

# Air Methods...from Page 1A

Air Methods Advantage memberships only cover residents who are transported via Air Methods aircraft, such as the helicopter stationed at Union General, though all regional medical helicopter services respond to emergencies as needed pending availability.

If the Air Methods helicopter is busy life-flighting a patient when another Towns County resident requires an air ambulance, a competing service may respond.

Should a medical helicopter other than an Air Methods aircraft act as a transport, then the Air Methods Advantage membership would not apply to the flight provided by the other service.

An example of a competing air ambulance service is the Life Force 4 helicopter out of Blue Ridge, which offers its own membership plan through the AirMedCare Network.

The two helicopters – Air Life Georgia 14 and Life Force 4 – act as backups for each other in the event that the other is busy or down for maintenance, though only the Air Life Georgia helicopter is covered by Air Methods Advantage memberships.

Essentially, while the odds are heavily in favor of being transported via the locally stationed Air Life Georgia helicopter that is covered by the Air Methods Advantage membership, residents could go a step further to protect themselves against out-of-pocket expenses by purchasing memberships with the separate air ambulance services in the region.

Being transported via medical helicopter is expensive, ranging in the tens of thousands of dollars per flight.

Usually, helicopter services are able to negotiate some payment through patients'

insurance companies, though the out-of-pocket costs left over after insurance can still be many thousands of dollars.

On its company website, Air Methods says that members can ask their doctors or care providers to request an Air Methods aircraft if it is available and can safely meet the needs of the patient.

Air Life Georgia 14 has been stationed at Union General Hospital since May of 2016, and has transported hundreds of patients to safety.

Any Towns County Air Methods Advantage members who receive a medically necessary flight via the helicopter at Union General Hospital can take advantage of their memberships by calling the company's billing office following the flight, or upon receipt of a bill, at which time proof of residency will be required.

Even residents without health insurance are covered through the membership for Air Methods life flights.

# Brown...from Page 1A

in 1973, chasing big record labels and radio stations.

Now, an established star for more than 35 years, the dark brown locks turned to silver, T. Graham doesn't have to bargain for elbow room.

He has recorded a total of 13 studio albums, and has charted more than 20 singles on the *Billboard Hot Country* songs chart. He also has been nominated for a Grammy for Best Grassroots Gospel.

T. Graham Brown and Jimmy Fortune are headed to Hiawassee's Anderson Music Hall on Saturday, July 1 at 7 p.m.

The name T. Graham Brown is well established with a song catalogue that includes *I Tell It Like I Used To Be*, *Hell and High Water*, *Darlene*, *I Wish That I Could Hurt That Way Again*, *Don't Go To Strangers*, *Wine Into Water*, and *Never Say Never*.

He's rode the highs and lows of a music career that has withstood the test of time, but, he wouldn't change a thing.

"I've had some good times," he said. "Of course, meeting and working with people like Conway Twitty, Merle Haggard, Waylon Jennings, and Tammy Wynette.

"Those were the good old days," he said. "Of course, today are the good old days too."

These days, T. Graham is working with Jimmy Fortune of Statler Brothers fame.

"We're heading to Hiawassee, and Lord, I love Hiawassee – the people and the food," he said. "I don't believe I've played a show with Jimmy in Hiawassee before, but, all that's gonna change come July 1."

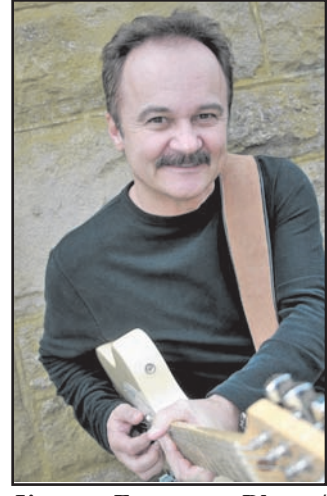
Fortunately, Fortune seconded the notion.

"I love Hiawassee," Fortune said. "I've been there several times with the Statler Brothers, and a few times as a solo act. I spent 21 years with the Statler Brothers and it was the greatest education I could have ever received."

Fortune said that folks coming to Hiawassee would surely hear one of the most legendary voices ever to perform in Country Music – that of T. Graham Brown.

"You talk about a happy man, you can see it in his face," Fortune said in reference to T. Graham Brown. "He's got a smile on his face and in his heart and that's something only God can do for you."

Patrons also will hear more than 50 years' worth of



**Jimmy Fortune. Photo/Facebook**

Gospel, Country and Rock 'n Roll. And, if you really want to get a feel for what to expect, just go to YouTube and type in the names T. Graham Brown, and Jimmy Fortune.

"We sign autographs after every show, we want to meet everybody, hugs their necks, and shake the hands of the people who made us what we are," Fortune said. "They are the reason that we are there."

*Tickets for this show are \$37 for Level 1 seating, and \$27 for Level 2. Call (706) 896-4191 for more details. Make sure you save your spot for T. Graham Brown and Jimmy Fortune. You'll be glad you did.*

# Sales Tax...from Page 1A

greatly from its SPLOST collections, taking in more than \$10 million since 2011, including projections from the final two months of collections that have yet to come in.

Hiawassee and Young Harris have each received 9 percent of those funds along the way, and once the last of the SPLOST funds are collected and distributed, each city will have received greater than \$900,000 from the county SPLOST.

SPLOST referendums, when passed, speak to the will of a majority of the people,

though not everyone is a fan of the tax.

Regardless of the politics, SPLOST monies provide communities with opportunities they would not have otherwise, such as the ability to purchase new fire trucks, ambulances, patrol cars, to conduct building maintenance and construct new facilities, and provide recreation for county residents and youths.

With the county's current SPLOST reserves, Commissioner Bradshaw said he plans to add to public safety

in Towns, including a new fire station in Young Harris.

Furthermore, the rec football field at Foster Park, which requires some finishing touches, will be getting a fieldhouse for use by youth athletes, and other recreation improvements and equipment acquisitions are in the works thanks to SPLOST.

The current E-SPLOST collection will enable the school system to collect enough money to complete much-needed building repairs, and to pay for other crucial education initiatives as previously reported.

# Library...from Page 1A

the evening.

Typically, the chamber hosts a Business After Hours at a chamber member's organization or place of business, and this was the first time that the event was hosted at the library.

"We usually put the information out to all the members and they can let us know when they want to host one," said Candace Lee, Chamber President. "Vince Stone here at the library actually emailed me immediately and asked for a date, because we have 12 every year."

"Business After Hours is a great networking event for chamber members and their guests. A lot of times we'll get people involved that we don't normally see with our other events. These people will come to this event just to meet other members."

Although the library is not technically a business, according to Mountain Regional Library System Director Vince Stone, it is a vital asset for businesses and business owners, especially since the new renovations.

Stone went on to explain that, for businesses, it offers all the services needed to successfully get a business up and running, such as printers, computers, Wi-Fi access and more. Because of this, Stone felt it was important that the business leaders of the community know that the library was meant for their use as well, not just children and those who enjoy a good book.

"The library is an integral part of the community," said Stone. "If there's anybody who is starting their own business who doesn't have their own office, we offer Internet. We offer computers



**Director Stone with Carol Townsend and Marsha Elliot of Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge. Photo/Lily Avery**

for them to do work on. We offer information resources that they may not be able to afford or get easily. We have printers and copiers.

"We're almost a small business affiliate and it's free to the public."

During the event, the library was not the only one benefiting from the networking opportunities. While many of the guests are long-time chamber members, Shelley Eyerly recently relocated to the area and began working with Coosa Creek Marketing Products. Since moving, Eyerly decided to join the chamber as a means to gain clientele and, of course, to network.

"I just got into the area, so this is helping me out a lot," said Eyerly. "I'm networking in four counties; Union, Towns, Fannin and Gilmer. This is my first time coming to this Business After Hours, but I've been able to meet some good people and make good connections. I'm definitely going to try and come back to another."

Before the night's close, Stone shared a brief overview of the renovations to Mountain Regional Library, explaining what was knocked down and refurbished and added to create the community room, additional computer labs and a children's room. To top out the night, guests were treated to a full fledge tour of the library, given by Stone.

According to Stone, both he and the library staff are anxious to continue hosting similar events for the community and want residents to know that the library is their library, their facility and there to serve the community.

"We support the chamber," said Stone. "We've been a member of the chamber for many years. Also, any time that we can get members of the community here to see the facility that don't normally come, we love doing that. This is the community's library. We want them to know that."

The next Business After Hours will be Tuesday, July 11, at STA & Carol's Florist.

# July 4th...from Page 1A



**Hundreds turn out to see the annual fireworks at the Fairgrounds. Photo/Lily Avery**

This is a free event for anyone who wishes to attend, with parking available at the Fairgrounds as well as fireworks visibility from Lake Chatuge for anyone who wants to spend the evening out on the water.

"We're starting off the weekend with a concert on July 1 of T. Graham Brown and Jimmy Fortune," said Hilda Thomason, Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds General Manager. "On the Fourth of July, the band Raven and Red will be playing in the parking lot in front of the office, starting at 6 p.m."

North Mt. Zion Church of God will also be setting up shop in the parking lot at the Fairgrounds before the fireworks. They will be providing games for children, activities for all ages and some free snow cones and cotton candy for those who wish to take part.

"This is a free event for anybody who wants to attend," said Thomason. "I want to say a big thank you to all of the sponsors who gave money and contributed money toward the fireworks. It wouldn't be possible without them."

Brasstown Valley will also be hosting an evening of games, barbeque and fireworks for the resort's annual Fourth of July extravaganza. Beginning with the annual cookout that goes from 6:30 p.m. until 9:30 p.m., where guests can eat, drink and be merry before the grand finale fireworks show at dusk.

"We will have a DJ that will be playing throughout the evening," said Charles Burton, Brasstown Valley General Manager. "We'll have a beverage cart moving around to take care of people's needs as far as refreshments go."

"We're going to be having a cookout, which can hold up to 300 guests, and that's at our Sunset Pavilion. It's in high, high demand. We do encourage reservations because it will fill up."

"We're also going to be having some family fun activities with a bounce house and pie-eating contest and horse shoes and things like that. We try to make it like it's a big outdoor Fourth of July cookout, like you would have at a park with friends and family."

After the barbeque, just

around sunset, there will be a fireworks display open to the public that can be viewed from the resort's golf course, or even across the highway at the spa. Those who wish to attend are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets to enjoy a fun-filled night at the resort.

Brasstown management does ask that all pets and coolers be left at home during the fireworks display. If there is inclement weather, the cookout will be moved to the ballroom and fireworks will continue if there is only light rain.

Reservations for the cookout can be made by calling (706) 379-4617. Tickets for the cookout for adults are \$42 per person, children 6 years old to 12 years old are \$25 and children 5 years old and under are \$8.

Regardless of age or preference, there will be a little something for everyone in Towns County for the Fourth of July weekend so make plans to celebrate the independence of this great nation with one, or more, of the many great venues throughout the county for a weekend of family-friendly fun.

# Meeting...from Page 1A

liability program, according to the ACCG, "covers county buildings and vehicles throughout the state and responds to claims against member counties for personnel decisions, law enforcement operations, and claims for injuries caused by the county or which occur on county property."

The credit comes from previously collected premium payments that were not needed to pay claims, and the county's rate for that program should be finalized soon, taking the credit into account.

Commissioner Bradshaw also reported that the 2016 county audit was nearly complete, and that everything was looking tip-top financially.

"We are better than most counties," said Bradshaw. "I just finished a class down at Callaway Gardens last week, and I'm getting to know a lot of the different county commissioners all across the state of Georgia. A lot of them have become very good friends."

Through conversations with other commissioners, Bradshaw said he has heard "horror stories" about the finances of other counties, adding that Towns County's good financial health to this point was due largely to the fiscal stewardship of former Commissioner Bill Kendall.

"We may need this and we may need that, but let me tell you, folks, compared to a lot of counties, we're doing very, very well," said Bradshaw. "So, we're very excited about that."

Bradshaw went over a list of county projects his office had been hard at work on, including continued improvements to youth sports facilities at Foster Park, renovations to the facilities at Hiawassee Beach, and extensive plans for the old Sunnyside Campground on Georgia 288, about which he will present a more comprehensive update in the July county meeting.

The commissioner went on to say that, recently and by his estimation, the county will have brought in more than 23,000 people by mid-July through various initiatives such as shows at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds and other events hosted at Foster Park and elsewhere in the county.

"And that's not even all of the events," said Bradshaw. "That's not talking about the



**Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw. Photo/Lowell Nicholson**

Georgia Mountain Fair, that's not talking about what our lake brings in, what Bell Mountain brings in.

"So, I'm going to try to keep up with numbers to let you guys know, but we're pushing hard to promote."

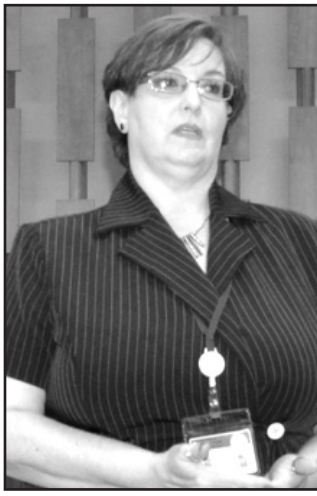
Bradshaw welcomed several speakers in the meeting, including: Lena Andrews with Benefit Support Group; Charlene Scott with Georgia Division of Family and Children Services; Linda D'Angelo, executive director of Enotah CASA; Towns County EMA Director Rickey Mathis; and EMA Deputy Director Brandon Walls.

Health insurance has skyrocketed in recent years, and the commissioner knew going into office that rising health costs would be a problem for the county.

Fortunately, he heard about Benefit Support, which is a partially self-funded insurance program that is cheaper than anything else out there, but is still "very good insurance," and will include the Teladoc service, according to the commissioner.

Andrews is the county's new insurance agent, and she explained that the partially self-funded portion of the insurance acted in a way similar to the credit the county is receiving toward its property and liability premium through ACCG, helping to keep insurance costs down.

In their presentation, Scott and D'Angelo spoke of the tremendous need for more involvement in the lives of foster children of the county, how there is only one foster home in Towns, with a second family currently working



**Charlene Scott with Georgia DFCS. Photo/Lowell Nicholson**

toward approval.

Mathis and Walls talked about the increased social media presence of Towns County EMA, and how they could use social media to keep county residents up to speed on a variety of information.

The new EMA Facebook page can be found by searching for Towns County Emergency Management Agency on Facebook.

In the new business portion of the meeting, the commissioner adopted an official schedule of rental fees for county buildings and facilities. Rental fees now more accurately reflect fees being charged in neighboring counties.

He also adopted updated Environmental Health fees that came out of the Towns County Board of Health, and held a second reading and adoption of the ordinance establishing a drug and alcohol testing policy for county employees.