

School bells will be ringing

It seems like every year the first day of school cuts just a little bit more into summer.

On Monday, Aug. 3, Union County Schools will be back in session. This signals the end of summer for our school children, and it's also a good indication that summer's end is truly near.

It adds much to the cliché that time flies when you're having fun.

This has been a fun summer, but for the many school children I've talked to this summer, they aren't exactly ready to go back to school.

However, when these young people hit the stores in search of those back to school necessities, the itch to get back in the classroom generally sinks in.

That was always the case for me, and the summer had been long enough for me to be anxious to get back to my friends at school.

With the opening bells of school come the urge to get back to Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium as football season and the draw of those Friday Night Lights become stronger.

Head Football Coach Brian Allison and the Panthers are ready for the season to begin - just as fans are getting the urge for some Friday night fun.

The Panthers will host Holy Innocents on Aug. 7 at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium. Game time: 6:30 p.m. It's the first of two scrimmage games this season.

That's truly a huge indicator that class is back in session.

The reality of students returning to the classrooms will sink in as teachers greet those youngsters getting into the classroom for the first time.

There is nothing as special as capturing images of those first-time students getting off the school bus and greeting their new teachers.

Those first moments allow students to bond instantly with their teachers and classmates. Those moments also open a new world to a young child that they'll never forget.

Some (parents) will shed tears, and the students might too. But all-in-all, the excitement of new classmates and the warmth of a teacher's heart makes it all worth while.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Salt and Light

These are strange times we live in. Right here in the USA, charities that care for orphans and invalids, and small businesses run by families are forced to close or face punitive fines because of morals informed by faith. Are news stories like these the canary in the coalmine? Is the world better off with fewer Christian organizations, and is that where we're headed?

History tells us that Christians have often served with courage. In 252 AD in what is now Tunisia, when the plague began to spread, residents including medical practitioners fled the affected areas, abandoning the afflicted. But not Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. He organized Christians to risk their own lives to care for the afflicted. He seized the opportunity to show living witness to the hope of eternity. For his efforts, he was superstitiously blamed for the plague and banished. In 258, he returned only to be arrested and condemned to a martyr's death by the people who knew the good he did. The words come to mind, "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

Africa is better off because of Christians like Dr. Kent Brantly with Samaritan's Purse, who in 2014 contracted Ebola while treating those with the disease. His remarks to the 2015 graduating class at his Alma Mater, Indiana University School of Medicine, reflect a familiar Christian worldview: "When everyone else is running away in fear, we stay to help, to offer healing and hope. There is so much more to being a physician than curing illness. The most important thing we do is enter into the suffering of others." He recently returned to Liberia with his family to continue doing just that.

Christ-followers in America today are organized in multiple ways to serve with compassion: Caring for the poor while preserving their dignity, and challenging them to participate in the solution; creating businesses in poverty-stricken areas to give hope for communities; supporting the two lives most affected by unplanned pregnancies - mother and child; promoting the value of women by rescuing those caught in prostitution and drug addiction; educating students from the philosophy that to learn about

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Questions and Answers

For the next few weeks I want to address questions about some items we discussed at last month's county meeting. The reason is that we have made several decisions about how to handle the payoff of our Community Center and other SPLOST projects. The questions below are part of what I have heard from some at the meeting, but they are mostly questions to help you understand the financial decisions that have been recently made.

Q. What is SPLOST?

A. It stands for Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax. It is one of the seven pennies out of every dollar collected in sales tax. The State of Georgia gets four of the pennies, the school gets one of the pennies, and the county gets the remaining two pennies. Of the two pennies, one is the Local Option Sales Tax, commonly referred to as LOST. This goes directly to reduce our property taxes and is not used for any projects. The other penny is SPLOST and it is designed for capital projects, among other uses.

Q. How long is a SPLOST sales tax good for?

A. When done in cooperation and agreement with the city, the SPLOST is for a period of six years and began in April 2015 and will run until April 2021. It must be approved by the vote of the public. Our election was on Nov. 5, 2013.

Q. If we have a SPLOST sales tax, why do we have to borrow any money?

A. That is a very good question. Similar to your borrowing to build a house or purchase a vehicle, the county borrows money so we can build the projects now and pay for it later as the sales tax is collected. This usually saves money, as most projects delayed usually cost more to build or purchase later with inflation, so the interest paid to borrow the money is often, but not always, saved in construction costs.

Q. Where does the county get its financial advice?

A. We receive it from several different sources, but mostly from outside experts who specialize in government financing methods. These are folks we have relied on for years to advise us and their advice has always been very sound.

Q. Is the county going to be borrowing money on this new SPLOST IV and how will we pay it back?

A. Yes we are, and we will be paying it back with SPLOST sales tax funds.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor ...

Don't be a spin doctor

Dear Editor,

Re: Letters to the Editor/Rewrite History, July 15, 2015 - George Mitchell

In response to above mentioned letter I would like to say that I don't believe anyone (Liberals or Conservatives) is trying to rewrite history by a symbol of sadness, pain and suffering and yes, racism from the steps of our state and government buildings.

According to history, after the Civil War ended Robert E. Lee did not want the Confederate flag flown or displayed. It would have been considered treason. At his funeral and by his request, no flags were displayed and the Confederate soldiers presiding did not wear uniforms. He also was opposed to erecting monuments on battlefields where soldiers under his command fought against the Union.

Jefferson Davis said, and I quote, "My pride is that the flag shall not set between contending brothers; and that, when it shall no longer is the common flag of the country, it shall be folded up and laid away like a vesture no longer used."

We must educate ourselves to history and try to understand where it has led us instead of blindly pointing fingers accusing others of trying to change it. History can't be changed - it is what it is whether we like it or not.

Why can't we wipe the red or blue off our glasses and see the world clearly and fairly instead of spinning things left and right?

Donald Ferre

History Rewritten

Dear Editor,

Mr. George Mitchell surely made enemies of friends and neighbors with such radical thinking as telling the truth about history. However, he did let a multitude of items slide as it would take an entire edition of this newspaper to list them. Here are a couple more items.

The fact that U.S. Grant owned a slave and did not free him until March 1859 is readily ignored today. Grant's wife, Julia, used her slaves well into the War of Northern Aggression as none had been freed by January 1865. Shucks, President Grant will have to be expunged from history.

Billy Sherman, wow, he hated the blacks and had no problem with slavery. His subordinate officers kept the blacks away from him. Those in Union uniform guarded railroad facilities way behind the lines and out of sight. Now Gen. Sherman will have to be yanked from history like an abscessed tooth.

It is interesting that the evil forces have attacked everything Confederate, but have said nothing about the EPA. You would think that people truly concerned about the USA would be out of their minds about the usurpation of power and Constitutional violations by the EPA. In 1824, a dispute between some States and the Federal government over licensing of cargo ships (taxes) evolved into an egregious overreach by the EPA's ongoing administration of the Clean Water Act. Welcome to Nazi America complements of the Progressives/Socialists/Communists.

The shameful and regrettable murders in Charleston were the direct result of the Confederate Battle Flag, or so the evil forces say. The mentally deranged druggie would never have hurt a fly if it had not been for the Confederate flag. The fact that the FBI was asleep when Dylann Roof bought the gun he used had nothing to do with it. His Internet research about other shootings and the resounding racist reporting that tried and convicted innocent white people before any facts were known had no effect on him either. If you are buying any of this slop I have a bridge I will sell you.

Of course, there is the Supreme Court decision that homosexual marriages are ok. Then the Casablanca gave it a color, or rather, a rainbow. Now every time I see a rainbow I think of

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Who Exposed Dirty Laundry?

Dear Editor,

I wrote a letter about a family, whose 14-year-old son was involved in teenage sexual explorations with younger sisters: 12 years ago. A rebuttal letter accused me of "writing under the subterfuge of religious hypocrisy in order to publicly reveal the family's secrets."

Actually the writer missed the point. It was not me who brought this matter to the attention of the public; that was previously done by the media. Many people across the nation

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Give Dr. Gowder support

Dear Editor,

I would like to add my voice to that of The Rev. Victory McVay in support of Dr. David Gowder.

We have known Dr. Gowder in a professional capacity for over 20 years and have always experienced him as a very competent and caring professional. It was a surprise and a disappointment, then, to see his picture on the front page of your paper, not once but twice, as if to shame him for making an error in judgment.

It is hard to believe that Dr. Gowder chose to become addicted to a pain pill. When one is an objective observer of the long, difficult hours a physician works each day, then it is no surprise that he or she might be tempted to take a pill to

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Jesus loves you

Dear Editor,

Judge not: It is not my place to judge another person. This is God's task, my task is to pray that he or she will see their wrong ways, repent of them and turn to Christ, before it's too late. As long as a person has breath of life he or she can find forgiveness at the foot of the Cross. That is where it all began when Jesus died for all of mankind. None of us are deserving of God's grace, but it is given to those who choose the right pathway.

History always repeats itself over and over again. Man never seems to get it right the first time. We all do our own thing as we grow up and we all make mistakes along the way, but then manhood comes with a price. Responsibility and leadership in the family must take second fiddle to God's commands. We no longer have the luxury to do our own thing without consequences of our actions. All of the human race ever born has that choice to make. Serve God and be blessed, serve self and other idols of your own choosing and pay a hefty price of being separated from the only source of grace that can get you to heaven. It's not rocket science folks. You don't have to be a math major to figure the numbers out. You don't even have to have a PhD to get into heaven. You don't even have to travel to the moon to find the joy of the Lord. It's in your grasp. God's love is all around you. All you have to do is just

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Speck Fishing

One of my favorite enjoyments is what is called "Speck Fishing." Speckled Trout derive their name from the specks that cover their body. In other parts of our country the fish are called "Brook Trout" or "Brookies." The fish generally require cold, clean water and they do not tolerate "Rainbow Trout" well. These tend to prey upon the Specks. These little fish are Georgia's only native trout. As a matter of fact when John Muir traveled through Trackrock Gap all those years ago he noticed many smaller Trout in the creeks in the area. Later it was determined these minnows were actually Specks.

Since that time the territory of our native Speckled Trout has decreased significantly. The introduction of Rainbow Trout and the development of much of our land have both decreased our water quality and placed extraordinary pressure upon our only native trout. Now to catch this species you must travel into the high coves and above waterfalls underneath many of our high mountains. My good friend Patrick Fix loves to Speck fish as much as I and this is a story from his childhood.

Patrick, his cousin and his father, Bill Fix, were Speck fishing somewhere around Blue Mountain. Patrick said 'I can still remember watching Dad walk through the rhododendron thickets. He carried a small fishing rod and on his back was a day pack containing water and a small frying pan. When the trio caught enough fish they would grease up a pan and build a fire. Next all the fish were rolled in corn meal and fried along with some potatoes. What a way to spend a day with your son and nephew.'

Late in the afternoon the trio came to a long cascading waterfall. The falls were not free falling, but, more of a long chute with potholes placed intermittently through the 100-foot drop. Actually, the waterfall was in the shape of an S-curve much like a water slide you might see at an amusement park. Bill Fix looked at the two young boys and said, "that blue granite was too slick for my liking, so I am going around this fall to the bottom and fish that big hole." So, Bill and his nephew disappeared around a point while Patrick sat looking at a pothole halfway down the waterfall.

I don't think Patrick has ever met anything he is afraid of and the more he looked at the pothole the more he wondered if it contained a record "Speck." So, carefully he crept through the boulders navigating his way down the waterfall to the pothole. At one point he was standing on a flat-topped boulder about 3 feet wide and 30 feet tall with nothing but other sharp boulders below him. Finally, he found himself above the pothole. He noticed there was no soil around this waterfall only the wet blue granite. As he stepped onto the wet rock he remembered his dad's words

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Lt. Gov. Cagle coming here

The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce along with our partner Park Sterling Bank are thrilled to announce that Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle will be our guest speaker at our upcoming Power Lunch. The event will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 18 at 11:45 a.m. at the Union County Community Center.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



Registration is open, and the public is invited to attend.

A successful entrepreneur and respected former state senator, Casey Cagle made history in 2006 by becoming the first Republican elected to Georgia's second highest office. As Lt. Governor, Casey championed the Charter Systems Act, which improved education in our state while providing a path to career technical education for Georgia's high school students. Additionally, he launched the Georgia College and Career Academy Network, a partnership between local community leaders, school systems, and Georgia's technical colleges. Finally, an avid triathlete himself, Casey leads Healthy Kids Georgia, an effort to encourage local partnerships that introduce children to healthy lifestyle options.

The Chamber would like to express our sincere thanks to this year's Power Lunch sponsor, Park Sterling Bank.

Located at 458 Hwy 515 East, Blairsville, GA, Park Sterling can take care of all of your financial needs. Stop by or call them at (706) 781-3166.

Please make plans to join us as we welcome

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I Say Tomato and You Say...

To speak of the virtues of a mid summer tomato sandwich, delicately seasoned with salt and slathered with mayonnaise would be a waste of my time and the readers. We already are completely apprised of the intrinsic worth of this culinary jewel. A combination of taste and texture that one would think could only be replicated by one of the greatest of world chefs can be constructed in any kitchen by even a child.

I do not ignore that this simple sandwich can be exalted, not by necessarily adding any elements, but more by the variety of the quartet of ingredients. Let's begin with the tomato, itself. The most popular hybrid varieties of slicing tomatoes in the USA are Big Beef and Steak Sandwich tomatoes. Both of these varieties tend to be large, where two slices will be hanging out the sides of your bread. The Big Boy, is a little juicier and sweeter, with the Steak sandwich being meatier and having that old fashioned tomato taste.

When it comes to taste and texture I will always choose an heirloom tomato over a hybrid, especially in the summer, when they are picked ripe, and I have such an assortment to choose from at our Union County Farmers Market. If presented with a choice of heirlooms for my sandwich, I'm going to choose Cherokee Purple, for its sweetness. A close second is the large, firm, pinkish Mortgage Lifter, a variety that was developed by a man who took one tomato plant and crossed it with the pollen from three other plants. He then grew this new tomato out for six seasons until it was stable. He then sold the tomato plants for \$1 a piece until he paid off his mortgage.

Once you've chosen the fruit you must now choose the bread. This becomes more of a dilemma for me. I have my favorite, which isn't always handy, and that's a toasted pumpernickel bagel. I can hear you now, chanting of the abomination of this Southern glory. Toasted, buttered, Hellmann's mayo and a large, thick slice of a purple red tomato, with a light grind of Himalayan pink sea salt, served open face is my

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