

# Towns County Herald

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## Miller to resign as judge; Langley declines consideration

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Following 10 and a half years of judgeship in the Enotah Judicial Circuit, Superior Court Chief Judge Murphy C. Miller has decided to step down from the bench effective July 1.

"It's my time to go," said Miller. "I've been doing this a long, long time, and it's time for me to move on and do something else, and kind of have a changing of the guard to let some new folks come in and pick up the mantle. Things will carry on and all will be fine."

Added Miller: "It's been a privilege to serve (the citizens of the circuit). I've found it very rewarding. I know I wasn't always right, but I did the best that I could."

Miller has made practicing law his life's work, and come November, he'll have been at it for 38 years.

A graduate of Emory University and the Woodrow Wilson College of Law, he began his legal career as a lawyer in his hometown of Young Harris before going on to serve as a workers' compensation administrative law judge.

After then-Gov. Sonny Perdue signed the Georgia Indigent Defense Act of 2003 into law, Miller became the first circuit public defender for the Enotah Judicial Circuit of the Ninth Judicial Administrative District of Georgia.

His rise to superior court judgeship occurred in January 2008, when Gov. Perdue



Murphy C. Miller

appointed him to a newly created position on the court.

In 2012, Miller took the helm as chief judge of the Enotah Judicial Circuit, and he



Jeff Langley

won re-election to the court in both 2012 and 2016.

Reflecting on his time as a superior court judge, Miller said that many of his most

positive experiences have come while overseeing the Enotah Mental Health Court.

"We've been doing that about seven years now," said Miller. "That's been extremely rewarding, and we've really done well. It's a team approach to a pretty serious problem in criminal justice, and I think we've done people some good over the years."

Added Miller: "The accountability courts and all that criminal justice reform has been a good thing for our circuit and a good thing for the state."

As for next steps, Miller said he's not looking for anything else at the moment, and that he may do volunteer work or practice law in North Georgia after leaving the

court. "I coach the (Union County) Mock Trial Team, and I'm going to continue to do that if they'll still have me," said Miller. "That's one of the best things I do, is working with those young folks."

Miller has four children: eight grandchildren and resides in Dahlonega. He is the son of the late Gov. Zell Miller and Shirley Carver Miller, and the older brother of Young Harris City Councilman Matthew Miller.

On May 1, he submitted his letter of resignation to Gov. Nathan Deal, which triggered a search process by the Georgia Judicial Nominating Commission.

Normally, superior court

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## Williams named new agriculture agent in Union/Towns counties

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

It's a point of pride round these parts that people still know how to grow things.

Case in point, both Union and Towns counties have farmers markets, and plenty of people here in the North Georgia Mountains make a living growing and selling fruits and vegetables.

And since it's always okay to ask for advice, folks will be pleased to learn there's a new community resource that's here to help: Jacob Williams with the University of Georgia.

Williams is the new Agricultural and Natural Resources Agent for the UGA Extension Offices in Union and Towns counties. He is taking the place of Melissa Mattee,



New Union/Towns Ag Agent Jacob Williams in his Towns County office.

who recently transferred to the Fulton County Extension Office.

"UGA Extension has a county delivery model

where agents, who are public service faculty members, are the primary resource for local communities,"

See *Williams*, Page 6A

## Jarrard named editor of NGN, TCH

Shawn Jarrard has been named the new editor of the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald*.

Jarrard, 33, started with the newspapers in August 2014, and he was promoted to assistant editor earlier this year, in January.

Publisher Kenneth West made the announcement last week that Jarrard would lead the papers.

"Shawn has done a fine job at both newspapers," said West. "He's been with us going on four years now, and I am confident he'll do a great job in his new leadership position."

Added West: "I've always believed the community ought to have a say in what appears in the newspaper. That's why we'll continue to listen to and keep the community involved moving forward."

Jarrard replaces Charles Duncan, who faithfully led the Herald since 2008 and the



Shawn Jarrard

North Georgia News since 2012.

"I want to say thank you to Charles for his mentorship and guidance over the years," said Jarrard. "And thank you to Mr. West for allowing me the opportunity to serve

these wonderful communities in an even greater capacity."

Looking ahead, Jarrard said that both newspapers will maintain their sharp focus on the hometown news that matters most to the distinct communities of Union and Towns counties.

"When it comes to covering local news, we regularly ask ourselves, 'What do our readers need to know to stay informed?'" said Jarrard. "The way we see it, our job is to let everyone know what's going on in these North Georgia Mountain communities."

"Whether we're finding out how local tax dollars are being spent or reporting on school safety, or veterans at the farmers market, we promise to keep doing what we do best – producing high quality news content for our community-oriented newspapers."

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## School board passes budget, approves NY trip



Residents, business owners and city officials gathered at the Towns County Civic Center for a June 12 town hall meeting to discuss the city's upcoming strategic plan.

Photo by Mark Novak

By Mark Novak  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education gave final approval to the school system's Fiscal Year 2019 budget,

which features revenues and expenditures balancing to \$25,049,643.

School board members voted to approve the budget in their June 11 regular monthly meeting.

Although \$25 million seems like a lot of money for a local school budget, the schools are getting much needed repairs totaling \$6 million, which will be partially funded by grants

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## Hiawassee plans ahead in Town Hall Meeting



A photograph of the Towns County Courthouse that was demolished in 1964, after the current courthouse was built.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Mark Novak  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Local residents and business owners joined members of the Hiawassee City Council for a Strategic Planning Town Hall Meeting

on Tuesday, June 12, at the Towns County Civic Center.

Representatives of the University of Georgia's Center for the Study of the History of the South and the Vinson Institute of Government attended the meeting to collect data for the plan.

Hiawassee Mayor

Liz Ordiales opened up the meeting with a brief overview of what the city's Strategic Planning Committee is trying to accomplish.

"The intent of this is to define what we want our city to

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## Barrett helps kids, teachers through PTSO

By Mark Novak  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Parent Teacher Student Organization President Amy Barrett spends much of her time working to better the quality of life for students and teachers of the local school system.

Barrett has a daughter who just graduated from Towns County High School and a son who is currently enrolled.

"Towns County PTSO has been around for decades, even before my kids started attending school there," said Barrett. "And what happened is, when my daughter was in middle school, I wanted to get more involved. That's when they switched (schools) from

Hayes to over here."

With the assistance of her husband Timothy, Barrett and her team have taken the PTSO into the last year, making it a 501(c)(3) organization.

Gaining nonprofit status has opened numerous doors for the PTSO to obtain charitable contributions through Ingles and Amazon.

Ingles has a program called Tools for Schools that allows Ingles Advantage cardholders to help out specific PTSOs.

"If you're hooked up with Tools for Schools with Ingles and you give us your Tools for Schools number, we can register you so we get a percentage of points for all your purchases," said Barrett. "It's



Amy Barrett

really cool, because this year we got \$4,000 in Ingles Tools for Schools points.

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## Towns County Historical Society takes walk down memory lane

By Mark Novak  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Local historians Jerry Taylor and Jason Edwards held a special presentation of old photographs from Towns County's past in the monthly meeting of the Towns County Historical Society on June 11.

The presentation made side-by-side comparisons of old photographs with modern-day pictures to show what the same location looks like now, including the old and new county courthouse and other places around Towns.

Edwards welcomed input that evening, asking members of the crowd what it was like back in the day in an attempt

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**EARLY DEADLINE**  
**The DEADLINE**  
**for the 4th of July Paper**  
**will be THURSDAY,**  
**JUNE 28th at 4 PM**