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Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw

Poppy...from Page 1A

around the world for decades by handing out small poppies as commemorative tokens for those who lost their lives in the line of duty. Now the U.S. is joining the ranks through an initiative spearheaded by the American Legion that was sanctioned by Congress.

As of this year, every Friday before Memorial Day from this point forward will be recognized nationwide as National Poppy Day.

The bright red poppy has been a popular symbol of fallen soldiers since after World War I, when the flowers began to flourish in abundance all across Europe. This sudden increase in blossoms and soil enrichment in places like France was largely attributed to the remnants of lime from the aftermath of the war.

Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the beautiful blood red poppy blossomed beneath the rubble.

Serving as an inspirational image during and after wartime, the red poppy became widely recognized as a symbol for bloodshed during battle after the publication of Lt. Col. John McCrae's poem, "In Flanders Fields."

Lt. Col. McCrae wrote the poem on May 3, 1915, while serving on the front lines at the battlefield in Ypres, Belgium. The opening lines to the poem read:

"In Flanders Fields the poppies blow, between the crosses row on row. That mark our place; and in the sky the

Loretta Youngblood voting no to consolidation.

Following that May vote, the board decided to advertise its intention to consolidate with the following notice that appeared in the Towns County Herald:

"In accordance with O.C.G.A. 21-2-262(c), the board of elections and registration will, at its June 14 regular monthly meeting, make a final determination regarding the consolidation of the Macedonia precinct into the Hiawassee precinct effective June 14, 2017, as per the recommendation of the board at its May meeting.

"Any person objecting to this proposed consolidation must file in writing his or her objections with the superintendent prior to June

14."

Should the consolidation occur, Macedonia's 2,942 active voters will need to drive an additional two miles into town to vote at the Hiawassee precinct.

Added to the already 3,126 voters registered at the Hiawassee precinct, this would bring the total number of voters at the Hiawassee precinct to more than 6,000.

And while parking is limited around the Towns County Civic Center, where Hiawassee precinct voters turn out on Election Day, the board office isn't worried about taking in 6,000 voters in a single day.

The reason the board office isn't worried is because of early voting, which was greatly utilized by voters in last year's elections.

Of the 80 percent of registered Towns County voters who cast ballots in the November General Election, some 53 percent voted during the three weeks leading up to Election Day, and only 552 Macedonia voters cast their ballot on Nov. 8.

Scott Ledford and Rob Murray, the Republican Party appointees to the

elections board, highlighted the board's thinking at the regular meeting of the Towns County Republican Party on Thursday, May 25, at Brother's Restaurant.

The board's original plan was to consolidate all of Towns County's precincts into one, though after a public comment meeting and several open board meetings, the board has decided on a compromise of closing just the Macedonia precinct.

Reasons they enumerated for closing Macedonia included concern over the ever-increasing technical difficulties of running multiple precincts, thousands of dollars in taxpayer savings per election cycle, as well as the board's recurrent trouble staffing precincts with steady poll managers and workers.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw and others present at the Republican Party meeting last week put forth the sentiment that some things are worth paying for, and the commissioner pledged once more that the board would always have everything it needed.

Bradshaw has been

one of the most outspoken opponents of any kind of consolidation, and has been collecting dozens of names in his office of people who say they are willing to volunteer to staff the polls.

The board has maintained a skeptical stance that it will always have the appropriate number of volunteers and workers sign up to staff the individual precincts moving forward, though it continues to encourage residents to volunteer.

And while the board is leaning toward consolidation, objections potentially sufficient to sway the majority against closing Macedonia can still be made.

Objections to the consolidation can be dropped off at or mailed to Towns County Board of Elections and Registration, 67 Lakeview Circle, Suite A, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

Closing the Macedonia precinct is not expected to have any effect on the Towns County Board of Education's Macedonia Post, as Macedonia is only used for qualifying purposes, which can continue even if consolidation occurs.



Drummond giving out poppies to United Community Bank Patrons on Friday, March 26. Photo/Lily Avery

larks, still bravely singing, fly scarce heard amid the guns below."

Five years later, on September 27, 1920, the American Legion officially adopted the poppy to commemorate all the soldiers who had gallantly fought and lost their lives during the war. By 1924, the distribution of poppies became a national program of the American Legion.

Today thousands upon thousands of poppies are distributed nationwide to remember those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for this nation's freedom. Those who receive this small symbolic token, if compelled, may make a donation to support veterans and

active-duty military personnel's medical and financial needs.

"All of the funds that are generated today will go toward the veterans organizations," said Drummond. "The commanders and administrators will decide what exactly this money will go toward. Things like Boys State and other events like that will definitely be considered but either way, it'll go toward helping someone, somehow."

In Towns County, this event is planned and sponsored by veterans of the VFW Post 7807 as members of the VFW, American Legion, VFW Auxiliary, American Legion Auxiliary, American Legion Riders, Sons of American Legion or Marine Corps League.