

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Hands-Free Georgia Act

Most people are aware of the dangers of distracted driving. Distracted driving can involve visual distractions, which can be anything that takes your eyes off the road; manual distractions which can be anything that takes your hands off the wheel or feet off the peddles; and cognitive distractions which can be anything that takes your mind off your driving or prevents you from maintaining situational awareness.

The most commonly known distracted driving issue today is the use of cell phones and other electrical devices. Many people have campaigned over the last couple of years to make Georgia a hands-free state. On May 2nd, House Bill 673, known as the Hands-Free Georgia Act, was signed by Governor Nathan Deal. The complete details of the bill can be found at www.gov.georgia.gov/legislation/2018. The main objective of the bill is to prevent motor vehicle accidents from distracted driving.

There are many details to the bill but basically it states no individual operating a motor vehicle shall: 1. Physically hold or support, with any part of his or her body, a wireless telecommunications device or stand-alone electronic device. 2. Write, send or read any text-based communication. 3. Watch a video or movie. 4. Record or broadcast a video. Drivers shall not use more than a single button to initiate or terminate a voice communication and they may not reach for a wireless telecommunications or stand-alone electronic device in such a way as to prevent the driver from being in a seated driving position or properly restrained by safety belt.

There are a few exceptions stated in the bill which are too detailed to list in this column. It is best to do your own research and know that law. This bill also does not apply to incidents where a person is reporting an emergency such as traffic accidents, fires, medical emergencies, or possible criminal activity. It also does not apply to certain individuals such as law enforcement or other public safety personnel who are in the performance of their official duties.

This law will take effect on July 1 of this year so please be aware. For some people, this will be a hard habit to break. However, keep in mind that distracted driving is dangerous. Everyone should be focused and alert when operating a four-ton automobile traveling at 55 miles per hour down the highway. Those phone

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Mother's Love

What has your mother done to make you feel loved? Such was my recent poll question. The responses, both delightful and sad, suggest a common yearning.

"I can still taste her pear preserves made just for me." "She still gathers the whole family together for Sunday dinner." "She never wanted the last serving."

"She led our girls club, took us camping." "She read many books to me." "We visited our extended family often." "My classmates envied the burgundy velvet jacket she made for me." "When my own children were born, she came to stay with me."

"In a thunderstorm, she rocked me." "During the night, I would call out and she would appear at my bedside." "She brushed my long hair and made me feel special as her only daughter." "She listened when I had girl troubles." "Driving the last mile to school every day, she would pray for us in the car."

As I expected, the question also uncovered the grief of mother's passing or the pain of not knowing mother's love. It is our common yearning to experience love from mother. Whether or not we receive that love, the yearning springs from a deeper well.

In *THE UNKNOWN GOD*, Alister McGrath writes, "The desire that we experience in the world can be thought of as a real desire for something that lies beyond this world. It is hinted at by our experiences of the world." That "something" is to be loved perfectly and eternally, something only God can do. He demonstrates love for you by creating you, by revealing Himself to you, and by Christ's sacrifice for you, so that you can enjoy Him forever.

St. Augustine said, "Thou has made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee." Blaise Pascal observed that humans seek, but don't find complete happiness. "What is it then that this desire and this inability proclaim to us, but that there was once in man a true happiness of which there now remains the empty trace, which he tries to fill from all his surroundings? The infinite abyss can only be filled by an infinite and immutable Object, God Himself."

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Why is a new access road into the Farmers Market necessary?

A. We are often having over 5000 people visit the Farmers Market in the middle of the season each week. The current entrance off Weaver Road is becoming more and more crowded with traffic backups often occurring at the intersection of Weaver Road and Highway 515. In addition, when the Highway 515 expansion is completed, there are GDOT plans to do away with the left turn out of and left turn into Weaver Road because of a proposed concrete median in the new project plans. All these upcoming changes are a result of long-term planning for the future of our county and city and the county was also awarded a \$100,000 grant commitment by GDOT to assist us with this project.

Q. Will there be other uses for the new access road into the Farmers Market?

A. Yes, this new access road will also be utilized by the Jenkins Family as access into their commercial property, benefiting them and the community with a prime commercial site. This new road will also be used to access a ball field complex in the next couple of years.

Q. Will this roadway be completed this year?

A. We certainly hope so, but GDOT and necessary permits will mostly control the process. The county has already started working on the new road construction from the Farmers Market's new covered bridge headed out toward Highway 515. We are also awaiting final engineer plans on exactly how the new road will mesh with Highway 515 and its expansion. As soon as we receive those plans and the permits from GDOT, we will continue with the project.

Q. When will the county start work on the property they purchased from the Davenport Family along Highway 515 across from Wendy's?

A. It will probably be a couple of years at least since access into the property will be controlled by the Highway 515 widening project. However, the access into the property at the Glenn Gooch By-Pass is also part of our new property that we are working on

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

Communication: The Best Prevention for Drug Use

According to the most up to date professional advice out there today, the most effective drug prevention tool available to parents is still open communication.

Treatment and prevention experts advise that as children enter adolescence, parents must focus on knowing what the child is doing when they are away from home. Children should be required to check in regularly by cellphone or other means, and parents should know who their child is with at all times.

Getting to know the parents of your children's friends and using those contacts to help keep track of your teens' activities will help to verify that your children are where they say they will be.

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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.

"The kids messed up the kitchen making you breakfast, took you for a long walk in the park, and gave you an iron for a present. So how do you feel?"



"Like a Mom... tired, but loved!"

Letters to the Editor

Lead, or Be Left Behind

Dear Editor,

America, wake up! The handwriting is on the wall. The times they are a changing. We no more can cling to the use of fossil fuels than past generations could cling to oil and kerosene over electricity or horse and buggy over automobiles. The future of energy is in renewables like wind and solar. If America is to remain competitive in the world, we have to be the leaders, not the laggards, in the Green Energy Revolution. China is spending \$360 billion by 2020 on renewable energy which will result in 13 million new Chinese jobs, and they installed more solar last year than has the US in its history. China is leaving us behind. We cannot allow that to happen! It is time for the US to put its differences aside and take its rightful place as the world leader in clean energy.

A carbon fee and dividend plan as proposed by Citizens Climate Lobby is a conservative, market driven plan that can accomplish that purpose. Simply place a fair price on the production of carbon from fossil fuels to account for their external damage and return that money to all US citizens in a monthly dividend check. That would rapidly cause fossil fuels to

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School Nutrition

Dear Editor,

Recently, a reader questioned the need for kitchen upgrades and cafeteria expansion in the form of a paid advertisement. As the Director of the school Nutrition Program in Union County Schools, I would like to address this issue.

The need for new kitchen equipment is much greater than a desire for more current technology. The new equipment upgrades are designed to decrease the frustrations and limitations staff experience with the current unreliable resources. The staff is currently working with equipment purchased as far back as 1978. The performance and reliability of the kitchen equipment requires consistent maintenance almost daily. Additionally, this presents an issue in locating replacement parts for outdated equipment. There are no plans for any employees to lose their position due to facility and equipment upgrades.

Regarding cafeteria expansion, Union County High School has experienced an enrollment increase of 200+ students in a relatively short period of time. We currently serve these students in 4 lunch periods. There is a need to decrease from 4 lunch periods to 3 due to student scheduling conflicts. We would also like to serve these students in a food court style set-

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Around The Farm

A Dog's Life

Dogs have been an integral part of my life. The dog I presently call my own is a Black Lab called Jack. He thinks he is part of the family. He sleeps by the fire place. He goes hiking and even fishing with me. Why all the fuss over a dog?

Two years ago Jack and I were in the woods and walked up on a sow bear with cubs. The bear charged me and Jack charged her. The bear left as quickly as she came. Jack earned his spot by my fire place.

About 63 years ago my grandfather bought a pair of Black and Tan coon dogs. These dogs were all around farm dogs. During the day they helped round up hogs and cattle. At night the dogs were used to hunt coons. My grandfather and his two sons enjoyed many a cool evening listening to and following "Sam and Lou" through the woods of northern Alabama.

Sometime during the summer of 1958 a panther was seen numerous times around Trapptown. Many local farms had young pigs and calves to disappear. Young parents warned their children not to wander too far from home. Papa and his two sons took to the woods on a regular basis that summer trying to catch and kill the menace that was roaming the woods.

One night while hunting the bluffs and hollows of Turkey Creek my dad and Uncle Bud heard a panther scream. Next, they heard Sam and Lou open up on a hot track. The dogs trailed the animal for 30 minutes when everything went silent. Soon, however, the quiet woods erupted with the sounds of dogs and a big cat fighting.

By the time my dad and uncle got to the dogs the cat was gone with Sam in hot pursuit. Dad found Lou at the edge of the creek. Her abdomen was split open from her sternum to her stomach. The young men carried her home and sewed up the wounds. The dog lived to a ripe old age.

As a matter of fact she became my baby sitter. When I was 4 my dad and I were at Granny's house and he told me to get into his car to go home. I told him "no" and was about to get a spanking. Dad heard something and turned to find his dog, Lou, standing next to him growling. That was one spanking I deserved but, never received. That good old dog lived another 7 years and she always looked after me and my cousins.

When I was still in diapers the family was all outside in the late summer of my first year. They were all sitting on the front porch and I was romping through the front yard and old Lou was following my every step. At one point in the

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



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Chamber Events

The 2018 Chamber Buy Local Extravaganza is scheduled for June 21st. There will be a estimated 750 attendees and over 100 local businesses displaying their products and services. Businesses wishing to reserve a booth or table can sign up on the web site at www.visitblairsvillega.com/events and click on "Buy Local Extravaganza" or businesses can come by the Chamber office and pick up a registration form. United Community Bank, Dixie Confections and Amazing Grace Catering are our sponsors and we have a few sponsorships still available for the event.

"Shop late" in downtown is on for the summer. The first Thursday in each month the downtown Blairsville stores will be open for extended hours from 5 PM to 8 PM. There will also be deals and discounts offered by the merchants.

Friday night was the beginning of the summer "Friday Concerts at the Old Courthouse". There will be a concert on the square every Fri-

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Al Harper



Letters to the Editor

Things That Go Bump In The Night

Dear Editor,

As an elderly person with nothing better to do than lay awake at night, there is plenty of time to think about things.

If reporting from the Brookings Institute is correct (and this is borne out by real world observations) home schooling is: "... geared to preparing a student for the real world... and home schooled students ...test scores are exceptionally high... and rate well above those of public and private school students".

So if this is true how can they be doing this without an infrastructure? How can a home schooled student achieve this obvious academic excellence without a gym, "art center", pig farm, mad naseum and still achieve these high academic and real world standards? Could it be that home schooling focuses on quality of education rather than where the next million for more infrastructure is coming from? And also could it be that the parents of public schooled children have deferred to Jimma's DoEd to educate their children rather than making it the responsibility of the parents and teachers? These are the things insomnia is made of!

And according to a FreedomWorks piece (and many others): "... the school district that spends the most per child have the worst results". Apparently throwing more money at "education" doesn't raise the student's academic standards; it just creates more infrastructure to repair and maintain in later years.

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A Good Deal

Dear Editor,

This earth is a big-bad world with a dog-eating mentality. Those who are climbing the ladder of success and fame are stepping on the fingers of others as they go up. Should Christians join some group and go out for good government? Certainly we ought to be interested in trying to elect the best person who has moral values and a honest heart, which is not always easy to find in today's rat race to the top. The Lord God says: Whatever a man sows, He will also reap. The Word of God has a great deal to say about the fact that when Christ returns and sets up His kingdom here on earth, the poor are going to get a good deal, a right and honest deal, for the first time in the history of the world. God never forgets His promise to His people. In the book of Isaiah 11:4 we read: But with righteousness shall He judge the poor. Believe me, the poor have not had a good deal yet. If you think by changing a political party you will somehow get a good deal for the poor, you are wrong. We cannot look to

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RC&D

Georgia Sentinel Landscape Partnership

The Departments of Agriculture (USDA), Defense (DoD) and Interior (DoI) have designated parts of southern Georgia as the newest Sentinel Landscape designed to protect natural resources, enhance habitat for several key species and maintain military readiness.

Through this partnership, more than 20 federal, state, and local partners with similar goals work together to sustain working farms and forests, protect vital habitat for several important species and enhance military readiness.

Building on a legacy of successful, collaborative land protection in Georgia, a diverse group of partners have identified about 1.3 million acres as critical to helping the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership. The Georgia Sentinel Landscape includes nine important military installations and ranges, including Fort Stewart, Fort Benning, and Townsend Bombing Range.

"It is critical to protect agricultural lands and wildlife habitat for current and future generations," said Acting Agriculture Deputy Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Robert Johansson. "This unique partnership can achieve greater gains by protecting private working and natural lands that are compatible with the military's need for open space to conduct sensitive missions. Together we will keep our nation strong militarily, while also continuing to ensure it provides food and fiber to the world." The military network stretching over portions of southern Georgia offers diverse testing, training, and operational resources, and capabilities to service men and women from each military branch.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA), as part of the new USDA Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) mission area, which also includes the Risk Management Agency (RMA), will be working with the other Georgia Sentinel Landscape partners to identify and help private landowners and agricultural producers voluntarily protect and improve working agricultural lands to sustain Georgia's food and fiber production. This partnership leverages technical and financial assistance available through Farm Bill programs and other resources. "It's critical, now more than ever, that we all work together," said Terrance O. Rudolph, USDA NRCS state conservationist. "Our FPAC agencies are poised to assist other project partners, to help our customers improve their land's productivity and impacts on the environment and community." Together,

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RC&D Executive Director
Frank Riley

