

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Grassroots efforts leads to Towns County WUI success

The following is an excerpt of an article that I wrote for the International Association of Fire Chief's "On Scene" newsletter. March and April are two of the most dangerous months for wildfires here in North Georgia. Leaves are still on the ground and with the high winds and low humidity we are living in a tinder box and just one spark away from disaster. Wildland fire in our own backyards is something most of us think will never happen, but it only takes one match, hot ashes dumped in the yard or a bonfire that we were sure was out to bring a disaster right under our porch and into our living room.

Grassroots leadership for the Ready, Set, Go! (RSG) Program, Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) and Firewise (FW) is key to successful wildland-fire education. The Towns County Firewise program started in 2008 during an 800-acre fire on Cedar Knob Mountain. After that fire, local, state and federal agencies began working with community members to get them involved at a grassroots level. They did this by telling the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) story. Those who started RSG & FAC in Towns County soon realized that they were the only ones pushing the issue and if they quit pushing, the momentum would roll to a stop and no one would notice, so they gave ownership of the programs to the citizens they were trying to protect, thus keep the programs moving forward.

In 2013, the Towns County FAC Citizens Coalition took ownership of RSG and FAC programs and developed the grassroots network and leadership to keep the programs growing. The coalition consists of six citizens and three agency representatives, all dedicated to wildland-fire safety and education. Supporting the coalition is an ex-officio group providing technical expertise, resources and funds when needed. As control of Towns' RSG and FAC programs passes to the coalition, the development team will take the lessons learned here to jumpstart new Fire-Adapted Communities in surrounding areas using FAC, RSG, and FW through peer-to-peer contacts.

Most everyone in North Georgia lives in the wildland-urban interface, creating a major risk for residents from wildfire, and the most important component of wildfire preparedness

Executive Director of RC&D

Frank Riley



here is Ready, Set, And Go!, the evacuation plan which is the key to surviving a wildfire. It shows us how to be aware of conditions and be Ready; have our important items at hand or Set; and to Go when the call comes to leave.

If a wildland fire approaches and the residents and emergency responders don't have a plan in place to get out of harm's way, then all other FAC components become useless. The RSG Program ties in well to the existing Towns County Firewise program because many of our mountain communities have narrow roads and usually just one entrance. Ingress and egress are critical issues here and a large-scale evacuation is almost impossible, making Ready, Set, and Go! extremely important to our residents and emergency responders.

Between the 2008 fire and spring 2013, Towns had only three Firewise Communities, but since the RC&D Council received the FAC grant in mid-2013, nine more communities have been added in just 10 months. Grant funds were combined with matching funds to pay for salaries, travel and needed supplies and to have personnel attend training on new RSG/FAC methods and to share what was learned during the development process.

A successful wildland-fire safety and education program isn't easy to start, because we all tend to ignore risks near our homes until smoke and embers are blowing over the ridge—and then it's too late. A program such as this must have its own spark and must be properly fueled; and once ignited, it will spread on its own through the grassroots channels. Help us fuel this fire, Be Firewise!... your life may depend on it!

For more information on FW, FAC, or RSG! contact Frank M. Riley Jr. Executive Director of the Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council @ www.frank.ccrd@gmail.com.

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

"Men have differed in opinion and been divided into parties by these opinions from the first origin of societies, and in all governments where they have been permitted freely to think and to speak. The same political parties which now agitate the U.S. have existed through all time. Whether the power of the people or that of the [aristocracy] should prevail were questions which kept the states of Greece and Rome in eternal convulsions, as they now schismatize every people whose minds and mouths are not shut up by the gag of a despot. And in fact the terms of Whig and Tory belong to natural as well as to civil history. They denote the temper and constitution of mind of different individuals." --Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 1813.

Research into the relationship between biology and political belief is accumulating, and recent additions to the field are being made by John Hibbing at the University of Nebraska. At the University's Political Physiology Lab, they are using an interdisciplinary approach to study the biological differences between those who identify with liberal and conservative thinking and those who have no interest in politics.

Research indicates that, while environmental factors strongly influence political views early in life, in later years there is a consistent influence by genetic factors. The structure of our brains determines, in large part, how conservative or liberal we are. Liberal brains have more gray matter in the anterior cingulate cortex which indicates a greater tolerance for uncertainty. Conservatives have more volume in the amygdala, which indicates a greater sensitivity to fear based stimuli.

There are other significant differences thus far identified between liberal and conservative brains. Conservatives show more activity in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, which is the part of the brain which processes complex social evaluations. Liberal thought processes tend to be more creative and open minded whereas conservative brains are generally more orderly and better organized. Conservatives sleep more soundly and liberals have a more active dream life. Conservatives are concerned more with preventing harm to the group whereas liberals are more concerned with the

welfare of group members.

There are probably no surprises in this body of research for anyone who follows politics or political history – or for anyone who has noticed that another person witnessing the same event can describe something completely different. But perhaps there is, somewhere in these findings, an opportunity for those of us plagued by the passions of the political season to find peace. The democrat is not necessarily wrong – she just sees things, literally, in a different way. The republican is not wrong either, he just prefers to protect where others wish to promote.

Over time, one finds the nation more or less evenly divided between brain types with a slight pendulum swing in one direction or another caused by the manipulation of the political process. This, in my own brain's opinion, is where we all lose out. The business of politics, or rather, the politics of business, seeks to reinforce the natural divisions in our thinking by leveraging perennial, hot topic issues such as guns, sexual orientation, abortion and religion. While we are distracted by these issues that change rarely or slowly if at all, our freedom and our productivity is increasingly devoured by the insatiable appetite of the unholy alliance of government and business.

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"IT'S ON MY MIND.."
Danny H. Parris

Greatest bridge known by man

Since my childhood days I have loved bridges. In my boyhood days there were numerous wooden bridges and foot logs you could walk across or ride bicycles across. Sometimes a group of boys might get together some discarded boards and build their own bridge to cross a stream. Bridges have been the subject of poems. Wordsworth did a poem entitled "From Westminster Bridge". Thornton Wilder studied the problem of evil in "The Bridge At San Luis Rey". Kids entertained themselves years ago by playing London Bridge, which kept falling down. Movies have been made about bridges. Songs have been written about bridges (Billy Joe McAllister jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge). Sadness and death are associated with some bridges. Years ago I had a beautiful 14-year-old cousin who ended her life by jumping from a bridge on the Toccoa River. Why? No one will ever know in this life. We sing the song "Bridge Over Troubled Waters". We talk about the proverbial "Bridge to Tomorrow", or we "burn our bridges behind us." Covered bridges have always been intriguing to me of which very few are still in existence. While in seminary in New Orleans, Louisiana I served a church just northwest of the city in Maurepas, Louisiana. To get to the church our family had to cross the Lake Pontchartrain Bridge (Causeway). It is 24 miles (23.87Miles) across. The twin spans of the causeway are made of prestressed panels supported by over 9,000 concrete pilings. The first span with two-way traffic was opened in 1956; the second span, which allowed one-way traffic, was opened in 1969. The spans are

80 feet apart with only seven emergency crossovers in the 24 miles over water. Men have spanned some mighty great gulfs and connected points that were seemingly impossible. The Golden Gate Bridge, which is the symbol of San Francisco, is an engineering marvel. This bridge was largely the result of one man's vision, Joseph Strauss. In spite of enormous opposition, he was convinced that a bridge could be built. It was completed in 1937 with only 12 lives lost during construction. The Bay Bridge, which was being built at the same time, had 24 lives lost. During the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge the unofficial count of loss of life numbered 27. Most of the fatalities occurred from men falling or being dragged by falling equipment. One man, pushing a wheelbarrow, ran off the edge of the plank continued to grip the barrow handles and fell to his death. Someday I hope to cross some of these bridges just because I want to, but some I will never cross. However, I have crossed the longest, widest and greatest bridge ever known by man. It's called the Calvary Grace Bridge. It was completed when God's Son died for sinful mankind on a hill outside the city walls of Jerusalem. Jesus, Himself became the bridge. He connected two opposite points: Sinful man and a holy God were brought together by grace. Men and women are able to get to God over the bridge of the grace of Jesus Christ. You are not charged a toll. You don't have to travel anywhere to cross it, not even to church. You can cross that bridge right in your living room. You can cross over from your darkness to light; from death to life; from time to eternity over Calvary's Grace Bridge. As the songwriter said, "Oh the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary."

Thank God for the life, crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He Lives! He Lives!

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.

RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

Do your kids do porn? I don't think so, Dr Don, my son's only twelve. Then you should know that the average age for a kid to see porn on the web for the first time is eleven. But my kids don't have any opportunity to watch it. Really? I am told that if you type a couple of key words into a popular search engine it returns 83 million porn hits in less than a tenth of a second. A recent study reveals that 53% of boys in America 11 to 15 watch porn with some degree of regularity. Among girls in that age group it's more than 1 in 4.

Is that serious? It is. Porn is a destroyer. It teaches kids that intimacy is for their selfish pleasure rather than the beautiful married purpose for which a loving Creator provided it. At a recent Pornography Symposium at Notre Dame University, a former porn film producer told how he would watch the light go out of the eyes of the young people who came to work for him. He recalled seeing a young starlet, curled up naked in a fetal position in the corner, sobbing bitterly at the reality of what she had just been asked to do and what she had become. Porn destroys everyone it touches.

Why has it become such

a problem in our generation? The reasons are many. One is the skidding moral climate we have permitted. Porn use is like drug use; the more you use it the stronger it needs to be to satisfy. Another reason is the ready availability. Responsible parents used to tell Sean he had to keep his computer out in the living room so the family could see what he was watching. Now he can take his digital tablet – or his cell phone – with ear buds, into the restroom stall at school and have complete privacy.

Some suggestions: Make sure your actions, your words, and your attitudes at home display deep respect for others. Next, moral character qualities are built at home so see that your kids are early introduced to spiritual resources. A family that prays together helps build a fence around its young. Next, talk to your kids. Let them know how damaging pornographic imagery can be, and why it is contrary to the values in your family. Don't be naive about what your kids are seeing. Be sure they understand that your family's goal is to rise above the darkness.

Send your parenting questions to: DrDon@RareKids.net

GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE EMAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net. Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc. Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*

Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

American Legion Post 23 meets 1st Tuesday of each month at 4 PM at VFW Post 7807, Sunnyside Rd., Hiawassee. Call 706-896-8387 for details. We need your support!
Towns County Water Board Meeting 3rd Monday of each month at 6 p.m. in the TC Water Office Building.
Mountain Community Seniors meet the second Thursday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 1 p.m.
Towns County Democratic Party meets the 2nd Thursday of every month at 5 PM at the Senior Center.
Towns County Republican Party meets at 6:30 PM the 4th Thursday of each month at the new Senior Center. For more info call 706-994-3919.
Towns County Planning Commission is held the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Courthouse.
Towns County Commissioners meeting is the 3rd Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in the courthouse.
School Board Meeting, 2nd Monday each month at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.
Hiawassee City Council 1st Tuesday of month 4 p.m., at City Hall.
Young Harris City Council, 1st Tuesday of month at 7 p.m., Young Harris City Hall.
The Hiawassee River Valley Kennel Club meetings are held at 7 p.m. the 1st Monday of each month at Brother's Restaurant in Murphy. Call Kit: 706-492-5253 or Peggy: 828-835-1082.
The Unicoy Masonic Lodge #259 meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m.
Stevens Lodge #414 F & AM meets the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM in Young Harris.
Towns County Board of Elections holds its monthly meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 4 p.m. at the Elections Office (Old Rock Jail).
Towns County Historical Society meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 5:30 p.m. Annual dues \$15, PO Box 1182, Hiawassee, GA. We do oral family histories

of residents. 706-896-1060, www.townshistory.org
Bridge Players intermediate level meets at 12:30 p.m. on Mondays & Fridays at the Towns County Rec Center.
Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild, Inc (MRACG) meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at ArtWorks Artisan Centre, Hiawassee. Refreshments at 6 p.m., meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Call us by 706-896-0932 or mtregarts-craftsguild.org.
Mountain Computer User Group meets the 2nd Monday of each month in Young Harris. Meetings start at 6 p.m. and visitors are welcome. A "Q & A" session follows. Details can be found at www.mcug.org.
FPL Retirees Breakfast will meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Hole in the Wall Restaurant on the square in Blairsville at 9 a.m.
Chattahoochee-Nantahala Chapter, Trout Unlimited meets 2nd Thursday of each month at Cadence Bank in Blairsville. 5 p.m. Fly Tyng - 7 p.m. General Meeting. Everyone welcome. www.ngatu692.com.
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) meets the 3rd Monday of each month at various area restaurants. For information call John at 706-896-2430 or visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridge-mountains.
Alcoholics Anonymous: 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.
Mothers of Preschoolers meets the third Thursday of each month at First Baptist Church of Blairsville from 6 - 8 p.m. Call the church at 706-745-2469.
Chatuge Regional Hospital Auxiliary on the 3rd Monday of each month, except the months of July, October and December, in the hospital cafeteria at 1:30 p.m.
Mountain Magic Table Tennis Club meets 3 p.m. Thursdays at Pine Log Baptist Church Fellowship Hall in Brasstown. Ping Pong players welcome. Call Jerry (828) 837-7658.
The Humane Society Mountain Shelter Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at Cadence Bank in Blairsville.

The Towns County Alzheimer's Support Group meets the first Tuesday of each month at 1:30 PM in the Family Life Center of McConnell Memorial Baptist Church. For more info call Carol at 706-896-6407.
The Appalachian Shrine Club meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM at the Allegheny Lodge in Blairsville. For more info call William 706-994-6177.
Georgia Mountain Writers Club meets at Cadence Bank the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 10 AM.
GMREC Garden Tours every Monday 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Shooting Creek Basket Weavers meets the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 10 a.m. at the Shooting Creek Fire Hall Community Center. For more info www.shootingcreek-basketweavers.com.
Friendship Community Club meets the 3rd Thursday of the month at 6 PM at Clubhouse, 1625 Hwy. 76, 706-896-3637.
Goldwing Road Riders meets the 3rd Saturday of each month at Daniel's Steakhouse in Hiawassee. We eat at 11 and meeting begins at 12.
Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meets every Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m. at the Red Cross building (up the hill from the chamber office on Jack Dayton Circle).
Caregiver support group meets 2nd Tuesday of each month, 3 p.m. at Brasstown Manor, located at 108 Church St., Hiawassee. Call 706-896-4285 for more info.
Enchanted Valley Square Dance Club. Dances 2nd & 4th Fridays at Towns Co. Rec. Ctr. from 7-9 PM. \$5/person to dance. Free to watch.
Brasstown Woodturners Guild meets 1st Saturday of month at 9:30 AM in HHS shop. For more info call J. C. at 706-896-5711.
VFW Post #7807 will be hosting a fish fry they 2nd & 4th Fridays of each month April - October. \$9. all you can eat from 4:30 - 7 PM.
Mountain Amateur Radio Club (MARC) meets 6:30 PM the 1st Monday of month at 1298 Jack Dayton Cir. (next to EMS), Hiawassee. For info call Al 706-896-9614 after 6 PM.

Towns County Herald

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