

Opinions

Everybody has one...

A Support System

The fire department is not like it once was. In the past, the main responsibility for the fire department was to respond to fires. Over the years, the fire department has turned into "emergency services" and responds to all types of emergencies including fires, motor vehicle accidents, hazardous materials, medical calls, searches, rescues, and many others, including the recent pandemic. The fire department also provides community services such as fire safety education, smoke alarm installs, and community support initiatives.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief



David Dyer

Union County Fire Department and its members, both career and volunteer, are dedicated to serving Union County. At times, that service can be physically and mentally demanding. It takes a great support system for people to join the fire department, go through the required training, maintain that training, and provide emergency services 24/7/365, especially as a volunteer. Union County Fire Department is extremely fortunate to have such a support system.

Firefighters have a great deal of support from their fire family and home family. Our motto is "Our Family Protecting Your Family," and we take that to heart. We are more than just a group of coworkers. We work together, play together, and essentially live together on shift. We have the same issues as all families do with the occasional disagreement, but we are there for one another when we need it.

We also have a great deal of support from our families at home. Shift work and volunteering are difficult on a family, and these families must make many adjustments. However, they understand the desire firefighters have to help their community and to make a difference.

The fire department has support from the Union County Government. They provide support through our budget. More importantly, they support our efforts to continuously evaluate and improve our services and our department. They also understand the value of having an effective and efficient volunteer service that works well with the career firefighters.

Of course, some of the greatest support that we get is from the community. Our community supports our efforts and understands our vision to make this the best department and to provide the best services possible. Our department is a combination department, meaning that we

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Finish Your Course

Every life runs a certain course, including yours. To have a sense of what that course is and to stick to it is the making of a fulfilled life.

This story starts with a lady who lived across from the local high school in Wyckoff, NJ. For years, Dorothea Clapp prayed for the students to come to know the Lord Jesus. She prayed for George Verwer by name and mailed some literature to him. Verwer assumed himself to be a Christian since he attended his mother's church.

One day in a store, he noticed a magazine featuring a young Billy Graham. He read the article and the wheels of his mind began to turn. Soon after, a man in Verwer's neighborhood offered to bus the local teens to a Billy Graham event at Madison Square Garden. Verwer went and heard the gospel for the first time. "This is the truth," he thought. "My search is over; this is the most important thing in life." So it was that in 1955 at the tender age of 16, Verwer received Jesus Christ as his Savior.

That set the course of his life. As a senior in high school, he distributed 1,000 copies of the Gospel of John. He led several of his classmates to trust Christ. During his first term in college, he hosted a rally back at his high school. Hundreds of students packed the auditorium. After hearing Verwer speak, over 100 people professed faith, including his own father. The next year, Verwer and friends sold their possessions to purchase and deliver Bibles to Mexico.

A few years later, Verwer founded Operation Mobilization to support churches and indigenous Christian workers in spreading the gospel of God's grace. Today OM works in 140 countries and has mobilized over 250,000 workers for that purpose. Verwer has said this verse describes the theme of his life: "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Verwer had a sense of the course of his life. So did Dorothea Clapp, who had a quiet but vital ministry of prayer and encouragement. Therein lies my charge to you, Christian. God has

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Residents have recently asked questions about the Union County Fire Department and about the fire department's funding. This week's questions talk about the various ways that our full-time and volunteer fire stations are funded. Our fire department operates efficiently, and we're so proud of the great work that they do.

Q. I understand that Union County has full time fire fighters and volunteer firefighters. What is the difference between the two?

A. Union County Fire Department is a combination department - meaning that we have both career and volunteer firefighters. The career firefighters are full time employees who work a 24-hour shift every third day. Currently, we have three shifts who operate out of the headquarters station, Station 1. We also have a full-time firefighter in Suches who works from 8 am to 4 pm each weekday. He is assigned to Station 5. Station 13, located on the Murphy Hwy, will be opening soon and will also have career firefighters on duty each shift.

Q. Where are our fire stations located?

A. The volunteers are assigned to four main fire districts: 2 (Jones Creek), 3 (Owltown), 4 (Ivy Log), and 5 (Suches). They are responsible for the operation of the 11 volunteer stations that are within these districts. The volunteers are as the name implies—volunteers—they only receive reimbursement for the calls that they respond to. For specific fire house addresses, please consult the union county website at www.unioncountyga.gov/fire-department/stations

Q. Does the Union County Government fund the Union County Fire Department?

A. The Fire Department has a budget that funds the salaries of the career firefighters, reimbursements of the volunteers, and general operations for all 12 stations, soon to be 13. These general operations include building, vehicle, and equipment maintenance, power, water, telephone, fuel, insurance, etc. There is a limited amount of money for equipment purchases.

Q. I have recently received mail asking for donations for volunteer fire departments. What is this about?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Biden's Border Catastrophe

As President Biden's self-inflicted border crisis continues to spiral into chaos, the White House wants you to believe the situation has drastically improved. In fact, Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre recently touted that illegal migration is down a staggering 90%.

You and I both know this is a bald-faced lie.

While the White House quickly claimed these comments were made in regard to the Administration's deceptive parolee program, no one wants to admit just how disastrous the southern border is due to President Biden's failed leadership and radical policies. Under his watch, there have been more than 5 million illegal alien encounters and over 1.3 million known gotaways at the southern border. In March alone, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) faced nearly 191,900 illegal alien crossings — marking almost a 24% increase from February. Alarming, this crisis expands far beyond the

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United States Congressman Representative Andrew Clyde



Letters to the Editor

"Misnamed" Response

Dear Editor,

The gentleman apologizes for this debate/dispute in a public forum of letters to the editor. I would think that a debate of an issue as critical as changing the government in the county would need to be a public discussion and debate. Doing this debate publicity is a good way for people who want to be informed to see both sides of the issue. There really is no other way to have a public discussion about this at this point in time since we have moved on from wooden boxes in the town square to air the issues. Letters to the Editor is meant to be a public forum for us all. (Side note: Mr. Editor, your space in the paper is not large enough. Please consider more room for letters from the citizens of this area. It is one of the few outlets for public discussion.)

I agree with you about good government, but twice in my life I heard the siren call of multiple commissioner proponents "have each (commissioner) member closer to the constituency that they represent and can hence listen to and better discuss with their electorate before deciding how to act." You must mean let me ignore your emails, delete your texts and screen your phone calls, and in the grocery store I don't have time to talk right now. I'll circle back around to you later but never do type behaviors from the multiple commissioners. Yes, with more commissioners, that's what happened in my two prior counties that I used to call home.

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Rep. Clyde Misleads Us Again

Dear Editor,

I won't go into any partisan divide here. In response to Rep. Andrew Clyde's avid response of the Republican "Limit, Save, Grow Act of 2023," I will simply point out some glaring facts that the GOP does NOT want us to notice in it.

FACT 1: The bill proposes all federal spending EXCEPT FOR DEFENSE be reduced to and frozen at 2022 levels.

FACT 2: That spending freeze results in a 22 PERCENT FUNDING CUT to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

FACT 3: That spending freeze results in a 22 PERCENT CUT to Social Security payments.

FACT 4: You must work or perform 80 hours of qualified, verified community service every month in order to continue receiving Medicaid.

FACT 5: It repeals 247 individual tax credits - not corporate tax credits - that farmers, food production, alternative fuel vehicle drivers, and alternative energy consumers currently receive.

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Nature's Bulldozers

Feral or wild hogs are not something most of us usually think about until one morning we look out at our manicured yard or hay field and see that it looks like a bulldozer moved across it during the night.

Wild boar, feral swine and Eurasian boar are members of the same biological species - *Sus scrofa*. Pigs, or swine, were first introduced to North America by Spanish explorers in the early 16th century. Some escaped; some were released intentionally. The actions of these explorers led to the number of wild pigs now present in America. Pigs were initially favored by early North American settlers because of their lack of required care. Settlers raised pigs with free-range practices for centuries.

In the early 1900s, the introduction of the Eurasian species of boar for sport hunting resulted in this group's interbreeding with free-ranging domestic pigs already present. Due to the cross breeding that occurred and unique features of pig biology, the pig population expanded considerably. This caused immeasurable economic and ecologic damage across the United States. Due to the extent of interbreeding between these two subspecies, the Eurasian boar and free-ranging domestic pig are now considered by most experts to be the same animal - the wild pig.

Unclaimed free-ranging populations of wild pigs quickly increased and spread throughout the United States. Major contributing factors for the success of wild pigs are short reproductive cycles and large litter sizes. Since these animals descended from domestic stock, they were selected for their high reproductive potential.

Wild pigs are the most fertile large mammal in existence. They have a gestation period of 112-115 days, or about 16 weeks. Females can begin reproducing at 6 months of age. A typical sow will give birth to two litters per year consisting of four to six piglets per litter. Under the right conditions, a sow may produce up to 13 piglets in one litter. Doing the math, one sow can contribute over 50 pigs per year when her offspring start multiplying, because she can produce four to 13 piglets every 115 days!

While large litters were an ideal trait in a domestic hog, this characteristic has persisted in feral strains and is a major cofactor in the explosion of the wild pig population. Wild pigs travel in groups called sounders consisting of two or three related adult females and their offspring. Males, especially larger boars, are often solitary. It is common for members of a sounder to exhibit cooperative nursing, during which piglets

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RC&D Executive Director

Frank Riley



The Baker Place

Let me describe one of my mother's favorite places, which was the farm of her grandfather, Charlie Baker, whom everyone called Dad. Shirley Adams was born on Dad Baker's farm in October of 1939 about 13 miles east of a little place called Phil Campbell, Alabama. She was able to spend a great deal of time with Dad and Mommy Baker because they lived so close together. The first time she went to town was with her grandparents. The first time she had store-bought icecream (Black Walnut) was with her grandparents. One of her favorite activities was brushing out Mommy Baker's long black hair. She had a grand childhood living close to her grandparents.

Athel was a cousin of Mom's and was raised by Mommy and Dad Baker. She and Mom were as close as sisters. Dad Baker owned a large tract of land and had a fine garden including apple trees, muscadine and grape vines, peach trees and pear trees. Mom has always loved green apples. However, Dad Baker would not allow anyone to pick any apples until he said it was time. This did not prevent Athel from helping her younger cousin to steal a green apple or two before they were ripe.

The whole farm was one huge playground for Mom and all of her cousins. Athel would always look after Mom and Sherwon, another cousin. They loved playing in the garage on rainy days. The garage was detached from the house, and Dad's car was always parked in the middle. On either side of the garage were two big rooms with tools stored in them. In front of the car was a long stage-like structure off which the girls could jump and play. The girls loved playing hide and seek with their older cousin Athel.

Mom also enjoyed the wash house. All of the Baker kids came to the farm to use the wash house because it had a fancy washing machine with wringers to help dry the clothes. Mom loved going there because it smelled of bleach and was always kept so clean. When she was young she just had to try running the wet clothes through the wringers. She held on to the clothing a little too long and the wringers caught her hand, and before she knew it her arm was caught in the contraption. The little girl was scared to death because she just knew that machine was going to pull her whole body into it. She said, "To this day I can still hear my mother laughing. Her laughter actually calmed my nerves and I then knew I would be okay."

The Baker Place also had a blacksmith shop on the farm. Dad Baker could make or repair anything related to his farm in that shop. It

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Chamber of Commerce

Recently, I had overheard several individuals talking about controlling where their tax dollars were being spent. It's an age-old question, and I think it is common to many taxpayers. The benefit of living in Georgia is that now we have an input as to where our tax dollars are being directed.

There are currently two programs that will allow pass-through entities to make a contribution of up to 75% of their annual state tax liability through the Georgia HEART Hospital Program or the Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program.

Effective in 2022, Georgia pass-through businesses may elect to pay their state income tax at the entity level thus providing a work-around for the \$10,000 limitation on the SALT deduction (HB 149).

Under the Georgia HEART Hospital Program, businesses can elect to contribute up to 75% of their state tax liability to an eligible rural hospital. These funds can then be invested in our

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Hay Testing

Hay testing is an important part of any livestock management program. If you feed hay, it's important to know the quality of the hay. Without performing a hay test, you don't know the quality of the hay.

Feeding hay that is poor quality can lead to an impaction in the animal's stomach.

Essentially, what happens is that the hay fed to cattle has a lot of fiber in it. Lots of fiber in hay without nutrition means that the cattle can't properly digest the forage. Cattle will eat enough forage to be full, but all that indigestible forage creates an impaction in their rumen. The effects of cattle eating low quality hay and getting an impaction can range from calving issues, to diarrhea, to weight loss, and even death.

When cattle start to die because of poor quality hay, usually you will have at least a few cattle go down. Forage quality issues can be made worse if they are combined with supplements that stimulate forage intake, because then cattle are eating more of the low quality hay. The best treatment for low quality forage is to know ahead of time about the quality of your hay. The only way that you can do that is through hay testing.

Body Condition Scoring (BCS...not referring to college football) also shows how important hay quality is. BCS is an index that measures the health of the animal based on how fleshy or boney the animal is. The scale ranges from 1-9. A one is a severely emaciated cow. Bones in the shoulders, back, and ribs are clearly visible. A BCS of one is rarely seen in the field. A BCS of nine is a very obese animal and its mobility is impaired by excessive fat. This score is also rarely seen in the field. In cows, you ideally want a BCS of five to be maintained for calving. If BCS drops to a four then your calving interval will increase. Typically a BCS of five will give you conception rates of >85% and calving every 360-370 days. A BCS of four or lower means calving will be >380 days. Cows will require high quality forage for about 70 days to go from a BCS of 4 to 5.

We have three main tests for hay. The basic one costs \$15 and will tell the moisture, fiber, crude protein, lignin, total digestible nutrients, and give you a relative forage quality (RFQ). The RFQ is an index that will give you a number to give you a reference on the quality of your hay. Dry cows do not need as high of an RFQ compared to gestating cows, or cows with a calf that they are feeding. Above the basic test is a \$20 test that is the basic test + nitrates. Above

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Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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Website: www.nganews.com • Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com • Mail: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

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Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 (Union County) - One Year \$45 INCLUDING UNION COUNTY CUSTOMER REQUESTS MAIL SERVICE. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$10. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 24, 1988, at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement.

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A. The volunteers also raise donations that are controlled and operated by the volunteer members assigned to the fire stations in their district. These funds are used to purchase additional equipment for the volunteer members. This equipment includes firefighting gear, wildland gear, search and rescue equipment, and medical responder equipment. The funds are also used to purchase communications equipment, and firefighting equipment as well as fire apparatus.

Q. Does the Union County Fire Department re-

ceive grants?

A. The fire department as a whole does actively seek and receive grants from both state and local organizations. We apply for the Georgia Forestry Commission grant each year. This grant is a 50/50 match grant for wildland firefighting and other firefighting equipment. We have also received several federal grants to purchase Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) s and Turnout Gear washer/dryers. Both the career and volunteer firefighters benefit from these grants.

Williams... continued from Page 4A

that is a \$40 test that is basic + nitrates + minerals.

A single hay test can cover an entire hay lot. A hay lot would be all the hay from a particular field at the same cutting. I have a hay probe in my office and I would be happy to come out and collect the hay sample for you. Once we've processed a hay sample, I can help you come up with a balanced ration to get you through

the hay feeding months. If you think you have some good quality hay let me know, and we can submit a sample to the Southeastern Hay Contest.

Quality forage when grass isn't growing is a big part of any livestock operation, not matter how big or small. If you have questions about hay testing contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Lausier... continued from Page 4A

You see, they can listen to you but still vote yes on the new apartments, or 800-home subdivision, pig processing plant or RV park, etc., etc., and have the permits approved and builders in there before they have to face any re-election challenge.

But thanks for making my point for me, to quote "each member of a five-member board comes to their own decision in their own time." Yes, exactly what I was referring to in terms of delays, waste and inefficient government.

I have talked with several "volunteers" of this group who have moved here from other states but don't like the way we handle things in Georgia. Ask yourself why did you move here? And yes, I understand that many signatures are longtime residents of Union County, which again helps

prove my point. Long-time residents have not lived under a five-or-more-commissioner government and have no idea the mess and declining quality of life that occurred in the two counties I lived in, and will occur here. While people from other states have moved to Georgia, some have brought good ideas, but this change in governance is not one of them.

I totally agree that Mr. Lamar has served his time and needs to be replaced, and his unpleasant behavior in county meetings has been ugly, and gotten worse lately, and there is a question of transparency. BUT don't replace the office, replace the man.

I don't know how to say this any simpler: a five-commissioner board will be the death knell of life quality in this beautiful valley.
Eva Lausier

Clyde... continued from Page 4A

southwest region. Concerns continue to rise with illegal migration at the northern border, as CBP encountered more than 15,700 illegal crossings in March — more than a 100% increase compared to March of last year.

President Biden's open borders also continue to embolden bad actors. So far this Fiscal Year, CBP has seized over 14,000 pounds of fentanyl — enough to kill more than 3.1 billion people. Unfortunately, cartels still manage to smuggle this deadly drug, which is largely manufactured in China, into our communities. Additionally, Biden's weak border policies have encouraged dangerous individuals to illegally enter the country. In just the first six months of Fiscal Year 2023, 80 suspected terrorists were apprehended attempting to cross the border, including 11 in March alone.

The harsh reality is these startling statistics are only bound to get worse after the expiration of Title 42 last week. Successfully issued by President Trump in 2020, Title 42 allowed the immediate expulsion of illegal aliens in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at the southern border. Yet this beneficial measure ended on May 11th, removing a critical tool used to significantly curb the flow of illegal migration.

With Title 42 ended, President Biden's border crisis will

inevitably become a major catastrophe. In fact, Department of Homeland Security officials were warning as many as 700,000 migrants were waiting to cross the southern border when Title 42 ended on Thursday. 700,000! To put that number in perspective, that's more than 16 times the population of Gainesville, GA. President Biden is responsible for this imminent — and intentional — invasion.

Unsurprisingly, the Biden Administration has no plan to address this chaos. But House Republicans do.

On Thursday, House Republicans voted on a comprehensive package to secure the border and combat illegal migration. H.R. 2, the Secure the Border Act, forces the Biden Administration to resume construction of President Trump's border wall, deploys vital technology to both the southern and northern borders, increases the number of Border Patrol agents, and requires transparency regarding illegal alien crossings from the Department of Homeland Security. Additionally, H.R. 2 strengthens current law to protect unaccompanied minors from human trafficking, ends catch and release, and eliminates the abuse of executive immigration authority.

In our Commitment to America, we promised to deliver a nation that's safe by tackling the border crisis. And last week, we did just that.

Riley... continued from Page 4A

from all the females will suckle from one sow while the others stand watch for predators, contributing to low mortality rates of the wild pig.

Another trait that has made wild pigs so successful is the ability to utilize a variety of habitats. These animals are highly adaptable and inhabit a variety of habitats, including mountainous areas, forests, salt and brackish swamps and marshes, old growth pinelands, semiarid brush habitats, as well as many other habitat types. Since their introduction to North America, wild pigs have colonized more than 40 of the 50 states.

Wild pigs are opportunistic omnivores. They will consume almost anything from agriculture crops and mast crops, such as acorns and fruit, to grub worms and dead animals, also known as carrion. Though not considered active predators, they will consume fawns, livestock, and the eggs of ground nesting birds in addition to vegetation and other food items. The roots of a vegetative food source will often be

consumed when the leafy portion or fruits/nuts of the plant are no longer available.

With their tough snouts and over-developed neck muscles, wild pigs can be considered "nature's bulldozers." The most common form of damage caused by pigs is ground disruption because of hunting for food. Destruction of crops, yards of homeowners, and natural habitat is of concern, and damage of a great magnitude can be created overnight.

Wild hogs live all around us on higher elevations as well as in the valleys. Several years ago on my farm, wild hogs destroyed the last acre of corn that the bears had left for later, and while they were at it, they destroyed the church cemetery all in one weekend. Wild hogs are not just wreaking havoc in farmers' fields, but also in homeowners' yards in some of the communities right here in the mountains, so nothing is safe from these ravaging gangs of nature's bulldozers.

For more info, contact Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D at info.ccrd@gmail.com.

Cummings...continued from Page 4A

contained an anvil, a forge, a bunch of tools and smelled of steel and charcoal.

The farm also had a meal shed which was used to grind corn for meal to make corn bread. Each fall we would also bring the harvested peanuts to this shed where the family would pull off the peanuts from the dead vines. The peanuts would be dried here and then stored in the root cellar. One of Mom's favorite sweet treats was peanut brittle which her mother would make each fall and winter.

His farm also had a barn on it where the animals were kept. There were milk cows which supplied milk for drinking as well as making butter. Hogs were kept there to be fattened and later slaughtered. From the hogs the family made bacon, sausage and country ham. Also, they made lard for cooking. The hogs were always butchered in the late fall because temperatures were cool enough to prevent the meat from spoiling before it could be preserved in the smokehouse. The barn also contained a stall for Uncle T. D.'s horse. Mom and Sherwon would wait until after her Uncles had all gone to work, and then they would ride his horse nearly all day. They always took the time to brush the horse before they placed him back in his stall. She said her Uncle never let on that he knew anything about them riding his horse. But I think he always knew. Yet he never said a word because he knew they took good care of the horse.

Next to the Baker house a storm cellar was located. But, during wet times there was always a couple of inches

Fowler...

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a course for your life. It is some selfless expression of glorifying God, displaying His love, and advancing His truth. You are "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10).

Some pray. Some serve. Some even start worldwide organizations. But all of us can finish well, as did Verwer. In 2023, George Verwer left for the land of the living. He was 84.

Chamber...

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community to meet our community health care needs.

The Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program allows the Education Expense Credit law to provide families access to better educational opportunities. Taxpayers can contribute to SSOs and designate a qualified private school and receive a Georgia tax credit and possibly a federal business deduction.

There is an annual cap on both of these credits, so be sure to contact Union General Hospital for more information on the Georgia HEART Hospital Program or go online to www.goalscholarship.org to learn how you can take control of your Georgia tax dollars. Be sure to contact your CPA or tax advisor to determine what credits and deductions you may be eligible to receive through your contributions, that help make Life Better in Blairsville!

St. Lawrence...

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This isn't deceptive, political doublespeak. It's not my "interpretation" of the bill. These are verbatim facts directly from the proposal. But PLEASE don't take my word for it. Read it for yourself in the actual text of H.R. 2811 - Limit, Save, Grow Act of 2023: <https://rules.house.gov/bill/118/hr-2811>.

Don't let Rep. Clyde fool you or mislead you.

I wouldn't dare tell you what political decisions you should make. But, since your decisions affect me and mine, I will tell you to at least make INFORMED decisions.

Thank you,
Gary St. Lawrence

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

have both career and volunteer firefighters. The community supports the volunteers by donations, which are essential in supporting the volunteer firefighters and the operations of their stations.

We want to thank the many people who support our efforts and make a difficult job easier. We ask that you please continue that support.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

of water in it. Mom and her cousins loved playing in the cellar during the heat of the day. Close to the house there was a large garden in which the family grew green beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, okra, peas, butterbeans and cabbage. The whole family would gather in the summertime to pick and preserve the produce and fruit which was grown in the garden. Mom especially enjoyed making hominy. She said it was one her favorite things to make from the garden. She was fascinated by the the big black pot which was used to cook the hominy. Another of her favorite activities was picking blackberries. She said the whole family would gather to go berry picking. She said, "I wore some old overalls, a long-sleeved shirt and old shoes." She would wipe coal oil (kerosene) around her ankles and wrists to prevent chiggers and ticks from biting her. The kids were not allowed to go by themselves due to rattlesnakes and copperheads.

The family was extremely close and did many things together even after all the kids were grown. The Baker farm was a great place to raise children.