

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## A true No. 1

In the world of athletics, the question of who is No. 1 always is front and center. Who has the best football team, basketball team, baseball team, hockey team and, well, you get the picture.

In the world of real life, the question of who has the No. 1 cardiac care unit ultimately is much more important.

In this week's edition of the *North Georgia News*, you'll find an advertisement recognizing the Ronnie Green Heart Center as the No. 1 Cardiology hospital in Georgia. I'm living proof that this is a fact.

In February 2009, I became extremely ill. I didn't have a clue what was wrong. I knew it wasn't the flu, pneumonia, or anything close to that.

I went to a doctor in another county, I was told I more than likely had the flu. I went, and spent half a day at a local hospital, and was sent home with a diagnosis of walking pneumonia.

Six days later, and feeling close to death, I went to the emergency room at Lanier Park Hospital. Dr. Jerry Ball, the attending physician at Lanier Park, told me he couldn't tell me what others had told me, that I had something simple. Take into account, I had dropped 40 pounds in three weeks and I had stopped eating. No, Dr. Ball told me I wouldn't be going home anytime soon, if at all.

"Mr. Duncan, you're in critical condition, we're sending you by ambulance to Northeast Georgia Medical Center," Dr. Ball said.

I remember being wheeled into the emergency room. I remember doctors standing over me, trying to make a determination what was wrong with me.

I was prepped and immediately taken into surgery to do a cut down on an abscess on my left collarbone. I woke up in ICU at 3:38 the next morning. Dr. John Gott, my surgeon, was by my side.

As I opened my eyes, Dr. Gott told me it was an honor to see me open my eyes. He told me I had less than a 5 percent chance of survival. He told me I was in the Ronnie Green Heart Center. He told me I was on the road to recovery.

On March 16, Dr. Daniel Winston performed open-heart surgery to replace my aortic valve, which had been damaged by the abscess on my left collarbone.

On the Friday before my Monday surgery, Dr. Winston knelt down beside my bed and told me to hang in there for three more days.

"Come Monday, I'll make you feel like a brand new man," Dr. Winston said.

Monday came, my aortic valve was replaced with a mechanical valve. Three days later, a pacemaker was installed.

I spent 49 days in ICU, had four surgeries, and spent five months after that recuperating from my ordeal.

Dr. Winston was right, I do feel like a brand new man. Dr. Anita Bandiwad, now in St. Louis, MO, was my cardiologist. She worked hard to get me where I am today. Dr. James Varnell, now here in Blairsville, is my cardiologist

See *Duncan*, page 5A

## Letters to the Editor ...

### Unease and Alarm

Dear Editor

In this season of peace and good will, I am astonished by my feelings of unease and alarm regarding the future of our country and politics in general. At age 84 I have never experienced such extreme levels of divisiveness, disrespect, hate, falsehoods, misrepresentations, non-cooperation, and lack of empathy - to name a few. I believe that this negativity threatens the very foundation of our democracy.

See *Folmer*, page 5A

### Appreciate Union County

During the holidays, I went to the "Holy Land" - Florida. And yes, it was warm (75 degrees). While I did live in that sacred arena for many years, I have lived also in Blairsville for even longer. I remember Dorothy in the "Wizard of Oz" proclaiming, "There's no place like home." I'll say that being back in this small Southern community is absolutely wonderful for several reasons: we folks smile at people we don't even know; the lifestyle is so much slower; we can see friends in stores we actually know; we are courteous to each other; when needed, we go to each other's rescue; we are not usually in a rush, with the exception of the holidays; and, we know our neighbors and actually speak to them.

This safe, refreshing, caring, and secure phenomenal community is the Promise Land... on earth. Sometimes it takes visiting other places in order for us to appreciate where we live.

Dr. Ray Ashurst

### Nostalgia

Dear Editor,

I ordered the *North Georgia News* perhaps a year ago. The news that I receive about a week or two later does not stop me from reading page to page.

I am now living in Florida since 1973, I love it here, but I was raised in a small community in upstate New York. Your paper brings me back to the wonderful lifestyle that I was brought up with.

Unfortunately I was not able to participate in all that Blairsville offers. I did experience my Christian upbringing and various programs that I attended in church, the American holidays, not to mention the Scottish Festival, the square dancing, the canning factory (we didn't have one, but Mom taught me how to can and pickle), the various functions for the elderly and the less fortunate were on top of our lists, especially during the holidays; the various parades and the competitions for Miss Hudson. I could go on and on, how I wish I could be there to experience a true and sincere Christian community.

My two granddaughters are involved in 4-H, the Saddle Club and courses. I am so grateful that they are blessed to be in an environment of decent and blessed up bringing. Of

See *DiMartino*, page 5A

## Mountain Velcro

There are three relatively modern products that have made life more practical and productive than anything that has been discovered or developed in the last two hundred years (maybe a little exaggerated). These three products hold things together that need to be held together, loosen things that need to be loosened and substituted for more things than you can count. In general, they help to solve more practical, every day problems than all technology combined. We know them as W-D 40, Duct Tape and Velcro.

I am a firm believer in all three products. I got to thinking about Velcro and thought that I would do a little research on the internet concerning its history. My personal thoughts were that it was developed by some good-ole-country boy who got the idea from "beggar's lice" (Mickey Cummings can give you the technical term). However, I was wrong. It was the idea of a Swiss engineer, Georges de Mestral, who, along with his dog, had gone for a walk in the woods and he wondered if the "burrs" that fastened on to his trousers and his dog's fur could be turned into something useful. Thus, Velcro. While that may be the true, brief history of Velcro, "beggar's lice" is every bit as tenacious as Velcro. As a young boy who loved to spend time in God's creation I have had numerous confrontations with "beggar's lice." It would latch on to your shoe laces, socks, pants, shirt and even get in your hair. You didn't just "brush off" "beggar's lice." You had to pick it off, piece by piece, by piece. It could be a time-consuming process. It would even stick to your fingers sometimes. In fact, it seemed to be magnetic. If you didn't dispose of it some distance from you, it might be right back on your clothing.

"Beggar's lice" reminds me of sin. As you journey through life, all at once you discover you are covered in sin. Bad habits, evil, wickedness, yea, sin has fastened onto you and you are impotent to remove it. Unlike "beggar's lice" sin cannot be pulled off, brushed off, worked off, it must be washed off through the cleansing of Christ. As we enter and journey through this new year let us be alert as to the path that we are travelling so that we don't end the year covered in sin. The following is good advice

See *Parris*, page 5A

### It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



## Questions and Answers

**Q. I was at the December county meeting and a question was asked about the "International" code in reference to the revised building codes that were adopted by the Building and Development Department. Did you find out why it is called an "international" code?**

A. We asked the Building and Development Department about this and they said the construction code used to be called the "Southern Building Code" but it was renamed approximately 10 years ago to include the United States and its Territories and all the various codes that now make up the International Code Council. It has nothing to do with the United Nations or any other country but is just the name that was chosen.

**Q. Why does the county adopt national building codes?**

A. When I took office in 2001, our county had never had building codes. In other words, anybody could build what they wanted, where they wanted and how they wanted. We have always been lucky in that most of the builders in our county have always been reputable. But we found out as our county continued to grow, more and more people were claiming to be builders and while it was not the norm, there were some scary construction methods being used on some houses.

**Q. Have the building codes helped in the county?**

A. As most people know, I am against putting in too many regulations because I do not want to infringe on our basic principals of free choice. But the problem was that we were in danger of having our property values devalued because of a few sub-standard construction practices and in some cases those practices also impacted the safety of a structure. So someone coming to Union County and purchasing a home had no way to know what was behind the walls. Was the electricity properly installed, were decks and balconies correctly built to withstand large weight loads, were spindles on decks the correct distance apart to keep children from falling through or hanging their head between them, were the proper size windows installed in upstairs rooms where a person could escape in case of a fire? The list just went on and on.

**Q. Has the Union County Building and Development Dept been fair and reasonable**

See *Paris*, page 5A

## Welcome Erin Huffman

The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to welcome Ms. Erin Huffman as our new Membership Coordinator. Erin joined the Chamber staff on January 6, 2014. She possesses a dynamic personality, a strong customer service background, and a can do attitude.

Erin grew up in the Midwest playing sports, cheering on her beloved Kansas Jayhawks basketball team and traveling with her family. In August 2010, she and her husband moved to Georgia. She has worked in higher education for the past nine years in many different capacities of customer service. She brings with her experience of helping others, solving problems, and being community oriented. You can often see her cheering for her husband as he assists in coaching the Young Harris College Mountain Lion baseball team.

Erin received her B.S. degree in Psychology from Saint Mary University in Leavenworth, Kansas. She currently resides in Young Harris with her husband Travis, their one year old son Charlie, and their dog Lulu.

Please join us in welcoming Erin Huffman to the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce. She can be reached by calling (706) 745-5789 or via email at membership@blairvillechamber.com.

## Making Friends

I traveled nearly 3,000 miles over the holiday season. When on the road, McDonald's is my "go-to" stop for bathroom privileges and my coffee. I was near Mobile, Ala when I felt I couldn't make it any further without a "liquid in, liquid out" stop. When I got to the restroom, the first stall was occupied, so I took the handicap stall. While I was sitting there, contemplating my next leg of the journey, a head popped under the door. "I have to pee" said the little girl with the multiple pigtails woven with dozens of primary colored beads. "Hurry," she requested, flashing me her white baby teeth. With that I heard the lock disengage on the adjoining stall and she ducked out and into that space in lightning speed.

When I emerged into the washroom area, I found her little pint size figure standing in front of the wash basin, hands in the air, not anywhere close enough to the sink. "Do you want me to lift you so you can reach the sink?" I asked her, as if I didn't know the answer by the look of her huge brown puppy eyes that were staring through me. She nodded so hard, I was afraid the beads would cause bruising as they bounced off her forehead.

I lifted her high enough that she could actually sit next to the sink. She got her hands wet, reached for the soap and was generous, causing an abundance of lather. I asked her if she wanted to share and she wiped her hands on mine. Then she looked at me and patted my head with her sudsy hands and said "pretty hair." I took the compliment and ignored the fact that she had left bubbles on my crown. When she finished rinsing her tiny hands, she stood to jump down, which I halted with an abrupt "no," startling her. I lifted her down and she came under me to dry her hands with mine, beneath the obnoxiously loud air blower. When we completed our task, she waited for me to open the door, as she couldn't reach the handle.

I assumed she knew where her family was seated, and she reached up to take my hand

See *Leone*, page 5A

THEN...

"The moment is at hand to end hunger in America."

Richard Nixon 1969



NOW...

"...Instill in them there's no such thing as a free lunch."

Jack Kingston 2013



## Lucky Come Home

Dear Editor,

About noon on Thursday, Jan. 9, our little dog, Lucky, disappeared while helping me work in the woods near the Gumlog Church. Evidence leads us to conclude that someone lured him into a vehicle near 6054 Gumlog Road and drove away.

Lucky is a Jack Russell Terrier, 18-20 pounds. He is pure white with a brown head and a dark spot in front of each ear. His tail had been docked and he is unneutered. He is highly energetic, moves at top speed and is rarely still.

We rescued Lucky three years ago when the driver of a dark gray Dodge Ram pickup pushed him into a busy highway and drove off leaving a terrified little dog to be run over or perish in freezing weather. We gave him a good home off the pavement with several hundred acres on which to run. He is a very affectionate little fellow and a favorite activity was sitting on laps in the same position as a human child. Thus he became our "Dog Baby." He loved us dearly and we returned his sentiment in full.

We hope that Lucky is still alive and is being kept somewhere in this area. We also believe that some readers know or will learn where he is (likely in

See *Gibson*, page 5A

## Why I choose to live in North Georgia

Dear Editor,

I am proud to be a part of the nonprofit charity that, with the help of our wonderful community, provides Christmas for children who are in or have been in foster care. For fourteen years this charity has grown with people agreeing to sponsor foster children who might not have a Christmas without their generosity. Despite the depressed economy, each year the number of people willing to help these children has grown.

But this year, my amazement has grown. You see, things get pretty hectic when we arrange to have children's gifts picked up or delivered in time for "Santa's" visit on Christmas Eve. This year we helped Santa with special wishes for 98 children in Towns and Union Counties. Somehow, in all the rush, a very important present fell by the side of the road without anyone knowing. Now, this present was quite big and wrapped in pretty Christmas wrapping. Some good Samaritan found the gift and decided that it was for a foster child. They took their time to bring the large present to the DFCS office. The package was still in the pretty wrapping, unopened! I was notified about the gift and quickly knew what child had not received their important present. I contacted the foster mom and learned that she had commented to her husband that morning that the baby was outgrowing his car seat and they would need to purchase one soon.

Because of the honesty of our good Samaritan, this little fellow will ride safely in his new seat.

This gift was delivered unopened and in perfect condition. The gift had accompanying paperwork indicating that it was quite expensive and purchased at Walmart. It would have been easy to return the gift for money, but our Samaritan did

See *Elliott*, page 5A

## Grissom Brothers

A few years ago I served as President of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents. While serving in this capacity I met a man from Athens, Ala. named Curt Grissom. Curt was a County Agent from Athens. He told me that his relatives were from Russellville, Ala. I told my Papa about meeting Curt and found out Papa was acquainted with Curt's relatives. He told me the following story about the Grissom brothers.

Russellville was the county seat of Franklin County. Around the early 1900s Russellville was a quiet little town with no paved roads and many times people settled disputes in their own way. It seems the Grissom brothers were thrown in the jail and were awaiting trial. No one can remember their offense. But, it was fairly obvious that they were in real trouble.

Their mother made them a pone of corn bread with a skeleton key placed in the middle of the bread. She took the corn bread to the jail for her two boys. The jailer felt sorry for the elderly lady and took the bread from her and presented it to the brothers in their cell. After the jailer left, the boys devoured the bread and hid the key. Later that night they opened their cell and quietly slipped out of town. The boys left the country and headed for Texas. Later, they came back and raised their families, but, never served any time.

I always wondered if all these stories were true. So, I related the story to Curt. He smiled and told me that recently, he had inherited that key. He said the same story had been related to him many times in his youth. His interest in the story had been noticed by the members of his family. So, one of his relatives had left the key to him.

It's kind of funny how things in life are intertwined. This story happened when my grandfather was a little boy. As my grandfather grew to manhood he still had connections with this family. In 1967 my grandfather purchased a brand new Ford full-sized pick-up from Grissom Ford in Russellville, Ala. He still owns that truck. Papa had always been a Chevy man. But, when he went to the Chevy place to trade nobody would wait on Papa because he was dressed in overalls. So, Papa walked across the street to the Ford place. He and a salesman picked out a new 1967 F-100. When asked how he wanted to finance the truck, Papa said, "I don't need any financing," and he reached into his pocket and pulled out \$3,000 to pay for the truck. Papa then asked the salesman to walk over to the Chevy dealer and tell them they missed a sale because they refused to help a man in overalls. Finally, nearly 100 years af-

### Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



See *Cummings*, page 5A

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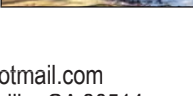
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