

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

www.townscountyherald.net

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1928

50 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 87 Number 16

Wednesday, February 17, 2016

HRWC has a plan for Lake Chatuge

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

At the Hiwassee City Council Meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 2, those assembled got an update from the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition.

Callie Moore of the HRWC explained that the four biggest dangers facing Lake Chatuge were excess sediment, excess nutrients, pathogens and too much runoff.

"Excess sediment is number one because it's the biggest impact to our streams

and more rivers. So we have many more miles of streams and rivers than we have lake acres," she explained.

"In addition to the impacts to fish and aquatic life, excess sediment increases cost of water treatment, and it's obviously an aesthetic issue. Lake Chatuge became muddy for the first time ever since I've been here in a long time. We don't need a muddy lake.

"People are not going to spend a lot of money to come up here on vacation if the lake's muddy. And the same is true of our rivers,

and the economic impact of trout fishing and so forth. So there's lots of reasons we want to prevent muddy streams and rivers," she continued.

Causes of excess sediment include construction without appropriate Best Management Practices, or road building without appropriate practices.

"The excess nutrients are a major issue for Lake Chatuge. Many of the sources of nutrients are also sources of pathogens, so when we have excess nutrients going in, oftentimes we have excess



Callie Moore
pathogens too," Moore said.
Excess in nutrients
See HRWC, Page 10

UV filtration in final testing phases

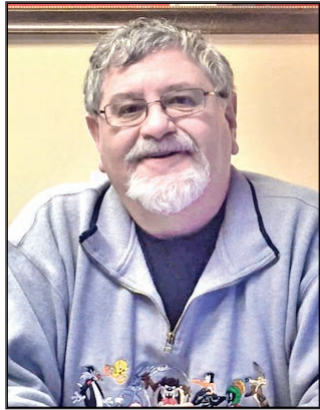
By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Feb. 4, the City of Hiwassee installed a new ultraviolet filtration system in the city sewer plant.

The system was checked for leaks, but will require additional checks and testing before it will be turned on. Final testing will occur on Wednesday, Feb. 17.

Although the City is compliant with all health and environmental standards, the council is still committed to keeping Lake Chatuge as clean as possible.

This new, high-tech filtration system is only the first step in the city's efforts to drastically reduce any



Rick Stancil
negative impact it might have on Lake Chatuge. It will target pathogens harmful to humans.
The system will not,
See UV, Page 10

Vietnam Veterans to receive state's Vietnam War Certificate of Honor

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

One hundred seventy-five Vietnam and Union counties will be honored in a ceremony featuring Commissioner Mike Roby of the Georgia Department of Veterans Services on Wednesday, Feb. 17, at 4:30 p.m. in the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center.

Veterans will be awarded the Vietnam War Certificate of Honor, along with the Defense Department Commemorative Vietnam War Lapel Pin, all in recognition of



GDVS Commissioner Mike Roby, center, tours Union County Schools Fine Arts Center with area veterans and Arts Center Manager Regina Hawkins, ahead of Wednesday's ceremony

Quilts of Valor presented to nine area veterans by Quilters Guild

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Misty Mountain Quilters Guild, along with the Union County Historical Society, honored nine local veterans with Quilts of Valor over the weekend at the Historic Union County Courthouse.

Charles King, James Ronald (Ron) Long, Thomas Segars, James (Jimmy) Lunsford, Larry Davis, Larry King, Clinton Bond Strough, Danny Barrett and Robert Lester were honored with custom-made quilts from the Misty Mountain Quilters



The nine honored Veterans who received Quilts of Valor from Misty Mountain Quilters Guild

Chamber brings in new talent, board chair

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Thursday, Feb. 4, the Towns County Chamber of Commerce hosted its Annual Meeting and Member Appreciation event at Brasstown Valley Resort.

An important part of the meeting was the swearing in of new members to join the 15-member chamber board.

New board members were Lynn McPeak, Brad Hutson, Valerie Polding, Melanie Hughes and Marvin Copeland.

Current board members

took the oath again, including Sarah Dearing, John Allen, Charles Burton, Rex Strickland, Eric Seifarth, Dr. Joey Arenobia, Lee Durham, Carmolita Haney, David Sanford and Mark Dehler.

They were sworn in by Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall, taking the following oath:

"We do solemnly promise and pledge to faithfully execute the duties in accordance with the governing documents and state, local and federal law to the best of our knowledge and ability; to commit to the organization's highest

standards and ethics; to further admissions and goals; and to assume full responsibility for governing the organization."

Next on the agenda was to replace outgoing Chamber Chairman Mark Dehler with new Chairman John Allen.

Dehler spoke about the future of the chamber.

"We knew when we started this year that this was going to be a rough year," said Dehler. "We were changing everything we were doing and trying to quite literally turn on a dime and take up several new functions, most of



New Chairman John Allen
them having to do with tourism and introducing people all

See Chamber, Page 11

Sunday sales, liquor by drink would boost, and increase business

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

During the Hiwassee City Council Meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 2, Councilman Jay Chastain broached the idea of a referendum authorizing Sunday sales of alcohol to be put before voters this year.

The idea immediately had the support of some councilmembers.

"If we time this right, not just to do Sunday sales, but liquor by the drink or even packaged liquor in our city, I think that's key to some kind of downtown redevelopment to get nicer restaurants in here," said Councilwoman Liz Ordiales. "Until we have that, it's going to be difficult."



Jay Chastain
The issue is that Towns County is legally a dry county. City Manager Rick Stancil explained that, while it is entirely possible for Hiwassee residents to pass a referendum

See Sunday, Page 11

Union General Hospital board assures public all is well

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Nearly two weeks out from the very public arrests of Union General Hospital CEO Mike Gowder and Dr. Jim Heaton, the Union General Inc. Board of Directors is continuing its pledge to keep the public informed of the latest updates from the hospital.

"The biggest question that's come up to us, is the hospital going to close, and is it sound financially," said Board Vice Chair Jim Williams. "And the answer to that is, yes, we are financially sound, and the hospital is going to continue to operate as normal.

"Lewis Kelley is interim CEO, and the board is very engaged with being sure

that the hospitals, all of our organizations, have the support that they need to continue to do their jobs."

Williams added that, as additional information becomes available concerning the hospital in the aftermath of Gowder's departure, he and the board plan on keeping the public "in the loop."

Concerns over the fiscal solvency of the hospital have been brought to Williams' and Efrid's attention by members of the community.

"Whether it's a church or at the post office or at the grocery store, people will say, 'I understand you're on the board, is the hospital going to close,' or what kind of shape are we in financially," said Williams. "The point is, we're

financially sound - probably one of the most financially sound rural hospitals in Georgia, if not the country.

"We're trying to communicate effectively with our staff, with our physicians. We did have a meeting with the physicians and the medical staff on Tuesday (Feb. 9), Patsy and I did, to meet with them, to bring them in the loop of what was going on, and to let them know that we're depending on them to continue to do their jobs as they always have been, and to serve the public."

The Union General Board of Directors is composed of seven individuals appointed by either the commissioner or mayor, and approved by the board itself.

Currently, only six of

the seven board members are considered active, as Dr. Heaton was appointed to the board last fall, but has since been suspended pending the board's ongoing internal investigation into the allegations against the physician.

Patsy Efrid is chairman of the board, Williams is vice chair, and Dinah Paris, Max Cochran, Myron Turner and Steve Rowe make up the remaining active members.

"The board is very much united in our efforts to ensure that the hospital continues to operate as normal, and that we cooperate with law enforcement in any way they seek," said Williams. "If in

See UGH, Page 10



Jim Williams, Patsy Efrid, Max Cochran and Myron Turner at the latest called meeting of the UGH Board of Directors

14 pages	Inside
Lake Levels	Arrests 2
Blue Ridge 1,671.53	Church 6
Chatuge 1,918.83	Classifieds 12
Nottely 1,762.54	Opinion 4
	Legals 13
	Obits 7
	Sports 8

Arbor Day Celebration

See page 3

Assistance needed in Rabun County BANK ROBBERY

See page 2

Iwo Jima Program at Towns County Recreation and Conference Center

See page 2

SPORTS BASEBALL

Sat. Feb. 20 vs. Lumpkin Co 11 AM
Mon. Feb. 22 vs. Union Co. 5:30 PM