

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Awards and Appreciation

Union County Fire Department held its Awards and Appreciation Dinner last Saturday night. The dinner was an opportunity for firefighters from all the fire stations to meet, have dinner and enjoy a night of fellowship. Firefighters were presented with various awards and years of service pins during the ceremony.

There were different categories of awards based on the different levels of firefighter certifications. The first level is the Support Firefighter. This is the entry level for anyone who would like to join the fire department. The Support Firefighter is a person who has completed 48 hours of initial basic training in many areas of fire department operations. The Support Firefighters operate fire trucks and support other firefighters who are fighting the fire. There were 12 firefighters awarded this certification.

The next category was Registered Volunteer Firefighter. These are firefighters who have completed the Support Firefighter training and have completed additional training to actively participate in fighting fire. The requirements for this certification involve approximately 95 hours of training and firefighters must complete a live fire training class. There were 14 firefighters awarded this certification.

Firefighters can take further training and advance to the level of National Professional Qualifications (NPQ) Firefighter I. This is a recognized certification that meets the national standards for structural firefighting. Students must complete the NPQ class consisting of over 200 hours and then pass written and skills exams. There were fifty-four firefighters awarded this certification.

There is also a National Professional Qualifications (NPQ) Firefighter II certification which is considered the highest level of certification at the firefighter level. Firefighters must be certified as NPQ Firefighter I and complete the Firefighter II class as well as testing. The class involves an additional 80 hours of training. There were 36 firefighters awarded this certification.

Firefighters were also recognized for their years of service with the department. Years of service pins were awarded in five-year increments. There were 22 with at least five years of service; 11 with 10 years of service; six with 15 years of service; three with

See Dyer, page 5A

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Free Indeed

The U.S. State Department convened a three-day, first-ever Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom last month. Political and religious leaders from over 80 countries attended the gathering in Washington, D.C.

During the event, Sam Brownback, the U.S. Ambassador for Religious Freedom, announced the release of the Potomac Declaration. This document notes that 80 percent of the world's population endures limitations on the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and declares reasons to promote that right.

It is fitting that America lead such an effort, since it's in our DNA. The Pilgrims were separatists, harassed by the Church of England, and they came to these shores seeking religious freedom. But more to the point, this freedom is under duress not just then, but now; not just in foreign lands, but in America's court rooms.

Speaking about a Supreme Court ruling, Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, called it a "defacto and legal catalyst for the marginalization of Americans who embrace a biblical worldview. The moment biblical truth stands defined as hate speech in our nation, America as we know her will cease to exist." That is serious.

In some quarters, sexual freedom trumps religious freedom. Vince Vitale, director of the Zacharias Institute, said, "Culture seeks from sex what is found in God: meaning, intimacy, identity, freedom." Our post-truth culture wants to be autonomous, liberated from God, and it confuses that for freedom. Autonomy is an insidious form of captivity whose cellmates are chaos, confusion and despair. It is also a pretext to restrict religious freedom.

The 17th-century scientist Blaise Pascal said, "Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it may be true. The cure for this is first to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect. Next make it attractive, make good men wish it were true, and then show that it is." I like his optimism!

Jesus said, "The truth will make you free." He was talking about something reasonable, worthy, and attractive. Don't you wish it were true? It is! He is talking about Himself. "If the

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

This week's questions and answers focus on the Union County Registrar's Office. This office is under the direction of the Board of Registrars. These questions are some of the most common questions we receive, and the answers contain general information. If you have further questions, you can call the Union County Registrar's Office at 706-439-6016.

Q. Where do I go to register to vote?

A. The Union County Registrar's Office handles voter registration here in Union County. They are here in the Courthouse located at 65 Courthouse Street, Blairsville, Georgia 30512. You can also register to vote at any public library or at the Department of Drivers Services. You may also print and mail an application or apply online through the Georgia Online Voter Registration System at <https://RegisterToVote.sos.ga.gov>. You can call the Registrar's Office at 706-439-6016 with questions regarding registering to vote.

Q. If I am not yet registered to vote in Union County, is there still time to register before the Nov. 6 election?

A. Yes, there is still time to register to vote and still be able to vote in the November election. You have to be registered by Oct. 9.

Q. What else does the Registrar's Office handle other than voter registration?

A. The Registrar's Office is under the direction of the Board of Registrars, which is responsible for the safekeeping of all registration records for Union County. This includes adding new voters; removing deceased voters, felons, etc.; entering voter history; and working with the office of the Secretary of State on a daily basis to verify voter eligibility. They are also responsible for all early and absentee voting. Their rules and regulations are governed by the Georgia State Election Code, as well as the State Board of Elections.

Q. Is this the office I would go to for early voting?

A. Yes, it is. Early in-person voting is available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., three weeks prior to an election, as well as one Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. two weeks prior to the election. Absentee ballots are available 45 days before the election.

See Paris, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

Marijuana Tied to Psychotic Symptoms in Some Teens

Adolescent boys who regularly use marijuana are at increased risk of experiencing persistent, subclinical psychotic symptoms, particularly paranoia and hallucinations, even after they stop using the drug, a study published in the American Journal of Psychiatry suggests.

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.

Lead investigator Jordan Bechtold, Ph.D., Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, notes, "Perhaps the most concerning finding is that the effect of prior weekly marijuana use persists even after adolescents have stopped using for one year."

"Given the recent proliferation of marijuana legalization across the country, it will be important to enact preventive policies and programs to keep adolescents from engaging in regular marijuana use, as chronic use seems to in-

See Drug Free, page 5A



Chamber of Commerce

I would like to thank the Board of Directors for giving me the opportunity to serve as the President of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce.

The first week has been very exciting and has included welcoming several new members:

Proflame; Gaines Concealed Carry; North Georgia Extreme Boot Camp; Superior Paint; Our Hometown Pharmacy; AirMedCare Network; Sensational Shakes; and The Nifty Thrifty.

We also had great ribbon cuttings for the Girl Scout Union Towns Service Unit and Sensational Shakes.

Some of the upcoming events include the Union County Agriculture Education Open House on Aug. 16, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Everyone in the community is invited to come out and see what the students will learn throughout the year, as well as what the Young Farmer adult education program has planned. A meal will be provided.

See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

Saved by Grace

To the Editor:

Ever been around someone who always complained about anything and everything? They never find any good in others, yet they see themselves as above the law of the land. Back in Jesus' day, at times, He would dine and eat with despised people, while the Jewish religious leaders, called the Pharisees and scribes, would complain of Jesus eating and associating with sinners. Wow, what a new revelation, yet the Jewish leaders never thought of themselves as sinners but as being perfect in their positions of being head of the church, though they made other laws for the common core people to abide by, which didn't come from Jesus Himself, but from sinful man.

In Romans 3:23, we read: For all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. Being religious never saved anyone, only faith in Jesus Christ can save a lost person from hell.

How can one work or earn their way into heaven? It can't be done. You can possess all the wealth in this world and not a dime of it will buy your way into God's kingdom. It's only by faith in Christ that we achieve entrance into His glory, yet the story after story is told of people who thought they had a better plan than God's. They might have been very brilliant in their thinking, but they were

See Combs, page 5A

On Belief

Dear Editor,

The ancients believed in many gods: gods of the trees, gods of the river, gods of the sky, etc. It would seem that in all our history, man has realized that the earth itself has provided for them. They just didn't know how it came about. So, they invented a rationale.

They couldn't see who gave them this bountiful largess, so they imagined an unseen power or person that was responsible. Therefore, the creation of multiple gods.

Later, maybe through an "odd man out" process, they settled on one god. Of course, this one god had different faces: the god of the Hebrews, the god of Islam, and the god of Christianity.

It would seem that this one god told his followers to believe subtle differences not to be believed by the others. Each group had different goals on earth, but the ultimate goal was heaven (that place in the sky). Then, there was that other place that scared the crap out of people and increased their belief in whatever was popular at the time (believe us or we'll kill you, believe in me and no other, etc.).

Here we are, billions of people occupying this small orb, believing in different ways

See Sowers, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Time to Work Together

Dear Editor,

America is terribly divided now. It seems that if one side of the political aisle holds a position, the other side opposes it, no matter its merits. It seems that the idea of compromise is that we talk, and then do it my way. However, it was not always that way. There was a time in American politics when both sides could sit down together and discuss an issue and arrive at a common solution, and I believe it is possible again. After all, we are all Americans, and we share common values. We want to pass on a healthier, more prosperous world to our children. We care deeply about the values of kindness, honesty, fairness, and love of neighbor. We believe in loyalty, respect, and the sanctity of life.

So, let us all decide to build on those common values and begin to work out the big problems of our times so that we truly can pass on a better world to our children. That means not only talking to the other person, but truly listening to the other person with the idea that we can learn something from them. It is time to begin to live our values of respect and love as we strive to work out our differences, both individually and as a nation. Our forefathers knew this well when they said, "United We Stand, Divided We Fall."

See Dixon, page 5A

A Higher Opinion

Dear Editor,

At first, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry when I read the Aug. 1, 2018, opinion piece entitled "Happy Now?" Immediately, I thought of a sage comment my grandfather used when some guilty soul or other made accusations about others that applied equally to themselves. I can still hear his booming voice: "That's the pot calling the kettle black!"

Then, a more salient quote came to mind from a power higher than my Papa's. It comes from the prophet Isaiah, and its words have come into sharp focus in social, political and religious circles in recent years. "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil. That put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight."

But then, I am one of those "evangelicals" who also believes what the Bible says about the sovereignty of God in the affairs of our nations and their leaders. "Do not toot your own horn or speak with a stiff neck. For promotion does not come from the east or from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge. He puts down one and sets up another." Imagine that! God is

See Buckman, page 5A

Wrong Way, Calvin

As mentioned before, Calvin was a man I deeply admired. He never made it past the seventh or eighth grade, but he commanded an inordinate amount of horse sense. He was also known as being the best heavy equipment operator in our area, and he took great pride in his ability to find his way through the woods. We had coon hunted numerous times together in all types of weather, and he never failed to bring us out of the woods right back to his truck.

During my freshman year of college, I enrolled in a couple of math classes that impacted my ability to find my way through the woods. My first semester I took a geometry class, and the second semester I took a trigonometry class. During the trig class, my professor used a compass to enforce what he was telling us about angles and degrees. Normally, I shunned math, because I had trouble understanding its basic concepts. However, this professor brought the class alive for me, and I ended up passing the class with a high B. I learned about trigonometry, and I also learned to use a compass. I was eager to show Calvin what I had learned.

As I shared my newfound information with my friend, he grinned and asked, "Why do you need to use a compass in the woods?" I explained that a compass could keep you from getting lost. "I have never been lost, but I was once bewildered a few days, and I have never used a compass," Calvin stated. He went on by telling me, "Don't you let me catch you using one of them things when we're hunting together." Later that night we went coon hunting in Lookout Valley, between Lookout Mountain and Sand Mountain. We were hunting some ridges between the two mountains, and the dogs had spent a lot of time on some cold tracks traveling from one ridge to another. Also, showers were forecast for the next day and fog was now moving into the valley. At last, the dogs treed in a deep hollow between two tall ridges. We were exhausted when we shined the lights up in the persimmon tree to find the coon. We shot the coon from the tree and sat down to take a break. We drank some coffee and Calvin told tales. After a while, we got up to leave, and he began going in the wrong direction. I knew it would cause problems for me, but I told him he was headed in the wrong direction. I knew I had hurt his pride when he said, "I have lived and hunted in these hills for more than 40 years, and you mean to tell me I'm going the wrong way?" I asked him, "Which way is Sand Mountain?" He pointed his finger and said, "West." I then asked, "Shouldn't we be

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Honey Bee

Aug. 18 is National Honey Bee Day this year. Honey bees are a very important part of agriculture and the natural beauty that is all around us in the mountains. One third of our food is produced as a result of insect pollination. Georgia is among the top three states in the U.S. in producing honey bees and queen bees for sale. Here in the mountains, we even have our own unique honey flavor from the sourwood trees that is world renowned. Young Harris College hosts the Beekeeping Institute every year, which includes speakers from all over the U.S. and around the world and provides concentrated training in all aspects of practical beekeeping.

Bees are social insects, meaning they live in groups, cooperating with different castes and performing unique tasks. The main type is the worker. These can number from 2,000 to 60,000 in a colony. They are reproductively underdeveloped females that do all of the work in the colony. There are also drones, which are the male bees. A colony may have zero to 500 drones. Their only purpose is to fly from the hive and mate with queens from other colonies. The queen bee is a fully fertile female that produces eggs. If the queen dies off,

See Williams, page 5A

Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



RC&D

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan, or CWPP, is a written plan that is administered by the Georgia Forestry Commission and used by a community to prepare for eventual wildfires that would require local resources to protect the community, like with our 2016 wildfires.

A CWPP is designed through collaboration between state and local fire agencies, RC&Ds, homeowners, and interested stakeholders. The plan implements the community's values and serves to protect natural and community resources and public safety. Planning also enables communities to address their development patterns in the Wildland Urban Interface and determine how to reduce risk through alternative development patterns. The plan includes prioritized recommendations for the appropriate types and methods of fuel and structure ignitability reduction to protect the community's essential infrastructure. Specifically, the plan includes community-centered actions that will: Educate citizens on wildfire and ways to protect lives and property; Sup-

See Riley, page 5A

RC&D Executive Director
Frank Riley



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Kenneth West
Publisher/Owner

Shawn Jarrard
Editor

Derek Richards
Advertising Director

Todd Forrest
Sports Editor

Mark Smith
Staff Writer

Lowell Nicholson
Photographer

Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - One Year \$40. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 10, 1987, at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement.

Phone: 706-745-6343 Fax: 706-745-1830 * P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, Georgia 30514

Website: www.nganews.com
Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com
Mailing: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, Georgia 30514