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Free emergency medical flights available for Towns County residents

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Starting June 1, all Towns County residents will be eligible for free medical flights through Union General Hospital's Air Methods helicopter service.

Residents will not have to sign up for the Air Methods service, but will be automatically enrolled countywide on June 1.

Union General Hospital initially reached out to the county to provide the service, which will be funded through a partnership between the county and the hospital.

The cost to the county to provide the service to all residents is currently estimated to be roughly \$27,000.

Air Methods is a company that provides air medical transport services to the nearest trauma centers, such as Northeast Georgia Medical



Individuals from Union General Hospital, Air Methods, Union County and Towns County governments, gathered at the UGH helipad on Monday, March 13.

in Gainesville. Each patient must be evaluated by medical professionals, and their situation must be determined

as sufficiently emergent for Air Methods to provide a flight.

The Air Methods flight has actually been provided

by the hospital and county for nearly a year, though previously residents had to individually sign up for

memberships.

While the automatic countywide memberships will go into effect this coming June, residents who signed up for the service last year will still be covered now until the new memberships begin.

"This program is an agreement between Air Methods and the county," said Derrick Moody, Air Methods Georgia Regional Business Manager. "The county and the hospital are going to be in a joint effort. They're purchasing the membership through Air Methods Advantage for the aircraft in Blairsville.

"We have an aircraft in Blairsville, Gainesville and Jasper; those are the ones closest to Blairsville. We're all Air Methods, through AirLife Georgia. They would be covered under them as well. This also covers them nationwide. If any Air Methods aircraft transports any of these citizens, they'll

be covered."

For citizens who live within the city limits of Hiawassee, this will be an additional membership on top of the air medical transport membership through Life Force Air Medical that is provided by the city.

Again, all residents will be automatically signed up for a membership starting June 1.

When a resident requires an air medical transport and receives one through Air Methods, the first that happens is personal insurance pays toward the cost of the flight. However, any cost that not covered by insurance will be covered under the Air Methods membership, which usually amounts to savings of many thousands of dollars.

For people who don't have personal insurance, the entire cost of the medical flight is covered by the Air Methods

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Phillips previews EMC policy changes ahead of town hall meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors will be hosting a town hall meeting on Thursday, March 23, at 6 p.m.

North Georgia Technical College will host the meeting, located at 121 Meeks Ave in Blairsville.

BRMEMC began its practice of holding town halls in January 2016. The meetings are meant to give the membership chances to speak directly with directors in order to have questions answered and concerns heard.

The board will be holding another town hall on April 13 at 6 p.m. inside the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center, at 150

Foster Park Road in Young Harris.

In the upcoming town hall meetings, directors will take turns presenting up-to-date information about the EMC, including policy changes, which Board Vice-Chair Steven Phillips said will feature many issues important to the membership.

A past example of an item that came out of the Policy Committee was the board's decision to change up its own leadership from year to year, which is why Phillips will be stepping down from chair following the 2016 annual meeting last September.

"We've got a very good board," said Phillips. "We've got everybody working for the good of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, and we've made a lot of changes."



BRMEMC Directors Mickey Cummings and Steven Phillips in the June 6, 2016, Hiawassee Town Hall.

As vice-chair and head of the Policy Committee, Phillips decided to do things a little differently from his

predecessors.

"I got staff involved, the employees of the Blue Ridge

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Cathy Cox to leave Young Harris College

NEWS SPECIAL
Towns County Herald

YOUNG HARRIS – Young Harris College President Cathy Cox announced last week that she will formally step down from the position in June 2017 to accept the role of dean of Mercer University's School of Law, her Alma Mater.

During her 10-year tenure as president, Cox has led YHC through an unparalleled period of growth, transitioning it from a two-year to a four-year college, more than doubling the size of the faculty and student body, and constructing \$100 million in new facilities, while staying true to its United Methodist heritage. Under her leadership, the College has developed 21 new baccalaureate degree programs and 22 minors, gained NCAA Division II membership, and



Cathy Cox, Young Harris College President

celebrated the most successful capital campaign in YHC's history.

"It has been a privilege to work alongside Cathy

See Cox, Page 6A

MercyMe returns to The Hall on March 25



MercyMe is a Contemporary Christian music band that's been around since 1994.

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

For more than 20 years, MercyMe has been one of

most successful Christian Music's contemporary bands, and the group will be performing at Anderson Music Hall on Saturday, March 25.

Tickets for the 7 p.m. show are \$47, with off church groups of 20 or more.

Known globally for their

See MercyMe, Page 6A

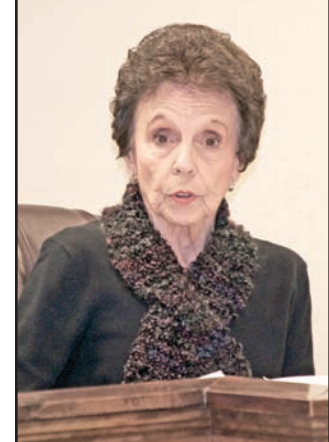
City of Hiawassee Mayor Mathis won't be rushed into retirement

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis announced her intent to retire in the coming months. According to Mayor Mathis, while her retirement is pending, she will continue to serve as mayor for the time being.

"There have been many rumors going around about my retirement," said Mayor Mathis. "The radio station made a statement that I had resigned but I have made no such statement."

"I am going to be retiring, but I don't know exactly when. I have not set a date yet. I want to let everyone know that. It might be two



Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis

weeks, it might be two months or it might be two months.

"It is in the near future."

I appreciate everybody. I love the city. I love working with the city and I will still continue working with the city."

Also during the meeting, Hiawassee City Council discussed current website development for the city and the need for a code enforcement officer during a called meeting on Monday, March 13.

For months, the city has been advertising for a new website developer to update the city's current website as well as help the city establish a social media presence to promote commerce and tourism within the city.

As of last Monday, the city had several bids on the position but the council felt

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BOE celebrates Board Appreciation Week

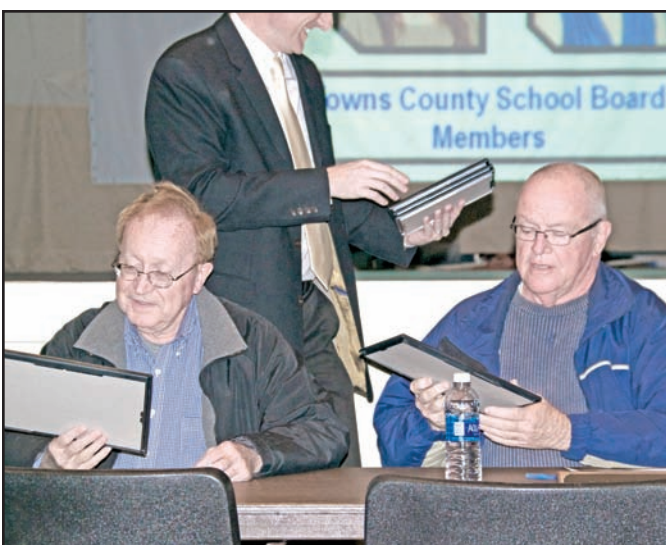
By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

School boards throughout the state of Georgia – and especially the Towns County Board of Education – are receiving VIP treatment this week for School Board Appreciation Week.

The Towns County BOE was honored during the board's monthly meeting on Monday, March 13. School Board Appreciation Week is celebrated from March 13 until March 17.

Towns County's school board is comprised of Chairperson Robert Williams, Vice Chairperson Stan Chastain, Jerry Taylor, Laura

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L-R, Towns County Board of Education members Jerry Taylor and Robert Williams receiving certificates of appreciation from Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong.

Law firm to meet with residents to discuss Windstream claims

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

CHOESTOE – Beckum Kittle Law from Birmingham, Alabama, will be holding a Windstream Action Information Meeting on Monday, March 27, at 7 p.m. at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center to discuss an ongoing trial against Windstream's product quality.

Last week, a representative from Beckum Kittle Law held a similar meeting for Union County residents at the Choestoe Schoolhouse to further explain the Windstream case and how to get involved.

There are currently 25 lawyers from Alabama



Attorney Dustin Kittle of the law firm Beckum Kittle LLP out of Birmingham, Alabama.

working on the case concerning Windstream's advertised Internet speed. Dustin Kittle, one of the leading lawyers on

the case, spoke with Union County residents during the meeting.

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Nottely 1,763.79



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answered
at NDO
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Community
Shred day
GA Mtn Fairgrounds
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Baseball
Fri Mar 24 vs. Commerce (DH)
4:30 & 6:30 PM
Mon Mar 27 vs. Oglethorpe 5:30
Soccer
Fri Mar 24 @ George Walton
5 & 7 PM