

# Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

www.townscountyherald.net

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1928

75 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 90 Number 47

Wednesday, September 25, 2019

## Friends conduct flag raising to honor Iwo Jima Veteran Bud Johnson

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

On Friday, Sept. 20, Iwo Jima Veteran Clarence "Bud" Johnson of the U.S. Navy was recognized at his home for being the oldest living veteran in Towns County.

"He is 97 and a half, and he was in World War II," said local Army veteran Skip Peters, who organized the event. "He is our only living World War II Veteran who was in Iwo Jima. We just thought it would be nice to recognize him with a flag raising."

"Bud and I were talking about his history with flags, and he didn't have a flag. He said that it has been so long that he has had a flag, and I put a small flag up for him, but we wanted to give him a bigger one that he could look out and know that

his town and people care." The flagpole and flag were donated by the Warriors Veteran Outreach and Terry Thompson, owner of T.L. Hiawasse Construction in Hiawasse.

"This isn't something that happens every day," Johnson said to his many local supporters who attended the event. "I love you and thank you for doing this."

Johnson raised his own flag while the attendees sang "God Bless America" in unison.

"I want to thank all of you veterans," Johnson said. "This just goes to show you, even here in our little mountain country, how important this flag is, and it's a blessing to every one of us with its red, white and blue. God, country and family –

See Johnson, Page 8A



Iwo Jima Veteran Bud Johnson with supporters at his Hiawasse Campground flagpole dedication on Friday, Sept. 20.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## Luckenbach draws valuable lessons from 2019 Girls State participation

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County High senior Corrina Luckenbach has plans to pursue social media strategy and fashion marketing after she graduates in May 2020.

But Luckenbach also wants to know and understand how local, state and federal governments work, how and why the laws that affect her and her world are made, and how and why the people who make up governments do what they do.

Why does Luckenbach want to know so much about government? She says, bottom line, it's because she wants to be able to make informed decisions when casting her vote at election time. And Luckenbach will be of voting age come the 2020 elections.

So, when American



TCHS Senior Corrina Luckenbach

Legion Auxiliary Member Robin Halfon approached Luckenbach in her junior year with an offer to participate in the 2019 Girls State Program, she jumped on it.

"Robin came into our school and gave a brief

presentation on basically what Girls State was about," Luckenbach said. "It was everything that I enjoy doing. It had a lot of leadership skills. I really enjoy learning about government and politics. And

See Luckenbach, Page 6A

## Bradshaw sets millage rate, announces helipad at Young Harris Fire Station

By Chad Stack  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw set the 2019 and fire property tax millage rates during his regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 17.

He adopted the millage rates for each, setting the county millage rate at 5.075 mills and the separate fire tax millage rate at 0.472 mills.

Due to slight growth in the tax digest since last year, the county expects to collect \$3,963,632 in property taxes at 100% collections in 2019, which is \$43,875 more than in 2018, even with a lower property tax rate.

The fire tax millage rate will generate \$368,637 in property taxes at 100% collections, which is \$4,342 more than last year and will go toward funding the operations of the Towns County Fire Department.

Sales tax collections are on the rise, Bradshaw said in the meeting, pointing out that the county was collecting "more money than we did at



Local VFW Auxiliary Members Rosemary and John Whalen promoting Operation Care Package in support of troops serving overseas.

Photo by Chad Stack

this point last year."

"We can definitely see a pretty good size difference," Bradshaw said. "Hotel-motel tax collections are up. We're very thankful for that. That helps keep our property taxes down, so we love our visitors."

Bradshaw also thanked Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby and Hiawasse Mayor

Liz Ordiales for helping with the 9/11 tribute on the square, and he talked about his plans to involve the students from Towns County Schools next year.

"I don't know that we can do enough, but we are starting to plan next year already in my

See Bradshaw, Page 6A

## Joint investigation leads to meth trafficking charge for Young Harris suspect

News Special  
Towns County Herald

A joint drug investigation ended Sept. 13 with a Young Harris man being charged with trafficking methamphetamine.

The investigation was conducted jointly by the Towns County Sheriff's Office, Hiawasse Police Department, Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement Office and the Union County Sheriff's Office.

On the morning of Friday, Sept. 13, a Hiawasse police officer conducted a traffic stop on a Harley-Davidson

motorcycle being driven by Lonnie Max Marcus, 44, of Young Harris.

Upon further investigation, Marcus was arrested without incident on the following charges:

Possession of methamphetamine, possession of Schedule IV drug Xanax, possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony, removing a license plate to conceal vehicle identity, operating a vehicle without registration, and no insurance.

Subsequent to the

See Investigation, Page 8A



Lonnie Max Marcus

## Amateur artists 'Let Freedom Ring' with local patriotic art submissions

By Chad Stack  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

A patriotic art show spotlighting a variety of local talents highlighted the Towns County Republican Party's regular monthly meeting on Thursday, Sept. 19, at the Civic Center.

GOP Chair Betsy Young called the meeting to order and introduced local student Samantha Church as the special guest and host for the meeting.

Church called on Eastgate Church Pastor and Eastgate Life Academy Founder Greg Roberts to lead the invocation.

Eastgate Life Academy student Gabriel Moody followed the invocation with the Pledge of Allegiance, after which Towns County High School student Summer Rahn performed "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Also in the meeting, Sheriff Chris Clinton announced



Local student Samantha Church led the September meeting of the Towns County GOP.

Photo by Chad Stack

that he would be seeking re-election to the office of Towns County Sheriff, with qualifying set to begin March 2, 2020.

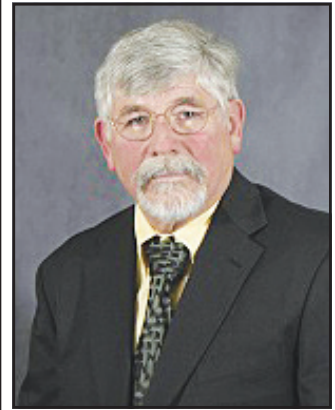
Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw presented the awards for the "Let Freedom Ring" Amateur Art Contest that evening, and three winners were

selected from three different divisions – two youth divisions and one adult division.

The Third-Place winner for the first youth division was Moody, with Aubrey Figg finishing second and Miriam Canup taking home First

See Art, Page 8A

## BRMEMC to hold annual meeting at Young Harris headquarters Sept. 26



Gene Mason of Union County



Cory Payne of Clay County, NC



Ray Cook of Cherokee County, NC

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

YOUNG HARRIS – Now in its 81st year, the Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation will hold its annual membership meeting with board director elections on Thursday, Sept. 26, with the day, time and location differing from years past.

The 2019 meeting will take place in the covered truck parking area of EMC headquarters in Young Harris. Voting will start at 1 p.m., to be immediately followed by the business portion of the meeting at 3 p.m.

In recent years, annual meetings have been held on Saturday mornings at an external venue – the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center in 2017 and 2018, and for years before that, at the Anderson Music Hall inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

Earlier this year, the EMC Board of Directors voted to change the venue, day and time of the meeting in a multi-front effort to scale back on annual meeting costs.

For starters, holding the meeting at co-op headquarters during business hours will

allow the EMC to close early to divert staff to assist with on-site hosting duties, meaning no overtime costs, or extra weekend labor and no extra venue costs to host the meeting elsewhere.

And though the change to weekday business hours is likely to impact the number of members who will be available to attend, it won't impact the overall say of the membership in the 2019 director elections, since each incumbent running for re-election is running unopposed.

As such, Gene Mason of Union County, Cory Payne of Clay County, North Carolina, and Ray Cook of Cherokee County, North Carolina, will be automatically re-elected following the Sept. 26 meeting, granted enough people vote in the election to establish a quorum.

All three incumbents won election to their first three-year board terms in 2016, and Mason, Payne and Cook were the only members to submit director nomination paperwork ahead of the 2019 election.

Since the only items to appear on this year's ballot are the elections of three unopposed member candidates, the EMC

Board decided in July not to bulk mail paper ballots, thereby saving the co-op roughly \$35,000.

On top of the \$35,000 in paper ballot savings, the EMC will save an additional \$20,000 in annual meeting costs by cutting advertising and forgoing door prizes, along with holding the event during the week at co-op headquarters.

The annual meeting cost about \$100,000 in 2018, so the \$55,000 savings in 2019 will result in a cost reduction of more than 50% for the annual gathering of the membership.

Cash prize drawings will take place instead of the usual awarding of door prizes to entice member participation at this year's big meeting, which will also feature a number of industry professionals providing information to members in the leadup to the start of meeting business.

In other EMC news, the board held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, Sept. 16, and directors heard from Certified Public Accountant Woody Trimble with financial services firm Jackson Thornton.

See BRMEMC, Page 6A

2 Sections 16 Pages

Inside  
Arrests 2A  
Church 4B  
Classifieds 6B  
Opinion 4A  
Legals 7B  
Obits 5B  
Sports 2B

Lake Levels  
Blue Ridge 1,675.74  
Chatuge 1,920.25  
Nottely 1,766.87



SPORTS  
FOOTBALL

Sept 27 @ Athens Acad. 7:30 PM

SOFTBALL

Sept 26 @ George Walton 5 PM

Firewise  
Coalition  
Community  
Meeting Oct. 15

See page 5A

Indian  
Summer  
Festival  
October 5-6

See page 8A

Fall Festival  
St. Francis of  
Assisi  
Catholic Church  
Sept. 27-28

See page 5A