

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## Search and Rescue Training

When you think of the fire department, you think of fires. However, Union County Fire Department (UCFD) and Union County Emergency Management Agency (UCEMA) respond to many more types of incidents than fires. One of those incidents is Wilderness Search and Rescues (SAR). Search and Rescue incidents can range from helping a person off the Appalachian Trail to an all-out search for a missing person. Firefighters who perform SAR missions must be well trained in order to properly and safely search for and rescue missing or injured persons. UCFD/UCEMA conducted SAR training this month to learn new techniques and to practice essential skills.

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



The training was held on Saturday, March 18th and involved firefighters from career and all volunteer stations. The class and exercises were taught by UCFD instructors and retired experts from US Army Rangers. The class was started early with a discussion and practice of a pace count. This is used to measure how many paces that each individual must take to go 100 meters. The pace count is used to determine how far a person walks.

Another major component of the class was the use of map, compass, and global positioning system (GPS). These are valuable tools and skills to know when performing search and rescue. Searchers may be asked to walk to a certain point or be able to walk a certain distance in a certain direction. The class taught firefighters how to read the map; locate certain terrain features; and be able to navigate using the map. They were also taught how to navigate using the compass and GPS. Firefighters were then given a practical exercise to practice their skills.

The class also covered some aspects of rescue. Once the person is located, rescuing and extracting the person to safety is the next step. This involves packaging and safely transporting the patient. Most patients are immobilized with long spine board. They are then placed in the stokes basket and secured. Firefighters were taught how to properly immobilize, package and secure patients for the transport out of the woods.

Once the class was complete, firefighters were tested in their

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## Virtue Signaling

If I was a betting man, I'd put money on "virtue-signaling" to be Oxford's word of the year for 2017. You've probably noticed it, even if you haven't heard the term. When a celebrity is outraged about an issue and co-ops an awards ceremony to express disgust or hate, but otherwise does nothing about it, the point is apparently to signal what a virtuous person he or she is.

James Bartholomew, writing in "The Spectator" (2015) defined the term virtue signaling. He said, "No one actually has to do anything. Virtue comes from mere words or even from silently held beliefs. There was a time in the distant past when people thought you could only be virtuous by doing things: by helping the blind man across the road; looking after your elderly parents; staying in a not-wholly-perfect marriage for the sake of the children. These things involve effort and self-sacrifice."

Here's how it works with certain celebs, pundits, and partisans. Hurl accusations of misogyny, xenophobia, or other phobias to signal deep concern for certain groups of people. Vent rage at an opposing-party politician by hating his family. Take a hydrocarbon-fueled private jet to a European conference to hate on climate-deniers. Support a violent protest of a travel security policy while contributing nothing to resettle refugees. Jesus called out those who "love the place of honor at banquets" but they "say things and do not do them" (Mat. 23:2-6).

Is it OK to hate something immoral? God does. He calls these seven things an abomination: "Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, one who spreads strife among brothers" (Prov. 6:16-19). May God purify your heart and hands of these. It is humbling to realize that if you have any virtue at all, it is the righteousness of Christ and the exchanged life you live by faith (Gal. 2:20).

Virtue should be on display, but the question is motive. Jesus said, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your

**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



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## Commissioner's Questions

**NOTICE:** Last week's Commissioner Questions column regarding the emergency helicopter membership for Union County citizens, was submitted and printed earlier in the year before the current agreements were made. We did not intend for these questions to be printed last week and we are sorry for any confusion. Please disregard last week's Q & A completely. I will address some of the same questions below, but with current information.

**Q. We keep getting letters from different Emergency Helicopter Service Providers. Which company is the one we are currently signed up with in Union County?**

A. Last year when Union County Government and Union General Hospital agreed to pay for any local people who wanted the emergency helicopter membership plan, the company was called Omni Advantage. They have now changed their name to Air Methods, but it is still the same company.

The letter or advertisement many have been receiving in the mail the last few weeks is not from our helicopter service stationed at Union General Hospital, but the one stationed in Blue Ridge called Life Force Air Medical #4. While it is based in Blue Ridge, it is operated by Erlanger Medical Center in Chattanooga. It is a good and reliable service, but they will generally only pick up in Union County if the Union General Air Methods Helicopter is either tied up with another emergency or is temporarily out of service for maintenance. The two helicopter companies work together and support each other as backup.

**Q. Is there a need for us to join the membership with the helicopter service in Blue Ridge?**

A. The odds of needing that service is slim, but there are some people who are purchasing it as a backup. You must pay full price for it since our county is not participating in their service, but it is completely up to you if you want to pay for the additional membership/service. They are certainly a reputable company.

**Q. Last year we had to sign up to get the free membership and helicopter service through Union General Hospital.**

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



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## Letters to the Editor

### The Reason Christ Came

Dear Editor,  
As we fast approach Easter time in which those who believe in God above celebrate not only the death, burial and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we also take a peek back in history when Jesus walked with His disciples teaching them for three years or more and now the Lord Jesus announces to His beloved disciples His death and resurrection for the final time, for He had mentioned it four times before in the book of Matthew, twice in the 17th chapter and twice in the 20th chapter and yet His disciples were not prepared for it, judging from their reaction. Did they think Jesus was just joking around with them? Had they not been listening to the Master's voice? Were they in denial of the fact that Jesus had told them time and time again of His impending death? Soon the disciples would know the truth.

In spite of Jesus' intensive instruction, the disciples failed to grasp the significance of it

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### MEDEVAC Math

Dear Editor,  
Here's a huge "thank you" to the board of Union General Hospital and to Commissioner Lamar Paris, for arranging free helicopter medevac service for another year for Union County residents. I am perplexed, however, by the cost numbers in the recent *North Georgia News* story.

"The cost to the county to provide the service to all residents is estimated as between \$50,000 and \$55,000", says the story. But I know from friends who've used the service, that the retail price Air Methods charges insurers for individual flights is \$25,000 to \$30,000.

The numbers suggest that Union County will experience just two covered helicopter medevacs in the next 12 months (2 x \$25,000 = \$50,000). Obviously that is not the case. So how did the reporter arrive at the quoted annual cost to our county?

Roger Beal

### Meeks Park Addition

Dear Editor,  
I want to express my thanks to Union County and Union County Parks and Recreation for the exercise equipment at Meeks Park. I have belonged to many health clubs in the past but never stuck with it because it was so boring, just exercising in a room with nothing to look at. But at the park you can enjoy the beauty of nature while at the same time watch other people enjoying the park. Kind of takes your mind off your aching abs and legs!

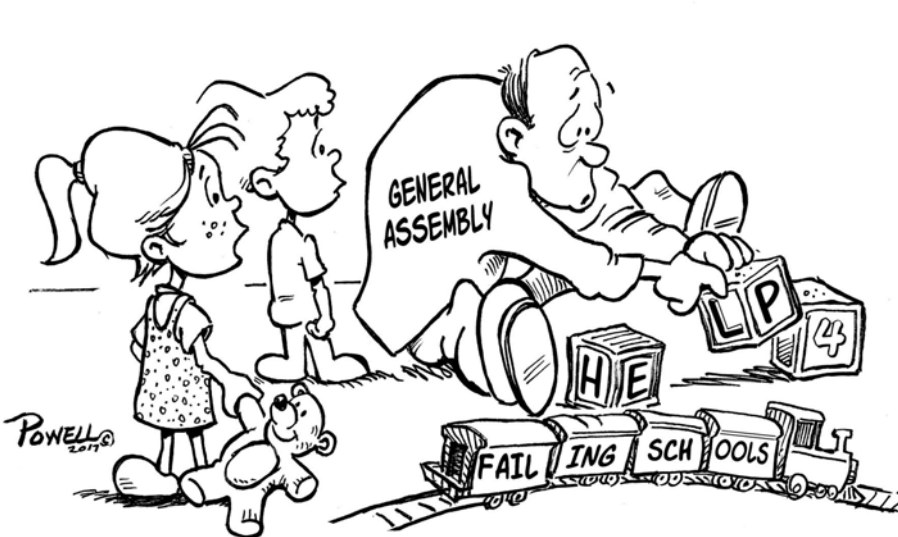
However, a suggestion and an observation. First of all, would it be possible or feasible to have a roof so we could exercise when it is raining? Secondly, I have noticed that children are playing on the equipment which to them looks like a fantastic playground. Over the week-

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### Just Say No

Dear Editor,  
Too many mountain community governments are becoming addicted to the toxic fumes coming off of fresh road tar. That's the only explanation I can see since now even the Union County Government is considering widening a section of the Murphy Highway north of Blairsville. The claim is that the project will lessen traffic; but what traffic is there really? There's no where near enough traffic there to justify making it into a major four lane highway. I don't know about everyone else; but I know I like Union County because it isn't paved over with major divided highways cutting through or bulldozing over the landscape. If you want to know where you get to with major highways look at Atlanta. If they start building more big roads around here (especially when we don't actually need them)

See Lance, page 5A



"He can be a little slow, but he is trying."

### More to Ponder

Dear Editor,  
My last letter elicited so much comment = both pro and con + editor's comments twice, that I will be a bit more specific this time around. For many years I have watched the U.S. changing little-by-imperceptible-little, but with extreme consequences over time, resulting in the Federal government becoming the be-all and sole solver of any and all needs and desires. It has happened in administrations led by Democrats or Republicans, and I am not happy with the results of either party. The Federal government has become so bloated that we now have a horrifying and unconscionable \$19 + trillion debt, mostly due to the funding of projects and entitlements that the government was never entitled to be involved in.

Does anyone understand why Federal or State governments need to fund such projects as sports stadiums, museums, or the arts, for example, with money from our pockets, when there are multitudes of people who are aficionados and enthusiasts who would willingly lend their support and \$\$ to funding them? When Rick Perry was Governor of Texas, a multi-million dollar corporation decided to build their plant in another state, because of the lack of an upscale arts culture in Texas. So he called the Mayors throughout the state and told them he would not use taxpayer's money, because there was enough private funding available if they would just seek it out. Today Texas has one of the largest array of

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### Mr. Leon Davenport

Dear Editor,  
I was so saddened to hear of Leon Davenport's passing. He was quite a giant among men, although he never sought the accolades he was due. It was due to Mr. Davenport's persistence that my husband and I came visit Blairsville when we were looking for a place to practice. His words to me were "You'll be sorry if you don't come here and consider this piece of Heaven."

He was so right and 23 years later we feel so blessed to live here and to have raised our children here.

I only knew him as the hospital administrator, but I came to know him as a man of integrity, humor and dedication. My husband and I never had a contract (unlike most doctors) with the hospital. He did what he said he would and we did what we said we would. A rare thing today. Only later did I learn of his military service and bravery.

People told me stories of how determined he was that the community have a quality hospital and that he was known to pay hospital bills personally to keep things going.

Reading the story of his life speaks to the fact that he was a man who let his actions reveal his character more than his words.

I will be forever grateful to him and for him. The community will miss him greatly.

Sincerely,  
Debora Quigley

### Fred McGhee

Fred McGhee was a coon hunting machine. He hunted 6 or 7 nights a week 52 weeks of every year. Fred was extraordinarily poor and a large portion of his income came from the hides he captured through coon hunting. Fred had a large family which required a lot of food and his regular job of logging just would not pay for all the food required by his family. At least that was his excuse for all the time spent in the woods away from his wife and children. Fred was also described by many in our little community as a "big blow". Fred was adept at making you think that he was better than anyone else at almost anything. He had better dogs, better hunting territory and was more knowledgeable about the woods than anyone else. Even with all that was known about his bragging Fred was well liked and people enjoyed his company on a hunting trip. My dad said that he enjoyed hunting with Fred because he was entertaining and fun to listen to.

One Saturday night in August Dad set up a hunting trip with Uncle Mack, Uncle Rufus and Fred. They decided to hunt over in the "Section". This area is now a part of the Bankhead National Forest close to Double Springs, AL. The area is drained by the Sipsey River which eventually feeds into the Black Warrior River. The topography of the "section" is comprised by rolling hills with the occasional deep hollow. At one time there were many farms located in the area. But, during the depression many of these marginal land farms had been abandoned. The federal government came in during the 1930s and bought up all these old farms and created the national forest.

On this particular hot and sultry night in August these 3 men and my dad, who was a teenager, walked far back into the area to the treeing dogs. A treeing dog has spent some time trailing a raccoon to a tree. When the coon climbs the tree the dog comes to the tree and uses a different type of bark than when the coon is still on the ground. Anyway when the 4 people came to their dogs they knew there was a problem. The raccoon had climbed a massive Tulip Poplar. The coon was hiding in the top of the tree amongst all the leaves and to make matters worse the trunk of the poplar was covered with gigantic Poison Ivy vines. The men could not find the coon and normally, Dad would climb the tree to find the animal. However, he refused to climb the tree due to the strong possibility of developing a bad rash from the Poison Ivy. So, the men began gathering their dogs to leave the scene.

As Dad was leashing his dog he noticed Fred sitting down and taking off his shoes. Dad looked at Fred as if he were crazy and asked,

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**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



### Lichens

Lichens are complex parasites of trees, shrubs, and other woody ornamental plants that many people believe to be the downfall of their plants. However, the truth is that these pests are actually indicative of a bigger problem with your plant and don't harm anything they grow on at all.

The lichens that we typically find on our woody plants are made of a few different organisms that rely on each other for survival. The main part of the lichen that we see growing on bark and stems can be any one of a variety of different fungi. Some are broad and leaf-like, and some are slender and look like clumps of thread. This fungus will absorb moisture from the air, and eventually algae will take advantage of the moist surface of the fungus and begin to grow on it. These algae are what give lichens their characteristic blue-green color, and they use sunlight and air to create nutrients, much like the green leafy plants we have in our own gardens. The fungus will also get some of the food the algae make, and in turn give the algae a safe, damp place to live.

Despite their ability to take over a large percentage of a tree or shrub, lichens are never the cause of its decline. Usually, when plants become stressed because of disease, undesirable weather conditions, or a lack of nutrients in the soil, they will not produce as many leaves. This means more sunlight will hit the stems and promote the growth of lichens and their partner algae, which allows them to produce more nutrients and continue to thrive. As long as your plant is unhappy and its canopy is reduced, the lichen will continue to grow and become unsightly. Lichens are also common in the winter, especially if it has been a damp season. As plants naturally lose their leaves, the fungal spores have more access to the bark and more light availability. If a plant is healthy, the lichens will hardly be present in the summer as the leaves keep out sunlight. However, if they are still around at the end of summer, there is a bigger problem at hand.

As tempting as it may be, spraying your plant to get rid of the lichens will not solve your problem. Currently, there are no recommended treatments for lichens that are also safe to use on plants. Spraying a plant that is already stressed and in decline with a home remedy or unapproved chemical could injure it or make its condition even worse. Instead, manually remove any unwanted lichens by gently scraping them from the bark. If you have an extensive lichen problem, you should also examine your plant for signs of disease or an insect infestation. A soil test is also recommended because most of the time, plant stress comes from a source under the surface that we can't see. The soil test will show

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**Blairsville - Union County Chamber**  
Regina Allison



## Colors of New England

For the past several years, the Chamber has sponsored some amazing trips; from Ireland, to Scotland, to the Dutch and Belgian Waterways. This fall, we are teaming up again with Collette to enjoy the vibrant colors of New England. This 8-day trip is from September 28-October 5, 2017.

The tour will begin in Boston, Massachusetts for a 2-day sightseeing tour of the Old South Meeting House, Public Gardens, Old North Church, Beacon Hill and a stop at the famed Faneuil Hall Marketplace. From Boston, the tour will take you to picturesque Woodstock, Vermont where you will enjoy the charm of a "quintessential New England village" and the spectacular view of the Quechee Gorge.

Prepare your taste buds for a 2-night

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