

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Hydrant Inspections

There are over 1,100 fire hydrants in Union County, and the number continues to grow. Fire hydrants are a crucial element of the fire service. Union County Fire Department utilizes fire hydrants on just about every fire, so they need to be readily available and in good working order. One of the many non-emergency fire tasks performed each year by the firefighters of UCFD are fire hydrant inspections and maintenance.

UCFD inspects each hydrant to ensure that it is in good working order and that the department will have water in the event of a fire. Inspecting fire hydrants is also one of the many tasks that we must perform to maintain our Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of 4/4y.

Firefighters locate each hydrant and record the GPS location. They then take the caps off and grease them so that they are easier to take off in an emergency. The hydrant is opened or turned on to ensure that there is water on the system and that the hydrant is in working order; they are not flushed.

Hydrant inspections begin in the late spring and go on throughout the summer until completed. You may see firefighters in various marked vehicles on the side of the road or in your neighborhood performing these inspections. Please be aware of the move over law if you see fire vehicles with flashing lights on to ensure the safety of the firefighters checking these hydrants.

One thing that homeowners can do to help with this process is to take the time to look at the hydrants on your property. Fire hydrants that are covered with weeds and brush are not visible or easily accessible in an emergency. If a hydrant is on your property, please take the time to cut the grass and trim around these hydrants to make them more visible and accessible. Make sure that these hydrants are not blocked by gates, fences, retaining walls, vehicles, landscaping or shrubbery.

Remember these hydrants are there to protect you and your neighbors; anything that slows down the process of finding and/or accessing these water sources can seriously affect the outcome of a fire. If you locate a hydrant that looks damaged or is leaking, contact your water department or Union County Fire Department.

Fire hydrants are a very important part of the job of firefighter-

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Hope in Crisis

"I heard the roar." "I lost everything." "I should be dead." I hear such words when serving as a chaplain in natural disaster zones around the country. I am amazed at the resilience of survivors.

After the initial shock, responses can vary from despair to anger. Despair, if someone assesses a crisis as random, chaotic, and meaningless. Anger, if you thought you had a deal with God to prevent it. But the resilient ones usually have something in common: faith in God to see them through. It's like they have an internal compass that points to what is known, unchanging, and available. I realize some might dismiss this as an "emotional crutch." But it is far more than that, and it's something that can inspire you to increase your own resilience for whatever trauma or crisis you might face.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ opens access to deep meaning in life, especially in a crisis. C.S. Lewis notes that life is a series of troughs and peaks, but it's the troughs that strengthen your connection to God. "The fullest grace can be received," he writes, "by those only who continue to obey during the dryness in which all grace seems to be withheld." Standing in a debris field or the rubble of a home is an acute "dryness," as well as an opportunity to receive God's grace, peace, and hope.

If anyone might have expected God's deliverance from affliction, it was the Apostle Paul. He was not spared, and he connected crisis to deep meaning. Speaking of his hardship as a missionary, "We were burdened excessively, beyond our strength," he writes, "so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead..." He on whom we have set our hope" (2 Cor. 1). God gave Paul more than he could handle. Paul responded by trusting the providence of God and maintaining an eternal perspective. This life is not all there is, nor do afflictions have the final say. Let that inspire your resilience!

Now is the time to prepare for future crises you might face. Your yearning for a crisis-free life is a signpost pointing to the place Jesus prepared for you. You secure your place by receiving His grace by repentance and faith. He is your hope in crisis. As

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. In the monthly Commission Meeting, you stated that independent auditors have been in Union County doing the annual audit of the County financials. Why do we pay someone to examine our books every year?

A. Under Georgia law, Union County's financial statements must be prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, audited annually by an independent auditor (CPA), and submitted to the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts. Governmental finance officers and auditors follow auditing standards developed by professional associations and guidelines offered by various agencies of the federal government.

Q. What are the auditors looking for?

A. Recently developed standards place a great deal of responsibility on Union County Government finance management and the independent auditor for the identification and measurement of compliance with various legal and contractual obligations; state laws, rules, and regulations; grantor guidelines; and other finance-related requirements. These broad categories also include assuring that revenues due Union County are actually received and accounted for, that assets of Union County Government were not lost or stolen, that expenditures were made only for budgeted and approved items, and that financial statements accurately reflected the financial position of Union County Government and the financial results of its operations.

Q. What are the required qualifications for an auditing company to audit Union County finances?

A. Union County Government may employ an accountant to aid in examining and auditing the books, vouchers, and accounts of any county employee who handles county funds. Currently, Union County uses Rushton, a company out of Gainesville, GA. Rushton is an independently owned and operated member firm of CPAmerica, Inc., one of the largest associations of CPA firms in the United States. In addition to a CPA firm conducting an audit, a grand jury can also investigate, inspect, and examine the books and records of county offices or, when necessary, to appoint one or more citizens of the county to do so.

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



The Chasing Waiter

Rene has a contagious laughter about her. I would often meet her for lunch, and on this particular day, we decided to risk eating at a new restaurant down the street from her workplace. A risk? Only because we had heard nothing good or bad about its cuisine.

The meal was palatable, and as always, the topics of conversation between Rene and me were intriguing, with a mixture of uncontrollable laughter and entertainment. Not a care in the world - the lunch hour zoomed by. Neither Rene nor I gave attention to the finishing touch of the meal - the tip!

As we were ambling back to Rene's workplace, we heard this screeching noise behind us. Literally running down the sidewalk towards us was our waiter - screaming something in a language that was certainly not English. For a brief moment, I thought he was "speaking in tongues" but not so.

See Ashurst, page 7A

Successful Mental Health Dr. James Ray Ashurst PH.D.



Letters to the Editor

No Changes Allowed

Dear Editor,
My wife and I, while on vacation, stopped at this huge working farm to take their grand farm tour. The guide was very informative and friendly, and had actually worked on the farm for over 20 years.

We visited the entire operation, and he introduced us to some of the animals and fowl near the main farm house. You could tell the cows, horses, chickens and ducks were used to having visitors. As we were standing by a large Holstein bull, I thought I heard him trying to cluck like a chicken. It actually startled my wife, because it was obvious that the bull

See Vickers, page 7A

Fallen Heroes

Dear Editor,
Another Memorial day has come and gone, with families across our beloved nation paying tribute to those brave men and women and service dogs who paid the price for our freedoms so we can enjoy the day with family grilling out at home or going to the local park. But let us never forget those who have died as we drive through out little town of Blairsville and see all the wooden crosses bearing each name and what war they fought in. Our hearts are heavy towards all the families who have had a dad, a mother, a son or daughter, and other kinfolk who sacrificed their lives to allow us to be free from all the wars that rage around us.

See Combs, page 7A

Letter Policy?

Dear Editor,
Does the North Georgia News have a policy concerning letters to the editor? Within the past few years, I have noticed that the paper tends to show, occasionally, a moderate or left-leaning letter followed the next week with a letter that replies in the extreme. Do you intentionally choose a moderate or liberal letter in order to get an extreme reaction the following week? If the policy of the paper is to promote visceral reactions from the community, I think you have

See Maloney, page 7A

Alcohol

Dear Editor,
Regarding a letter in last week's paper entitled Thank You Pastors. A husband and wife team objected to a proposed "90-day trial of open carry of alcohol in our town", which they called a "very bad idea". The letter writers invoked prayer and acting in faith as well as being

See Meier, page 7A



Left's Political Lawfare

As you well know, the Left has weaponized our justice system into the election interference arm of the Democrat Party.

President Biden and his Democrat allies have shamelessly abused the power of prosecution to interfere in the upcoming election because they're terrified of facing President Trump at the ballot box this November. In total, Trump faces 88 bogus charges across 49 different jurisdictions: Georgia, Florida, New York, and Washington, D.C.

Notably, the sham trials in both the Peach State and the Sunshine State continue to be delayed. These postponements present major setbacks for the Left's crooked prosecutors - but big wins for President Trump.

However, Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's show trial has forced Trump to spend his time and resources in New York rather than on the campaign trail. Of course, this is the entire goal of the political persecution plot.

Regardless of the outcome, the process becomes the punishment.

This is election interference, plain and simple. But will their nefarious plot succeed?

The American people see straight through the Left's political lawfare against President Trump. After all, the prosecution's star witness is Michael Cohen, a disbarred attorney, serial liar, and convicted perjurer. Just yesterday, Cohen confessed to stealing \$30,000 from the Trump Organization.

Even liberal pundits on CNN are admitting Cohen's testimony has been a disaster for the prosecution!

Despite numerous concerns about witnesses' credibility and liberal bias from the judge and his daughter, President Trump has been barred from publicly defending himself. As you may know, Judge Merchan issued a gag order and even threatened to put Trump in jail for exercising his First Amendment rights to call out the Left's corrupt witch hunt.

Due to this unconstitutional muzzle, Republicans are showing up to the New York trial to show support for President Trump and denounce the liberal lawfare. I was honored to join this effort last week, where I spoke outside the courthouse to raise awareness for my amendment to prohibit federal funds from being used to prosecute any major presidential candidate before the 2024 election.

Please know that as lawmakers begin crafting spending bills for Fiscal Year 2025, I'm fighting to include this language in the base text of the Commerce, Justice, and Science appro-

See Clyde, page 7A

United States Congressman Representative Andrew Clyde



Boogers in the Night

Growing up in the country, kids like me learned all types of things about scary boogers or events that happened to other people. I have heard old folks talk about fluorescent green, glowing lights that followed people as they walked down lonely stretches of roads in dark woods during the night. Granny used to tell me about panthers that would try to sneak up on people to stalk and catch them unawares. I have even heard that my great-great-grandmother Baker haints a hill close to her home place in North-western Alabama. I guess it is a thousand wonders I didn't have nightmares every night when I was growing up.

Many of these stories were told to me before the TV became the far-reaching influence it is today. Back in those days children and adults used their imagination more than we use our imaginations today. Back in the early 1940s, Papa bought his first piece of property (80 acres) for \$100/acre. Papa and Granny cleared, farmed and lived on that original 80 acres until their deaths. They built a small, framed house and carried water from a quarter of a mile away. As the house was being built, Papa dug a well right next to the house. The well didn't even have a well house over it yet when a mishap occurred. The only covering over the well was an old 2x12 with a tarp over it. Late one night the family milk cow fell a straddle of that 2x12.

The cow's full weight was resting on the board and she was having trouble getting free of the well and board. She would bellow a deep, mournful, guttural sound resembling a growl from a large animal. Also, the well was located right next to the house, and each time the cow would swing her head her horns would rake across the siding of the house. Papa got up to go check on this awful sound, and each time he would reach the door the cow would bellow out this sound and rake her horns on the house. My Granny would let out a scream of terror and Papa would run back to check on her and his sons. Eventually, Papa gathered enough nerve to go outside and confront the demon. He laughed about it when he told the story. But, back in those days he was plenty scared of that awful sound.

A little later a mad dog came to Papa's house. Granny said their house was not even finished yet. It was still summer. The walls of the house weren't finished and Papa said, "We didn't even have some of the outside doors up yet." For those of you that don't know, today we would say a mad dog was rabid. Granny said this dog

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Chamber of Commerce

We have so much to be thankful for. Last week we celebrated 2024 High School Graduates, Memorial Day, and Election Day. I know that sounds like a strange combination, but if you stop and think, they are all related.

First, we should thank all the men and women and their families that have served, pray for the families of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice to keep our nation safe, and to ensure that we keep the freedoms we so often take for granted.

Second, these high school graduates are the future of our nation. It is so important that our students get a good education because, as some have said, if the next generation is not taught the history of our country, both good and bad, they cannot learn from our mistakes and use that information to help make our nation great. It is also important for parents and families to play a role in our students' learning. This is not

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



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Q. How does the auditing process work? Do the auditors physically spend time in the Union County Government offices?

A. Yes, auditors spend time in many different Union County Government offices where financial records are kept. In conducting the compliance audit for Union County Government, both the independent auditor and the Union County Government management team (particularly the finance officer) assume important responsibilities. Management is responsible for the adequate identification of Union County's principal activities and for ensuring that Union County complies with the laws and regulations applicable to its activities. Although responsibility will vary

with the terms of the specific audit arrangement, the independent auditor is responsible for testing and reporting on Union County's compliance with laws and regulations. At the end of the audit, a comprehensive report of findings is prepared by the auditor. The final audit report is made available to the public upon request.

A correction needs to be mentioned concerning last week's Q & A. There are officially four county positions that draw their authority from the Georgia state constitution and do not fall under the control of the County Commissions. In Union County, the term "constitutional officers" typically refers to the sheriff, superior court clerk, tax commissioner, and probate judge.

Chamber... continued from Page 6A

only to preserve your family values, but these students will also perform better and have better results.

Finally, I hope everyone took advantage of their right to vote and they were pleased with the outcome. It's proven that individuals who are passionate about an issue will get out and vote. But it is just as important that if you are satisfied with the way things are go-

ing, you also get out and vote. As previously stated, men and women have given their lives to preserve our freedoms, so don't take them for granted. Spend time researching and helping the next generation but also encouraging them and helping them find the answers when they have questions.

Remember, it takes us all to make Life Better in Blairsville.

Ashurst... continued from Page 6A

Shock was an understatement of the astonishing reaction that Rene and I had. Being chased down a busy sidewalk by an angry waiter definitely was not a normal occurrence that one witnessed in St. Petersburg, Florida. After reaching safety at Rene's cubicle in her office, and after

the shock dissolved, we realized that neither of us had left a tip. With friendship comes great laughter, which became a reality at that precise moment. And to this day, Rene and I still laugh "our heads off" when we re-live the angry waiter, no tip, screaming the unknown language episode.

Vickers... continued from Page 6A

was doing his best to emulate the sound we all associate with chickens. The tour guide smiled, but before he could reply, the horse in the corral started making noises that definitely didn't sound like a horse. It was like the horse was trying to imitate the bleating sound of sheep. "What on earth is happening here," I quickly asked.

"We're living in crazy times," the tour guide responded. "This is something new that has recently happened on the farm, and I think the farm animals are picking up things they see in some of

their visitors. They can pretend all they want to be something other than what God has made them, but that bull will always be a bull and that horse will always be a horse. End of story," he said.

We thanked our tour guide for the tour and left in amazement at what we had just witnessed. "The tour guide was absolutely right," I told my wife. "No matter what kind of foolishness we, or in this case, the farm animals can dream up, we will never be anything other than what God made us to be. End of story."

Gene Vickers

Combs... continued from Page 6A

Sadly, wars are a part of our fallen world because nations thrive on overpowering other nations to attain more territory, more resources, and the people's freedoms which we all enjoy. In 1945, U.S. president Harry Truman said: "Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifice." Army veteran Edwin Martinez said: "What greater gift can one man or woman sacrifice to keep the U.S. free and maintain our way of life."

Sadly, our government doesn't do enough for all our armed forces across the globe who need support not only on the frontlines, but

at home where families have lost the main breadwinner, and this matter needs dire attention. But as usual, the military and other administrative agencies are at the mercy of our defunct government that have their own agenda.

I know that millions of red-blooded Americans pay their respect to the fallen as they gather at the grave site of their beloved family member and lay flowers or wreaths and weep in remembrance. We cannot afford to forget those who paved the way with their own lives so that their families could be proud of all the men and women who gave their all. God bless them and their extended families. Amen.

Frank F. Combs

Meier ... continued from Page 6A

concerned about giving a lot of ground to the devil and being involved in a battle.

All this apparently directed to alcoholic beverages and their consumption. They went so far as to proclaim alcohol as evil. This is very disturbing. Since they cited a Scripture verse in 1 Tim, I would suggest they further delve into God's Word to become knowledgeable about what the Bible teaches about drinking alcoholic beverages.

They can begin by studying about Jesus' life and how he made wine (John 2:1-11), drank wine (Matt. 11:18) and served wine to others (at the first Lord's Supper). Obviously, if he did this, he does not condemn its use. By his very actions Jesus encourages the prudent use of wine and strong drink.

God wants his people to enjoy what he considers to be a special gift to them because by doing so they will be made radiant (Jer 31:12), they will thrive and flourish (Zech. 9:17), it cheers both God and men (Judges 9:13), it brings joy to the heart (Psalm 4:7) and it gladdens the heart of man (Psalm 104:15).

Wine is also a medicine and an antiseptic. God told Timothy to stop drinking only water and to include wine in his daily diet for his stomach and frequent ailments (1 Tim.

5:23). The Good Samaritan poured antiseptic wine on the wounds of the "half dead" man he encountered on the road to Jerico (Luke 10:30, 34). These are just a smattering of the scores of verses throughout the entire Bible that identify wine as a special blessing from God. The Bible equates alcoholic beverages with the extremely good things of life such as air, rain, bread and olive oil (Deut. 7:13).

It is plain God has provide alcoholic beverages to his people for their enjoyment, the goodness of wine interwoven throughout Scripture. There is absolutely no ambiguity in the importance it places on drinking alcoholic beverages. The use of wine and strong drink is intertwined in every facet of the lives of people of both the New and Old Testaments. It was an important element in the lives, relationships, discussions and culture of God's people, especially in the areas of worship, punishment, tithing, rewards, companionship, relationships with God and increased wellbeing.

To castigate alcoholic beverages in a public forum such as this newspaper under the guise of it being a Christian issue is disingenuous, at best. Such letters are best not written when they contradict God's Word.

Gary Meier

Cummings... continued from Page 6A

was slobbering at the mouth and attacked their dog. Next the dog came for the family. Granny sent her young sons up into the loft while Papa fetched the gun. She said, "Papa would run from one side of the house to the other searching for the dog." She would begin telling the story and would get tickled as she described my grandfather, in his drawers, running around while she directed him to a spot where the dog could be safely shot. She said, "The story is funny now. But, back then if a man got bitten by a rabid dog it was a death sen-

tence." Finally, he was able to shoot the dog after which he sat down and leaned against a wall in the unfinished house. Papa said, "Your Granny told me to get doors hung on that house, and I did later after we had finished breakfast."

Your imagination can cause you some severe problems. In the first story Papa was scared of a sound. Little did he realize the sound was nothing but his old milk cow. In the second story Granny was so stricken with fear for Papa's safety she couldn't give him proper directions.

Fowler...

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a believer, take time to reflect on your past crises when God has seen you through. Resolve to leverage any future crises to develop your endurance by faith. "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (Jas. 1:2-3).

P.S. Email mountainchristian@brmemc.net to learn about opportunities to volunteer in a disaster zone.

Dyer...

continued from Page 6A

ing. Union County Fire Department places a great deal of man-hours and effort into the inspection and maintenance of each hydrant. With your help, we will be able to locate and utilize the hydrants in a fire emergency.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Clyde...

continued from Page 6A

priations bill. Because regardless of our political stripes, we can all agree that the American people get to decide who wins the White House — and that our hard-earned tax dollars have no place funding unjust efforts to interfere in our elections.

Williams...

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plant. If you have had southern blight in the past you can wrap the bottom 3 inches of the plant with aluminum foil to reduce infection.

If you have questions about what might be affecting your tomatoes during the growing season, contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Maloney...

continued from Page 6A

lost sight of the mood of this community. You only have to look at last Tuesday's election to see that extreme candidates for Sheriff and Commissioner lost. You could better serve the community if you chose balanced viewpoints on issues, not those from the extreme.

Thank You,
Frank Maloney


Honor Flight trips to Washington, D.C. for Veterans

Sponsored (no cost to Veteran) Honor Flight trips to Washington D.C. to see the memorials to the Wars in which they served. Veterans do not have to have been deployed overseas ... just to have served during the War period. World War II, Korea, and Vietnam veterans are included. Spring and Fall flights. If interested, call Paul at 615-232-4445. Thank you!

American Red Cross Volunteers

Make a difference in your community! As a volunteer with the American Red Cross, you can help families recover after a home fire, train individuals in first aid and CPR, support America's military families, or take on any number of other roles that make our communities safer, stronger and more resilient. Get started at <https://www.redcross.org/local/georgia/volunteer.html> or call your NWGA chapter office to ask about volunteer opportunities 844-536-6226.

**Bell Ringing Union
County Old Courthouse**



May 4, 2024
In memory of
Grace Moss
In celebration of her life
By Scott and Jessica Moss
and Tommy Byrd
**Bell ringing information
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