

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Winter Driving Reminders

Everyone who has lived here in Union County for a while understands that the weather here can be hard to predict, especially the winter weather. Union County can have winter weather, such as snow or ice, in one area and not in another. There are many times when the roads are clear in Blairsville but treacherous in other parts of the county, such as the south due to the higher elevation. These hazardous road conditions could result in motor vehicle accidents. Union County Fire Department would like to remind everyone of a few driving tips for this winter season.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Before we begin winter driving, we must get prepared. Drivers should ensure that their vehicle is in good working order and has good tires for winter conditions. If your car is not performing well, you may get stranded in these colder temperatures. Tires are extremely important. Worn tires reduce traction and increase the possibility of an accident in rain, snow, or ice.

It is also a good idea to be prepared in the event that you are in an accident or stranded for a while in the cold. Drivers should create a Ready Kit with essential supplies that can be stored in the vehicle for such emergencies. These kits should include food, water, first aid kits, flashlight, blankets and other essential equipment. The web site www.ready.gov has tips on winter preparedness and Ready Kits. If you must drive in winter conditions, there are a few things to keep in mind. Know the weather and the possibility for hazardous conditions. There are many resources for determining the weather and road conditions such as local weather channels and GDOT 511. Please do not call 911 to get road conditions. The E911 Center is usually extremely busy with emergency calls when there is hazardous weather.

Drive slower than usual and do not let other drivers rush you. Keep a greater distance between you and the vehicle in front of you. Stopping distances increase dramatically with snow and ice. Turn your lights on to make your vehicle visible to other drivers. The last thing is pay attention. Distracted driving is a major contributor to accidents in good weather much less winter weather. Driving in winter weather can be dangerous. Being prepared and taking extra precautions will help keep you and your family safe during this winter season. Union County Fire Department would like for everyone to have a safe Christmas and Happy New Year.

Union County Fire Department ~ Our Family Protecting Your Family ~

The Life Giver

The wrapping paper's on the floor. That moment of giving is no more. This year's Christmas is now gone past. What now remains is the gift that lasts.

The movie "It's a Wonderful Life" became a classic Christmas film. Christmastime is the setting at the beginning and end. But it's not about Christmas presents though it is about giving.

George Bailey (played by Jimmy Stewart) learned about life from his father, Peter, who ran the town building and loan. In contrast to the rich and miserly Potter who owned the bank and abused the townsfolk, Peter told George, "I feel that in a small way we are doing something important. It's deep in the race for a man to want his own roof, and we're helping get those things in our shabby little office."

After Peter passed unexpectedly, Potter insulted the man while arguing to close the building and loan. George responded, "In the twenty-five years since he and Uncle Billy started this thing, he never once thought of himself. He didn't save enough money to send Harry to school, let alone me. But he did help a few people get out of your slums, Mr. Potter."

To keep the family business open, George assumed his father's position. It cost him his lifelong dream of hearing anchor chains, plane motors, and train whistles, and building airfields, skyscrapers, and bridges. He stayed home while Harry went to college.

In one scene the flirty Violet, a lifelong friend, needed a new start in life. George helped her with the means to go to New York. Her response? "I'm glad I know you, George Bailey."

Near the end of the movie, George found himself in a crisis not of his making. While contemplating a leap off the bridge, he realized how many lives he had touched in Bedford Falls. With renewed enthusiasm for life, he returned to his family. When news spread that George was in crisis, his friends rushed to help.

Jesus said, "Give that which is within as a charitable gift" (Luke 11:41). As portrayed by George Bailey, that means humil-

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. We are expecting some snow this year. Can you tell us how much it costs the county to keep the roads clear during a similar event?

A. The extra cost to the county, while still an impact, is within our budgeted amounts. When a snow/ice event lasts 3-5 days, costs can be upward of \$30,000. This includes salt, gravel and overtime costs. This does not include our normal labor costs, or equipment time and repair costs.

Q. How many miles of road does the Road Department typically scrape and apply salt and gravel to?

A. The Union County Road Department only treats county-maintained roads. The GDOT works the state roads. On average, the Union County Road Department addresses more than 500 miles of road when it comes to ice and snow. Furthermore, when these events last for multiple days, the Road Department often has to scrape and gravel some roads several times. The county and state crews do a heck of a job, and we appreciate that so many of our citizens have recognized this. The City of Blairsville also does a very good job on maintaining city streets.

Q. How many snowplows does the county utilize?

A. Soon after I took office in 2001, it was obvious that during a serious snow, we did not have adequate equipment to deal with the situation. Over the first two years, we began purchasing additional equipment so that not only could we maintain the main county roads, but could also scrape and salt many of the smaller county roads. Now, during a regular snow event, we have two large spreader trucks with plows, five smaller 1-ton trucks with salt spreader boxes and plows, and three F-250 trucks with blades and salt boxes. There are usually two Road Department employees per truck. The City of Blairsville has one truck with a snowplow and salt spreader box. GDOT usually has two trucks and sometimes three, so we have about 10 or 11 vehicles working in our county. There is no other rural county in Georgia that has this much equipment. In the event that we have a large snow over 4 inches, we also have several privately owned motor graders in the county that have agreed to help when we call.

Q. How do you decide what roads to treat during a snow?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

BPD Gives Thanks

Dear Residents, Businesses and Visitors of the Blairsville/Union County Community:

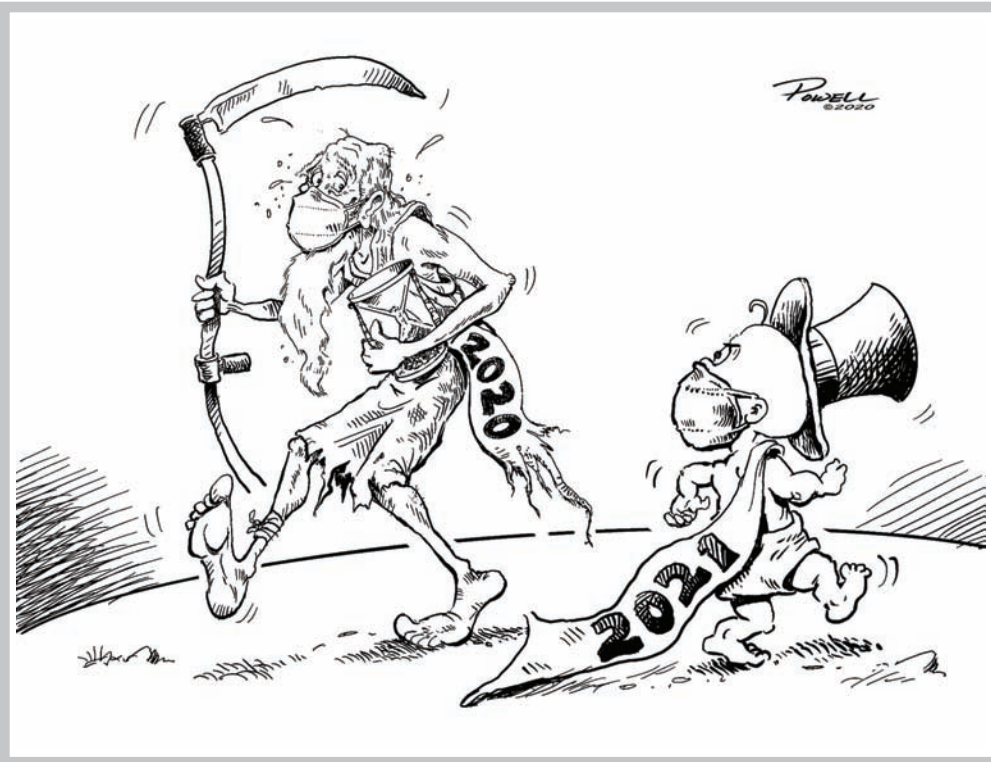
On behalf of the Employees of the Blairsville Police Department, I would like to say thank you for making the 20th Annual Blairsville "Shop with a Cop" program such a great and memorable event. This letter gives me great pride to express how grateful and appreciative we are to serve the supportive community we work and reside in.

The Shop with a Cop program celebrated its 20th anniversary this year; over 1,125 children have been able to have a Christmas thanks to supporters like you.

Without community support of our Duck Derby (ex: volunteers, prize donations, etc.) and donations to our program, the Shop with a Cop program wouldn't be possible. This year was our biggest event ever with numbers of children and volunteers who participated.

Again, Thank You, and I hope everyone has a healthy and Happy New Year.

Regards,
Michael J. Baxter,
Chief of Police
Blairsville Police Department



Injustice Has Been Served

Dear Editor,

Two articles in recent editions of our newspaper really drew my attention. I find it more than interesting that two individuals continue to try to jilt and tilt the judicial system. How long has it been since a local doctor, Dr. James Heaton, and the former CEO of Union General Hospital, Michael Gowder, were arrested and charged with a multitude of crimes involving dispensing and using narcotics? Eventually they were tried and in October 2019 found guilty on more than 100 counts involving perhaps as many as 15,000 illegal doses of Oxycodone and Hydrocodone. It took from October 2019 to June 2020 for them to be sentenced! Of course, I know the pandemic played a role in that lengthy decision. Dr. Heaton was sentenced to six years confinement and Michael Gowder received only a one-year sentence! Try to figure that one out.

Now we see the convicted felons attempting to swing the scales of justice to their side as both seek delay after delay to keep from beginning their sentence. To top off the absurdity of that, Michael Gowder has petitioned the court for home confinement, and Dr. Heaton has asked for a similar arrangement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Will these felons ever go to jail? How much more money will be wasted on them before

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Georgia Senate Elections

Dear Editor,

This letter is in response to the articles covering the Georgia Senate elections. I write because I have family living there and believe our voice must be heard.

The choice between Democrat and Republican is quite evident.

Democrats care about people and choose to help those who cannot help themselves. Republicans, on the other hand, believe that government is best that governs least; people should pull themselves up by their boot straps no matter how bad off they are. COVID-19 is a prime example.

Democrats believe in the fair distribution of wealth while the Republicans leverage it into the fewest hands.

Democrats advocate health care as a right guaranteed to all citizens while Republicans support enriching the insurance companies and drug manufacturers.

Democrats don't lead America into unnecessary and futile wars while Republicans consistently act to increase defense spending in order

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Letters to the Editor

It Will Be OK

Dear Editor,

Perhaps you have seen this post-election slogan on signs throughout the area. OK may be fine for a burger at a greasy diner or for two-day old bread at the discount bakery, but not as our identity for the next four years.

OK for the Harris/Biden is the gateway to our nation's downfall. As they open our borders, defund our police, take away our Second Amendment rights, give our hard-earned tax dollars to those who seek nothing but a free ride, and accept Chinese propaganda as truth, we will lose our identity as a great nation to become an OK nation.

While the Democrats will likely prevail in the White House, hopefully the citizens of Georgia will have the common sense to vote Republican to ensure the U.S. Senate does not become a rubber stamp for Harris/Biden.

OK is never good enough.
Paul Brownhill

Miracle Child

Dear Editor,

The wonder of it all that a miracle child came from heaven and dwelt among us and His Name would be called the Christ child, Jesus. Never before and after has anyone stepped into this sinful world proclaiming to be sinless and the Savior of the world. Scholars, priests, Sadducees, scribes of old and even today's wisest men and women of great knowledge still marvel and study God's word and wonder if it could really be true, that God, our Creator, sent this miracle child to earth to reconcile mankind back to Himself. Well, folks, as they say, the proof is in the pudding, and if one dares to stir the pot of curiosity and sit down for a while and get serious about God's word, you will find out that it is all true, every last drop of His precious word. And then one has to make the most important decision of their lives to believe in the virgin birth or not.

Could it be that this miracle child was born in a stable, instead of a king's castle? That there was a star that shone down upon the baby Jesus, and that shepherds came to see this wonderful sight on a cold winter's night, and that three wise men came bearing gifts afterwards to pay honor to a King who humbled Himself, so that He could be a servant to all that would seek His face and come to know Him as their personal Savior and friend? How much faith does it take to believe this incredible event that took place over 2,000 years or more ago? Down through all of the generations that have come and gone, people still seek after this miracle child born on Christmas day. What holds a person back from

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The Snowstorm

How many times have you heard about all the snows that our fathers and mothers lived through in their younger days? So many times I have heard about big storms my parents and grandparents experienced in their younger days. Once, my Great Grandfather, Lon Cummings, told us that it was cold enough in his young adult years to freeze the Tennessee River in Florence, Alabama. He even watched a truck drive across the river over the ice. My Grandfather, Coon Cummings, told me that he'd had wet clothes freeze on his person while wearing them during a sleet storm. The following story came from my Mother's childhood.

Early in her life, the Adams family lived on the farm of her grandfather, Charlie Baker. Jobs were difficult to come by in 1944, and her father Bill had recently landed a job with Franklin County Schools as a bus driver in their community. One day, school was called early due to a snowstorm sweeping across Northwestern Alabama. He was summoned to come early to get all the kids from Enterprise to take them home.

Meanwhile, Maw Maw Delph set about her evening chores, which were made more difficult due to the fact she was eight and a half months pregnant with her third child, Ralph. Delphia was waddling around cleaning house and beginning to get ready for supper. As she went about her chores, a nagging feeling began to eat at her insides. Normally, Bill's bus route could be completed in about 1 hour and 15 minutes. He should be home by now, and it was almost time for the evening milking of Bess the family milk cow. She had just enough time to milk the cow and get back to the house before dark. So, she bundled up in her wool coat and walked the 40 yards to the barn. This was quite a chore due to her pregnancy, and it was all she could do to walk that distance in the knee-deep snow.

The milking process was not difficult except for Bess' swishing tail which kept striking my grandmother's face. The snow had really piled up by the time she finished, and there was just enough light for her to find her way back to the house. She began the trip carrying the gallon and a half of milk trying not to spill it. Soon she came to a place where she knew a ditch was located. However, under the snow, everything looked level, and she could not find the foot log over the ditch. The cold made her cast aside her better judgement, and she decided to walk on regardless of the deep snow in the ditch. Her foot slipped, and Delph soon found herself falling into this ditch. As usual, she laughed at her pre-

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



Lake Drawdown

Today I'm going to talk about the lake drawdown. The drawdown happens annually on Lakes Nottely and Chatuge, as well as a bunch of other lakes that are run by Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). I'm going to go through a history of the TVA because, to understand what they do, I think you need to understand what lead to their creation. I'll talk about the lakes' drawdown and how that plays into what TVA does.

TVA was started back in 1933 as part of the "New Deal" from President FDR. TVA was founded with the mission of improving energy, environmental stewardship and economic development in the region. TVA covers parts of Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia. The Tennessee Valley lagged behind the rest of the US in development even before the Great Depression. The TVA was given authority to acquire land for dams, reservoirs, transmission lines, and power plants. The idea was that hydroelectric dams would bring affordable electricity and modernize the region. Lake Nottely and Lake Chatuge were constructed in 1942. The TVA also worked to improve flood control, malaria prevention, reforestation, and erosion control. TVA encouraged farmers to use improved management techniques, like crop rotation. They also produced fertilizers to boost farmers' yields and economic productivity.

One controversial point of the TVA is that creating the dams and reservoirs necessitated relocating around 15,000 families. This included a few towns and several cemeteries.

Today TVA is one of the largest producers of electricity in the US. TVA began to shift away from hydroelectricity towards cheaper coal energy in the 1950s. Now TVA operates 30 dams or hydroelectric facilities, eight coal plants, 16 natural gas plants, three nuclear plants, 14 solar energy sites, and one wind energy site. Even though the hydroelectric dams aren't relied upon as heavily for electric production, they are critical for flood regulation.

Prior to TVA, the Tennessee Valley was regularly devastated by flooding. The flooding would take lives and ruin land. The system of dams and reservoirs that TVA constructed are designed to keep floods under control. Wintertime carries the largest risk for flooding. To prepare for that TVA begins to lower the lakes at a faster rate after Labor Day. Then when a winter storm hits the reservoirs can hold the water back. Once the danger of flooding is subsided, the water is released gradually.

In the summer time, TVA lets the lakes

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber
President
Steve Rowe



What a YEAR! We have almost made it to 2021, and all I can say is we are truly blessed to live in Blairsville-Union County. It seems vital that I take time to thank those that have helped our community navigate a year of restriction and safety protocols. From our elected officials to our first responders, medical personnel, hospitals and educators, Blairsville-Union County proved one of the safest places on earth this year much in part to your efforts. We are in your debt. I also want to thank those individuals and business owners that sacrificed to keep us safe while keeping their doors open for us, especially those that stuck to protocols despite how it may have affected their bottom line. Your service was not in vain, we pray 2021 finds you richly rewarded.

At the Chamber, we were able to host a few virtual events during our quarantine, several outdoor events such as our Sporting Clays Tournament, Golf Tournament, and the July 4th fire-

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Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



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