

## States of Emergency...from Page 1A

they're going to protect one another by abiding by this declaration."

Bradshaw supported the U.S. Forest Service's decision to close the Appalachian Trail last week, and he issued recommendations for in-county campgrounds requesting no new reservations until April 27. Present campers can stay for the remainder of their time with no extensions.

Seasonal reservations may stay intact at this time, Bradshaw suggested, but other bookings between March 27 and April 27 should be canceled or rescheduled.

The commissioner said that, while Towns County loves her tourists and visitors, right now is just not the time to be encouraging travel between counties as health care professionals continue to recommend social distancing to slow the spread of the virus.

Bradshaw has received many phone calls and had numerous conversations with residents recently, and people are both offering to help in any way they can and simply sharing their concerns over the present situation.

"There's a lot of uncertainty and people worrying about the food supply," he said. "I've tried to be encouraging, and as I said, we will get through

this and it will pass. It might require some sacrifice from all of us.

"I, for one, don't like sitting at home. I want to get out and do things. But we will get through this and things will get back to normal. We just have to be patient and do our part. And by our part, I mean staying away from people, staying home, just those types of common-sense things."

Added Bradshaw: "We just want everyone to know that we're in constant prayer for our community and our country, and that's very important to me."

On top of the county measures, Hiwassee and Young Harris issued the following orders in their declarations: no public gatherings of 10 or more people; city business may be conducted via teleconferencing; and no public utility disconnections due to nonpayment at this time.

Currently, there are no curfews in the county or cities, but that could change depending on the spread of the virus and developing containment measures.

"I think everybody knows to be prepared for the fact that our worst is yet to come," Councilman Dr. John Kelley said at the end of the March 27 called meeting of the Young Harris City Council. Dr. Kelley is a cardiologist with Piedmont

Heart of Blairsville.

Continued Kelley, "If you see family or friends or neighbors that are not practicing social distancing, just say, 'Look, I love you so much, I want you to stay safe - how about you guys spread apart?'"

Dr. Kelley also strongly stressed the importance of washing hands for at least 30 seconds with soapy water, and that people should use sterilization wipes as appropriate.

"It is not necessary to wear a mask as this time whatsoever," Dr. Kelley said. "If you are using a mask walking around, you are using something that a health care provider might need later ... nobody needs to panic."

"We all need to work together and be available if asked, to volunteer to help out with things that might come up to save our neighborhood. The health care facilities are absolutely stretched to their limit. If you can put them on your prayer list, that would be very much appreciated."

Like the cities, the Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation has suspended utility disconnects for non-payment through May 1. The changes apply to both traditional post-pay members, as well as FlexPay members.

## Clay County, NC, resident tests positive for COVID-19; currently isolated



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
March 30, 2020

The Clay County Health Department was notified early this morning that a Clay County resident has tested positive for COVID-19. The individual has been in isolation, and the health department will continue to monitor them throughout the rest of their isolation time. The Clay County Health Department will continue necessary contact tracing on this patient in identifying other close contacts. To protect individual privacy, no further information about this case will be released.

Clay County has been vigilant in prevention efforts, but has been preparing for the reality that we could reach this point eventually. The identification of this positive status does not detract us from our efforts, and we will continue to adapt to the

guidelines as set forth by the State of North Carolina and the Federal Government as information becomes available. Our staff has planned, trained, and is fully prepared to take on any challenges that may come our way, but our resolve stands firm that we will work together for our citizens.

It is advised that anyone who becomes ill with a respiratory type illness should isolate until the following criteria are met:

- 7 days have passed since the onset of symptoms; AND

- At least 72 hours without a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and respiratory symptoms are improving

Because COVID-19 is most commonly spread through respiratory droplets, individuals should take the same measures that health care providers recommend to prevent the spread of the flu and other viruses, including washing your hands, avoiding touching your face, staying home if you are sick and covering coughs and

sneezes with your elbow.

It is important to make sure the information you are getting about COVID-19 is coming directly from reliable sources like the Clay County Health Department, CDC, and NCDHHS. For more information, please visit the CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) and NCDHHS' website at [www.ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus), which will also include future positive COVID-19 test results in North Carolina.

The Clay County Health Department regularly updates our county call-in-line 828-389-8052 ext. 110 with information regarding COVID-19 as well, we encourage the public to call or see our Facebook page for up-to-date information. There is an additional local call line for the community at 828-835-4258 that is staffed from 9am-12 and 1pm-4pm.

**Stephanie Johnson**  
MPH, MBA  
Public Health Director  
Clay County Department of Health and Human Services

## Small Businesses...from Page 1A

Manager Andrew Smith said. "We have people calling in or even pulling up to the window to place their order. We're happy to take care of them either way."

"We've been very successful, so if it continues that way, we might extend our hours or add an extra day or two per week. I think that people still want a good, sit-down meal, and we're one of the few options remaining in town besides fast food."

Restaurants that have already closed during the current Towns County state of emergency are Brassie's Grill, Brother's at Willow Ranch, Daniel's Steakhouse, McLain's on Main, Moondance Bar and Grill and Sundance.

The Towns County Chamber of Commerce features a complete list of all local restaurant operations at [www.golakechatuge.com](http://www.golakechatuge.com). Click on the "Takeout at Chatuge" link that is located on the COVID-

19 Resources page.

As for the businesses that are considered necessary, they are facing their own set of unique challenges. At McKinney Heating and Air Conditioning, employees are taking additional safety measures on house calls.

"We always play it safe, but now we're adding some extra precautions," owner Gary Miller said. "We're wiping down all equipment with Clorox wipes before we work on it and when we finish."

"We try to avoid living areas as much as we can, and now, instead of wearing only booties, we wear surgical gloves when we enter a home. We're also quizzing people a little more before we go in to make sure nobody is sick or in quarantine."

On the economic front, Miller admits that business isn't booming, but he understands things could be worse. He also pointed out that spring is

usually a quiet time of year, but this year isn't usual.

"Things are kind of slow right now, but certainly not as slow as other businesses," he said. "This is our slow time of the year anyway, but when you take a slow stretch and then add to it, it makes things a little tighter."

"It's like combining an economic downturn with a weather event. That's how I would best describe things right now."

Miller also noted that his business installs air filtration systems, ventilators and other air quality products but has seen no interest in the services during the pandemic. Despite the adversity, Miller is confident that Towns County will bounce back stronger than ever.

"We know that God is in control and that every storm runs out of rain eventually," he said. "This isn't the new normal. It's just a temporary normal."

## Viral Concerns...from Page 1A

really dangerous and that we shouldn't go out that much, so we only come out when we absolutely need to and to get some groceries. Usually, we just stay inside and tend to things around the house, like our gardening."

"We have really been trying to make the most of all this time - it is just like retiring with a little more seclusion. We are just happy to see the people here taking this whole thing seriously."

Frances Burt, Rob's wife, said she agreed with her husband that they weren't overly scared, but that they were definitely concerned about others in their community.

"I've noticed a lot more people out here with bags and hitchhiking with their signs, which makes me worry a little," Frances said. "It's sad to think that some people may be losing their homes and their jobs because of the virus."

"I don't think there are a lot of people afraid of catching the virus. I think a lot of people have bigger concerns, like their family and making their bill

payments. Hopefully, it all gets back to normal sooner rather than later."

One thing is for sure amid all this virus uncertainty - residents appear to be taking seriously their responsibility for doing what they have to do to keep vulnerable populations safe.

"I work for a plumbing service that goes around the area, so I have seen a few places that are reacting to this in different ways," Eliot Adams said. "It's really nice to see a community that is handling this well and not freaking out over everything like others are."

"People here are listening and only coming out when they need to. This not only keeps them safe, but it keeps everyone else safe, too, because this is a community that a lot of retirees live in, and I would hate to see anything happen to those we care about. People just need to keep doing what they are doing and staying safe for everyone."

Of course, for some, it's only natural that people are anxious about all the recent

changes in daily lives.

"I think that people have every right and reason to be worried or concerned," Marty Hillford said. "This is a serious virus, and people really need to take it seriously."

"We really don't want it to spread and get others sick. I understand that people need to go out and get the things they need, but that should really be it. We can't risk getting sick."

"We have people that are worried about work and are worried about what they will do to make ends meet, and that makes everything scary. While I say that people have every reason to be scared, I still think it is part of handling this."

"If you aren't worried or scared in some way, then you are just lying to yourself, because this is making an impact on everyone."

Most people who ventured out into the public last week, including those observed at Ingles, seemed to be practicing the advised social distancing, showing that folks are on the same page as far as keeping the community safe.

## Schools...from Page 1A

environments for teachers and students alike.

"The schools are going well," Perren said. "We, in fact, had a faculty meeting over Google Meet, and all of our staff was there to talk about how we are delivering instruction to our students."

"Teachers are really on top of it. They are sending lessons out daily and sending videos. Take math as an example. The teacher assigns problems, then he sees where the students are at with the work and makes a video showing them how to work it out."

"We are working hard to help our students learn during this time. I have been really pleased with the effort our teachers are putting out, and I have been very pleased with the students as well."

High schoolers with technological limitations have been assisted by the school to get their work done as well.

"We supplied Chromebooks to those that do not have computers at home so that they can have computers," Perren said. "We have gotten with EMC to set up a hot spot out at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, just in case somebody doesn't have

internet at home.

"I am pleased that we are able to do this for students who worry about not having internet, because there are a handful of students, at least at the high school, that do not have internet access at their homes."

"We are doing the best we can in the situation that we are in. Prom was supposed to be on April 18, and if we have to postpone the prom, then I am committed that we will have one for these seniors."

"That goes for graduation, too, even if we have to do it this summer. We are going to get that done for these kids so they don't lose those experiences that are so important."

For their part, teachers are finding that many students have transitioned to online learning without a lot of complications.

"I actually think the students have had an easy time adjusting to the technological aspect," English teacher Brooke Whitt said. "They really are quite adept, and it is interesting because there are some technologies that I am using with them that I have not used in the classroom, and they have just been great."

"The part that I am probably more concerned about is the social interaction that they miss out on. I primarily teach seniors, and this is a big year in their lives, this is a transition year, and there is a lot going on. We are in the middle of scholarship season, and we are trying to help them manage their time and get everything together."

Parents are helping their children work through all the new challenges, too, which can be a back and forth between work and school schedules, but everyone agrees it's worth it in the end.

"The students really must take the initiative and focus while learning at home, and parents must add this additional work to their ever-growing list of responsibilities," said Caroleen Woods of the Towns County Parent Teacher Student Organization. "Even though online learning is a challenge, most people we have spoken with would prefer it rather than extending the school year."

Check in with the "Towns County Schools" Facebook page for update videos by Superintendent Berong.

## TVA launches initiative to strengthen public power COVID-19 response

**TVA** KNOX - The Tennessee Valley Authority announced Thursday an initiative to support increased flexibility for local power companies who are responding to urgent community and customer needs during the ongoing response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

TVA will make up to a total of \$1 billion of credit support available as an option to local power companies through the deferral of wholesale power payments based on the needs of individual local power companies.

"The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the communities we serve is unprecedented and creates a degree of economic uncertainty in the weeks and months ahead," said TVA President and CEO Jeff Lyash.

"We recognize that we have a responsibility to leverage TVA's resources and

expertise to provide local power companies the stability and flexibility to address the unique challenges faced by their customers."

Detailed plans will be customized for each participating local power company based on individual needs and financial impacts. A portion of the local power company's monthly TVA wholesale power payments would be deferred for a period during the ongoing COVID-19 response and an appropriate repayment plan will be put in place. The new initiative builds on actions TVA has already taken to provide regulatory flexibility to allow local power companies to halt disconnection of electric service and respond quickly to their customers' immediate needs.

"The strength of public power is a passionate commitment to serve people over balance sheets," said Lyash. "This is perhaps more critical today than it has ever been."

"Just as they have through February flooding and March storm recovery, our TVA team remains committed to working with all 154 of our local power company partners to benefit the communities and customers we jointly serve, especially during these challenging times."

The Tennessee Valley Authority is a corporate agency of the United States that provides electricity for business customers and local power companies serving nearly 10 million people in parts of seven southeastern states. TVA receives no taxpayer funding, deriving virtually all of its revenues from sales of electricity. In addition to operating and investing its revenues in its electric system, TVA provides flood control, navigation and land management for the Tennessee River system, and assists local power companies and state and local governments with economic development and job creation.



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