

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Praise and Preparedness

A couple of weeks ago, Union County and Lumpkin County Emergency Management Agencies hosted a Georgia Emergency Management Agency /Homeland Security's Church Security and Safety seminar at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. The seminar was presented by Field Coordinator Jason Ritter with the assistance of other GEMA officials. There were over 75 attendees with at least 10 different churches represented. The main focus was to introduce emergency preparedness issues and ideas to representatives of several congregations within our community.

The church representatives were given information on the need for preparedness and basic guidelines on how to get started. Members were encouraged to start with a safety assessment. Safety assessments can be performed by the congregation with the help of GEMA representatives. Once the assessment is completed, an emergency plan is developed. The plan should include subjects such as communications during an emergency; evacuation of buildings; sheltering in place; and the role of the church in a community disaster. Plans should also include roles and responsibilities of the safety and security team members.

The seminar covered a variety of subjects including church disturbances, severe weather, and active shooter/hostile assailant situations. One of the most important points was to understand that these incidents can happen and that congregations need to start the conversation about planning and preparing.

The seminar also introduced Praise and Preparedness. Praise & Preparedness is a new initiative launched by GEMA where faith-based organizations are encouraged to promote the message of readiness and help members prepare before disaster strikes. According to GEMA, "In light of recent unfortunate events, many houses of worship nationwide are working to take the necessary measures to prepare their houses of worship for not only natural disasters, but human-caused disasters as well, specifically Active Shooters."

What is Praise & Preparedness? In times of crisis, many people look to faith-based organizations for guidance and support. In addition, congregations often play an integral role in local readiness and recovery, providing shelter and supplies before and after disasters.

See Dyer, page 5A

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



God Hath Wrought

Samuel Morse was a portrait painter in 1825. He was away from home working in New York City when he received a message that his wife was sick. The next day another message said she had died. He immediately rushed home only to learn that she had already been buried. Working through his grief, he determined to improve long distance communications.

In the decades to come, he contributed to the invention of the electromagnetic telegraph, and received a patent for it. He crafted a transmittable alphabet. In 1844, he transmitted a long distance message in Morse code from the Supreme Court chamber in Washington D.C. to Baltimore. The historic first message was, "What hath God wrought?" (Num. 23:23)

That question is part of the story of Balak urging the prophet Balaam to curse God's people, even though God had blessed them. The immediate retort was that God is not fickle or changeable, like humans. He had already declared that Balaam was not to curse the people. Instead he was to bless them, and the time or place of the question didn't change the answer.

Israel was not like the other nations which relied on mysterious divinations to communicate with their gods. Israel enjoyed immediate revelation from the one true God. The evidence was in how He guided and empowered them, not least of which was the liberation of His people from Egypt. The people knew the answer to "What hath God wrought?" because they saw it. No words of Balak or Balaam would alter the blessing.

From that time, to the time of Christ, to now, God has not changed. He reveals Himself and His works. Even when you simply take a walk in the woods, His nature is "understood through what has been made" (Rom. 1:20). The greatest deed God hath wrought is recorded in history, never to be forgotten, and forever unchanged. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16) to die on a tree to set you free. I cannot say that's what Mr. Morse had in mind, but it seems a distinct possibility.

We need no long distance communication from God; He is immanent and accessible. We need no mysterious means to know

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. We saw a lot of activity going on Wednesday at the intersection of Hwy 515 and the Glenn Gooch Bypass. What was going on?

A. There has been a lot of construction work going on to build a new road from the Union County Farmers Market to this intersection. There was a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new project Wednesday.

Q. Does the new road have a name?

A. Yes, the new road is called Farmers Market Way.

Q. It looked like a lot of people under the tent for the ceremony?

A. Yes, it was an excellent ceremony with Senator Steve Gooch and GDOT

Pre-Construction Engineer, Sue Anne Decker attending and speaking to the group as well as myself and Jim Conley, Mayor of Blairsville. Thanks to the many folks who attended and were involved in making this event and road project a success.

Q. Why was a new road necessary to the Farmers Market?

A. The traffic on Weaver Road and the access onto Hwy 515 has been congested for some time and we hope the alternative route will take a lot of pressure off this road. Weaver Road is used primarily by our ambulance service and the fewer delays possible, the better.

Q. Are there other reasons for building this new road?

A. Absolutely. Most importantly, when the new Hwy 515 divided highway is completed in a couple of years, the entrance to Weaver Road is scheduled to have a concrete median preventing left turns (East bound) off Hwy 515. To access Weaver Road and go to the Farmers Market would require that you continue to the red light at the Glenn Gooch By Pass, make a U turn and then a right turn onto Weaver Road. So having an alternative entrance we felt was necessary for future operations.

Q. What will be done with all the property located along this new Farmers Market Way?

A. This is another one of the main reasons for the new Farmers Market Way access road to the Farmers Market. Our future plan (2020 or 2021) is to build a "very young youth" ballfield

See Paris, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

One is Not the Same as the Other

Over the last year, it seems that the new buzzword is CBD. If you believe the claims made on social media, CBD oil can cure anything from anxiety to cancer... and maybe it can, but enter this new and exciting world with caution. Not all CBD products are created the same. CBD is not medical marijuana. Some CBD products contain higher levels of THC and can prove positive on drug screens. Some products are imported from other countries with unregulated manufacturing standards and have unspecified or varied chemical compounds.

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.

Cannabis is organized into two distinct groups; marijuana and hemp. All cannabis contains CBD, which in the non-intoxicating cannabinoid and THC which is responsible for the "high" associated with recreational marijuana use. While both hemp and marijuana can pro-

See Drug Free, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Memorial Day

Dear Editor,

Memorial Day reflects the loss of loved ones on the battlefield. Those who sacrificed their own lives that we could be a free nation, not under some tyranny or dictatorship, but with liberties and freedoms for all. War has always had a high price no matter where we have fought. My Uncle Bob Gildersleeve served in the Air Force flying planes back and forward to those comrades who needed fresh equipment to fight with, but my uncle never made it back. He and his

See Combs, page 5A

A Good Public Service

Dear Editor,

You provide a good public service in your paper by giving space to Commissioner Paris. The responses last week really showed the commissioner as a servant leader. Many government officials/politicians could take a lesson from the efforts Mr. Paris gives to Union County. I believe he is honest and forthright in dealing with his constituents. If it wouldn't be such a loss to Blairsville, we should send him to Washington! We do live in one of "the best places in the world."

Richard E. Hyer

Saving Veterans' Lives

Open Letter to Gov. Brian Kemp:

I am writing to you with my concerns for the suicide rate of our veterans. According to the most recent report published by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, a national average of 20 Veterans a day die from suicide. Our Military Veterans have served with honor and have experienced the horrors of war. Provision should be made to assist their transition back into civilian life. It has reached an epidemic when over 20 veterans are committing suicide each day.

See Luca, page 5A

Hot Cars = Dog Deathtraps

Dear Editor,

As the days grow hotter and hotter, we at your local Humane Society's Mountain Shelter have a reminder for you. Please, do not take your dogs with you on your errands and leave them in the car -- not even for "just a minute." If you can't take your dogs inside with you every single place you're going, please leave them home. Yes, we know your dogs love to ride with you -- but the risk to them of being in a car, even with the windows "cracked" for a little while, are immense. Parked cars are deathtraps for dogs; on a

See Shannon, page 5A

Local Farmers Market

Local Grown at your Local Farmers Markets - This is one I do every year at this time to remind you to support your local farmers, buy the crops that they have grown in the local area which supports the local economy, creates local jobs, and makes us eat healthier. I saw a small cup of apple juice that had juice from US, Mexico, Poland, California, and several other foreign countries. Think about the transportation costs and time it takes to get the products from there to here on our table. Why not just use what we have here? Is that too simple or am I overlooking something, like supporting foreign shippers or overseas growers that don't add one cent to our local economy. I will buy American no matter what it costs because, it will help us one way or another.

The only fruit that is really fresh is grown in our part of the country so look at the labels and buy local. It's that time of year that we look forward to all winter when the farmer's markets open and local grown vegetables are ready for us to enjoy. Those who know me know that my favorite past-time is growing things here on my Grandfathers old farm down on the river in Towns County.

Walter Brown was the first Towns County Agent in 1917 and eventually became the Director of the UGA Extension Service in Athens, so I get my Ag experience honestly having grown up on my family's farm in Taylor County where we grew hay, vegetables, and other things that contributed to the food supply of our area. We plant oats, corn, soybeans, in the fields and cut flowers & vegetables in our High Tunnels that grow (sometimes) into something we can eat or sell.

Of course, farming requires my other favorite things, tractors, and equipment to prepare the ground, plant the crops, and harvest what the bears and other critters don't eat before we do. I never was one to use a hoe or manual equipment like that when I can use my 100 hp Kubota with AC, Stereo and air ride seat (we've come a long way since the A John Deere) or my 1964 Ford 4000 or 1952 Ford 8N or 1954 Ford 740 to prepare, plant, and harvest.

We always plant more crops than we can eat or give away so we sell all that we can at one of the local farmer's markets or on the roadside on our farm. Sweet corn will be ready in late July. If we figured how much the vegetables that we plant really cost we would just go to the farmer's market and buy our vegetables already picked and ready to prepare and save a lot of money, but that's not as much fun as growing it ourselves

See Riley, page 5A

RC&D Executive Director



Frank Riley

Veto and Barbra

After the ride through the cornfield, Veto should have known better than trusting my father and his cousin Junior. However, he began to like the two Cummings boys, and so he continued to hang out with them on Friday evenings. Prior to one Friday, the boys were in literature class, and they were discussing the story of Romeo and Juliet. Veto asked Junior if he could introduce him to any girls. Junior told him about Barbra Lauderdale. Junior told Veto that Barbra was a beautiful young lady that lived out around Spruce Pine. Junior stated he was sure Barbra would like to go out with Veto and that she enjoyed smooching very much.

Junior explained to Veto that Barbra's dad did not like him. However, he thought Lonnie Paul (my Dad) was a very good boy. So, it was decided that Dad would take Veto to Barbra's house to introduce him to Mr. Lauderdale. So, the boys made their plans to meet Friday evening about 7:30 and drive out to the Lauderdale house at Spruce Pine.

Unknown to Veto, Dad and Junior were setting him up for a practical joke. The Lauderdale house was an old abandoned house that was actually lived in by the Lauderdale family prior to this event. Junior was to be present in the house when Dad and Veto arrived.

So, Dad met Veto in town at the Pool Hall. Veto showed up wearing enough hair tonic to wet the whole baseball team. Dad said that Veto was very nervous because he had never been on a date. Anyway, Junior was in the house with a coal oil lit and burning when the boys arrived. Dad knocked at the door and Junior answered with a gruff voice, "Who's there." Dad responded by saying, "Mr. Lauderdale, it's Paul Cummings here with Veto Gore to see Barbra." Junior answered again, "Who? Speak louder. You know I am hard of hearing." Dad yelled this time. "Mr. Lauderdale, it's Paul Cummings here with Veto Gore to see Barbra." Junior answered a third time. "Cummings? Junior Cummings, I told you to never come back to my place again." Before Dad or Veto could answer, Junior stuck a shotgun out the window of the house and fired. Dad grabbed his chest and hit the ground, yelling out, "I'm hit, Veto."

Veto spun and jumped from the porch, his feet hit the ground and he began running. Veto ran through the front yard and jumped off a 15 foot tall bluff into thicket of plants called the Devil's Walking Stick. These shrubs were about 8 feet tall and covered in 1 inch thorns. Dad said he heard Veto breaking sticks, and then he heard

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm



Mickey Cummings

Chamber of Commerce

"What a tremendous community we live in!" This was a phrase I heard numerous times this past weekend. We had a record number of visitors that said they love coming to Blairsville and Union County because of our great businesses and friendly people. The Arts Festival had an incredible turnout, and I think I even saw a few locals dancing in the streets during the performance by the Tom Floyd Band! The Parade paid great respect to all the men and women who have served, and who are serving today, to protect our freedom. While Memorial Day was last week, I hope we continue to remember the sacrifices that so many have made for our country.

The Southern Highlands Employers Committee's Job Fair is coming up. The Job Fair is a great opportunity to connect local employers with individuals who are looking for a job or a change in career path. Many of the employers even offer training to new employees. If you are a

See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President



Steve Rowe

Drought Strategies

Temperatures in Georgia have continued to rise as the rain has held off for several weeks now. We haven't had any appreciable rain since May 11, as of writing this article. We may have some rain early in the week the first full week of June, which is when this column will be published. I can't predict at this time how much rain we'll get, but I'll talk about some strategies to use in drought situations, and give some websites that contain helpful information regarding rainfall.

The first website that I'd like to share with you is www.georgiaweather.net. This is a great website from the University of Georgia that has tons of information on it. UGA has weather stations all around the state that are continually collecting data that you can use. You can select the weather station that you'd like to look at. I'd recommend either using Blairsville, which is housed at the Experiment Station, or Tiger, which is housed in Rabun County, depending on your location. You can look at current conditions at these stations, which has information on air temperature, soil temperature, soil moisture, and wind speed among other things. If you go over to the drought tab, there are many maps with information about cumulative rainfall for the year, and how that compares to historical data. Under the Calculator tab, you can click on rainfall and look at data there, by making a custom range of dates.

Another website that I'd like to share is the United States Drought Monitor, www.droughtmonitor.unl.edu. At the time of writing this article according to the US Drought Monitor we don't have drought conditions. Obviously, that could change if we don't receive rain soon. Much of southern and central Georgia have abnormally dry to moderate drought conditions currently. I would expect those conditions to continue northward if the rain holds off.

Both of those websites have very useful information and I use them frequently. Now let's talk about some things that you can do when we have dry conditions. These strategies won't solve all your problems, but instead lessen the impact of dry weather.

Applying mulch wherever possible will help conserve soil moisture. The mulch is a barrier that protects the soil from sunlight, which keeps evaporation lower. Mulch will also help build the organic matter in the soil. Organic matter will help build the soil's water holding capacity. Our soils have a high water holding capacity, but increasing the organic matter will also make your soil healthier. Biochar is a product that can

See Williams, page 5A

Watching and Working



Jacob Williams

North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Kenneth West
Publisher/Owner

Shawn Jarrard
Editor

Derek Richards
Advertising Director

Todd Forrest
Sports Editor

Mark Smith
Staff Writer

Lowell Nicholson
Photographer

Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - One Year \$40. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. 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. 10, 1981, 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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