

# Towns County Herald

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## Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Sunny	81 61
Fri: Clouds	81 63
Sat: Rain	80 62
Sun: Rain	80 63
Mon: Clouds	82 63
Tue: Sunny	84 64
Wed: Rain	85 64



Upstream Elevation Predicted 08/26/2015	
Lake Chatuge	1,922.46
Lake Nottely	1,770.73
Blue Ridge	1,681.12

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## Young Harris Art Festival August 29th August 30th

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## Towns County Library Annual Book and Bake Sale

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## 2015 Chamber Business Showcase

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## SPORTS FOOTBALL

Fri. Aug 28 @ Union County 7:30

SOFTBALL Thurs. Aug 27 @ Providence 4:45 PM

CROSS COUNTRY Thurs Aug 27 @ Union 4:30 PM

## Matthew Akins resigns as EMC general manager

By Charles Duncan  
Towns County Herald  
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

Matthew Akins is no longer the general manager at Blue Ridge Mountain EMC. The news comes as the BRMEMC board hired Daniel W. Brewer as interim general manager, EMC Director Steven Phillips said Monday.

“Mr. Akins came before the board Tuesday night (Aug. 18) and offered his resignation if he could be demoted to the position of engineer,” Phillips said. “The board told him that decision had to be made by the new general manager. Mr. Akins resigned from his position as general manager on Friday.”

Akins’ resignation comes 16 months after the disclosure of more than \$48,000 in unpaid utility bills by former BRMEMC President Terry Taylor.

News of the debt started a fire storm throughout the membership that led to the defeat of three incumbent EMC



Matthew Akins

board members. Departed EMC Board Member Danny Henson, who opted not to seek the vacant Union County EMC director’s seat, said Akins’ departure was inevitable.

“If Matthew Akins didn’t know about Terry Taylor’s debt, he should resign. If he did know about Terry Taylor’s debt, he should resign. It is as simple as that,” Henson said.

Brewer will remain in the interim, Phillips said.

“We’re going to search for a new GM, but we’ll wait until after the annual meeting and elections in September,” Phillips said.

“Daniel Brewer came highly recommended. He’s been an interim GM three times before and a GM twice at EMCs,” Phillips said.

The EMC Annual Meeting is Sept. 12. Two seats are up for grabs and one has already been decided.

In Union County, Mickey Cummings, Patrick Malone and Charles Rich are on the ballot by petition.

In Towns County, Roy Perren, who got on the ballot by petition, faces Jerry Nichols, who was nominated by the EMC Board of Directors.

In Fannin County, Larry Williams is unopposed on the ballot after gaining admission to the ballot by petition. William Prather, the EMC Board of Directors’ president, declined the nomination to seek another term on the board.

## Rep. Collins speaks to Movers and Shakers

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

In last week’s Mountain Movers and Shakers meeting at Mary’s Southern Grill, area residents received the chance to take part in a Town Hall meeting with U.S. Rep. Doug Collins.

The congressman spoke on issues that he has been working closely with of late, such as expediting help for veterans by restructuring the Veterans Affairs Administration, as well as what he considers to be a bad deal in the Iran Nuclear Deal and the challenges facing the upcoming budget process to avoid a government shutdown on Oct. 1.

According to Rep. Collins, roughly 84 cents of every dollar spent in the nation’s capital is considered mandatory spending.

“In other words, we don’t even budget that,” said Rep. Collins. “I’m not sure if you



U.S. Rep. Doug Collins

realize that – we don’t budget Social Security, we don’t budget Medicare, we don’t budget these things. If you qualify, you get it. That’s one of the reasons we’re having the trouble right now, if you qualify you get it.

“So, 84 cents – think about this. How many of you here work in business or own businesses? What if I went to

See Collins, Page 10

## Fire & Rescue seek new recruits

By Mason Mitcham  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Fire and Rescue is now recruiting volunteer firefighters.

Fire Chief Harold Copeland explained that firefighters who trained in Towns County often go on to careers in bigger counties such as Fulton or Gwinnett, meaning that the department has to fill its roster once again.

“A fire department’s just like a baseball, football or basketball team,” said Chief Copeland. “Take your high school team up here for example – freshmen come in out of rec ball, they come in as freshmen, learn the system, graduate to sophomores with more experience, graduate to juniors with even more experience, until they get to being seniors and they have all this experience.”

To keep the roster full, the fire department trains replacements annually.

“Every year we try to



Chief Harold Copeland

have a rookie school or a beginner class, and it’s strictly to obtain and retain more people,” said Chief Copeland. “It’s not easy. And not just here, but when I travel the state and go everywhere, the ability to obtain and retain volunteer firefighters is hard.”

Although Chief Copeland said that anyone who has the drive can be a firefighter, the training process and the job itself take a toll that many find themselves unable to pay.

“It’s just a demand on

families nowadays, the hours of training – you have to hit at least 60 hours of training, while getting up at 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. and leaving your family,” said Chief Copeland. “Are we all good with that?”

Firefighting recruits in 2015 face a different set of requirements than recruits 30 years ago, including a greater degree of liability and more stringent state requirements. Nevertheless, Chief Copeland is hoping to get a good batch of fresh firefighters this year.

“If we get 12 or 15 people in class, then hopefully all 12 or 15 will stick and be great,” said Chief Copeland. “But if we get five or six good people out of that in an area our size, then that’s huge from a team rebuilding standpoint.”

For the chief, acquiring volunteers is an important step for the department to take in order for it to continue to run efficiently.

“Obtaining and retaining volunteers is huge,” he said. “In

See Recruiting, Page 10

## Oak Ridge Boys play The Hall

By Mason Mitcham  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

On Friday, Aug. 21, the Oak Ridge Boys returned to the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds’ Anderson Music Hall in Hiawassee.

Although the group, founded in 1943, has 51 hit records and was selected this year as one of the Country Music Hall of Fame 2015 Inductees, the guys still made time to meet and greet fans prior to the show.

Joe Bonsall, the tenor vocalist, has been in the group for 42 years. He described the band as “recording Country songs with a Rock ‘n’ Roll attitude.”

Bonsall said that he loves having been able to make a career out of music.

“I’m singing songs for a living, man,” said Bonsall. “My daddy worked in a factory, that was hard work. For as long as I can remember, I’ve had a microphone in my hand. I’m a singer, I’m a writer, I can’t think of a better way to make a living. We have some of the



The Oak Ridge Boys’ William Lee Golden performs at Anderson Music Hall. Photo/Mason Mitcham

finest musicians in the world play behind us.”

In addition to singing, Bonsall also writes. Sometimes he writes songs, but more recently he’s been writing books.

“I’ve authored 10 books,” he said. “Like for instance, I just wrote a book on The Oak Ridge Boys called On the Road with the Oak Ridge Boys. The

publishers wanted a book on the group, how we do what we do, how we’ve done what we’ve done, stories that haven’t been told before, so I’ve got that out. It just came out and it’s going good.”

As far as songwriting goes, Bonsall likes to wait for inspiration before he puts pen

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## Gear up for vintage trailer weekend

By Mason Mitcham  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Fans of vintage car shows might want to mark their calendars for Saturday, Aug. 29, because on that date, Hiawassee Riverbend Campground will be hosting a vintage trailer rally.

Pete Whitley is something of a big name in the vintage trailer community. *The New York Times* even interviewed him for an article about the emerging hobby of restoring vintage trailers. It’s no surprise, then, that he’s the one promoting and managing the rally at the Riverbend Campground.

“We’re spending a weekend, Aug. 27 through Aug. 30 at the Riverbend Campground, and there’s going to be about 40 vintage trailers there from 1947 to the early ‘70s,” Whitley said.



“There’s going to be a couple of vintage mobile homes there.

“The main event is the Trailer Show on Saturday. It’s open to the public from 3-5 p.m.,” said Whitley. “I sent some flyers to the Towns

County Herald, and I sent some to the chamber of commerce, so we should be getting a good crowd from outside the campground on Saturday.”

This is not the first time

See Rally, Page 10

## Three people face armed robbery, burglary charges

Towns County Herald  
News Special

Three people remain behind bars following what the Towns County Sheriff’s Office is calling an armed robbery/home invasion.

Authorities were alerted to the incident on Thursday, Aug. 20 around 9:40 p.m. That’s when deputies responded to the armed robbery/home invasion call.

According to sheriff’s reports, the victims provided descriptions of both the three suspects as well as the vehicle they were driving. The victims also told authorities that the suspects were armed with a handgun.

Towns County sheriff’s deputies along with an officer from the Hiawassee Police Department spotted the vehicle in question at a business on Highway 76 in Hiawassee. Three subjects who fit the description provided by the victims, according to sheriff’s reports, occupied the vehicle.

Steven Mathew Anderson, 28, of Hiawassee, Jerry Laverne Alferink, 36, also of Hiawassee, and Kathryn Savannah Mumpower, 22, of Hiawassee were arrested without incident, sheriff’s reports show.

Anderson, Alferink, and Mumpower, were charged with one count each of armed robbery and one count each of burglary, Towns County Detention Center records show.

The case remains under investigation and ongoing. At press time, no bond had been set for the three suspects. Additional charges are likely, sheriff’s reports show.



Steven Anderson



Jerry Alferink



Kathryn Mumpower

## Commissioner Kendall proclaims Constitution Week in Towns

By Mason Mitcham  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

At the Towns County Commissioner’s meeting on Thursday, Aug. 20, the county once again affirmed its annual commitment to honoring the U.S. Constitution.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall signed the proclamation honoring the week of Sept. 17 through Sept. 23 as Constitution Week.

At the meeting, Ann Atchison, the recording secretary of the Old Union Trail Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, added a few words to mark the occasion.

“We’re just proud to be there for the community and to remember that the Constitution is our basis of what our forefathers had intended,” said Atchison. “And we need to preserve it and defend it.”

In addition to educating people about the Constitution, the DAR also seeks to serve and educate the community at large.

“Basically we try to help to educate the community,” said Atchison. “We’re a patriotic organization, and we try to preserve history. And so based on those issues, that’s what our organization does – we help the community with different things.

“Right now, we’re commemorating the Vietnam Veterans. We just did a commemoration at Union County a couple of weeks ago,” Atchison contin-



Commissioner Kendall signs Constitution Week proclamation.

ued. “We’ve helped school children with scholarships to travel to Washington D.C. We’re a volunteer organization for the community, especially when it comes to patriotic activities. We work closely with the Sons of the American Revolution that’s based out of Blairsville.”

Commissioner Kendall was in complete agreement with Atchison about the importance of educating people about the Constitution.

“As Ann said, the Constitution was, at the time, it was some miracle that all those original colonists could get together and come together with a document like this,” the commissioner said.

Additionally, the county

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TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

