

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Why do they do it?

Why does a person become a firefighter? Why do they do it? It is a good question and there are many fire departments asking that question more and more due to the fall in the number of volunteers in the fire service today.

The answer to the question cannot be compressed into one magic statement that explains the desire for people to become firefighters. The reason "why" is different for many people. Most people think that firefighters are a bunch of adrenaline junkies who like to run into a dangerous situation or burning building. Others may think that firefighters are trauma seekers who want to see devastating motor vehicle accidents.

Although fires and accidents are exciting, firefighters go beyond just wanting to see these things.

For the most part, firefighters have three universal traits. Firefighters are problem solvers, knowledge seekers, and they always want to help. This is what makes them different. When they see an emergency, they see a problem that must be solved, and they jump into action.

Firefighters love to learn. They want to learn the latest information and skills to be able to handle just about any emergency. They train constantly to learn a skill in order to be prepared when minutes count. The fire service is a great environment for learning. Where else can you learn to put on turnout gear and SCBA; go into a burning building; extinguish a large fire; cut the door off a wrecked car; repel off a building; and the list goes on and on.

Firefighters love a mystery. We have stated many times how a firefighter must be a jack-of-all-trades because we have no idea what we will be called to next. Each scene can be different, and firefighters love the challenge of using the knowledge and skills they have learned to solve the problem with the best possible outcome.

At the end of the day, the best part of being a firefighter is knowing that you did something that day to help someone. Firefighters have the knowledge and skills to help on what may be the worst day of someone's life. There is no other feeling like knowing that you can make a positive difference.

Union County Fire Department is always in need of more volunteers. We need people who are willing to learn new skills;

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Blasphemy or Doxology

Blasphemy has been in the news of late. It's a harsh word we tend to avoid in everyday use. A more accessible synonym is "slander," defined as false and malicious speech against someone. So if blasphemy is false words against God, its antonym could be doxology, true words to God.

Ireland voted in late 2018 to remove blasphemy as a constitutional offense. It became an issue when actor Stephen Fry opined on TV about a god who is mean, stupid, and maniac. The Irish police investigated, and could have levied a fine of 25,000 euros. They dropped the case because not enough people were outraged. I wouldn't have been either, since I don't know the god Mr. Fry described. If he was addressing his Creator, I'd suggest that's between the two of them.

Apparently Pakistan has defended its blasphemy law by pointing to Ireland's constitution. It's an issue that has roiled that country, especially concerning the case of a Christian woman, Asia Bibi. Pakistan imprisoned her for blasphemy from 2009 until 2018, when three high court judges acquitted her. Now she and her family are in hiding as vigilante radicals search house to house. She awaits asylum, but not even the country founded on religious freedom has stepped forward. (That's US.)

A hero of the Christian faith was once a blasphemer, by his own admission. Paul wrote, "I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief." Perhaps Mr. Fry was similarly afflicted. Paul doesn't dwell on his reckless unbelief. Instead, he speaks of the grace, love, and mercy of God toward the "foremost of sinners" (himself), and his own faith and gratitude to Christ Jesus our Lord. In fact, as Paul writes about the patience of Christ towards him, he becomes enraptured. "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen!" (1 Tim. 1:12-17)

Did you see what happened there? He abandoned blasphemy and embraced doxology. Wow, do we need more of that in our culture today! You can detect the cultural blasphemies that contradict the truth of God in these: "Male and female He created them." "A man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Do you know how many restaurants there are in Union County?

A. As of January 11, 2019, there are 61 permitted restaurants in Union County and the city limits of Blairsville. There are always restaurants opening and some closing within Union County, so this number fluctuates.

Q. Where can I find a list of all the restaurants and their locations?

A. Out of the 61 permitted restaurants 44 are members of the Chamber of Commerce. You can go to their website at www.visitblairsvillage.com and click on the Business Directory at the top of the page. You can then choose what category of business you would like to see and one of these categories is Food and Beverage Services. This will provide you with all the restaurants that are members of the Chamber of Commerce.

Q. Do you plan to bring more restaurants to Union County?

A. This is a large misperception of the job of the commissioner. Most restaurants choose a city or a county because of the quality of the area, the population, the average income, the potential locations and the potential competition and the ability to make a profit. So, while what we do to assist the county and what the Mayor, council and employees do to help the city are all pieces to the puzzle that help make us attractive to a new business or restaurant looking to move to our area.

Q. What is the inspection process for all these restaurants? How are we, as consumers, protected?

A. All restaurants are inspected by Union County Environmental Health. Restaurants must be inspected prior to opening and are then inspected every six months after that. Restaurants are graded by a very specific set of standards. A low health rating could be because of numerous small issues or because of just one or two big issues. If a restaurant scores below an 80 they can correct the issue on the spot or they are given 10 days to fix it before being re-inspected. If a restaurant scores below a 70 they are shut down immediately until the issues are corrected.

Q. How do citizens and restaurant owners contact

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

The Opioid Epidemic

A class of synthetic drugs has replaced heroin in many major American drug markets, ushering in a more deadly phase of the opioid epidemic.

New numbers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that drug overdoses killed more than 70,000 Americans in 2017, a record. Overdose deaths are higher than deaths from HIV, car crashes or gun violence at their peaks. The data also show that the increased deaths correspond strongly with the use of synthetic opioids known as fentanyl.

Since 2013, the number of overdose deaths associated with fentanyl and similar drugs has grown to more than 28,000, from 3,000. Deaths involving fentanyl increased more than 45 percent in 2017 alone.

The recent increases in drug overdose deaths have been so steep that they have con-

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The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

"As the new Governor of Georgia, I am ready to hit the ground running."



"If I can just get used to these shoes!"



Letters to the Editor

New Year Resolutions

Dear Editor,

After we celebrated the birth of baby Jesus last month in all of its glory, we slowly began to take down our decorations and the tree for another year, looking forward to 2019 and what lies ahead, which only God knows. It was then that I got to pondering what new resolutions I might entertain that would bring joy to my Savior, Christ, Jesus.

Yes, I have made a few resolutions over the years, but they never stuck with me for the whole year, so I am striving this year to be a better father to my kids, my grandkids and great-grandkids. To pray for them more often and to send them cards during the year to let them know how much they are missed and loved.

Another point of interest would be to continue encouraging folks on Facebook to keep the faith and keep on trusting God in all things. I sometimes tend to forget to call folks now and then, just to let them know I am thinking of them and if there is anything I can pray for them about, also need to mend fences and relationships in the family.

Life truly is short, and what we do and say hopefully here and now will leave a lasting effect on the next generation coming up. Will they know me as a humble and gentle person, one who went out of the way to help others in need and

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Build the Wall

Dear Editor,

It is evident to me that President Trump is not a member, by choice, of the "Good Ole Boy Political Network."

I think he is trying to prevent, or at the very least, curtail, illegal immigrants from entering the United States.

How many years has a Band-Aid been put on this serious problem? It hasn't worked, in my opinion.

Folks that can, put a barrier around their home or business when it is necessary. It may be for attractiveness, but I think the security it provides is the primary reason.

Without the wall, the can is "kicked down the road" again. If considered again, the cost would probably double and be out of the question to be considered again permanently.

It really is difficult for me to understand (maybe some North Georgia readers can help) how anyone would be against installing a wall to prevent, or slow down, those that would enter without due process.

I think the cost, if the wall is constructed, would be returned to the taxpayers via a mini-

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RC&D

Plan For The Great Escape!

The local Firewise Citizen's Coalition and the County Fire Rescue want to make sure you know what to do in the event of a wildfire. Do you have an early warning system to alert you of a fire in your home?

If your smoke alarm goes off do you know what to do? What if you have a fire in your home? Will you have time to get out? You should have a working smoke detector, a minimum of one on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms. This will give you the time you need to get out. Remember to change your smoke detector batteries twice a year. A good rule of thumb is to change your batteries when you change your clocks, for daylight savings time.

Have a home escape plan: Know two ways out of every bedroom. Have an escape ladder for bedrooms on the second floor. Plan a special meeting place for family members outside your home; mail box or a large tree. Never go back inside a burning building. Once you're out stay out! Call the fire department from a neighbor's house or cell phone, never call from inside your home; the time it takes for you to call may be the time you need to get out. Know your address to ensure emergency responders can find your home quickly. Make sure address numbers are visible for emergency responders to find your house. Have a family fire drill and practice an escape plan. This will help your family in the event a fire starts in or around your home.

The Firewise Citizen's Coalition works hard to make your community safer from a wildfire by encouraging all residents to reduce the fuel around their homes and by educating them about the risks where they live and the measures they can take to reduce those risks.

There are now 23 official Firewise Communities in Towns County out of more than 100 in all of Georgia. Soon after the Firewise program started in Towns in 2009, there were three Firewise communities in the county, but things changed in 2013 when the Chatstee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council received a Fire Adapted Communities grant to develop a pilot project there, and since have added many Firewise communities with more to come.

Residents of these Firewise communities have taken actions to reduce the fuel around their homes and are recognized for their efforts by NFPA's Firewise program, but most important, residents can rest knowing that their homes are safer from wildfires like we had in Fall

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RC&D Executive Director

Frank Riley



A Father's Love

Recently, my Mother and Father retired and moved to Blairsville. Many of the stories told to me over the years have come through my mother's experiences. However, today's story came from one of my mother's cousins. Recently, my mother met one of her cousins for the first time in a number of years.

Dot Gooch came to me after she read one of my stories in the North Georgia News. Dot knew the people I was describing in my article. After Mom and Dad moved here I introduced them to Dot and was surprised that Dot and mother were cousins. Fortunately for me Dot related the following story about her Daddy.

Dot was only 4 or 5 years of age when her Daddy received his draft notice to enter the Army and World War II. The day Bud Baker received the draft notice was a sad one for the family. Bud's parents and siblings all gathered at their house to discuss the sad news. Bud was a brave man and was honored to serve his country. However, he was very sad and apprehensive about leaving his young family. Bud was afraid his young wife and children would go hungry as a result of his absence.

Ed Baker looked at the worried face of his son and told him not to worry. "Your wife and kids will have enough to eat". During the war years the young man was constantly on the mind of his father, Ed Baker. There was no such thing as electricity in north Alabama during those years. The Baker family did have a radio that was battery operated. The rule of the house was that the radio could not be operated by anyone except Ed. Each night after supper the family would gather around that old radio to listen to the news about the war. They used it as a way to keep up with the whereabouts of his son Bud.

Now let's go back to the family gathering at Bud Baker's home. Dot said, "All of us kids were playing and having a big time with our cousins. Then I noticed my parents and grandparents were crying. I just couldn't understand why they were so sad". She had no idea about the meaning of a draft notice. She was just enjoying her cousins.

A few weeks later the entire family gathered at the home of Ed Baker. Once again all the little kids thought it was a great day, but, Dot understood something was causing a great sadness to overshadow the family gathering. Dot said, "The adults sat up and talked all night while us kids were sent off to bed around 10 PM. And when I got up the next morning my Daddy was gone to Boot Camp somewhere in Mississippi".

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Black Walnuts

Black walnuts are a very common tree up here in the mountains. My backyard is almost completely covered with the walnuts every fall. I've been woken up very suddenly more than once in the middle of the night from them dropping on my roof. Black walnut trees are pretty interesting plants with some unique properties and uses. Let's talk about black walnuts and what some of those properties and uses are.

Black walnuts are in the walnut family which includes pecans and hickory trees. It can be identified by its leaves and bark. The leaves are alternate, pinnately compound. That means the leaves alternate from one side of the branch to the other in a kind of palm tree leaf shape. The bark has deep ridges in it that come together and separate going up the trunk. The nut has a green husk on it that turns to a brownish black color after falling to the ground.

Black walnut trees can grow to be 100 feet tall with a canopy spreading up to 75 feet. The trunks can grow up to 7 feet in diameter. Black walnuts are difficult to transplant because they have a deep taproot, making it difficult to pot them without cutting the roots. They like moist well drained soils. This makes them make good trees to grow along stream banks.

An interesting property of black walnuts is that they produce a chemical called juglone. Black walnuts put this chemical out through the roots and into the surrounding soil. Juglone will stop the growth of or kill some types of neighboring plants. It's like a natural herbicide that the tree uses to reduce competition with other plants.

Economically speaking black walnut trees can have dual value. The walnuts can be harvested and eaten. The actual nut which is edible is protected beneath the husk and a shell, making it difficult to get to. From personal experience I will say if you are peeling the husk off by hand to wear gloves! The husks will stain your hands. I used just about every product I could find from gasoline to quaternary ammonia to dish soap and the stain stayed on my hands until the skin that was stained wore off. Besides the nuts, the other value of black walnuts is from the timber. A single tree can be worth up to \$20,000. That price tag is only if the tree is of the highest quality. Unfortunately for opportunistic black walnut owners in Georgia we don't have the right climatic conditions to grow high quality black walnut timber. Water stress and cold winter temperatures that we don't get, but that occur in places like Iowa, lead to better quality. When European settlers ar-

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Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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