

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Life of a Firefighter

As we move into April, we are anxiously awaiting the promise of warmer weather that spring brings. The warmer weather means working in the yard, vacations, and enjoying the outdoors. For the fire department, it means more emergencies and more responsibilities. Spring is the time of year where we start some of our annual activities, namely testing of fire hose and inspecting of fire hydrants. These activities will continue through the summer until they are completed.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Every fire hose of Union County Fire Department is tested annually. There are over 28,000 feet of fire hose. That's over five miles of hose. We have hose size ranging from 3 1/2 supply lines to 1 1/2 hand lines. Each 50 foot section of hose is tested by removing it from the fire apparatus, attaching it to the testing machine, and pressurizing that hose for a certain amount of time. The pressure is increase 2-3 times the amount of pressure used on a fire. During the test and immediately after, the fire hose is inspected to determine if there are any leaks and if the couplings are secure. Once tested, the hose is marked, recorded and placed back on the fire apparatus. It is a labor intensive and time-consuming job.

When all the fire hose is tested, the firefighters begin hydrant inspections. There are over 1000 fire hydrants and they are spread out throughout Union County and the City of Blairsville. UCFD firefighters inspect each one annually. The hydrants must be located and new hydrants are GPS recorded. Once located, the hydrant is inspected for damage and operation. The caps are removed and the hydrant is opened to ensure that it is operational and if there is water at that location. There are times where the caps are greased to ensure they are easy to remove. Hydrant inspections can also be time consuming and it will take most of the summer and well into the fall to complete the inspections.

Fire hose testing and hydrant inspections are just a couple of the many maintenance duties that Union County Fire Department firefighters perform. Most of these duties help to lower the county's ISO rating thus reducing fire insurance rates for home and business owners. It is part of the many services that we provide to Union County and the City of Blairsville along with the 24/7/365 emergency services.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Listening

On that flap between Joy Behar and Vice President Pence... when she implied he could be mentally ill because God speaks to him. After all she is a comedienne, but this attempt at shock humor bombed. She did apologize later to her credit.

The reason the joke didn't work is because Christians actually do expect people to hear from God. But what we experience is nothing like Behar's implication that we hear delusional voices.

Henry Blackaby wrote, "When God speaks, it is to reveal something about Himself, His purposes, or His ways. God's revelations are designed to bring you into a love relationship with Him." Christianity is a relationship with God, and communicating is normal in a relationship. Jesus said, "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God" (John 8:47).

Years ago, I experienced some folks confused on hearing God speak. During a Bible study, several older Christians agreed that they had never heard God speak to them. As their pastor I was incredulous, since they each had heard thousands of sermons, experienced the wonders of nature, read their Bibles regularly, and prayed routinely. But they had not considered ways they hear God other than an audible voice.

So if not by audible voices in your head, how do you hear from God? Suppose you read in the Bible, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mat. 22:39). You realize you have neglected a needy neighbor or mistreated someone, and your conscience prompts you to act or apologize. You just heard from God. God speaks through His Word.

He also speaks through creation. "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made" (Rom. 1:20). The Creator speaks through the beauty of the world and the complexities of life.

Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to his followers. "He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak... He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you" (John 16:13-14). How do you recognize

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



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Commissioner's Questions

Q. We were coming back from the Union County Transfer Station today and there is new signage and blinking lights on either side of Deep South Farm Road directly across from Union General Hospital. Could you tell me what this is for?

A. This is a new pedestrian crosswalk from the doctors' office, across Deep South Farm Road to the Hospital. When someone comes up and presses the button on the crosswalk light, there will be flashing lights in both directions. By Georgia Law you MUST stop if anyone is in the crosswalk. The light lets you know that someone is about to cross or may have just crossed, but you must slow down and anyone within the crosswalk has the right of way. There are two of these same type crossings on Highway 76 in Young Harris just in front of the college. Please use caution when driving there.

Q. Do we have to stop on this new crosswalk in front of Union General Hospital?

A. Always use caution at any crosswalk, but if the light is flashing you must stop. If the light is not flashing, you do not have to stop unless it is obvious that someone is walking in the crosswalk. Once it is obvious that the people are across the highway and no one else is coming, you may continue. The pedestrian has the right of way, not the vehicle.

Q. Is the county still working on having property owners of distressed properties clean up?

A. Yes, Building Inspection and Development has been working very hard on this. Currently, they are working on thirty-eight different complaints regarding distressed properties and getting them cleaned up. As of today, Friday, March 30, sixteen of these complaints have been resolved and are closed. Most property owners who have received notice have already begun the cleanup process or are working with Building Inspection and Development to get the issue resolved.

Q. I reported a house for having trash piled up last week and it has still not been cleaned up. Why?

A. When the County contacts people to clean up their property they must be given 30 days-notice once the letter is received. Sometimes there are circumstances that delay the cleanup process.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



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Drug Free Mountain Life

Whatever happened to The Gateway Drug Theory?

If you grew up as part of the D.A.R.E. generation, you know all too well the dangers of so-called gateway drugs. You were taught that if you tried marijuana or beer, you risked ending up using cocaine or heroin. Three decades later, scientists and politicians still debate whether using "soft" drugs necessarily leads a person down a slippery slope to the harder stuff.

The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

But new research is breathing fresh life into the controversial theory, and the timing seems appropriate. As marijuana legalization and the opioid epidemic sweep across the country, parents are once again questioning the root causes of addiction.

A Columbia University study published
See Drug Free, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Georgia Mountain Passion Play

I felt compelled to praise the First Baptist Church for the incredible performance of the Georgia Mountain Passion Play. My husband and I, and two grandchildren attended, and were amazed at the fact that each year it seems better than the year before.

What a spectacular way to Praise the Lord and celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Church Family deserves a "very well done".

The Anderson family can't wait until next year's performance. Thanks so much for a very wonderful, moving, and emotional Saturday afternoon.
Joan V. Anderson

Zell Miller

I am totally surprised a bigger deal wasn't made from Governor Miller's passing. Especially *Towns County Herald*. Goodness sake he was a governor.
Elizabeth Bridges

ESPLOST

I am responding to Ed Reed's editorial in last week's newspaper.

Yes, it is nice to have all the new facilities for our schools, funded by the ESPLOST. The Medical Wing is a fine example, since it can give the students some direction as to what they want to do after High School.

The fact is that this original ESPLOST was voted on in five (5) year increments and has been extended several times. My point here is to say, why don't we take a break from the tax and see what can be accomplished with what we have and the other School Taxes we already pay. In other words, manage what we have for a while.

It is my understanding that school enrollment is down and that about \$11,000 is spent per student, whereas other districts across the state only spend about \$8,000. Surely, there is a cushion in there somewhere.

Why not give the taxpayers of Union County a tax break for five years and then revisit it at the end of that time. As I have stated before, there are a lot of people in the county that are on fixed incomes or no incomes and while this might seem like "crumbs" to some, it would be important to them.

Thank you,
Jim Breece

Letters to the Editor

Farm on Lake Nottely Sold

I just heard that the cow farm on the south end of Lake Nottely has been sold. Can you tell me if you know what the new owners intend to do with this land? It is a beautiful part of the lake and it would be a shame if it is filled up with dozens of new houses. It looks to me like the land is currently zoned as agricultural. Is that something that is easy to change in Union County? I think the address is 836 Meeks Road.
Thanks,
Brian Preston

Devil's Playground

When I first heard Joy Behar's comment about Vice President Pence a while back regarding his speaking to Jesus Christ and Jesus in turn speaking back to Pence, it showed Joy's ignorance of God's Word. We have to remember Satan has a way of deceiving millions of people by lying and putting thoughts of hate and evil into their minds and once in their mind, then down into their heart and eventually comes forth out of their mouth, spewing their own distaste for the truth of God's Word. The whole world is the devil's playground and he knows how to push the right buttons in the un-believer's heart to cause division, strife and malice, even in God's house of prayer. Satan enjoys it when he can get into not only the minds of people, but into their hearts where he can stir up his people to do his bidding and cause all kinds of trouble and problems as we see in the days that we are living. Does Satan have limited power? Yes, only the Lord God can allow the devil to do certain things, like tempting us and testing our faith and trust in God.

In the book of James in the Bible in chapter 3: 16— An uncontrolled tongue produces envy and strife which leads to confusion and every evil work. Scripture is very clear that God is not the author of confusion. The confusion we find in the world today is a confusion brought about by the work of the devil using little things like the tongue to cause much division in our world and we can see how well the devil has been able to persuade not only many in Hollywood, but across our nation as well as in our disgraceful librated, lying and backbiting in our media, in the liberals and the Democratic party as well as in the Republican party. The devil's playground is reaping great stress and division, even in our churches, not caused by God, but by Satan, the author of all confusion and lies.

We should respect the power of the devil and his cunning demons, but never fear Him for every believer is armed with the full promises of

See Combs, page 5A

Swinging On Vines

Many people have asked me if all these stories I write about each week are true. I learned a lesson very early in life that emphasized the need for me to verify each story I tell. So, when I talk with my relatives I will ask them about a particular story and if it is told the same way a couple or three times by different individuals I assume that the story is true.

I was in the first grade and was getting ready for bed and realized I had forgot to complete an assignment that I needed for school the next day. Each student was required to participate in something called "Show and Tell". Basically, we were supposed to bring something to school and tell the class about it. Or we could simply tell about our family history. I was almost in a panic when I remembered a story my dad told me about how he and mother had met. So, before I went to bed I went to Dad and asked him to tell the story. My dad began to grin and began telling the story. As Dad related the story my mother just rolled her eyes and left the room. Dad said the words were so thick over at the Adams place you could not walk through them.

So anytime you went to Blue Springs you had to go around the Adams place. He went on to say that one day he had to play ball over at Blue Springs and he left home a little late. So, when he got to the Adams place he didn't have the time to go around the thick woods. Right before this Dad had seen his first Tarzan movie and was amazed at how Tarzan could swing on vines all across the jungle. So, dad said he climbed a tree and got hold of a vine and began to swing through the trees like Tarzan. He said he was going along pretty good until a vine broke. Dad must have been knocked out when he hit the ground because everything was all fuzzy and the world was spinning around. But, then he came to himself and there was Bill Adams, my future grandfather. He said the old man was staring at him with a big grin on his face. Daddy said, "The whole time I was looking at the business end of a 12 gauge shotgun". Dad told me that Bill made him marry my mother. Dad smiled and told me I needed to get to bed. So, with that story in my head and the promise of a good grade for "Show and Tell" I went to bed.

The next day came and it was my turn to participate in "Show and Tell". I walked to the front of the room and related the story of how my dad met my mother. I looked at the teacher as I finished just knowing I had received the best grade in the class and she had a look on her face I will never forget. She handed me a note after

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



RC&D

National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day – May 5, 2018

March and April are our spring wildfire months up here in North Georgia. Most of my articles are about wildfire preparedness in our communities and are intended to make you aware of the wildfire risks all around us and the small things that you can do to prevent one of these life changing events in your backyard. When conditions are right, it only takes one match or a small spark to start an out-of-control fire that can't be stopped before it destroys things that can't be replaced!

Even though we have had only one major wildfire (Fall 2016) since 2008 in our area and no loss of life or homes, history is not on our side and eventually a wildfire will strike, and it won't be pretty. Imagine what this area would look like with all these scenic mountains charred and the views turned black. Who would want to visit or live here after that? Our wildfire education programs are working because it was reported recently that a couple of our adjacent north Georgia counties had 134 wildfires (no Firewise) in the past 3 years and Towns has had only 9. The trend is holding true this year also! Might be luck, but we'll let our Firewise programs take the credit for educating you as to the dangers all around us and you have taken measures to lessen your risks.

The wildfire that we can have one day might not be as spectacular as the destructive fires out west, but if it is just your house or my house it is a tragedy just the same. The most dangerous months for wildfires up here in the mountains historically are November, March, and April, but we can't let our guard down the rest of the year because wildfires don't know which month it is and can happen at any time when the conditions are right. Wildfire education is a never ending, year round process.

Join communities throughout the U.S. on Saturday, May 5, 2018 as the National Fire Protection Association launches its fourth national Wildfire Community Preparedness Day! Dedicate a couple of hours for risk reduction, or the entire day, and watch as your actions positively contribute to reducing your community's wildfire risk. Challenge your friends, your family, relatives, or youth organization to develop a project and join others throughout the nation in making big changes for community safety. Your efforts will help raise wildfire awareness, promote collaboration and bring neighbors together to work on projects that can help protect homes, neigh-

RC&D Executive Director
Frank Riley



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