

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Local Emergency Management

Last week, I was able to attend the Emergency Management Summit and Training Session which is hosted by the Emergency Management Association of Georgia. It is an opportunity for Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Directors to be updated from the GEMA/Homeland Security Office on the latest issues.

There are also lectures on various subjects involving emergency management. A subject that was brought up in discussion was the assumptions that people had about the Emergency Management Agency, how it works, and the importance of the organization.

There is a saying about disasters; all disasters are local, they start local and end local. That is where we will start with an overview of emergency management. Every county in Georgia has an Emergency Management Agency and a Director. There are a lot of responsibilities placed on that office and the Director. The local EMA office is responsible for all phases of emergency management in that county. The phases are prevention, preparation, mitigation, response and recovery.

Prevention, preparation, and mitigation are phases where the EMA office is evaluating and planning for a disaster. Most people do not know all the hard work that goes into these plans. In prevention, the EMA looks for ways to prevent an incident or disaster from happening in the first place. These can include ordinances such as fire and construction codes or general preparedness education such as the training in the Citizens Emergency Response Team (CERT). Preparation can include obtaining needed resources and contacts to be able to respond to a disaster. Mitigation is an attempt to eliminate a disaster threat all together. These include programs such as relocating homes that have a history of continuously being flooded.

Response and Recovery are the two main areas that most people are familiar with. Response is actually going to the disaster to save lives, save property and to stabilize the incident. Disasters, by definition, overtax the available resources in the county. This is where mutual aid and contacts are very important. One

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Happiness

Written into the mindset of Americans is the pursuit of happiness as a natural, God-given right. That doctrine is oft thought to originate in the Bible, but the language actually appears in the Declaration of Independence, and is perhaps its most famous phrase. So, how do we pursue happiness?

Arthur Brooks of the American Enterprise Institute has described social science research that indicates a path to happiness includes four values: faith, family, community, and work.

Faith helps you make sense of the world we live in, including death and suffering. It gives you identity, and provides ultimate answers like where you came from, why you are here, and where you are going. Having a family that loves you means there are people who feel your pain and share your joys. This doesn't preclude a single person from finding happiness because there is also the benefit of community. Having a group of friends who know you very well and enjoy your company is the antidote to the pervasive loneliness in our cocooned society. (Social media doesn't count!) Happiness from work is counter-intuitive because we think of it as drudgery. But you are more likely to find happiness if your occupation (paid or unpaid) is a means to making the world a better place.

Looking for happiness from politicians who create rights is a futile pursuit. America has been called a "city with foundations," i.e. God, not government gives rights. Senator Ben Sasse, speaking recently at the Gospel Coalition national conference, told Christians, "We have the task of setting up an embassy that says your yearning for a city with foundations is natural, but the king that you yearn for is supernatural. And he is coming again as a liberator. He has already arrived on a distant shore." Government can secure your right to pursue happiness, but your deep yearnings are actually for the love, community, and purpose that God provides.

French philosopher Blaise Pascal identified the true object of your pursuit like this: "What else does this longing and

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Last week we talked about the ongoing trash issue on the sides of our roads and highways. This week we are discussing some ideas on what to do.

Q. If we want to "Adopt a Road" to pick up litter, how do we go about it?

A. You can come by the Commissioner's Office and fill out some very basic paperwork which includes safety rules for cleaning up litter along the roadside. To adopt a road, you will have to commit to picking up a minimum of one mile of a county road at least four times a year. You will then be provided with an orange safety vest and some orange bags for the collection of litter. The County will also place a sign in the section of road you have adopted giving you or your organization recognition for keeping that portion of the road clean.

Q. The county used to have a Litter Hot Line for turning in people we see throwing out trash. Does the county still have this number?

A. Yes, we do. The number is 706-439-6025 and we hope that anytime you see someone throwing out trash you will report it by using this number. Calls to this number are anonymous. If you simply want to call 911 when you see someone in action, that is also permissible. Please write down the litter hotline number so you can call it either on your cell phone or when you get home after spotting a violator.

Q. If we report someone for littering, what information is needed?

A. We need the location where it happened, the date and approximate time, color and type of vehicle and the tag number if possible. This will allow law enforcement to follow up and be able to make a case.

Q. I have been following some of our local commercial trash haulers and have occasionally seen trash blow off their truck. Is there a way to stop this?

A. There is no excuse for any commercial hauler to contribute to the littering problem. Their purpose is to make it better.

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Up North and Cold

When I was 2 years old my daddy lost his job. To find work we moved north to Chicago and lived there about 4-5 years. I remember very few things about Chicago. I remember seeing a lot of snow. I remember not being able to eat

grits. I remember watching the Cubs play a baseball game and I remember the cold. One night it turned cold and a "Blue Norther" came through. Dad got up the next morning and opened the door to our apartment and saw nothing but snow. He had to call a neighbor to dig us out simply to walk out the front door. Another time it was snowing and Dad woke me up. I was told to get out of bed and get dressed. I remember an orange glow coming through the window. Apparently, the building next door was on fire!

We walked out of the house and began walking down stairs. Mom was leading me and Dad was carrying my baby sister. His foot slipped on the ice of the stairway and down he went. He turned at least 2 flips as he tumbled down the steps. At the bottom of the landing Dad stood up and checked my sister. She slept straight through the whole thing!

We were always cold even in the summer time. Mom and another lady took a bunch of us kids to Lake Michigan to go swimming in July. Mom said that my sister and I were the only two kids that wouldn't get into the water. We told Mom, "The water hurts". When we did try to swim we turned blue! We stayed on the beach and played in the sand. I went back up there a couple of years ago and it's just like I remember, cold! If you think Helton Creek is cold, visit Lake Michigan. Even in late summer the temperatures are in the low fifties.

But, it does get cold here from time to time. I was talking to a friend the other day and he remembered a story from his early years about cars and cold weather. Apparently, a young man had just acquired a new car—his first one.

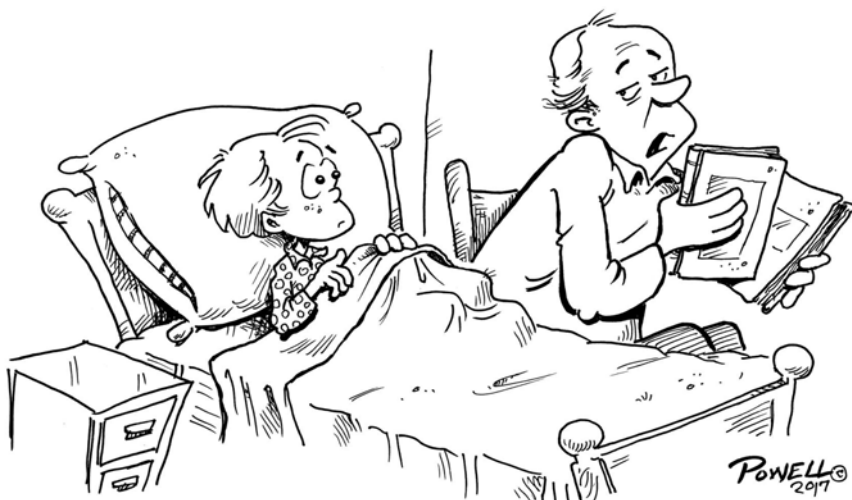
The boy drove it all summer and was just getting used to his vehicle and the seasons changed. Cold weather came to Union County. Back in those early days of the automobile the use of antifreeze was unheard of and folks just used water to keep their vehicles from over heating. But, in the winter the vehicles had to be drained of water or protected to keep them from freezing.

So, one night this boy's radiator froze up. The next day he was complaining about it to his friends. When asked about what he was putting in his radiator the boy said, "Well I use spring water". When asked why he used spring water the boy replied, "Well, I have never seen

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



"So, which do you want to hear first...how state revenues are up, or how the state plans to spend it?"

Letters to the Editor...

Global warming

Dear Editor,

First I'd like to respond to Luther Elder's letter last week. Mr. Elder said, "... all you need to do is study the science" on global warming. That's very true, however, depending what you study, you'll find there is a close split among scientist as to whether climate change is really a problem. The weather channel has expressed weather patterns have been changing for centuries and this is most probably one of those changes. Not only do I find it rather amusing to think, "... all the land ice melts" when again some scientists have measured ice depths and density in both polar regions and found some ice is more dense than ever. If the oceans are rising why did the U.S. Navy have to extend the dock at their

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Life saved by Union County Resident

Dear Editor,

On Wednesday, April 19, I was on my way home from a doctor appointment in Atlanta. I was sitting at the red light in front of Ingles. The light turned green and I started to accelerate and the woman next to me started to honk her horn. I immediately stopped and realized that there was a new 4 door, black jeep running the light and on their cell phone. They never tried to stop and just kept on going. As I began to proceed towards home I waited for this nice woman from Union County and as she got next to me I waived profusely to thank her and she gave me a thumbs up! I don't know who she was but without a doubt she saved my life! Thank you! If any of you know this woman after reading this please tell her thank you and how grateful I am for her quick actions!

Sto Goodwin, Ellijay, GA

Hemlocks

Dear Editor,

Invasive pest is especially bad for hemlocks this spring - Please help!

People tell me all the time about how much they appreciate the unique way hemlock trees contribute to the beauty, privacy, and value of our individual properties and our neighborhoods; cover our mountains with lush forests that support thousands of jobs related to tourism and recreation and produce millions of dollars in revenue; provide food and habitat for many birds and animals, shade for native plants, and cool temperatures for trout streams; help maintain the biodiversity of the ecosystem and protect the air and water quality we depend on; and create special places that restore our bodies and refresh our spirits.

But there's bad news - the hemlocks are

See Shearer, page 5A

Parenting, 1940s and '50s style

Dear Editor,

1. My mother taught me to appreciate a job well done. "If you're going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning."
2. My mother taught me religion. "You'd better pray that comes out of the carpet."
3. My father taught me about time travel. "If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"
4. My father taught me logic. "Because I said so, that's why!"
5. My mother taught me more logic. "If you fall out of that swing and break your neck, you're not going to the store with me."
6. My mother taught me foresight. "Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."
7. My father taught me irony. "Keep crying and I'll give you something to cry about."
8. My mother taught me about the science of osmosis. "Shut your mouth and eat your supper."
9. My mother taught me about contortionism. "Just you look at that dirt on the back of your neck!"
10. My mother taught me about stamina. "You'll sit there until all that spinach is gone."
11. My mother taught me about weather. "This room of yours looks as if a tornado went through it."
12. My mother taught me about hypocrisy. "If I told you once, I've told you a million times: Don't exaggerate!"
13. My father taught me the circle of life. "I brought you into this world, and I can take

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Earth Day 2017 What Does It Mean To Us

Dear Editor,

Earth Day, 2017. Will it be the beginning of a better way to treat our earth? Can this be the year when we, as a people, unite and say no to the exploitation of our earth and no to putting profits ahead of caring for our earth? Where do we, as a nation, place our values? Despite present political tensions, I, for one, believe that we will look within ourselves and make the right choices. I believe that all Americans do truly value proper Creation Care. We do not have to sacrifice our economy to do so, for countless studies show that we can both care for our environment and grow our economy at the same time. Every dollar spent in caring for our environment yields 3-4 dollars in long term savings. Let Earth Day be a day of new beginnings. For the sake of our children, and for the sake of children for countless generations to come, we can, and we must, make the proper moral choice to care for our precious earth. There is no Planet B.

Vernon Dixon

Chamber Events

For this week's article, I wanted to highlight a couple of our wonderful Chamber members and some of their upcoming events.

If you have not had a chance to stop by Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge, there are some great opportunities this weekend and in the coming weeks to enjoy the beauty of the gardens and meet some of the amazing people who are involved with caring for this Towns County treasure. Hamilton Gardens is a botanical paradise fairly bursting with dogwoods, tulip magnolias, native azaleas, wild flowers, trillium, and of course, rhododendron. There are over 400 varieties of rhododendron - 1,100 plants in all!

Saturday, April 29th and Sunday, April 30th, they are hosting a giant Arts and Crafts Show. Come early Saturday morning and be a part of

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison



Azalea and Camellia Leaf Galls

The cool, moist weather we've been having has brought on a new problem that we need to be on the lookout for in our gardens: azalea and camellia leaf galls. Unlike some galls, these are not caused by insects, but instead are

a symptom of a fungal infection with an Exobasidium fungus. Though these galls usually pop up in the spring to some extent, this is an exceptionally bad year for them. This means that even though you may have never experienced this before, you should still be on the lookout for it.

These galls are green or sometimes pink and look like marshmallows dangling from branches. The fungus responsible for these unsightly growths in azaleas is called Exobasidium vaccinii and it can also infect other closely related ornamentals such as rhododendrons. Though these growths look ugly and harmful, they typically will not kill the plant. In fact, a common name for them is "pinkster apples" because people used to eat them. However, I wouldn't recommend that, seeing as how rhododendrons are poisonous and I've heard the azalea galls don't taste very good at all! In camellias, infection with Exobasidium camelliae causes abnormal, pale green, fleshy leaves at the tips of branches.

You will typically see leaf galls form just after flowering and spring green up. Eventually, if the galls are not removed, they will turn white and look powdery as the fungus forms its spores and will finally turn brown as the plant tissue dies later in the summer. Once the spores are produced, they are spread by the wind and by water droplets bouncing on the affected branches. They can spread from branch to branch and plant to plant. Once the gall turns brown and hardens, it will drop off and if it remains close to the plant, it can be a source of fungal infection for next year's growth. The fungus can also remain dormant in leaf tissues that seem otherwise unaffected, as well as underneath bud scales on stems.

Leaf galls appear exclusively on new, tender growth, which makes them a little easier to deal with than many fungal diseases. The best option for controlling this disease is to prune out any and all galls that you can find, preferably before they turn white and form spores. The spores disperse so easily that by the time you find a white gall, they have probably spread to another branch or plant. You can also prevent major leaf gall infections by inspecting azaleas and camellias before you purchase and plant them, as well as by leaving adequate spacing between bushes so leaves can dry well after watering and bouts of rain.

The best course of action is to monitor your plants for these symptoms and remove any

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From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



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