

# Towns County Herald

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## Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Rain	63 43
Fri: Clouds	68 44
Sat: Sunny	74 50
Sun: Sunny	78 55
Mon: Clouds	80 57
Tue: Rain	80 59
Wed: Clouds	80 59



Upstream Elevation Predicted 04/29/2015	
Lake Chatuge	1,924.16
Lake Nottely	1,772.88
Blue Ridge	1,686.94

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BRMEMC

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TCHS

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## Fire claims the life of an elderly Towns woman

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

An early morning fire on Gum Log Road on Sunday claimed the life of an elderly Towns County woman, Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland said.

Lillian Powell, 78, died early Sunday morning, April 26, in a fire that destroyed her home on Gum Log Road.

The State Fire Marshal's Office is now in charge of the investigation to determine the exact cause of the blaze that claimed the life of Powell.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation, but foul play is not suspected, according to Copeland.

Towns County 911 Dispatch received a call from one of Powell's neighbors early



A bouquet of flowers in memory of 78-year-old Lillian Powell was left outside the remnants of her destroyed home on Monday. Powell died in the Sunday morning blaze. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Sunday morning, and dispatch alerted Towns County Fire & Rescue at 1:39 a.m. of the structure fire and possible entrapment of its owner.

"Engine 2, Tanker 2 and Tanker 1 responded to the

call," said Chief Copeland. "Upon arrival, we found a single-wide mobile home fully involved. First reports stated it was already on the ground, and

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## Confederate soldiers remembered

By Mason Mitcham  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Blairsville - On Saturday, April 25, the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Daughters of the Confederacy celebrated Confederate Memorial Day at Veteran's Memorial Park. After leading the pledge and the salute of the Georgia flag, Commander Harold Levi read the charge of Lt. Gen. Stephen Dill Lee.

"To you, Sons of Confederate Veterans we will commit the vindication of the Cause for which we fought," the charge reads. "To your Strength will be given the Defense of the Confederate Soldier's good name, the Guardianship of his history, the emulation of his virtues, the perpetuation of these principles which you also cherish."



Members of the Daughters of the Confederacy place a wreath during Saturday's Confederate Memorial Day ceremonies. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Compatriot Scott Ledford spoke about what that charge means and how best to carry it forward in 2015 rather than in 1867.

"In order to teach future generations

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## TCHS juniors page at Gold Dome

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Three Towns County High School students traveled to the state capitol building in March to serve as pages to State Rep. Stephen Allison during the latest legislative session of the Georgia General Assembly.

Juniors Adam Penland, Jake Pylrik and Sterling Hedden went with Towns County Middle School Principal David Turner, who spent much of his time at the State Capitol in his previous role as the state's Career, Technical and Agricultural Education director.

"We went for an educational experience," said Penland. "It was a really fun experience getting to see firsthand how everything works down



there. You have to be at least 12 years old to be a page. They'll say you're paging for Stephen Allison - well, what a page does is send notes around the senate, and although we may be paging for Stephen Allison, we

worked for the whole House in the state of Georgia."

The Page Program allows students to interact with constituents in delivering mes-

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## Van Vliet accepts honor for his father

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

In February 1943, German soldiers captured U.S. Army Lt. Col. John Van Vliet Jr. after he commanded an infantry battalion in the invasion of North Africa and the subsequent battles near Kasserine Pass in Tunisia.

Several months into being a prisoner of war, the Germans took Van Vliet and fellow POW Army Capt. Don Stewart, against their will, to be witnesses to the uncovering of the gravesites of thousands of Polish officers.

"We have to go back to the start of World War II, where Germany invades Poland in 1939," said John Van Vliet III, Van Vliet Jr.'s son. "Shortly after that, Russia, the Soviet Union, invades Poland from the east, also in 1939. The Russians wind up capturing about 450,000 Polish military folks in their part of the conquest of Poland. Roughly 25,000 of those 450,000 are officers. The communist soviet system doesn't think much of officers and people of successful entrepreneurial or professional status, and so the Russians ordered that those officers be killed."

Later in the war, the Germans attacked the Russians and conquered the area including the Katyn Forest, which is where the killings of the Polish officers took place.

Some of the locals pointed the Germans in the direction of the mass graves, and when they began finding bodies in the ground, the Germans realized



POW U.S. Army Lt. Col. John Van Vliet Jr., third from left and in the background, views an examination of a Polish officer's remains by a Nazi physician at the Katyn Forest in 1943.

that no one was going to believe that they had not committed the massacre.

Van Vliet and Stewart, who were being held captive in a POW camp in nearby Poland, and because they were U.S. Army officers, were considered ideal candidates to serve as witnesses to the uncovering of these bodies and the facts that would be found.

"Dad and Capt. Stewart wanted no part of that," said Van Vliet III. "They thought it was going to be Nazi propaganda, but they were ordered to go, and so dad and Capt. Stewart watch as the Germans uncover these bodies, go through the pockets of the uniforms and find letters, diaries, magazines, notes - anything with a date on it. And the Germans are busy showing that there are no dates after spring 1940."

Here is where Van Vliet and Stewart apply their knowledge as POWs to come to a conclusion of who actually

killed these Polish officers in 1940.

"Dad and Don Stewart thought the Germans were perfectly capable of faking that, but they had both been POWs long enough to be able to judge how long someone had been in captivity by the condition of his uniform, particularly his boots and shoes," said Van Vliet III. "And these bodies had cavalry boots and other boots and shoes that showed very, very little wear."

"And what that meant is that the condition of the uniforms confirmed the evidence of papers and dates, and so dad and Don Stewart came to the independent conclusion that, yes, the Polish officers were killed during the period of time when that territory was under Russian control, and so it was the Russians who did it."

The Germans asked the men to make statements on

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## Note from Commissioner Kendall

The Towns County Public Safety departments will be conducting an Emergency Training Session in Lake Forest Estates on Ramey Mountain on May 2, starting at 9 a.m.

There will be a lot of emergency vehicles, sirens, and lights in this area.

This is only a drill and should not cause alarm or concern.

## Benson to lead Indians

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education voted in its regular meeting on Monday, April 20, to hire Rob Benson of East Paulding High School as the new Indian head coach for high school boys basketball to start the 2015-2016 school year.

"I couldn't be more excited about the opportunity to coach basketball," said Coach Benson. "I love this gym, I love this setup, this arena seating. I'm looking forward to packing this place in."

Benson, a Georgia native and University of Georgia graduate, has spent the last 12 of his 18 years at East Paulding as head coach of the boys basketball program, where he has taught AP math courses as well. He coached and taught at



Rob Benson

Wheeler and North Gwinnett high schools prior to that.

"I'll bring a lot of pace, because in that area you're going to have to play a lot of up-tempo," said Coach Benson. "We'll bring hard work, and I just talked with the young men about that. We expect them to

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## Kendall: 'county withdraws from Resource Management Authority'

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall informed the community that the county is withdrawing from the North Georgia Resource Management Authority, or NGRMA, saving taxpayers \$21,912.

He made the announcement during the April County Commission meeting.

The authority was established in 1994 with four counties - Towns, Union, Lumpkin and Banks - and has been responsible for organizing the sale of recyclables collected at the Towns County Transfer Station.

Each of the four counties involved has been responsible for paying an annual membership fee of \$21,912.

"Towns County participates in a variety of regional programs with surrounding counties, i.e. Enotah Judicial Circuit (court system) and Georgia Mountain Regional Commission," said Commissioner Kendall. "The charges for these programs are distributed to the participating counties on a per capita basis."

"For example, the court system budget is shared between Towns, Union, White and Lumpkin County. Lumpkin County is responsible for approximately 34 percent of the



Commissioner Bill Kendall

budget, while Towns County is responsible for about 12 percent, based on the population of each county."

The NGRMA, however, charges each county involved the same fee, regardless of the number of residents actually being served.

"Lumpkin County, with a 2014 population of 37,248, is paying 70 cents per person, while Towns County, with a 2014 population of 10,862, is paying \$2.02 per person," said Commissioner Kendall, who disagreed with the pay structure and asked that it be changed to a per capita basis in order to make the arrangement more equitable for Towns taxpayers.

The NGRMA board denied Commissioner Kendall's request to bring the fee more

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## Towns Library Board meets

By Mason Mitcham  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Towns County Library held its quarterly board meeting on Tuesday, April 21. Debbie Phillips, the branch manager, went through the statistics and financial report, while new Mountain Regional Library Director Vince Stone gave the Director's Report.

After handing out statistical and financial spreadsheet reports, Phillips voiced some concerns about the quality of reports that the library's Evergreen Open Source Library Software was generating. "We're getting these ugly reports that do not match," she said. "So at best, for circulation, this is not what I would call one hundred percent accurate."

It's been a recurring problem with Evergreen that software malfunction leads to inaccurate reports. "We have told Evergreen about this for a long time, and it seems like they do lots of updates to other things, but they do not work on their reports a whole lot. So you will notice that there are some gaps," Phillips said.

Other unusual patterns in the reports are due to changes in the library. "You will notice that on our videos, there is a big percentage in the negative," said Phillips. "That is because we are phasing out our VHS."

In an age of DVD's and streaming movies on the internet, the only surprise is that the library has continued to stock VHS tapes as long as they have.



Vince Stone

but I hesitated to do it, and I've waited this long, because we've still got quite a bit of circulation. There still are some people who have VCRs, believe it or not, and do not have DVD players. So they are still being used quite a bit."

On the bright side, library attendance is up by 53 percent this quarter. That's even more unexpected considering the library has been closed 16 times, not counting weekends. "This past Monday, after we were closed for 10 day, we had 326 people that day," said Phillips. "We were hopping. We've had more and more people coming in. Which is great, it's what we want."

After Phillips gave her reports, Director Stone, who is

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