

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Community happenings

I have some great things to talk about this week. Our fifth grade CHAMPS class graduated 213 students on Friday. It's a great program and it's a Georgia original. It was born right here in Georgia, actually, just up the road in Dawson County. It helps fifth graders deal with peer pressure, bullying issues and provides awareness for drug and alcohol issues.

Union County Sheriff's Deputy Sally Tanner said the program allows School Resource Officers to adapt the program to fit the regional environmental issues of each school.

Speaking of schools, we must congratulate the students at Woody Gap School for their accomplishments. The high school and elementary school have been named Title I Rewards schools. Also, Union County Elementary School, and Union County Middle School have been named Title I Reward schools. Congratulations to the students, educators and administrators for such a high level of achievement.

Speaking of children, Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll and the Police Department's Shop With A Cop program need the community's help. While the program has picked up some new contributors this year, the program has lost a corporate sponsor. That leaves a \$5,000 doughnut hole in the department's annual shopping spree for our underprivileged youth.

The program fills a void that Santa can't, and has grown enough to help 80-plus children in recent years. The Blairsville Cruisers play a large role in that and will continue to be there for the children in 2014.

Combined with the Sheriff's Give A Gift Christmas, local law enforcement and their sponsors help more than 200 children at Christmas.

If we don't fill the \$5,000 void, a lot of children will do without this Christmas. Chief Carroll had a long face last week as he discussed the possibility that some children will do without this holiday season.

It was the Department's goal to brighten the faces of at least 100 children this holiday season. That goal still is within reach, but, the days are numbered to make up for the loss of \$5,000. The Shop With A Cop trip is scheduled for Dec. 13.

Shop With A Cop and Give A Gift Christmas don't just help out one time a year. They keep an eye out for needy children who need winter coats and new shoes.

They also handle Christmas emergencies and usually fill a void just in time for Christmas Day. Let's help all we can this holiday season.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



God or the Gobbler

Our modern Thanksgiving Day is sandwiched between Halloween and Christmas and is so compressed that very little gratitude (if any) is expressed to the giver of all blessings. The centerpiece for most of our Thanksgivings is a big ugly bird that has only one word in its vocabulary that it just keeps on repeating; gobble, gobble, gobble. This bird is killed, stuffed, cooked and placed in the center of the table, surrounded by numerous bowls and platters of vegetables and desserts. We humans gather around the table overflowing with all of this food with the gobbler in the center and engage in the ritual of gobbling up the gobbler. Sometimes individuals gobble up so much of the gobbler that they are gorged to the point of gagging. Over-indulgence of the gobbler and the giblet gravy has been known to cause severe reactions in some individuals with their speech becoming a lot of gobble-dy-gook.

If I understand the tradition of Thanksgiving, I believe God is to be the center of attraction and not the gobbler. When we gobble up the gobbler without giving thanks to God we become like an animal that does not recognize his maker. I heard about a farmer who made a trip to the city. At lunch time he went into a café and ordered his meal. When it arrived at his table he bowed his head and gave thanks. Seated at a table next to him were some young men who snickered and laughed at him as he prayed. When he finished his prayer one of the young men, in a loud voice for everyone to hear, said, "Hey, Rube, where you come from does everyone pray before they eat?" Very calmly and collectively, he replied "Everyone except the hogs."

John Milton describes those who live like hogs as "Swinish gluttony (which) Ne'er looks to heav'n amidst his gorgeous feast. But with besotted base ingratitude, Crams and blasphemes his feeder." Samuel Johnson defined such people when he wrote, "Gratitude is the fruit of great cultivation; you do not find it among gross people." James says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). Paul says that Christian people should always have the attitude of gratitude, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God

See Parris, page 5A

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Questions and Answers

Q. What preparations has the county made for winter weather?

A. The Road Department has every storage bin full and about 250 tons of salt on hand right now. We will have two additional 3/4 ton trucks for use this winter on the narrower roads, for a total of nine spreader trucks, two are the large trucks, five one ton trucks and two - three-quarter ton trucks. All nine are ready to go. In case of emergency and the "big one" we also are set up with several local private contractors with motor graders to assist us.

Q. Have you run into any problems getting salt since so much of the country is already having bad weather?

A. Our main problem is restocking salt. Because of the harsh winter last year and the start of a difficult winter this year we cannot get a commitment for additional salt until after December. Typically, we have enough salt on hand to cover about three average snow events. The cost has already gone up from last year of \$66 per ton to \$104 a ton this year and if the demand stays high, the prices could continue up. Based on current prices we have about \$26,000 in inventory.

Q. What options does the county have if no salt is available?

A. We will really not let that be an option for us. We CAN NOT run out of salt, and whatever is necessary to maintain a safe supply will be done. We may have to send trucks to South Florida or to the Midwest, or who knows where else, but we will not run out of salt because we can't.

Q. Is there a difference in the types of salt available?

A. We have found that Florida salt is usually more available as a last resort. However, it does not melt ice quite as well as the Midwest salt. When going out on the road, our trucks are usually loaded with 2/3 gravel and 1/3 salt. Without sunlight and a minimum temperature in the high 20s salt will not work and the gravel is added to help with traction. As usual, the best remedy during a snow storm is to stay home and off the roads as much as possible.

Q. Do you know how well you did with the Electronics Recycling?

See Paris, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor ...

A message from

Union/Towns County Tea Party

Editor: The following letter has been sent to Gov. Deal, with copies to our State Senator, Representative, Senators, Senator-elect and Congressman

November 18, 2014

The Honorable Nathan Deal
Office of the Governor
State of Georgia
203 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Gov. Deal,

Georgia citizens are living under a growing and justifiable fear as the President of the United States continues to use powers not granted him under the Constitution. Many fear that action on the part of the federal executive will soon sweep aside the legal citizenship process and he will declare amnesty for millions of illegal alien immigrants.

Reliable news reports indicate the many of these persons may have multiple criminal convictions, membership in organized drug cartels and a prevalent use of fraudulent identification and citizenship documentation. Also, recent events require us to consider that some of these people are carrying contagious infectious communicable diseases which constitutes clear and present dangers to citizens of Georgia and the nation.

See Thibodeaux, page 5A

Heroic

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my objection to sports broadcasters and writers using the word "Heroic" to describe the actions of athletes.

"Heroic" should be saved for people like doctors and nurses treating Ebola and other deadly diseases, soldiers risking their lives for freedom, and fellow soldiers, firemen jumping into fires to save people and property, policemen who every day under heavy criticism protect us from the criminal element, schoolteachers teaching children not always wanting to learn. These people many times do these things for very little pay and not much gratitude.

"Heroic" should not be used for a golfer hitting a little ball into a hole, racecar drivers using precious fuel racing around a track, basketball players shooting a ball into a hoop, football players scoring a touchdown, baseball players hitting a ball a long way. It is not heroic to play a GAME for big pay.

Save this word "hero" for people who deserve it.

Al Wiedrich

Like it like it used to be

Dear Editor,

I have enjoyed the holiday decorations each and every year through out Blairsville, but, the ones they have put up year after year for the past few years have worn out their welcome I think. Although very beautiful indeed, still, I miss the days when those big giant round strings of lights were hung across the highway from pole to pole and the old courthouse lawn had a manger scene along with snow men, Rudolph and Santa and his sleigh.

I know and understand Christmas has gone almost commercial these days, but still a little bit of holiday decorations never hurt any one or any thing.

Seems that all have tried to not only take Christ out of Christmas, but the JOY along with it as well.

Thank you very much,

Mrs. D. Barnes

"There! Now that makes Christmas just right!"



It's time to get the incentives right on wildfires

Every year we hear about the devastating effects of wildfires, with lives risked and millions of dollars spent defending homes. But something is different this time. People are now asking: Why do we keep building houses in fire-prone areas? A fire marshal in a Wyoming resort community, thinking about the safety of her firefighters, refers to these places as "suicide subdivisions."

Defending homes can lead to tragedy. Firefighter fatalities have doubled in the last 30 years, and last year 19 hotshots died defending an Arizona town that had done little to prepare for the inevitability of wildfires. The town had been evacuated, yet the crew was sent in anyway. As a parent of one of the firefighters said, "Brave men died defending empty structures."

The cost trends around wildfire also are troublesome. Since 1990, the number of homes destroyed has tripled. Yet in the last 30 years, 60 percent of new homes in the U.S. were built in the Wildland-urban interface (WUI), the private land next to public forests. Federal firefighting costs average \$3 billion annually; also triple the amount from a decade ago. Research indicates that at least one-third and up to 95 percent of the firefighting bill goes to defend private homes.

In some fires in the Sierra NV, agencies can spend \$200,000 to \$400,000 per home. An example of the high costs is the recent King fire, which destroyed 12 homes and burned almost 98,000 acres, and cost more than \$53 million to fight. Half of the Forest Service's budget today is taken over by fire suppression, so fewer dollars are available for things the public enjoys, like campgrounds and hiking trails. Perversely, the agency also "borrows" money internally from funds designated to reduce future fire risks such as fuel reduction.

One logical step is to treat wildfires like other natural disasters and fund them through FEMA. This will eliminate "fire borrowing," but we are waiting for Congress to act. Other efforts like voluntary programs to increase the survivability of homes and selective clearing of fuels through prescribed burning or logging, are important, yet not enough, as the trends keep worsening. What has not yet been tried is altering the pattern of future home development on fire-prone lands. The key is to get the incentives right.

Currently, local governments benefit from a federal government subsidy that pays the bulk of firefighting costs and underwrites risky and expensive developments. Passing on more costs to local governments - where home

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Executive Director of RC&D

Frank Riley



Junior and Price

During his senior year of high school in 1956, my dad, Paul, took part in the only protest Phil Campbell, AL ever witnessed. You have already met Paul's second cousin, Junior Cummings. He was the biggest and strongest boy in Phil Campbell High School. Junior could hold a 75-pound bale of hay in each hand and throw them 2 at a time on to the top layer of hay on a flat-bed truck. Junior was the sort of person everybody liked and because of his size and strength Junior commanded much respect. But, he also had a big heart. He just didn't want anybody to know it. Junior's best friend of equal size and strength was Price McMicken. Both of these young men ruled the roost as seniors at Phil Campbell high School.

A young man, Clayton Dix, moved to the community. He was very poor and didn't have much of a home life. Also, his daddy had a drinking problem which caused a lot of family problems. Many times Clayton came to school with a black eye and bruises on his face and arms. He was thought of as being puny and unable to defend himself.

Clayton was the smallest and youngest boy in his sophomore class in 1956. As a result of his small size he was at the lowest rung of the ladder in regards of pecking order. Slowly he became the object of ridicule for his class. Everyone looked down upon him. That is until Junior and Price McMicken decided he shouldn't be picked on anymore. Junior told the football team not to pick on Clayton; slowly, but surely word got out to the rest of the students and they began to treat the young man with a little more respect.

But, the damage had been done. Clayton was on edge and it wouldn't take much to set him off. There were two bus routes for Phil Campbell High School. One route ran from Phil Campbell down toward Trapptown and Union. The other route ran toward Spruce Pine and Enterprise. Clayton rode on the Spruce Pine route.

One morning Clayton got on the bus while chewing some tobacco. The bus driver noticed and told him to come to the front door and get rid of the tobacco. He did so and was about to return to his seat when the bus driver slapped Clayton's face. Something inside of him snapped and before anyone noticed the driver was down and being pounded by Clayton. Three young men were needed to pull the young man from the fight with the old driver.

After hearing the driver's version of the story Mr. Weeks called Clayton to the office and expelled him from school. This action didn't sit too well with Junior and the rest of the Senior Class. So, a meeting was held with some of the senior athletes. Everybody listened to what Ju-

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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Jingle Bell Buys

Need a reason to shop local this Christmas? How about 30 of them! The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce invites you to take part in our Jingle Bell Buys weekend event. Thirty local merchants are offering discounts on hot Christmas gift items during normal business hours on Thursday, Dec. 4 through Saturday, Dec. 6. For three days only, savvy shoppers can take advantage of a variety of "buy one get one free" deals and featured 50 percent off items. Whether you are a newcomer to the area ready to discover all that Union County has to offer, or a long time resident who believes in supporting the businesses who make our local economy strong, this event is for you.

The Chamber would like to say a special thanks to Busy Bee Printing & Signs and Huddle House for sponsoring our Jingle Bell Buys event. Just to give you a taste of the great deals, Busy Bee Printing will be offering 50 percent any size satin or canvas photo print and Huddle House will be offering buy one get one free Smokehouse Breakfast Platters! To receive a full list of this year's coupons, simply go to www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com or call the Chamber of Commerce at (706) 745-5789. If you would like to subscribe to future e-mail coupon promotions, and never miss another great sale, go to www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com, click Newsletter Signup and subscribe to Buy Local Coupons &

See Williams, page 5A

Giving Thanks for the Cocktail Napkin

Humming. I'm leaving on a jet plane. Anyone who chooses to fly anywhere Thanksgiving week is crazy. I know. Unless they fly on Thanksgiving Day.

The airport should be virtually empty. I leave Atlanta around 9 a.m. EST and arrive at Dallas Love Airport, just six miles from family, at about 11 a.m. CST. Plenty of time for Turkey, pretending like I'm rooting for the Cowboys (Tony Romo, is not Italian, but of Mexican, German and Polish descent, so I don't have an allegiance to root for him, either) and taking a nice long nap on the wrap around sofa with 13 other relatives draped over one another in a sort of holiday incest lovefest.

My direct flight is with Southwest Airlines. I love Southwest Airlines. They have a sense of humor. Everyone that works for them is smiling and cracking jokes. If I'm going down in a blaze of glory, crashing into a gambling casino in Shreveport, LA, I'm going to be laughing on impact. When my homemade jam (early Christmas gifts for the family) splatters across the Harrah's marquee, I won't have wasted five mins on hauling my suitcases across the South. On Southwest, your suitcases (yes, two of them) fly free.

I was booked on a flight to Dallas in September. Five days before the flight, I had to cancel my plans. I called Southwest customer service, ready to beg their indulgence, asking them to somehow understand my circumstances and give me at least a little cash credit towards my next flight I was booking on Thanksgiving Day. Before I began my well rehearsed lament, I wanted to be sure I had the correct department. I wasn't up to performing this drama more than once. When I simply asked who shall I speak to regarding canceling a flight, the pleasant sounding representative, who was not located in a third world country, suggested I could do it easily enough online.

I chuckled at the misunderstanding and proceeded to tell her, in detail, what I had in mind. She repeated my soliloquy to assure me

See Leone, page 5A

Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone

