

# Opinions

# Everybody has one...

## COVID-19 - Do Our Part

We are all still in the middle of the COVID-19 event. We have all had to make many adjustments and sacrifices to get through this and we may have a ways to go yet. Although the United States as a whole has seen its predicted peak in cases and deaths, the State of Georgia and Union County has not. We are still one or two weeks out from our predicted peak. In order to get through all this, we all have to work together and do our part for ourselves and our community.

I know that people are tired. You are tired of not working or maybe working from home. You are tired of not going out or not eating in a restaurant. You are tired of the social distancing and not gathering. You are tired of the uncertainty and the fear. We understand but in order to get through this, we each have a part to play.

Your part remains the same for now. Everyone needs to work together and to stick to the guidelines. We have been educating everyone on the latest guidelines and recommendations from the CDC and Georgia Department of Public Health over the last couple of weeks. Everyone should be following the recommended guidelines. This is your part to protect yourself, your family, and your community.

Union County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) has been working very hard every day to plan, prepare, and respond. We have been in constant contact with organizations and leaders from the local, state, and federal levels. We have plans in place for how we respond. The EMA has also been providing information on the virus, the guidelines, and our response so far. That has been our part in the COVID-19 event.

The number of cases has steadily risen over the last couple of weeks. That was to be expected. The social distancing, masks, procedures, etc., were put in place to slow the spread, not stop it. There are positive cases in our county. We are in the middle of it and we are all praying that this virus isn't going to be devastating to our community.

We will continue to do our part and we are asking that you do yours. Follow our Facebook page for the latest updates. For more information on COVID-19 visit [www.dph.georgia.gov](http://www.dph.georgia.gov) or call the COVID-19 Hotline: 844-442-2681. Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

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



## Mere Virus

During this coronavirus season, two basic human desires emerge. We do not want to be alone and we do not want to die.

The retired Army colonel and infectious disease expert Dr. Deborah Birx tells us that these two concerns are working against each other. If we isolate ourselves, we have less chance of infection and death. If we give in to the desire to be with others, we increase risk to ourselves and them.

Loneliness has itself been called an epidemic. Former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy said, "We live in the most technologically connected age in the history of civilization, yet rates of loneliness have doubled since the 1980s." So even though we have access to smart phone apps and computers, these are no substitute for in-person human interaction. The current social distancing and shelter in place demands have their own risk: exacerbating loneliness.

Projections of coronavirus fatalities in the U.S. have dropped considerably over the lifespan of the pandemic. Initial estimates of 2 million are pushed aside by the latest models predicting 60,000. They tell us it's because we are practicing the recommended "mitigation" techniques. It is also surely a function of the heroic efforts by health care professionals.

Despite our best efforts, we will never in this life be free from loneliness, and these human bodies we live in will run out of time. So, though we have desires to the contrary, they will not be completely and finally fulfilled in this life. In "Mere Christianity," C. S. Lewis puts that into perspective. "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same."

So, you soldier on, with the joy and expectation of another place where you will enjoy companionship and life. The Bible says, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations, before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth... You turn man back into dust and say, 'Return, O children of men'" (Psa. 90:1-3). The companionship you desire is with God, and with all those who answer his call to return. Your desire for life

**All Things New**  
*Wayne Fowler*



See Fowler, page 3C

## Commissioner's Questions

**Q. What is going on at the courthouse while the COVID-19 threat is still out there?**

A. We are all working in shifts although it is a very busy time for everyone. The Tax Assessors office is working on mailing out assessment notices for 2020 property taxes that are due in December. The Tax Commissioner's office is always busy on Property Tax Collection, Tags, and Vehicle transfers. Our office is working on the 2019 audit - getting information ready for the auditors. All offices are very busy using electronics and technology to get the county's business taken care of.

**Q. We heard that the Election Registrar's Office was very busy. What are they doing?**

A. They are probably the busiest of all. Not only are election dates changing on a fairly regular basis as the State tries to figure out how the COVID-19 virus will impact voting, but the local Registrar's Office really had a curve ball sent their way from the Secretary of State.

**Q. What is the Secretary of State's office doing related to the COVID-19 virus?**

A. They have changed the Presidential Preference Primary election day from March 24th to May 10, and Primary Election Day is being pushed forward from May 19th to June 9th. The main problem is that Early Voting will begin in just about four weeks, so preparation for that also has to be dealt with. More importantly, the Secretary of State's office also decided to mail out Absentee (Mail-in) Ballot Applications to every "Active" registered voter in the State of Georgia.

**Q. What does it mean that every registered voter receives an Absentee Ballot application?**

A. If you are an Active Voter (legal term), the State Elections has mailed out an application form so that you can vote on a paper ballot from home and then mail in your ballot without having to go to the election polls. It is similar to getting a normal absentee ballot, except you need no excuse for getting one of these. Anybody can apply for one to make it easier to vote - especially if you do not want to take a chance with being around people on early voting or election day.

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



See Paris, page 3C

## Drug Free Mountain Life

### The Importance of Early Prevention

Why is adolescence a critical time for preventing drug addiction? Early use of drugs increases a person's chances of becoming addicted. Remember, drugs change the brain - and this can lead to addiction and other serious problems. So, preventing early use of drugs or alcohol may go a long way in reducing these risks.

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.

Risk of drug use increases greatly during times of transition. For an adult, a divorce or loss of a job may increase the risk of drug use. For a teenager, risky times include moving, family divorce, or changing schools. When children advance from elementary through middle school, they face new and challenging social, family, and academic situations. Often during this period, children are exposed to substances such as cigarettes and alcohol for the first time. When they enter high school, teens may encounter

See Drug Free, page 3C

## Letters to the Editor

### Time for Unification

To the Editor,  
If there is one thing that COVID-19 has taught us, it is that this is no time for changes in government personnel and policy. It has often been said that "timing is everything." The virus has brought on huge, unexpected expenses. Can you imagine adding the cost of new health and education expenses and additional taxes to the national debt at this time and what that would do to the economy and investments that are so critical to us now?

We are fortunate that the current administration has provided economic growth that we now recognize as our greatest asset to coming out of this crisis. How many have considered that the lackluster lack of accomplishments of Nancy Pelosi and her liberals have produced almost nothing of merit over the last three years in their struggle for power?

The adding of "pork" to the efforts to fund this fight is a shining example of a lack of financial responsibility. The voters of this country are fed up with this lack of performance. This will likely cause the liberals to lose the House of Representatives.

See Hummel, page 3C

### Timing Is Everything

To the Editor,  
When it comes to pandemics, timing is everything. If national leaders don't respond and prepare quickly enough, the results can be catastrophic.

For two months, Trump was putting a positive spin on coronavirus, saying things like: "If you get sick, go on back to work." "Calm down, don't panic, this will probably all be over by Easter." "When the weather warms up in April, this virus will just magically all disappear."

Trump has been using his daily press conferences as a reality TV show, babbling on and on about the great amount of face masks, tests and ventilators he has acquired. He brags about how he was the first to ban Chinese from coming into America. Not true. The truth is that 38 countries before him put bans on Chinese entering their countries. Trump's toothless ban had holes in it, and 40,000 Chinese entered our country.

He tells us that no one knew this disaster was coming. Not true. There's a Jan. 29 memo from Trump's trade adviser, Peter Navarro, warning Trump of a pandemic risk and an economic disaster. Trump said, "We are fine." Navarro warned him again in February that the pandemic was getting closer and it could kill millions of people. He was warned by many others, including the Centers for Disease Control and Preven-

See L. Williams, page 3C

## Seasonal High Tunnels

It's that time of year when our thoughts turn to spring with flowers blooming, grass growing and garden planting.

Traditional gardens are at the mercy of the sun, rain, wind, and sudden drops in temperature when the plants have started to bloom. A seasonal high tunnel is a covered garden that protects plants from nature's destructive forces and extends the growing season on both ends of the season by at least a month.

In 2016, the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council, along with the other 11 RC&D councils in Georgia, received a \$15,000 grant from the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority due to efforts of our Sen. John Wilkinson and others in the State Capitol. The guidelines for how to use these funds were for most anything that would enhance the RC&D's mission in the counties they serve. Chest/Chatt RC&D's mission is to "assist local people in planning and carrying out activities that conserve natural resources, support economic development, enhance the environment, and improve the standard of living for all citizens in the 13 counties of Northeast Georgia."

Our goal is not only to help people improve their way of life in these counties but to help teach young people how to provide for themselves in the real world. Chest/Chatt wanted to make a difference in people's lives so we decided to use the funds to donate a 20-by-16 Seasonal High Tunnel to each of the 13 counties in our work area. The Blue Ridge Soil & Water Conservation District (S&WCD) that covers Union, Fannin, Towns and Rabun Counties kicked in some of their state funds to double the size of the donated tunnel houses to 20 feet by 32 feet, as did Upper Chattahoochee S&WCD, which also kicked in funds to increase the five tunnel houses in their area, as did Broad River and Stephens County S&WCD.

A High Tunnel or hoop house is a plastic covered, unheated greenhouse with sides and doors that roll up for ventilation during the warm months and roll down when the temperatures drop. These structures maximize vegetable, fruit, or flower output from a small area since the plants are protected from wind, rain, sun, and animals. A high tunnel can extend the growing season by a month on each end of the season. These growing houses are placed in public places and schools where they can be a benefit to the community by demonstrating to people how they can produce their own locally grown food, flowers, or fruits. We think this is a worthwhile use of

**RC&D Executive Director**  
*Frank Riley*



See Riley, page 3C

## Old Time Sayings

Staying at home and social distancing leave me with much time to think and ponder about things. Don't get me wrong, I am not bored. It is just that I now have more time to think. One thing that has come to my mind over the past few weeks concerns the words that people use and how these words came to be used in our vocabulary. I heard my grandfather say many words that sound strange to a lot of us in the present day.

For example, I heard him describe an individual as "curious." He was trying to say the person was very peculiar, not inquisitive or wanting to know something. So, any time I heard him say the word about a person, I knew he meant the person was peculiar. My great-grandfather, Clifford, use to say that old so-and-so was turned "funny." If you think about a person using a lathe to turn a piece of wood, sometimes the piece just doesn't turn out like you want because the grain of the wood will not allow you to turn it properly. Therefore, the wooden bowl or handle just looks funny. Same thing with a person. Sometimes one's circumstances cause them to turn out just a little different than other folks. I heard other old folks in my family refer to a person as "quare," which meant the person was very, very peculiar.

Papa used another term that is not used much anymore when he was talking about helping someone to do something. He would tell you that we would "holp" a person to do something. I used to also hear him say, "I'll be there direkly," which meant he would go to them soon. Granny used to talk about carrying her lunch in a "paper poke." I learned this was a paper bag. It wasn't until recently (my age) that I came to understand what Papa meant when he said, "I am stove up." It is not until you are in your 60s that you understand that, after driving or riding in a car for a few hours, you are mighty stiff or "stove up."

When I was little and not feeling well, my parents or grandparents would ask me if I was "puny" or "peaked." The word peaked had the emphasis on the last two letters of the word. If I was told to grab a hold of something, I heard, "get ahold of it." If I was into mischief, my mother would tell me that she was going to "wear me out," which meant I was about to get a serious spanking. "Nary" was a word used instead of neither.

I once heard my Uncle talk about seeing "ghostes" instead of ghosts. Another Uncle used the word "his'n" instead of his when talking about something he owned. An Aunt once declared, "I ain't never seed no sech a thing anyhow" when discussing the landing of a man on

**Around The Farm**  
*Mickey Cummings*



See Cummings, page 3C

## Chamber of Commerce

We are entering another week of "Shelter-in-Place," and I know everyone is asking "when will it end?" We do know that Gov. Kemp has extended the order until April 30th and we can safely say that his next announcement will be determined by what unfolds next week. Based on the experts, Georgia should be reaching our peak this week. While I do have a background as a CPA, and I do understand modeling, I think what it boils down to is how well everyone has been behaving. We will see how everyone did during the Easter weekend, and if seven to 10 days later we do not have an increase in the number new cases in Union or Towns County maybe we will start seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

We have been receiving calls from people wanting to travel to this area, but we must remind everyone of the Governor's order. I can assure you that the Chamber is working on a promotional campaign that will be released as soon

See Chamber, page 3C

**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**  
*Steve Rowe*



## Composting

I think that more of us find ourselves eating at home during this time. More eating at home means more kitchen scraps that can be used for composting. Compost is a welcome addition to any garden. It's a popular and effective method to improve the quality of your soil. It can also help you get rid of lawn debris such as grass clippings or leaves as they are beginning to fall. Composting is not difficult to do, but here are some tips so that you can start your own compost pile.

Compost is rich, dark humus that is the end product of the natural decomposition of plants or plant products. Using a compost pile will speed up the natural decomposition of plant material. Compost can improve soil drainage, structure, and help hold water and nutrients. The nutrients in compost will not be enough to replace fertilizing, but they can reduce fertilizing.

You can use just about any organic material for composting. Leaves, grass clippings, twigs, old annual or perennial flowers, old vegetable plants, straw, and sawdust can all be thrown into the compost pile. Try to avoid using insect or disease infested plants to reduce the spread of those plants the following season. You can put things like kitchen peelings and coffee grounds into the compost pile too. Kitchen scraps should be buried into existing compost so that they don't attract too many wild animals. Covering your compost pile will help keep animals out too. Avoid using highly processed foods because these will take longer to break down.

When making a compost pile, it's helpful to have something to contain it. A lot of different materials can be used from wire, fencing, wood pallets or concrete blocks. Leave some open spaces on the sides for ventilation. Good air circulation is important for successful compost. The bottom of the pile needs to be open to the soil to allow good drainage. Construct your pile in an out of the way place in your yard, in full sun.

Once you've constructed your container for the compost pile, start adding organic matter. Smaller pieces will decompose more quickly than large pieces of organic matter. Once you have a layer of organic matter in there add in some garden soil or animal manure. These will add fungi, bacteria, insects, and worms to the pile. They're the critters responsible for breaking down the plant material into the humus that you add to your garden. You'll want to keep the pile moist, but not soggy.

Sometimes a concern with compost piles is that there might be an odor. If you turn the

See J. Williams, page 3C

**Watching and Working**  
*Jacob Williams*



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