

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Active Shooter Exercise

The phrase "Active Shooter Event" seems to be heard almost every day. Whether it's on the TV, radio, social media or newspaper, active shooter events are hot topics. Everyone has their politics and their opinion, but the fact of the matter is that this is now the world that we live in.

The concern for Union County Emergency Management/Homeland Security (UCEMHS) is that these events can happen anytime and anywhere. We must be prepared. The active shooter event involves all emergency management phases of prevent, prepare, mitigate, respond and recover. One of the best ways to prepare is to conduct exercises.

UCEMHS was one of many partners who were involved in an Active Shooter Functional Exercise on May 30th at Union County High School. The exercise was initiated by Union County School System and Union County Sheriff's office. Planning began earlier this year. Assistance in planning was provided by Union County School System Administration staff, Union County Sheriff, Blairsville Police, Union County Fire and Union County Emergency Management.

A functional exercise is a multi-agency activity designed to evaluate capabilities and multiple functions using simulated response. The objectives of the functional exercise were to respond to the threat; to provide security to rescue teams; to prioritizing victims; to practice lockdown procedures and to demonstrate to the teachers and staff the actions of law enforcement and fire department during an event.

The participants of the drill were exposed to several different scenarios. Each scenario tested the skills, communications, and cooperation of the various responding units as well as command and control. There were many role players who played their part as teachers, students, panicked runners, and victims.

Teachers practiced lockdown and response procedures. Law enforcement practiced responding to the threat and security. The fire department practiced working with the law enforcement security teams and prioritizing victims. The exercise controllers attempted to make the exercise as realistic as possible. Observers and evaluators were impressed with the actions of the participants

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Too Bad

Does God throw someone away because he is too bad to save? Someone like David Berkowitz, arrested in 1977 for terrorizing New York with serial killings as the "Son of Sam"?

Berkowitz is still serving a life sentence. He now claims faith in Christ and a decided change of heart. He admits he brought suffering on many people, and prays for them. He talks about forgiveness saying, "I'm not worthy of these things." He puts his prison lockup in perspective. "The Lord set me free from self-sabotaging behaviors which causes chaos all my life. He set me free from the power of Satan, who had a hold on me. I have freedom to share my faith with others. I'm free from the power of sin that had me bound for so long. My freedom is found in Jesus." He summarizes his life with, "No one has done so much evil that God will not forgive them."

If you think that Berkowitz doesn't deserve heaven, you're right. But neither do you nor I. Jesus said, "No one is good except God alone" (Mark 10:18). But surely some sin is worse than others? Certainly in terms of earthly consequences, but in view of Divine judgment it's all the same. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). So the objection is moot.

If the thought of Berkowitz in heaven makes you think less of it, you're sitting in the shade with Jonah pouting about God's compassion. Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous" (Luke 5:32). That'd be the person that is too good to share heaven with those "sinners." Every sinner needs the same Savior, the same cross, the same compassion.

We cannot truly grasp the extent of God's vast and abiding love. The Bible says, "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit. 3:4-7). That kindness, mercy, and grace is the same for Berkowitz as it is for you.

The cry from a repentant heart to the Lord Jesus Christ

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. I am confused by the different types of roads in the county. Can you explain the difference?

A. There are basically three different types of roads within the county. There are county-maintained roads which the county has and will continue to maintain. There are public roads which the county does not maintain, but they have been open to the public for many years. This type of road may have been used by several property owners to access their property or it may be a connecting roadway that has been used by the public for many years. Finally, there are private roads which are owned by the property owners and are not county-maintained.

Q. What is the difference between a "public road" and a "private road" neither of which is county maintained?

A. A "private road" (not county maintained) can be controlled by those who live on that road or who actually own the road. The road has not been opened up for public access through the years; therefore, if the property owners want to gate or close the road, they have that right. The owners are also responsible for all maintenance of the road.

A "public road" (not county maintained) must be maintained by those that live on it or those that use it, or as in some cases, no one maintains it. Sometimes it is a homeowner's association, or just a group of property owners that get together to pay for maintenance. Usually, on a public road, access cannot be denied to the public since the road has been utilized by the general public for many years, and the road cannot be legally blocked off. This often causes problems when those paying to maintain the road cannot keep those that don't from using the road. This is often the case when an old US Forest Service road that is open to the public and utilized for hunting, goes across or through a subdivision or is accessed from a county road.

Both of these type roads "public and private" are identified by a BLUE street sign - which means they are "NOT" maintained by the county.

Q. So how is a county-maintained road different from a public road?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

Current Drug Trends Among Teens and Young Adults

Drug trends among teens and young adults today are different. The whole scene has changed, according to Dr. Edward Barrias, Medical Director at the Hanley Center, a residential addiction treatment center. Commonly used mind-altering substances that have been around for a long time such as opiates, marijuana, and hallucinogens, continue to be a problem. Today, however, we add to this list increasingly bizarre practices such as consuming embalming fluid, along with numerous synthetic drugs and organic drugs that are unstudied and often untraceable. Here is an overview of the major drug trends nationwide.

Kratom has become a hotly-debated drug, often touted as an organic pain-reliever and recently classified as an opioid by the Food and

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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.



Letters to the Editor

Shameful Actions

Dear Editor,
I would like to find out something about noise. Why is Harley motorcycles do not have to have mufflers also why so many car and trucks sound the same way. Does Blairsville have any muffler laws. I live on the intersection of 515 and Old Blue Ridge and I can tell you, if there are laws our police department could write noise tickets there all day and night between the Harleys and the cars and trucks. I road a motorcycle for years and I can tell you their "loud pipes save lives" is a lie. Most of the time they just make people mad. We need help from this pollution.
Kelly Waring

Thanks to Rep. Doug Collins

Dear Editor,
As a volunteer for the Alzheimer's Association here in North Georgia, I would like to thank Rep. Doug Collins for his Co-sponsorship of a key legislative effort in the support of Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act (S. 2076/H.R. 4256).

Endorsed by the Alzheimer's Association, the BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act would create an Alzheimer's public health infrastructure across the country to implement effective Alzheimer's interventions including increasing early detection and diagnosis, reducing risk and preventing avoidable hospitalizations.

See O'Brien, page 5A

Saving Bacon

Dear Editor,
This letter is a "shout out" to all the hard working and wonderful people who saved my bacon on the 26th of April at about 7:30 a.m. I volunteer at the Union County Senior Center. Kathy Hill, Director, and I were having a discussion on the morning of April 26th and I told her I was feeling strange and she suggested I sit down. That is all I remember until the EMTs revived me and told me they were going to give me a shock to stop my heart from beating too fast (180 b.p.m.). They shocked my heart and it went back to normal. They delivered me to Union General Hospital where I was well cared for until another emergency team transported me via ambulance to Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta. This emergency team had already delivered a patient to Braselton and another to Gainesville (did I mention hardworking?) They still had to drive back to Blairsville before any chance of resting!

If you wonder why I love this community, it is because we help each other! No matter if we are life long friends or total strangers!
Ralph Holdsworth

Letters to the Editor

Wait Upon God

Dear Editor,
There is a true story out of God's Holy Book, the Bible, about two sisters who had a brother named Lazarus who fell to sickness, so the sisters sent for Jesus to come and heal their brother, but Jesus instead stayed two more days where He was and Lazarus died, then Jesus told His disciples, now is the time to go; but when Jesus arrived both sisters told Him, if you had come when we asked you too, our brother would still be alive. Jesus replied: Your brother will rise again and Martha said I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day, but Jesus said; I am the resurrection and the life, he that believes in Me, though they be dead shall live again, then Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven and cried out with a loud voice at the tomb of Lazarus—Come Forth and Lazarus came forth walking with his grave clothes hanging from him and Jesus told them to loosen him.

The question for us here is why did Jesus wait two more days? Did Jesus not know that Lazarus would die before He arrived or did He care? Sometimes we ask the Lord why certain things happen in our lives or our families and we may get an answer or not. God is not obligated to respond to our request, because He wants us to trust Him in all things. Another point of interest is that God does what pleases Him according to His purpose and will for us, perhaps the reason why

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Where Does It Stop

Dear Editor,
Recently, our state and country celebrated Memorial Day, and the Armed Forces personnel who gave their life in the line of duty. Also, Confederate Memorial Day was remembered a month earlier and celebrated too by those who wanted to remember those who gave their life for their (Confederate) country. It is interesting that the State of Georgia, for the last one hundred and fifty years, has proclaimed April 26, along with other Southern States, as an official State holiday to pay tribute and honor to Confederate dead... that is until two years ago. For now, it still is an official holiday, but it has no name. It is listed as simply "State Holiday". Most blacks and the liberal media recently have put pressure to erase a lot of Southern and Confederate history. We see Robert E. Lee's statue being brought down in New Orleans. And we see similar acts taking place over the South. But I have to ask where does it stop? The theory all around seems to be about slavery and who agreed to it back then. If that's the case, then we have to assume "they" will hunt and seek to the farthest level. OK, take this: The father of our country, George Wash-

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Around The Farm

Uncle Mack

My mother's two uncles, Mack and Rufus Baker, were two men that everyone loved and respected. I looked up to each one because they were tough and yet kind. They paid extra attention to young boys. Each man spent a great amount of time in the woods. Each of them enjoyed hunting. As young men they especially enjoyed coon hunting the hills and hollows of Newberg Mountain. Before my dad ever dated my mother he was coon hunting with Mack and Rufus. He loved hunting with these men and his two Black and Tan Coon Hounds, Lou and Sam.

When the two dogs were about 6 months old my father asked Mack and Rufus if he could go hunting with them. The two men pulled up in the yard and waited with my grandparents as my daddy fetched his dogs. The trio of men and the young boy walked across the cotton and corn fields to the "James place". The dogs struck a coon and began the trailing just after dark. The raccoon led the dogs up and down Turkey Creek and under bluffs for about an hour. Finally, the old coon went up a Black Gum Tree standing on the banks of Turkey Creek.

Uncle Rufus tied the old dogs and told my dad to let Sam and Lou continue tree barking. Uncle Mack waded out into the middle of Turkey Creek and began to try and squall the coon out of the tree. Basically, Uncle Mack would make a sound that resembled a fighting coon. This squalling sound will entice a raccoon to walk down a tree and jump into the middle of a pack of dogs. This time was no exception with the squalling sound working to perfection and the old coon began to make its way down the tree. The coon got to within 10 feet of the ground where the dogs and Uncle Mack could see the coon. Uncle Mack made one more of the squalling sounds and the old coon jumped from the tree into the creek.

But, before the coon hit the water Uncle Mack's false teeth flew from his mouth and hit the water. The sound of the splashing convinced the dogs that the coon was in the water. So, Sam dove into the water right where the false teeth had landed. Almost immediately, the coon landed on the dog's back. So, there was Uncle Mack bending over looking for his teeth and the dog was swimming in circles all while howling because the coon was biting his ear.

Just when you thought matters couldn't get worse Lou, the other dog, joined the fight. Uncle Mack was hollering, "get the dogs". Sam was howling because the coon was still biting his

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



RC&D

Local Grown Food at your Local Farmers Markets

It's that time of year that we look forward to all winter when the farmer's markets open and local grown vegetables are ready for us to enjoy. Those who know me know that my favorite past-time is growing things here on my grandfathers old farm down on the river in Towns County.

My grandfather Walter Brown passed from us in 1965 but he still lives on in my mind and memories here in Mountain Scene where he was born in 1890. Walter was the first Towns County Agent in 1917 and eventually became the Director of the UGA Extension Service in Athens, so I get my Ag experience honestly having grown up on my family's farm in Taylor County where we grew hay, vegetables, and other things that contributed to the food supply of our area. Does not matter to me if its oats, corn, soybeans, cut flowers & vegetables in our High Tunnels, or any other kind of plants that I can plant a seed in the ground and watch it grow into something we can eat or sell.

Of course, farming requires my other favorite things: tractors, and equipment to prepare the ground, plant the crops, and harvest what the bears and other critters don't eat before we do. I never was one to use a hoe or manual equipment like that when I can use my 100 hp Kubota with AC, stereo and air ride seat (we've come a long way since the A John Deere) or my 1964 Ford 4000 or 1952 Ford 8N to prepare, plant, and harvest. We always plant more crops than we can eat or give away so we sell all that we can at one of the local farmer's markets or on the roadside on our farm. Sweet corn will be ready in late July. If we figured how much the vegetables that we plant cost we would just go to the farmer's market and buy our vegetables already picked and ready to prepare and save a lot of money, but that's not as much fun as growing it ourselves and playing with our tractors.

Local farmers need a place to sell their crops and this is where our local farmer's markets provide the place to sell what they grow so they can try to recoup some of their investment. Farmers Markets are a throwback to earlier days when our ancestors had to grow their own food and then they would bring what they did not use to town to sell to the community. Today Farmers Markets are gaining popularity across the country from the metro cities to the most rural of our towns. Local Farmers Markets have become popular community events that are drawing people together on Saturday mornings and

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RC&D Executive Director
Frank Riley



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