

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Let's pull together

Do you remember Cody Morgan? He's the young man that was killed in a tragic crash on Skeenah Gap Road at the Fannin-Union county line. I mention Cody because I wanted to tell you folks what you did for Cody's family. You took every bit of worry off their shoulders.

You, the Union County community, paid every last cent of that young man's funeral expenses. Every last dime and more. His mother came to me a few weeks back with a note of appreciation to this community, and a hug for me for letting you know what we needed to do. It humbled me, and brought tears to my eyes, for just being a part of it all.

It's amazing what we can do when we pull together as a community in solidarity.

There's another mission for you and I as a community. The vote on the Educational Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax is upon us. Friday is the last day to vote early in this all important community referendum. March 19th is your last chance to let your voice be heard at the ballot box.

Naysayers beg you to vote it down. They tell us it's just another tax. Well, they are wrong.

It's an extension of the current sales tax. True, it keeps the sales tax rate at 7 cents on the dollar. But, what these naysayers don't tell you is, it keeps your children and your grandchildren viable. It gives them a chance to compete in this world.

It pays for technology, it pays for classroom expansion, it pays for books, buses and a place for our young people to express themselves through music and performance.

Most of all, it pays for the security measures that must be addressed at our schools. After all, keeping our kids safe is our greatest priority.

I didn't mean to bring Cody Morgan into this issue about keep a tax, slay a tax debate.

However, Cody Morgan was a viable member of this community. He was still in the formative years of his life. Cody was an Explorer Scout, he wanted to gravitate into law enforcement. He wanted to serve and protect his hometown community.

The naysayers urge us to vote this down.

Those folks believe that they don't have a dog in the hunt, by that, I mean that they don't have a child in school. Well, once again, they are wrong.

You see, it takes a village to raise a child, and if they don't want to pay for educating our children, then they're not part of our village.

Be a part of this community, vote yes.

Letters to the Editor ...

No such thing as 'just a goat'

Dear Editor,

We wish to thank those in the Union County Sheriff's Office, especially, the investigative and animal control units, who worked to diligently and professionally to apprehend those responsible for the theft, torture and murder of our pet goat Mercy. We are truly humbled at the outpouring of love, support and concern shown by this community and the entire Tri-State area.

Thank you.
Goats, just like dogs, cats, horses and all animals, are living, feeling, loving creatures and should be able to live their lives without being subjected to torture and cruelty. Mercy will always be remembered and loved, especially by those who knew her.
Jo Anne Allen, Tom Allen, Henry Coleman, Blairsville

Who turned off the phones

Dear Editor,

Monday, at approximately 6:30 p.m. our AT&T cell phone went out and our landline and the Internet, but not our satellite TV. Then neighbors stopped by and reported the same thing, except their cell phone service was Verizon and it was also out. But the electricity was okay. All service returned about an hour later.

This didn't make any sense to us. How could a landline be down at precisely the same time that the cell service went down? Didn't the cell service come from a cell tower and the landline and internet from a wire running to the house?

One person suggested the rapture and that we had been left out. Another thought the Chinese or Iranians had attacked. Since there was no report on our TV about this problem, we figured it must be local. One neighbor drove around and found service in Young Harris. Maybe the hackers, we speculated, just wanted to warn America without doing a lot of harm and so had selected our North Georgia community to demonstrate their prowess? One neighbor insisted it was a satellite and that the landline and the cell server operated through a satellite and not just lines and towers.

I hope the North Georgia News will investigate and report how this strange event could have happened where the landlines/Internet goes down at the same time as two large competing cell phone companies. Perhaps things are more interrelated than we realize.

Thank you for all the good work you do for the community.

**Philip McPherson Rudisill
Blairsville**

Just the facts

Dear Editor,

Reading in your recent column that some people in our community would rather not have negative news splashed on the front page was quite surprising.

My husband and I often joke about the fact that we must live in utopia, according to our local paper, as there is rarely "bad" news. We come from other areas of the country although we have lived in this general area for about 20 years.

Your soft newspaper was something we had not experienced and, if anything, we were

See MacCloud, page 5A

Baptists & Birds

I have been watching Baptists and birds most of my life. I love Baptists and I love birds. As I write this column the snow is falling and there seems to be as many birds around my feeders as there are snow flakes.

Baptists and birds have some common characteristics. For the past couple of weeks a beautiful pileated woodpecker has been feasting on suet right outside my den window. Woodpeckers have sharp bills to drill and chisel into the bark of trees to gorge themselves on bugs. They have long tongues - to probe for grubs in deep tunnels. Their heads absorb a lot of shock because they have spongy skulls to protect the brain. They are always using their heads as hammers.

The Robins and Brown Thrashers have been feasting on a new crop of worms. They are always busy digging up something. The Eastern Blue bird is one of my favorite birds. It seems to be humble, is beautiful in appearance and is continuously busy catching harmful insects. It is the farmer's friend. The appearance of the Blue Bird is a welcome sign of spring that better days are ahead.

The tiny House Wren is little but loud. They fly upon my deck early in the morning and with great gusto they bellow out a melody that makes you think they are 10 times larger than they are. They are also snoopy little birds. They will build nests in your flowerpots and quite often get into your out buildings to build nests.

They are rather messy builders. Several years ago we returned home from vacation to find that one of the little rascals had built a nest on the engine of my automobile. Once, our daughter had Wrens to build a nest in a wreath hanging on her front door.

The House Wren has another aggravating habit. It perches itself in one of my bird feeders and proceeds to sling perfectly good seed all over the ground until it finds whatever seed it is looking for. I believe it is looking for a piece of chaff among the good seed. But it irks me because it wastes a lot of

See Parris, page 5A

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Give something back

Dear Editor,

Since taking over state government, the GOP in Georgia has drastically cut public education and continues to do so while state revenues continue to climb.

Fiscal responsibility is being shifted toward local boards as the cuts continue to fall. Local school boards have to scramble to make up for the lack of funding in order to try to provide quality education for our children.

Locally, the Union County GOP has stated its opposition to the ESPLOST, conveniently referring to it as simply a SPLOST on its billboards around the county.

I suspect that since Commissioner Paris' name was dropped in the the local GOP's press release to the North Georgia News, it would seem that the GOP is trying to shift the focus toward the Commissioner's Office.

This would especially be significant, since the Union County School Board is dominated by Republicans.

At least the GOP school board members seem to understand the plight of Georgia's school systems, even if the local party doesn't.

I would like to know what alternatives the local GOP will advance in lieu of the ESPLOST. Perhaps it would like to contribute the thousands to the school system that it is spending on billboards and other advertising to defeat the ESPLOST.

See Reed, page 5A

Do the math

Dear Editor,

Sequestration Question: To hear President Obama's chicken little presentation about sequestrations 2 percent cut in growth, we are led to believe the sky is falling and it will be the end of the world as we know it.

Tens of thousands of job layoffs, loss of defense of our country, cuts in important government services etc.

If I was expecting a 2 percent increase in salary and did not receive it, I may be disappointed, but there would be no change in my income. Therefore, nothing would change in my household as I am already budgeted to live on my existing income.

See Adams III, page 5A

How did the GOP get beat?

Dear Editor,

The Republican National Committee has yet to report to us the number (even a ballpark figure) of those Republican voters who chose to stay at home on Election Day rather than vote for a Mormon, thus contributing to the Party's defeat.

There is, of course, no religious means

See Ramsey, page 5A

Recovering from Mother Nature

Q. We heard about the large culvert on Lowes Mill Rd. getting washed out during one of the recent floods, which by the way was between the snow storms and wind storms. When will it be replaced?

A. Back in 2004, the last time we had a large flooding event on Lowes Mill Rd. the 2 x 5' culverts were nearly washed away. The county asked for help from GDOT (Georgia Dept. of Transportation) back then and they agreed to help. The problem was that when our hydrologic studies were completed by an engineer, the new four barrel culvert would require additional right of way to install and after some time in attempting to obtain the right of way, we made the decision to just repair the road, and leave the culverts as they were.

Q. Why are you now replacing the culverts?

A. Over the past several years, the culverts have continued to rust and the upstream ends of each culvert was damaged so badly during the most recent flooding event, we have no choice but to replace them. The problem is that the road is utilized by the concrete company and several home owners. Luckily, there is an alternate route, but it is a very narrow road. As I am completing these questions on Thursday night, the Road Department is making an emergency repair with replacing the two 5' culverts with 2 x 8' culverts. This time a headwall will be installed along with several other additions. All the work can be completed within the current right of way.

Q. Have there been any problems with replacing the culverts today?

A. There are always problems when trying to make an emergency repair in less than a day in order to keep the road open for the public. However, in this case there were several other issues. There were two underground phone cables crossing the creek as well as a Coosa water line serving several homes. So in addition to replacing the culverts, the other utilities had to be moved and reinstalled. The water line was the final one and now at 9 p.m. they are still trying to complete the waterline as several people have been out of water for much of the day. One fire engine was on call to deliver water to the concrete plant if needed.

Q. What will be the cost of replacing the culverts on Lowes Mill Rd?

A. The estimate of replacing the culverts, pouring concrete head walls and installing a concrete section in the road to prevent future

See Paris, page 5A

Education Means Business

As Chamber President, I often find myself encouraging others to look at the big

picture, to realize that the journey of 1000 miles starts with a single step, and to consider the ripple effect that one action can create. These common theories apply not only to chamber membership and business development, but also to so many other aspects of personal and community development. This week I want to explore the impact of education on our business community and the community at large.

A quality education for our local youth might easily be overlooked by those who do not have children in the local school system or those who do not have children at all. The common adage, "What's in it for me?" applies here. The reality, however, is that we all live, work and play in a community that is in so many ways dependent on our future generations. After reviewing a RAND Corporation study from 2008 which looked at "The Impact of Educational Quality on the Community," I thought you might be interested to hear some of their findings.

According to the research, high quality education impacts three distinct areas: individuals, the local community, and the larger community. From an individual's standpoint, higher quality education usually means greater opportunity for employment and earnings as well as an increased quality of life in terms of physical and mental health. Fewer finan-

See Williams, page 5A

My Trash Is Someone's Treasure

I was in college in the early 70's. I just missed the height of the "hippie" movement. That era of "free love, let's all bed down in the same pad, all sharing our limited resources" had pretty much lost its luster by the time I got to that stage of life where you "experiment" with relationships of all kinds.

Now, at this interim of my life, I'm always preaching to my close circle of friends, "we should be living a communal lifestyle". There are eight of us that hang out together. Between us there are 8 vehicles, nearly a dozen toilets, four annual property tax bills, and probably enough pots and pans to cook a meal for the National Guard (for all the states).

Last week, we had dinner together twice and caught a movie and coffee together a third night. When we meet we discuss how we've been entertained while apart. It turns out that we watch about 75% of the same TV. Oh, did I mention that we have at least a dozen TV's between us? We help each other get to out of town appointments, ask each other what they need at Costco when one of us is heading that way. We all pitch in and bring a dish when we gather at one or another's house. We spend most holidays together, bringing our families, along. We always are asking each other for resources and referrals. We share our joys, our sorrows and all the best e-mails.

We should all live together. But we don't. And we won't. And therefore, we'll do what everyone does. We'll each scale down, if not to a smaller abode, at least to fewer possessions. Between us there are at least 4 (but at one time, there were at least 6) bread ma-

See Leone, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



The Scoundrel

When I was a boy there were very few turkeys in north Georgia. Then things changed for the better and turkeys became quite common. But, all of my friends wanted to be able to harvest a turkey. One particular friend wanted to take one so bad that he studied Turkey hunting. He studied it more than he studied math or any other subject.

My friend, Patrick, was reading a book written by a great Turkey hunter which said that using a gilly suit would help the hunter to conceal himself from the turkeys. So, Patrick went to the local Army Surplus store and purchased a gilly suit. Gilly suits are a camouflaged, netted, suit used by snipers in the military. So, Patrick began using the Gilly suit while he chased Gobblers all over the hills of north Georgia. But, he still had problems taking a turkey because he was young and inexperienced. So, he hit upon a plan.

One spring day Patrick took some corn from his Dad's corn crib and found a place where Turkeys had been roosting. He poured the corn on the ground under the trees. Then he seated himself against a tree with big log lying on the ground next to the tree. He would strike his slate Turkey Call every 15-20 minutes. After an hour or so he noticed the bushes moving and heard leaves crunching as if an animal were walking toward him. As he peered through the bushes he saw a man's head and then his whole body and then another man was with him. Patrick recognized the men as local Game Wardens. He and everyone else knew that this Game Warden was a fair, but, tough man. Patrick said, "I knew these two fellows meant trouble for me.

So, he lay down next to the log and covered himself with leaves. He listened as the Game Wardens came closer and closer. Soon he could hear each and every word the men spoke. Patrick said, "Mr. Burnette, walked so close I could have reached out and grabbed his foot". Despite looking for 20 minutes the wardens never saw Patrick. Finally, the men sat down on the log and rested. The younger warden spoke first and said, "Looks like he just baited the area and I think we must have scared him off". Mr. Burnette said, "Nope, the little scoundrel is close by because, I can feel it in my bones". Eventually, the wardens left and so did Patrick. Later, Patrick told me, "This incident scared me straight and I have never baited turkeys or any other game since that spring day in the late 1970's.

The next September a bunch of local boys were helping Eugene Burnette haul hay. Eugene knew Patrick loved to deer hunt and while everyone was taking a break to get a cool

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