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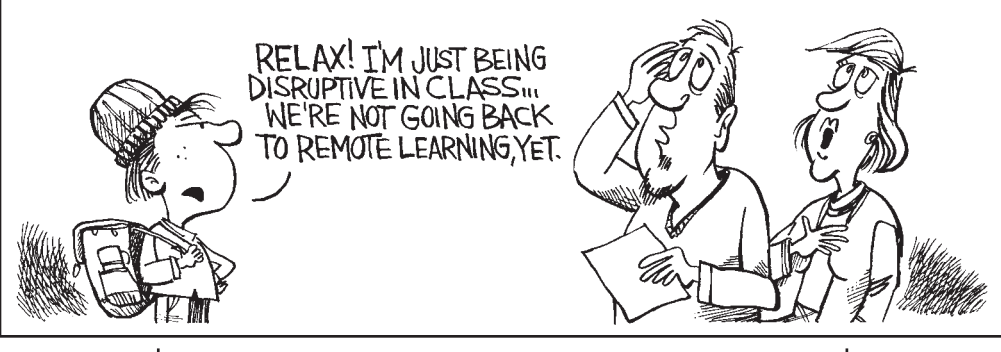
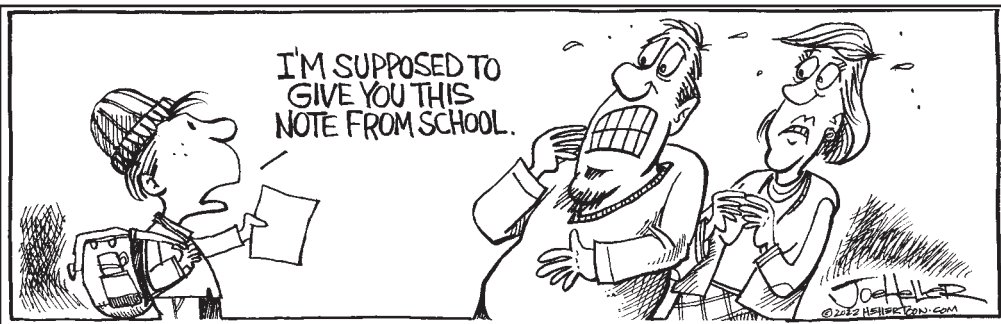
OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

She Stepped up for America

She clearly didn't even need to. But like so many of our Greatest Generation she stepped up to serve our American ideals and something far greater than self. We are loosing these wonderful folks due to natural aging processes at a fast pace. We simply cannot forget them and we must honor them as examples of the way we all should strive to be, for each other and America. Betty White was called Home only two and one half weeks prior to her 100th birthday, on December 31, 2021. Personally, I knew little about her, other than when Sherry watched some of her comical appearances on several different older TV shows. She was unique and had great talent as a comical, always smiling, sometimes silly character. I have learned that Betty White was an extremely popular and well loved actor who had an Eight decade long career, entertaining many Americans.



The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



Radon Awareness Month

January is national radon action month. Many Georgians spend these cold months huddled inside waiting for a warmer spring. This makes it even more important that we test our homes for radon, a colorless, odorless gas that is the second leading cause of lung cancer.



In Union county, about 46 percent of homes have elevated levels of the naturally radioactive gas radon. In Towns County, it is 36%. Over the course of many years, exposure to this gas can cause lung cancer even in non-smokers. In fact, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Smokers, current and former, exposed to radon gas have an even greater risk of developing lung cancer. Radon is a naturally occurring gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil and rock. Often granite rock naturally has high lev-

The Invisible Wall

Anyone who writes can tell you about the invisible wall of writer's block that can appear between the first sentence of a composition and a deadline. It showed up for me this week like Bill Murray's clock radio alarm in the movie "Groundhog Day."

Isn't it true, that since the beginning of the "plague years," a certain sameness has crept into our day to day awareness and custom? Infection rates have increased, new variant appeared, politician reacts to, celebrity reacts to...haven't we heard all this before? Haven't I written all THIS before??

I stood at the kitchen window looking out over my cup of coffee trying to erase the voices of Sonny and Cher from my head, and standing just above the bird feeder I saw three white-tail deer. Now there was something new! Then I noticed an Eastern Towhee on the feeder with the Carolina Chickadees, and thought, "What are you doing this far north in January buddy? I'd better check the bird guidebook."

The sun was just coming over the ridge in the east, casting a medley of shadows beneath the laurels. The mountain wore a mantle of hoarfrost which glistened in the morning light, wisps of cloud streaming into clear blue sky. The evil spell was broken.

I think the first step on my path to release was closing the laptop on my way to that window. Trying to stay informed today is like tending a fire. If you get too close, or linger too long, you will get very uncomfortable at the least, or burned at worst.

It takes some effort, and focus, to navigate the polluted waters of the Pixel Ocean, even more to fish in them. Use a net and you're going to find a lot of garbage in your catch. Use a pole instead, like an angler.

In that spirit, my recent media burn inspired some new efforts, and I found a news aggregator that actually seems to work. I've tried Google's version, and the results always seem tainted by their efforts to spy on me and sell me things. Microsoft's version seems intent on slyly injecting social engineering into my results, but that could also be the effect of corporate media's intent to push a political agenda and the cringe-worthy efforts of fragile academia to disseminate discredited and repackaged Marxist ideas.

I've also rediscovered as new, something very old: The binding of ideas and factual information onto stacks of paper. It's odd that they became invisible for so long, since one wall of my office is covered with these bindings. I find it very convenient that they are so near, now that they are so needed. Ironic, isn't it, that an invisible wall of writer's block could exist within an arm's reach of an invisible wall of books.

With that thought I bid you farewell for now, my friends, in this first month of the new year. We'll do our best to push through those invisible walls of thought and habit this year, so "Put your little hand in mine, there ain't no hill or mountain we can't climb..." Sorry about that. Think of something else, fast, before it gets stuck in your head!

There is a news aggregator available on the news360 website which has, so far, been very promising. When I block a celebrity topic, for example, it stays blocked rather than being reintroduced in a slightly different form. My news feed is now tightly focused on the topics that interest me, like physics, finance, weather, geology and, of course, recipes.

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.

Partner Families are required to donate 350 hours of work on the building of their home, someone else's home, construction repair projects, or working in the ReStore. Since it usually takes about a year from the time a family is selected until the time they move into their home, there is plenty of time for this to be accomplished.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor
P.O. 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.

Partner families are offered support all along the way, from the time they fill out the application for home ownership all the way until they pay off their 20-year mortgage. There is always someone from the Family Support Committee available to answer any questions a family may have, and offer help when situations arise. There are credit counselors available to help families learn how to best spend their money, the best way to raise their credit scores, and handle things like bank accounts, credit cards, and bill-paying.

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.*

The best part of this Habitat program is its lasting effects. Some of our homeowners sell their homes, and move on to bigger and better situations. Homeownership becomes "generational", meaning that the children who grow up in stable housing tend to further their education beyond high school, potentially moving into careers that pay more. They tend to become homeowners themselves. Their children follow their examples.

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

Habitat for Humanity has developed a model that helps families become homeowners, when they normally would not be able to accomplish this in a conventional way. For example, potential Habitat families don't just buy houses, they become "Habitat Partner Families." The Families don't need a huge down payment (which is often 10% of the home's value). Instead, their down payment is \$1500. This down-payment amount is due at closing, but can be paid in smaller increments from the time a family is selected, until the date of closing.

Have something to sell?
Let the Herald work for you!
Contact us at 706-896-4454
Deadline for the T.C. Herald is Friday by 5 PM

A Hand up, not a Hand Out

Many of you reading this column come from long lines of families that are or were homeowners. That, however, is not the case for many other families in Union and Towns Counties, here in Georgia. According to a quick internet search, it seems that around 23% of Union County adult residents and 22% of Towns County adult residents rent their homes. Some, of course, rent by choice, others out of necessity. You may not have given much thought to it, but owning a home is proven to have a wide-ranging impact on a family, in ways that you may not have considered. People who own homes are much more likely to stay in their homes longer than those who rent. This provides stability to families, because they aren't moving around often. Parents become more involved in their communities. Children do better in school when provided with a stable environment. Home ownership comes with a sense of pride and accomplishment.



Habitat Happenings
Cathy Wheeler

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The Towns County Herald is an independent and nonpartisan publication. As such, third-party views contained herein are not necessarily the opinions or positions of this newspaper, e.g. advertising, press releases, editorial content, perspectives expressed in articles covering local events, etc.

Letters to The Editor

Hamilton Gardens in Good Hands

Dear Editor,
I have been a frequent visitor to the Hamilton Gardens for years. While on a recent walk through the gardens, I took notice of all the clearing and cleaning that the new staff is doing. It looks great! The newly installed landscaping in the parking lot is very professionally done and looks much nicer too. I love the new rock work and the stage makes more sense placed on the lawn than sitting in the parking lot. I spoke with the new Curator about all the changes; she has a wonderful vision for the future of the Hamilton Gardens. What I don't understand is all the anger and hatred directed at such a beautiful place - it truly makes no sense. The previous management made their decision to dissolve their business. Change was bound to happen. Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds definitely chose the right person for the job!
Phoebie Seay

Daffodil Project, A Shameful End

Dear Editor,
In 2017, our local Jewish residents, and Towns County, were honored to be selected as a location for the Children's Daffodil Project. The garden site was to be at Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge, Inc. Initiated by Am Yisrael Chai, a non-profit Holocaust Education and Awareness organization, the purpose of the Daffodil Project is to build a worldwide living Holocaust Memorial with the planting of 1.5 million daffodils around the globe in honor and loving memory of those 1.5 million children who were murdered in the Holocaust.
It was our honor to plant 600 bulbs for 600 children in a location blessed by a Rabbi and contained within the existing Memorial Garden, a perfect location. Each bulb planted was represented by a lost child's biography, so this was a very personal project. A beautiful dedication of this Garden was held on April 15, 2018, which is the International Day of Observance of the Holocaust and many local residents attended the program.
Today, this garden is gone; the bulbs uprooted; the area smoothed over; all evidence of the Children's Daffodil Garden is gone.
Management of Hamilton Gardens reverted to Georgia Mountain Fair in November, 2020 and a staff was hired to operate the garden under the umbrella of a "Gardens Committee", chaired by Terry Taylor.
In spite of the fact that information was provided to this committee and others, asking them to honor and respect all of the special garden projects, funded and planned by community donors, including the Children's Daffodil Project, it did not happen.
Does the Gardens Committee have a plan, does it include the eradication of all previous work? Who is responsible, and better yet, who is accountable? The destruction of the Children's' Daffodil Project is beyond being shameful and disrespectful of the children honored here. This is an act of desecration of a sacred site.
It feels as if these children were murdered a second time.
Grace Howard
Former volunteer at Hamilton Gardens

Towns County Herald

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Publication No: 635540
Advertising, News deadlines: Friday at 5 p.m.
Towns County (1 Year) \$25. Out of County (1 Year) \$35. 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.
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