

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Firefighter TV Shows

I was recently asked by someone if I would be open to suggestions on column subjects. I said, "Absolutely." She wanted to know if firefighters watch the numerous firefighter television series, and if they did, what did they think of them? She believed that many people get their impressions of the fire service through these series.

I must admit that I do not watch any of them, and most firefighters I know do not watch them either. The simple reason is that they are not real. The story lines are either too simple that they seem childish or they are so complicated that the incident would most likely never occur. And, in my opinion, everyone is overly dramatic.

Besides that, most of the procedures and the actions of the actors are not what happens on a fire scene. The fact of the matter is that it makes for good entertainment but not much on how the fire department operates. People shouldn't take firefighter lessons from a television series. The same can be said about medical shows.

Most of the time, the fire department is a normal job just as any other job. We come to work; we check and maintain equipment; we train; we conduct pre-incident plans; we test hose; we inspect hydrants; and many other duties. The part of the job that is unique is responding to the emergency calls. Responding to the calls is the exciting and the most rewarding part.

Does the fire department respond to exciting and often dangerous incidents? Yes. There are times where it is life or death. Any time that you respond to a medical emergency or car accident or structure fire, there is a possibility that someone can get hurt or killed. It can be dangerous. Emotions can run high and it can be extremely stressful.

The people affected by the incidents are often filled with emotions of fear, anger, and sometimes desperation. It is difficult to not let victims' emotions affect your own. We make every effort to correct the situation, even to the point of sacrificing our health and safety. We don't do it for the credit or to entertain people; we do it for the satisfaction of knowing that we made a difference in someone's life.

So, when these firefighter TV shows are overly dramatic or they do something wrong, I can say that it gets under our skin.

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



His Story

An obscure verse in the Hebrew Scriptures describes the sons of Issachar as "men who understood the times." Could we, if we step back and look at the big picture?

Ideologies exist today that would remove Christians and our gospel, if not from the face of the earth, at least from visibility. Over there, it's by violence. Here, because they dared to live by faith, a baker, florist, teacher, judge, and business executive lost their jobs and more. Neither the world nor western culture can agree on what is good for human flourishing. We can't even agree on the value of human life.

God isn't done yet. Jesus said, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working" (John 5:17). Look at history since then. After Stephen's stoning, the early Christians found a reception for the gospel among the Greeks of the region, and in Europe. In the 7th C., the Saracens drove out Christians in the Mediterranean Basin. At the same time, Scotland and Ireland began to embrace the truth about Christ.

In the 17th C., while the Church of England punished non-conformists, the Pilgrims left on the Mayflower seeking religious freedom in America. In the 18th C., as French revolutionaries overran Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, William Carey took the gospel to India. In the 19th C., the church grew in Korea and China.

Now, despite the headwinds of communism, Korean missionaries number almost 30,000 worldwide, and China could soon be home of the largest Christian population in the world. The Chinese church has accepted the call to send missionaries to the Middle East. Despite hostility, the church among Iranians and Kurds has experienced startling growth. Many claim Christ spoke to them in dreams.

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). F. W. Borchman opined that the movement of God is more like a bird than a candle that can be snuffed out. "If you startle a bird, the gentle creature flies away and sings its lovely song upon some other

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Does Union County still have the Adopt-a-Road Program?

A. This program is definitely up and running, even though over the years the participation in the program has died down some. Litter along county roads has always been a problem and always will be. Keeping our roads free from litter is a very time consuming and expensive operation for the county.

Q. How do I Adopt-a-Road?

A. Any interested group or individual should contact Jennifer Mahan in the Union County Commissioner's Office at (706) 439-6000. There are a couple of forms that have to be filled out, which you can come by the office to fill out, or Jennifer can email or mail them to you. The adopting person or organization must adopt a minimum of one mile and pick up the litter at least once per quarter. You are also asked to fill out a Status Report when you pick up litter, because this information is used to calculate how much litter is picked up by the volunteers as a whole.

Q. What exactly is the Adopt-a-Road Program?

A. This is a litter prevention program that is sponsored by North Georgia Resource Management, Keep Our Mountains Beautiful, and Union County to attract public involvement in cleaning up litter along county roads. When individuals, civic organizations, or businesses volunteer to adopt a portion of a county road, they are committing to picking up all the trash on their adopted road at least four times per year or once a quarter.

Q. Does the Commissioner's Office furnish us with bags?

A. Once you have signed the Adopt-a-Road Agreement and picked your road, the Commissioner's Office will provide you with orange safety vests for the members of your party who will be picking up litter, as well as orange bags for collecting the litter in. There will also be an Adopt-a-Road sign placed at the beginning of the section of road you are picking up that states your name or organization and that you are keeping this section of road clean of litter.

Q. What do we do with the litter we pick up?

A. Once you are done collecting the litter, you can do one

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

Gabapentin Abuse: What You Need to Know

Recreational use and abuse of the prescription drug Gabapentin is on the rise, and the increase has raised concern among officials in several states.

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 non-opioid medication, known as "Johnnys" on the streets, is prescribed to treat epileptic seizures and nerve damage-related pain. The anti-convulsant is available in generic form and sold under the brand names Neurotonin and Gralise, among others. The drug is also used to treat people who are in detox treatment from alcohol withdrawal and cocaine withdrawal, and can be prescribed for insomnia, bipolar disorder, and restless legs syndrome. The medication also is prescribed for off-label purposes, including anxiety. It can be taken in capsule or tablet form, or as an oral solution.

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Letters to the Editor

Thanks for the Joy

The purpose of my letter is to thank someone for bringing joy into my life. Ironically, I have never met this person and possibly never will. Said person(s) takes the time and energy to adorn a calf statue with a hat that is appropriate to seasons, holidays and/or occasions. This well-dressed calf "resides" on Nottely Dam Road. I do suggest you drive by and enjoy the scenery!

Although I do not reside in Blairsville, I visit regularly, and on every trip I drive by to see what the calf is "wearing." At this stage of my life, I have learned it is the small things that make life enjoyable, and this is one of life's little pleasures.

So, a big thanks to the person(s) who puts a smile on my face and in my heart on a regular basis... whoever he or she may be!

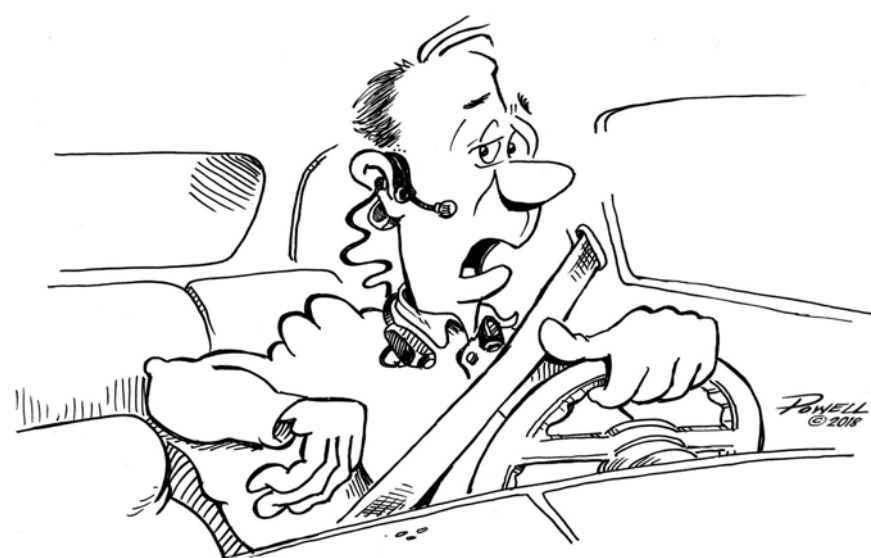
Smiling gratefully,
Sandy Kendall
Macon, GA

Blind Man's Hope

This is an amazing true story of a blind man from birth who was chained to his blindness and had to beg for alms at the gate of the city. And year after year he made his way to once again sit in the darkness of his disability without any hope. But then, stories of a man called Jesus, who had the power to heal people's illnesses and diseases by His spoken word or by the touch of His hand, came to the ears of the blind man, and for the first time in his life hope became a possibility. And one glorious moment in history, Jesus came passing by the city gate, and as the multitude passed by, the blind man asked what was going on. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was in their midst, and the blind man shouted out, "Jesus the Son of David, have mercy on me." But the crowd rebuked the blind man to be still, but he cried out the more to Jesus, who heard his cry and told the people to bring the blind man to Him. And Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And he replied, "That I may receive my sight," and Jesus said, "Receive your sight, your faith has saved thee." And immediately he could see and he followed Jesus, giving praise and glory to God.

My takeaway from this miracle by Jesus gives us all hope in sight of hopelessness. It gives us a glimpse into who Jesus Christ really was, the Son of God, and it shows us how the multitudes back then and even today probably would stop one from receiving the gift of restoration, whatever the issue. Nothing has changed over the past 2,500 years. Most men would give their right arm for their sight if need be, but to deny another the same is disgraceful in the sight of our Lord God. The

See Combs, page 5A



"The lawmakers were right! Since I'm able to talk hands free, driving is not nearly as distracting."

Letters to the Editor

Drug Use

The things you don't hear about. The formula for drugs: This is what kids need to see and hear about. Plain and simple.

Friends, boyfriends using, casual use, need more excitement, try new and different drugs, heading to the dangerous drugs now and overdosing.

Anytime you use drugs it takes a toll on your body - there is only so much your body can handle. Passing out, fast heartbeat, palpitations, your heart can't pump the necessary blood your body needs because it's beating too fast.

Do you ever think about closing your eyes and sleeping at night, never to wake up in the morning because your heart stopped? End of story.

Long term drug use: damages to the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys. You will be paying the price for the rest of your life in health problems. You don't think this can happen to you - wrong. You're gambling with your life every time you experiment with drugs.

Parents, if you think your child is above all this, you are in denial, face it and deal with it. You can't be their friend, you are their parent who is trying to stop your child from killing themselves.

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Dog Park

My wife and I have had the great pleasure of visiting and vacationing in Blairsville for many years. We love it so much that four years ago we purchased a home here; we continue to count our blessings for having discovered such a wonderful, welcoming community. It's been so great that we recently sold our home in Florida and moved here year-round.

One of the greatest blessings is our Union County Parks system. We love to hike the trails in Meeks Park, attend festivals and events, and walk our dog in the dedicated section of the park. While we truly enjoy how the park system is so well maintained, there's one concern we'd like to share with our fellow dog walkers.

The signage at the beginning of the Meeks dog park clearly states that all dogs must be on a leash. For some reason, many folks don't feel this applies to them or to their dogs. But it does. When we respectfully draw attention to their failure to comply with the restriction, we hear such things as, "My dog is under voice command, I don't need to leash him." Or, "My dog is so cute and gentle, it

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Around The Farm

Setting Hens and Popsicles

It is difficult for me to imagine not being able to go a local store to purchase a cold drink or candy bar. But in 1948, that is just the way it was in the Appalachians. The closest store to my Dad's home was about four miles away. There was no money to buy gas for the old truck let alone a Popsicle. The only time he was able to enjoy a treat was the monthly trip to town or when the peddler came by. The peddler came by once a week in a horse-drawn wagon. He had everything in that old wagon, even Popsicles. My Dad and uncle could trade six eggs for a Popsicle.

So, one hot July day they noticed the peddler coming down the road toward their house. These two young boys ran to the hen house to gather up the needed eggs. But that old boss hen was there, and she would not give up her eggs easily to these two young boys. My Dad was afraid of the old hen and she knew it. She would flap her wings and try to flog him every time he reached for an egg. My Dad looked out of the hen house and could see the peddler getting closer and closer to his home. He wanted the Popsicles so bad he "could just taste it." So, he reached down to pick up a stick and went back into the hen house. He walked toward the hen, and as she opened her wings, he hit her in the head with the stick. He told Uncle Bud to keep quiet about the incident.

They gathered up the eggs and went to the wagon, where they traded with the peddler. As they enjoyed their Popsicles they noticed their mother walking out of the hen house. As Granny neared her sons, Uncle Bud began to cry and blurted out, "Paul killed the old hen to get her eggs." He could never keep a secret. My Dad just knew he was in for a big bait of trouble. But he also new the taste of that Popsicle would be worth the pain of a whipping.

Granny sat down next to her sons and explained that they should have told her about the old hen, and they should never lie to her or their Daddy. So, the two boys learned a good life lesson. Anyway, the boys enjoyed their Popsicles, and later in the evening, the boys enjoyed a plate of fried chicken with fresh vegetables for supper.

My father was 10 and my Uncle Bud was 8 when this happened. Dad always remembered this incident, and each time he was faced with a decision about "wanting something so bad he could taste it," he would think about that old setting hen and Popsicles.

Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



RC&D

Secretary Perdue Applauds Fire Funding Fix in Omnibus

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue expressed his appreciation for the work of Congress to find a bipartisan fix for the way the

U.S. Forest Service is funded for fighting wildfires. Secretary Perdue had advocated for the change since taking office in April 2017. Congress included

RC&D Executive Director
Frank Riley



the solution in the FY 2018 Omnibus Spending Package, which has been signed into law by President Donald J. Trump. "The fire funding fix, which has been sought for decades, is an important inclusion in the omnibus spending bill, and I commend Congress for addressing the issue," said Secretary Perdue. "Improving the way we fund wildfire suppression will help us better manage our forests. If we ensure that we have adequate resources for forest management, we can mitigate the frequency of wildfires and severity of future fire seasons. I thank Congressional leaders, with whom I've frequently discussed this issue."

The solution included in the omnibus provides a new funding structure from FY2020 through FY2027. Beginning in FY2020, \$2.25 billion of new budget authority is available to USDA and the Department of the Interior. The budget authority increases by \$100 million each year, ending at \$2.95 billion in new budget authority by FY2027. For the duration of the eight-year fix, the fire suppression account will be funded at the FY 2015 President's Budget request - \$1.011 billion. If funding in the cap is used, the Secretary of Agriculture must submit a report to Congress documenting aspects of fire season, such as decision-making and cost drivers, that led to the expenditures.

The omnibus includes a two-year extension of Secure Rural Schools, providing rural counties approximately \$200 million more per year. It also provides Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act Reauthorization. The legislation also includes seven important forest management reforms, including: Categorical Exclusion for Wildfire Resilience Projects; Healthy Forest Restoration Act inclusion of Fire and Fuel Breaks; 20-year Stewardship contracts; Cottonwood Reform; Fire Hazard Mapping Initiative; Fuels Management for Protection of Electric Transmission Lines; Good Neighbor Authority Road Amendment. Until the funding solution was achieved, the fire suppression portion of the USFS budget was funded at a rolling 10-year average of appropriations, while the overall USFS budget remained relatively flat. Because fire seasons are longer and conditions are worse, the 10-year rolling fire suppression budget average kept rising, consuming a greater percentage of the total Forest Service budget each year. This increase forced the agency to take funds from prevention programs to cover fire suppression costs. In addition, hunting, fishing and other recreational programs were cut to cover the costs of fire suppression.

Last year, wildland fire suppression costs exceeded \$2.5 billion, making it the most expensive year on record. The USFS confronted wildland fires last summer that started in the Southeast and continued through the year in the Southwest, Pacific Northwest, Intermountain West and Pacific Northwest. At peak season, more than 28,000 personnel were dispatched to fires, along with aircraft and other emergency response resources.

Since taking office, Secretary Perdue has worked diligently to address the issue and ensure both fire suppression and prevention efforts receive the proper funding they need. This long overdue funding fix for wildfire suppression will allow the Forest Service to put more funds into prevention programs like the ones we have developed here in North Georgia, Virginia and Western North Carolina.

These programs include Firewise Com-

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