

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Thankful for home, sweet, home

The clock is ticking on 2013. Here it is already Thanksgiving, Black Friday is, well, on Friday, and Christmas is just around the corner. How blessed can one community be.

I'm just happy to be here. I hope that our community will come together and make Christmas a very bright holiday for the many children of Blairsville-Union County.

Shop With A Cop and Give-A-Gift Christmas are in full swing. Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll reports that donations are coming in, if they continue, Blairsville Police Department will set a record for the number of children served in a single year.

The Union County Sheriff's Office's Give-A-Gift Christmas also is in full swing. Sheriff Mason, Chief Deputy George and Ginger Carey ask that you bring an unwrapped gift by the Sheriff's office or one of the dropoff points within the county.

Speaking of children, if you peruse one page inside this edition, you will find birth announcements for 20 new additions to our world - and especially Blairsville-Union County.

How proud we all must be to have nearly a whole page of babies. I look at the page, and I think how happy their folks must be to see them and have them in this world.

It's just another reason to be excited about living in God's Country. Our community is growing, and, we should be proud to be here in our smalltown hub.

Our community is a giving one, and folks here know that it is better to give than receive. The bright, smiling faces on Christmas morning are a joyful inspiration.

However, as Pam Jakab so eloquently spoke in her Letter to the Editor this week, the Christmas Season is about more than gifts under the tree.

Truly, Jesus is the Reason For The Season. Now, in this politically correct world of ours, I'm sorry if I offended anyone by mentioning that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

Likewise, I'm sorry if you don't realize that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. I'll pray for you. Just like the hundreds that prayed for me when I was on the operating table undergoing open heart surgery a few years ago.

Jesus is real. We shouldn't be ashamed to let people know that we do believe in Him, and his healing powers, both spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

So, to each and every one of our readers, I wish you the best Thanksgiving anyone could wish for.

Happy Thanksgiving, Blairsville-Union County, I wish you all the best.

Letters to the Editor ...

Doesn't believe in the Tooth Fairy

Dear Mr. Duncan, I do not agree with your opinion that the JFK assassination was a conspiracy.

Oswald was a troubled and confused young man and like so many today, chose to settle accounts with an easy to get firearm.

He was trained by the U.S. Marines to fire a rifle accurately. However, he did take more than a single shot.

After weighting the facts of the matter, one would have to believe that he acted alone.

If one chose to believe otherwise one would probably believe in the tooth fairy and that the recent SPLOST vote was not really a tax.

Harry E. Smith, Blairsville

Editor's Note: The SPLOST IV referendum and this newspaper repeatedly call SPLOST a 1-cent sales tax. Actually, the words sales tax are in the name, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax. I hope no one believes that SPLOST isn't a tax.

Reason for The Season

Dear Editor, Greetings fellow soldiers of the Lord,

In my search for a representation of my Lord's Holy place of birth, "The Manger," I went to all our stores in Blairsville, to seek out a Manger or Nativity set. I found one store had four 6" x 6" Nativity sets on the floor out of sight. Two other stores said they do not order them any more! And another large store had some figures of the Blessed Family and three small sets on the bottom shelves. They said they do not order many.

I ask, WHAT HAS HAPPENED? Why is our society just brushing aside the TRUE meaning of Christmas?

Grandmas, Grandpas, Moms and Dads, I ask you to pull out your Nativity sets and teach your children about the birth of our Savior Jesus. We are on assignment. Fellow servants, it is time! Do not let the darkness overshadow the light. Stand your ground! If we can't buy Nativities in the stores, we can and will build them. Teach our children the real reason for the season. Give the true gift of love - the "Manger" is the definition of true love.

Your fellow servant in Christ, Pam Jakab

Giving Thanks

Dear Editor, I want to give a BIG Thanks to Union County Primary School for allowing parents to have a Thanksgiving lunch with their child.

The lunchroom staff did a fantastic job with the preparation of the Thanksgiving meal. They prepared delicious turkey and dressing, green beans, yams, a roll, and an apricot fruit cup desert. This was my first time experiencing the annual Thanksgiving meal and I was very impressed with the way the event was thoughtfully organized. The staff worked hard to serve not only their usual students, but the families of those students as well. That was a big task to take on and it was highly appreciated by my family. It was a great success that definitely deserves recognition. Well Done Union County Primary School! Happy Thanksgiving!

Sonja Krout

Give thanks to The Lord

Each year Thanksgiving seems to be more difficult to observe. In fact, it is almost crowded out of our holidays. Secular society puts the squeeze on Thanksgiving.

Halloween gets more popular each passing year and commercial Christmas promotions are in place before Halloween is celebrated, leaving almost no official time to give thanks.

Because there exists such a tremendous anti-Christian resentment in our nation, some people are intimidated about giving thanks. They are confused. Who do I give thanks to? The great pumpkin! The pilgrims!

They are like the little fourth grader who stood before the class to give a report concerning the origins of the Thanksgiving Holiday.

He said, "The pilgrims came here seeking freedom of you know what, when they landed, they gave thanks to you know who. Because of them, we can worship each Sunday, you know where."

Charles Colson told about a Thanksgiving a few years ago, when he asked his 8-year-old grandson why the pilgrims celebrated Thanksgiving.

His reply, "Because they were thankful." Colson went on to ask his grandson "to who were the pilgrims thankful?" He said, "I suppose they were thanking the Indians, that's what we learned at school."

I hope you know to whom we ought to give thanks and that you aren't afraid to call His name. His name is JESUS.

It is absolutely disgraceful that a lot of our young people don't know the true story of Thanksgiving. The pressure is being applied for our nation to forget and remove God from receiving any thanks from anyone.

I am reminded that on April 30, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation for a national day of fasting, humiliation and prayer. The proclamation read thus:

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties

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Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Questions and Answers

I am going to do something a little different this week. I am going to answer this recent question with a repeat of some past questions that were printed in the North Georgia News with the dates of printing shown above each section.

Q. I understood that the Union County Community Center was going to be paid off with the current SPLOST III funds, not the new SPLOST IV. Did I remember this correctly?

A. No. That is not accurate. I have always indicated that the new Community Center was being funded with the future SPLOST IV funds and I previously had questions in the North Georgia News to that effect.

Q. I do not remember seeing those questions in the newspaper on repayment of the Community Center with future SPLOST IV funds. Are you sure you mentioned that previously in your column?

A. Yes. To answer these questions, I am reprinting parts of the past Q & A questions.

From Aug. 31, 2011 North Georgia News Q & A
Q. Will the county still have any debt after the current SPLOST ends in 2014?

A. Yes, but it will only be around \$5.5 million on the new community center. Every other SPLOST project will be paid in full unless something terrible happens with the economy such as a huge double dip recession or depression.

Q. How will the county pay off the community center debt if not with the current SPLOST dollars?

A. The interest on the money will be paid by the current SPLOST, but the principal will be carried over until the next SPLOST in 2014.*

*** I actually did inadvertently use the wrong date of the future SPLOST as it actually begins April, 2015 instead of 2014.**

From Sept. 14, 2011, North Georgia News Q & A
Q. Are you still going to pay for the Community Center with SPLOST funds?

A. Yes. However, in order to arrange financing to accommodate our SPLOST cash flows, we had to make some tough decisions. First, we had a tremen-

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Happy Thanksgiving!

I firmly believe that one of the secrets of true happiness is to be thankful. Frequent reminders of the many blessings we are granted makes it hard to be anything but happy. From everyday necessities to our individual luxuries, we all have things for which to be grateful.

For the past seven years, the Chamber has been such a huge part of my life, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to work with and for this great community.

No success or happiness happens without the intervention of others, so this week I would like to publicly express my gratitude to some of the individuals who give unselfishly to the Chamber.

First, I must thank our amazing staff. Tobie Chandler and Debra Edwards are two of the most enjoyable and passionate people with whom I could ever imagine working. Their dedication to the Chamber and this community is an inspiration to me.

I am also very grateful for our Chamber Board of Directors. These individuals deserve many accolades for their volunteerism. They are the first to step up and assist when needed and dedicate a tremendous amount of time, energy, and resources for the good of our community.

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Gratitude

A few weeks ago, a dear friend posed a question to me. "What are three things you most love about life?" She said we didn't need to discuss it then; we'd discuss it when we got together next. I spent time pondering that question,

at least number two and three on the list. My number one answer came to me swiftly. When I would continue to evaluate my notes, before we met again to share, I never swayed from my affirmation that "gratitude" was number one of the things I loved most about life.

Life is the feeling within us, not the circumstances that surround us. We can say we love to see two people joined together in matrimony or the birth of a child into the world. Actually what we love about those circumstances is the feelings that they invoke in us, that of hope, love, joy and promise.

I love being engulfed in gratitude. It's appreciating the smallest acts of kindness. I can remember as a kid playing curb ball, dreading when the ball would take an unplanned trajectory on over to another yard. If the neighbor raking leaves would stop to grab it and pitch it back so I didn't have to go chase it, I would just feel so grateful for his actions. If he smiled and waved back, I was even more satiated with appreciation for his kind ways.

As an adult, I spend an abnormal amount of time in the grocery store. Each time I amwhelmed by simple kindnesses; watching someone retrieve a can off the top shelf for a stranger that is vertically challenged, listening to two shoppers share a stew recipe at the meat counter when one laments that they don't know how to make the meat tender, observing someone handing back to the clerk the excess change they were given incorrectly, or the young bag boy that runs through the parking lot, dodging oncoming cars, just to return to the gentleman the sunglasses that he left at the register. I see the look of gratitude in the recipient's eyes in these circumstances and I know the rush that feeling brings them, even for only a moment.

I have spent many a day as a caregiver in

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"Lord, help us remember that Thanksgiving is not about how much we have, but rather, how grateful we are."



Muscle Cars & the FFA preparing future generations

The Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D mission is to support local people to improve their lives and economic status and there is no better way to do that than to help young people grow up to be responsible adults. I tell kids that they need to become responsible because I want a replacement when I become un-

responsible. In spite of what we thought when our kids were growing up and doing things that we didn't understand (or pretended not to), most of them actually grew up and made us proud, as we did for our parents in spite of our misdoings along the way.

When I think back about things I did growing up it makes me cringe and to think of what my two boys probably did makes me not want to think about it. When they got older they would tell me things that I suspected, but didn't want to know. When my two sons were in high school in the 90s, we restored muscle cars from the 1960s and we had some of the fastest and most powerful classics such as: 1969 Chevelle SS396, 1968 HO350 Firebird, 1966 Chevy II SS, 1967 Chevy II SS, 1967 GTO, 1969 GTO Judge, and an original 1967 Camaro that was bought new by a little lady from South Georgia. My boys also had my grandfather's 1958 Jeep pickup that I drove in high school so they never lacked for something cool to drive. They were supposed to drive the Jeep to school since my insurance agent would pass out if he knew that my 16 year olds were driving to school in a big block, 4 speed muscle car, but the Jeep never seemed to have gas so they just had to drive the Chevelle to get to school (the bus was never an option). I heard in later years about drag races they had with my friend's son in his 1965 Oldsmobile 442.

These car projects bonded us while they were growing up, but there is an organization that really influenced them more than anything and gave them the kick start that they needed to go from foolish kids to responsible young adults, although my youngest made me wonder if the kick was hard enough to get him started, but he finally got cranked up and now does very well.

Many groups pull at young minds to try to turn them down a new road to try radical ideas or go off on some wild tangent, but the organization that is the best out there to influence kids is one that has been guiding young people into adulthood since 1928, the FFA. "Future Farmers of America" was founded by a group of young farmers back in 1928. Their mission was to prepare future generations for the challenges of feeding a growing population. They taught us that agriculture is more than planting

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Executive Director of RC&D

Frank Riley



A Chivalry

A "chivalry" was a big part of most marriage celebrations during my parents and grandparents younger years. I think today we are all too busy for this type of activity. Don't get me wrong I enjoy participating in the social media we find on the Internet. However, the social media we use via our computers cannot really forge long lasting friendships like we develop when we rub elbows with one another. To me the social networks are tools I can use to keep up with friends.

A chivalry was a custom during my grandfather's time. The event was held after a marriage ceremony. Remember, there was no such thing as a trip to the beach or mountains for one's honeymoon. After my grandparents married they were allowed to live in "the weaning off house" until they could afford to get a place of their own. After their marriage ceremony Papa and Granny knew that the "chivalry" was coming to their place.

After dark, Papa heard the "chivalry" coming. About 15-20 of their friends and relatives walked down the lane to their house. The group of people was all singing a song. These friends of Papa and Granny built up a large fire in the front yard of the "weaning off house." Some of the group kept up the singing while the rest of the group roasted some chickens and made coffee. Then about every 15-20 minutes the group would parade around the house beating on the walls with pots and pans. Every now and then someone from the group would knock on the door to ask about borrowing some sugar or salt. Papa said, "And you had better answer if they knock or things might get rowdy." The "chivalry" would last the entire evening and the group would not go home until dawn the next morning. Papa said his friends were up all night in his front yard and no amount of pleading could convince them to leave.

Papa also participated in some of these chivalries. He remembered one where the group of boys took things a little too far. He said, "We walked around the house beating on the sides with frying pans and singing. We even knocked on the door to ask for some salt. But, we heard nary a peep from inside. So, one of the boys decided we should go in and steal the groom." The group of boys walked into the house and down the hall to the bedroom. They flung open the bedroom door and grabbed up the protesting groom and carried him outside. The group of boys walked around the house carrying the groom above their heads while they all sang "Oh Susanna." When the group reached the west corner of the house the leader kept walking all the way to Little Bear Creek.

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings

