

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### National Preparedness Month

As emergency managers, we have emergencies and disasters on our mind constantly. It's our job and we think about it every day. The average person rarely gives it a single thought because they feel that it will not happen to them. The truth is emergencies and disasters can strike at any time and with little to no warning. It is best to be prepared for these disasters before they happen. The month of September, being National Preparedness Month, is the perfect time to put some thought into disaster preparedness.

The Department of Homeland Security's website, [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov), provides a great deal of information to help people get prepared for disasters. The site also has guidelines for each week of National Preparedness Month. This year's theme is "Prepared, Not Scared."

Week one encourages people to "Save Early for Disaster Costs". Week two requests that people "Make a Plan to Prepare for Disasters". Week three's theme encourages "Teach Youth to Prepare for Disasters". Week four wants everyone to "Get Involved in Your Community's Preparedness". We will discuss each week theme during the month.

The first week talks about saving early for disaster costs. Saving involves saving money, documents and property. Having an emergency fund is always a good idea. Not just for when you have that unexpected flat tire or when the stove goes out, but in times when you have a disaster. An emergency fund can sustain you when you may be out of work for a while. Have some cash on hand also just in case debit cards cannot be used.

Saving your documents is important in order for you to recover from disasters. Documents such as ID, birth certificates, insurance information, etc., should be stored in a waterproof and fireproof box, safe, or bank deposit box. These documents will be used to file an insurance claim and ensure your identity after a disaster. It's also a good idea to video your home and belongings to have a record for your insurance company.

The last and most important issue when it comes to saving for a disaster is your insurance. This can be very confusing. People should first purchase insurance to protect their property and home. This should also include flood insurance. Once you have insurance,

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**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**  
*David Dyer*



### The Race

Joshua Harris and Marty Sampson made quite a splash in some circles recently. They are both religious influencers who announced in writing that they are stepping away from the Christian faith. That's disappointing, but should we be surprised? Probably not.

In recent years, Pew Research Center studies have documented the increase of the "nones" (religiously unaffiliated) in the U.S. The most oft-cited reasons for people categorizing themselves this way is that they disagree with teachings on religious and social issues. To unpack that, they find more truth in culture than in Christianity. Statements made by Harris and Sampson reflect that trend, and raise a question. Must authentic, Biblical faith pass a cultural litmus test?

Jesus was a bit counter-cultural. A lot, actually. Those who considered him a revolutionary used that as the proximate cause of his execution, which he willingly endured for His eternal cause. He knew His followers would face the risks of cultural pushback and even apostasy, so He warned about it in parables (Matt. 13). The seeds fell on rocky and thorny places, and they didn't endure. The weeds grew with the wheat, at least until they didn't.

The New Testament book of Hebrews uses some version of the word "endure" eight times in chapters 10-12. The context of that exhortation is faith, and reasons to believe. It becomes apparent that endurance is the fruit of a well-grounded faith, not the cause of it. Don't miss that. Such faith might make you a public spectacle because of your view of eternity (10:32-34). But by faith you endure and do the will of God, not of the cultural influencers of the day (10:35-36). Your time on earth is finite, but by faith your soul endures (10:39).

Hebrews 11, the "hall of faith," describes the deeds of men and women who had an assurance, a conviction about eternal truth. They actively resisted the incoherent truth claims of their day, and they are our examples. They proved the world was not worthy of them. You do the same when you resist our culture's confusions such as, when people believe something it becomes their truth; faith is worthless because it doesn't stop bad things

See Fowler, page 5A

**All Things New**  
*Wayne Fowler*



### Commissioner's Questions

**Q. If I own a \$100,000 home, how much will my property taxes be in Union County?**

A. For simplicity, we will assume there are no exemptions on this property. A \$100,000 home would be assessed at 40% of the assessed value, which means it would be assessed and you pay taxes on \$40,000. You take the assessed value and multiply it by the mill rate to determine the taxes on this example.

\$100,000 assessed value of home  
x 40% of the assessed value  
\$ 40,000 Amount you pay taxes on  
x .006144 county mil rate of 6.144  
\$ 245.76 Total due for county taxes

\$ 40,000 amount you pay taxes on  
x .011740 school mil rate of 11.740  
\$ 469.60 Total due for school taxes

\$ 245.76 total due for county taxes  
+\$469.60 total due for school taxes  
\$ 715.36 Total tax bill

**Q. It is my understanding the millage rate will not be increased this year, is that correct?**

A. Yes, that is correct. The millage rate will NOT be going up this year. We had a Called Meeting to set the 2019 Millage Rate on August 22, 2019 at 5:30. While it is only a small decrease, our mill rate will decrease from 6.153 to 6.144 for your 2019 property tax bills.

**Q. Does the county and the school mil rate always compare as some of the lowest in the state.**

A. Yes, we both are always very low. Out of 159 counties in the State of Georgia, you should be proud that Union County government and school system are always in the top five lowest mil (tax) rates in the entire state. We have varied from the lowest tax rate to 5th lowest and the school usually varies from the second lowest to the 3rd or 4th lowest. This year, if you combine the county and school tax rate, we are third lowest in the state. The county government sets the millage rate every year for your property taxes. The School Board sets the millage rate every year

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**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**  
*Lamar Paris*



### Drug Free Mountain Life

#### International Overdose Awareness Day

International Overdose Awareness Day is on August 31. This is a day to raise awareness and reduce the stigma of drug-related deaths. It is a time to remember those who have lost their battle with substance use and the families that they left behind. It is also an opportunity to stimulate discussions about overdose and the social climate surrounding it.

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.

In 2017, there were 1,014 overdose deaths involving opioids in Georgia, a rate of 9.7 deaths per 100,000 persons. No community is immune to the impact of the overdose epidemic. Overdose occurs in every city and town. Overdose occurs in families of the very rich, the very poor and every class in between. Overdose is no respecter of persons. It takes and it does not give back.

Society blames the doctor who prescribed

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### Letters to the Editor

#### Power in Prayer

Dear Editor,  
On July 17, my husband, Carl Johnson, woke up around 5:30 a.m. to say he thought he was having a heart attack. We quickly made our way to Union General Hospital Emergency Room. The hospital's experienced staff checked him out and made the decision to send him to Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville, where surgery could be performed if necessary.

The next day, on July 18, Dr. Patel placed two stents in arteries that were 95% blocked. During that procedure, Carl suffered another heart attack. How thankful we were for Union General staff having made their decision and for our praying friends. Don't tell me there is no power in prayer.

God is good — all the time. It has been a month now, and Carl is regaining strength. COPD is playing a part. Thank you to everyone involved. We love you.

Mrs. Carl Johnson, Gloria

#### Worth It All

Dear Editor,  
When all is said and done and Jesus Christ returns to gather His faithful followers unto Himself, will it be worth it all? In this sinful world, we deal with struggles, disappointments, heartache, sorrow, pain and suffering, and how we deal with these issues determines how strong our faith is in God.

We are not promised a rose garden without thorns and thistles, but Christ did promise us victory over trials and temptations if we trust completely in Him. When the last choir sings Hallelujah and the last sinner accepts the beauty of the Cross and all of the aborted babies in history are snuggled tightly under the wings of the Almighty God, will it be worth it all?

When the last sunrise appears on the horizon  
See Combs, page 5A

#### A Simple Answer

Dear Editor,  
As a simple 94-year-old World War II veteran, first I want to say I love my country and I love the people of this wonderful God-given country. I have a simple answer to the problem we are suffering in our beloved nation. In fact, it's so simple yet profound. As I listen to the pundits and commentators on TV, they don't know what the problem is yet. You sure can't fix the problems if you don't know what the problem is. Here is the problem... SIN. The remedy is Jesus Christ. Christ is the answer to all our problems. God loves you.

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### Fire Can Happen on the Farm

Fire is one of the land managers best tools when used properly and under controlled conditions, but when it is out of control or sneaking up on unsuspecting citizens who are not prepared it can be a death trap and a wave of destruction for any and all things in its path. We see houses and businesses destroyed by fire storms as the strong winds sweep the flames through the dry brush and forests into unprotected communities of homes in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

WUI is the area near our forests where folks move into so they can live with nature, not realizing that Mother Nature can also be a bad neighbor where a wildfire can consume all of your stuff in a matter of minutes as it moves through the neighborhood jumping from house to house showing no mercy except to those who have prepared and have made their property firewise.

The goal of our wildfire risk reduction programs is to educate the public and first responders about the dangers of uncontrolled wildfire and to develop emergency survival plans for the eventual wildfire that as the experts say is not a matter of if, but when one strikes as many of us experienced a few years ago.

The result of the Fire Adapted Communities project is to help make the places where we live and work safer from the ravages of a destructive wildfire. A wildfire doesn't have to be a major spectacular event like we see on TV news in California, but a small one that destroys a home, barn, equipment shed, or a business is just as tragic to the families affected. Most of the TV coverage we see about wildfires in the west shows hundreds of homes destroyed in a matter of minutes when a wildfire rolls through, but what we don't see are the farms and ranches that the fire had to burn through and destroy on its way to the targeted communities.

Losses due to wildfire on farms and ranches can be staggering because of the high value of the equipment, livestock, crops, pastures, timber, water systems, and any other components of our farm businesses that farmers rely on to make their living to grow and produce crops to feed themselves and the rest of the world.

Many of these farm assets are not insurable or not insured so the loss can be complete with no recovery possible. If these things were suddenly taken away by a wildfire, the farmers and families' lives would never be the same. It can be relatively easy to replace a home with insurance, but most parts of farms are irreplaceable, and a loss can destroy what their ancestors

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**RC&D Executive Director**



Frank Riley

### Friends for Life

William Shelnut was my Dad's best friend for many years. The two of them were inseparable as boys, and as they grew, when one was seen so was the other. As someone once told me, "Them boys were meaner than strip-ed snakes." That phrase did not mean the boys were evil like Hitler or Stalin. The phrase simply means the boys were typical boys. They were mischief looking for somewhere to happen. The closeness of these two boys began due to an event that happened nearly 80 years ago.

William was born to Henry and Anita Shelnut in 1938. The young family was happy and excited about their young son, and life was great for them. Soon they found out they were expecting again. As the time grew near for the arrival of the new baby, they began to make plans for the future of their children. However, Anita developed complications and died during childbirth. Everyone in the community was devastated upon learning the news concerning her death, but none more so than young Henry. Young William was so young and couldn't understand what happened to his mother. All that he knew was that she wasn't there. There were many nights that he cried himself to sleep wishing to see her again.

As the little Shelnut boys grew, their father, Paw Henry, tried his best to be a good mother and father to his two sons. He worked all day in the cotton fields and tried to cook and mend their socks when he got home. But, he couldn't sew very well, nor was he a good cook. There were no telephones, no running water and no electricity. Life was hard! But, the Shelnuts were good friends with Coon and Glenna Mae Cummings. She always had a soft spot for the underdog, and William was an underdog.

Each week, she would hitch up the wagon and go over to get William to come play with her son Paul. The two boys would sneak through the woods with their flips, stalking big game like crows and chipmunks. They fished in the creeks and hunted arrowheads next to the bluffs along Turkey Creek. They wallowed their way through the little cave next to the branch below the big American Beech Trees close to their corn patch. Normally, most mothers would fuss at their boys about getting so dirty. However, Granny knew that William seldom bathed, so she never said a word of complaint. But, what she did was to make sure young William got a much-needed bath each time he came for a visit.

Each time William was placed in the big wash tub, he complained vehemently. However, Granny insisted, and the young boy always gave

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**Around The Farm**



Mickey Cummings

### Chiggers

If you've ever been out hiking, walked through a pasture, been fishing, or spent any significant amount of time outside, you've most likely encountered chiggers. If you haven't, then consider yourself fortunate, because you live a blessed life. Let's talk about chiggers, what they are, and what you can do to protect yourself from them.

Some people call chiggers red bugs because they are tiny red mites that are less than 1/50th of an inch long. Chigger are mites that are still in their larval stage. The larval stage is the only one that bites. The other stages of the chigger life cycle either lay eggs or prey on small insects. Chiggers like to live in areas that are full of brush and debris. They can be found in leaf litter. If you have areas with tall grass, they'll like that too. Chiggers mainly bite rodents and rabbits. So, if you have areas that make a good habitat for rodents and rabbits then there is a good chance that you'll have mites as well. Female mites will lay their eggs in the late winter, which will hatch in the spring. Chiggers will reach peak population in mid-summer and remain active until fall. They'll be killed off by a hard freeze.

Chiggers only bite, they don't bury under the skin. When they bite they inject their saliva which has a skin dissolving enzyme in it. As your skin cells dissolve, they drink it up. The saliva that they inject causes irritation, which makes you itch. Chiggers can stay latched on for three or more days, so if you have a chigger bite it's best to wash that spot with lather repeatedly, and then dab the spot with an antiseptic. That will kill most of the chiggers on you.

Chiggers typically like to bite in tight places. That means you'll often get their bites underneath your socks, in your waist band, or armpits.

Chiggers are susceptible to dehydration. Therefore, they like to populate areas with shade and high humidity. Removing brush piles and leaves, keeping grass cut, and removing bushes will eliminate areas that they like to live. Blackberry bushes seem to be a particularly favorite habitat. Contrary to popular opinion chiggers don't live in Spanish moss. We don't have Spanish moss here, but if you go to the beach, don't worry about them dropping into your hair from the dangling Spanish moss.

There are some chemicals that can be used as repellents or to kill chiggers. Products containing DEET will be effective at repelling chiggers, mosquitoes, biting flies, gnats, and ticks. You can also spray it on your clothing to keep them off your clothes. Oil of lemon eucalyptus

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**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**  
*Steve Rowe*



### Chamber of Commerce

While the temperatures are cooling off, things around Blairsville are heating up.

This weekend we will have the Mountain Heritage Festival to be hosted by the Historical Society. The Festival will be held at the Mountain Life Museum which is just off the Square in Blairsville. Come out and celebrate the history and mountain culture of Union County.

Also, don't miss the 10th Annual Tractor Show and Parade this Saturday at the Farmers Market. This event will be hosted by the Union County Farm Bureau and will be fun for the entire family. If you haven't been to a Tractor Show it is truly an experience to see a small portion of our history.

For those businesses that are searching for talent, don't miss the Local Business & Employment Fair to be held on the Plaza at Young Harris College from 6-8 PM on August 27th. Individuals seeking employment will want to attend the

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**Watching and Working**  
*Jacob Williams*



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