

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Winter Weather Preparedness

The last couple of weeks have shown us that winter is here. We are feeling the colder temperatures and have seen a few snowflakes. Winter weather systems can bring a variety of weather to include wind, snow, sleet, and/or ice. We must be ready, and there are several things that you can do to prepare yourself, your family, your home, and your vehicles for winter weather.

One of the first things that should be considered when preparing for winter weather is the ability to stay informed. Watching the local weather stations and receiving weather alerts/updates from local authorities are two great ways to stay informed. The CodeRED Emergency Notification System can send weather alerts to your cellphone, keeping you informed on the go. For more information about CodeRED, please visit www.unioncountyga.gov/codered or call UCEMA at 706-439-6091.

Hazardous roads and power outages are common with winter weather. There may be times when the road departments and utility companies are overwhelmed or unable to provide assistance right away. You and your family should be prepared to stay at home, possibly without power, for at least three days. To prepare, you will need supplies and a Ready kit. A Ready kit includes non-perishable food, water (one gallon per person, per day), flashlights, batteries, a weather radio, and a first-aid kit. Other things that you may want to consider are medications, pet food, and games for the kids.

Ready kits are also a good idea for your vehicle. Drivers should create a Ready kit with essential supplies that may be needed for emergencies or if they happen to be stranded in a winter weather event. Supplies include food, water, blankets, flashlights, batteries, and a first-aid kit. A portable mobile phone charger is also recommended for your vehicle and your home.

Winter weather preparedness is something to consider now. Make plans to stay informed and pay attention to local weather reports. On your next visit to the grocery store, add a few items to stock up your Ready kit. Grab some batteries, a few gallons of water, some non-perishable food, and do not forget the manual can opener. Union County Emergency Management encourages everyone to prepare and to be safe. Remember, you are ultimately responsible for your own safety. Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Groundhog Day

"I got you, babe" plays on the clock radio, waking Phil Connors to face the same day yet again. Bill Murray played the lead in the film, "Groundhog Day" (1993). Phil discovers he is trapped in a time loop, experiencing that same song, day, and people over and over. To escape, he tries crime, exploitation, good deeds, even suicide. Yet every day, Sonny and Cher wake him up just the same.

Connors experiences a nightmare that forces him to focus on the future. The film plays to human anxieties about present realities and future unknowns. At least you know what your past is – it's fixed. To focus on future unknowns is to subject yourself to the pathologies of fear and worry.

The Bible has something to say about the future. "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt. 6:34). It invites you to be circumspect about the future. "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring" (Prov. 27:1).

So far, we've been talking about a future within the bounds of time, your earthly lifespan. There is a future beyond time that is quite unavoidable – the immortality of your soul. Critics say God's promise of happy immortality is a divine bribe at best, an opiate at worst. But as a believer, you know that our faith is not in some imagined future state of the soul; it's in a Person – Jesus. He calls you to a self-sacrificing faith, with eternal benefits secondary to a loving relationship with your Creator. The essence of faith "is the thirst for an end (God) higher than natural ends... self-rejection in favor of an object (God) wholly good," writes C.S. Lewis. "That the self-rejection will turn out to be a self-finding, that to die is to live – these are sacred paradoxes."

The challenges of today and the unknowns of tomorrow are not nearly as daunting when you accept that this world is but a foyer to eternity. That perspective of reality brings meaning and purpose into life today. "We live by faith, not by sight. We... prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it" (2 Cor. 5:7-9).

In the film, it was sincere love that finally released Phil

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

When I am out and about in the community, people often stop me to ask questions that are important to them at the time. I may have an answer, but I may also need to do some research to provide a complete answer – depending upon the question asked. This week's questions reflect a few of the topics that have been brought up as I have visited with Union County residents in our community.

Q. I have a request that some needed signs be put up on my road. Is there a reason that I have to call for this? Why doesn't the Road Department keep up with needed signs?

A. Our Road Department does a great job of maintaining our county road system, but I can assure you that we NEED and REQUEST help from the public. This is a huge job. The county has approximately 544 miles of county roads which include 380 miles of asphalt paving, 58 miles of surface treatment pavement and 105 miles of gravel roads. That is enough roads to take you all the way from Blairsville, GA to Tampa, Florida. So bottom line, the Road Department needs assistance when you see a sign that is bent, knocked down, missing, road potholes, or any other issue related to road problems, including litter. Simply call 706-439-6062 and you can leave a message after business hours and someone is usually answering the phone from 8 AM to 4 PM. Thank you for your interest.

Q. I have a problem with a certain topic and would like to send in my request anonymously. Would you still take my request or complaint seriously?

A. Absolutely! We take all requests into consideration, and we investigate all serious complaints. The problem is that if something is sent to us anonymously, we have no way to follow up; we have no way to get further necessary information; we also cannot let you know the reason why we cannot complete your request; or we cannot let you know that we are going to complete your request but it might take a few days, weeks, or even months for some request. So, we will definitely take your request, but you should be extra careful to provide all necessary information including tag numbers, addresses, vehicle type and color, nearest id of location of problem if you do not have an address.

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



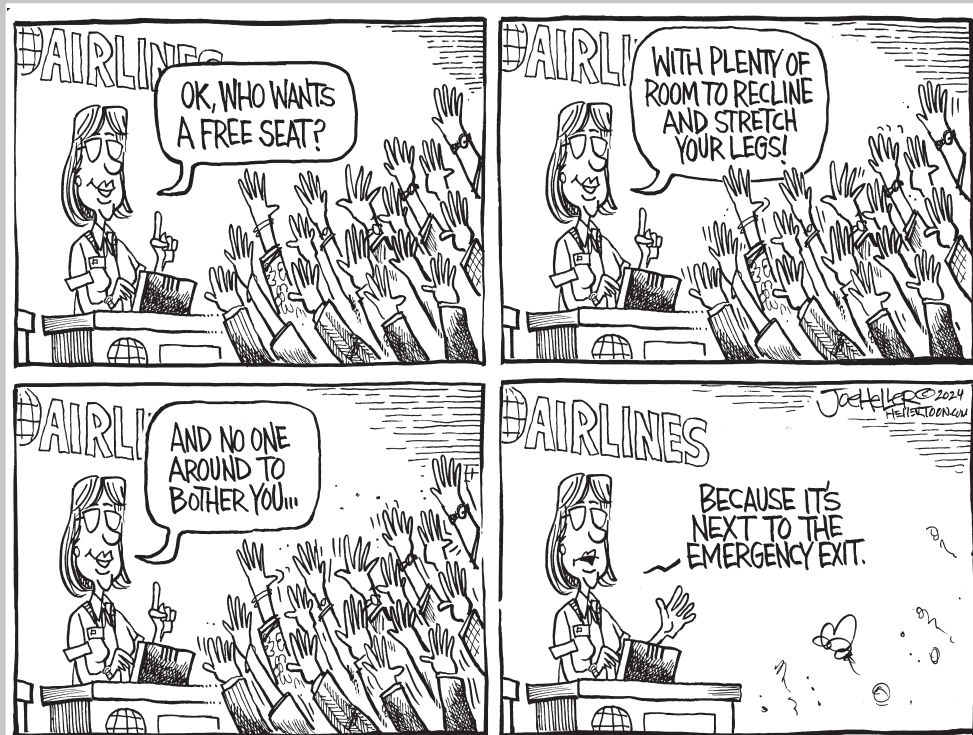
New Year, Same Border Crisis

While millions of Americans recently made New Year's resolutions, I can guarantee that President Biden didn't make any plans to change the course of his self-inflicted border crisis. After all, Biden's ongoing illegal invasion is intentional. For the last three years, the Biden Administration has incentivized illegal migration, failed to uphold the law, and diminished our border security. Undoubtedly, the White House's radical immigration agenda has not only put Americans last – but put Americans in danger.

Under Joe Biden's watch, more than 300 suspected terrorists have attempted to illegally cross the southern border. Notably, these are only the suspected terrorists who were caught by Border Patrol agents. How many more evaded CBP and illegally entered the country? With over 1.7 million known gotaways since President Biden took office, how can Americans truly feel safe as the open southern border continues

See Clyde page 5A

United States Congressman Representative Andrew Clyde



Chamber of Commerce

Excitement is building up as we prepare to shine the spotlight on the exceptional talents and hard work within our community. The time has come to honor our STAR Students and Teachers who have not only demonstrated academic excellence but have also made a significant impact on our schools.

We are thrilled to invite you to the much-anticipated "Evening with the STARS" event, scheduled for February 8th. This celebration is more than just a Chamber of Commerce gathering; it's an opportunity for the entire community to come together and recognize the outstanding achievements of these remarkable individuals.

Our STAR Students and Teachers have been carefully selected for their dedication, passion and contributions to the educational landscape of Blairsville. These individuals have worked tirelessly to make a difference, and now it's our turn to acknowledge and applaud their

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

Fisher Field Road Bridge

Dear Editor,

According to the 2021 (most currently published) Union County bridge inspection report from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), 18.8% of Union County bridges "need repair or closed."

The Fisher Field Road bridge is one of those bridges now being replaced in May, after having been designated "structurally deficient" in 2021, thus begging the question of why it was not replaced then? It most definitely is an emergency now three years later since the new GDOT load limits prevent anything larger than an unloaded full-size pickup truck passage, e.g. no fire trucks or ambulances, no propane trucks, or school buses serving the 41 families landlocked by the defective bridge.

There are an additional eight county bridges designated by GDOT as "needs repair or closed." See Blanchard, page 5A

How Spectacular Could We Be?

Dear Editor,

My buddy passed away Jan. 3 after valiantly battling cancer for years. I wrote a story about this man in 2021, "Meet God's Soldier with a Mission," published in several news outlets across the South. Lt. Col. Dan Payne wore so many different hats during his lifetime of service to God and country that he required a room to hang them all.

If we are fortunate to live a while, we all wind up with a roomful of hats. We change our roles throughout our lives. Transitioning from child to adult, from mothers and fathers to empty nesters, and from one job to another until we wear the cap announcing, "I'm Retired!"

Dan graduated high school with me and married my good friend, Jo. Became a father, See Gendusa, page 5A

Local Election Basics

Dear Editor,

This is only a short summary, but I have covered most of the basics of what the Board of Elections and the Board of Registrars in Union County do.

Be in mind that We The People have no say in who these people are as they are not elected but appointed.

The BOE (Board of Elections) deals with the machines we use to vote with every day of the election making sure they work correctly, getting the paper and material for ballots, etc., and monitoring the process. The only day they have total control of the election is on the actual

See Lodes, page 5A

Loneliness II

Loneliness can make us vulnerable to emotional pain in a large fashion. We do become actually discombobulated in our tiny arena. Our lives become confusing and truly disconcerting. In other words, we become a royal mess. Loneliness can be dangerous and destructive when we deny or ignore our personal loneliness, even becoming prisoners to it. However, the welcoming message is that even though the pain and grief may be evident in our lives, those feelings cannot be in control if they have been analyzed, evaluated and properly dealt with.

Research claims that loneliness can cause serious threats to a normally healthy person over a long period of time. All of us have a need to connect to others, and when we don't, we can experience a sense of loneliness. The problem is that some individuals may well be surrounded by friends and family members throughout the day and yet still experience a deep sense of loneliness. Therefore, no matter how many individuals or how much time a person is in reach of others, loneliness can still exist. Having a lack of social contact with others can be painful.

The dilemma is that the individual may well know the possible negative health consequences of the few social connections and yet also recognize the situation of being a loner – the individual faces complex, difficult circumstances of needing and not truly receiving any connections. The person knows that he or she is receiving very few human connections – this carries with it sadness, pain and hopelessness.

Being physically alone is not a necessary condition of experiencing loneliness. Such a person can experience a lonely state of mind while being with others at work, at home with loved ones, or even in the sacred environment of marriage. Loneliness can happen to anyone, at any time, and wherever the person is.

An individual may well be the popular cheerleader in one's high school and still be lonely. A deciding factor is the authenticity of the relationships. If there is a lack of authenticity, the result can be a feeling of loneliness, even among family members. This sense of loneliness is very devastating because the individual is living among those who supposedly have love for him, or her, and yet for some reasons, the lonely individual doesn't feel the love or acceptance. People experiencing loneliness are susceptible to a variety of health issues that can cause pain and misery.

Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness. (Maya Angelou)

Successful Mental Health

Dr. James Ray Ashurst PH. D.



The Right Thing

This time of year celebrates the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King. His life cried out for equality for people of all races. All that Dr. King wanted was for people to be able to sit down at the same table regardless of their color. The lesson for present day Georgians is we are all Americans. We are all people and we all want the same thing for our kids: "A better America."

Daniel T. Hyde was my Great-Great-Grandfather. His father was also called Daniel. The elder Daniel came to Dawson County immediately after the Indian Removal in the 1830s where the Hyde family settled in the Shoal Creek District. During the Civil War, Daniel T. Hyde fought with the Confederate States of America in the same outfit in which many people from Union served. Daniel T. Hyde's father, Daniel, also fought with the confederacy while at an age of approximately 70. The elder Daniel participated in something similar to the Home Guard. His outfit was out of Dahlonega.

After the war, Daniel Tence Hyde raised his family in Dawson County. One of his sons was named Clifford. Clifford was my Great-Grandfather. My father told me, "In his younger days, Clifford was quite the rounder." I think Clifford enjoyed carousing, drinking and fighting. He wasn't very big, but, they say he would fight a bear at midnight with nothing but a hickory switch. One evening Clifford was enjoying too much of the night life at a saloon down around Atlanta. Something happened and Clifford became involved in an all-out brawl. When it was over Clifford was standing, but, another man was not. Clifford thought the other man was dead. So, to save his skin he left his family and moved to Phil Campbell, Alabama, where he married my Great-Grandmother. Clifford named one of his sons Daniel.

Uncle Dan and Aunt Rosie had one son, D. T. Hyde, who was about six years older than my father. During this time everything was going great for people in Alabama and the South. The war against Japan and Germany had just ended. For the first time since the Civil War, the economy in the South was booming. He was the first person in his family to attend college, and then another war began. The young man did the right thing. He volunteered and was shipped off to a place called Korea.

He was serving with all kinds of people in his outfit. He soon learned that skin color doesn't matter in a foxhole and when bombs are exploding all around you. In this situation, you look out for each other regardless of the color

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Crape Myrtle Pruning

Crape myrtles are a very common tree that many people like to plant in their home landscape or you may see them lining roads in towns. There are couple of reasons why crape myrtles make great landscape trees. The first is that they are very disease and insect resistant, as there are not too many pests that will bother them. Powdery mildew is the most serious disease issue that crape myrtles will usually have, and it rarely kills the tree. Ambrosia beetles will attack crape myrtles, but generally they only attack trees that are already dead, dying, or stressed. Crape myrtles also come with a variety of flower colors, making them very attractive. Finally, crape myrtles come in a variety of sizes. Varieties range from dwarf to semi-dwarf to full size, meaning mature tree heights range from 3 to 30 feet tall.

Pruning is important for crape myrtles, because the blooms only form on new growth. Even more important is selecting the right sized variety for your location. If you select a variety that will grow to a good height for the spot where you're putting it, the pruning will not be difficult, because you won't be as concerned with managing the plant's size.

Now is a good time of year to prune your crape myrtles. Excessive pruning can lead to problems with disease and insects, because the tree is stressed. Bad pruning practices are called CRAPE MURDER. Crape murder generally involves topping the tree, or cutting back all the branches to 3 to 4 feet above the ground. This will result in an oddly shaped tree that produces a lot of suckers.

To properly prune a crape myrtle start at the base of the tree and work your way up. You're looking for suckers, if you find them prune those off. Once you get to where the branches are, remove crossing branches. Crossing branches will rub against each other when the wind blows and create sites where disease and insects can get in. As the tree grows you can remove branches from the lower third of the tree. Removing those branches will expose the trunk character. Some people like to prune off the old seedheads. I think they're an attractive feature. With new growth in the spring the old seedheads will fall off. On some varieties of crape myrtles you can prune in the summer after the blooms are spent to create another flush of flowers. A second bloom is difficult to force on varieties that bloom after mid-July.

A common misconception is that crape myrtles have to be pruned to produce flowers. This is not true. Pruning allows to you shape the

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Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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Q. If I call 911 to report a problem, can I remain anonymous?

A. No, you cannot remain anonymous on 911. All E-911 phone calls are electronically recorded and are subject to Open Records laws. If you have a non-emergency problem and want it to be anonymous and not use your name, you can call the litter hotline number for not only litter but any other private matter and your call will not be recorded nor your name used. This number is 706-439-6025.

Q. Too many people in Union County are leaving their poor dogs out in the cold and rain. Some howl and cry all night long. This should be considered animal cruelty

and needs to be enforced.

A. We certainly want to remind folks that during this very cold and wet weather, we must look after our pets. However, I also want to caution the public that cold temperatures impact different pets in different ways. We have also had an issue with people complaining to Animal Control about an animal out in the cold, when in fact they are in a doghouse that is padded and relatively warm. We also had a complaint just a few years ago about dogs being outside in the cold. When investigated, not only did the dogs have dog houses, but they had electric heating pads in them. It appears that some owners do consider their pets' comfort during cold months.

Clyde... continued from Page 4A

to pose a severe threat to our national security?

Unfortunately, President Biden's policies have also emboldened human smugglers, drug cartels, and other criminals. In November alone, Border Patrol agents arrested 6,422 illegal aliens with criminal convictions, including 83 known gang members. Additionally, dangerous drugs continue to flood our communities after being smuggled across the wide-open southern border. While Border Patrol agents seize thousands of pounds of deadly fentanyl every month, federal officials estimate they're only able to seize 5-10% of the fentanyl smuggled into the country.

Clearly, Joe Biden's self-inflicted border crisis is treacherous and very deadly!

So, how can Congress stop this madness?

As the White House and Senate leaders negotiate an ineffective border deal, House Republicans must use the power of the purse as leverage to secure the border. President Biden can immediately address the chaos at the border by adhering to current

immigration law, as well as fortifying our border security by agreeing to the strong policies in H.R. 2, House Republicans' "Secure the Border Act," which is the most comprehensive border package in history.

Anything less than H.R. 2 is a slap in the face to the American people. Yet the President remains focused on advancing severely watered-down border provisions to justify sending additional taxpayer-funded aid to Ukraine.

House Republicans cannot sit on the sidelines while a disastrous border deal moves forward. No more empty words and promises – it's time for action.

President Biden has a choice: Will he shut down the southern border or shut down the government?

Funding the Biden Administration's intentional destruction of our nation is simply not an option. Please know that my conservative colleagues and I remain committed to holding the line in the fight to secure the border and put Americans first. Soli Deo Gloria,
Andrew S. Clyde

Gendus... continued from Page 4A

college student, Vietnam veteran, seminary graduate, and Baptist pastor. Then rejoined the Army and became a Chaplain in various military bases worldwide, including in the Desert Storm/Shield conflicts. Finally, after serving 28 years, he was a veteran with so many medals that he needed another room for those!

Yet, that wasn't the end. No, Dan became a Park Ranger and a grandfather while continuing to counsel and support countless appreciative people.

"Lynn, I often wonder why God keeps me on earth to suffer?"

"Well, Dan, I think God has used you to send messages of hope to the numerous folks you touch throughout your life. And he is still making you work. How many people have been encouraged to never give up because of the grace and bravery you exhibit through your sickness?"

Then, I ended my conversation as I usually did with Dan... A joke. "Shoot, Dan, who knows, you might wind up taking Job's place in the Bible!"

I didn't shed a tear when I heard Dan had left us. Instead, I smiled. To lose a lifetime buddy usually puts me holding a box of tissues for a while, but not this time. It was as if heaven opened for me to glimpse Dan sitting beside the Lord. This time, he wasn't wearing a hat; he donned a crown.

I traveled with another high school friend to Dan's funeral on Jan. 8 at the First Baptist Church in Blairsville. We listened to members of the military speak, saw Dan's minister shed tears as he delivered his eulogy, and Park Rangers sitting side by side in a pew. Family members gathered in swarms, and as I watched Jo enter the church in the arms of her sons, I saw her smile.

She knows Dan's life isn't over and his legacy will live on for years. A life of service, sacrifice and joy.

Dan's life journey taught me that it is not how much we accumulate in our earthly life. Instead, it is about how much

we give away during our time here.

We can spend time on the beach or playing sports. How many of us spend years searching for success and making money only to obtain more material items? We spend hours looking for ways to entertain ourselves and have fun. We spend precious time defending our often-errant beliefs and personal opinions that, most of the time, matter little.

Ultimately, what have we given to others' lives when our life was complete? How many hats did we wear that improved the world? Like Dan, did we inspire others by the way we spent our time? Did we leave a legacy, benefit our nation, protect our forest, become a hero, and hear thunderous applause when we reached heaven's door?

People often ask, "Do you think about death often?" Usually, if one does, it is a sign of depression or negativity. I have made the monumental discovery that we should contemplate our death more. We all know our lives will end, and if we live as though it could be over tomorrow, perhaps we will treasure our days and spend our time in more valuable ways.

We cannot take success, money, fame, fun, political party affiliation, or beach chairs when we pass to the great beyond. We will not be asked how we spent our hours because God already knows the answer.

Did we serve, minister to others, provide calm, and love people and all of God's creatures? Were we kind, patient, forgiving, giving, faithful and fearless? And did we do well enough that folks smiled at our funeral because they knew, without a doubt, that we were safely in the arms of the Lord? If so, what a glorious way to end our earthly journey.

Goodbye, old pal, you were outstanding here. I can't imagine how spectacular you will be in heaven!

In memory of Lt. Col. Dan L. Payne, 1947-2024
Lynn Gendus

Lodes... continued from Page 4A

day of elections.

The BOR (Board of Registrars) is only concerned with the voter rolls, early voting, absentee ballot requests and verifying that the signatures match on the absentee ballots and Poll Workers in early voting. Glorified clerks who are picked by Grand Jury and the judge make the final decision on who can be on it. They also take care of the Challenges to the voter rolls, cleaning them up and the Hearing on the

Challenges. As of Jan. 8, 2024, they had not been able to tell me and others what constitutes valid proof for a Challenge to the voter rolls.

On Election Day (late afternoon), the BOR brings over the absentee ballots and everyone (BOR and BOE) goes through them and adds them to the voting totals.

They, the BOR and the BOE, have other duties, but these are the basic ones.
Marsha Lodes

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

of one's skin. Anyway, D. T.'s outfit had been given the order of taking a hill. As the men advanced on the hill, the fighting became very intense. The order was given to fall back.

While the men were retreating, the young man from Alabama came across an African American who had been wounded. The man could not walk, so D. T. lifted the man onto his shoulder and carried him back to the American lines, 400 yards away. As he and the man he was carrying came to the American line, they had to go up a steep but short hill. So, my second cousin lifted and pushed the man over the hump and into the foxhole. As D. T. pulled himself over the

hump, he was shot and fatally wounded. Uncle Dan and Aunt Rosie's son gave his life so another man could live. But, that is not the end of the story.

After the war was over, sometime in the mid 1950s, a black man came to Phil Campbell, Alabama, to visit Uncle Dan and Aunt Rosie. This man must've had a lot of courage, because this was Alabama in the Deep South before the Civil Rights Movement. This was the same man which D. T. had carried to safety during the battle in which he had died. This black man ate supper with Uncle Dan and Aunt Rosie. And I don't think they cared whether he was black or white. All they cared about was the fact that this man cared for their son. He wanted to say "thank you" for raising a son that saved his life.

After supper they sat around the fire and cried. Then they all laughed at the stories Uncle Dan told about D. T. Like a family, the three people came together to grieve and celebrate the life of D. T. Hyde. And they didn't care about the color of their skin.

This is what Dr. Martin Luther King wanted, "For people to sit down together at the same table with no regard for the color of one's skin."

Fowler...

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from his nightmare. In reality, it's God's love that overcomes the fears, unknowns, and evils of this fallen world. "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16). To secure your relationship with the Creator, He offers you a Savior. Believe, and be ready for your future!

Williams...

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tree. If you have a spot where the tree can grow and does not need shaping for space concerns, pruning is not necessary. I encourage everyone to do some research on finding the variety that will fit in the space that they have, because that will solve a lot of pruning issues before they arise. Pruning crape myrtles properly allows accentuates the natural beauty that they have.

If you have questions about crape myrtle pruning contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Blanchard...

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rective action." This situation speaks to poor management of general fund tax money. A ballot question of whether you would like a new hiking trail at Meeks Park and better bourbon at the Golf Course or safe roads and bridges would yield interesting results.

But is postponing the volume of road and bridge repairs until there becomes an emergency, poor management or careful planning to justify another T-SPLIST vote?

Zeb Blanchard

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A
efforts.

But the excitement doesn't stop there! Alongside our STAR honorees, we will be presenting special awards to six other deserving individuals who have distinguished themselves in various ways. These awards highlight not only academic accomplishments but also contributions that extend beyond the classroom.

As we gather to celebrate, we want you to be a part of this memorable evening. Join us at the event venue for an unforgettable night filled with inspiration and appreciation. And to make it even more enticing, we've partnered with LongHorn Steakhouse to bring you an excellent dinner that will surely tantalize your taste buds.

To secure your place at this prestigious event, register online at www.visitblairsville-ga.com or simply give us a call to reserve your seat. Don't miss out on the chance to be part of a night dedicated to recognizing the stars among us and those who make life much better in Blairsville!

Copperhill America Legion Post 96 meeting

Copperhill America Legion Post 96 meets the first Saturday of the month; at 10 AM, Hwy. 64 Gym, 5800 US 64, 37317. Or call Mike Pingetzer at 706-455-9503 for information.

Honor Flight trips to Washington, D.C. for Veterans

Sponsored (no cost to Veteran) Honor Flight trips to Washington D.C. to see the memorials to the Wars in which they served. Veterans do not have to have been deployed overseas ... just to have served during the War period. World War II, Korea, and Vietnam veterans are included. Spring and Fall flights. If interested, call Paul at 615-232-4445. Thank you!