Mar 2 @ Lumpkin 5 & 7 PM

Pre-K and Kindergarten Registration begins
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Top of GA Speech Contest
Thursday, March 1, at 6:30 p.m.
New Towns County Senior Center

Navy Seabees Military Ball
March 3rd
See page 3A