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A. That is very hard to quantify. At the height of the home and real estate market boom in 2006, our growth rate was in the 3% -4% range per year, which was definitely too much. Home permits were in the range of 40 to 60 homes per month. However, during 2009 - 2013 recession, permits were in the range of 1 to 8 homes per month. We estimate we are probably in the .5% to 1% range growth rate now and that is increasing slightly. So long as we stay in 2% range or under, we think it is sustainable. Currently new home construction is in the 8 to 18 permits per month.

Q. Can you really do anything to stop growth?

A. Not really. God has blessed us with one of the most beautiful areas and climates and it has attracted many already to move here and more to simply stay. I often hear people say they wish we had a certain brand grocery store or different restaurants. But every time we have a new one come here, most seem to love it, but then complain about the traffic and crowds, including me sometimes. However, you can not have it both ways. It is either like it used to be with dirt and mud roads everywhere, little pavement, poor and run down facilities and people that all had to leave here to look for jobs. Or have the wonderful county that we now are blessed with. Sure we may have too much traffic at times, or too long a wait to eat sometimes, but our people are financially coming back with good and profitable businesses and restaurants, great county facilities, wonderful people and ---- more people.

Q. What happens when a community stops growing?

A. I think if you ask some of the people of Hiawassee, you would find that businesses leave town or close, property sales are very slow and it is kind of depressing. I personally feel a duty to try

to continue to seek good employment for our young people getting out of high school or college. It is easy to be retired, enjoying life and wanting things to basically stay the same as they are now. I certainly understand that thought process. But the vast majority of us have kids, grand kids or great grand kids and don't we want them to have a part of the American Dream no matter where they live? Is it really fair to just not worry about them and instead only worry about ourselves?

Q. Is Union County and the City of Blairsville lucky to have what we have?

A. I think we are very lucky. We have exceptional county and city facilities for people of all ages, giving us an unmatched quality of life. We have many public safety employees and volunteers that are there to help any of us at a second's notice. We have one of the best rural hospitals anywhere. We have many churches covering most religions whose members are always wanting to help others. We have hundreds of community volunteers and service club members who work tirelessly to help make this a better community. We have the best schools and school facilities of most counties in Georgia, we have nearly 200 full time and part time county employees that tend to your every local government need and work hard to be sure you maintain the best quality of life anywhere. In Meeks Park, we have one of the most outstanding recreation facilities anywhere. We have the most caring and helpful people living here, that are from here or have moved here, full or part time, and make this their home. Then if all that is not enough, we only have to look around at our mountains, lakes and many streams to see a view that only God could design. So are we lucky? You bet we are and I hope most are thankful for what we have.

Allison...

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will include a question and answer session. There will also be city and county development leaders there to discuss plans including managing growth.

To help children prepare for their first day of school, there is a new community event being hosted at First United Methodist Church of Union County on July 30th from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. It is called the Backpack 2 School Bash for Union County and is open to children from Pre-K to seniors in High School. The purpose is to help alleviate some of the financial stress on families in Union County who have school aged children by providing the students with backpacks and school supplies. Parents need to pre-register their kids for the event by logging onto the website at b2sb.weebly.com. There will be a kid friendly lunch and fun activities for families as well; all free of charge and there is no income requirement to participate. Please have your child bring their school supply list

with them. The volunteers with the committee have secured 300 backpacks for children, but they are asking for help from the community with the supplies to fill them such as pens, pencils, erasers, etc. There are collection boxes set up across town at the following locations: Chick-fil-A, Union County Sheriff's Office, Chamber of

Commerce Office, Blairsville Police Department, and First United Methodist Church of Union County on Hwy 515. Thank you in advance for your generous support and everyone who has helped with this program, especially Tricia Wallace and Alexis Noe.

I also wanted to remind voters of the runoff election on

July 26th for the Georgia State House race. Early voting started July 5th at the Union County Courthouse.

To find out information on all the events in our area, and for information about our Chamber Members, go to our website at VisitBlairsvilleGa.com.

Chief...

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rescues. Rescue is a major component of Union County Fire Department and swiftwater rescue incidents have increased over the last few years. The department is making every effort to be prepared by training personnel and obtaining the needed equipment to better respond to these emergencies.

**Union County Fire Department
~Our Family
Protecting Your Family~**

Fowler...

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His message for you, dear Christian, is that when you have opportunity, stand for Christ and Truth with courage! "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Cor. 16:13-14).

During our conversation, I never felt like I was talking to a stranger. I was speaking with a true American hero, a family man, a brother in Christ who knows what it means to lead with courage, speak truth to power, and stand firm in the faith. By God's help, we will do no less.

Ramay...

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ries is that of Cain killing Abel. We cannot legislate "evil" into extinction. Good people will abide by the law; defective people will always find a way around it.

We can only live safely by teaching personal responsibility and respect for others. When that fails, justice must be swift and sure.

Robert F. Ramay

Gray...

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correct Pentagon, forbidding the mention of that onerous word "God" to be uttered.

As the flag-folding ceremony began, when the Commanding Officer, Lt Col Michael Sovitsky realized that Oscar Rodriguez intended to use the previous traditional speech, he had three of his officers grab Oscar Rodriguez and forcibly evict him out of the room! The visual is utterly incredible! Never in my lifetime did I ever expect to witness that kind of behavior towards a member of the military whose commitment to serving goes all the way to being willing to lay down his life for the USA and its freedom. Shame!

If you want to see with your own eyes, go to Youtube: video Air Force tosses out Vet for saying "God"-- that is, if you have the stomach to watch what our Country's Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Religion have disintegrated into.

I don't like bumper stickers that say God Bless America, when more accurately, if we are grateful for this incredible country, it should say America Bless God — May God have mercy on us for allowing this unique land to be turned into the sham of its original founding as it stands today. Our Constitutional rights have been eroding with lightning speed, and we are guilty of allowing it to happen inch by inch.

Arlene M. Gray

UC Historical Society picnic

The Union County Historical Society will hold their annual summer picnic (for members) at Vogel State Park on July 19th at 6 p.m. Please call 706-745-5493 for any additional information.

Mattee... continued from Page 4A

feeding for another four to six weeks, the grubs go through a transition stage (pupa) and become adults which emerge in June to begin the cycle again.

The Japanese beetle is particularly devastating to landscapes because both the grubs and the adults feed excessively on plants. However, there are a few control methods that can be taken to decrease beetle populations around your home. If you have several bare spots in your turf that you suspect may be from beetle larvae feeding on grass roots, peel back a single square foot section of turf and count the number of grubs present. If you have more than five grubs in a square foot, you should treat your lawn with appropriate insecticides to prevent the larvae

from doing any more damage. If adult beetles are infesting only a small area of your property, physical removal may be most economical and effective. However, in cases where a large percentage of property is affected, chemical control with insecticides may be required. Planting ornamentals that are unappealing to Japanese beetles can also help prevent large populations from establishing. However, never place beetle traps because they can actually end up attracting even more beetles to your property!

If you are interested in the various treatment options for Japanese beetle infestations, or would like a list of beetle-resistant ornamental varieties, contact the extension office for a publication.

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

Jack's Gap Trail. After a ways we turned west off the trail and began walking alongside the mountain. We soon found ourselves in an Ivy thicket. We crawled on our hands and knees a ways. It felt like miles, however, I think it was only 1/2 mile. We soon popped into the edge of a clearing and found the largest Birch Tree I have ever seen. One that I have never been able to find again.

Soon we made our way back to the trail and traveled until we found a lead going off the mountain. We followed the Rocky Lead off the mountain. Our group found some really large trees and some of the steepest ground I have ever walked upon. An old clear cut soon forced us down off the ridge top and we sat down underneath a tree at an old sawmill site. I leaned against the tree and felt a prick in my hip. I sat up and realized I was sitting on a Chestnut Burr. The old burr was from a hybrid chestnut set out in the 1980s. We were able to see some beautiful sites, but, did not find the Rock House with the soap stone furniture.

Another time Tom Starrett, Harold Dyer and I made the same trip, but, we walked off of another lead. Once again

we traveled through Ivy and Laurel thickets. We found some really nice ledges of stone. But, couldn't find anything resembling a Rock House. We have made 2-3 other trips off the Rocky Lead looking for this place and have yet to find it. So, we keep looking. Who knows, we may find it yet.

On one such trip Harold and I became separated from Tom in yet another thicket. We came to a slick wildlife trail going almost straight up and followed it into an unknown Rock House. The vegetation was so thick you couldn't see more than 10-15 feet and all at once we found ourselves under this rock overhang. We looked down and noticed fresh bear scat all around our feet. Harold looked at me and said, "I once knew a lady hiker that asked me what should we do if we seen a bear. I looked at the lady and asked if she could run fast. She told me no. So, I looked at her and replied, "I can run faster than you, so, I do not have anything to worry about". So, Harold asked me, "How fast are you Mickey?" I said, "Fast enough." He just grinned and so we keep looking for our Rock House.

Blairsville Cruisers showcase hot rides



As we all "sizzle" this hot summer, the Blairsville Cruisers invite you to view some "hot" rides, which have been meticulously crafted to perfection, this coming Saturday, July 16th, as they host their monthly "Cruise-In On The Square" car show around the historic Blairsville Courthouse Square from 4 p.m. until "it's too hot to take it". As has been the case at past shows, music will be provided in case you feel the need to cut a rug, scrumptious food will be available for purchase at our wonderful local restau-

rants (all within walking distance), and tickets for a 50/50 drawing and raffle prizes will be sold.

If that isn't enough, for a donation of \$5 per ticket (or 5 tickets for \$20) the Blairsville Cruisers will provide you with an awesome opportunity to take home a fabulous 2002 Silver Mustang GT Convertible (or \$3,000 cash; winner's choice), for which all proceeds benefit local children's charities!

Whether you are participating by bringing your "hot" ride (there is no registration fee) or simply attending as a spectator, the Blairsville Cruisers and their many treasured car club sponsors look forward to seeing you around the Courthouse Square this Saturday for an afternoon of fun!