

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Time to vent

Thankful for our community togetherness

With barely any warning, Northeast Georgia got slammed with a winter storm that packed a wallop. A dozen-plus inches of snow fell on our community like a blanket. It was a heavy, wet snow, the kind that puts our power crews and public safety employees to task.

More than 75 motorists were stranded on the Lumpkin County side of the mountain on Friday as a tractor trailer jackknifed and blocked access for more than three hours.

Throughout the region, power crews worked nonstop trying to restore electricity to thousands. Crews are continuing to work to restore power at press time. Help was on the way from South Georgia.

The Union County Fire Department braved the elements to fight a structure fire during the snow. No one was injured, but the homeowner lost everything. Unfortunately, she didn't have insurance.

This storm caught us so off guard, the obligatory dash to the store for loaf bread and milk didn't happen.

The weather folks made the call that the mountains would get a dusting. I've never seen a storm like this get overlooked by the weather folks.

With two weeks left until Christmas, the white stuff came down early and often. I now have no desire for a white Christmas.

I want to thank House of Prayer for stepping up to the plate when a shelter from the cold was necessary. House of Prayer Family Life Center located at 145 Bible Camp Circle, Blairsville, became the home-away-home for those without power; who had no alternate heat source and needed shelter.

For those with the ability to communicate through social media, road conditions were shared, places open and available for a hot meal was shared, and power updates were shared via Facebook.

Oh and of course, shelter information for both Union and Towns counties was shared.

This storm did nothing but create hardships. Sure, it was a beautiful snow, however, I'll trade that beauty for electricity and a nice safe road to travel - any day.

I know there have been some complaints about the power

See *Duncan*, page 5A

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Message Methods

I am a patron of a certain chicken restaurant. I hope they don't take exception to my friendly observation that their ad campaign is just wrong.

The award-winning campaign has raised brand awareness and improved sales and profits. The ads have cows urging people to eat chicken instead of beef. Their bovine writing adds to the humor. Here's what's wrong. The cows in the ads are of the Holstein breed. Milk cows. As the son of a dairyman, I assure you I don't require convincing to avoid eating a Holstein. Wouldn't a Hereford or Angus have a more personal interest in beef sales than their lactating cousins? Just sayin'.

Pardon the leap from cows to Christmas, but some get tripped up on that message too. Well-known atheist Richard Dawkins says he loves Christmas, and celebrates it with family and friends. He once wrote in the Washington Post, "Christmas belongs to anyone who wants it, and just because I gave up believing in a god doesn't mean I gave up believing in the love and joy of family. I did not give up the joy of celebration with my abandonment of the absurd."

Perhaps Dawkins would be less dismissive if the Christmas story had been a mass marketing event. What if God coming to earth was a worldwide spectacle, not just for shepherds, replete with brilliant beings and melodious music? He should arrive to a richly-appointed palace on earth, not a smelly barn for cows and chickens. How absurd that he didn't descend from the sky with all nations paying tribute, not just a few wise men!

The Advent of God in the flesh was more personal, like direct marketing. Os Guinness writes, "God has disclosed himself to us in a form that is a shocking surprise, and one that contradicts and confounds all our human expectations and ways of thinking. The Word became flesh and spoke in a human form as one of us." About the Babe he adds, "What a mystery, what an absurdity if not true, and if true what a wonder! The God of all power chose to become weak to subvert our puny power, the God of all wealth chose to become poor to subvert our meager wealth, the God of all wisdom chose to become foolish to subvert our imagined wis-

See *Fowler*, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Boil Water Advisory - Part 2

Q. Are there other times that a required water boil would be announced other than when there is a large water tank cleaning?

A. Yes. Anytime that a waterline breaks and must be repaired, people along that particular section of line are notified. Most times it does not impact a lot of people.

Q. What does a boil water advisory mean?

A. An advisory to boil your water means to boil it before you consume it. You can also buy bottled water for consumption. This way, if there are any impurities in the water, by boiling it, they are removed.

Q. Is it still safe to take a bath or wash our hands in the water during a water boil?

A. Unless it was something very unusual with a dangerous chemical, the answer is yes, it is still safe to use the water for things other than consumption. Washing your hands, bathing, and laundry are fine to do with un-boiled water during a normal Boil Water Advisory.

Q. Is it safe for pets to drink the water in the event there is a boil water advisory?

A. Animals have a much more rugged digestive system than humans and under normal conditions are able to drink from most sources. However, it is recommended by veterinarians that you do not let your pets drink the water during a Boil Water Advisory just to be on the safe side. If they do consume water that has not been boiled you should just keep an eye out for signs of gastro distress just like you would in a human.

Q. Why did some restaurants close and others did not?

A. Some restaurants were able to find alternative ways to stay open and provide food and drinks to their customers while observing the boil water advisory. Some restaurants were able to obtain large quantities of ice and bottled water, but some were not able to find a cost-effective alternative and therefore had to close.

Q. What about the businesses and home owners that had the aggravation of not knowing what to do during the water boil?

A. Again, some mistakes were made, but hopefully lessons

See *Paris*, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Anti-Drug Coalition

Ritalin and Adderall Abuse

Ritalin—also known as methylphenidate and Concerta—is a prescription medication used to treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy. The drug is a stimulant that affects the central nervous system, providing users with increased focus and energy.

The mission of the Union County Anti-Drug Coalition is to support an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse. Visit and Like our Facebook page for additional articles and videos.

A forerunner to the more popular medication Adderall, Ritalin is still widely prescribed and abused. Students and athletes sometimes abuse Ritalin as a performance enhancing drug, enabling them to study or train for longer periods of time.

People also abuse Ritalin for its mood-altering effects, getting a feeling of euphoria that is like the high experienced by cocaine users. These users either take the drug at higher doses than prescribed or by crushing the pills and snorting them. Ritalin can become extremely addictive and lead to withdrawal symptoms when

See *Coalition*, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

George says thanks

Dear Editor,
At the probability that I'll forget someone, here's my personal Thank You list coming up to the holidays.

Thank You to:

- The men and women who wear the grey of the Union County Sheriff's Office.
- The men who wear the green emblem of the EMC. Without you, we'd be back a hundred years in just a few days.
- The folks at the EMC who keep us connected to and current with the world outside of Union County.
- The folks at Notla Water. Without you, we'd be dipping water out of the lake.
- The folks at Heritage Propane. It's a whole lot easier to turn a thermostat to get heat in the house than it is to cut a cord of wood.
- The folks at Thomas Tire (and Oscar). Mosby's got 310,000 miles on him because of your care.
- The folks at Zaxby's, Rib Country, The Aviator Grill, Dan's Grill, Sicily's, Fatz. You feed us in grand fashion.
- The folks at Pat's Hallmark. You keep a beautiful place!
- The women and men at Bank of the Ozarks for always being easy — and competent.
- The folks at The Sawmill. Breakfast doesn't get any better.
- Elaine Young, and her family at Ken's Herbs for adding time to my life (and for keeping me straight).
- Gene Nelson for keeping our trees cut back.
- James Patterson and his crew for keeping the front yard looking respectable.
- Ralph Hughes. For 19 years, you've been easy and four-square with us.
- T.J. and all the folks at Ingles. The place is so clean that we could eat off the floor. You folks keep a fine store even though you stay covered up.
- The women at the Post Office. You always smile -- even when things get crowded at the front counter.
- The Union County Road Department for re-graveling our road.
- Cody Gibson and your crew for our beautiful, new roof.
- John Moore and his staff at The Home Depot. Your recommendations have always been solid.
- Ms. Jen at the Massage Place, I was a hurtin' puppy until you laid hands on me.
- Fay and Grant Pendley at Busy Bee Printing for not minding the piddlin' little jobs that we bring you.

See *Mitchell*, page 5A

Recruit Class

Volunteer firefighters provide a great service to the citizens and visitors of Union County. They respond to medical calls, motor vehicle accidents, and of course, fires of all types.

They take time out of their busy day to help fellow citizens and their communities in their time of need.

However, as dedicated as they are, they can't respond to every call. That is why there is always a need for more volunteer firefighters. The more volunteer firefighters in the Union County Fire Department, the more likely some can break free and respond to emergencies.

Over the last couple of months, we have been writing about the need for volunteer firefighters. If you or someone you know has been wondering about becoming a volunteer firefighter, now is the perfect time to join.

Why? This is the perfect time because Union County Fire Department is starting a recruit class in January.

To become a volunteer firefighter, a person must fill out an application and begin initial training. The first level is the Basic Support Firefighter. Not all firefighters go into burning buildings. Some operate firetrucks or support the firefighters who do go into the burning buildings. The first part of the recruit class fulfills all the requirements for the Basic Support Firefighter. Students must take the Basic Support firefighter test after meeting the requirements.

The class then moves to the next level which is the National Professional Qualifications (NPQ) Firefighter I. This is a recognized certification that meets the national standards for structural firefighting. Students must complete the recruit class then pass the written and skills exams for NPQ Firefighter I.

The recruit class introduces students to the world of emergency services. It involves classroom lectures and skills on subjects such as fire behavior, personal protective equipment, ropes, knots, ladders, survival, medical and many more. The skill stations are physically challenging and involve scenarios of potential fire scenes.

Volunteers provide a great service to the community and they are always needed.

Now is the perfect time for you to complete an application and sign-up for the upcoming recruit class. You can become a volunteer firefighter.

Please contact the Headquarters Station at (706) 439-6091 for more information.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



The Serenade

When my mother was a little girl Christmas was a much simpler time. There was not much money to buy gifts and use elaborate decorations. So, the family made do with other things. For gifts a child might get a doll or wooden car. But, most times Santa Claus brought fresh fruit and candy to children. I am sure you remember those orange candy slices, soft candy canes and chocolate drops. Mother said it was even a treat to get fresh tangerines from Florida.

For decorations Mom and her siblings would use popcorn strung together using sewing thread and real candles on the tree. They would also shoot mistletoe from the top of a tree and decorate inside their home. Instead of caroling like city folks the folks around Trapptown would visit homes and serenade their friends and neighbors with Christmas songs. The people doing the singing would try to conceal their identities by wearing shabby clothing and bags over their heads. The host or the people listening to the songs were supposed to guess the identity of the singers. If the host could not guess the identity of those who were singing. They were obliged to feed them sorghum cake, cookies and maybe apple cider or coffee. This feeding would continue until the identities of the singers were determined.

Mother was able to attend her first Christmas serenade at the age of 6 or 7. Mother's Aunt Tudler and her older cousin Athel dressed the young Shirley like a hobo. They covered her head with a burlap sack with holes around her eyes so she could see out. Tudler and Athel dressed in a similar fashion. The ladies and young girl walked a couple of miles to the home of Fat Morgan. Fat just happened to be Tudler's brother and he was married to the best cook around Trapptown. Tudler spoke to her young niece, "Shirley, you must promise not to tell Fat who we are because he will keep feeding us cake and cookies if he can't figure out our names". So, Shirley promised she wouldn't tell.

Aunt Tudler knocked on the door of the house. When Fat opened the door the trio began singing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas". After the song Fat invited the trio into his home because it was cold outside. Fat sat down by the stove and shook his head so the trio then sang "Silent Night". After the song Fat said, "I'll swan I just can't figure out who you'ns are". So, Mrs. Morgan brought out some sugar cookies and hot cider. Fat began scratching his head and stared at the three people in the serenade troop. Fat continued his stare and proclaimed, "I can't figure out

See *Cummings*, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Crop Rotation

Though we may not need to plant our gardens for several months, these cold fall and winter days are the perfect time to start planning for next year's crop. Many of us have a few plants that we're particularly fond of and grow every year: tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, corn, and so many more. While it is no problem to plant your favorite vegetables every year, planting them in the same areas can lead to pest and soil issues, so it is important to plan out a rotation strategy well before it is time to plant.

Crop rotation is one of the most important aspects of maintaining good production. Many of the vegetables that do well in our area are closely related, and planting crops from the same family in the same plot every year can lead to a multitude of issues. To design your rotation scheme, you need to first determine what you want to grow, and if any of those plants are in the same family. Peppers, tomatoes, potatoes and eggplants are all "solanaceous" plants belonging to the nightshade family. Cabbage, kale, broccoli and Brussels sprouts are all in the cabbage family. Cucumbers, squash, and pumpkins are all cucurbits, and peas, beans and peanuts are legumes. These are just some of the main groupings that are important to rotate. There are many more depending on how varied you want your garden to be.

Rotating your crops helps immensely with both disease management and soil nutrition. Closely related plants are often susceptible to the same diseases. Even though one year you may plant tomatoes in a row and potatoes in that row the next year, your potatoes will likely have the same diseases and pests your tomatoes had. This is because despite planting a different crop, the plants are still closely related so you did not truly rotate your garden. Plants in the same family also have similar nutrient requirements. Planting different groups of vegetables in different plots every year allows the soil to replenish some nutrients as others are used up. Some crops, such as legumes condition the soil by adding nitrogen. You should always wait at least three years before planting a vegetable family in the same spot.

Your crop rotation plan can be as simple or complex as you want. Many home gardeners divide their gardens into sub plots that are rotated every three to four years, leave it fallow after harvest, and plant again in spring. However, introducing cover crops such as clover or rye while your plots are unused can prevent erosion and add nutrients back into the soil. In the spring,

See *Mattee*, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison



Holly Jolly Christmas

Tour of Trees and Holly Jolly

We hope everyone enjoyed the gorgeous snowfall and stayed safe. Our family enjoyed playing out in the snow and learned how quickly our dog could destroy a snowman in the process of being built! Even though the snow is so beautiful, it created treacherous driving conditions forcing us to cancel Holly Jolly Christmas this year. The committee searched for a date to reschedule, but with the number of volunteers, musical groups, etc., try and coordinate, we found that it would be difficult to do so in such a short amount of time especially this time of year.

Please remember to visit the Tour of Trees as it will continue until December 31st. We will have the Gingerbread Houses on display as well in the Community Center until the end of the month. We would like to say a special thank you to Union General Hospital and Union General

See *Allison*, page 5A

UGA Extension From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



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