

Opinions

Everybody has one...

The Fire Apparatus

Wherever I go, I am always looking for fire stations as all firefighters do. I am fascinated at the many different types and designs. Of all the different fire stations that are out there, one thing is for certain; there is a fire truck, or as we call them, fire apparatus, in each one of them. As people pass by the fire stations in Union County, they know that there is a fire apparatus in that station, but do they really know anything about it?

Each fire station must be certified by Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council (GFSTC) and one requirement of that certification is to have a fire apparatus at that station. GFSTC requires that there be an operable pumper or fire apparatus with a capacity of 750 gallons per minute (gpm) at 150 psi and tank capacity of a minimum of 250 gallons. The fire apparatus in Union County well exceeds these minimums. Most have at least a 1,000 gpm pump and a water tank of 1,000 gallons.

That does not mean that on every fire that we pump 1,000 gallons of water per minute, but we have the capability to do so. Most fires require that we pump 150 to 300 gallons per minute. Each 1 3/4 inch attack line (fire hose and nozzle) used by the firefighters can flow 95 to 150 gallons per minute. Usually we use two or three of these lines on a fire. However, on major or large fires, we may use larger attack lines such as 2 1/2 inch lines which can flow almost 250 gallons per minute.

The fire apparatus also must carry a certain amount of fire-fighting and rescue equipment in order to be certified. There are the common things that people associate a fire apparatus to carry. These include fire hoses, nozzles, ladders, and axes but there is much more. Union County fire apparatus carry other equipment such as fire extinguishers; hand tools for forcible entry; power tools such as chain saws; various hose couplings to connect fire hose; salvage and overhaul equipment; turnout gear; and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). Of course, a fire apparatus would not be an emergency vehicle without the red lights, siren and Federal Q siren.

The fire apparatus is the corner stone of the fire department. We have both new and older apparatus but regardless of their age, they are equipped, tested, maintained, and always ready to respond

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Crisis of Contempt

Dr. Arthur Brooks spoke at the 2020 National Prayer Breakfast in Washington D.C. His message was not well received by some, but it is a message we need to hear.

America is facing a crisis. Scorched earth politics, demands to "fundamentally change" our country, and violence against political opponents are symptoms. Dr. Brooks, a Harvard professor, identified the problem as a crisis of contempt, defined as "the unsullied conviction of the worthlessness of another." How did we get there? Market-driven reporting and ill-informed opinions foment outrage, which triggers contempt, which erupts into the headlines of the day.

People who disagree with your politics have the same worth as you, made in the image of God. "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). You express God's image within you by loving even those who hate you and pray that they, too, rise to the image of God within them. God loved you before you loved him, so likewise, you may have to be first in tamping down your own outrage and contempt. By the way, recognizing the image of God in every person includes not only your political opponent, but also the aged, infirm, disabled, people of different race or creed, and unborn humans.

When Christians follow Jesus, we lead the way to reconciliation. He taught a lofty ethic, the way we ought to live. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:43-45). Can partisan D's and R's really love each other? If you follow Jesus, you have no choice. To do otherwise is to lose sight of what it means to be truly human.

Dr. Brooks said, "True moral courage isn't standing up to the people with whom you disagree. It's standing up to the people with whom you agree, on behalf of those with whom you disagree." Don't let people who do agree with you get away with contempt for those who don't. Speaking up is your opportunity to

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Thank you very much for giving us the weather updates this winter on your Facebook page. That has been a really big help. Will it be possible for us to look at the cameras on Neels Gap (Blood Mountain) during bad weather from our home computers or phones in the future?

A. We are working very closely with GDOT and our own computer IT Department trying to find a solution. One problem is that with mission critical cameras, opening them up to the public also makes them susceptible to hacking. So what this may require is once we have our main cameras and the GDOT cameras set up and consistently operational, we may be able to install a separate "Web Cam" with its own circuit so it will not negatively impact the main cameras.

Q. Why is it so difficult for the public to get access to the GDOT camera on Neels Gap?

A. The GDOT camera was not designed to accept the direct fiber connection that we had installed, but it was set up to work off the cell phone signals. Once we determined that the cell phone signal was not reliable in bad weather, we worked with Blue Ridge Mountain EMC to have the fiber cable run to the camera directly. Unfortunately, that was several months ago and GDOT has been unable to get their camera adjusted and set up for us to receive access. We are still working very hard to make this happen soon.

Q. Why is it so difficult to get a camera on the mountain set up so we can all see it? There are cameras that are viewable all over the world?

A. To just get a still shot from a camera is not very difficult, but to be able to see the actual movement of the video is more difficult. We must get a reliable video and then once that is done, hopefully we can then figure out how to make it available to the public through a website. Sometimes, if too many people try to access a camera via computer, the picture may not be good enough. If we share the photo/video, we want to have it as clear as possible because there is often fog on the mountain, and it can be difficult to see without additional data.

Q. The last time you showed a snow weather report on your Facebook page, it had a photo of Wolf Pen Gap on

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

Methamphetamine Facts and Risk

Methamphetamine is a stimulant drug. Stimulants are a class of drugs that can boost mood, increase feelings of well-being, increase energy, and make you more alert. It has dangerous side effects like raising heart rate and blood pressure, and use can lead to addiction. Methamphetamine's pleasurable effects can disappear even before the drug levels fall in the blood, leading people to use more and more, sometimes not sleeping and using the drug for several days.

Methamphetamine use changes the way the brain works by changing the way neurons communicate. Neurons send messages to each other by releasing chemicals called neurotransmitters, telling us how to act and behave. These neurotransmitters attach to molecules on neurons called receptors.

There are many neurotransmitters, but

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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.



Letters to the Editor

Disingenuous at Best

Dear Editor,

On Feb. 19, a letter writer asked a question. It was "Do Honest Politicians Exist?" If the person asking it has no agenda and is purely inquisitive, it's a valid question. However, the person who asked it this time proceeded on a five to six paragraph tirade against our sitting president, not once mentioning the current crop of presidential candidates from the opposite side. So, let's do that.

First of all, I'd like to start by saying that the current president is not a politician. If he were, he wouldn't get himself in trouble with the other side as much. Now, lets look at the opposition. Bernie Sanders has never been able to hold a job other than his one in government. He constantly lies to his fanatical followers, promising them free everything, regardless of the fact that

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Guest Column

A Life-Changing Experience at MECHS

My name is Ashly Mendoza, and I am a senior at Mountain Education Charter High School. My experience at MECHS has been life changing, and I am glad to be able to work with and get along with all of my teachers and peers.

M E C H S gives students the chance to start again and to earn a high school diploma. This high school has a low student/teacher ratio, and it is self-paced. The school hours are from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m., and it is open Monday through Thursday year-round. Students can attend during the hours that are most convenient for them.

The school is an accredited school, and all teachers are professionally qualified. The faculty and staff at my school care about their students and offer them a tremendous amount of support. What makes it even better is the fact that each student is assigned a mentor, and these mentors meet with each student at least once a week to check their progress and to encourage them to stay on track as they work toward meeting their goals.

MECHS is the best school for anyone working toward getting their diploma. The school is filled with helpful, loyal people who encourage and motivate you. They care about your education, and they will work tirelessly to get you on track to graduate.

The teachers congratulate you in so many ways; I have never had this support group in any school, and I am honestly blessed to be in a school where I feel wanted and safe. Before attending MECHS, I was caught up in the wrong crowd, and I stopped going to school. I had dropped out, and at one point, I lost interest in getting my education.

I felt like I didn't have a future, but I was lucky to find out about this high school, and MECHS honestly turned my life around. I went from not having any motivation to striving for greatness. I went from not having any plans after graduation to planning on getting my degree in criminal justice.

In spite of all of my mistakes, what I love most about my teachers is that they see potential in me and not my mistakes. If it wasn't for this school and all the support, I don't know where I would be right now; they really enabled me to turn my life around and to get me back on track, and that is something I will always appreciate from all of my teachers. Words can't describe how thankful I am for everyone's help, love and support.

Guest Column
Ashly Mendoza



Mr. Newell

Old Man Newell was a little different. Some folks said he was a mite "quare," while others just said he was "turned funny." The bottom line was that he just didn't like young boys for some reason or another. He was always rough talking and short tempered when it came to the boys around Trapp-town. No one knows the reason why, but, Old Man Newell just didn't trust any of the local boys.

Paul and Bud Cummings grew up during the late 1940s and early 1950s. They ran with the likes of Tommy Trapp, William Shel-nutt, Jerry Cohen and Hubert Brooks. These boys grew up and did everything together. They had a code and it was enforced. None of the boys ever told on another one of the boys. You might not agree with what one of the boys was doing, but, you never told on your buddy.

One day during church, the boys were all sitting together, and Paul (my father) noticed that Tommy Trapp had something in his pockets that was causing them to bulge. When asked about the contents of his pockets, Tommy pulled out a big nail and whispered, "I am getting even with Old Man Newell." After church, the gang of boys walked outside to Old Man Newell's log truck. Tommy walked around the front of the log truck and emptied his pockets of the nails. There must've been 2 pounds of 16 penny nails in front of the wheels of that truck.

Paul and his younger brother Bud felt sorry for Old Man Newell, so, after Tommy and the other boys left, they began trying to kick the nails away from the front of the truck. At this point in time, Old Man Newell came up and thought the boys had placed the nails in front of his wheels. The old man had a fit and screamed out, "You boys are trying to give me a flat tire." Papa ran up to the boys and whipped them in front of the whole crowd. Paul and Bud would not tell on their buddies. So, they took the whipping without a word. But, they vowed to take vengeance on Old Man Newell.

Some years later, Old Man Newell's logging truck broke down, and the old man was relegated to driving his little buggy back and forth to town. A plan was soon hatched among the boys. One Saturday in the month of June, the boys, including Paul and Bud Cummings, Tommy Trapp, Jerry Cohen, William Shel-nutt, and Hubert Brooks, went out to Old Man Newell's house and waited for him to go to bed. After Newell went to sleep, the boys took apart the old man's buggy and re-assembled it on top of his barn. Paul and Bud didn't make it back home until the wee hours of the morning. They slipped

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



Chill Hours

This week I'm going to talk about chill hours and the affect that cold has on plants. The cold weather can feel very dreary and like there is no life with plants not growing, trees without leaves, and wildlife holing up for the winter. However, winter is a very important and necessary time of the year for plants. Without it there's a number of important fruits and flowers that would not bloom every year. Let's talk about the effect that cold weather can have on plants and why it's so important.

For some plants they are not just responding to the cold, but they are also responding to the change in day length as the days grow shorter in winter and then longer into the spring. These kinds of plants are called photosensitive, because they are responding to the changes in light. Mums and poinsettias are some common examples. A change in the day length can trigger blooming or other responses in these plants.

Many fruit plants require chill hours to be able to put on blooms. Chill hours is a count of the number of hours where the temperature is less than 45 degrees Fahrenheit. After a satisfactory number of chilling hours has been reached, the plant will break into bloom. This chilling process is called vernalization. Without vernalization, we wouldn't be able to enjoy apples, peaches, tulips, foxgloves, blueberries, and many other plants. Different varieties of plants require different numbers of chilling hours, so it's always best to pick varieties that are well adapted to our climate so that you have the most success with your fruits and flowers. For example if you select a variety of apples that requires too many chill hours, the apple tree will not bloom. However, if you select a variety of apples that has a chill hour requirement that is too low, it could bloom too early, and the flowers would be killed in the frost.

In these plants, a repressor gene is keeping the plants from blooming. The cold causes that repressor gene to be altered so that it's no longer controlling the blooming of the flower. That way when warmer temperatures arrive the flowers can bloom out.

The timing of when cold happens is also critical. Oftentimes in the mountains, we'll have a late freeze after many of the apple trees have already bloomed. Freezing temperatures after bloom can result in flowers dying and falling off. If the blooms fall off a fruit tree, that tree won't be able to bear any fruit that year. For a freeze to damage blooms the temperature usually need to be 28 or lower. Early freezes can be damaging to plants as well. They are forced into freezing

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Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



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