

# WE THANK YOU

THE STAFF OF THE TOWNS COUNTY HERALD  
AND WEST PRINTING COMPANY

# Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

www.townscountyherald.net

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1928

75 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 94 Number 02

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

## County to recognize Veterans Day in Nov. 11 event

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

It's November, and Veterans Day is almost upon the nation – a time set aside to renew vows to remember, thank and honor the men and women who have worn the uniforms of the U.S. Armed Forces: the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, Space Force and Reserves.

In addition to active-duty forces, it is veterans who have defended this constitutional republic and the freedoms it espouses against those despots in the world who would do away with the American way of life if given the chance.

It is they who have sacrificed time away from families and loved ones and put their

lives on the line so that all may freely speak their minds, move about unhindered, choose livelihoods, raise children as seen fit by each family, vote, and worship God.

Being home to a great many veterans and being in fly-over country, North Georgia – specifically Towns County – is a haven of Americanism. Its people, both young and old, demonstrate respect for God and country, which often seem in short supply in other parts of the nation today.

Veterans Day is observed every year on Nov. 11, the significance of which is the day that the “War to End All Wars,” World War I, came to a halt: the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918.

It's extremely important that Veterans Day be celebrated annually, especially for young folks who weren't alive for Sept. 11, 2001, or the Vietnam War or Korean War.

In that vein, a Veterans Day event hosted by Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #7807 will proceed on Friday, Nov. 11, at 11 a.m. at Towns County Veterans Memorial Park, located along US 76 directly in front of Towns County Schools.

Participating in the event will be members of American Legion Post #23, American Legion Post #23 Auxiliary, American Legion Riders, Sons of the American Legion Squadron #23, Marine Corps League Unicoi Detachment #783, and Club 66 of Young Harris.

See Veterans Day, Page 7A



Veterans will receive first-class treatment on Friday during the Towns County Veterans Day Ceremony at Veterans Park. Photo by Lowell Nicholson/2016

## Hiawassee hosts haunted Halloween at Fairgrounds



The City of Hiawassee and Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds hosted yet another successful Halloween event last week. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Boys and girls of every age gathered on Halloween to see something strange at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, with north of 2,500 trick-or-treaters enjoying copious amounts of candy handed out by local businesses and organizations that Monday evening.

“This is the second year that we have held the city Halloween party at the Fairgrounds,” said Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales, whose primary concern was safety in moving the annual event from the Town Square. “I hope to do it here every year; it's so much fun.”

The updated location also added a lot of room for parking and helped assuage fears regarding the spread of COVID-19, since the seasonal

festivities were held in a larger space.

Most impressive, however, was the new-in-2022 haunted house experience in the Pioneer Village. Judging by its popularity, the addition, sponsored by Enhabit Home Health, will be returning yearly.

In reality, it was a two-part experience, with two of the sheds that usually house merchants cleared and covered in a black tarp.

On the left, the truly brave could pass possessed dolls, catch glimpses of caged costumed in an asylum, or take a stroll through a creepy autopsy room wherein the medical examiner was looking for limb donors.

The building on the right housed a foggy forest inhabited by a growling, green-eyed werewolf that guarded the entrance of a strange swamp

where a trio of witches performed their dark rituals over a bubbling cauldron.

Credit goes to the Minchew family, who were all involved in not just setting up the decorations and animatronics but were also actors who played their parts well by jumping out at unsuspecting wanderers to elicit squeals and shrieks of shock.

But it wasn't just about being scared – there was certainly some silliness involved. “This is what happens when you don't go to the dentist for 3,000 years,” a man in scrubs teased a young asylum patient with blackened teeth, who retorted, “I've only been here for 100 years.”

Dodie Thomas and Kim Farmer, representing the Hiawassee Park Senior Living Community, shared a table with See Fairgrounds Halloween, Page 6A

## Holiday Bazaar debuts to crowds in 2022

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

On Saturday, Nov. 5, and Sunday, Nov. 6, the Towns County Recreation & Conference Center became a winter wonderland in anticipation of the coming holiday season with the inaugural Holiday Bazaar shopping experience by the Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce.

Touting everything from food to crafts and dog harnesses to doll clothes, there was a little bit of something for everyone when it came to early Christmas gifts.

While the Rec Department has hosted other arts and crafts events before, especially in summer, 2022 is the first See Holiday Bazaar, Page 3A



Billed as being “very similar to our Made in Georgia Festival,” the new-in-2022 Holiday Bazaar at the Towns County Recreation & Conference Center was a big hit for the Lake Chatuge Chamber Nov. 5-6. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

## Payne takes the helm at Lake Chatuge Chamber

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Lifelong Towns County resident Julie Payne stepped in as president of the Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce on Halloween, Monday, Oct. 31, in what she describes as a homecoming.

“I am from Hiawassee,” said Payne, “I'm a 1995 graduate of Towns County High School, went through the Towns County Comprehensive School System. My parents are Donny and Sharon Payne of Hiawassee.”

“I guess I would be the fifth generation to grow up in Hiawassee on my mother's side. So, her family is from Hiawassee.” See Chamber President, Page 3A



Julie Payne  
Chamber President

## Two killed in Mack Truck crash in Young Harris

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Two Towns County residents died Friday after their van pulled in front of a Mack Truck on US 76 on Swanson Mountain, aka Young Harris Mountain, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

Harold James Moore, 79, and Mary Kenny Francis, 74, both of Young Harris, were the occupants of the van.

“On Nov. 4, 2022, at approximately 8:30 a.m., the Georgia State Patrol Post 27 Blue Ridge was requested to

investigate a two-vehicle crash on State Route 2 (US 76) at its intersection with Crooked Creek Connector in Towns County,” according to GSP.

The 1998 GMC Van driven by Moore “failed to yield after stopping at the stop sign at Crooked Creek Connector and State Route 2 and entered into the path of a 2001 Mack Truck pulling an equipment trailer.”

According to GSP, the Mack Truck struck the left side of the van in the intersection, and the driver and passenger of the van were pronounced

deceased at the crash scene by the Towns County Coroner's Office.

The Motor Carrier Compliance Division was requested to conduct a vehicle inspection of the Mack Truck, the driver of which was OK following the accident.

“No charges are pending,” GSP said. “Alcohol/drugs are not a suspected factor in the crash. All were wearing seatbelts.”

The crash comes on the heels of other recent fatal accidents in Towns County, including See Mack Truck Crash, Page 3A



Young Harris residents Harold James Moore and Mary Kenny Francis died in this Nov. 4 crash on US 76.

2 Sections 16 Pages  
Lake Levels  
Blue Ridge 1,670.05  
Chatuge 1,918.25  
Nottely 1,761.90

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

**SPORTS**  
**BASKETBALL**  
**SCRIMMAGE**  
THURS. NOV. 10  
VS. HIGHLANDS, NC  
@ HOME 6 PM

**Election Results**  
available Nov. 9  
at  
townscountyherald.net

**ND** Ninth District  
Community Action Agency

**Heating and Water Assistance Available**

See page 3B



## Chamber President...from Page 1A

Hiwassee/Towns County – we've been here a long time."

And her roots extend in both directions, as Payne has a 26-year-old son who graduated from Towns County High School and another son, 3.5 years old, who will also be attending Towns County Schools before too long.

"I knew I was going to go through the school system with him again and wanted to be back over this way so that I could attend his functions and be more involved in his growing up," she said.

Regarding her work experience, Payne started with Bank of Hiwassee as a teller and worked there for 17 years, being promoted into lending and finally as a branch manager at the Hiwassee office. She then went to work for a Blairsville attorney handling all their real estate closings.

So, Payne's professional experience made it easy for

her to take the reins at Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce, as did her desire to "get back to Hiwassee to work."

"That's always been my goal," she said. "When I heard about the open position here, I was ready to make a change. So, I applied, and the board hired me. Hiwassee is home. I always knew that I wanted to get back over here and work."

Payne also volunteers at the Georgia Mountain Fair with the Towns County Lions Club, and she's participated in the Relay For Life initiative with the American Cancer Society and plans to renew that relationship now that she's working in Hiwassee again.

Her immediate plans for Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce are to increase membership and membership participation, and to bolster community events.

"Growing the membership, getting more businesses

involved, getting more businesses to volunteer with the events that we have and getting our board members on board with events is key," said Payne.

"We've had a very successful Made in Georgia Festival for the past few years. This year we did the Holiday Bazaar at Foster Park again with over 75 vendors participating. I would like to do more events like that to get the membership involved and other people, other crafters and vendors, to our area.

"We work very closely with Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw as well as Hiwassee Mayor Liz Ordiales, and Mayor Andrea Gibby over in Young Harris. We're promoting the whole area, and we want to make sure that we have their input and what they're doing – all their events. We want to make sure that we have them involved in our chamber."

## Mack Truck Crash...from Page 1A

ing deaths among younger and older residents.

"We've had a lot of tragedy on our roads lately," Coroner Tamela Cooper said. "There really hasn't been a pattern, but generally, I urge people to slow down, wear your seatbelts, be aware of your surroundings, and be cautious.

"In the last 10 years, I've watched our population grow. We have more teenagers getting their licenses; we have an aging population who may find driving at night more challenging; and there are people who are not as familiar with our mountainous roads.

"It's heartbreaking for

the Coroner's Office – our wish would be to never have another motor vehicle accident fatality."

Additionally, out of an abundance of caution, Coroner Cooper advises motorists to keep next-of-kin information in their wallets to assist the notification process in case of an accident or other emergency.

Moore was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force who served during the Vietnam War and was of the Baptist faith, according to his obituary issued by Mountain View Funeral Home, which has charge of arrangements for both Moore and Francis.

"He made his home in Young Harris in 2005 moving here from Plant City, Florida," Moore's obituary reads. "He was a loving companion, father and grandfather ... preceded in death by his parents and also his companion Mary Francis, who passed away in the accident also."

Continuing, "Interment and graveside services will be held from the Georgia National Cemetery with Military Honors at a later date and will be announced."

Francis, who moved here with Moore in 2005, was also of the Baptist faith, and no services were planned at press time.

"Mrs. Francis was very passionate about animals and had volunteered at Union County Mountain Shelter," her obituary reads.

The couple's dog was also reportedly killed in the crash.

In lieu of flowers, people may make donations in their memory to the Union County Humane Society Mountain Shelter, per the loved ones of Moore and Francis.

People may sign the family guestbook and send condolences online at [www.mountainviewfuneralhome.com](http://www.mountainviewfuneralhome.com).

## Holiday Bazaar...from Page 1A



A customer checks out teenage entrepreneur Gracie's baked goods during the Holiday Bazaar Saturday.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

year the chamber hosted the bazaar, welcoming more than 75 vendors to try their hand at the business ventures.

Take, for example, local high schooler Gracie Dancsecs, who started selling baked goods as Gracie's Cakes back in January and February. She plans on moving up and working her way into owning a fully-fledged bakery one day.

Dancsecs said she's been "cooking for a long time," and that the event was a fun experience. She's already gotten a lot of orders, with things picking up in time for the holiday season, and the bazaar helped.

"I have work-based learning where I get out early (from school) and get to cook," she explained, giving an idea of how she manages to attend classes and fulfill orders of carrot cake, cookies, and other delectable goodies.

There were also experienced vendors, like Mae and Shirley Smith. Originally from Massachusetts, the sisters now hail from North Carolina and Tennessee, respectively.

Mae had a booth set up for unique crafts like handmade dream catchers, crystal and feather jewelry, adorable animal-shaped keychains, and more. Shirley was the self-proclaimed model for her sister's business, jangling festive

bracelets and necklaces made of jingle bells.

That Saturday morning, Mae had taken the time to put together some extra pieces of jewelry that were on the table that evening.

"And then sometimes I crochet, because I also do blankets and stuff," she added. "I've got enough stuff that's already made; making more here is great."

With all the effort that local vendors put into bringing the best of their products to sell, it's no wonder that guests were pleased with the event overall. Tori Armentrout had come to visit her friend, a Hiwassee resident, and was glad she did.

"It has been wonderful; already I have found something fantastic," said Armentrout, who had only recently arrived and was already carrying a bag. "We were talking about and planning my visit, and she said, 'One of the things we're going to do is go to the art and craft fair.' And I said, 'Sign me up.'"

Meanwhile, David Cottongim and Michael Lesser decided to see what they could find between two rooms full of options, including tables that took up the entirety of the blue-carpeted gym.

"I really like the variety. It kind of reminds me of some

of the (Kris Kringle) Markets I've been to," said Cottongim, already carrying a bag himself. The pair had been looking for Christmas ornaments to add a personal touch to their tree.

"What's so cool about coming up here is that the artists that put stuff like this together are just so unique and so special. I love it," Cottongim added, eager to share his find – a small, handcrafted ornament with the scene of a cozy cottage surrounded by snow and covered in plastic, meant to emulate a snow globe.

It's a lofty statement, considering the couple has experience browsing similar holiday markets as far north as their former home city of Chicago. Although they've been in Hiwassee for a few years now, the area is still close to their hearts and hasn't lost its charm.

"I hope that they continue to do stuff like this," Cottongim said, with Lesser agreeing. "We definitely appreciate it."

The chamber is hoping to return the Holiday Bazaar next year, likely in the same place at the Rec Center. For this Christmas season, look out for more awesome local events that include tree lightings, caroling, parades, and other markets with local craftsmen.



# Health Fair provides free, discounted medical tests

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE – A community is only as healthy as the dedication of its medical providers, and on Nov. 5, the Union General Health System made a point of showing residents from all over the region that they are in good hands with the return of the Health Fair in 2022.

Although it's been a tradition for at least 20 years, the Health Fair dropped off the radar like many other events when COVID-19 took the nation by storm. It's understandable, especially since everything takes place all over the second-floor interior of Union General Hospital.

From there, staff wearing red hospital shirts provided a stunning variety of different tests for low cost or for free; the only service that required payment – and discounted at that – was bloodwork, since it had to be sent off to the lab for official testing.

Otherwise, important procedures such as vision and hearing screenings, skin and breast exams, and even EKGs were offered to whoever wanted them, requiring only a signature on a sign-in form so that the facility could keep track of numbers.

Speaking of numbers, Hospital Human Resources Director Stacy Plante spoke with a couple of different service providers before estimating anywhere between 200 and 250 people took advantage of the many health care opportunities Saturday.

"It's not as big a turnout as we have had in the past, but I think it's just getting the word out in the community so everybody knows that we're there for them," Plante said. "During the regular week, most of us are working folks who don't have time to take off and go to the doctor and get all these different screens."

There's also good evidence that the service helps the community, and it's not a stretch to say that the Health Fair has saved lives. Plante recalls past firsthand accounts about visitors who took advantage of the free exams and found concerns like a lump in a breast or a faulty heartbeat.

That being said, not all of the booths were dedicated to screenings. Some, like the Relay For Life booth manned by prominent Relay member Barbara Richardson, provided practical information and spread awareness. The same was true for Medicare Adviser Cathy Jarrett, who believes the Health Fair is "a good investment of time."

"I grew up here," Jarrett said, remembering a time when "you used to have to go to Gainesville or Atlanta – like my kids were born in Gainesville – and we didn't have the services and facilities here that we do now."

Close to the entrance of the fair was a station for guests to test their ability to perform CPR or pack a wound and stop bleeding with gauze and a properly tied tourniquet. At least one medical helicopter pilot stood near other EMS workers to talk a little bit about what goes into



Local health care workers staffed the Union General Health Fair Nov. 5, manning screening stations all throughout the second floor of the Blairsville hospital.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

airlifting patients out of critically traumatic situations.

Around the board, the goal of staff was to answer questions, assuage fears, or provide further help, and despite what some sufferers of the dreaded "white coat syndrome" may have expected, inquisitive or concerned patients were treated with dignity and patience.

Some guests, like Beverly Chaussy, were there not for themselves, but for the wellbeing of loved ones. She got her blood drawn, and while she has visited the fair before, she believes in keeping on top of her health and was impressed with the "tremendous amount of information" available.

"There's things I didn't even think of (a Health Fair having)," Chaussy said. "Wound care – my husband is having a little trouble with a wound, so I'm hoping to pick up a little bit of information there. I wasn't expecting that."

There was even a concession stand at which more than a few folks dropped by for breakfast, whether that be in the form of a piece of fruit or a cup of parfait. Vivian Keling enjoyed a cup of coffee and sat down for a few minutes, striking up a conversation with accounting staff Sue Strickland and Judy Samard, who were directing people looking for the bloodwork site.

Keling was glad she visited that day, noting how she loves "meeting people and talking to people" in a more relaxed and friendly environment.

"Can't there be something good?" Keling implored. "Can't we have some fellowship or fun? I hate to turn on the news."

She also understood where the staff were coming from, as it turned out, having "worked at a psychiatric hospital for adolescents down in Douglas County ... for 10 years, and I got to feeling at home and thought I better leave."

And though the 250-attendance number was celebrated by the hospital, it's not the 300-400 estimate of the crowd that came out in 2019. Some theorized that the foggy, gray weather and on-and-off rain had something to do with it. Regardless, the Health System has pledged to continue health awareness campaigns.

Anyone in the community is encouraged to visit the hospitals or one of the system's several outside providers if they have any questions. For those who already have a history with any of the sites, they can access the UGH Patient Portal.

Appealing enough is the fact that the Patient Portal can be accessed from anywhere – PC or phone – but it's also worth mentioning that the app stores patient history from even before the advent of the Portal.

Patients can view their medical file, schedule appointments and set up reminders, receive lab and other test results, consult their doctors, or even pay their bills all from one handy piece of software. Basically, anything relating to Union General can be found in the Portal at no cost.

Keep an eye out for next year's Health Fair, but until then, Union General Hospital can be found at 35 Hospital Road in Blairsville. To ask questions or to set up a specific appointment, call 706-745-2111.



Judy Samard, Vivian Keling and Sue Strickland had a great time at the Health Fair Saturday. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

## Fairgrounds Halloween...from Page 1A

Sharon and Richard Parkman, who were dressed as cows on behalf of Chick-fil-A.

"This is our first year back (since the pandemic)," Thomas said, believing the event to be "a great success" with how organized the crowds – and subsequent lines – were.

Dressed in the gruesome guise of the headless horseman, Darby Jo Norton stood beside equine Opie, who made for a gentle steed despite his costume and fake blood on his snout. Although the horse belongs to local equestrian and longtime friend of Norton, Hannah Minchew, Norton and her mother Debra were handling him for the night.

"I'm just glad she trusts me with her horse," Norton admitted before alluding to a very real fright of horses she had seen among fairgoers – and the reason why Opie was out celebrating, too. "People can have experience with horses ... and they can conquer their fear."

For her part, Debra appreciated the new location, saying that as a mom, she felt much more at ease in the spread-out venue removed from street traffic.

"It's so much safer, and the kids are able to run and have fun and enjoy (themselves)," she said. "This is definitely an improvement out of the 30



Costumes ran the gamut during the popular trick-or-treat evening at the Fairgrounds, including this father-son hotdog duo.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

years I've lived here. This is awesome; this is a good thing."

Considering most of the Fairgrounds was used for trick-or-treating booths, game stations, and even some food and drink vendors, there was plenty to do throughout the night. Some little ghouls had fun with candy-corn bowling while others had their fortunes told.

All in all, the event was a

major success, with many families hauling bags of candy and other treats like themed temporary tattoos home to enjoy the spooky holiday.

Be sure to keep an eye out for next year's Halloween celebration, which is still planned to take place at the Fairgrounds with expectations of growing bigger, better and scarier in 2023.



## Registration Open for Leadership Chatuge Community Builders

Love our rural mountain community? Want to help it become more thriving by learning more about the region, developing leadership skills, and networking with others? The 12-week Leadership Chatuge Community Builders course offered at Hinton Rural Life Center in Hayesville is now accepting applications and will be held February 1 through April 19, 2023. This will be the sixth Leadership Chatuge course to be hosted at Hinton, with more than 70 community members who have participated. The class, which meets weekly on Wednesdays from 5:30-8:30 PM, equips and supports participants by offering a solid foundation to be a more knowledgeable and effective leader in our rural mountain community.

“Leadership Chatuge helped me to understand the way this rural community in-

teracts and works to get things done,” said graduate Laura Kleiss Hoeft. “It has been a worthwhile investment of my time.”

Topics covered throughout the three-month course include personal leadership styles, regional economic development and opportunities, local history and Appalachian culture, community supports, understanding social determinants of health, and more. The classes include dinner and feature speakers who are experts in their fields. Among the presenters already confirmed for 2023 are Jerry Taylor, local historian; Erik Brinke, with BRMEMC; Amanda McGee, director of Cherokee County DSS; Hiwassee’s Mayor Liz Ordiales; Dr. Jennifer Hallett, communication studies professor at Young Harris College; and Margarita Gonzalez, with Dogwood Health Trust. “Participating in Lead-

ership Chatuge has had a tremendous impact on those who have participated,” said Jacqueline Gottlieb, Hinton President and CEO. “The networking opportunities open doors, and the regional and leadership knowledge gained has prepared and motivated participants to seek additional credentialing and even new careers.”

The course is open to adults and high school students who live and/or work in Clay, Cherokee, and Towns counties. Participants have included educators, nonprofit and business employees, government officials, volunteers, entrepreneurs, students, artists, health care workers, and first responders.

For more information and to apply, visit [www.hintoncenter.org/training](http://www.hintoncenter.org/training). Class size is limited. Partial scholarships are available.



Erik Brinke

## TCHS Students enjoyed Future Georgia Educators Day at the University of North Georgia



Towns County High School Students with Mrs. McClure

Towns County High School Education Students enjoyed FGE Day at University of North Georgia on Nov 3. This day is set aside for Future Georgia Educators and sponsored by the Professional

Association of Georgia Educators and hosted on the campus of UNG.

Students enjoyed an informational and fun-filled day with guest speakers, workshops, lunch, PAGE sponsored

Knowledge Bowl, college fair and campus tour.

The Teaching as a Profession pathway courses at TCHS are taught by Mrs. Maureen McClure, who is also the FGE advisor.

## Veterans Day...from Page 1A

The keynote speaker will be retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Robert J. Williamson, a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point who had a brilliant 38-year career over which he received, among many other decorations, two Distinguished Service Medals and a Bronze Star.

Members of the Towns County High School Band will accompany Rilee Kitchens as she sings the National Anthem, as well as Pam Leslie as she sings a patriotic hymn.

Scott Drummond, a veteran of the United States Coast Guard, will preside over the

dedication of the new Veterans Wall of Honor there at Towns County Veterans Memorial Park.

Civilians, especially young folks, are cordially invited to attend this year’s big Veterans Day service, as well as the VFW Post #7807 Veterans Day lunch afterward at 1329 Sunnyside Drive in Hiwassee.

It should not go without mentioning that the United States Marine Corps will celebrate its 247th birthday on Thursday, Nov. 10, as the Second Continental Congress resolved to raise two battalions of Marines on that date in 1775.

Marine Corps League Unicoi Detachment #783, which enjoys membership in Towns and Union counties, will celebrate the occasion with a Marine Corps dinner at Brother’s Restaurant in Young Harris.

A highlight will be the cutting of the cake ceremony, performed with a Mameluke sword. Traditionally, the first piece of cake goes to the guest of honor, the second to the oldest Marine present, and the third to the youngest Marine present, per the Marine Corps Association.

## Farm Equipment Road Safety Message: Use Precaution

The Chatuge/Chattahoochee RC&D Council is constantly working on ways to help make our citizens lives better, safer, more prosperous, and to improve our standard of living. One way we try to accomplish this is to remind our citizens of safety hazards and things that can suddenly change the course of their lives in ways of which we don’t usually think.

There is nothing more startling than to come around one of these mountain curves while gazing out at the beautiful scenery and there dead ahead is a tractor with a bale of hay on each end going 15 miles per hour. Sometimes there are flashing lights on it to warn drivers, but many times there is nothing but the back end of a hay bale. This sudden slow down to 15 MPH irritates many drivers and they will take any chance they get to drive around the slow-moving farm machine even if there are cars coming from the other direction.

I guess the rule of no passing when cars are coming doesn’t apply to passing a tractor in people’s minds, but the consequences could, and many times are fatal. While this traffic situation happens more often in other parts of Georgia, it still happens up here and the results are the same, not good for anybody.

I sometimes drive my tractor for short distances on the highway when it is not practical to load it up on the trailer as do many of my neighbors when they are feeding cows down the road from the barn. I try to pull over as soon as I can to let cars by, but it is not always possible and the driver behind many times gets furious because they have to be delayed for 2 minutes to their important destination. We all have to remember that the feed, fertilizer, seed, or crops that the farmer is hauling today will turn into the food on our table tomorrow, so we all need to work together to help keep them farming.

When harvest season approaches, the state’s highway safety and agriculture agencies team up to bring attention to the need for more safety on Georgia’s rural roads. While motorists cruise the beautiful rural

roadways of Georgia this year, they should be aware of slow-moving farm equipment using those roads during harvest season.

The Department of Agriculture and the Governor’s Office of Highway Safety have worked for the last two years to get this message out to drive safely around slow-moving vehicles, but it’s clear there is still more work to do. Statistics from 2020 show that nine deaths resulted from 429 farm-equipment related crashes and 185 people reported injuries. As our farmers are working to bring in the year’s crop, Georgians are reminded of farmers’ increased presence on the roadways.

While traveling, you are urged to be mindful of tractors and other farm equipment sharing the same roadways and to take extra precaution. When sharing the road with other motorists, farmers should have red reflective triangles posted on their equipment to signal to drivers they are operating a slow-moving vehicle. The triangle should be visible and if it is rusted or faded, it should be replaced.

The Departments want our farmers to have a happy harvest and for motorists to get home safely. When drivers come up on slow-moving vehicles on an open country road, many won’t think twice about passing them in a hurry and motorists are reminded that these farmers have every right to use the roadway, too. Waiting a few minutes to safely pass or for the driver to pull over won’t impact their drive substantially, and everybody will get home unharmed to drive another day.

Georgians can improve their yield behind the wheel by following a few simple tips travelling Georgia’s rural roadways: For Motorists: When passing a farm vehicle, do not enter an oncoming lane of traffic unless you can see clearly ahead of the vehicle you will pass. Do not assume that a farm vehicle that pulls to the right side of the road is going to turn right or is letting you pass. Due to the size of some farm implements, the farmer must execute wide left turns. If you are unsure, check



the operator’s hand signals and check the left side of the road for gates, driveways, or any place a farm vehicle might turn.

For Farmers: Georgia law requires operators of slow-moving vehicles to place a reflector on any machine that travels the road slower than 25 MPH. Always point the triangle reflector upwards, keep the emblem clean to maximize reflectivity and replace the emblem when it fades, normally every 2-3 years. Mark the edges of tractors and machines with reflective tape and reflectors. Consider installing retrofit lighting on older machinery to increase visibility. Turn on your light but turn off spotlights when going onto the road. Avoid the highway during rush hour and bad weather. Do not drive before sunrise or after sunset. Consider installing mirrors on equipment to enable you to be more aware of motorists around you.

Remember farmers have a right to be on the road too as long as they adhere to the safety rules and motorists must honor that right or disaster can happen. When I am in my tractor on the road, I pull over to be courteous to the impatient, very important people behind me, who are in a terrible hurry and don’t want to slow down for anything, but by law, I don’t have to. When they blow the horn and give me the finger it just shows their real character. So be patient, let us farm, and we will all get home safely. Remember your food does not just come from Ingles, a farmer grew it!

For more information on the “Improving Georgia’s Yield Behind the Wheel” initiative, please visit [www.gahighway-safety.org](http://www.gahighway-safety.org) or [www.agr.georgia.gov](http://www.agr.georgia.gov). For more information on farm equipment safety contact: Frank M. Riley, Jr, Executive Director - Chatuge/Chattahoochee RC&D Council. email [frank.ccrdd@gmail.com](mailto:frank.ccrdd@gmail.com).

**Copy, Scan, EMail & Fax Documents**

**Full color business cards, 1,000 for \$79**

**Yard Signs - One Color \$22 each**

**Business Forms 10% OFF New Set Ups**

**Notary Services Available**

**Laminating Up to 11x17**

**Come see Allison or Kenneth!**

**West Printing Company**

**266 Cleveland Street • Blairsville, GA 30512**  
**[westprinting@brmemc.net](mailto:westprinting@brmemc.net) • 706-745-6343**