

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## Annual Letter Drive

Union County Fire Department is a combination department. A combination department is made up of the career staff, which are paid firefighters, and volunteers. The volunteers make up the majority of the department's firefighters. There are 11 volunteer stations throughout the county. Although the fire department's budget pays for equipment maintenance, fire apparatus and buildings of the volunteer stations, most of the volunteer's purchases and operations are made possible through donations. The annual letter drive is the main source of donations for the volunteer stations.

Every year, the volunteer fire stations send out a letter to the citizens and business owners who are protected by their station. The letter serves several purposes. It informs the people on the operations of the stations. The letter provides information including the number of members; the number of calls; any changes to the stations; any equipment purchases; and any needs that the station may have. They also provide information on the future goals of the station to better respond to emergencies and serve the community.

The letter also provides dates and times for each annual fire station's open house. This is an invitation for the people to visit the fire station. The volunteer firefighters display the station, the apparatus and the equipment. They are available to answer questions. Often there are educational displays and demonstrations of fire and rescue equipment.

The main purpose of the letter is to ask for donations. The volunteer stations survive on the generous donations provided by the citizens and business owners of their coverage area. They use the donations to purchase radios, turnout gear, wildland gear, and various other firefighting and rescue equipment. They also use the funds to purchase fire apparatus, rescue trucks and to make improvements to the stations.

Every donation is needed to keep the volunteer stations operational; to achieve future goals; and to respond to emergencies throughout the county. The volunteers do not ask for a dollar amount. They ask citizens and business owners to donate what they can to assist the stations in serving their community. The continued support from the citizens, business owners and the community

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**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**  
David Dyer



## Journey Toward

I recently met a couple who hiked the Camino de Santiago (the Way of Saint James). From the popular starting point, it is a 600-mile trek across France and Spain. Pilgrims (hikers) make their way toward the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. The 2010 movie "The Way" portrays a father (Martin Sheen) who completes the pilgrimage on behalf of his deceased son. It shows the route between European villages traversing pastoral scenes and scanning majestic vistas.

In the last 20 years, the number of hikers grew from 30,000 to 330,000. Reasons number as many as the hikers, but seeking respite from our distracting world must be a common motivation. Writer James Jeffrey admitted, "I've been continually perplexed by, and mullied endlessly over, just why the experience was so fulfilling, shocking even, in a dazzling, uplifting way." He hints at a spiritual answer. "We are designed as humans to look to a horizon and move towards it. But we are forgetting this truth, and it's destroying us."

The Appalachian Trail is near our town, and I hear stories of hikers from friends who enjoy helping them on their way. Thru-hikers face a 2200 mile trip and only 1 of 4 attempts are successful. Many AT hikers are on their own spiritual quest, and even if they are not sure what they'll find, they journey towards it anyway.

This journeying toward a goal or purpose is a key to understanding Jesus. After spending time in Galilee, "He set his face toward Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). The trek from Galilee to Jerusalem is about 100 miles, but the distance was not His challenge. He knew too well what would transpire there. He said, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day" (Matt. 17:22-23). He only confirmed what had already been written, that God requires and provides an atoning sacrifice to reconcile us to our Creator.

You might think that Jesus' journey ended at the cross, but his empty tomb and post-resurrection appearances say otherwise. Neither did His journey end later when he ascended from Bethany, destination heaven. In fact He still journeys toward his goal as

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**All Things New**  
Wayne Fowler



## Commissioner's Questions

**Q. What is the Reece Farm?**

A. The Byron Herbert Reece Farm & Heritage Center, commonly referred to as the Reece Farm, is a historic farm and homestead located at 8552 Gainesville Hwy., Blairsville. The farm is bordered by Wolf Creek and the Blue Ridge mountains. This is a county treasure with the experience of 20th century Appalachian farming, farm animals, exhibits, Visitor's Center and Gift Shop. The farm property is open daily. The visitor's center and exhibits will re-open for the season on April 17th and are open Wednesdays-Saturdays from 10 AM until 4PM thru mid-November.

**Q. What is there to do at the farm?**

A. First, there is a Welcome Center located in the restored home of Byron Herbert Reece and contains some original furnishings. There you can pick up a self-guided tour brochure with a map and information. The Welcome Center also houses a Gift Shop which includes books by Byron Herbert Reece and other local authors as well as other items such as arts and crafts made by local artisans. Outside there is a poetry trail that will lead you along the points of interests, beginning with Mulberry Hall, believed to be Reece's writing studio. Be sure to stop at the petting and livestock area to see the farm animals before heading to the main barn which houses farm exhibits and equipment. Also along the trail is a smoke house, corn crib, chicken house, Creekside amphitheater and picnic tables. Then you can follow the trail across the meadow to a wooden bridge crossing the lovely cascading waters of Wolf Creek. This path will lead you to a large pavilion.

**Q. What is the Pavilion?**

A. The Pavilion is a large wood and stone structure, that is great for reunions, weddings or picnics. The pavilion is available to rent for special events through the Byron Herbert Reece Farm at 706-745-2034.

**Q. Would you say it would be worth a visit?**

A. Absolutely! The Reece Farm is a relaxing and fun place to walk along the creek, look at historical signage, pet the donkey and just imagine how it was living on a farm in early 1900's rural Appalachia. Byron Herbert Reece was a talented farmer and

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**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**  
Lamar Paris



## Drug Free Mountain Life

### Prevention: A Parent's Guide

As parents, we want to raise healthy, drug-free children who learn and succeed in school and life. Students who use substances have are at higher risk of failing or dropping out of school but more importantly, using substances can lead to death.

**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.**

An adolescent or teen that shares a healthy bond with their parent or parental figure is less likely to experiment with illicit substances. Have the conversation with your child, let them know you understand the temptation, but you do not want them engaging in risky behavior. Make the consequences clear. If you use drugs or drink alcohol, these are the consequences, and these are non-negotiable.

Discussing the health risk related to each type of substance, allows your child to make an informed decision. This information is available at www.NIH.gov. Become engaged in their so-

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## SO WHAT DOES EASTER MEAN TO YOU?

## Chamber of Commerce

I am blessed to be able to work at the Chamber each day and see the mountains with all the trees showing off their vibrant shades of green, with the dogwoods in full bloom just in time for Easter.

As we look at the Chamber events calendar, we also know its spring, as ribbon cuttings and seasonal events begin to get underway. Last week, we hosted Matt Meeks, of Square-Frame Media, at our Monthly Mingle luncheon. Matt gave everyone in attendance expert tips to improve their presence on Google and other search engines. Who would have known that uniformity of a phone number and street address would have such a big impact on local search results?

This week, on April 17th, we look forward to the annual opening of the Byron Herbert Reece Farm just south of town off Gainesville Highway. Make sure you stop by and check out all their exhibits, including the new display

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**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**  
Steve Rowe



## Letters to the Editor

### The Cross

Dear Editor,  
A lot of folks think that if they have religion, that is enough, or if they join a church and attend faithfully and give tithes and offerings, perhaps serve on a mission board or be a deacon or even an elder, they have a ticket to get into heaven. Yes, all of these are worthy causes in God's church and are needed in order for God's church to fulfill His purpose and good will. But we must remember the most vital ingredient of all is "The Cross," for without it, there would be no church, no need for pastors and teachers of God's Word. Without the Cross, there would be no Savior of the world. Without the Cross, there would be no forgiveness of sins.

How could death and the grave be conquered without the Cross? Without Jesus Christ,  
See Combs, page 5A

### No Warming Disaster

Dear Editor,  
The subject of "global warming" has reached monumental proportions. From Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) declaring world extinction in 12 years to at least two frequent North Georgia News letter writers. This all began with Al "Inventor-of-the-Internet" Gore insisting our planet was going to be destroyed by it. At first, over 90% of scientists jumped on the bandwagon. It gave them so much pause, it just had to be true. After decades comes the good news: It ain't so!

A doctor recently wrote about the "Energy  
See Crawford, page 5A

### Sunday Morning Emergency

Dear Editor,  
Should we come into our church on empty, no power? So many are powerless before we came. We are not attempting to read or even listen to his words. That is where the world came with — the word "cool" we are, very cool. We are not connected to reach Him in our words or heart. We do not do what He says to do.  
Before we ask Him to send us a revival, I believe we should desire a revival, not just ask Him to send it. We need to make preparations to receive it and do something about it after we have received it.  
What is the affect of the Holy Spirit being in our churches and its people? Do we possess anything form the spirit? Christ-like! It is not a setting down place. We need to put shoes on our feet and follow Him. That's what He said.  
See Porter, page 5A

## Wildfire Preparedness Day

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 were charred and the views turned black. Who would want to visit or live or visit here after that?

Our wildfire education programs are working because it was reported recently that a couple of our adjacent north Georgia counties had 117 wildfires (no Firewise) in the past three years and Towns has had only with none in 2018. 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 4, 2019, as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) launches its fifth 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, neighborhoods and entire communities from

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**RC&D Executive Director**  
Frank Riley



## The Girl

The other day I was rummaging through some of my things and found a pay check stub for my grandfather, Bill Adams. He drove a truck for the Rockwood Limestone Company and delivered cut, white limestone all over the Eastern United States. The pay stub revealed that Paw Paw made \$2.00 per hour or about \$80 per week. Seeing that pay stub reminded me that 1970 was a year in which I decided that I needed a job.

So, that summer I went to Paw Paw's house to work for him in the chicken houses. He told me he'd pay me \$10 per week. The work was hard. I worked in 6 broiler houses for 6-7 hours per day. My day began with feeding the birds by hand. Next, I walked the houses for dead birds. Then I checked each watering device to make sure it was not clogged. Periodically, I had to go back to each house and lower the outside curtain depending upon the outside temperature. The work was hard and the hours long. However, the days were made bearable by my good friend Vernon.

Vernon and his 4 brothers lived in a rental house on my grandfather's place. Each day after work I would visit the Baker boys and we'd have a grand old time. We swam in the creek at Baker's Rock. We built a club house. We played baseball and football. One particular Friday Vernon's mother was gone and we were gathered at the house because a cloud had come up and it was raining outside. Vernon went to the pantry and brought back 6 straws and a 5 pound bag of dried peas. We shot peas at each other for the better part of an hour. We had a ball that day. Vernon's mother must've thought they had mice. There were peas scattered all over the house. Vernon's Dad came home from work and was wondering why he kept sitting and stepping on peas.

We didn't get into trouble over the peas. However, I knew that my life was over because of the next story. Before I get into the story you must know about Vernon's sister. I can't remember her name. But I remember her eyes and her face very well. She must have been about 16 or 17 and I am pretty sure she was dating. She was a pretty girl, but the look on her face that day still causes me to wake up in a panic. The old house the Baker's lived in was a small place. Mother said she had lived in it as a little girl. In those days the house was without running water and electricity. Mom said it was kind of a spooky old place because the front door was riddled with bullet holes. By the time the Bakers had moved in vast improvements had been made. The house now had electricity and running water. The well

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**Around The Farm**  
Mickey Cummings



## Blueberries

I think that most people enjoy eating a handful of blueberries. Eating them always reminds me of my grandfather because he always puts them on his cereal in the morning. Blueberries grow pretty well here, but there are a few things to be aware of so let's talk about those so that you can have a successful blueberry crop.

Blueberry bushes can be planted in the early spring or in the fall. In North Georgia, the most common type of blueberry planted is rabbiteye. There are many different varieties of rabbiteye blueberries, ranging from early to late season in ripeness. If you plant a rabbiteye variety, it is important to make sure that you plant more than one variety, as they need to be able to cross-pollinate to bear fruit. Northern highbush is another type of blueberry that can grow here. They are self-fertile, but they require more maintenance. Rabbiteye blueberries are native to Georgia.

If you are selecting a site to plant blueberries, choose a place that will receive full sun for at least half a day. They can grow in shady spots, but the fruit production will be less. Blueberries like soil with a pH of 4.5 – 5.2. This trait makes them well adapted to native soils because most of our soils will naturally be in that range. Therefore, lime is probably not needed when planting blueberries. Rabbiteyes do best with 5 – 6 feet between plants in row and 11 – 12 feet between rows. When planting make sure you don't plant too deep. After planting prune back 1/3 to 1/2 of the plant. This will cause the plant to focus on developing its root system. The first year you want to pick off any blooms, because you want the plant to put its energy into growing roots and not fruit. You can apply 1 oz. of 10-10-10 after the plant has begun to put on leaves the first year. The second year after planting put out 2 oz. of 10-10-10 in March and July. Make sure not to over fertilize blueberries, as that can harm them. After the third season, apply 1 oz. of 10-10-10 per foot of height on the bush.

Blueberry bushes do require pruning each year. Once plants reach 6 feet high you'll want to start cane renewal pruning. This means removing one to three of the biggest canes each winter at ground level. Over a period of five years the bush will be completely renewed. New canes are going to bear more fruit than old canes so it's important to maintain this pruning process. If you have bushes that haven't been pruned for a few years, it might take several seasons to get bushes into the five-year rotation. After you've picked the fruit, you can top plants if they are over 6 feet

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**Watching and Working**  
Jacob Williams



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