

# Towns County Herald

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## In 3-2 vote, elections board closes Macedonia precinct

By Lily Avery  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Elections voted on Wednesday, April 5, to close the Macedonia voting precinct and leave the three remaining precincts intact – Young Harris, Hiawassee and Tate City.

In a previous board meeting in February, all board members voted unanimously to consolidate the four precincts into one, which would have resulted in voters throughout the county casting ballots in Hiawassee at the Towns County Civic Center in future elections.

However, after a public hearing held in March for community members to voice opinions concerning the matter, board members Barbara Shook and Loretta Youngblood retracted their support for consolidation, leading to a re-discussion of

the idea. During the meeting on Wednesday, Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw and several voters from Tate City attended to further express their opposition to consolidation.

Commissioner Bradshaw spoke with the board on behalf of Towns County residents, explaining that the consolidation would prevent many residents from voting due to a considerably longer commute for some.

Additionally, Commissioner Bradshaw added that, if funds were the board's primary reason for the consolidation, the county would ensure that the elections office continued to be properly funded.

"If we want to get to the issue of money, Mr. Kendall has always supplied this office with what it needs to conduct its business," said Commissioner Bradshaw. "As commissioner,

I will tell you this, if we leave the precincts the way they are, I know it will cost more money. There are some things that cost more money that we need to provide. There are certain things that you don't cut corners on.

"Now, I understand the other side. You can sit here and talk about what it would cost, how much easier it would be, how much it would save on manpower and dollar figures. It sounds good, but we need to think about what it really affects.

"We have men and women who have died for this country for the right to vote. I know you're not taking it away, but when you start making it harder for people to vote, then it is taking it away. I'm asking you to revisit the subject and the implications that it has."

While finances played a large role in the board's consideration of a consolidation,



Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw addressing the Board of Elections and Registration on Wednesday, April 5, voicing his opposition to the precinct consolidation.

it was not the only concern.

The board shared its frustrations over a serious lack of consistent and dedicated poll workers for the various precincts, and expressed concerns over their ability

to train poll workers properly

before elections given the lack of volunteers in recent elections, something that could open the precincts up to making mistakes, and mistakes could potentially mean investigations

from the state.

By consolidating all precincts into Hiawassee, these problems would have been less of a concern, and several board members felt they would have

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## Georgia 515 right of way acquisitions to start this summer

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – The Georgia Department of Transportation is beginning its right of way acquisition process for the Georgia 515 widening and relocation project this summer, with construction anticipated to begin in 2020.

And while the department has not yet finalized a right of way plan, GDOT anticipates requiring about 230 parcels of land along the 8.5-mile stretch of GA 515 between Blairsville and Young Harris, which will be widened to four lanes.

Many businesses and buildings inhabit parcels that will need to be acquired by GDOT for the project, including the Food Heaven Convenience Store in Union

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Towns County residents checking out the plans to widen and relocate Georgia 515 from Blairsville to Young Harris

## Clint Black cancels concert last minute due to the flu

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Get well soon, Clint. Country Music icon Clint Black canceled his Friday, April 7, concert at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds due to a weeklong bout of the flu.

More than 1,500 fans who purchased tickets are eligible for either a refund or exchange of their ticket. Exchanges are good for another show at Anderson Music Hall this year, excluding Hank Williams Jr., who will be performing at The Hall on Sept. 2.

Black first reported his illness on April 2, when he announced he would have to reschedule a show in Greeneville, Tennessee.

"Hey Greeneville, I hate to deliver bad news, but I am under the weather and would not want to deliver any less



Clint Black, Country Music Icon. Photo/Clint Black Instagram

than 100 percent on the stage tonight," wrote Black on his website. "So, we are moving the concert back one week to Sunday, April 9, 2017, and can't wait to see you all then."

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## Mathis readies county for update to Hazard Mitigation Plan

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

When Rickey Mathis became full-time EMA director in February, he hit the ground running.

Since that time, he has helped the county to acquire a low cost, high yield disaster mitigation program called ORION to help first responders thoroughly and accurately populate paperwork related to disaster damage.

Mathis has also begun the process of getting the county's Hazard Mitigation Plan updated, a process required by the federal government every five years.

That kickoff meeting



First responders of every stripe attended the Towns County Hazard Mitigation Planning kickoff meeting on Wednesday, March 29

## Student housing facility another step closer in Young Harris

By Lily Avery  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Young Harris City Council held a first reading to amend to the Young Harris College Overlay District in the April 4 regular city meeting.

Amending the overlay is aimed at allowing the construction of a student housing facility across from the college. The amendment is necessary because, at present, the proposed building is 20 feet taller than the 35-foot height restriction on buildings in the county.

Since the county denied the city an exemption for the height variance last year, the

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Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby and City Attorney Marvin Harkins

## City council hears from Howard on 'A Blooming Affair'

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Grace Howard, a local leader on the board of the Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge, gave a public presentation in the April Hiawassee City Council meeting.

The presentation contained an invitation to city council, and by extension, the public, to attend the happening known as "A Blooming Affair" at Hamilton Gardens.

"A Blooming Affair" encompasses the spring blooming season of the gardens' azaleas, rhododendrons, dogwoods, wildflowers and more.



Grace Howard presented information to Hiawassee City Council on the upcoming event at the Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge in the April 4 regular meeting.

## Smith named National CASA Advocate of the Year

By Lily Avery  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

SEATTLE – For some, volunteering is simply a way to pass the time, but for Diana Smith, volunteering is a way of life.

One way in which Smith demonstrates her passion as a volunteer is through her role as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for children within the Enotah Judicial Circuit.

In recognition of her accomplishments in this role, Smith was honored on March 12 as the recipient of the G.F. Bettineski Child Advocate of the Year award during the National CASA

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Judge Darlene Byrne, left, with the National CASA Association, presenting Diana Smith of Blairsville with the G.F. Bettineski Child Advocate of the Year Award in March.

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Lake Levels  
Blue Ridge 1,676.41  
Chatuge 1,921.80  
Nottely 1,768.43



## Easter Egg Hunts

April 15th

Towns County  
Recreation Dept.  
10:30 AM

Hiawassee United  
Methodist Church  
11:00 AM

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STUDENTS  
SPEECH CONTEST

Tues. April 18th

Senior Center

5:30 PM

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Baseball

Wed vs. Lakeview 5:30 PM

Thurs vs. Athens Christ. 5:30 PM

Soccer

Tues @ Lakeview 5 PM (girls)

Tues vs. Riverside 6 PM (boys)

Thurs vs. Hebron 58 & 7 PM