

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## Hiking Safety

Winter is almost over. There are a few weeks before spring is officially here however; Mother Nature has shown us a taste of spring over the last week. Warmer temperatures stir the desire to get outside and enjoy the sun. One outside activity that many people are looking forward to is to go hiking. I enjoy hiking but the multiple search and rescues from the trails can be challenging. Union County Emergency Management would like to provide some tips for hiking on the beautiful trails of North Georgia.

Hiking can be great exercise but hikers should know their limits. There are a multitude of different trails throughout Union County each with different physical requirements. For the person who wants to enjoy nature without a long, strenuous hike in the mountains, there are several great trails at the various county and state parks. For the more adventurous, there is the Appalachian Trail and its various access trails. These trails can be physically challenging to the less experienced and less conditioned hiker.

No matter which trail you hike on, you must always know what you're getting into. Hikers should research the trail and map it out before they start. They should know the distance, the start and finish, the terrain, the difficulty of the trail and their hiking pace. A hike from Bryan Herbert Reece access to Blood Mountain, for example, is a two mile mountain hike. The average mountain hiker walks one mile per hour. A hike to Blood Mountain would be considered a four hour hike. Make sure you have plenty of time for your hike. It is also a good idea to know the weather.

Hikers should also be prepared. Hikers should wear the appropriate clothing and footwear. It is also a good idea to dress in layers as well as have extra clothes. Hikers should carry essential equipment such as water, snacks, map, flashlight with extra batteries, first aid kit, whistle, and something to start a fire. If you take a cell phone, ensure that it is charged. Cell phones can be unreliable. There are many places where there is no service on the mountain trails. Hikers should not depend on cell phones for flashlights, maps nor GPS.

Hiking can be a great outdoor adventure. We would like for everyone to be prepared and to be safe while hiking. These are just a few tips for hikers to consider when enjoying the beautiful trails in Union County.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**  
David Dyer



## Billy Graham

I never met him, but he was dear to me. I grieve his passing.

Billy Graham held the respect of the world's powerful people, yet he thought of himself as a simple farm boy called by God. If ever I was tempted to doubt the authority of the Bible, the identity and work of Christ, or the reality of eternal life, I knew that a man of such stature believed. He is now part of that "great cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1).

I'll miss those stadiums filled with people from all walks of life. Before the civil rights movement of the 1960's, he made sure race was no barrier to participation in his events.

I'll miss the baritone voice of George Beverly Shea (d. 2013). "I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold. I'd rather be His than have riches untold. I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands. I'd rather be led by his nail-pierced hand."

Someone would offer a testimony of faith. One was Louis Zamperini, the Olympian and WWII POW who was saved at the Los Angeles Revival in 1949. He returned to Japan and led some of his captors to Christ, and later founded a ministry to wayward boys.

I'll miss Billy Graham's prophetic voice declaring, "The Bible says..." He never failed to mention the historical event that authenticated his message, the cross of Christ. Rev. Graham explained once that he doesn't transition his message to an ending invitation. He is giving the invitation from the start.

You would hear something like this: "God loves you! Christ shed his blood on the cross for you. 'Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Rom. 10:13), the Bible says. Repent from sin! You won't be the same once you come to Christ. Come by faith to receive Jesus as your Savior and Master. Make your faith public right now. Your bus will wait."

Cliff Barrows (d. 2016) would lead the choir singing, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, and that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee." The aisles of the vast stadium would flow like waterfalls with people willing to

**All Things New**  
Wayne Fowler



See Fowler, page 5A

## Commissioner's Questions

**Q. We saw in the North Georgia News that the old Fort Sorghum is going to be torn down? Why?**

A. After a lot of discussion and some tough decisions we have decided to tear down the old fort. The Sorghum Festival Group, formerly Blairsville Jaycees, have had control of old Fort Sorghum for many years and have utilized it for the benefit of the community. About ten years ago the Sorghum Festival had to be moved to Meeks Park due to the lack of room for vendors and lack of adequate parking. They have continued to utilize part of the old fort for storage along with the county and various other groups. The school also used it to host a haunted house. The adjacent parcel (the empty gravel lot) is owned by the Sorghum Festival Group and they have decided to sell this property. They came to the county suggesting the removal of the old fort since many boards were rotten and it has been very difficult for us to control access into the area. This liability has been a concern for quite a while.

**Q. Who actually owns the property the old Fort Sorghum is on?**

A. It is owned by the County and is a portion of the Haralson Property that contains the Civic Center. The property was donated to Union County by Haralson Memorial Civic Center, Inc. in September of 1971.

**Q. Are there any parts of the old fort structure that the county can use?**

A. We are looking to see if it would be feasible to move one or both of the corner towers to the new Sorghum Festival site located in Meeks Park. The original "Fort Sorghum" wooden letters that were on the side of the structure have been removed and will be donated to the Historical Society.

**Q. Is it possible to have some of the wood from the old fort?**

A. The Sorghum Festival Group has already taken care of distributing the remaining sound boards at this point.

**Q. Do you not feel sad seeing the old structure being taken down?**

A. In one way I am sad about it, but I also see the possibility.

**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**  
Lamar Paris



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## Drug Free Mountain Life

### Battling the Drug-Friendly Culture

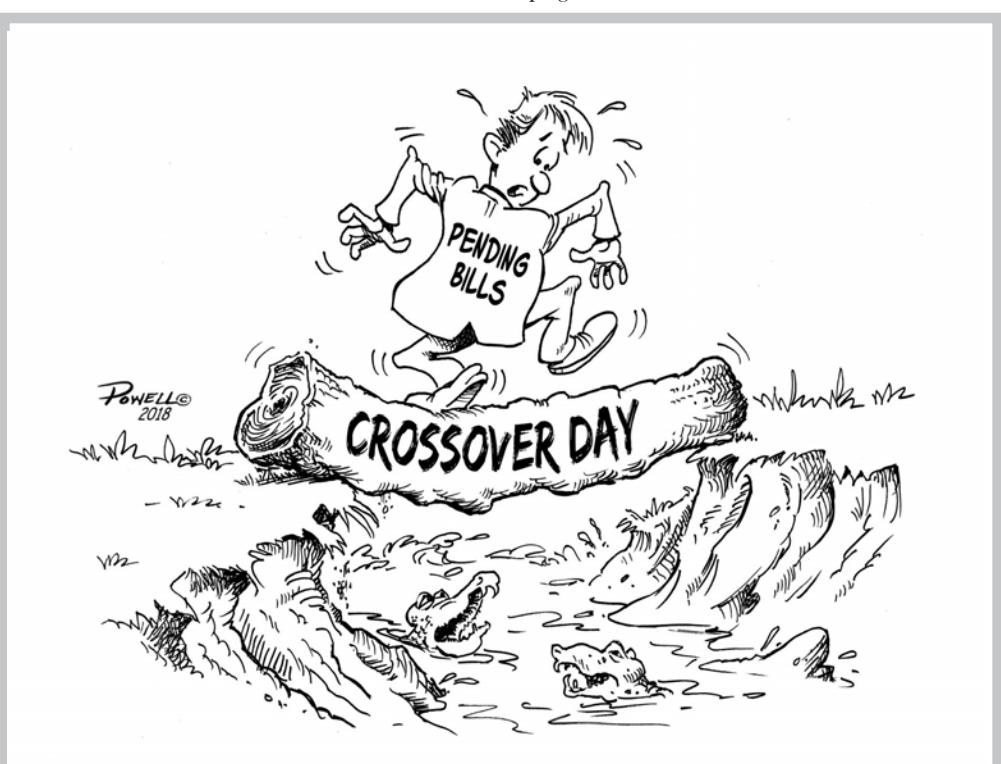
Since when did we become comfortable with our employees working with a little buzz from last night? And why have we been pressured and bullied into looking the other way?

When a worker falls off a roof, a ladder, or down a flight of stairs, do we treat that as "no big deal"? No. Therefore, the efforts behind safety, wellness, and whole health should be equally as respected.

The night-before buzz isn't just about pot. It also pertains to alcohol, other illicit drugs, and prescription or over-the-counter medications, whether used appropriately or misused and abused. It all flows together and relates each to the other because current U.S. culture has become boundary-averse. It is, at this time, drug-friendly, and that is what employers are constant-

See Drug Free, page 5A

**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.**



## Letters to the Editor

### ESPLOST

Dear Editor,

Over the past few weeks, I have noticed a couple of "Letters to the Editor" concerning the upcoming ESPLOST (Educational SPLOST). I would like to make sure everyone understands that the upcoming Educational SPLOST is NOT a "new" tax for Union County. The vote will be to continue the 1-penny sales tax that we currently have in place and that has been in place since 1998. If this were passed, it would NOT increase the sales tax rate in Union County.

I want to commend on the Union County School Administration and Board on their excellent management of the 1-penny sales tax. From the last round of ESPLOST, our students now have a state of the art Agriscience Facility and Fine Arts Center, which were built without placing the school into debt. In addition, without

See Karnes, page 5A

### School Security

Dear Editor,

The superintendent presented a capsule of the school security protocol at this week's school board meeting.

Our plan has been approved by GEMA so one would assume it includes "putting students in the closet when the alarm sounds" since this is a standard protocol of most plans. However this is analogous to putting fish in a rain barrel, of course.

Most school shootings are over and done within 3-5 minutes. Typical LEO response time is 7 minutes. When seconds count ... Training

See Blanchard, page 5A

### Trash

Dear Editor,

I was very pleased to read the comments of Commissioner Paris regarding getting tough on the trash problem in Union County. We live in such a beautiful place that I just can't understand why people trash the place where they live. Even animals have the good sense not to make a mess in the area where they sleep or eat. I can only conclude that the people who litter simply do not care about themselves or other people who are impacted.

I know there is a lot of trash on the roads but for me the problem is not so much the roads as it is property owners in a neighborhood who do not care how their property looks. Some people will say that they have the right to do what they want to with their property. But I say their property rights end where they impact my ability to enjoy my property.

See Deyton, page 5A

## Letters to the Editor

### One Entrance

Dear Editor,

I taught high school and some college for 36 years, retiring in 2000. My last ten years I gave to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

In 1990, Douglas High School was built on forty acres and was a designated "open campus" built around a large, central patio — which is to say that the wind blows through the connecting halls, rain puddles on the concrete floor, birds fly through the corridors.

The image on which Douglas was built was that the high school serving Parkland was to look like a "small college." Access was open from all directions.

Until Valentine's Day, 2018, that "open campus," those forty acres, the 3,000+ students, were patrolled by two — only two — uniformed "resource officers."

When our daughter drops off her fourteen year-old twins at their middle school, they must enter the school through the one — and only — entrance. There are several egress doors but only one entrance. Standing there is a uniformed police officer who goes on patrol as the late bell rings.

Nikolas Cruz, the acknowledged assassin, had access to an "open campus." What if he could have entered Douglas High School only through one door? What if the sole entranceway had been framed in ballistic glass and the doors' locks had been electronically-controlled? What

See Mitchell, page 5A

### School Resource Officers

Dear Editor,

When we lived in Winston Salem, North Carolina, my children (now in their mid forties), in every school had a Resource Officer. These were Winston Salem police officers, paid by the city. The schools were their "beat".

In every school the ROs gained the respect and confidence of the students. Students confided their problems and any rumors they heard.

The shooting in Florida exemplifies the greater need for not just ROs, but more people trained and armed. I'm sure some, if not many, coaches and teachers would be willing and able to do this to protect their students.

People talk about the AR-15 as the cause of so many young lives taken. In one of the worst mass shooting in the country, Virginia Tech, the murderer used hand guns.

As a former law officer in Winston Salem, I've seen lethal bats, knives, cars, bricks, lamps and other heavy household items. But the only way you can stop a bad person with a gun is a good person with a gun, period.

Chris Crawford

## Experiences at Church

Church and events surrounding the church have always been an integral part of my life. A I have learned much from those experiences. A few that come to mind follow this paragraph. Aunt June had a younger sister about my age whom I played with as a child. As we grew older Debbie became a Tomboy of the highest caliber. She loved riding those Honda Trail 90s and she could whip most of my male friends. Even as a young girl upon noticing a problem she did her best to correct that problem. Union Hill Congregational Church, a little country church in Trapptown was where our family has worshipped for more than a century. Everyone in the church is connected through family or close friendship.

As you walked into the old church the old tongue and groove pine planking would creak and moan as if in pain. During the summer time the windows would be opened and the old black ceiling fans would draw in cool air from outside of the building. The old wooden benches lacked cushioning insuring that very few people would fall asleep during the sermons of the preacher. At the front of the small sanctuary an old upright piano was placed in the corner of the stage on the preacher's right side. The "Amen corner" was located on his left consisting of two pews where the Deacons sat during services.

After Sunday School everyone gathered in the pews of the sanctuary for the worship service. A few good singers would sing a special or two and then the congregation would sing 8-10 good old gospel songs. These include "Amazing Grace" and "Let Us Have A Little Talk With Jesus". After these songs the "Song Leader" would ask the young kids to come up and lead the congregation in a song or two of their choosing.

This particular Sunday, Mr. McMurray asked the young'uns to come up to the stage. Debbie and I must have been about 5-6 years old. She walked up to the stage and the kids start to sing "Jesus Loves Me". Debbie soon noticed that Mr. McMurray's pants were unzipped and his shirt tail was sticking out of his fly. So, to correct this problem she reached toward his waist and tried to grab his zipper. The song leader did his best to maintain his dignity while trying to keep time with his left hand, holding the song-book with another and gently pushing this young girl away with his leg. The girl's mother, L. G., was horrified. My Aunt June was stunned.

Everyone else was trying not to laugh while all the teenagers were cracking up. Mr. McMurray was very professional. However, his left hand which was keeping time sped up and

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**Around The Farm**  
Mickey Cummings



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Kenneth West Charles Duncan  
Owner/Publisher Editor

Website: www.nganews.com  
E-mail: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com

Mailing: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

Shawn Jarrard Todd Forrest  
Assistant Editor Staff Writer

Derek Richards Lily Avery  
Advertising Director Staff Writer

Lowell Nicholson  
Photographer

Publication No: 001505

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Phone: (706) 745-6343 Fax: (706) 745-1830 \* P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

## Winter Weeds

I've found that there are two main opinions on winter weeds: people either love to see the extra splash of color and happy bees in their yard, or they view the unwanted plants as nuisances that need to be dealt with. Either way, it's always good to be able to identify weeds and know what their presence indicates about the environment.

Overall, if your lawn has a lot of weeds, the soil conditions are not that great for your grass. If your grass does not have enough nutrients or the soil is too compacted, weeds can easily take control. While pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicides like pendimethalin and glyphosate can help prevent and kill weeds, you will likely continue to have weed problems year after year if you don't improve the soil enough for your grass to fill in.

Certain weeds can actually indicate specific conditions of your soil. Small hop clover is a small weed that has leaves grouped in threes and a small, globe-like yellow flower. If you have a lot of small hop clover in your yard, your soil is much too dry and does not have enough nitrogen. Annual bluegrass, which forms in clumps, usually indicates that there is too much nitrogen, water, and compaction. A lot of moss means there is too much shade, not enough drainage, and compacted soil.

A very common weed that is popping up everywhere right now is henbit. This plant has a dark, square stem with rounded leaves and tube-shaped, purple flowers. Overall, it can be considered a very attractive plant, but it spreads easily and can quickly take over a lawn. Dandelions are also blooming everywhere. These weeds start as bright yellow flowers but eventually turn into fuzzy white or gray globes with seeds in the middle. These seeds are then spread by air movement and begin to infest the rest of your lawns.

Henbit, dandelions and other weeds, though often viewed as pests, are actually the first source of nectar and pollen for bees. If you've ever rubbed your finger over a dandelion flower or perhaps sniffed it a little too closely, you'll notice that your skin is covered in yellow pollen. These ample food sources are very important to help bees recover from the harsh winter.

If you plan on improving your lawn's soil conditions but just can't wait to get those weeds out of your yard, give your lawn a good mow before treating with herbicides. Though there have not been any proven links between herbicide application and bee decline, it is always best to discourage pollinators from being present when chemicals are applied, especially if treating with

See Mattee, page 5A

**UGA Extension From the Ground Up**  
Melissa Mattee

