

# Towns County Herald

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## Attention county residents: Do Not Pay Air Methods

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Did you receive a bill from Air Methods, the medical helicopter service?

If so, don't pay it – just throw it away.

As of June 1, all Towns County residents are automatically covered as Air Methods Advantage members, thanks to a partnership between the county and Union General Hospital Inc.

Air Methods recently mailed renewal letters in error to Towns County residents,

which has caused confusion in the community.

To rectify, the Air Methods mailout was a mistake by the company.

There are no individual bills to pay because the county and Union General have teamed up to pay the bill portion ultimately coming in at \$13,977.50.

Residents who renewed their memberships prior to the June 1 start date of countywide coverage can receive a refund by calling the Air Methods billing office at 1 (855) 877-2518, or emailing

airmethodsadvantage@airmethods.com.

Having an Air Methods Advantage membership translates to no out-of-pocket expenses for residents who take medically necessary life flights via the Air Life Georgia 14 helicopter based out of Union General Hospital in Blairsville.

This blanket membership for all county residents includes everyone who lives in or has a home in the county, regardless of past membership status, though new residents moving to the county after the June 1 start date will need to buy their

own Air Methods Advantage memberships.

Air Methods made the same mailing mistake in neighboring Union County recently, and residents there received a subsequent letter from Air Methods explaining the renewal mailout error.

"Please disregard the renewal letter as your coverage has been paid in advance by your community," read the correction letter. "Coverage starts on June 1, 2017, and covers you through May 31, 2018."

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Air Methods Helicopter. Photo/Lily Avery

## Fourth of July fireworks to celebrate independence, family

By Lily Avery  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Tuesday, July 4, will mark 241 years since America first gained her independence, a day that continues to define this nation more than two centuries later.

As a country founded on the celebration of freedom and pursuit of happiness, what better way to spend such a pivotal day in history than outside enjoying the beautiful mountain scenery and enjoying food, fellowship and fireworks with friends and family.

Towns County is gearing up for the Fourth of July weekend with plenty of opportunities to get out and have some fun.

"There's a bunch of music events the weekend before the Fourth of July, starting July 1," said Candace Lee, Towns County Chamber of Commerce President. "There's an event down at Paradise Hills Resort. Hightower Creek is



The Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is a popular destination for Fourth of July family fun. Girl riding mechanical bull on July 4, 2016. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

having two or three different events over the weekend, all the way up through the Fourth of July. There are tons of different events going on all

across the county throughout the weekend, so a little something for everyone."

Paradise Hills Resort's Independence Day Celebration,

complete with patriotic pizza, will take place from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. on Saturday, July 1. Hightower Creek is offering a weekend of music, on July 2 and July 3, from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. on both days.

To celebrate the Fourth of July, Crane Creek Vineyards is hosting its annual Bulletproof Concert on Saturday, July 1, from 7 p.m. until 11 p.m. More information on these events can be found at the chamber's website, www.golakechatuge.com.

For those who have their heart set on a fireworks display, there will be two opportunities in the county for such, one at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds and the other at Brasstown Valley Resort and Spa.

On July 4, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is hosting its annual fireworks display at 9:45 p.m. across the ball field, shooting the fireworks over Lake Chatuge.

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## T. Graham Brown and Jimmy Fortune headline Fairgrounds



T. Graham Brown. Photo/Facebook

By Charles Duncan  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

To hear him tell it, T. Graham Brown isn't doing half bad for 62 years old.

"I'm having the time of

my life," the Georgia native said last week in a telephone interview. "I'm having more fun now than I've ever had in my life."

He began his career

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## Commissioner Bradshaw updates guests in meeting

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

In what has become a staple of his regular county meetings, Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw delivered a state of the county report on Tuesday, June 20.

"Everything is going really well, as I tell you every county meeting," said the commissioner. "I work with our Finance Director Andrea (Anderson) weekly to make sure that we're on target, we're on budget."

Added Bradshaw: "We're watching every dollar we spend, we're making sure that the money we spend is appropriate and the right thing to do for the taxpayers. And we are dead on target with our budget, it is going really good."

Bradshaw then shared some good news from the Association County



Towns County EMA Director Rickey Mathis. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Commissioners of Georgia, that the county will be receiving a \$25,193 credit toward its upcoming property and liability premium for the 2017-2018 policy year starting on July 1.

This property and

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## Countywide sales tax drops to 7 cents on Saturday

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Sales tax in Towns County will drop to its former rate of 7 cents on the dollar starting Saturday, July 1.

The sales tax rate has been 8 percent countywide for the last nine months due to the local passing of a 1-cent E-SPLIST referendum in May 2016.

Collections for the E-SPLIST, which stands for Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, began on Oct. 1, 2016.

Because the sales tax is going down because the county's 1-cent SPLIST has run its course, and following six years of collections that started July 1, 2011, the county SPLIST will end after June 30.

Last year, after the passage of the school system's E-SPLIST referendum, then-Commissioner Bill Kendall decided a long-term 8 percent sales tax would not be good for the county, and he declined to attempt a renewal

of the county SPLIST via another referendum.

This is why, starting July 1, the sales tax will drop back to 7 percent.

"Sales tax is a retail point-of-purchase tax imposed by state and local governments that is paid by the purchaser for goods and services," according to the U.S. Small Business Administration. "As a small business owner, you are required to assess sales tax, collect it and pass it on to the appropriate authorities within the prescribed time."

This is saying that business owners are responsible for collecting the correct amount of tax from customers, which will soon be 7 cents on the dollar.

The new Towns County tax rate posted to the Georgia Department of Revenue website recently, and business owners and residents can go there to find the most recent Sales Tax Rate Charts.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw,



Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw

like his predecessor, doesn't like the idea of an 8-cent sales tax, which is why he said he won't ask residents to approve another SPLIST while the school is still collecting its E-SPLIST.

E-SPLIST collections could go out five years, though the schools pledged last year to collect just four years' worth of the tax, putting into play

an E-SPLIST cutoff date of October 2020.

Commissioner Bradshaw has been working closely with Towns County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Darren Berrong to approach state legislators concerning an innovative solution that would likely require a statewide vote to pass.

As it stands, a single SPLIST cannot be shared between a county and its schools, which is why Dr. Berrong and Bradshaw are studying the possibility of a joint SPLIST collection.

Splitting a SPLIST penny would equate to less money for each party individually, but it would be in the mutual best interest of both the county and the school system to avoid potential SPLIST showdowns, or perhaps years-long gaps without the versatile tax as the entities potentially take turns in perpetuity at the ballot box.

The county has benefited

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## Library welcomes chamber, hosts Business After Hours

By Lily Avery  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Mountain Regional Library opened its doors to the Towns County Chamber of Commerce for the chamber's monthly Business After Hours event on Thursday, June 22.

Dozens of business owners, chamber members and guests gathered together in the newly renovated library's community room to check out the library's newest amenities, mingle and network during the event.

Attendees also received a free dinner of sandwiches, chips and cookies provided by the Towns County Friends of the Library and the chamber gave away various raffles throughout

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Towns County Chamber of Commerce President Candace Lee and MRLS Director Vince Stone welcoming guests to Business After Hours. Photo/Lily Avery

## Homeowners Association talks water in meeting

By Lily Avery  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Towns County Homeowners Association met for its annual meeting to discuss county business and community concerns on Friday, June 23, at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center.

Lake Chatuge conservation efforts and projects around the county were the primary talks of this year's meeting, with Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw and Tennessee Valley Authority Watershed Representative Scott Ledford being the primary speakers at the event.

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Towns County HOA members met Friday, June 23, to share personal concerns with local and state officials. Photo/Lily Avery

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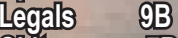
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FOLTC  
Bake Sale  
June 29th  
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EARLY DEADLINE THIS WEEK  
ALL ADS AND NEWS COPY MUST BE IN  
BY NOON ON THURSDAY, JUNE 29TH



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