

## Fire...from Page 1A

“Such ban, once declared, shall continue until lifted. Such ban can be imposed countywide or limited to a specified area or areas or limited in other ways. Such a ban shall not include fire department training fires. The chief or his designee shall be authorized to enforce this provision by issuance of a citation.

“Any person violating, ignoring or refusing to abide by this article shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and after having been found to have violated the same by a court of competent jurisdiction, shall be subject to the penalty set forth in Section 1-11 of this code. The fire chief or his designee shall enforce this code.”

Highlighting just how serious the burn ban is, Section 1-11 states that, “Except as otherwise provided in this code, a person convicted of a violation of this code shall be punished by a fine not exceeding \$1,000, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 90 days, or work on the streets or public works for a period not exceeding 90 days, or both or any combination thereof.”

Burn bans have been put in place by surrounding counties and the U.S. Forest Service, and the Georgia Forestry Commission hasn't been issuing burn permits for several weeks.

At press time, the Rough Ridge fire in the



This is a view from Highway 76 in Hiawassee — smoke is pouring in from the Boteler Fire just across the state line and the Rock Mountain Fire near Tate City.

Cohutta Wilderness of Fannin County was only 20 percent contained, having burned more than 20,000 acres since its discovery on Oct. 16.

Towns County has been particularly smoky due to the surrounding wildfires, with smoke blowing in from North Carolina's many nearby wildfires, as well as from the Rock Mountain Fire.

The Boteler Fire, located just east of Hayesville, North Carolina, had burned close to 10,000 acres at press time, and was only 37 percent contained.

The constant presence of smoke in the North Georgia Mountains has been causing visibility issues and raising potential health concerns for area residents.

For those worried about exposure to smoke, the U.S. Forest Service has issued the following:

“Fires throughout northern Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and North Carolina, have the potential to impair air quality. Conditions may change quickly, based on weather, wind direction and fire activity.

“Sensitive groups including individuals with asthma, lung or heart disease, children, older adults and pregnant women should take precautions to avoid exposure to smoke. If you feel like you are having health effects from smoke, see your doctor or health professional as needed. Use caution when driving in or around smoky areas.”

Georgia voters also passed Amendment 4, which will dedicate revenue from existing taxes on fireworks to trauma care, fire services and public safety.

Hiawassee ran a Special Election side by side with the General Election this year, to fill the unexpired term of resigned Hiawassee City Councilman Stephen Smith.

The winner of that seat was Rayette Ross with 54 percent of the vote.

“I want to say a big thank you to everybody,” said Ross following her election. “I'm very grateful that Hiawassee voters are trusting me to make decisions that will effect each of them.”

Ross is now a full member of the Hiawassee City Council, as she was sworn in during a council work session on Thursday, Nov. 10, two days following the election.

The three citywide initiatives voters were asked to decide went as follows:

Put to the vote, the selling of liquor by the drink passed with a margin of 172 votes yes to 73 votes no.

When asked to decide whether or not to allow the selling of alcoholic beverages by the drink on Sundays, the initiative passed with 165 votes yes to 82 votes no.

As for Sunday retail sales of beer and wine, Hiawassee residents passed the initiative, with 169 people voting yes and 77 people voting no.

## Park...from Page 1A

Revolutionary War, the War Between the States, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

Each of the four monuments is inscribed with the wartime dates and a personalized message on each stone in honor of the courageous men and women who fought during those tumultuous times.

These monuments were part of a park renovation project spearheaded by Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall.

In addition to the monuments, six new flagpoles were dedicated to honor the different branches of service — Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marine Corps and Air Force — as well as a POW/MIA counterpart in honor of those who have fallen to the terrors of war and those who never returned home.

Serving as the keynote speaker for the ceremony was Col. Charles A. Cunningham, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), of Murphy, North Carolina. During the program, Cunningham shared personal anecdotes from his time serving in the Air Force, beginning with his enlistment until his retirement in 1990, following 22 years of service.

Drafted into the military in 1964 during the Vietnam era, Cunningham took it upon himself to join before his draft date. By doing so, Cunningham was able to work his way up as an officer, serving as a contract negotiator dealing primarily with civilians until the end of his career.

“I had such a great time in the Air Force, it was just incredible,” said Cunningham. “It was all because of people like you and the senior officers that took care of me.

“I had a great career. I enjoyed every minute of it. I made great friends; we had a network of guys that we would communicate with one another all the time. It was an unbelievable trip for me.

“I want to thank you and salute all of you, including all of our dedicated civil servants who have taken good care of all of us. I want to thank you for it.”

At the end of the service, those who have served and have since passed on were commemorated with their names inscribed on the park's Wall of Honor.

On behalf of local veterans groups, their family members were recognized and given a plaque of appreciation.

These honored veterans included: James Coker, USAF; Glenn Greenwald, USA; Edwin Hickman, USMC; Paul Keller, USA; Donald Long, USMC; Ronald Neace Sr., USN; Wallace Parham, USMC; Marvin Parker, USA; E. Dail Rentz, USA; Howard



Col. Charles Cunningham, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), delivered the keynote address at the 2016 Veterans Day Service at Towns County Veterans Park.



Towns County Veterans filled their memorial park for the annual Veterans Day Service that always takes place on Nov. 11 at 11 a.m. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



The county hosted a Veterans Luncheon following the service, at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Seale, USMC; and Louis Youngblood, USA.

A special thanks to the following groups for making this year's ceremony a reality: Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 7807; Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, Post 7807; American Legion, Post 23; American Legion Ladies Auxiliary, Post 23; American Legion Riders, Post 23; Sons of the American Legion, Post

23; Army-Navy Squadron, Post 66; Marine Corps League, Unicoi Detachment 783; U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Flotilla 23; Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall; Towns County Veterans Monument Committee; Banister Funeral Home; Cochran Funeral Home; and WNC Marble & Granite Works.

## Election...from Page 1A

Cliff Bradshaw to be the incoming Towns County Sole Commissioner, and voters re-elected Sheriff Chris Clinton for yet another term as top lawman in the county.

Stan Chastain won his race in the Special Election for County Board of Education Post 2 to fill the unexpired term of Bradshaw, who resigned that post earlier in the year to run for commissioner.

All other races for Towns County offices were run uncontested, and finished with David Rogers resuming this seat as probate judge, Cecil Dye continuing on as superior court clerk and Bruce Rogers maintaining his role as tax commissioner.

Harold Copeland, the Towns County fire chief, was newly elected county coroner that night.

Breaking out of the county, Donald Trump won the presidential race handily, both in Georgia and nationally, taking an early lead in the Electoral College and never letting up until he was declared president-elect.

Republican Incumbent U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson won this re-election bid, defeating his challengers with 55 percent of the vote statewide.

For Public Service Commissioner, Republican Incumbent Tim Echols received 66 percent of the vote in state, and will remain in that office.

Incumbent Republican U.S. Rep. Doug Collins of the 9th Congressional District of Georgia ran unopposed, garnering 256,278 votes districtwide.

Incumbent Republican State Sen. John Wilkinson from the 50th District ran unopposed, capturing 5,593 votes in Towns County and 61,137 votes in the district.

Matt Gurtler ran uncontested as the Republican candidate for 8th District State Representative in the Georgia General Assembly, and he received 24,809 total votes.

As for the statewide constitutional amendments, Towns County residents voted in line with the rest of the state:

Amendment 1 failed with 60 percent of Georgians voting no. Amendment 1 would have given the state authority to take control of locally failing schools.

Amendment 2 passed with 83 percent of the vote statewide, authorizing penalties for sexual exploitation and assessments on adult entertainment to fund child victims' services.

Amendment 3 passed with 62 percent of the vote statewide, and will allow Georgia lawmakers to completely overhaul and remake the previously independent Judicial Qualifications Commission.

See Page 2B for election results by precinct

## SAR...from Page 1A

preserve the history and honor our patriots and our veterans. One way for us to do that is by coming to the nursing home and showing them that we really do appreciate them.

“We have other programs where we go into schools and talk to schoolchildren. We also honor policemen, firemen, EMS and teachers. We have programs for all of that. But, on Veterans Day, the emphasis is always on the veterans, and that's why we come here.”

Chatuge Regional residents, along with friends and family members, gathered in the dining hall last Friday to watch as 16 of their fellow denizens received honorable mentions and acknowledgement.

From World War II Veterans to Vietnam Veterans, all were recognized and

awarded with an honorary plaque of appreciation, each inscribed with the veteran's name and accompanied with a United States Star.

Smiles spread across the faces of each veteran as they heard their names announced alongside their branches and years of service, knowing that, even years later, the sacrifices they had made in the name of duty to America and her citizens had not been forgotten.

“I think they really enjoy us coming here,” said Turner. “Some of them, I know, look forward to it. I have noticed, by visiting the nursing home in Union County, that the veterans we saw and gave out certificates and stars to last year, that they have them put up on their walls now.

“I think sometimes they just like having someone to talk to, but it's a two-way street. We enjoy talking to them. I think

we get as much out of it as they do. Some of them have some really good stories to tell if you just have the time to sit down and listen. They really do, and I enjoy listening.”

After the presentation of the certificates, the SAR members served refreshments to the veterans and their families, taking the time to give back to those who have already given so much.

SAR members take more than just Veterans Day to pay respect to area veterans, visiting the Union County Nursing Home once a month.

The Sons of the American Revolution meet on the third Tuesday of January, March, May, September and November, at 6 p.m. at Brother's in Young Harris. For more information about the SAR Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter, visit georgiasocietysar.org.

Heaton case in the “near future,” though he said he couldn't comment on when that might be.

The scope of the investigation conducted by the sheriff's office dates back to when David Gowder was arrested in Fannin County in April of 2015, up to and beyond the February 2016 arrests of Gowder, four of his relatives and Dr. Heaton.

According to the authorities, a multiagency investigation is still ongoing in the case.

Agencies involved in the investigation at the time of the arrests were the DEA Tactical Diversion Squad, the DEA Digital Forensics Lab, the Georgia Drugs and Narcotics Agency, the Union County Sheriff's Office, and the Cherokee County NC Sheriff's Office.

## Gowder...from Page 1A

11 to the recent Monday, Nov. 7, administrative session.

Gowder was charged on Feb. 4 in Union County with three counts of fraudulently obtaining a controlled substance, one count of conspiracy; Heaton was charged with 40 counts of unauthorized distribution and dispensation of controlled substances, one count of conspiracy.

Also charged in Union County, Mike Gowder's brother, David Gowder, on 36 counts of fraudulently obtaining a controlled substance, seven counts of unauthorized distribution and dispensation of controlled substances. Three other Gowder family members were charged

in connection with the incidents in question.

When asked about these cases in Union County, which did not appear on either of the two sessions of the July Term 2016 Indictments of the Union County Grand Jury, Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley said that his office was currently going through evidence recently provided by the Union County Sheriff's Office.

“We just received a substantial portion of the sheriff's department's investigative file that they've completed,” said Langley.

He did add that there will be movement on the Gowders/

## TVA...from Page 1A

“Other imperatives deal with power rates and the requirement for low cost energy, debt as a necessity to live within our means, and power system assets so that TVA electricity is highly reliable and comes from a balanced mix of the sources.”

Johnson disclosed that, as a means for the TVA to work toward a more energy efficient and environmentally friendly future, nuclear power has been a major focus for TVA management.

In line with this effort, the TVA opened a new nuclear power plant unit in Rhea County, Tennessee, on Oct. 19.

“The nation's first new nuclear generation of the 21st century, Watts Bar Unit 2, entered commercial operation,” said Johnson. “It was a good day for everyone who works at TVA or who is served by TVA.

“Watts Bar 2 and the other nuclear units we have supply about a third of the region's energy capacity, providing electricity to about 4.5 million homes.”

According to the TVA website, Watts Bar Unit 2 is TVA's seventh operating nuclear reactor delivering carbon-free energy to the Tennessee Valley.

Mike Skaggs, Operations Executive Vice President, has been the leading force behind the Watts Bar Unit 2 construction and now plant performance.

Though the term “nuclear” might raise concern among TVA constituents, management wishes to affirm the extreme safety measures taken to ensure area protection and plant safety.

“The overriding priority for Watts Bar 2 was safety,” said Skaggs. “That's what we focused around. That's what we motivated around.

“To getting to the completion of Watts Bar Unit 2, we completed many operational tests and acceptance testing that was required. We transferred over 89 systems to the operation organization.

“We transitioned to a



Lynn Evans and Richard Howorth, both TVA board members, each delivered committee updates in the Thursday, Nov. 10, board meeting.

two-system organization and did all the work that was required to ready the staff for two units. We supported over 16,000 hours of inspections that were conducted to verify that we were in compliance with the requirements.”

Nuclear power, by definition, is the use of sustained nuclear fission to create heat, thus creating electricity. Essentially, the fission splits atoms of either uranium or plutonium to release energy that is carbon-free and sustainable.

Unlike other fossil fuel energy sources, nuclear power plants do not emit harmful fumes into the air but instead discharge water vapor, creating no greenhouse gasses that contribute to ongoing air pollution.

While this form of energy is more costly than other energy sources in the construction phase, in the long run it becomes both environmentally and economically savvy.

Watts Bar Unit 2 had a budget of \$4.7 million, which TVA management was able to stay within during the building process. The plant itself will add over 11,050 megawatts of carbon-free power to the authority's nine million customers.

“This unit, and the one previously completed by TVA, represent the last two successfully completed nuclear

units in the United States,” said Marilyn Brown, TVA Board Member. “What's notable in particular about that is that these were completed by a public entity. We're very proud of this and the team that put it together.”

TVA sees this plant as a stepping-stone toward becoming a completely environmentally friendly organization by 2020.

In terms of the drought affecting the majority of the TVA district, board members urged customers to be conscious of resource inputs and outputs.

Many area residents during the public listening session expressed concerns of the effects of the drought, most importantly the wildfires in the area and the erosion throughout the watershed. TVA Board Members assured them that precautionary measures were being taken to hopefully prevent further destruction to the Tennessee Valley, though they admitted that some of the situation was out of their control.

According to board members, residents within the TVA should strive to consolidate water usage and take care to abide by local laws in terms of burn bans and water restrictions.

All those in TVA management hope to soon see relief from these environmental hazards, and send their condolences to any affected by the wildfires.