

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## I'm Home!

Hopefully, I have stayed my last extended stay in the Gainesville hospital. I do want to say that I appreciate the good folks that have taken care of me and put me back on the road to healing.

At Northeast Georgia Medical Center, I extend my personal thanks to cardiologist Dr. Brenda Hott, who helped me better understand the ins and outs of congestive heart failure. I also extend a personal thanks to the dedicated nurses and techs at Northeast Georgia Medical Center - Lindsey, Mink, and Efrain - just to name a few.

Meanwhile, at New Horizons Limestone Transitional Care Center, it was here that I learned a valuable life lesson - never give up.

I met so many people with so many different physical limitations. As you may know, my left leg was amputated below the knee from complications related to a blood clot. I haven't been inside the office for almost a year.

But as I prepare to exit New Horizons, I leave with the excitement that I'm returning to Blairsville, and returning to work, back inside the friendly confines of the *North Georgia News*.

I owe it all to Susan, Becky, Melanie, Karra, Leah, Carleigh, Erin, Gina, Shea, Maggie, Brittny, Cassie, Jennifer, Mariah, Danita, and Eric. These people make up the physical and occupational therapy team at New Horizons.

Ami, Linda, Kelly, Adele and Tracy, make up just some of the outstanding nurses that cared for me, Shelly, Deborah, Mia and Anna make up just some of the outstanding CNA's that helped care for me.

Mendy made sure I didn't miss any appointments. And of course, Dr. James Parks.

We go through things in life that seemingly knock us down. But, the key to life is always get back up, dust yourself off and never give up.

I also want to thank all the hard working people that make up the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald*. Thank you for being there for me and doing the things that I couldn't do.

And a big thank you to Meghan Jarrard, and her adorable daughter Edwina. Both have kept me inspired during this long and turbulent journey to get back where I belong.

Also, thank you to all who kept me in their prayers - and a huge thank you to Betty Jo Allison, the love of my life. You stuck with me through this entire ordeal.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm back.

**Straight Shooting**  
Charles Duncan  
Editor



## American Legion Post #23

Thanks to each and everyone who attended our Memorial Day Ceremony. Once again our citizens demonstrate the true spirit of Towns County. We of VFW Post #7807 our umbrella for American Legion Post #23, VFW Auxiliary, Sons of American Legion 23, American Legion Riders, American Legion Auxiliary, Marine Corps League and let's not leave out Army-Navy Squadron #66 up on the GA/NC line; ALL OF US offer our sincere gratitude and honor those who came to our wonderful Remembrance Service!

We must never forget. "A nation that forgets our Defenders shall soon be forgotten." If you are a Veteran or someone who wants to volunteer a little time, please come join us.

Eleven quotes from our nation's greatest patriots:  
"It doesn't take a hero to order men into battle. It takes a hero to be one of those men who goes into battle." - General Norman Schwarzkopf Jr.

"Without heroes, we are all plain people, and don't know how far we can go." - Bernard Malamud.

"The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him." - G.K. Chesterton.

"For love of country, they accepted death." - James A. Garfield.

"I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." - Nathan Hale.

"They fell, but o'er their glorious grave floats free the banner of the cause they died to save." - Francis Marion Crawford.

"And they who for their country die shall fill an honored grave, for glory lights the soldier's tomb, and beauty weeps the brave." - Joseph Rodman Drake

"But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate, we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us - that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion - that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain - that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom - and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." - Abraham Lincoln.

"The brave die never, though they sleep in dust. Their courage nerves a thousand living men." - Minot J. Savage.

"They hover as a cloud of witnesses above this Nation." - Henry Ward Beecher.

"It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived." - Gen. George S. Patton.

*Semper Paratus*

**The Veterans' Corner**  
Scott Drummond  
USCG Veteran



## Pond Algae

Though we've been getting plenty of rain, we're still technically in a drought and this leads to an increase in cases of pond algae and weeds. As temperatures increase, water levels drop due to evaporation and nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous become concentrated within ponds. Also, decreased rainfall prevents natural cycling of water through pond overflows, so water becomes stagnant and a perfect environment for algae blooms. Some algae, known as cyanobacteria, produce toxins that are harmful to both people and animals that may come into contact with the water. These toxins are not usually released into the water unless the algae dies. However, when a "sudden death" event occurs within a pond which kills a large percentage of the algae, toxins are released into the water because the dead algae start to decay. Sudden death events may be caused by several circumstances such as chemical control, loss of sunlight, or nutrient depletion. These toxins are consumed by fish, giving them an "off" flavor. The most common toxin released is microcystin which causes a wide variety of symptoms such as kidney and liver damage, abdominal pains and skin issues when it is consumed. Because algal blooms can reach critical levels very quickly, it is important to monitor ponds for the first signs of increased algae presence. Acceptable algae levels allow light to reach twelve inches or more. You can test this by using a Secchi disc, or a plate attached to a stick with marked lengths. If visibility is less than twelve inches, the pond should be checked for toxins and you should look into possible control measures. If you are concerned about algae in your pond but unsure if levels are harmful, the extension office offers several tests that can tell you what types of algae are present in your water.

If your pond needs treatment for an algae problem, there are several options. The most common chemical treatments for algal blooms are copper based chemicals and sodium precarbonate. Copper has its advantages because it is inexpensive and can even be used to prevent blooms. However, because it kills so many algae so quickly, it could cause a mass release of algal toxins. Before applying copper to your pond, test the hardness of the water in your pond. If the water is too soft, treatment with copper may actually be harmful to fish. Rainbow trout, koi and blue catfish are especially sensitive to copper treatment, so be sure to explore all options before treating. An alternative to copper is sodium precarbonate, which not only kills algae but also helps to get rid of toxins that are released during treatment. However, toxins will eventually degrade on their own with exposure to more sunlight as the algae dies off.

To prevent future blooms, be sure to maintain grass buffers that will prevent excessive nutrients from entering the pond. Also, if you have livestock around the water source, limit their access to only a few points. This prevents mass contamination of the water with manure that could otherwise feed algae and other pond weeds. Always be careful when applying fertilizer near bodies of water as contamination with nitrogen or phosphorous may also encourage algae growth.

If you would like our publication on pond algae management, please contact the extension office.

**From the Ground Up**  
Melissa Mattee



## Letters to The Editor

To the Editor:

*Macedonia Voting Precinct 833 Should Not Be Closed*

There have been letters to the Editor and quotes by some in the paper that have been inaccurate and misleading concerning the proposal to eliminate Macedonia Precinct 833. Citizens have called me with questions as to why their voting precinct is being closed.

The three reasons given in last week's article in the *Towns County Herald* by Election Board Members Rob Murray and Scott Ledford are as follows:

1. Increasing technical difficulties in running multiple precincts.

I disagree. Towns County has only four voting precincts as compared to our neighboring Union County with 11 precincts and White County with even more - furthermore while serving as Commissioner, to insure the integrity of our voting machines and vote tabulation, I budgeted funds to bring in professionals from Kennesaw State University (who contracts with the Secretary of State to train election workers) to set up and inspect Towns County voting machines before election day and to tabulate votes from the machines after the polls close on election day. I felt it was important that Towns County citizens feel confident that their election machines are properly set up and votes tabulated by outside professionals that have no personal interest in the outcome of our elections. I highly recommend that the election Board and Commissioner continue this practice.

2. It would save thousands of dollars by closing Macedonia precinct.

This is inaccurate, we only have elections every two years. Any savings by eliminating four poll workers would be about \$576 per election.

3. They cannot find poll workers.

The election law creating the Towns County Election Board provides that the Democrat Party and Republican Party recommend, to the Election Board, poll workers. The Democrat Party has confirmed that they will carry out this duty and I feel the Republican Party will do likewise.

Macedonia militia district 833 must be kept intact to comply with OCGA State law constituting the Board of Education of Towns County.

Below is section 2(b) lines 70 through 85 and lines 92 through 99 of House Bill 338 by Representative Ralph Twiggs of the 8th and signed into law by the Governor.

(b) For the purpose of electing the members of the board of education, other than the two at-large members, the Towns County School District is divided into three education districts as follows: Education District 1 - Shall consist of Militia District 833 (Macedonia) and Militia District 1581 (Tate City). Education District 2 - Shall consist of Militia District 1468 (Young Harris). Education District 3 - Shall Consist of Militia District 990 (Hiawassee).

(2) Each member elected from an education district provided for in subsection (b) of this section shall be a resident of the education district which that member represents and shall have resided in Towns County for at least 12 months and in that education district for at least six months immediately preceding the date of that member's election from such education district. If, during the term of office any member ceases to be a resident of the education district the member was elected to represent, the member's position on the board shall thereby become vacant.

Macedonia Precinct will have over 3,000 voters for the next election, one of the larger precincts in the State. It makes no sense to cause confusion for its voters and their school board district by closing it. It has been in existence for 161 years, ever since the county was formed in 1856.

It is a source of heritage and community pride for its citizens. "Let's keep it."

*Former Commissioner Bill Kendall*

Dear Editor:

Section 36-31 of the County Code of Ordinances prepared to implement the corresponding state law is a surprisingly plain, easy to understand document. It states in part...

*Continued Gibson*

## Continued... Gibson

Any litter hauled on a moving vehicle shall be covered in such a manner that litter will not blow or escape from said vehicle while moving... Yet commercial trash haulers openly disregard this law. They commonly build a wire mesh cage on the back of their trucks. It usually covers the front of the truck bed, both sides and sometimes the top. None that I have seen cover the back and there is a large opening up to 8 feet high above the tailgate and some trucks don't even have tailgates. This makes it convenient for the crew to throw bags in, but when the truck reaches highway speed the wind blows whole bags and loose unbagged items out onto the road.

I have unofficially adopted a two-mile stretch of road near our home and walk part of it every week picking up roadside litter. During recent outings I have personally witnessed the following: 1. A driver from a McCayesville trash company throwing a drink can onto the road. The same driver on multiple occasions hauling bags of trash on an open bed pickup with no cover. I picked up three bags of his trash that blew off in one short section of road. I also reported these offenses to his company, but he still did not cover his load. 2. A driver from a Blairsville trash service driving with an open tailgate. (I reported this to the sheriff's office). 3. An unidentified trash hauler in Towns County with no tailgate on his truck (but several bags of loose trash). 4. Loose paper blowing out of the back of a white Ford truck driving around the Courthouse Square in Blairsville. A friend told of seeing a full bag blown from a trash truck in Towns County. A deputy in an official patrol car was cruising immediately behind the truck but did nothing.

Such blatant disregard of the littering law by commercial trash haulers is easy to address. We know who they are and where they are. The answer seems simple. Send deputies to the transfer stations to meet incoming traffic and issue warnings first and fines for repeaters. I have written letters to the Commissioners and Sheriffs in both Towns and Union Counties requesting they take enforcement actions against these violators.

If you believe reducing roadside litter is important, will you add your voice and influence to this effort?

*Wm. Ronald Gibson*

Dear Editor:

This is in response to a recent letter to the editor from Mr. Mahon regarding President Trump's budget proposal for "cuts of \$800 billion to Medicaid." Really? Where exactly are these cuts? According to the Trump budget proposal, Medicaid will increase by 19 percent from 2016 to 2020, rising from \$368 billion to \$439 billion. What many, including Mr. Mahon, refer to as "cuts to Medicaid" are actually cuts to the growth of Medicaid, not the current size of the program. This gives the false impression that the Trump budget would downsize Medicaid. It is just the opposite. The Trump administration allocates more for Medicaid every year of the budget. Under Trump, Medicaid spending would reach the highest level in U.S. history. Not to mention that Medicaid has become a less than adequate health insurance program. It costs roughly \$7,000 per recipient, and people with Medicaid often have health outcomes no better than people who have no health care coverage. The goal should be to get people off Medicaid, not onto it. True, some people always will need public assistance, and a compassionate society must provide it. But public assistance should be a last resort, not the default option. Finally, Mr. Mahon asserts that "the federal budget is a moral document." I would argue that budgets are not moral documents, they are a tabulation of how much the government spends on various programs. True, budgets reflect priorities, but priorities change all of the time. Morality can't be measured by dollars allocated to budgetary items. Morality should be determined by the actual outcomes achieved.

*Tim Groza*



## Towns County Community Calendar

	Every Monday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
	Every Tuesday:	
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Wednesday	
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Thursday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Friday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Sunday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	First Monday of each month:	
Mtn. Amat. Radio	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	6:30 pm
	First Tuesday of each month:	
Alzheimer's Supp.	McConnell Church	1:30 pm
American Legion	VFW Post 7807	4 pm
Hiaw. City Council	YH City Hall	6 pm
Young Harris Council	YH City Hall	7 pm
	Second Monday of each month:	
Chamber Board	1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
Historical Society	Old Rec. Center	5:30 pm
Mtn. Comp. Users	www.mcug.org	6 pm
Planning Comm.	Civic Center	7 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoy Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
	Second Tuesday of each month:	
Caregiver support	Brasstown Manor	3 pm
Arts & Crafts Guild	Mtn. Regional Library	4 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Mtn. Coin Club	N. GA Tech	6 pm
	Second Wednesday of each month:	
Basket Weavers	SC Fire Hall	10 am
Board of Elections	67 Lakeview Cir., Ste. A	4 pm
	Second Thursday of each month:	
CVB Board	Rec Center	9 am
Mtn. Comm. Seniors	Senior Center	1 pm
Democratic Party	Civic Center	5 pm

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## Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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