

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Severe Thunderstorms

We are all trying to make the most of this summer even though we are dealing with COVID-19. The summer brings fun and sun, but it also brings severe thunderstorms. The summer heat and humidity provide the right conditions for severe thunderstorms to develop. It seems that we have had a line of storms almost every evening. Storms pop-up suddenly and at times, produce heavy rain, dangerous lightning, and flash floods. Union County Fire Department wants you to understand the potential of these thunderstorms and what you can do to stay safe.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



The first thing is to stay informed. Television, radio, internet, and social media can provide information on severe weather events. Almost everyone has a weather app of some sort on their phone. You can also sign up for CodeRED alerts to receive weather warnings. The CodeRED Weather Warnings automatically notifies citizens in the path of severe weather just moments after a warning has been issued by the National Weather Service.

Lightning that is associated with severe thunderstorms can be very dangerous. If you can hear thunder, then there is the potential for lightning in your area. The best practice when there is lightning near you is to get indoors and avoid possible conduction areas. If in a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees. If in an open area, go to a low place such as a ravine or valley.

Thunderstorms can not only produce lightning but can produce heavy rain in a small area and in a short amount of time. This heavy rain can make driving very dangerous due to water on the road and lack of visibility. The best practice is to slow down; increase distance between vehicles or even pull into a parking area until it passes.

The heavy rain can also produce flash flooding. People should avoid walking or driving through flooded areas or running water. Just six inches of moving water can knock you down and two feet of water can sweep your vehicle away. If there is a chance of flash flooding, move immediately to higher ground.

We all want to enjoy our summer, but we must keep safety in mind. Stay informed on the weather when making plans. Be aware

See *Fire*, page 5A

J. I. Packer

Sitting on the porch in the cool of the morning, they pondered what the day might bring. There was a typical porch for those days, near enough to the road to overhear the travelers' talk, and to chat with them.

As the morning stirs to life, the travelers appear. As they pass, they discuss with the porch-dwellers the condition of the roads, where they lead, and what a traveler might see along the way. To the porch-dwellers, it's all theoretical talk since they are not on the journey. To the travelers, these are far more practical topics. The day, the weather, the roads call for understanding, decision, and action.

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



J. I. Packer used this allegory to explain his approach to writing the popular book, "Knowing God" (1973). It is one of his most notable contributions. In it, he unpacks for the seeker and believer how practical theology affects you as a traveler in life.

For example, he considers God's wisdom made available to you. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psa. 111:10). "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). Packer writes, "It is like being taught to drive. You do not ask yourself why the road should narrow or screw itself into a dogleg wiggle just where it does, nor why that van should be parked where it is, nor why the lady in front should hug the crown of the road so lovingly; you simply try to see and do the right thing in the actual situation that presents itself. The effect of divine wisdom is to enable you to do just that in everyday life." Quite practical.

Packer could have been a theoretical theologian. He was an Oxford-educated systematic theology professor. But the emphasis of his life was to offer knowledge and tools for people to understand and enjoy God in everyday life. In one of his last interviews he said, "As I look back on the life that I have lived, I would like to be remembered as a voice - a voice that focused on the authority of the Bible, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the wonder of his substitutionary sacrifice and atonement for our sins." During Packer's long life, he unpacked these deep truths of God in dozens of books. Yet he famously summarized it all as

See *Fowler*, page 5A

Commissioner's Questions

We have recently had several issues with people cutting more trees on their property than is allowed by law and I asked the Building and Development office if they would contribute some Q & A to remind the public that there are several ordinances and state laws related to this issue that MUST be followed.

Q. Does Union County have more land development regulations than other rural counties?

A. Not generally. All counties are required to follow state laws with local ordinances when utilized.

Q. I am about to start construction on my home. Can I start grading before my building permit is issued?

A. NO! You must obtain a Building Permit before any grading can begin, whether you are building now or not. Obtaining a permit prior to any grading allows the Building Inspection and Development Department to verify that your property is not required to have a "Notice of Intent from EPD" (requirements based on certain environmental standards related to water and erosion) and that the property does not fall under "mountain protection" (property above 2200' in elevation). It also allows them to determine if there are any streams or rivers on your property that would require a 50-foot buffer.

Q. I have property that is above 2,200' in elevation. What rules are in place for mountain protection?

A. Under Union County's Mountain Protection Ordinance, which follows state law, you can only remove 50% of trees that are 8" in diameter or larger, measured 4 1/2 feet above the ground surface in the mountain protection area. Given a one-acre lot, totally in a mountain protection area, you are only allowed to remove half of the 8" or larger diameter trees from that lot.

Q. Why do we look up on some of the mountain ridge lines and still see homes with no trees in front of them?

A. The law was passed to "Protect" the mountain tops. It was a very controversial bill when passed many years ago. It only pertains to trees at or above 2200' in elevation and unfortunately, some people clear the entire 50% of trees on the ridge top.

Q. Are their monetary penalties for violating this regu-

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



See *Paris*, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Forever Chemicals

To the Editor,

Our elected officials are trying to convince us that processing leachate (landfill wastewater) from Forsyth County is no big deal. It meets all current EPD guidelines.

The problem is that the EPD does not regulate nor require testing for some very nasty toxic chemicals that are present in leachate. These chemicals (PFAS) never go away. Blairsville Wastewater Treatment does not remove them. They are being dumped into our streams, lakes and drinking water. Some states do regulate these substances, but waiting for Georgia to get around to it is like closing the barn door after the cows escape, too late.

There are other ways to dispose of leachate. But none as easy and profitable as dumping them in Union County.

I long ago stopped believing that our government does what's in the best interest of the people. Union County is no different. The profit of a few well connected people comes at the expense of many. So sad.

Susan Haslam

Concerned About Kratom

To the Editor,

As I drive down Georgia 515 in Blairsville, I see an extensive banner flag advertising kratom. Until a couple of years ago, I had no idea what kratom was until I experienced a loved one use it as a "medicinal" way to alleviate their heroin urges.

My concern is kratom comes off as an herbal "drug." In my mind, I don't understand how an herbal drug can cause dependency. When reaching out to local drug rehabs about my loved one's issues he was experiencing due to kratom withdrawal, I found out a person can require rehab for kratom use. My first thought was this can't be true; it's legal to purchase this at more than one of our local convenience stores. Then after doing some investigation, I now realize there is a lot of money put into making sure this herbal "drug" stays on the market.

In my research, I'm finding this is a "drug of concern" from the DEA. When consumed in low doses, it becomes a stimulant. In high doses, it becomes euphoric for the person taking kratom.

See *Delosh*, page 5A

Responding to Systemic Claims

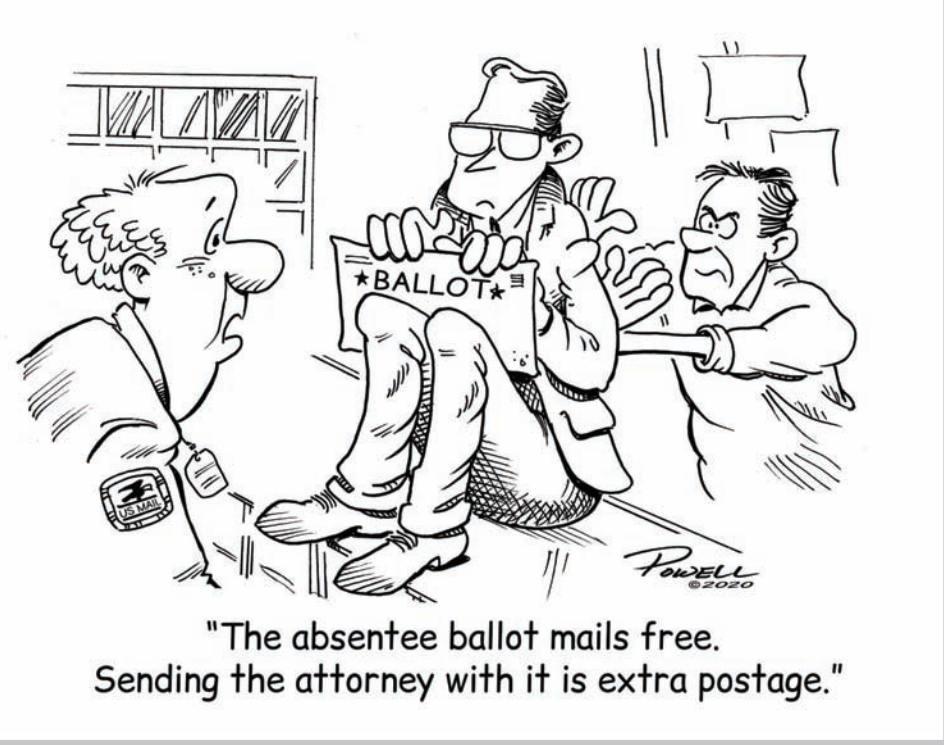
To the Editor,

In my original letter there was a typo: 1996 should have been 1966. How could a Black Panther shoot at one of our officers in 1972 if the organization was formed in 1966?

First, there is no such thing as a "right-wing" media. If you want to call MSNBC a right-wing media, you might as well call New York a right-wing city. Secondly, the writer responding to my original letter wrote, "The BLM movement did not 'stem' from the death of ONE man. This particular movement started in 2013 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the shooting death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in 2012." George Zimmerman was acquitted because a jury decided he acted in self-defense. That was ONE man. This writer also said, "If the entire government refuses to provide 'liberty and justice for all' by 'systemically' turning a blind eye to hatred and racism... who will provide it?" Not only was the Democratic Party (as well as Joe Biden) against integration (busing white and black children across cities), but Robert Byrd, distinguished Senator from West Virginia, who was eulogized by his best friend, Sen. Joe Biden, was the Grand Wizard of the KKK.

I'm tired of people using the word "systemic" when, in my original letter, I pointed out what the word means: "of or affecting the body as a whole." The only thing systemic about our government is corruption on both sides. There is certainly not systemic racism in police departments. I know because I worked with a great many different officers. The only time I wit-

See *Crawford*, page 5A



Letters to the Editor

Buying Your Vote

To the Editor,

Anyone paying into or collecting Social Security should be angry about the president's recent executive order deferring payment of the individual payroll tax. This is nothing more than the president using your money to buy your vote. The corruption implicit in that is bad enough, but worse still, his scheme will burden working families with a huge tax liability on Jan. 1, and it threatens the solvency of the Social Security Trust Fund so that current and future retirees may also be hurt. Here's why.

While he defers payment through Dec. 31, he cannot forgive the taxes due. As a result, when, two months after the election, Jan. 1 comes around, wage earners will still owe the tax. This will place a tremendous burden on people who live paycheck to paycheck, since additional money will have to be withheld from their earnings. For higher wage earners covered by the deferral it will mean less discretionary money to spend in the new year. The double whammy of lost income for these two groups threatens an even wider population, because reduced consumer spending will have a negative impact on the economy at a time when it is still staggering

See *Plunkett*, page 5A

Property Tax Increase

Dear Lamar:

I write in reference to the recently announced Union County property tax increase of 20 percent. This comes as a bit of a surprise to me in light of the fact that we vote over extensions of the 1-percent E-SPLIST, yet we get no say in large property purchases and huge property tax increases.

So our Union County Sole Commissioner, Lamar Paris, has unilaterally decided to raise rates and cost many of us a significant chunk of cash, and doing it in the wake of recent large property purchases, not to mention costly additions in the county during previous years of questionable value. This, of course without consultation or even comment, much less approval by county taxpayers.

I can only imagine that there have been lingering growth costs, exacerbated by the need for increases in personal and property expenses and other overhead costs. I don't know what these may be, indeed it is not my responsibility to know the specifics, that being the job of our Sole Commissioner. Of course, one must question the budgetary skills of a Sole Commissioner if he has indeed been surprised by these costs. I am sure that Mr. Paris, a sentient being of long experience, feels the pressure of these matters,

See *Hancock*, page 5A

Going to the Fair

Going to the Fair has always been a great experience for me and my family. In the days before TV became a driving force in our lives, the Fair was a place one could go to find adventure. I can remember holding to my Daddy's hand as we walked by tents with signs on the outside advertising bearded ladies and men which were 9 feet tall. A woman with a beard doesn't interest me much now, but when I was 7, I wanted to see it all.

I also wanted to ride everything. My mother also loved going to the Fair as a child. She always wanted to ride the Ferris Wheel, but, for some reason her father always refused to let her ride it. He thought the thing would come off the axle and roll away. When Mom and Dad first began to date they went to the Fair and rode all the rides including the Ferris Wheel. As she got on the ride she could still hear her Daddy's words, "Don't you go on that Ferris Wheel." Shirley could not enjoy the ride for feeling the guilt which came with disobeying her Daddy's orders.

When I was a freshman in high school, our youth group from church went to the Fair. We rode all the rides including a roller coaster and the Ferris Wheel. I even rode the tilt-a-whirl after eating a chili dog. The day was not finished, so we began to walk through the game area. I wasn't interested in most of them. But, the shooting gallery caught my attention. I always considered myself a fair shot, so, I decided to try my hand. The idea was to shoot a red star out of the card.

At first I thought all that had to be done was to shoot the star, which I did. I was very proud of my accomplishment, but, the man behind the counter grinned when I told him I had hit the star. He explained that I had to completely remove all the red from the card with only 10 shots. So, I tried to complete the job and was amazed that there was still a sliver of red on the card. I thought about this a minute and decided to try again and again and again. I tried to remove this star a number of times and spent almost \$10 in the process. Finally, I completely shot all the red off the star from the card. I was very proud of myself.

Now, I was able to pick out a prize for my efforts. I could have chosen a watch, a hat, a cheap knife or a dozen other items. But, I chose a photograph on a poster. There was a beautiful woman on that poster. Many of you will remember an actor by the name of Raquel Welch. She had starred in a movie about cavemen. This poster had her posing in a deerskin bikini. You also need to understand the poster was life sized. A good friend, Mark, was with me when I picked

Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



See *Cummings*, page 5A

Chamber of Commerce

As summer winds down, the Chamber continues doing everything within our power to promote local merchants. In doing so, we are excited to announce several upcoming ribbon cuttings for a few of our new, or currently relocated, businesses, beginning with Pinnacle Bank on Thursday, August 20, at 12:30 p.m. Join us as we welcome this respected financial institution to the family of other fine banks in Union County. The ribbon cutting ceremony invites the community to celebrate alongside new businesses as we introduce them to Blairsville. Rewinding to last Spring, the necessity to postpone this tradition for our new chamber members became obvious. In the wake of pandemic, the Chamber is determined to debut these businesses and has adapted the traditional ceremonies to a series of ribbon cutting "crawls." With all safety protocols in place, this season will be different. The Chamber staff invites you to stop by Keen Creation and Co, Mountain Life Mer-

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



See *Chamber*, page 5A

Pollinator Census

2020 is the second annual Great Georgia Pollinator Census. Last year the pollinator census was a huge success. It was the first of its kind and really generated some great data on pollinators. It's also a great way for citizens to become involved, learn about, and protect pollinators. This year's census will be held on August 21st and 22nd. Let's talk about how you can be involved this year.

The pollinator census comes together because of the hard work of Becky Griffin. Becky works at GMREC just south of Blairsville. With concerns about pollinator decline, the census allows us to capture critical data that can be used year after year to track the health and wellbeing of pollinators.

Some locations will have guided counts. If you're unsure of how to participate, joining a guided count is a great way to be a part of the census. Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge will be holding a guided count on Friday August 21st at 2:00 pm. If you would like to participate from home that is also possible.

If you want to join the pollinator census at home it's very simple. Go to the ggapc.org website. Click on the link to the handy counting sheet. Print out the counting sheet and take it outside with you to start your count. Each census count will be done by observing a flowering plant for 15 minutes. Fill out the information at the top of the chart. This includes information on the name of the plant, date, time, and temperature. Also, circle the weather conditions at the time of your count.

For the census, there are eight categories that you count insects. They are: carpenter bee, bumblebee, honeybee, small bees, wasps, flies, butterflies, and other insects. Let's go through how to identify each of the insects in these categories.

Carpenter bees are going to be the largest of the bees that we see. They look very similar to bumble bees. The major difference is that carpenter bees have no hair on their abdomen (also known as their hind end). Carpenter and bumble bees have yellow and black hair. Bumblebees will have all black hair on their abdomens.

Honeybees are smaller than bumblebees and will have brown or blackish stripes mixed with golden-brown. They have hair down their whole body. Small bees are any bee smaller than a honeybee. We have many different species of small bees out there that are native pollinators. These native pollinators are very important for pollinating native plants. Small bees can be down to the length of a staple.

See *Williams*, page 5A

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
Lowell Nicholson Photographer

Website: www.nganews.com • Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com • Mail: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

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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 \$5. 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. 17, 1988, 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.

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