

Opinions

Everybody has one...

'Tis the Season

It's the first of December and the holiday season is in full swing. Thanksgiving is behind us and we are looking forward to Christmas. Now is the time when people are starting to decorate for the season. Union County Fire Department would like everyone to have a happy and safe holiday. With that in mind, we would like to remind everyone of the increased fire dangers that are associated with this time of year.

Christmas trees, especially live trees, can be a fire risk. Live trees can dry out quickly and must be watered regularly. Everyone has seen a video on how fast a dry, live tree can catch fire and burn. When choosing a location for the tree, do not place it near any heat sources. It should be at least three feet away. Make sure that the tree is set up and on a stable platform. Trees can fall into a heat source if not stable. Christmas tree lights should always be turned off at night or when you are away. Christmas tree fires are not common but they can be very devastating to a home and the holidays.

Candles are associated with Christmas and the holidays. Increased use of candles, combined with an increase of combustible, seasonal decorations in many homes means more risk for fire. December is the peak time of the year for candle fires. Great care should be used around any open flames. Candles should be placed away from any flammable material. Children should not be allowed to have candles in their bedrooms or be allowed to use them. One third of the candle fires happen in bedrooms.

Electrical fires can be a fire risk during this time of the year. Lights, decorations, and extension cords should be inspected for frays or exposed wires before use. Overloaded electrical outlets and faulty wires are a common cause of holiday fires. Avoid plugging too many lights and decorations into an outlet. Overloaded circuits can overheat and start a fire. For those outdoor decorations, use Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI) outlets. Use lights that have a seal of an accredited certification agency.

These are just a few things to keep in mind when decorating. Union County Fire Department would like for everyone to be safe when preparing their home for this holiday season.

~Union County Fire Department - Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Jim Downing

One of our oldest Pearl Harbor veterans passed away this year. Jim Downing died in February at age 104. After surviving "a date which will live in infamy," he completed his Navy career, met multiple Presidents, and became the oldest male author on record with his 2016 biography, "The Other Side of Infamy."

His story begins in a small town in Missouri. He came of age during the Great Depression, and left to join the Navy. While living in southern California, he met Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators ministry. Trotman had led five of Downing's shipmates to Christ, and through their influence he became a believer also.

In 1941, Downing was stationed at Pearl Harbor. He was the ministry leader aboard the USS West Virginia, and hundreds of his shipmates had become followers of Jesus. In December, he had been married to Morena for five months when their world changed. The attack on Pearl Harbor forced her to evacuate for the mainland on Christmas Day. They were apart for 18 months.

During the attack, Downing rushed to his ship which rested on the bottom of the shallow harbor. He slid down one of the USS Tennessee's guns to reach his ship's deck. He directed a fire hose toward ammunition lockers. "I slowly moved toward the stern to water down more areas. Several bodies lay on the deck around me. No one else would be able to tell the parents of these men what had happened to their sons. I decided it was my responsibility to learn their names so I could report what I knew to their mothers and fathers."

The USS Neosho, a fuel tanker, was nearby. During the second wave of the Japanese attack, the planes swarmed the Neosho. "One of those bullets is going to hit pretty soon, I thought. God, I'll be with you in a minute. Another minute passed. Suddenly my fear melted away, replaced by the most overwhelming sense of peace I'd ever felt. For the next half hour I expected to die in the next minute. I was sure I would be ushered into God's presence - and that was fine with me. Peace."

But he had more to do. In 1956, after 24 years in the Navy, the Navigators asked Downing to take a leadership role after the tragic death of Trotman. He and Morena served the Navigators

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



See Fowler, page 5A

Commissioner's Questions

Q. Does the Sheriff's Office have a crew of inmates that work around Union County?

A. The Sheriff's Office does have a crew of inmates and one guard that works on various projects around the county. This is the crew that you often see out and about in orange. They work very hard all throughout the year and around county facilities. They do special projects that we would otherwise have to pay contract labor to complete. While they are housed in the jail, they are giving back to their community and they are always happy to help. They also take a lot of pride and satisfaction in their completed jobs. We appreciate the Sheriff allowing the county to use this crew. They also have an excellent deputy who oversees their work.

Q. What are some of the things the jail work detail does?

A. All through the summer they can be seen mowing, cleaning up around numerous county facilities, picking up litter along roads, working on small remodeling projects. In the winter they work primarily on indoor projects such as painting, cleaning, and anything else they are asked to do. Just this past week they helped put up all the Christmas decorations in and around the Union County Courthouse. A project that would have taken a day or more for my staff was done in a few hours with their hard work and help.

Q. Is the jail crew different than the crews from Carlton Colwell Detention Center?

A. Yes. Union County contracts each year with the Carlton Colwell Detention Center for up to six crews of inmates and a guard for each crew. Right now we are utilizing four crews which include one for the Road Department, one for Building Maintenance, one for Meeks Park, and one that does litter clean up on county-maintained roads. These crews are vital to the maintenance and upkeep of facilities in Union County. They work very hard and save the county a lot of money as it is much less expensive than having to hire someone to do these jobs.

Q. What are the different Veterans groups here in Union County?

A. We are blessed to have several Veterans organizations.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



See Paris, page 5A

Drug Free Mountain Life

Meth is On the Rise Again

Known by street names like speed, ice, biker's coffee, tweak or crystal, methamphetamine - or meth for short - is made in a home or lab. It comes in a white powder or pill form and is bitter-tasting. The form of crystal methamphetamine looks like glass fragments or shiny, bluish-white rocks. It is a stimulant like caffeine and cocaine, although far more powerful.

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 February 2018, The New York Times ran a story, "Meth, the Forgotten Killer, Is Back. And It's Everywhere." And it seems that it is. Government actions in 2006 restricted access to pseudoephedrine, a key ingredient used in making meth, resulting in a temporary decline in use. However, meth is on the rise again, largely smuggled in from Mexico. According to the DEA's 2017 threat assessment, its purity has been steadily climbing and is now well above 90 percent. It's also cheap, at \$5 per hit.

See Drug Free, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

God's Handy Work

Dear Editor,
When we read God's word from the Bible, there are times in His disciples' lives where they had to deal with criticism, hatred, anger and even death for preaching God's truth. God who is a sovereign God has the power to override any situation, whether it be good, bad or ugly, to bring Him glory. A great example of turning a bad situation into a good one was the apostle Paul who God allowed him to be imprisoned, and I am sure Paul might have thought that his work for God was over and death was his next step. But God used Paul in a mighty way, and being chained up with a captive audience, he preached the gospel to this group of men and they accepted Christ as their Savior. Many of the Roman soldiers starting hearing Paul's salvation plan, and they as well got saved and then went home to tell their families about God's amazing love. And God's word spread like wildfire across the region. We never know what God is up to when He brings not so good news into our lives. We all face situations and circumstances that are out of our control, but if we just trust God in all things, instead of trying to figure our own way out of it, then God's good will always come forth in the end, because of God's love for His people.

Like in the apostle Paul's life and ours as well, there are always false teachers proclaiming the good news of their agenda, not God's, so beware of those who say they know Christ as their Savior yet there is no proof in the fruit they bear. Are they preaching the truth of God's word or just driving a wedge between what is right and wrong? Satan always has a plan of de-

See Combs, page 5A

Thanksgiving Memory

Dear Editor,
The memory of "Kawlija," my great-great grandson, is still in my living room and mind! I seen him running, playing, laughing at himself yesterday, having fun! So was I. He was doing this thing, making facial expressions on the spur of the moment. Today, he isn't here. He went to this home after Thanksgiving dinner! His memory is here today, in mine! I had a wonderful Thanksgiving!

This brought this thought to me. Question: has Jesus been in our life, that might have put a memory in our life, living room or heart? Did he leave without "leaving" a memory?

What does his memory leave with you? And myself? What part of him did we forget, or did we?

We all say our prayers, tell him our needs

See Porter, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

New National Climate Assessment Report Just Released

Dear Editor,
The fourth National Climate Assessment was just released, and it issued dire warnings about Climate Change. The report is mandated by law every few years. Hundreds of scientists and officials from 13 government agencies wrote the report based on the best scientific evidence. The report emphasizes that climate change is due to humans causing an increase in greenhouse gases. The report says that without greenhouse gases, natural forces - such as changes in energy from the sun - would be slightly cooling Earth.

The report warns that temperatures are expected to warm between 4.6 to 8.2 degrees F by the end of the century, depending on our actions to decrease greenhouse gases. It also says that we will have heavier precipitation events, a marked increase in sea levels with high tide flooding events along the U.S. coastline, ocean acidification and warming, crop loss, and an increase in forest fires in the western United States and Alaska. All this will result in economic losses in the hundreds of billions of dollars annually by 2100 with up to a 10 percent decrease in our GDP.

Yes, this is very dangerous to us and even more so to future generations -- those are our children and my children and our grandchildren -- and yes, it is due to the burning of fossil fuels, despite what others may claim. It seems to me that, if our government ordered an exhaustive test to understand climate change, we should heed its warnings while there is still time.

The good news is that we actually can solve this problem. Economic studies show that a national revenue carbon fee and dividend plan will actually grow our economy and put more money back into the average American's pocketbook while at the same time being the best means to combat climate change. A bill, with joint Republican and Democratic sponsorship, was just introduced in Congress to do just that. This represents America's best chance to change the course of history and control climate change. I hope and pray that we will now do the morally right thing.

Vernon Dixon, MD

Voters Have Spoken

Dear Editor,
Government: of the people, by the people, for the people. Georgia voters have spoken; they have rejected socialism in favor of the time-honored concepts of self-determination and the rule of law.

Paul Little

Around The Farm

John's Christmas Gifts

Christmas brings back many memories to each of us. Christmas brings memories of various gifts of which I received through the years. I can remember getting stockings stuffed with all kinds of goodies. For example, I love tangerines to this day because my grandmother used to give them to me at Christmas. And I remember getting those candied orange slices at Christmas. I also remember getting those soft peppermint sticks at Christmas each year.

The Christmas of 1970 was a Christmas that will always be special to me. That particular Christmas things changed around our house. My Dad had always been a man who loved his family, but, he also drank heavily, swore often, and had a vile temper. But on Christmas Day in 1970 Dad met the "Reason for the Season" and his life completely changed.

After that day I haven't heard one curse word come out of Dad's mouth. Nor have I seen him take any kind of drink. And when he gets angry there is still a calm demeanor about him. I think that Christmas changed my Dad and his entire family.

My grandparents celebrated Christmas by decorating Cedar Trees and by answering the phone with a special greeting. The day after Thanksgiving my grandmother would greet telephone callers with "Christmas Gift" instead of hello. She told me that as a youngster she would go with large groups of people to serenade their neighbors. The group of people would begin the serenade by saying "Christmas Gift" and then the group would sing a Christmas Carol to their neighbor. The neighbors would respond by tossing hard candy to the group after the song.

Just after the turn of the century my Grandfather's family experienced some hard times. My grandfather was only about 4 years old when his Uncle joined the Army and went to fight in WWI where he was one of the last cavalrymen to ride into battle on a horse. Lum Cummings survived the war and lived through 2 separate gas attacks. Then the influenza epidemic came through the North Alabama and two of my grandfather's Aunts died while in their teens. Next, Papa's youngest Uncle was accidentally shot while playing with an old pistol.

These problems placed a strain on the marriage of my great-great grandparents, John and Martha Cummings. I don't know exactly what happened, but, John left his wife of more than 20 years and ran off with another woman. The

Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



See Cummings, page 5A

Chamber of Commerce

Thanksgiving is behind us and we are now headed into the Christmas season. Around the Chamber, we are preparing the Community Center for the Tour of Trees (Sponsored by Union General Hospital, Union General Wellness Center and Kinetic by Windstream) and Breakfast with Santa presented by United Community Bank. Beginning December 1st, we will have over 40 beautifully decorated trees and wreaths on display. These trees have been decorated by local businesses and the talent is spectacular. The trees will be available for viewing from 9 AM - 5 PM through December 31st.

This year, the Chamber has joined forces with United Community Bank to present Holly Jolly Christmas and Breakfast with Santa as a combination event. Santa will be at the Union Community Center Saturday, December 8, 2018 at 9 AM - 1 PM EST. Come join us for some free family fun at the Community Center which is located at 129 Union County Recreation Road.

See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



Oh Christmas Tree

Having a live Christmas tree can be a great tradition this time of year. Let's talk about some of the different types of trees that are suitable and proper Christmas tree care so that you can have a happy, healthy tree in your home and avoid a Griswold, "Christmas Vacation" scenario.

Three native grown trees to Georgia are Fraser fir, Leyland cypress, and Red cedar. Some things to consider when purchasing a Christmas tree are needle retention, strong limbs, fragrance, and dryness.

The Fraser fir has good needle retention and remains fresh. It also has strong limbs that can support ornaments. Fraser fir also has a good fragrance to it. Fragrance can be a good thing if you're going for a little extra Christmas spirit, but may not be a good thing if you have allergy concerns in your house. Fraser fir is the "classic" live cut Christmas tree.

Red cedar is sometimes thought of as a traditional southern Christmas tree. Red cedar also has a nice fragrance, which comes with some allergy concerns. The limbs on red cedar are not sturdy and may not be able to support as many ornaments. It can also dry out rapidly in a warm house if it isn't watered well.

Leyland cypress is a newcomer to the Christmas tree market. The limbs are soft and flexible making it more difficult to hang ornaments. Leyland has less of a scent to it than other Christmas trees. Similar to the red cedar, Leyland can dry out quickly in a warm house.

Before you even leave to buy your tree it's a good idea to select and measure the space where you'll be putting your tree. A good space is away from space heaters, fireplaces, or wood stoves. Measure how high the tree can go in your house. It can be difficult to gauge if a tree is going to fit inside when you're looking at it outdoors. Trees can appear small outside, and then seem to grow a couple of feet once you bring them inside.

When you are selecting your tree it is important to make sure that you get one that is fresh cut. A fresh cut makes means that the tree will be able to absorb water more effectively, and therefore not dry out as quickly. When you are purchasing the tree give the limbs a good shake and see if many needles fall off. Then grab a branch of a tree and pull the branch through your hand. Ideally you don't want to see many needles fall off the branch. Also check to for off color on any of the needles.

A dry Christmas tree can be a fire hazard in a house. If your tree has a fresh cut it should be

Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



See Williams, page 5A

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Phone: 706-745-6343 Fax: 706-745-1830 * P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, Georgia 30514

Website: www.nganews.com

Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com

Mailing: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, Georgia 30514