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Burn ban strengthened; Tate City threatened by fire

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It's hazy days ahead for Towns County, as smoke continues to pour in from wildfires still burning in neighboring counties, including a fire that is currently threatening Tate City residents.

Known as the Rock Mountain Fire, this recent wildfire event emerged in Towns and Rabun counties from manmade causes on Nov. 9, and had burned nearly 5,000 acres as of press time Monday.

Located just north of the Rock Mountain Fire, Tate City had been alerted to pre-evacuation steps by the U.S. Forest Service as early as Nov. 11.

Regionally, dozens of wildfires have consumed tens of thousands of acres in the Southeastern United States.

Georgia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, South Carolina, Virginia and Alabama have all been experiencing wildfire in recent weeks.

Drought has been a major factor in these wildfires, in effect creating tinderbox conditions for fires – however caused – to take hold.

Most of the counties of North Georgia, including parts of Towns County, have been moved to the U.S. Drought Monitor's worst drought classification level of "Exceptional."

Making matters worse, trees in the heavily forested southern Appalachians are in the middle of dropping their leaves, adding potential fire fuel to the ground, some of which has already complicated established wildfire control lines.

Hundreds of firefighting personnel with the Southern Area Coordination Center

– one of 10 geographic areas in the U.S. established to collaboratively manage wildland fire and other natural disasters – have been out at work fighting to put out and contain the dozens of wildfires in the Southeast.

Locally, the Towns County government has been doing its part to prevent the outbreak of wildfire here.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall with Fire Chief Harold Copeland issued a Burn Ban Proclamation on Friday, Nov. 4, declaring a total burn ban countywide on outdoor open flames.

The commissioner, with the fire chief's recommendation, added weight to the proclamation by amending the Code of Ordinance of Towns County in a special called emergency meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 8.

This amendment reads as follows:



The Towns County Fire Department responded late last week to a brush pile fire off Bell Creek Road, putting it out before it got the chance to spread.

"The fire chief of Towns County shall be authorized to ban all open burning of all types, including campfires,

bonfires, and any other open burning, when atmospheric, environmental, drought, or other dangerous conditions

of any type warrant such ban by creating significant risk of fire.

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Towns beat state in percentage of voter turnout

Hiwassee gets liquor by the drink, Sunday retail sales



Commissioner-Elect Cliff Bradshaw

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp announced last Wednesday that a greater number of Georgia voters turned out for the 2016 General Election than in any other



Sheriff Chris Clinton

election on record in the state.

More than 4.1 million voters showed up at the polls statewide, bringing participation among registered voters in the state to 76 percent.

This bested the previous record set in 2008, when 3.9



Hiwassee Councilwoman-Elect Rayette Ross

million Georgia voters went to the polls.

For their parts, Towns Countians cast 6,845 ballots out of 8,608 registered voters, for a whopping 80 percent voter turnout.

Towns County elected

See Election, Page 6A

Veterans Park unveils new memorials, flagpoles

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

One simple way to honor veterans on Veterans Day is to thank them for putting their lives on the line to protect the personal freedoms of every man, woman and child in the United States of America.

Towns County residents paid respect to these brave men and women – those living as well as those who have made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives – at the Towns County Veterans Memorial Park during the annual Veterans Day Service on Nov. 11.

New to this year's ceremony was the unveiling of new monuments at the park to commemorate four wars in American history: the

See Park, Page 6A



The United Daughters of the Confederacy unveiled the new War Between the States Memorial inside the Towns County Veterans Park on Friday, Nov. 11. Other memorials unveiled that Veterans Day: Korea, Vietnam and the Revolutionary War. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

TVA board talks nuclear power, drought

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE – The Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors held a public meeting at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center on Thursday, Nov. 10, in order to give updates on finances, ongoing projects and current environmental circumstances in the TVA reach.

The meeting began with an open forum for members of the public to voice opinions or concerns to the board, which the board addressed during the scheduled meeting that followed.

Energy efficiency and the present drought situation throughout the TVA district were primary touchstones during the public listening session, both of which were discussed at length by TVA CEO and President Bill



Tennessee Valley Authority CEO Bill Johnson met with his board for their monthly meeting, which took place in November at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center.

Johnson, along with the board.

"Our work in this region is guided by forestry teaching imperatives, including one that requires us to be responsible

stewards of the region's natural resources on behalf of all the people in the Tennessee Valley," said Johnson.

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SAR shows appreciation for local vets

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

For Towns County locals, the Towns County Veterans Park was not the only place hosting a celebration of veterans on Veterans Day.

The Sons of the American Revolution, Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter, brought Veterans Day Recognition to the Chatuge Regional Nursing Home to honor resident veterans on Friday, Nov. 11.

Since its inception in 2000, SAR has made certain to remember and honor veterans within its four-county district of Gilmer, Fannin, Union and Towns, rotating each year between the counties.

"We've done it ever since the chapter was organized in 2000," said Sid Turner,



Sid Turner, president of the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter Sons of the American Revolution, recently presented appreciation plaques to veterans residing at Chatuge Regional Nursing Home.

Chapter President. "It's been going now for 16 years. It's something that we like to honor done because we like to honor the veterans.

"In the Sons of the American Revolution, we like promoting citizenship and patriotism. We like to

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Gurley to become a Pirate

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County High School senior Jordyn Gurley signed a letter of intent to play softball with Chattahoochee Valley Community College of Phenix City, Alabama, on Thursday, Nov. 10.

On hand to view this historic moment in Gurley's life were her family, several members of her high school softball team, friends, coaches, teachers and administrators.

"I've been playing softball since I was about 7 or 8 years old," said Gurley. "I love everything about it. I love playing the sport and I try to play any time that I can."

Gurley's signing story is unlike a typical college team recruitment or tryout, in that she did not actually seek out



TCHS senior Jordyn Gurley, center, with parents Jeff and Denise; and in background, CV Softball Head Coach Steve Osteen

CVCC – the Pirates softball coach found her.

"To be honest, I didn't think I'd ever be signed by a

college," said Gurley. "I'm so excited."

"When it happened, it

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Gowder, Heaton cases see movement in NC court

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

MURPHY, NC – Former Union General Hospital CEO Mike Gowder and Blairsville physician Dr. James Heaton had some movement in their Cherokee County, North Carolina, criminal drug cases on Monday, Nov. 7.

Gowder received a continuance in his case through Feb. 27, 2017, while Dr. Heaton will appear before a judge on Jan. 3, 2017, so that his attorney can have motions heard, according to documents obtained from the Cherokee County (NC) Clerk of Courts Office.

Gowder and Heaton were arrested in North Carolina on Wednesday, March 2, following indictment by a Cherokee County, NC, grand jury, both for five



Dr. James Heaton



Mike Gowder

counts of trafficking in opium or heroin, and five counts of obtaining a controlled substance by forgery, according to Cherokee County, NC, Sheriff Derrick Palmer at that time.

Previously, Gowder and Dr. Heaton received continuances in their cases from March 28 to April 4 earlier this year, then from April 4 to July 11, and from July

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Blue Ridge 1,666.21
Chatuge 1,916.47
Nottely 1,759.24

Roy Perren
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Mountain
Home Music

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American Red Cross
Blood Drive
November 18th
Young Harris, GA

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Turkey Trot for
#239 Deputy
Mitchell Henderson
Sat. Nov 19
Meeks Park

SPORTS

Basketball
Fri Nov 18
vs Lumpkin 6 & 8
Tues Nov 22
@ Union 7 & 8:30