

Opinions

Everybody has one...

The True Impact of Drugs in the Workplace

A large part of the responsibility in a drug free community falls on the employers. We can begin regular conversations with our children while they are very small, but by far the largest audience for drug abuse prevention education is at work.

The mission of the Union County Anti-Drug Coalition is to support an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that nearly 77 percent of all drug users are employed, and The American Council for Drug Education estimates that over 31 million employees regularly use illegal drugs. That means one in eleven Americans abuse drugs in the workplace.

With all the recent talk of legalizing marijuana for recreational purposes in Georgia, the conversation has inevitably turned to whether employers have a right to demand that their employees be drug free. The issue is polarized and there doesn't seem to be much middle ground.

Some people think that what someone does on their own time is their business. It seems logical. I mean, you're paid to perform certain duties for a certain amount of time, so as long as you don't use drugs on the job, everything is fine, right? Well, not quite. Life doesn't occur in a vacuum. Drug use, even when off the clock, has a significant impact on everyone around you.

Let's say you decide to enjoy a "harmless" joint at home on your own time, but then come into work later that day. You think you're fine when you hop into the crane and fire it up, but before long you've managed to knock down a building and kill several innocent people. This may sound dramatic, but it's a true story. Every day thousands of accidents in the workplace and on our roads occur as the result of drug abuse—much of which took place during personal time.

Various scientific studies have reported both physical and cognitive impairment more than 24 hours after marijuana ingestion for periodic users. Physical and cognitive impairment has been noted for several days after ingestion for regular and chronic users.

Probably the biggest hazard to an employer involves risk management. Most states have case law saying that an employer could be held liable in such cases if it failed "a duty to prevent foreseeable injury". Since it's well established that marijuana use can cause serious accidents and injuries or death, a company may have to defend itself if they get sued for a worker's negligence - and today that can include a vehicle accident on the way to work. How will a jury react to hearing that the boss knew his employees were smoking marijuana? Or that he took marijuana out of the drug testing panel?

Studies have shown that drug abusers are more likely to: change jobs frequently; be late to or absent from work; be less productive employees; be involved in a workplace accident; file a workers' compensation claim.

Drug use results in an estimated \$81 billion loss for employers annually; that works out to about \$7,000 per employee, per year. Can your company afford to eat that sort of expense? Not many can.

Chest/Chatt RC&D Activities, Programs, and Projects 2015 - 2016

I have written each week of the past year about some project, meeting, or event that Chest/Chatt was involved in that week. As you have seen over the year, we are involved in many activities that touch

your lives in one way or another. This week is a summary of 2015 and 2016 activities for Chest/Chatt. The past several years since the National RC&D program was defunded by the NRCS have been

lean and uncertain for Chest/Chatt, but now due to a lot of hard work, good leadership by our current Executive Board, and support from our many partners, Chest/Chatt is now on the upswing to more financial stability. Frank Riley, Executive Director has operated Chest/Chatt alone for the past 20 months, but now will add a staff member to help administer these programs and projects.

Here are some current programs: 1. Chest/Chatt is one of two RC&D organizations in Georgia authorized to market the Wiregrass Seasonal High Tunnel house. This High Tunnel is designed for small fruit, flower, and vegetable growers who want to extend their growing season for their crops. 2. Chest/Chatt received a grant from NRCS for 12 field day events over the next 3 years in North Georgia. These events will be: Forestry, Soil health, Alternative/organic farming, High Tunnels, Row Crops, Pasture management, Agritourism, Small farm Conferences and other related topics. 3. Chest/Chatt has contracted with the Georgia Forestry Commission to assume the role of Georgia Firewise Liaison and will administer the national Firewise program throughout Georgia for people who live in wildfire prone areas or anyone who is concerned by risk of fire on their property. 4. Chest/Chatt was chosen in 2013 to develop one of the 8 national pilot FAC Hubs in the east. The pilot project was started in Towns County with a purpose to build a fire education and prevention program and to spread the concept across the Southeast. Chest/Chatt is now in the third year of the project and has started another FAC program in White County. 5. Appalachian RC&D Coalition - Chest/Chatt was asked by the US Forest Service Regional forester to spread the FAC concept up the Appalachian Mountains from Towns County to Virginia to help reduce the risk of wildfires in and around US Forest Service lands. Chest/Chatt and its partners have developed a coalition in this area made up of Chest/Chatt RC&D in Georgia, 3 RC&Ds in North Carolina and 1 in Virginia. 6. Town/Testna-tee Creek watershed EPD 319 grant - Chest/Chatt will administer the EPD 319h grant for agriculture BMPs in White County in the Town Testna-tee watershed. The cost share funds will assist landowners with projects that improve water quality and reduce erosion in the streams. 7. Chest/Chatt owns a 2,500 sq. ft (plus a 2500 sq. ft. basement) office building in Demorest and we rented it to the Disability Resource Center, an organization that assists people with disabilities in the 13 counties of Northeast Georgia. We retained one office for our use. 8. UGA/USDA Rural Development Energy Audits - Chest/Chatt is under contract with UGA for collecting field data for REAP energy audits with poultry producers. The REAP program is administered by USDA Rural Development and supplies cost share funds for producers to improve energy efficiency in poultry houses. 9. NC REAP Farm audits - Chest/Chatt will perform farm energy audits that will allow farmers to apply for cost share assistance with energy saving projects in North Carolina. 10. USDA

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Changed Lyrics

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas is considered by some to be the greatest Christmas song of all-time. What you may not know about the composer is really quite a story.

Hugh Martin was born in 1914, the son of an architect in Birmingham, AL. At his mother's urging, he developed his talent and followed his dream into the world of show business. He eventually moved to California where he became part of the Hollywood's Golden Age, working with stars like Judy Garland, Gene Kelly, and Debbie Reynolds.

Martin is best known for the 1944 musical *Meet Me In St. Louis* in which Judy Garland performed his famous Christmas composition. The lyrics are sentimental, hoping away troubles and pining for friends. The song maintains its secular theme, even with the line "We all will be together if the fates allow," which works for Hollywood, but is a hollow hope.

The young composer went on to enlist during WWII, serving the troops as an entertainer. After the war, he returned to his show business career, but soon began to suffer bouts of depression as the Golden Age began to wind down.

In 1974 at the age of 60, he entered a hospital for physical and psychological treatment. A fellow patient explained and demonstrated the Christian gospel to Martin, and he experienced a decisive conversion to Christ! He explained that his life had been self-centered and he had "hit rock bottom. God had to bring it to my attention that I was not all I thought I was." After his recovery, his career changed as he began to work in gospel music.

That's not all that changed. In 2001 he wrote new lyrics for his Christmas tune, including these: "Have yourself a blessed little Christmas, Christ the King is born... Tell the world we celebrate the Savior's birth. Let us gather to sing to Him, and to bring to Him our praise." Quite a departure from whatever the 'fates' might allow. Joni Eareckson Tada recorded this version with Martin for her radio program in 2008.

The first part of Martin's life is characterized by success, dazzle, and awards, but that lifestyle didn't bring real happiness as his troubles were not "out of sight." That was not the final stan-

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Manufacturing Part IV

Q. Are there locations for potential manufacturers to build and build facilities to suit their needs?

A. The majority of manufacturers (about 85%) are looking for already existing structures because it accelerates the timeline in which a business can begin operations and eliminates a lot of uncertainties. However, there are still those who are willing to build the facilities they need, especially those with processes that require unique facilities. Most of the companies who are looking for a build to suit location tend to be large scale operations and they have a lot of criteria that must be met when picking a location. The Economic Development Authority is always working with potential businesses to show them our sites at the airport industrial park and all the advantages they would have if they were to locate here.

Q. Do you see any additional attributes that our county needs to do to attract businesses?

A. We have spent the last 10 years getting our community ready for growth and employment. We have maintained one of the lowest property tax structures in the State of Georgia, so this helps keep the cost of doing business down for someone either purchasing or building a new facility. Since most companies are looking for existing facilities, it would give us an advantage if we had more industrial buildings that we could market. While Hwy 515 is not an interstate, you can probably make as good of time on it as an interstate and it connects us directly to Atlanta. I have also been working hard for years on getting US 129/19 widened, which would greatly improve our logistics to the markets north of us.

Q. Does being located here and this far from Atlanta for manufacturing offer any real disadvantages?

A. Not as many as the perception may be and that is sometimes hard to change in peoples mind. Oftentimes, the RFI requirement that a location be very close to an interstate is more about eliminating as many sites as possible, than it is about real logistics needs. While we are two hours from Atlanta, we're also centrally located within two hours of four major metro areas. Any product made in Blairsville can be shipped by UPS to Atlanta and be on a plane to another country the same day it is made. We do not have

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



It's a great time to join the Chamber

Each year, the Blairsville-Union County Chamber prints a membership directory as part of our Community Guide. The Community Guide is a professional, full color publication that serves as an all inclusive marking piece for visitors and new residents in Union County. A complimentary business listing in the business directory section is a valuable addition to your chamber membership, but you must be an active member in good standing on the directory deadline of December 31, 2015. If you or someone you know has been considering chamber membership, let me encourage you to act now so that you will be part of the 2016 Community Guide and Membership Directory.

All businesses, organizations, and individuals who have a vested interest in the prosperity and well-being of Blairsville-Union County are invited into the membership of our chamber. Business memberships start as low as \$150 per year! For a nominal investment, members gain access to a variety of advertising tools, invaluable resources and educational opportunities, and a network of likeminded business people, all of which contribute to the personal and professional success of the member. Through benefits such as special event invitations and marketing and promotional avenues, membership provides opportunities for your growth and development.

Whether you are looking to join the chamber for the first time or rejoin after a period of inactivity, we are ready to partner with you. It is time to join forces with over 630 local businesses and individuals who are part of our membership. Contact the chamber at 706-745-5789 to schedule an appointment or go to www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com and fill out the online application. Membership can start working for you today!

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



"Getting to these protests will sure be a lot easier when we get some of the highway improvements!"

Letters to the Editor...

Thanks to Road Crew

Dear Editor,

Thanks to the road crew for doing such a good job on Highland Trace around the mailbox and a place for us to park to pick up the mail.

Mozelle Campbell

Self Publishing

Dear Editor,

In the past, writers who had manuscripts they felt were worthy of being published in book form, would do well to hire a go-getter literary agent aware of all the shortcuts to hawking manuscripts to publishing houses. Now, however, with self-publishing, any manuscript - good or bad - can see book form if the writer has the financial means to foot the bill.

Ah, but then comes the rub! The very

See Ramsey, page 5A

Gun Control

Dear Editor,

Imagine: There is a violent criminal on the loose. My guns have been confiscated. I am supposed to feel safer? The community is safer because all guns have been confiscated?

Make no mistake. When you hear Obama and Hillary and others like them say gun control, the ultimate goal is confiscation, one step at a time.

Then we will all be safe. The federal government will take good care of all of us ... and the cow jumped over the moon.

Clyde Woolsey

Our Beautiful Dog Park

Dear Editor,

We walk our dog every day in our beautiful Dog Park. Saturday morning we were disappointed to find that someone had stolen the rope from the board walk. It had just been replaced recently, and know that it must have cost a lot of money. It was at least 2 inches in diameter and about 100 feet long, and was the railing on the

See Roseboom, page 5A

Licensing People?

Dear Editor,

Recently Mr. Jim Cowder's letter to the editor identified his desire to license people not guns. I take exception to his proposal but more importantly the facts don't support him either.

He cites DC v Heller as indication of the Supreme Court endorsement of the Second Amendment. This case was a five to four decision ruling against DC on its restrictions on gun ownership. How easily could this have gone the other way? Wikipedia documents numerous US cases of overturned decisions, for example 17 on the 4th amendment alone. How comfortable can

See Hogan, page 5A

Christmas Gifts

Christmas brings back many memories to each of us. Christmas brings memories of various gifts of which I received through the years. I can remember getting stockings stuffed with all kinds of goodies. For example, I love tangerines to this day because

my grandmother used to give them to me at Christmas. And I remember getting those candied orange slices at Christmas. I also remember getting those soft peppermint sticks at Christmas each year. (Did you know you can still get those candied orange slices and pepper mint sticks at Foodland?) I also remember getting those Ice Box Fruit Cakes at Christmas each year. My mother made those things and I would make myself sick eating them. I still have a sweet tooth for those kinds of sweets.

Christmas has always been a special time for my family. My grandparents celebrated Christmas by decorating Cedar Trees and by answering the phone with a special greeting. The day after Thanksgiving my grandmother would greet telephone callers with "Christmas Gift" instead of hello. She told me that as a youngster she would go with large groups of people to serenade their neighbors. The group of people would begin the serenade by saying "Christmas Gift" and then the group would sing a Christmas Carol to their neighbor. The neighbors would respond by tossing hard candy to the group after the song.

Just after the turn of the century my grandfather's family experienced some hard times. My grandfather was only about 4 years old when his uncle joined the Army and went to fight in WWI. Then the influenza epidemic came through North Alabama and two of my grandfather's aunts died while in their teens. Next, Papa's youngest uncle was accidentally shot while playing with an old pistol. These problems placed a strain on the marriage of my great-great grandparents, John and Martha Cummings. I don't know exactly what happened, but, John left his wife of more than 20 years and ran off with another woman. These two ran off to Missouri and raised another family. The Cummings family in Alabama was extremely bitter.

Some of John's sons never forgave him for the destruction of their family. He came back for a couple of visits, but, a couple of his sons would have nothing to do with him. But, time has a way of healing wounds. As the years went by John became more and more feeble. He made things right with my great grandfather, Lon. Who was always close to his father even though he couldn't understand why John had left his mother. So, one Christmas Lon invited his father, John, to come home and spend some time with his family.

The whole family was invited for Christmas dinner. Some came and some refused. There was still much bitterness among some of the

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



What's in your freezer?

I had fun this morning opening nearly three dozen email responses that came in on my request to readers, family and friends of the Union County Farmers Market. The questions I posed were such: "What one item in your kitchen pantry will you probably never use before the expiration date?"

"What piece of meat in your freezer is still there because you're not sure how to prepare it or it is too labor intensive to fix?"

"What spice in your cabinet do you have no idea what to do with it?"

"What was the last vegetable in your fridge that spoiled before you found time to prepare it?"

Then the bonus question was a multiple choice. "What is your favorite starch?" Potato, Bread, Pasta or Rice.

Let's start with the bonus question. It was a tight race, but pasta won over bread 12 votes to 10 votes. Potatoes came in third with 5 votes and rice had only 3 votes.

Now that I have my starch, I can create a meal while I'm writing, somewhat of a literary version of FoodTV's "Chopped", a cooking competition show that is all about skill, speed and ingenuity. Each week, four chefs compete before a panel of expert judges and turn baskets of mystery ingredients into an extraordinary three-course meal.

Today, due to limited editorial space, I'll just attempt an entrée meal. I received many interesting responses, but in fairness to the game, I'll use the responses that came in the most frequent. Therefore, my vegetable will be squash, which was thrown away, rotted more often than lettuce and cucumbers, which tied for second place. For my spice, it was a tie between Coriander and Turmeric. I'll use both. There was no multiple responses to the pantry item, so I'm choosing to take the most difficult, the liquid smoke. And for the freezer meat, there also was not a multiple response, but there were three beef responses, all different cuts, so I chose the two file mignon, that were wrapped in bacon.

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Kenneth West
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Charles Duncan
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E-mail: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com

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Phone: (706) 745-6343 Fax: (706) 745-1830 * P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

Joe Collins
Advertising Director

Todd Forrest
Staff Writer