

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Letters to The Editor

### To the Editor:

The Senate's proposed Better Care Reconciliation Act (Trumpcare) will result in cuts to long-term care services, greater unemployment and families needing to bear more of the burden of care for their loved ones. Medicaid will be cut \$869 billion (25%) over 10 years and 1,757,000 citizens in Georgia will be affected.

Medicaid acts as a safety net by paying for long-term care not covered by Medicare, and 70 percent of individuals will need this sometime in their life. 72% of nursing homes receive Medicaid funding. Nursing home care costs an average of \$82,000 a year, well beyond the cost of most seniors and their families. Medicaid also pays for in-home care, and if home and community based services are cut, more people will have to receive care in higher cost nursing homes. Reductions in staffing, lower quality of care and poorer health outcomes, even premature death, are expected.

The president's proposed budget cuts an additional \$6 billion in Medicaid. Given that health care constitutes one sixth of the U.S. economy, economists predict the cuts could serve as a catalyst for a recession. The cuts are being made to fund a tax cut for the wealthy.

If you have concerns about the bill or the proposed budget, contact your senators and the president.

Mary Lightner

### Letter to the Editor:

Most of the residents of Hiawassee are aware that the Mayor and the City Manager are gone from City Hall. What taxpayers are not aware of is the tarnished legacy they leave behind.

Two days after the City Manager was terminated by the City Council, The Mayor wired \$26,000 to the City Manager. This was done without any discussion, debate, permission, approval or authority from the City Council.

She did inquire of the City Attorney if it was legal for her to take this action. He offered that it was not illegal, but was not advisable or prudent under the circumstances.

The Mayor stated the \$26,000 was for 300 plus hours of unused sick pay; 80 hours of unused vacation pay and comp time. No hours were given for the comp time. That is \$68.42 per hour in addition to The City Manager's pay of \$98,000, plus benefits, per year. By the way, the City was in the RED for the month of April by \$14,000.

Since The City Council terminated the City Manager just one day prior, it is doubtful they would have been in favor of the \$26,000 bonus. The City Council was NOT aware of the Mayor's actions until after it was done. Why was the money wired directly to the City Manager? It was done to prevent the City Council from being able to stop payment on a check.

The City Council also took action on the Mayor's salary of \$48,000. Since no record of approval by previous City Councils could verify the raises, it was reduced to the official salary of record of \$16,000+. The Mayor claimed she received raises at the same time City Employees got raises. The majority of City Employees did not receive any raises in the past 8 years. The Council then reviewed GMA recommendations and similar Mayors' wages and established an updated wage scale for the Mayor's position.

Missing in the previous administration were many procedures and policies and an inventory of City owned tools and equipment. The new City Council has implemented nearly 40 new policies and procedures to guide them in carrying on City business. A complete inventory and tagging procedure now identifies all City owned tools, equipment and property. It can now be properly accounted for and scheduled for maintenance, work, replacement or sale. Fire hydrants were not hooked up, water meters were faulty, some 200 water meters could not even be located, water bills were often wrong, low water pressure exists for many customers, water lines are too small, water and sewer facilities are at full capacity, sidewalks are broken or missing, streets have not been upgraded in years. The New City Council is making progress and still finding problems as a result of the previous administration's "tarnished legacy".

All of these things should have been taken care of by the previous administration. This is especially true when we consider the extraordinarily high salaries that were being paid to those that were supposed to be taking care of our community.

Can any of these overpayments be recovered? Possibly. It is doubtful any funds will be returned voluntarily. The cost of any legal proceedings may be more than any monetary recovery that may be realized. Why do I mention this if nothing can be gained? After attending Council meetings for more than four years, I have tried to report the facts. Real numbers and facts have not always been readily available. The taxpayers need to know what is going on. We do not need a repeat of the poor performance of previous administrations.

What can you do to help? There is an election coming up. Demand all candidates attend a candidates forum. Listen to them. Question them. Do not vote for them if they do not participate in a forum. Support the candidates of your choice in any way you can.

I am very disappointed and disgusted at what has been done to our lovely home, especially when it is our own people that have done this to us.

Please attend your City Council meetings. It is your money and your home.

John L. Holmes

### GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:** Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net. Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc.

Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.\*

*Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.*

## Garbage In, Garbage Out

We can understand the basics of how the brain works by thinking of it as a kind of difference engine. The brain processes a continuous flow of data from the senses, as well as data from its own internal functions, and it interpolates. It assumes, averages, fills in the blanks. This is why optical illusions work. It is also why memory is unreliable, and why some people see a butterfly in an ink blot and others see a bat.

"Difference engine" refers to a mechanical device first conceived by Hessian Army engineer, J. H. Müller, and later attempted by English polymath, Charles Babbage. These were the first inklings of what we now know as the "computer."

A computer needs an operating system to function. Most of the human operating system, like a modern computer, is automated. The heart beats and blood circulates; we breathe; we digest food. On the cellular level, billions of chemical reactions occur at every moment, and the average human brain produces about .085 watts of electrical power (although some appear to produce considerably less). That's enough, by the way, to charge an iPhone in about 70 hours.

So far our basic brain functions are on par with every other living thing, but humans have sophisticated proprietary software and tremendous storage capacity which, as far as we know today, may be unique in the Universe. We reason. We have a sense of time. We develop complicated algorithms for belief, fantasy, morality and religion, as well as countless other concepts far removed from the electrochemical processes going on inside our heads.

There is an acronym as old as the Information Age: GIGO, or "garbage in, garbage out." Computers that receive faulty data can never return accurate answers.

We have understood the logic behind this bit of wisdom for much longer than we have understood computers. This is why so much time and expense is applied to education.

Unfortunately for our species, even the most sophisticated programs for producing educated, well rounded human beings are plagued by the limitations of our basic operating system. That OS was designed over thousands of years for surviving a great number of dangers and physical challenges. We were built to be able to quickly respond to these challenges by fighting or fleeing, and we are burdened or uplifted by an almost irrational desire to reproduce.

What happens when you install a sophisticated program onto an operating system that was designed for basic survival? Many things can happen. We can build pyramids, produce great works of art and literature or push back the boundaries of science. We can also fight over words and shoot each other over parking spaces. History contains a litany of horrors that testify to the glitches inherent in our programming.

We have understood the basic functions of the brain for a long time, and when we did not understand, we intuited. Whether by design or by accident, there have always been individuals and groups who were capable of affecting the programming of large numbers of operating systems like a computer virus. Marketing attempts to achieve this end every day. Political types seek to do it. That odd hybrid of business and government that we call "mainstream media" seeks to influence our programming every moment of every day.

Not all of the programming is bad. That which seeks to educate, to motivate or inspire for the good of the community, is always needed. The problem is that many of our programmers are allowed to move beyond motivation and inspiration to control, and to accomplish this control, whether for the purpose of selling soap or buying votes, the programming targets the survival subroutines built into our basic operating system. In order to sell soap and buy votes, they stimulate the fear, anger and lust that we inherit from our animal nature.

Programming us for viral responses is effective, and it is profitable. It also gets out of hand on a fairly regular basis, as anyone who has studied the history of war can tell

you. But on a personal level, the place where we live our lives among our fellow humans, where we digest our food and sleep at night and where we try to maintain a healthy body/mind - too much of the wrong information makes us feel bad. It literally makes us sick. Think about it. We wake up to a curated selection of bad things that happened overnight. Throughout the day, every bad event that is horrific, or shocking or tacky enough to grab our attention is broadcast for our consumption. We digest our food with generous servings of fight-or-flight metabolites circulating throughout our bodies.

Many of us seem to forget that we are all capable of self-programming. We do it unconsciously in the repetitive behaviors that become our habits, but we can also do it with intent. We can choose at any moment to disconnect from the external programming, and we might be surprised to discover how smoothly we will run without all the constant updates.

It won't be easy for some of us. Many of us are addicted to the neuropeptides that are produced by the constant stimulation of our reptile brains. But we can start with a simple, very personal question, a question that can be applied to every shooting and stabbing reported, every celebrity scandal, every imperial presidential tweet and just about every syllable uttered by every talking head out there: Does this information enrich my life in any way?

So turn off the television. Shut down the web browser. Put down the phone. Select quality information in the same way you would shop for ingredients for a home cooked meal. You will find it in libraries, in books, in online courses or continuing education programs. Granted, it's more work this way, but it digests better, and it's much healthier.

**Have something to sell?**  
Let the Herald work for you!  
Deadline for the Towns County Herald is Friday by 5 PM • 706-896-4454

## The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

## Fall Webworms

A few months ago I wrote about eastern and forest tent caterpillars making webs in the crooks of branches and causing unsightly damage to trees. Well, now we have a new culprit on our hands. The webs that you see at the ends of branches are caused by fall webworms. While these webs may look similar to what we saw in the spring, these critters are quite different from tent caterpillars.

The adult webworm moth has a one and a half inch wingspan. Its wings are white, and sometimes they have small black spots on them. The caterpillars are about one inch long, pale green or yellow in color and have tufts of long hairs covering their bodies. The webs they form are always at the tips of branches so they can eat plenty of the nutrient rich new tree growth.

Though webworms can sometimes be seen in the spring, they do the most damage in late summer and fall. Adult moths begin to emerge in summer where they disperse and mate. After mating, females will deposit their eggs on the undersides of leaves on trees and other plants. The egg masses can have up to six hundred eggs and are covered in hair to protect the new generation of webworms until they hatch. Once the caterpillars emerge, they build their silken nests to protect themselves while they eat the foliage. As they use up all of the leaves, they expand their nests down the branch until they are ready to pupate. The caterpillars will burrow into the ground and overwinter there as pupae. Once the weather warms up again, they will emerge as adult moths to begin the cycle all over again.

Webworms can do a lot of damage to trees, but they will almost never kill them. On smaller trees and low hanging branches, webs can be removed a variety of ways. If the branch is small enough, it may simply be pruned off and disposed of. If the branch is too big to clip off, then webs can be manually destroyed using a rake or long pole, and larvae can be knocked down into trash bags and killed. Many beneficial insects and birds rely on webworms for food, so simply tearing open the nests and letting natural predators eat the caterpillars will also help to keep future populations at bay.

Nests that are high up in trees can be damaged with pressure washers or by spraying them with insecticides. Pesticides containing Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) or spinosad are specific for harmful insects and will not hurt the beneficial ones that control the webworms. Carbaryl and pyrethroid insecticides are also very effective, but they can kill most insects, including non-harmful ones. Whenever applying pesticides to the nests, try to damage the nest first so the chemical can penetrate and reach the caterpillars.

Union and Towns County Extension will be holding a Master Naturalist Class Wednesdays starting July 26th and ending September 20th at the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. This is an eight week course that meets once a week and covers wildlife management, tree and insect ID, invasive species, Georgia natural history, and many other topics. Registration fee is \$250 for the entire eight week course. Please register ASAP!



From the Ground Up  
Melissa Mattee



"Thanks for showing us how to start a fire, Dad. Now can you show us how to start an air conditioner?"

## Towns County Community Calendar

Bridge Players	Every Monday:	All Saints Lutheran	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
Bridge Players	Every Thursday:	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.		Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Every Friday:	Red Cross Building	7 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Every Sunday:	Red Cross Building	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
Co. Comm. Mtg		Courthouse	5:30 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.		Blairsville store	5:30 pm
Quilting Bee	Third Wednesday of each month:	McConnell Church	10 am
MOAA		Call Jack @ 828-321-2896	
Friendship Comm.	Third Thursday of each month:	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
Humane Shelter Bd.	Last Thursday of each month:	Cadence Bank	5:30 pm

Publication No: 635540

Advertising, News deadlines: Friday at 5 p.m.

Towns County (1 Year) \$20. Out of County (1 Year) \$30. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawassee, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points. The Towns County Herald is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. Postmaster: Send change of address to: Towns County Herald, P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

Office located at: 518 N. Main St. Suite 7 "The Mall", Hiawassee

Phone: (706) 896-4454 Fax: (706) 896-1745 Email: tcherald@windstream.net

Or mail to: PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546

## Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

Kenneth West Charles Duncan Shawn Henrikson Lowell Nicholson  
Owner/Publisher Editor Copy Editor Photographer

Derek Richards Shawn Jarrard Lily Avery  
Advertising Director Staff Writer Staff Writer

Website:  
townscountyherald.net