



Towns County Herald

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TVA revises lake drawdown to two off-seasons

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The region is breathing a collective sigh of relief now that the Tennessee Valley Authority has “optimized” its plans to fix the Chatuge Dam spillway, reducing yearslong drawdown estimates to just two recreational off-seasons for all construction that requires record-low lake levels.

TVA’s Senior Project Manager for Dam Safety Chris Saucier made the announcement in meetings with local stakeholders, businesses and area media members at the Towns County Courthouse on Wednesday, June 25.

In March, TVA declared the need to rehabilitate the spillway after identifying a vulnerability the federal corporation decided was outside its risk tolerance for potential dam failure based on industry-

standard best practices, with loss of life risk being the driving factor in that decision.

And the repair, still a couple years away from starting construction, will be extensive.

TVA initially unveiled four construction concepts that included upper-bound estimates of between four and eight years of continuous drawdowns of Lake Chatuge to 1,908 feet in elevation; that’s 10 feet below winter pool and nearly 20 feet below full summer pool.

This news caused alarm across the region, prompting more than 1,700 public comments during the recent National Environmental Policy Act scoping period for the project, with feedback focused on what impacts TVA should be studying before committing to a construction plan.

The primary reason for

alarm was concern over the disastrous economic impacts of draining the lake for so long in the tourism-based communities of North Georgia and Western North Carolina, especially but not limited to Towns and Clay counties where the lake resides.

If enacted, such protracted and severe drawdowns would carry major implications for numerous local industries and stakeholders that rely on the lake for income, employment, property values, tax collections, water treatment, simple recreational enjoyment and more.

In addition to NEPA comments, TVA heard from many others working both behind the scenes and publicly to get the plans revised.

Local, state and federal elected officials chimed in, as did the large grassroots effort Save Lake Chatuge, marina

owners and other businesses that depend on lake tourism, plus countless individuals who reached out to make their concerns known.

And it looks like everyone is getting what they wanted: repairs to make the dam safe for generations to come with spillway rehabilitation and upgrades to other dam components in the process, and a much less economically damaging framework to complete construction.

Regarding the yearslong continuous drawdown estimates, TVA said in its initial rollout that “as the project progresses, we will know more and will refine those estimates.” And fortunately, TVA came through on that with its June 25 announcement.

“We were working behind the scenes to refine those estimates by doing more de-



Last week, Chris Saucier of TVA locally delivered the good news about the revised drawdown durations for the Chatuge Dam spillway repair project. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Made in Georgia Fest a big success at Rec Center



Hundreds of people attended the Made in Georgia Festival June 28-29 to take advantage of nearly 80 vendors selling goods made right here in the Peach State. Photo by Todd Forrest

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Sports Editor

YOUNG HARRIS — The two-day Made in Georgia Festival by the Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce once again drew large crowds when it returned for its annual outing at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center over the weekend.

Dozens of vendors showcased everything from handmade pottery and crafts to locally grown shrubs and honey, along with a new crowd favorite for 2025: birds of prey demonstrations by Georgia Mountain Falconry.

See Made in GA Festival, Page 6

Spend the Fourth of July at Fairgrounds and lake

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress proclaimed freedom from tyranny by approving the Declaration of Independence, giving rise thereafter to the quintessential American holiday of Independence Day.

Now 249 years later, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds and the Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce will be celebrating that momentous occasion with fireworks and a boat parade this Friday, July 4, and families across the region are invited to attend.

“Spend America’s birthday in Hiwassee and watch the Annual 4th of July Boat Parade on Lake Chatuge,” the

See Independence Day, Page 6



Fourth of July fireworks are a tried-and-true tradition in Towns County, always free at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Photo by Lowell Nicholson/2019

Sheriff’s Office makes two drug arrests at gas station

News Special

On the night of Saturday, June 21, Towns County Sheriff’s Investigators received reliable information regarding drug activity at the Texaco in the City of Hiwassee.

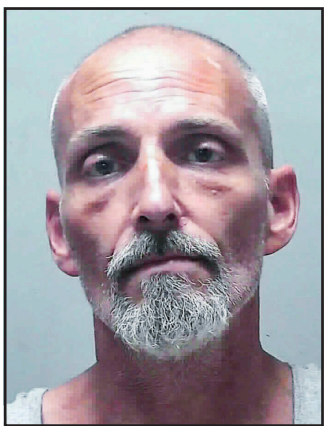
Investigators set up a surveillance and made contact with two suspects. Probable cause was developed and a search conducted, during which a variety of controlled substances was confiscated.

During the arrest of Nicole Michelle Arlotta, 40, of Warne, North Carolina, an amount of methamphetamine was found on her person.

Arlotta was charged with felony possession of methamphetamine; felony possession of a Schedule IV controlled substance; felony



Nicole Michelle Arlotta crossing state/county guard lines with weapons, intoxicants, drugs without consent; and misdemeanor possession and use of drug-related objects.



Brian William Whitney, 44, of Hiwassee, was arrested and charged with felony possession of a Schedule III controlled substance.

All suspects are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Bradshaw approves senior funding, payroll account

By Shelly Knight
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw held two meetings last month, his regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, June 17, and a called meeting on Thursday, June 26, inside the Towns County Courthouse.

In the regular meeting, there were no presentations, reports or proclamations and no old business to discuss, so Bradshaw moved right into new business. First up was to sign the Fiscal Year 2026 Local Share Commitment Letter with Legacy Link.

“Legacy Link is the organization that runs our Senior Building,” Bradshaw said. “Most of you all know our Senior Building; most of you have been in our Senior Building. They do a very good job over there, and it is such an important thing for Towns County to have a Senior Citi-



Commissioner Bradshaw signing an agreement in his June 17 regular county meeting. Photo by Shelly Knight

zens’ Building.

“There are so many people that utilize that building and their services. Our match on this contract is \$128,257. That is a \$5,000 increase from last year due to inflation. We are going to approve that tonight.”

Next, Bradshaw approved a facility use agreement.

See County Meetings, Page 12

12 Pages

8 0 4 8 7 9 1 9 3 1 5 9

Vol. 96 No. 36

Arrests - 2
Chamber - 5
Church - 8
Classifieds - 11

Opinion - 4
Legals - 11
Obits - 9

Lake Levels

Blue Ridge	1,686.16
Chatuge	1,925.00
Nottely	1,776.15

Early Submission Deadline July Fourth

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United
Community
Advisors

Community invited to join in 75th Fair Parade

By Shelly Knight
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Plans are underway to make this year's Georgia Mountain Fair Parade the most spectacular one ever, especially considering the Fair turns 75 in 2025.

The Parade Planning Committee gathered on June 18 to continue discussing the plans to make this a humongous community bash, with the parade set to roll at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Aug. 16, from SouthState Bank in Downtown Hiawassee to the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

Committee members include local business owners, the Towns County Sheriff's Office, the Hiawassee Police Department, Fairgrounds employees, volunteers, Towns County Schools, and even Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw.

As noted above, this year's parade is a celebration of not just the annual fair but also its 75th anniversary. The parade always opens the festivities with floats, Shriners, antique cars, horses, buggies, marching bands, softball and baseball teams, and virtually

anyone interested in joining the fun.

Some of the participants already signed up are the Cherokee County Shriners Club, the Pine Grove Baptist Church in Hayesville, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, the Challengers, the Sheriff's Office, Young Harris College, the VFW, the City of Hiawassee, the Model A Club, the Towns County Lions Club and many others.

The train will be in the parade for the kids to ride, and Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason encourages everyone to participate.

Julie Payne of the Lake Chamber of Commerce is continuing to run advertisements for participants in the weekly newsletter. It's truly a grassroots effort to ensure the best parade in memory.

"The theme this year is 'Mountains, Music and Memories,'" Thomason said. "The celebration party will be on Thursday, Aug. 14, at 7 p.m. We've got cloggers and speakers, the Historical Society will have storytelling, the concession stand will be open, we will have cupcakes, and there will be fireworks over the lake. There's a lot of excitement

about this."

The Fairgrounds has collected \$10,000 in prize money for the winners of the Parade Float Contest – that's an enormous sum provided by the Bob Cloer family.

Best Overall Entry will win \$2,000. Other competition categories include businesses; organizations, clubs, churches, individuals; and schools, with each of these categories winning \$1,500 for First Place and \$500 for Second Place.

As for decoration guidance, the best entries will adhere to the anniversary theme, "Mountains, Music and Memories." People will remember the classic TV show "Hee Haw," to appear on a float this year, so entrants are encouraged to use their imaginations and creativity and get busy.

"The Georgia Mountain Fair is turning 75; that's a big milestone for a nonprofit organization," Thomason said. "That's a long time to be in business. Everything that we do here is to benefit this county and the surrounding counties to help bring people here to spend money.

"You know, we have no industry here and we rely on



The Georgia Mountain Fair Parade Committee has been meeting to finalize one of the biggest and best parades for the 75th anniversary of the Fair.

Photo by Shelly Knight

tourism. Our whole purpose for being in business is to promote tourism. At last year's Fair, we had 33,000 people, and I'm hoping for 100,000 this year.

"I've been with (the Fairgrounds) 44 years, and I've watched it grow every year. I've always loved working here, and it's in my heart and soul. I give it my all to make it successful.

"I came to the Fair as a little girl many times growing

up here in Towns County, so it has lots of meaning and lots of memories for me and my family."

Parade applications are available at <https://georgiamountainfairgrounds.com/>.

The Georgia Mountain Fair itself will run Aug. 15-23: "Join us at the historic Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds for two exciting weekends of music, rides, crafts, and family fun," the website invites.

Amusements of Ameri-

ca Carnival opens a day early on Thursday, Aug. 14, with 75-cent rides that first evening, and the carnival will remain open daily through Saturday, Aug. 23.

"The Fairgrounds, Entertainment, and Anderson Music Hall are open for the first weekend on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 15, 16 and 17, and for the second weekend on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, Aug. 21, 22 and 23," according to the website.

Independence Day...from Page 1

chamber invites. "Enjoy the rest of the day on this beautiful TVA lake.

"Boaters line up behind the Grand Marshal for the parade beginning at 10:30 a.m. behind Young Harris Watersports in Sunset Cove. No U.S. flag. Additional patriotic decorations are encouraged."

Spectators can enjoy the free boat parade from the Anderson Bridge and the Georgia Mountain Fair Campgrounds, as the parade goes by the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds and loops around for the return trip.

"Boats must have a number issued by the Lake

Chatuge Chamber of Commerce to be considered for judging," according to the chamber. "Please, stop by the Chamber Welcome Center at 1411 Jack Dayton Circle in Young Harris to pick up your boat number."

The chamber will award \$600 in prizes to the parade entrants with the Most Creative boat and the Most Red, White & Blue boat. Registration forms may be downloaded at <https://www.golakechatuge.com> and returned in person or emailed to lcchamber2021@gmail.com.

As for the "big show" at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, the free annual July

4th Fireworks event opens to the public at 3 p.m. for plenty of family-friendly fun before the nighttime display.

Calvary Baptist Church is returning in 2025 to offer free activities for children, and the Nathan Morgan Band out of Knoxville, Tennessee, will perform a free concert from 6-9 p.m. before the fireworks spark off at 9:45 p.m. for a spectacular 20 to 30 minutes of color-bursting patriotism.

There will also be several vendors available for people to purchase food and drinks as they get ready for the display.

"The Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is THE destination for Independence Day because we have plenty of parking, plenty of space, a great place to shoot the fireworks, and we're in the entertainment business," Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason said.

"If you're in the entertainment business, you need to celebrate Independence Day and have a good fireworks display," Thomason continued. "This is good for the whole Northeast Georgia area to have a place to go and enjoy the fireworks with family and have a great time celebrating."

Thomason gives "a big special thank you" to all the people who make the annual fireworks possible: "We have several sponsors help with the expense, and we also take up donations under the parking shed, so if people want to donate, then that helps offset some of the cost."

"The Fourth of July means a lot," Thomason concluded. "America is the greatest country in the world, and we are here to celebrate and enjoy our independence.

"We'll probably have close to 10,000 people here, and everything's free except your food and your drinks – just come out and enjoy it and celebrate the Fourth."

Importantly, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds asks that people not bring their own fireworks to the event for the safety of all guests in attendance.

TCSO concentrated patrols make community safer place

News Special

Concentrated patrols are successful in impacting drug arrests and criminal activity in Towns County.

The Towns County Sheriff's Office implements concentrated patrols based upon technical crime analysis, data, citizen complaints, investigations, previous drug activity, informants, and other intelligence information to help determine the area, time and location to do these patrols.

The Sheriff's Office uses many resources to effectively do their job!

Sometimes the presence of Towns County Sheriff's Office black and white patrol vehicles and the low-profile vehicles in these areas can impact drug and criminal activity.

In a small agency like

the Towns County Sheriff's Office, you are looking at how to accomplish these tasks, maximize efficiency, and effectively utilize your personnel and resources for optimal impact, thus keeping our community safe.

Sheriff Ken Henderson is pleased with the results of this initiative but reiterates this is just one initiative among others used to combat drugs and crime in Towns County.

"I commend the hard-working men and women who work in the Sheriff's Office and their commitment to our war on drugs," Sheriff Henderson stated.

(Right): TCSO Deputy Zach Shelnut and K-9 Teddy routinely conduct concentrated patrols for the betterment of the community.

Photo/Facebook



Made in GA Festival...from Page 1



The Towns County Recreation and Conference Center offered the ideal venue for the Made in Georgia Festival over the weekend, providing plenty of open space to mosey and shop.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

"We were very pleased with how the weekend turned out," Chamber President Julie Payne said. "We had over 700 people on Saturday, and as expected, the numbers were down a little on Sunday, but it was still a great weekend, and everyone had a good time."

Now in its seventh year, the event featured 78 vendors, including Blairsville's Rustic Mountain Decor, a local business specializing in handcrafted furniture, decor and cabinetry.

"We've been coming to the festival for years," said co-owner June McElDowney. "These events are a great pro-

motion for us since our store is nearby in Union County but live in Towns County.

"This really helps promote our business to people who are not aware that we're in Downtown Blairsville. This event is always well organized; Julie is great to work with, and we really appreciate them in everything they do."

Greg Savell from Mt. Airy was a first-time vendor offering free samples of his recent venture, GPS Ketchup – a Gulf Coast-inspired variety of handcrafted spicy ketchups and Cajun sauces based on a family recipe.

"We've been up and run-

ning for almost a year now," Savell said. "We're here trying to get our name out. We did a show in Toccoa last fall and sold 20 cases, so these events have a very good sample-to-sell ratio."

Vendors offered an assortment of Georgia-made goods, including soaps, woodwork, home decor, leather, jewelry, clothing, shrubs, peccans, pickles and more.

Buster Brown and Georgia Mountain Falconry quickly became a crowd pleaser, drawing onlookers eager to learn and take pictures of the eagles, hawks, owls and other birds of prey, most notably, Majesty – an 11-pound female Golden Eagle with a 7-foot wingspan.

The Towns County Historical Society was on hand raising money for the Berrong House of Hiawassee by selling hot dogs and hamburgers. The event also featured a raffle on Sunday afternoon, and each day, the first 125 visitors received a free shopping bag.

"We want to thank all our sponsors, visitors and vendors," Payne said. "We appreciate all the support from the local community and those that visited us from out of town."

Payne added that the chamber will be hosting its Holiday Bazaar on Nov. 1-2 at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center. Vendor applications are already being accepted.



At Made in Georgia, people particularly enjoyed the 11-pound Golden Eagle named Majesty and her 7-foot wingspan, provided courtesy of Georgia Mountain Falconry.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Tri County British Car Club Holds June Meeting

On Sunday, June 29th, thirty one members and guests attended the Monthly Luncheon Meeting of the Tri County British Car Club, at the Sundance Grille, in Hia-wassee, Georgia.

It was a lively meeting with several big announce-ments, including a presenta-tion from member Catherine Luckenbach, the director of the Hamilton Gardens, at the Georgia Mountain Fair-grounds.

Catherine's presenta-tion was concerning the "Mu-sic, Mountains, and Motors", all import car show, that the club and the Gardens will be co hosting at Hamilton Gar-dens on Saturday, October 4th, 2025. All makes and years of imported cars will be allowed to enter. There is no charge to spectators. Show cars that pre-register, will pay only \$20.

The purpose of the show, is to raise much needed money for the award-winning Towns County High School Band.



Beautiful 1991 Jaguar XJS, owned by John and Arlene Hollier of Blairsville, Georgia

Band members have to supply their own uniforms, and have to pay to be members of the band. Right now, the band is using "hand-me-down" uniforms.

The show is in need of sponsors, to raise funds. All money less expenses, will go directly to the TCHS Band.

There is a web site on line, where people interested

in sponsorship, which is tax deductible, or who want to register cars, can do so at:

<http://www.ticketsign-up.io/ticketevent/musicmountainsandmotors>

Anyone interested in joining the 13-year-old TCBC, which has no dues, please email tricitybritishcarclub@yahoo.com.

Drawdown Revisions...from Page 1A

tailed design of the actual con-cepts," Saucier said, "fleshing that out a little bit more, and also stronger tie-ins with the construction side of it and how the construction activities might be sequenced.

"That's just work that wasn't completed at the time that we wanted to start this process, but we have sort of aggressively pursued that in the past few weeks and are able to come today with some of those refinements."

These refinements have enabled TVA "to optimize drawdown duration estimates for each remaining alterna-tive to address the spillway concerns; the drawdowns are still required to ensure worker safety, but all drawdown dura-tions have been reduced."

Specifically, TVA has eliminated Alternative B from consideration, "which would have required rehabilitation of spillway joints with a draw-down of the reservoir for up to eight years."

As it stands, the remain-ing Alternatives C, D & E will still take up to five years of construction each, from contract award to end of site restoration. But, critically, drawdown times "have been reduced to periods of up to two years with drawdowns occur-ring outside the recreational spring and summer months."

From a drawdown per-spective, the key difference between Alternative C and Al-ternatives D & E is that the for-

mer alternative could require two years of consecutive off-season drawdowns, while the latter two alternatives would feature two non-consecutive off-season drawdowns.

TVA has been able to "optimize" the alternatives by incorporating 24/7 con-struction during the projected off-season periods, enabling "drawdown critical" activities to be completed between late summer and mid-spring before allowing lake levels to rise again for seasonal recreation.

And while TVA has built in buffer periods, or "contingency times," to minimize the impact of off-season construction delays, there is a caveat to achieving full summer pool after each of the two winter drawdowns: Mother Nature.

"Seasonal rainfall amounts and any significant construction delays could alter these timetables for the length of the drawdown or returning the reservoir to summer pool," TVA said.

Looking ahead, TVA has noted that the first poten-tial lake drawdown will not come until the winter of 2027, with the winter of 2028 being considered more likely at this time, though several steps re-main before construction – and any drawdowns – can begin.

"TVA anticipates pub-lishing a Scoping Report in Fall 2025 that will summarize public and agency comments and TVA's planned scope," TVA

expects to release the Draft En-vironmental Impact Statement in late 2025 or early 2026."

The Draft Environ-mental Impact Statement will contain a socio-economic im-pact study that considers the revised construction alterna-tives.

Once published, the public will have 45 days to comment on the document, and additional public open houses will be scheduled as well. By that point, TVA will have selected its preferred al-ternative, with construction potentially to begin "as soon as late 2027."

Saucier said this is just the first round of optimizations for construction plans, and fol-lowing more design work and construction consultation, ad-ditional optimizations could be forthcoming to further im-prove both construction and drawdown durations.

Toward that end, "ad-ditional optimization of the various alternatives is planned for Autumn 2025, and these sessions may generate further opportunities to minimize drawdown impacts," accord-ing to TVA.

"This is the first of what we think are maybe even a couple more opportunities (for optimization)," Saucier said June 25. "You can imagine, as you go through a study like this, you get more information and more confident divulging, well, this is what the plan is going to be."

County Meetings...from Page 1A

ment with the American Red Cross.

"Most of you probably know where that is, off of Jack Dayton Circle right past the EMS," Bradshaw said. "We have to sign an agreement to let them use our facility, which they use mainly for storage.

"At this time, we're go-ing to sign the agreement, but there is no money switching hands here. Our area here is covered from the Gainesville office, and I don't need to ex-plain what the Red Cross does, as most of you know what they do.

"Very needed at times, though hopefully not needed – but they are there if we do. If (Hurricane) Helene had hit in Towns County, they would have been there for us."

Last on the agenda was to appoint Margie Winkler to the Towns County Board of Health to replace Lois Palmer, who resigned.

"The Board of Health plays a critical role in oversee-ing public health initiatives and ensuring the wellbeing of Towns County residents," Bradshaw said. "We have a resolution to appoint Margie. Her term shall commence im-mediately upon the passage of this resolution.

"We want to acknowl-edge the contributions of Lois Palmer during her tenure on the Board of Health and to ex-press our gratitude for her ser-vice. I've known Ms. Palmer most of my life. She is a won-derful lady, but she is stepping down. I've also known Ms. Winkler for many years, and she is going to do a great job."

During his Commis-sioner's Comments, Bradshaw noted that it has been a "very, very busy summer."

said. "The splash pad is up and running, and the kids are using it all the time. That makes us feel good.

"We're hoping to get back to work on the pavilion soon. It's mostly done. We are waiting for Larry Hedden, the contractor, to come back and will use our inmates to finish it up."

Bradshaw took a mo-ment to offer kind words for Towns County High School Athletic Director Jim Melton, who died suddenly on June 7.

"I will do my best not to get emotional here," Bradshaw said. "Most of you have heard of Jim Melton's passing. He was an icon in Towns County. I've known him most of my adult life. I went to church with him. My kids grew up with Jim and his kids. I just talked to him a few days be-fore he passed away.

"I just want to mention that he is going to be missed. We think the world of him. A very successful high school varsity girls' basketball coach. I mean, he's known all over the state. But forget all of that. He was just a very good person. A very good, fun, kind person."

Commissioner Brad-shaw holds his regular meet-ings the third Tuesday of every month starting at 5:30 p.m. in-side the Towns County Court-house. The public is encour-aged to attend.

In his special called meeting on Thursday, June 26, Bradshaw signed a resolution authorizing the opening of a payroll checking account.

"United Community Bank has been identified as a suitable financial institution to facilitate the payroll opera-tions of Towns County," Brad-shaw said. "We're doing this to streamline payroll processes and enhance financial account-ability. This is specifically and only for payroll purposes."

County Finance Director

Andrea Anderson explained that the Commissioner's Of-fice used to have a similar ac-count but ultimately felt it was unnecessary.

"So, we just closed it and ran the payroll through our treasury account," Anderson said. "But the volume of busi-ness done through the treasury account has grown. It compli-cates things when you have all of those payroll checks that you have to clear.

"Through this account, we can use direct deposit, and it will make the treasury ac-count easier to balance. Ad-ditionally, when you run so many checks through an ac-count, sometimes problems can arise.

"We recently had a problem and didn't have ac-cess to our treasury account for a short period of time and couldn't do a direct deposit. We ended up needing to pro-cess paper checks for all of our employees. That's less likely to happen with a checking account. It's much better ef-ficiency.

"And, if something did happen to the payroll account, we could revert to running payroll through the treasury account if we had to. In this way, we have two accounts available. This will ensure no interruptions to our employees getting paid.

"Most of our expendi-tures come out of the treasury account. So, we could buy a ream of paper from the treas-ury account and pay an em-ployee from that account. This payroll account will streamline the payroll process and keep the pots of money separate."

County Clerk Brenda McKinney said the county now has so many employ-ees that the payroll account has become necessary, with population growth ensuring the growth of the need for ser-vices.

Towns Co. Lions celebrate 2024-2025 Fiscal Year-End



The Towns County Li-ons always close their fiscal year during the second June meeting on the fourth Tuesday night of the month because the new year traditionally starts on July 1 and ends on June 30.

So, this past June 24 meeting was especially impor-tant as the local Lions looked back with prayerful pride and thoughtful thanksgiving to re-flect and remember the previ-ous year, and looked ahead to the next 12 months with plans, predictions, priorities and promises.

After another bodacious and bountiful buffet catered by Brenda Swanson, the Li-ons began their meeting with Georgia Mountain Fair Gen-eral Manager (and Lion) Hilda Thomason behind the mic as she presented a pertinent and prepared preview of the upcoming 75th Anniversary of the Granddaddy of South-eastern State Fairs that we are pleased, privileged and proud to host annually here in Hia-wassee. This year promises to be one of the best ever, August 14-17, and 21-23. Please mark your calendars and check the website for more details and info.

Next on the agenda, the club president Danny Meeks bestowed well-deserved club appreciation awards to the fol-lowing Lions: the Community Impact Award for the most valuable positive effect and leadership in the community to Hilda Thomason; the In-spiration Award for the most encouraging and motivating Lion to David Barrett; the Above and Beyond Award for the Lion who repeatedly goes the "extra mile" to Dale Will-rich; the Dedication Award for the Lion who showed con-sistently committed efforts to Sybil Davis; the Mentor Maestro Award for the Lion who most guided and sparked new membership growth to Janie McConnell; the Legacy Builder Award to Pam Greene



2025-26 Club President Kathy Carlson gives Vice District Governor and Immediate Past President Danny Meeks the Lions International Melvin Jones Fellowship Award

for her outstanding work with the club scrapbook which preserves the club's history and it won first place at the State Convention for Best Tradition-al Scrapbook; the Trailblazer Award to Vickie McCann for her unprecedented pioneering spirit to serve as a volunteer nurse this summer at the Georgia Lions Camp For The Blind in Waycross; the Giving Spirit Award to Susan Willrich who most exemplified a generous and selfless nature; the Com-munication Champion Award to Frank Morgan who keeps the community informed of lo-cal Lions activities and events (with able assistance from Martha Meeks on the Face-book front); and Perfect Atten-dance Awards for 2024-25 to Kathy Carlson and Danny and Martha Meeks.

After Immediate Past President Danny Meeks cer-emoniously passed the gavel to the new 2025-26 club Presi-dent Kathy Carlson, her first official act and most signifi-cant recognition of the night was conferring upon Danny Meeks, who had served 2 con-secutive years as club presi-dent and had recently been elected to the office of Vice District Governor in District 18-I, the highest Lions Inter-national honor of all, the Mel-vin Jones Fellowship Award, named after the legendary founder of Lionism who began

the first Lions club in 1917 in Chicago.

Since then, it has grown into the largest community service organization in the world and is about to celebrate its 108th birthday at the Lions International Convention in Orlando, FL, July 13-17.

Club Service Chair Di-anne Williams announced that the June 21 Pancake Breakfast fundraiser was a big success thanks to the generous sup-port of our community and the loyal volunteers who helped: David Barrett, Bill and Beth Beasley, Randy English, Cath-erine Luckenbach, Jim and Janie McConnell, Danny and Martha Meeks, Frank Mor-gan, Julie Payne, Matt Turpin, Lynn Whelchel, Dianne Wil-liams, and Suzanne Wilson.

During the State Li-ons Convention in Dublin at the end of May, three Towns County High School LEO club members were named Georgia State LEO Officers: Miranda Ramirez, Vice Presi-dent; Katelyn Walls, Secre-tary; and Cayden Hamilton, Treasurer. Congratulations to these Towns County LEOs leaders!

Last, but not least, don't miss the Independence Day celebration July 4 at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds with live music and the fabu-lous, fantastic and fun fire-works display. Happy Birth-day, America!

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