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ous amount already invested in plans and infrastructure based on the USDA requirements, so we chose to run the new financing through an Urban Redevelopment Agency. This required appointment of an Urban Redevelopment Board and of selling bonds to pay for the project. The financing is set up for interest only for the remainder of this SPLOST program and then the bond will be repaid with revenue from our next SPLOST. With the USDA loan, it would have required payments over 30 years at a higher interest rate, so in the end, we came out much better.

From May 9, 2012, North Georgia News Q & A

Q. Are there any other debts associated with SPLOST?

A. There is only one and that is the Union County Community Center. (\$5.5 million). This facility was originally scheduled to be paid for with a USDA 20-year low interest loan from stimulus funds. However, once the County began the design process, we saw that the red tape and additional cost that would be involved with using a USDA loan and building a project with federal stimulus guidelines, would be cost prohibitive.

Q. Did you change the financing method in order to complete the Community Center?

A. Yes. We made the decision to stop the USDA financing process dead in its tracks because of its complexity and tremendous extra cost. Knowing the value of this project to our economic development future, we chose to fund the cost for the project with future SPLOST IV proceeds. This will save us a tremendous amount in interest payments since we will be able to pay this debt off in

only 10 years instead of 20 years. In addition to saving us money on interest costs, getting away from the federal guidelines probably saved us several hundreds of thousands of dollars while speeding the project up by at least a year and maybe two.

From May 17, 2012, North Georgia News Q & A
Q. In last week's Q & A you mentioned that the new Union County Community Center would be paid for with funds from our next SPLOST.

Should that SPLOST IV be unsuccessful how will the Center be paid for?

A. Any bond indebtedness is always backed up by property taxes. Should a future SPLOST fail, the general county budget would be utilized to pay the debt. In fact, should the current economic conditions continue to improve at their current rate, we should be able to make a significant payment on the bond with the current SPLOST.

It is very rare that a SPLOST ever fails especially when the government has a good reputation of providing the projects that were sold to the public. With even very moderate growth over the next few years, paying the debt will not be a problem with or without SPLOST.

All past Commissioner's Q & A have been available on the Union County web site, www.unioncountyga.gov.

This is the best way that I have to keep the public educated on how our local government is operated. Please submit any questions that you would like answered to: Union County Commissioner, 65 Courthouse St., Blairsville, GA 30512, or unioncounty@uniongov.com, or by calling (706) 439-6000.

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Upon reaching the creek bank they heaved their load of groom into the cold waters of the creek. All of this happened after midnight in the winter. What a group of friends. Do you think you could ever experience anything like this as a result of social media?

I know of no wedding plans for anyone on the weekend of Dec. 6th and 7th. However, I do know the Farmers Market will be open for the Kris Kringle Market.

Santa Claus will make some appearances. Rumor has it that Santa will be played by some local dignitaries. I know one of these fellows is a really good looking and highly intelligent individual. We will have a bon-fire on Friday evening and kids will be able to roast some marshmallows.

We will also have a Christmas Train which will provide rides around the Farmers Market for young children.

A dessert contest will be held on Saturday. You can enter by going to UCFarmersmarket.com and completing an application. Then bring the application with your dessert on Saturday morning.

Although I don't expect people to walk around beating the building with pots and pans, I know the High School Chorus will be at the market singing Christmas Carols.

Also, we will have the Market decorated for Christmas and a Christmas tree will be up somewhere around the office. So, I hope you'll show up and make some friends at the 2013 Kris Kringle Market.

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munity.

Our current Chamber Board includes: Rita Gunter, Chair - United Community Bank; Joe Garner, Immediate Past Chair - Southeastern Farmers Co-Op; Joey Swanson, Chair Elect - Woodmen of the World, Janet Hartman, Secretary - Blairsville Downtown Development Authority; Steve Rowe, Treasurer - W. Steven Rowe, CPA; Luke Colwell - Colwell Construction; Amy Harper - Tugaloo Home Health; Robert Henderson - State Farm insurance; Patrick Malone - The PAR Group; Kristen Stroud - Community & Southern Bank; Chris Wadle - Lamin-x Protective Films; Mayor Jim Conley; Commissioner Lamar Paris; and Mitch Griggs, Union County Development Authority.

Another group of shining stars in the Chamber are the 2013 Chamber Ambassadors. Dedicating many hours to Chamber and community projects, these individuals are an extension of our membership services and are the Chamber's support network in so many ways.

This year's Ambassador

team includes: Ginny Gurley - United Community Bank; Alan Lee - Pro Therapy; TJ Parr - Esquire Insurance; Paula Pendleton - Curves; Joe Scerbo - The Hair People; Joan Shaw - Coldwell Banker High Country Realty; Rick Siefken - Budget Blinds; Ed Turner - Vericheck; Betty Turner - North Georgia Technical College; Flip Varney - Edward Jones Investments; Cathy Wheeler - The Vacuum Store.

Finally, I am very thankful to the *North Georgia News* for allowing the Chamber this column as a means to connect with our members and our community. The entire team is a delight to work with as it relates to sharing community news.

To all of our members and the entire Blairsville-Union County area, Happy Thanksgiving!

If we can assist with your holiday plans please call us at (706) 745-5789 or explore our website at www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com.

I can be reached at President@BlairsvilleChamber.com.

Parris...from Page 4A

of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten the gracious hand, which preserved us in peace, multiplied, enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.

Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to God that made us!

It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and pray for clemency and forgiveness."

God is offended when we fail to acknowledge and give Him praise and thanks for all things!

A dear lady's husband had died and she went to the newspaper to have his obituary printed. The editor informed her the price would be 50 cents for each word. She said, "Fine," "Put it like this: "Fred Brown died." The

editor knew the poor lady was trying to be thrifty but he had to tell her there was a limit of seven words.

He said, "You must have seven words." "In that case," she said, "Put it like this: Fred Brown died, 1983, pickup for sale." There are places to be thrifty, but when it comes to Thanksgiving, God wants us to be LOUD, VOCAL and EXTRAVAGANT.

Pumpkins and pilgrims have their place, but it is wise and right to give thanks to Almighty God (Psalm 92:1-2)!

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my time. I am grateful beyond measure for these opportunities to grow my patience, my knowledge of the circumstances, my exposure to the heart of one dying and the hope of one struggling to survive.

So, when I watch others who care for those less fortunate than themselves, I am overwhelmed with a feeling of grace for those serving others. Their responsibilities have them performing great feats, yet it is the tiniest of actions that make me grateful that there are people like this in our world. The tenderness of brushing the hair out of ones eyes for someone whose arms are encumbered by tubes, or the kiss on the forehead to the patient that just received some disheartening news, usually passes without the acknowledgement of a thank you, but the feeling of gratitude is none the less there, and has more healing power than one can ever imagine.

The day designated on the calendar to reflect on our thankfulness has approached. When I reminisce of Thanksgivings of my childhood, I remember being flooded with gratefulness that all our family, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, would be coming together to spend the day. I wasn't as excited about the meal, or the fact that we could have pop (northeastern term for "soda") that day. I was most grateful to be surrounded by the love and the laughter that exudes from a gathering of Italians around the dining table. Yes, I was also grateful that only my cousin Joey loved the black olives and the boiled turkey neck as much as I, for there was only enough for two to share.

Yes, I'll be giving thanks this 4th Thursday of November. An extra serving of sweet potato casserole and of gratitude won't hurt any of us.

But come Friday, I'll continue to feel gratitude during the moments of the day, for gratitude is one of the things I love most about my life.

Though I am a firm believer that we need to celebrate Thanksgiving before we rush into the Christmas holidays, I would be remiss if I didn't remind you to make sure you mark your calendars for Dec. 6th and 7th, for you must join us at the Union County Farmers Market for our 4th Annual Kris Kringle Market.

Visit our website at www.UCFarmersMarket.com for all the details.

Please bring the children in your life to enjoy all the activities, too.

Riley ...from Page 4A

and harvesting-- it's a science, it's a business and it's an art. FFA continues to help the next generation rise up to meet those challenges by helping its members to develop their own unique talents and explore their interests in a broad range of career pathways.

So today, we are still the Future Farmers of America. But, we are the Future Biologists, Future Chemists, Future Veterinarians, Future Engineers and Future Entrepreneurs of America, too. The letters "FFA" stand for Future Farmers of America; however, in 1988 the official name of the organization was changed from "Future Farmers of America" to "The National FFA Organi-

zation" to reflect the growing diversity of agriculture. Many of us were FFA members and have fond memories of those times when we were searching for who we were going to be when we finally grew up, and the FFA gave many of us the nudge that we needed to make us who we are today. Support your local FFA chapter and FFA Alumni groups anytime you can because the kid you help today might just be your replacement tomorrow!

For more information on FFA and RC&D projects, contact Frank Riley, Executive Director, Chestatee Chatahoochee RC&D Council at www.frank.ccrd@gmail.com.

Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse



Bell ringing information at 706-745-5493