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Heroic Iwo Jima Veterans honored in 74th Anniversary Celebration

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – One hundred and sixty-seven people gathered at Foster Park in Towns County on Feb. 18 to honor the nearly 7,000 Americans who lost their lives during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

Now in its ninth year, the annual event marked the 74th anniversary of the battle, which took place between Feb. 19 and March 26 in 1945.

Four area Iwo Jima Veterans attended the anniversary ceremony at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center inside Foster Park, which is home to a one-of-a-kind Iwo Jima Memorial commemorating the famous flag-raising by U.S. Marines atop Mount Suribachi.

U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Clarence E. “Bud” Johnson of Hiawassee, U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Phil Gamache of Blairsville; U.S.

Navy Fire Controlman 3rd Class Todd Kimsley of Hiawassee; and U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Joseph Tedder of Gastonia, all Iwo Jima Veterans, were honored that Monday.

Iwo Jima Veterans recognized posthumously were U.S. Marine Jack Rhodes of Murphy, North Carolina; Leon West of Hiawassee, who served in the Navy; and Jack Payne Sr. of Hayesville, North Carolina, also of the Navy.

Veterans from far and wide attended the ceremony, some even driving several hundred miles to be there.

The U.S. Marine Corps League Unico Detachment #783 posted the colors with assistance from U.S. Coast Guard Veteran Scott Drummond, which was immediately followed by a beautiful rendition of “The Star-Spangled Banner” as performed by Towns County High School student Summer Rahn.

Retired U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Raul “Art”

Sifuentes served as the honored guest speaker for the event. Sifuentes, an aviator, is currently the executive director of the Iwo Jima Association of America, and he came all the way from Quantico, Virginia.

“I can’t tell you how honored I am to be here on behalf of the Iwo Jima Association of America,” said Sifuentes. “I’ve never been to this part of the country, and I’ve been all over the world. It’s the most beautiful place I’ve ever seen.”

“And you add the patriotism and the folks that I’m talking to today – I’m just absolutely blown away. It’s a real pleasure, but even more so, it’s an honor to be here.”

Sifuentes went on to describe the little-known sacrifices surrounding the Battle of Iwo Jima, as the Japanese had sunk many ships making their way to the island, killing a great number of U.S. Navy sailors.

And the U.S. Army, which conducted a sweep of

the island following the month-long battle that was fought by U.S. Marines, lost many men to ambushes by Japanese soldiers holed up in caves.

“We cannot let people forget our history and what it cost to get to where we are today,” said Sifuentes. “These ‘giants’ paid a hell of a price, and we have to carry that on. We cannot let the youth of our country forget Iwo Jima – the price and the memorialization (of that event in our history).”

“That we have to be really careful, because you can see some folks (today) that are trying to erase part of our history, and we can’t go back to that. War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decaying... state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse.”

“The man who has nothing for which he is willing to fight for, nothing which he cares more about than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature who has no chance



Raul “Art” Sifuentes of the Iwo Jima Association of America with Iwo Jima Veteran Joseph Tedder on Feb. 18 at Foster’s Park.

Photo by Mark Smith

of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.”

In closing, Sifuentes thanked those in attendance for the opportunity to be with them on such an important occasion

of remembrance.

“I am humbled and honored to be here,” said Sifuentes. “Semper Fidelis. God bless you, and have a safe

See Iwo Jima, Page 8A

Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition applies for \$4,600 grant

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Michael Courey, Director of the Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition, announced at the monthly Coalition meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 19, that he has submitted paperwork for a Georgia Firewise USA Community Hazard Mitigation Grant.

Courey said the grant request is in the amount of \$4,600.

Of that amount, \$2,600 would be earmarked for equipment such as pole saws, heavy duty water hoses, wheelbarrows, brush cutters and the like – equipment that would be held by the Coalition and loaned out to communities as needed for fire hazard mitigation.

The other \$2,000 would be dedicated to the community of Tate City, an extremely remote community with no cellphone service, only one 911 emergency phone located at the town center, and a single dirt road that most fire apparatus, like tankers, cannot navigate.



Ann Atchison and Michael Courey of the Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition.

Photo by Mark Smith

The money would go for clearing and widening some intersections, clearing brush from around buildings and other fire hazard mitigation projects for that community.

In other Firewise news, there is some confusion regarding the renewals of Firewise statuses of

communities. Until recently, renewals were annual. Firewise USA announced last year that the renewals would be biennial now.

However, Courey said that when he received the renewal for his community

See Fire Wise, Page 8A

Local students steal the show at monthly commission meeting



Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw welcomed TCHS students Emily Williams and Summer Rahn to his Feb. 19 regular monthly meeting.

Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County High School students Emily Williams and Summer Rahn brightened up a dreary, rainy evening at Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw’s monthly meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 19.

Williams, a senior and member of the Junior Board of Government Officials, recited a speech she plans to deliver in the upcoming Future Business Leaders of America competition at her school. Her speech was about the goals of FBLA.

Rahn, a sophomore, sang a lovely solo rendition of “God Bless America.” Rahn also performed the national anthem the day before at the commemorative Iwo Jima Memorial event at Foster Park.

Both Williams and Rahn were poised and confident in their respective deliveries.

Haley Burch, director of Conference and Event Services for Young Harris College and a member of the Towns County Convention and Visitors Bureau Board, presented the new CVB logo.

Burch said that, as a

staff member at Young Harris College, she was able to access students in the new graphic design program at the college, specifically, a class on branding.

“We had, through this class, 46 different logos to choose from,” said Burch, adding that it was very difficult to pick only one out of 46 submissions.

Burch then introduced Shelby Lawrence, the Young Harris student who created the logo that was chosen, saying that the small prize purse that Lawrence won was very modest

See Students, Page 8A

High School Fishing Team places Fourth at Lake Seminole

By News Special
Towns County Herald

BAINBRIDGE – On Jan. 16, the Towns County High School Fishing Team traveled 330 miles to compete at Lake Seminole in Bainbridge.

Fishing Team partners Mitchell Grimsley and Adrian Hooper placed fourth out of 123 contenders at the Georgia B.A.S.S. Nation High School fishing tournament.

Mitchell and Adrian weighed five fish totaling 16.4 pounds. The winning weight was five fish for 18.31 pounds.

This Fourth Place finish is an incredible achievement for the team, representing the second time the team has



Mitchell Grimsley and Adrian Hooper of the Towns County High School Fishing Team with their prize-winning haul at the Georgia BASS Nation High School Fishing Tournament earlier this year.

TCSO, Hiawassee PD work together to arrest two drug suspects

By News Special
Towns County Herald

On Wednesday, Feb. 20, a Hiawassee Police Officer stopped a white Chevrolet pickup on US 76 within the city limits of Hiawassee.

The city officer requested the assistance of a Towns County Sheriff’s Office investigator.

Upon the completion of the initial investigation by the officers involved, a quantity of illegal drugs and firearms were discovered in the vehicle.

Towns County Sheriff’s See Drugs, Page 8A



Timothy Jeffery McCoy



Jake Scott Davies

Local man dies in two-car collision after driving on wrong side of road

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

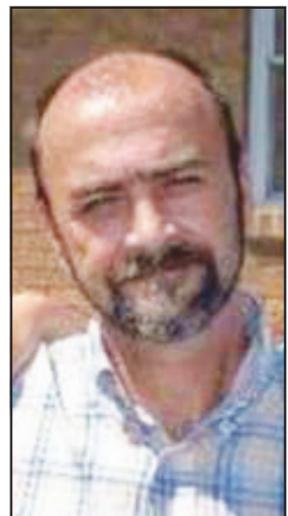
Terry Silvers of Hiawassee was driving the wrong way up NC-69 in Hayesville when his truck collided head on with another vehicle on Saturday, Feb. 23, according to the North Carolina State Highway Patrol.

Silvers, 52, died at the scene, according to Highway Patrol.

He had been heading north in the southbound lane of NC-69 with a truckload of firewood when, shortly after 7 p.m., he crashed into a 2017 Honda Accord that was carrying a local woman and juvenile, according to Highway Patrol.

The woman and child survived the crash and were transported to a hospital with non-life threatening injuries, according to Highway Patrol.

Some of the firewood Silvers was hauling came through the back window of his truck on impact, contributing to Silvers’ death, according to



Terry Silvers

Highway Patrol.

His rate of speed was determined to be about 50 mph, and NC State Troopers found that only the Honda attempted to brake prior to the crash, according to Highway Patrol.

Driving conditions were

at the time, though the road was slightly damp from rain earlier in the day, according to Highway Patrol.

The NC State Highway Patrol has sent for a series of toxicology tests on Silvers, and the results should be available sometime in the next month, according to Highway Patrol.

NC State Troopers Chris Scerri and Robbie Ellison worked the accident, alongside Highway Patrol 1st Sgt. Chris Wood.

The Clay County NC Sheriff’s Office, North Carolina Department of Transportation, Clay County EMS, and Fire & Rescue all assisted the Highway Patrol in securing the scene, according to Highway Patrol.

“Everybody stayed down there for quite a while,” said Wood. “We had the road shut down, and they helped us re-route traffic. Like it always is over there, it was a team effort, so we really appreciate that, too.”

Added Wood, “The family was all notified that evening and was at the scene.”

2 Sections 16 Pages
Lake Levels
Blue Ridge 1,687.41
Chatuge 1,925.01
Nottely 1,769.89

Inside	
Arrests	2A
Chamber	7A
Church	4B
Classifieds	6B
Opinion	4A
Legals	6B
Obits	5B
Sports	2B

SPORTS
BASEBALL
Feb 27 vs. Lincoln Co 4:30 PM
Mar 2 vs. Riverdale 1 PM
SOCCER
Mar 1 @ N. Murray 5:30 & 7:30

Ninth District Opportunity Heating Assistance Funds
See page 7A

Hiawasse Customer Appreciation Day
See page 7A

Head Start/Pre-K Registration March 1
See page 3A