

Opinions

Everybody has one...

The Career Firefighter Part 2

Union County Fire Department is a combination department meaning we have both volunteer and career firefighters. Last week, we outlined some of the responsibilities and functions of the career firefighter who is on shift each day. We also briefly discussed the types of incidents that the firefighter may be called to respond. This week, we are going to continue with the career firefighter.

One of the many questions that I get asked is "What are the requirements?" To be a career firefighter at Union County Fire Department (UCFD), a person must complete the basic requirements for UCFD Firefighter I. The training to meet these requirements enables the firefighter to effectively respond to the types of incidents for which we are responsible.

We start with being a firefighter. This requires that a person complete the National Professional Qualifications for Firefighter I which is approximately 300 hours of training. Some firefighters go to the Georgia Fire Academy for an eight-week course. Others take a local night class which last for about five months. Every career firefighter must meet the minimum standard set by the State of Georgia and be certified as a firefighter.

The next major training that each career firefighter must complete is the emergency medical training. Each career firefighter must complete an approved Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) course consisting of approximately 200 hours. This is usually a night course at a technical college lasting about six months. They must pass the National EMT exam and obtain a license as an EMT in the State of Georgia.

There are several other classes that the career firefighter must complete to meet the minimal requirements. The firefighter must complete a 60-hour driver/operator course in order to drive and operate the fire engine. There is a Hazardous Material Course consisting of 40 hours. The firefighter must complete the course and pass the state certification at the Hazardous Materials Operations level. There is an Auto Extrication course where firefighters learn to use various tools to extricate victims from car accidents. The career firefighter must also complete Incident Command courses.

The training requirements for a career firefighter usually

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Reunited by Love

Guo Gangtang suffered a father's worst nightmare. In 1997, his 2-year-old son was abducted.

A 2015 movie, "Lost and Love," documents the Chinese man's epic search for his son. He traversed most of China handing out flyers and proclaiming his cause. He wore out 10 motorcycles while traveling 300,000 miles. He slept under bridges, suffered bone crushing accidents, and endured highway robbery. But his search was unrelenting. He said, "Only by searching can I feel like a real father. It's impossible for me to stop." The movie ends as Guo continues in his cause, driven by love for his lost son.

Guo's persistence reminds me of Francis Thompson's poem, "The Hound of Heaven." These verses portray the relentless love of the Heavenly Father who pursues his children through the ups and downs of life. "Up vistaed hopes I sped; And shot, precipitated, Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears, from those strong Feet that followed, followed after. But with unhurrying chase, and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic instancy, they beat..." The poem's protagonist finally realizes what's happening and why. God seeks because He loves.

That is the message of Jesus' stories in Luke 15. The shepherd searched for one of his 100 sheep, then "calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'" The story of the woman rejoicing over finding her lost coin illustrates the "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." But the story most like Guo's is about the father who ran to greet his lost son. The father says, "Let us eat and celebrate for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found."

Now, the rest of the story. This month, Guo and his wife found their lost son, now in his 20's. Seeing him, his mother cried, "My baby, you came back!" Their son's abductors had sold him in a neighboring province. He was raised well and had a university education. How must he have felt when he learned that his birth parents never gave him up for adoption, never stopped loving him, and never ended their search for him! Guo reflected

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Union County residents have opinions about population growth in our area. These concerns are not unfounded. We are growing. However, it is important to understand that there are limits to how we can grow.

Q. Is the county trying to grow too fast and not looking after those who have lived here for a long time?

A. NO. It is easy to see all the traffic increase in the past COVID-19 year and wonder what is going on. Yes, with all the issues associated with heavily populated metro areas, we are seeing more folks come here and build homes, but we are not forgetting those who have called Union County home for a long time - nor will we.

Q. Does the county have plans in place to deal with the new growth we are experiencing in Union County?

A. Those plans are currently being made, but it will take some time to complete. For example, we just recently increased the requirements significantly for new apartments being built. That process took several months. Others have suggested that we place impact fees on new homes and businesses. Of course, many want to totally close the gates on any new growth. All options are and will be considered.

Q. When can we expect information from the county?

A. Controlling growth is the optimal word and it is what we want to be able to do in the end. That process takes a lot of planning. We unfortunately have been sidelined and concerned about issues associated with the Pandemic and COVID-19. Growth issues are being considered as we continue move forward in a post-pandemic environment.

Q. Our town in Florida use to be a sleepy small town like Blairsville and now it is overrun with people. How do we prevent the same thing from happening here in Union County?

We have several things going for us that Florida did not have. Money seemed to be one of the big motivators south of here, and the more development and the more potential growth, the more money people felt they made. While adequate revenue is an issue in any community, Union County has several things that will help protect us from this unbridled growth that Florida

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Korean War Armistice

Last week, on July 27, my husband and I attended a commemoration and wreath laying for Georgia Veterans of the Korean War, the day the armistice was signed. There was no formal agreement as to the end of the war. This day was started to commemorate and recognize the peace treaty that triggered

a cease-fire in a long-standing war. The Korean War is a significant chapter in American history in which approximately 50,000 American troops died in the conflict, over 100,000 were wounded, and thousands of others were held captive as prisoners of war.

But is it really over? I've always known that we have a continued presence in South Korea. And the DMZ still exists as a border barrier in the middle of the Korean Peninsula established to serve as a buffer zone between the North and the South. A mere 4 miles wide, it is the meeting place where continuing negotiations between the two countries take place.

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Military Musings

Janice Walters-Taylor



Letters to the Editor

Do Not Forget Us

Dear Editor,
Who are us? We are the thousands of translators and others who aided our forces in the last 20 years as we fought the Taliban in Afghanistan. Already one courageous person who aided us has been beheaded by the Taliban. We have committed to the evacuation of these brave people to an island base in the Pacific. However, it seems help has come too late for many, as the Taliban has closed off many roads to the capital. We need to do whatever is necessary to evacuate these people.

We certainly did not do enough for the Vietnamese who risked their lives to help us during the Vietnam War. If we enter another war, the country's citizens would be hesitant to help us, and of course, it is morally the right thing to do.

Veterans, please show your gratitude by contacting your representatives in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Floyd Schultz

Taxes

Dear Editor,
Each week I read the letters to the editor, and almost without exception everyone is complaining about increased taxes. As a conservative Republican, I don't like to pay taxes any more than the next guy, but let's be honest, higher taxes are the consequence of runaway inflation. I believe I read that Lamar is projecting a 10% increase in his budget because everything Union

See White, page 5A

Blessed Assurance

Dear Editor,
There is an old gospel song that God's children sing called "Blessed Assurance" that goes like this — Blessed Assurance Jesus is my mine, Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine. Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of His Spirit, washed in His blood. To a child of God, these

See Combs, page 5A

A Political Poem

Pelosi, Biden and Schumer
I can say without humor
Are our Nation's deadly tumor
They want to tax and spend
Till we all descend
Into debt without end
So let us remember
When next comes November
To vote for a no tax and spender!!

Caroline Richbourg

Letters to the Editor

Confusing Traffic Lights

Dear Editor,
Since our accident on June 3, which injured the occupants of the car who made a left turn on a flashing yellow light in front of us (when we had the green light), there has now been a fatality from a collision on July 15. Your newspaper reported the death of Mr. Miller, on vacation from Pennsylvania, in your July 28 newspaper. There have been other accidents at the Hwy. 515 and Murphy Hwy. before ours, but still nothing has been done to correct the situation.

The left turn signal turns to flashing yellow while oncoming traffic has a green light and the right of way. The signal is confusing and leads people to make a left turn, even with on-

See Nethery, page 5A

A More Perfect Union County

Dear Editor,
In order to form a more perfect Union County, finances are required. How to acquire those resources is the question.

Property taxes are low by comparison to other Georgia counties and cities. The fact that Union County's property tax rate is close to the bottom should convince some residents that we are being treated fairly. I know it is hard to make comparisons, but close to the bottom tax-wise tells a story.

The SPLOST is shared, not just paid by property owners.

Quality schools are probably the best single indicator of a good community. Union Coun-

See Hyer, page 5A

Plant Native Plants

Dear Editor,
We in North Georgia run across the destructive effects of globalization everywhere we turn, from jobs lost to foreign day laborers to all the many plant diseases that have (and still are) being brought in on exotic plant species being planted by the hundreds and thousands in the area each year. How is it that we see the demise of the flowering dogwoods, stately hemlocks, ash trees, and others as they die off and so follow the way of the American Chestnut (which was likewise killed by an exotic disease)? Or see English ivy, Chinese privet, or the infamous kudzu smothering an entire mountainside and yet still we keep going to the store or exotic plant sale each spring and summer to buy still more invasive non-native species to plant? If it's not diseases that they bring, it's the seeds that these plants spread,

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Dynamite: Small Packages

One summer in my childhood I was at my grandparents' home in Trapptown, Alabama. Papa had just come in from cultivating his cotton for lunch when into the driveway pulled an older model Ford Falcon. First the parents and then four small children piled out of the car. I didn't really know their names, but, I recognized them from our community church. I soon learned the names of the parents were Roy and Myrtle Jean. Roy was a tall, lanky individual while his wife, Myrtle Jean, was less than 5 feet tall while wearing her high heel shoes.

The family sat down to dinner with us and we all listened as Papa and Roy discussed the Bible. Each time Roy would declare his views on the Holy Scriptures Granny would roll her eyes. Later after Roy and his wife left I asked Granny about the reason for her rolling her eyes. She said, "We'll talk about it when you are older." Later in the fall Uncle Bud went hunting and came up on Roy in the woods. For some reason unknown to me, he punched Roy in the nose and took a gun away from him. Uncle Bud then took the gun to his friend Kenneth. I listened to my uncle tell part of the story, but, I only heard part of it because Granny made me leave the room. Again I asked her about what happened and she said, "We'll talk about it when you are older."

Time went by for me and we all grew older. I never got around to asking my grandmother to explain things to me. But, the other day the memories came back to me and I talked with my mom about Roy and Myrtle Jean. This is their story. Myrtle's mother was Myrtle Evans, one of many daughters in a poor but proud family. Myrtle had a difficult time finding a husband, so she ordered a mail order groom from Czechoslovakia. Her new husband was hardworking and honest. These individuals raised a tiny little girl they called Myrtle Jean. She married this unscrupulous character by the name of Roy. He claimed to be a preacher, but, when Myrtle Jean was not around, he loved to drink and he was bad about borrowing things and not bringing them back. Remember Uncle Bud punching Roy in the nose and taking a gun away from him? That gun was owned by Uncle Bud's good friend, Kenneth.

Roy and Myrtle Jean left North Alabama and moved to Chicago to find work just like many other southerners did in the '50s and '60s. Mom and Dad were living and working in Chicago at the time. Mother was working at an embroidery plant sewing the Boy Scout Emblem on uniforms. One day Mom told her boss about Myrtle Jean and she was hired. But, about a week

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Chamber of Commerce

One of the fun things about writing a column in the paper is you have to write it the week earlier than it appears. Since I like to keep everyone informed on what's going on in Blairsville-Union County I sometimes have to only include a few of the details from some of the events. As of this column all of the cars arriving for the Georgia Mountain Moonshine Cruiz-In and they are excited to be in Union County. We spoke to several of our local businesses and they are also excited to have the tourist in town. Since we live here too, we understand that it is sometimes difficult to get in your favorite restaurant or we may have to alter our walking routine, but this is a big boost to our economy and our local businesses. With all that has happened in the last year I know this is a welcomed boost.

School is here! It's hard to believe that the summer break is almost over and school will be starting back in the next week. With that being said, the Stuff the Bus campaign is coming to an

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



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Who are us? We are the thousands of translators and others who aided our forces in the last 20 years as we fought the Taliban in Afghanistan. Already one courageous person who aided us has been beheaded by the Taliban. We have committed to the evacuation of these brave people to an island base in the Pacific. However, it seems help has come too late for many, as the Taliban has closed off many roads to the capital. We need to do whatever is necessary to evacuate these people.

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Kenneth West Publisher/Owner
Shawn Jarrard General Manager/Editor
Derek Richards Advertising Director
Todd Forrest Sports Editor
Lowell Nicholson Photographer
Website: www.nganews.com • Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com • Mail: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

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faced.

A1. First, about 50% of Union County is not buildable by the general public because it is owned by the US Forest Service and the Tennessee Valley Authority. Many people do not realize this fact. Unbridled growth that is being forecasted by some is simply not possible in a large portion of the county.

A2. Second, about 20% of the remaining property in the county is in conservation use covenants. When you research that aspect, you learn that conservation covenants prevent development on many of those parcels and helps us protect the beautiful farmland. It also ensures that farmland receives a significant tax break also preventing much of it from being developed.

A3. Third, public sewer, is a necessary resource for more dense development. Fortunately, the public sewer system is mostly found in the City of Blairsville and in only a few spots does it leave the city limits.

A4. Fourth, public water (Notla Water, Coosa Water, and the City of Blairsville) requires a ¾ acre minimum lot size in order to qualify for services. The rest of Union County requires 1.5 acres minimum property size with no public water which is most of the rest of Union County. The requirement for larger parcels of land is a deterrent to land developers

who make their money building homes on smaller lots. In a nutshell, Union County areas such as Ivy Log and Gum Log to the north and Town Creek, Trackrock, Choestoe, and Suches to the south will probably never be attractive to dense land developers for this reason. As I mentioned, public water is very scarce outside of the City of Blairsville, and public water is a requirement for fire protection – another deterrent for dense development such as apartments.

So while we are not perfect, we have a lot of protections that many other counties do not have.

Q. Will the county utilize other groups to assist with county future planning?

A. We certainly will. In fact, with the aid of the University of Georgia Carl Vincent Institute of Government, the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, a recent contract with TBT (The Brady Team), and the involvement of local citizens, we hope to carefully plan out our future. To be done well, it cannot be done overnight. We will also be looking at how similar communities to ours are dealing with their problems - or at least working toward potential solutions.

We are certainly not alone - our neighboring counties have some of the same issues, whether it be Fannin, White, Lumpkin, Rabun, Gilmer, etc.

Williams... continued from Page 4A

Butterflies are usually pretty easy to identify because of their wings and variation of colors. The other category includes all other insects that may land on the plant while you're watching it. This could be beetles, dragonflies, lacewings, or ants.

After you've done your count for 15 minutes go to

ggapc.org to enter your results. You can do the census as many times as you'd like on the 20th and 21st. If you see an insect leave your plant and come back count that as a new visitor.

If you have questions about the pollinator census contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

White... continued from Page 4A

County buys costs more this year than it did in 2020. I can relate to this because whether I buy gas, groceries or almost anything else, I pay more than I paid last year. To make matters worse, Biden is telling us that according to his "experts," injecting trillions of dollars of borrowed money into the economy will result in just a short-term increase in prices. Does he think we are stupid? I submit our problem is about 500 miles north in Washington, D.C. and not in our county courthouse.

And why is everyone getting excited about their property tax bill when no one, not even Lamar, can tell with certainty what the millage rate will be? This cannot be determined until the appeal process is completed. My assessment went up 54%, but this does not mean my taxes will go up 54%.

It has always been interesting to me that when folks complain about their taxes, it is always Lamar that catches the heat, although funding for schools represents over 60% of

our property taxes.

I retired to Union County 30 years ago, and the quality of life today compared to 30 years ago cannot be measured. I don't have the space to list every positive thing that has made this such a great place to live. And Lamar Paris is responsible for most of this change. For those of you who moved from elsewhere, how much did you pay in taxes in your former home?

And as for a Sole Commissioner form of government, this was something with which I was not familiar, but folks, if you don't like the job the commissioner is doing, you can replace him with someone else every four years. With multiple commissioners, you are stuck; it is almost impossible to remove all of them at the same time. Think about it.

Concerning the TSPLOST question, I must confess this will take a lot of convincing. I agree in principle with a consumption tax but only if it eliminates other taxes. We'll see.
Peter W. White

Hyer... continued from Page 4A

ty Schools have quite a good reputation when test scores are compared to other systems, both statewide and nationally.

Sales taxes are shared by all citizens and tourists, not just property owners. We have a lot of tourists who share our county financing through sales taxes.

There is no point in blaming county officials for complying with mandated state and federal requirements. Slanderous and libelous remarks cause people to take sides when our energy could be directed toward solving problems. Thoughtfulness about budget-

ing should replace the "blame game."

Let's join forces in discussing how resources are spent and resign ourselves to the fact that finances have to be raised. After living full time in Blairsville, I'm convinced we have a good quality of life and leadership that is capable and concerned about citizens' well-being. Government works better here than in many Georgia communities.

Remember the song sung by "the greatest generation"... "Accentuate the positive." Let's "eliminate the negative!"
Richard E. Hyer

Combs... continued from Page 4A

precious words ring out loud and clear of what God has done for you and me. It tells the story of Jesus Christ who came down from heaven to live among sinners, and because of His great love for all of mankind, He willingly sacrificed His own sinless body in order to save us from our sins.

God's love, grace and mercy fall fresh each morning for us to enjoy and embrace because of the cross, and the cross has the power for sinners to come as you are and just ac-

Local Al-Anon meetings

Are you troubled by someone's drinking? Al-Anon Family Groups (for friends and family) meet every Tuesday at 12 noon at Sharp Memorial United Methodist Church, 1114 Main Street, Room 105, Young Harris, GA. For details call 404-687-0467 or visit ga-al-anon.org NT(Aug4Z1)CA

cept Christ's free gift of salvation. You might ask, but what do I have to do in order to go to heaven? First, you must believe upon the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, confess your sins, and repent of your wrongdoings. God knows the hearts of all of us, so don't think you can just pretend to believe in Christ and it's a done deal. You must come by faith believing and trusting that the cross made the difference and can change you from a sinner into a saint of the Most High God.

If you come like a little child and truly accept God's redemption plan, then your life is no longer yours but God's, and He promises you the blessed assurance that Jesus is yours for eternity. Oh what a foretaste of glory divine when we all gather before the throne of God and sing wonderful songs of His redeeming love and praise His Holy Name forevermore in glory.
Frank F. Combs

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

later, Mom's boss came back to her and explained that someone had to tell Myrtle Jean about regular bathing and deodorant, and that person was going to be Mom.

So, Mom explained to Myrtle Jean that she was no longer in the country with just a few people. Therefore, she needed to bathe every day and use deodorant. Mom gave her a list of items she could use. Myrtle Jean was appreciative and thanked Mom for her advice. Mom's boss thanked her as well.

Later that week Myrtle Jean and Roy came to the house to grill some hot dogs. Also, Dad's longtime friend William Shelnett was there with his wife. At that time my Dad and William were not church going people, and they enjoyed drinking beer. Roy and Myrtle Jean showed up to the event, whereupon Roy was offered a beer. Myrtle Jean said, "Oh my Roy don't drink." Dad exclaimed, "Well he had some the other night." Roy's face became red and he sat down on the edge of an armless sofa. He tried to explain that he only

drank a little every now and then. William asked, "Roy, what about that six pack you borrowed from me the other day?" Myrtle Jean had endured enough; she drew back her tiny hand and slapped Roy across the face, which knocked him off the couch and onto the floor. Then she rolled her eyes in disgust just like Granny did when she heard Roy proclaiming to everyone about his knowledge and virtues. I now understand what Granny was thinking all those years ago.

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

take about a year to complete. Once completed, the firefighter has the training and knowledge to respond to most incidents that we have in our community. What most people do not know is that the training does not stop there. These are just the minimum requirements. A firefighter will spend each year completing 120 hours of fire training, 12 hours of leadership/officer training, 12 hours of driver/operator training, 8 hours of hazmat training, and 20 hours of EMT training to maintain certifications, license, and employment requirements.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Fowler...

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on the 24 year ordeal saying, "Everything can only be happy from now on!" The father's relentless search led to a joyful reunion.

Jesus's stories show that you, too, are the object of a great quest. Your story is God's story when by faith in Christ Jesus you are reconciled to Him. "He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in his love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy" (Zeph. 3:17). That is the Father rejoicing because you are reunited with him by love.

mountainchristian@brmemc.net

Walters-Taylor...

continued from Page 4A

I hope you will look for, and read, my other submission about the Commemoration. Perhaps you will see that we still have cause for concern.

Until we muse again, I bid you, "At Ease!"

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

end and all that was collected will be provided to eligible students on August 7th. Good luck to all of our students and teachers, we hope everyone has a great year.

Speaking of school, don't miss out on our Power Lunch on August 11th when the Georgia Lottery will be bringing us up to date on what's new and where the funds are being spent. Come and hear all the ways the Lottery helps Georgia Education!

And remember, It's Better in Blairsville!

Lance...

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which then grow new plants that take space away from native plants which damage if not destroy the God-given beauty of our area forests. So please plant only native plants.
Will Lance

Nethery...

continued from Page 4A

coming traffic. This creates a very dangerous situation, and many people we have talked to agree that the flashing yellow light should be eliminated, allowing left turns only on the left green arrow when other traffic has stopped.

How many more accidents, injuries and fatalities can we expect unless the Georgia Department of Transportation decide to put a stop to these ridiculous flashing yellow lights encouraging left turns on busy highways?
Jean and Al Nethery