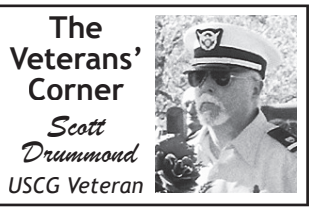


DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Announcements and Events of Vital Importance

Town Hall meeting on Agent Orange to be held in Dahlonega: The Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 970 will be hosting a town hall meeting and educational seminar with speakers from around the country on the latest information on Agent Orange. Vietnam Veterans, as well as their children and grandchildren, are encouraged to attend this free seminar from 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday, May 14 in the Hoag Auditorium on the University of North Georgia Dahlonega campus.



According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. military sprayed millions of gallons of Agent Orange and other herbicides on trees and vegetation during the Vietnam War. It was later revealed to cause serious health issues to those who were exposed to it and their descendants.

The seminar will make attendees aware of what damages and conditions are covered by the VA and what benefits may be available to affected vets and their affected dependents. At this meeting, you will also learn how to file claims for yourself and covered family members.

In addition to identifying conditions now covered by the VA, the discussion will include how we can assist current efforts to support bills in Congress that will advance research on this important issue. The Vietnam War ended in 1975, but the VA did not recognize any Agent Orange effects until the 1990s.

If you have questions, please feel free to call Bill Martin at (706) 809-2573 or Fred Weil at (770) 313-4328. The Hoag Auditorium is located at 82 College Circle, Dahlonega.

Memorial Day is May 30th. The program will begin sharply at 11 a.m. We have a wonderful Veterans Memorial Park, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Bill Kendall, our outgoing Towns County Commissioner. Please be with us on that day for a wonderful tribute to those who served us all and have gone on before us. Those many who gave their lives for all of us are very special souls indeed. For many of us every day is Memorial Day!

Our volunteers from VFW post 7807, American Legion post 23 and Auxiliaries will be doing our park cleanup on Saturday, May 28th. Please come and help, bring trimmers, weed-eaters, gloves, rakes, mowers or what have you. There is always a wonderful family spirit here on these cleanup missions and sometimes it's hard to tell if the fellowship outweighs the final goal of a beautiful Veterans Memorial Park.

Saturday May 7, from 3 PM - 5 PM was our first "open house" for those who wish to have their deceased and beloved Veterans' names inscribed upon our new Memorial Wall at Veterans Park. Please see the full notice, for details, posted in TCH. Next visit will be June 4. Our Memorial Wall Committee chaired by hard working and dedicated US Navy Veteran Billie Krueger, will be there for you every first Saturday until October, when we will submit those names to be inscribed for our Veterans Day celebration.

Semper Paratus

The Truth Hiding in Plain Sight

Sometimes the truth hides in plain sight, disguised as a joke, and so it was that when I flipped on the television this morning with my morning coffee, I was laughing at Jethro Bodine bragging about his eighth grade education when I remembered an article I had read recently about adult literacy.

Since 1935 when the first literacy surveys were done on a national scale, Americans have consistently read at about an eighth to ninth grade level. (Newspapers, you will be happy to know, are usually written at about an eleventh grade level, which is not to say that they are always comprehended as such.)

Many of us who read (and write for) newspapers are approaching an age where memories of the eighth grade begin to melt around the edges like a snow cone in July, losing form if not flavor. My own work in outdoor experiential education allowed me a refresher course in all things eighth grade, however, and what I observed (as well as what I remember from my own experience) suggests an interesting if sometimes complicated time of life. Eighth graders, in my estimation, possess all the intellectual faculties of an adult, but they are lacking the emotional intelligence that comes from life experience. They can be delightful to work with when their minds are applied to the untarnished ideals of youth. However, when they turn their attention to the dark side they can be intensely conniving, gossipy and cruel. (Picture a kitten playing with a moth.)

I have no scientific basis for this opinion, but could it be that our apparent tendency, as a least common denominator, to communicate and perhaps comprehend at an eighth grade level, might explain much of what we see in politics today, from the local Sheriff's race to the national elections? "I'm just sayin'." (an expression I picked up working with eighth graders.)

The literacy surveys only go back as far as 1935, but juvenile manure slinging can be found in politics as far back into history as you might care to go. Today, however, it is amplified by the ubiquitous presence of social media and real time news and commentary so it seems worse to those of us who came of age before the Internet. Manure slinging is now also well funded by super PACS and refined by science, but what does it say about our political system that we seem less capable of intelligently discussing issues every year? How is our history being altered by the fact that the candidates which prevail are the ones to whom the least amount of manure is sticking in plain sight at the end of the election?

It is challenging, when we are attached to our party or our candidate with the same kinds of raw emotional bindings that once tied us to our schools' sports teams, but be honest: Don't Hillary's lies and Donald's bluster remind you of those playground antics of years gone by? Are we doing any better in our local elections?

USDA announces Rural Schools Payments

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced recently the investment of more than \$272 million that will go to 41 states and Puerto Rico this year in support of local schools, roads and forests through the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS). The SRS is administered by the U.S. Forest Service.

"The Secure Rural Schools program has allowed USDA to work directly with community leaders to meet rural communities' unique education, transportation, and conservation needs," said Secretary Vilsack. "This support is part of the Administration's ongoing commitment help rural communities remain self-sustaining and prosperous." The payments from the Forest Service may be used to support public schools and roads; to help maintain and improve the health of forests; and for other county needs like implementation of "Firewise Communities" projects, development of community wildfire protection plans and reimbursements for emergency services on national forests.

Forest projects are reviewed and recommended by resource advisory committees made up of local residents working together to improve the environment and to help provide jobs in rural communities. "I'm extremely pleased that the Forest Service is once again participating in this essential program," said U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. "As we've seen repeatedly in past years, the Secure Rural School program not only provides funding for schools and roads, but also provides funding for conservation projects recommended by the collaborative Resource Advisory Committees."

The Secure Rural Schools local resource advisory committees (RACs) provide the public with opportunities to collaborate on the management of national forests and grasslands. This year almost \$27 million of the SRS funding will be used to complete conservation projects on federal lands proposed by the local RACs. SRS increases educational opportunities and contributes to local economies through the jobs for implementation of local projects and the increased recreational opportunities that those projects support.

In South Carolina, for example, SRS funding helped a community repair a popular horse trail on the Francis Marion National Forest with the additional benefit of improving and protecting the integrity of nearby waterways. In Clearwater County, ID, the community is converting a fuel oil boiler system at the Pierce Community Center to use woody biomass culled from nearby State and federal forestlands. Each state's payment amount is determined by a number of factors set in the law, including the number of counties electing to share in that State's payment. A breakdown of funding by state and county is available on the U.S. Forest Service website.

The mission of the Forest Service, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. Public lands the Forest Service manages contribute more than \$13 billion to the economy each year through visitor spending alone. Those same lands provide 20 percent of the Nation's clean water supply, a value estimated at \$7.2 billion per year. The agency has either a direct or indirect role in stewardship of about 80 percent of the 850 million forested acres within the U.S., of which 100 million acres are urban forests where most Americans live.

Towns County has for several years received funds from the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS) Title III. Over the past few years our very successful Firewise program has used these Title III funds to help educate our citizens about the risks of wildfire in and around the communities here in the North Georgia Mountains.

For more information on Title III funds or any of our wildfire education programs, contact Frank Riley @ info.ccrd@gmail.com.

The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

Pruning ornamentals

Azaleas and other flowering ornamentals are an integral part of the Georgia landscape from the flats of the coastal plain all the way to our mountains. Currently, we can see bright patches of orange and purple dotting the mountainsides as our native azaleas and rhododendrons bloom. Depending on the varieties of cultivated ornamentals in your own yard, your own plants may be starting to bloom as well. By tending to your flowering plants at the appropriate time, you can ensure a successful and colorful bloom year after year.

Because azaleas are spring blooming plants for the most part, they set their buds for the following year in mid-late summer. This means that in order to maintain the parts of the plant that will flower next year, we have to prune ornamentals that bloom in spring right after they lose their flowers. If they are pruned in the fall or winter, the bloom-forming buds may be accidentally removed and the normally colorful and vibrant azaleas will have fewer blooms.

This rule of thumb is good for most other spring blooming plants as well. Early bloomers such as bigleaf hydrangeas, redbuds, forsythia, clematis, beautybush and numerous others should be pruned after they have finished flowering to prevent them from becoming too sprawling. Pruning these plants before late summer ensures proper maintenance without harming newly formed buds. However, because many ornamentals have late blooming varieties, one pruning time is not necessarily appropriate for all plants of the same type. Generally, if a plant blooms before May, it is safe to prune just after flowering. If it flowers after May, then it should be pruned just before the start of its spring growth. Two exceptions to this rule are late blooming azaleas and oakleaf hydrangeas because even though they bloom in the summer, they still form buds in the previous year so pruning in the spring before bloom will remove viable buds.

When pruning flowering or shade trees, always try to minimize the bleeding of sap from the tree. Maple, birch, willow, plum and cherry trees all have the potential to produce large amounts of sap, and while it is not harmful, it can be unsightly. To reduce the amount of bleeding from your tree, prune large branches in warmer weather when the leaves are mature. The leaves will have taken up the majority of the sap as they grow, leaving less available to bleed out upon pruning.

Pruning is also important for disease management. Many ornamental plants are prone to fungal diseases. If you notice a fungal growth or a gall on your plant, prune out the affected portion as soon as possible. Diseased portions of plants may be bagged and immediately brought to your local extension office for diagnosis. Without knowing what is attacking your plant, it can be nearly impossible to successfully treat. However, by identifying the disease, exploring treatment options, and proactively pruning your plants, you can keep your ornamentals in great condition year after year! If you would like a publication on ornamental pruning or disease management, contact your local extension office.



Letters to The Editor

Letter to the Editor:

The Towns County Board of Elections and Registration recently held a public hearing to discuss Sheriff Clinton's qualifications affidavit. This hearing was the result of a challenge brought by Linda Curtis who is seeking the post of Sheriff as an independent candidate. The challenge was Clinton provided false information on that affidavit. To be more accurate, Sheriff Clinton did not disclose important facts on the affidavit and that is false information by exclusion. The missing information was not openly discussed, only the fact that the qualification affidavit was false was under consideration.

There was standard prancing and dancing around the issues, timing, notifications, shuffling of papers and he said, she said type dialog.

After great due diligence, The Board Legal Council discovered an ordinance that provided a seated Sheriff, that has been in office for two years prior to running for re-election, may not have to file a qualification affidavit "for that election. That being said, the Board declared they did not have any reason to do anything further. Any other action would be advised to seek out the Office of District Attorney.

That does leave the question of how the qualification affidavit was filed in Clinton's first run for office in 2007 and then again in 2012.

This was a public hearing, but not open to the public to participate.

There are several remarkable facts that came out of this hearing: 1. The Elections Board failed to take any punitive action based on a technicality. That is why they exist. Yes, according to the very special ordinance, it was legal. Probably not in the best interest of the community. 2. The "missing" information was not discussed, especially when it concerns the qualifications of the highest law officer in the county. You probably would not find a framed copy of that information hanging on the wall in Mr. Clinton's office. 3. Mr. Clinton was not afforded an opportunity to speak. 4 Ditto Ms. Curtis.

Candidates for office should all have to meet the same standards in order to run for office. That begs the question: What are the standards? Two candidates for higher offices in the County have stated "Background checks are not necessary."

My question is: "What are you hiding?"

Hiawassee Day Care workers are required to have a background check. Even a member of our Hiawassee Master Gardeners Club get a background check.

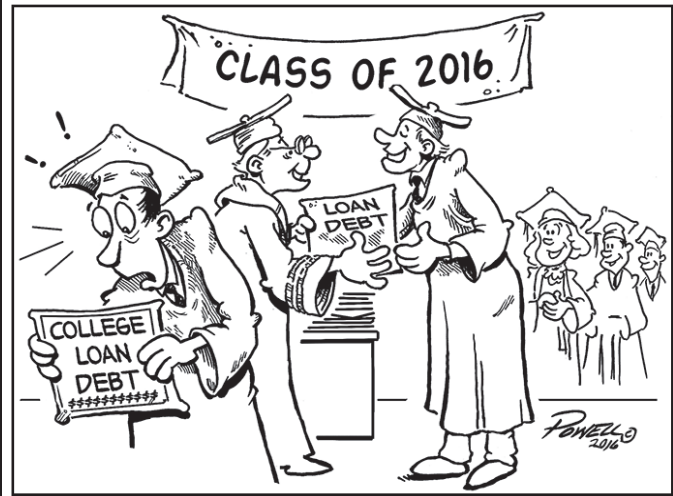
I spent three years in the Army as a Special Agent conducting background investigations for people requiring security clearances. Background checks will clear you or catch you. If they "catch you" you have the opportunity to explain and clear yourself. At least, we the taxpaying public, will know who and what you are.

We need to know if a public official can be trusted with our health, safety, property, money and wellbeing.

Background checks should be mandatory for any public office.

Go vote, it's important! Please choose carefully.

*John L. Holmes
Taxpayer, City & County
Property Owner
Hiawassee Resident*



Towns County Community Calendar

Bridge Players	Every Monday: Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Free GED prep.	Every Tuesday: Old Rec. Center	4 pm
SMART Recovery	Every Wednesday Red Cross Building	7 pm
Free GED prep.	Every Thursday: Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Bridge Players	Every Friday: Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Every Sunday: Red Cross Building	7 pm
Chamber Board	Second Monday of each month: 1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
Historical Society	Old Rec. Center	5:30 pm
Mtn. Comp. Users	www.mtcug.org	6 pm
Planning Comm.	Courthouse	7 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoy Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
Caregiver support	Second Tuesday of each month: Brasstown Manor	3 pm
Arts & Crafts Guild	Calvary Alliance Chapel	6 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Mtn. Coin Club	N. GA Tech	6 pm
Basket Weavers	Second Wednesday of each month: SC Fire Hall	10 am
Board of Elections	Old Rock Jail	4 pm
Mtn. Comm. Seniors	Second Thursday of each month: Senior Center	1 pm
Democratic Party	Civic Center	5 pm
Square Dance Club	Second Friday of each month: Rec. Center	7 pm
Hospital Auxiliary	Third Monday of each month: Cafeteria	1:30 pm
Water Board	Water Office	6 pm
YH Plan Comm.	Third Tuesday of each month: YH City Hall	5 pm
Quilting Bee	Third Wednesday of each month: McConnell Church	10 am
MOAA	Call Jack @ 828-321-2896	
Co. Comm. Mtg	Third Thursday of each month: Courthouse	5:30 pm
Friendship Comm.	Clubhouse	6 pm
Goldwing Riders	Third Saturday of each month: Daniel's Restaurant	11 am
Red Cross DAT	Fourth Monday of each month: 1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	5:30 pm
Lions Club	Fourth Tuesday of each month: Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Republican Party	Fourth Thursday of each month: New Senior Ctr.	6:30 pm

Towns County Herald

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