

Health Care in the Mountains: Reading the Landscape

Keeping up with the news on health care can be a headache, and tracking the impact of federal policies on local communities might seem even more painful, but as citizens and consumers, we need accurate readings of the health care landscape.

At the next meeting of the Public Policy Network (PPN) from 4 to 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 8th, at the Hinton Center in Hayesville, NC, Dr. Brian Mitchell will map out a variety of perspectives on the ACA, Medicaid expansion, and rural health initiatives and then take questions and lead

discussion.

Brian Mitchell, MD, a Board Certified Internist, has practiced medicine in Western NC for over forty years. A member of the Medical Staff at Murphy Medical Center and The Peachtree Community Health Center, Dr. Mitchell continues to advocate for the good health of North Carolinians and Georgians by sharing his wealth of experience and knowledge with the local community.

PPN's mission is to encourage citizen participation in the democratic process through education, action, and

advocacy. A volunteer civic organization, PPN monitors state and national policy proposals that affect individuals and our communities. We provide data, information, and resources to enable the citizens of western North Carolina and North Georgia to make informed decisions about policies that affect them.

For more information contact:

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Ledford...from Page 1A



Coach Ledford with her Towns County Indians and Lady Indians at the 2017 Class A Public Area 4 Championship last October.

kindness, determination, and respect is as important to me as state championships.

"To be nominated for the Double-Goal Coach Award gives me a sense of peace that I have done my part to harbor those into my kids' characters. Being a part of a sports team teaches so much about life. In life and in sports, we do not always win. In fact, it is rare, and that is what makes it special. We have to learn to win and lose with grace and deep respect."

Coach Ledford has taken the Towns County Cross Country program to soaring heights, seeing her boys team improve

in meaningful ways season after season, and coaching the Lady Indians to five consecutive state championships in recent years.

"I am excited to see the growing success of our sports programs at TCHS and in this entire surrounding area," said Ledford. "Northeast Georgia teams and individual student-athletes are proving to be some of the toughest in the state. The lessons they are learning through sports and competing at higher levels can positively affect them for a life time."

As her student-athletes will attest, Ledford has managed to strike a unique

bond with each of her runners year after year, and her teams become cohesive family units each season as a result of her passion and guidance.

"Coaching has been an honor," said Coach Ledford. "It is who I have been for 18 and a half years. I have lived it, not just coached it."

"What my kids have given to my life through my coaching career cannot be put into words or an award. They are my success. With humble thanks, I am deeply touched for being a national finalist for such a meaningful award."

Crothers...from Page 1A

never met anyone that is so unselfish and giving of her time. It's amazing, and I love this lady."

Crothers received the recognition for her many years of community service, such as being elected to the Hiwassee City Council and volunteering in an untold number of local civic groups.

"I haven't done all this to get any recognition," said Crothers. "I've just enjoyed every minute of it because I love the people here, loved them the minute I came. They accepted me, and it's just been thrilling living here, so I can't think of any place better and I lived all over the country."

In the meeting, Bradshaw told the story of a single mother with a 9-year-old daughter who came to Towns County in 1977.

That woman was Crothers, and Bradshaw said that, despite her circumstances, she has committed a tremendous amount of service to the county and has never once stopped donating her time.

The list of selfless acts Bradshaw highlighted not only included what Crothers has done for the county, but what she has given of herself for her family.

"She worked numerous odd jobs to support herself and her daughter including ... cleaning cabins, substitute teacher, hauled people to the airport, and a cashier at a local restaurant," said Bradshaw. "In other words, she did anything and everything she could to pay her bills. She worked hard."

Working long hours, Crothers still found time to become an active member of the community.

"She began volunteer work at the school where her child attended, our school here in Towns County," said Bradshaw. "She served eight years as a Girl Scout leader, volunteered many hours at the 4-H group, and was an active member of the PTSO."

"Ms. Crothers has served our community throughout her life. She helped found several very important community groups that have provided vital support for Towns County citizens."



Photo by Mark Novak
Commissioner Bradshaw signing official documents in the county meeting, with County Finance Director Andrea Anderson and County Clerk Linda Hedden.

In other business, Bradshaw gave his customary commissioner's report.

"This is a very good time for us right now, we're starting off to a very good year, everything is going very smoothly in the county," said Bradshaw. "Financially, it's going very well, very excited on where we're at. We still have the reserve in place, and we're going to keep it in place."

Bradshaw credits the economy with helping to bring additional funds into Towns County.

"We're \$14,000 dollars ahead (in sales tax collections) of where we were last year," said Bradshaw. "We're very excited about that."

Promoting tourism and hiring a new rec director for Foster Park in Towns County has brought more dollars into the county as well.

"We hired a new director, Matt Youngblood, he is doing a great job up there," said Bradshaw. "He hosted two state basketball tournaments a couple of weeks ago that brought families from all over the state of Georgia."

"That's a positive thing, it is generating money, and it's a trickle-down effect. Hilda (Thomason) had a concert that Friday and Saturday night at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, and she had to find hotel rooms for the entertainers that were coming. And it wasn't as easy as it usually is, she had

to call around and find rooms because of the basketball tournaments."

Bradshaw held a second reading and adoption of the resolution amending Chapter 40 of the county's Code of Ordinances concerning variances.

Anyone that is building and that may need a variance will now have to fill out an application, pay a fee, and it will go to the planning commission for a review.

"Somebody comes in and they are going to build a house, and maybe there is a big rock on the property and they need to move the house a little further, this is just one example," said Bradshaw. "We have setbacks where you have to be 10 feet off the property line, and they need to be 8 feet, so they come in and ask for a variance."

Operation Clean Sweep will take place in Towns County from April 16 through April 21.

Anyone interested in picking up trash on the roadways can contact J.C. Berrong at (706) 781-8366.

Gloves, safety vest and bags can be picked up at the Commissioner's Office at the Towns County Courthouse, and at both Hiwassee and Young Harris city halls.

"We want to concentrate on the feeder roads," said Berrong. "We will pick up the bags once you leave them beside the road and carry them to the landfill."

Helicopter...from Page 1A

companies that service Union and Towns County.

The first is AirLife GA owned and operated by "Air Methods," which is the one being paid for by Union General and Chatuge Regional Hospitals as well as the Union and Towns County Commissioner's Offices.

The second helicopter company is AirMedCare, which charges a \$65 renewal fee and is not affiliated with Air Methods Helicopter Membership.

The Air Methods Membership is free and has no fee, and the current year's Air Methods Membership for all county residents will take effect on June 1, 2018.

Union and Towns County residents do not have to sign up for or fill out anything to become a member

of Air Methods Helicopter Membership.

Air Methods provides emergency air medical transport to the nearest trauma center for patients in critical condition.

As we stated earlier, there are two different helicopter companies that service this area.

Air Methods is the helicopter service based at Union General Hospital, which is the membership being paid for by Union General Hospital, Chatuge Regional Hospital, and both Union and Towns County Commissioner's Offices.

This free membership covers you locally, as well as in 48 states throughout the country wherever Air Methods helicopters are based.