

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Thankful

Over the last few months, the COVID-19 virus has been at the forefront of almost everything we do. We have all made adjustments and sacrifices. We have changed our actions, our thoughts, and our lives to deal with this event.

The Union County Emergency Management Agency began this journey months ago. We have been extremely busy planning, preparing, and responding to this event. Even though we are dealing with COVID-19, the world goes on. We have also been responding to our usual call volume consisting of fires, accidents, and medical calls.

We have received so much support during this event and we are eternally thankful. The community has played a major role in the preparedness, planning, and response. People have listened and responded to the guidelines and information that we have provided. They have dealt with the inconvenience of not being able to visit or conduct business in person.

Many individuals and organizations have donated items such as masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer to be used by public safety. These items, along with the personal protective equipment we had on hand, are being used by first responders on the various calls that we receive each day.

A major contribution has been the making of cloth masks which are donated to the department. We have received enough cloth masks to be able to provide all the firefighters and other responders with at least one cloth mask and in some cases more. We also have a group of individuals who are making gowns from materials that we had on hand just in case they are needed. These people have worked extremely hard to do their part and to provide for our safety.

Some of the local restaurants have helped as well. We have had meals donated and delivered to the firefighters. This is a great help because it saves us time and worry in these busy shifts. A few restaurants have made take out service exceptions for the department because we are not always able to use the drive through.

The ingenuity, creativity, and most of all the generosity of these people are shining examples of the united spirit that resides in our community. We are so thankful. Our community has done so much and made many sacrifices but it's not over yet. We still

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Not Forsaking

The government tells churches not to meet when officials determine such assemblies to be non-essential during the pandemic. Most churches would comply without threats of enforcement, but some challenged the authorities. It's no surprise that one man's "stay home!" threatens another man's freedom. The courts are already ruling on whether certain jurisdictions crossed religious freedom boundaries.

Those who see church attendance as their essential religious duty might cite, "Don't forsake the assembling together" as the source text for their essential religious duty. Let's consider the hermeneutics of that Bible passage. For starters, look at it in context. "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised); and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:23-25, KJV).

The exhortations here are (1) hold fast to the hope and faith we have in Christ and (2) provoke or stimulate one another in ways that benefit our fellow man. In short, it's about loving God and loving your neighbor, the two greatest commands according to Jesus. We do that by exhorting one another, and that is best done in community - together. So the church gathers not because it is simply a religious duty, but as a means to loftier purposes. If the church assembled is not an expression of loving God and neighbor, then let's call it out as bad hermeneutics.

The unity expressed in those purposes is undeterred by diversity. C. S. Lewis writes, "The church is not a human society of people united by their natural affinities but the Body of Christ, in which all members, however different, must share the common life, complementing and helping one another precisely by their differences." Philip Yancy agrees. "Church is the place where I celebrate my identity in Christ and work it out in the midst of people who have many differences but share this one thing in common. We are charged to live out a kind of alternative society before the eyes of the watching world, a world that is increasingly moving toward tribalism and division." Unity in diversity is

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. COVID-19 has caused many events nationwide to be cancelled. Is the Farmers Market going to be able to open this year?

A. Yes, the Farmers Market is scheduled to open on Saturday, June 6, 2020, at 7 a.m. The staff at the Farmers Market has been working extremely hard to come up with a plan so they can open the market and still maintain social distancing guidelines.

Q. How will the county be able to do this since the Farmers Market is always so busy on Saturdays?

A. The buildings at the Farmers Market are designed for customers to walk down the center aisle and the vendors to be in their booths on the outside. This causes people to be in close proximity to one another while shopping. This year the vendors will basically turn around and face outward. Customers will then walk around the outside of the building and no one will be allowed down the middle aisle. Customers should also be mindful of maintaining six feet of distance between other shoppers. This should still provide enough cover for both vendors and customers in the event of rain. Also, for at least the month of June there will be no craft vendors at the market so the produce vendors can be spread out at 10 feet apart from each other.

Q. Will the craft vendors be able to participate in the market later in the season?

A. As more information is available from state and federal agencies and the CDC throughout the summer, we hope we can involve craft vendors soon.

Q. Will there be places for customers and vendors to wash their hands and will there be any hand sanitizer available?

A. There will be portable hand washing stations available upon entering the market area. There will also be many opportunities to disinfect your hands throughout the shopping area. Also, as the CDC recommends wearing a mask could help preventing the spread of the virus. We also have to provide plastic bags.

Q. There are always so many people at the Farmers Market. Will the number of people shopping at one time be limited somehow?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

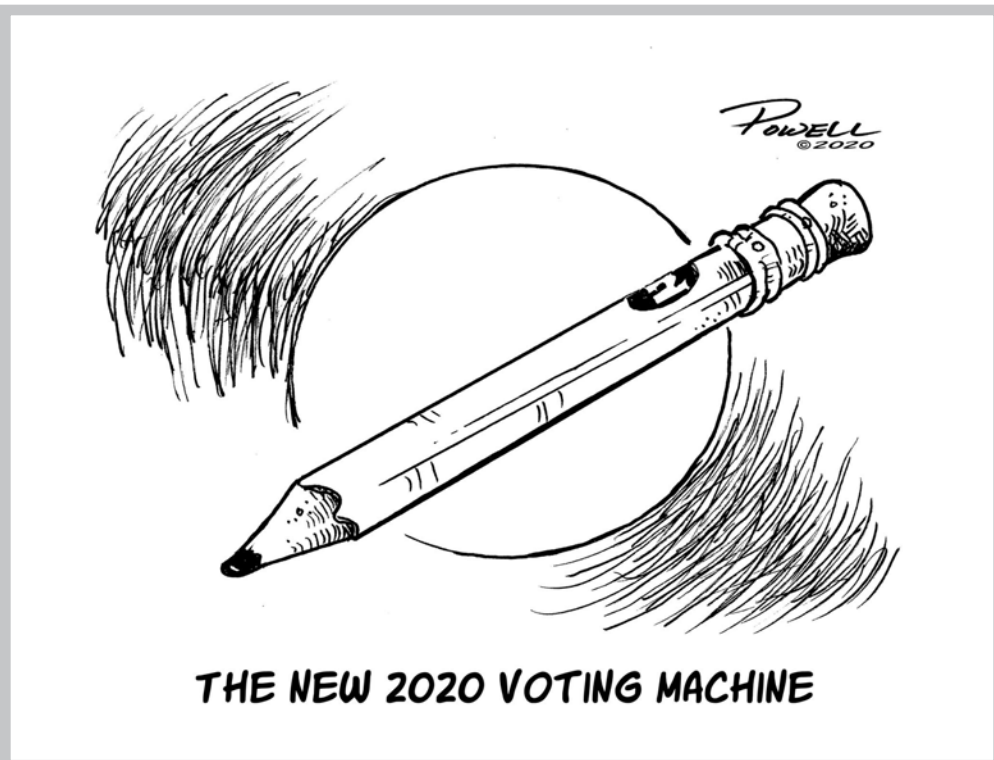
Covid-19 and Mental Health

These are confusing, stressful times for all of us. As the coronavirus pandemic affects numerous facets of our society, it also impacts each person in different ways. The disruptions to daily life have been significant and demand we adjust to a "new normal". Children are home-schooled, churches are closed, social gatherings with friends and family are off-limits and some of us are facing financial insecurity now and in the future. We are all feeling uncertain about what could happen in the coming weeks, as we hope to slow the spread of this pandemic. Feelings of anxiety and uncertainty are completely normal during times like this.

Now imagine you are facing this uncertainty and have a mental illness. How much more challenging must it be to navigate this uncertainty? While we all are concerned about the future,

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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.



Chamber of Commerce

This last Sunday was Mother's Day, but the Chamber wanted to make sure that our moms received all the praise, love, and recognition they so richly deserve every day of the year. The last couple of months have applied all sorts of stresses and pressures on each of us, but this special day reminds us to share how grateful we are for our mothers and mother figures, who have donned even more hats in light of current circumstances.

We particularly thank those mothers who are also healthcare providers, first responders and other essential workers who have had to make certain sacrifices to ensure the safety of their loved ones. We appreciate the mothers who have also become impromptu teachers as they have tirelessly helped their children achieve their academic goals during a very emotionally draining experience. We thank and celebrate ALL of our mothers for loving us unconditionally, being a source of comfort during difficult times, and

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

An Imperfect Science

To the Editor,
In response to a recent letter titled "Should We Listen to Science," the question is, which scientist? As we have learned with the scientific modeling during this coronavirus pandemic, modeling is an imperfect science. There is so much that goes into these prognosticators' guesses. What is the source of the data, which selective data is inputted, how much data is gathered, is the data reliable, and how many years is the modeling done? All of this can be skewed to come up with a desired result. In regards to climate change, another question is, who is paying the scientists? Are they paid by our liberal universities? Are they paid by our liberal bureaucracy? This all factors into the results that our resident climate change alarmist uses to scare the readers into believing that hundreds of thousands of innocent people will die due to climate change. His scare tactic is also supported by expert scientists such as Al Gore, John Kerry, Robert De Niro, Jane Fonda, and the new rising star, 17-year-old expert Greta Thunberg. All of this is supported by our willing left-wing media and politicians.

The answer to your question is "NO," we should not listen to these scientists.

Bill Scott

Everything is a Panacea

To the Editor,
I have written for quite a lot of y'all out there: no matter who you are, no matter what you do, no matter where you are, if it is in fact your destiny to get this virus and die from it, you will get this virus and die from it.

That being said, it is NOT most of our destinies to get this virus and die from it. All the precautions, the social distancing, the masks, the complete shutdown of our economy among the most prevalent things that have been done are nothing but panaceas.

A panacea is remedy for everything. A cure-all. Panaceas do not work! Masks will stop you from getting this virus about as well as underwear and pants stop you from smelling it when someone around you passes gas!

There are only a few ways, in my opinion, that one could eliminate any risk of catching this thing: buy a hazmat suit and wear it constantly; turn your home into one giant air-locked clean room and never leave; or just get and completely live in an impermeable plastic bubble. Not exactly options that are doable for most of our population, and something tells me that, if you are meant to get this, they would not stop this thing.

People do these things because they are afraid. To me it points to one thing. That thing

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Coronavirus Pandemic

The novel coronavirus pandemic has radically changed the way we do business whether we are sheltering at home or alternating work-days at our offices. With no contact in groups allowed, people have had to become innovative as how they can conduct meetings and programs to keep their businesses going.

New technology available allows people to see and communicate with each other in real time on their computers at home or office and has opened a whole new can of worms for the future way we do business. I do not think it will go back completely to like it was since this technology saves a lot of travel money and time and accomplishes the same purpose of getting people together to discuss ideas and move projects forward. I am not a child of the internet, more like a child of rotary phones where you had to put your finger in a dial and rotate it one number at a time.

I also remember the old phones where you called the local operator and asked her to put you through to "mama," and she knew who you were talking about. Or you could call and say, "Mrs. Byrd, where is Mama?" And she would say she is visiting with Amsey and Claudine at Amsey's house. Mrs. Byrd knew everybody's business since she listened in on all calls, (called hackers today) but there were not that many calls in Butler, Georgia, back in those days, so it was not hard to keep up with what was going on.

Our farm was 15 miles out of town (we lived in town) and there was no electricity or phone there, so to make a telephone call we had to go three miles to the Halfway House, the local truck stop on US Hwy 19 and US Hwy 80. I remember going there with Papa to make a call and drink chocolate milk. I thought the waitresses were very nice but later found out that it was a notorious moonshine distributor and house of ill-repute, but it was the only telephone in that part of the county, and it worked since we mostly did business locally and didn't need to be in constant communication every minute of the day like we do now.

If you needed something back then you went to the local store and bought it not like now with Amazon where you can think about it and it shows up on your door already charged to your credit card on file. Now we can just click on the computer, tablet or even our cell phone and talk and see the other person or persons on the other end in real time.

Our Fire Adapted Communities Network usually holds our annual meeting in very interesting places mostly in the west, and I look for-

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RC&D Executive Director
Frank Riley



Spring Tonic

During the early 1940s, there weren't very many doctors in the Tennessee Valley. The ones which were present were hard pressed to get to because of the lack of good roads. The closest one to our farm in Northern Alabama was some 15 miles from Papa's farm. During this time, "Doc Underwood" rode a big white horse everywhere. So, when my 4-year-old Daddy came down with the Scarlet Fever, it was more than a day before "Doc" arrived.

Doc suggested bed rest and plenty of water and food along with the medicine he left for Granny to give to her son. Paul was a scrawny little boy, and the "fever" left him without an appetite. He even turned down his favorite, "biscuits and syrup." Granny was worried about her boy because he wouldn't eat and was losing weight fast. Papa's mother, Laura, came over to check on her grandson. She asked the little fellow, "Paul, what would you like for us to cook for ye?" Dad looked at his grandmother and stated that he wanted some "poke salat and scrambled eggs."

All the little boy ate for two-three weeks was poke salat mixed up with scrambled eggs. The more of this "spring tonic" he ate, the stronger his little body became. And after a short period of time, the little man was back to his old self. Since those days, "Poke Salat" has been the spring tonic in my family. Each year, the grandkids were fed the leaves of Poke Berry scrambled up with a few eggs. I think the leaves are high in iron. But, we never ate the mature leaves. They can be toxic.

Another spring tonic my Grandmaw Adams used to give us was a tea made from the roots of a Sassafras Tree. This tea tastes just like a root beer. It is difficult to remember just how pleasing the tea was. However, the memories provided to me by Grandmaw will be etched in my mind forever.

Another springtime delicacy that I learned of after moving to North Georgia is that "ramps" will make most anything taste better. You can cook them with fried potatoes, scrambled eggs, meatloaf, hushpuppies, cornbread, spaghetti, potato casserole, or you can deep fry them like an onion. One of my favorite methods of preparing ramps is to pickle them. They are good! However, one of the most enjoyable ways of eating ramps is to simply slice them up and place them on a sandwich. It can be a bologna, ham, turkey or any other type of cold cut. The ramp makes the sandwich taste better. Another benefit of eating ramps is to make sure your teenager eats

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



COVID-19 & Agriculture

COVID-19 has disrupted our lives and caused a change in the way we go about our lives. Today I want to talk about the impact that it is having on agriculture. Every one of us must eat, making agriculture one of the most important sectors of our economy. Agriculture is the number one industry in Georgia. It contributes over \$70 billion to Georgia's economy annually. One in 7 Georgians work in agriculture, forestry, or a related field. COVID-19 has certainly disrupted supply chains and affected the way that agriculture operates.

Farmers are still hard at work. COVID-19 has not changed that. And as long as people need to eat, farmers will continue to be hard at work to meet that need. What has been changed is the supply chains to get food from farmers to your plate. Over the years, Americans have become more and more removed from the farmer that puts food on their plate. To meet the increased demand for food, complex systems to get the food from farmer to plate have arisen. I'll try to explain some of these food chains, and what you can do in response.

The meat industry has been hit hard, as you can tell from what's available on the shelves at the grocery store. Most meat goes through a handful of processing plants. If one of those plants has to close due to infection that has a cascading effect on the availability throughout the country. There is also an effect on the farmers because, the product that they had planned to ship may not have anywhere to go if the processor has shut down. Holding onto livestock longer means more costs for a farmer to feed. Distribution centers for produce may be forced to temporarily shut down if they have personnel with COVID-19. These shutdowns can also create a cascading effect throughout the country.

You have probably seen stories of farmers dumping milk or other products. That's because there has been a major shift in where Americans purchase agricultural products. Products are still being produced, but the demand to bring products to schools, hotels, restaurants, and other places has been reduced or eliminated. That means in some cases, the product has to be disposed of at a loss.

So, what can we do? Unfortunately, in the imperfect world that we live in, there are no perfect answers. Grocery stores will continue to have produce and meat, but not in the quantity that we have grown accustomed to. The best thing that you can do is to buy locally or regionally grown/raised as much as possible. Talk with your family

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Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



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