

Opinions

Everybody has one...

A Tragedy

A family, a neighborhood, and a community experienced a tragedy a few weeks ago with the home explosion off Pauline Lane. The incident was a surprise to everyone. The shockwave could be felt many miles away and the debris field was spread over hundreds of yards. The home was completely destroyed and there was damage to other nearby homes. The loss of life, the sudden way in which it happened, and the destruction of the home are difficult to comprehend or understand.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



These types of incidents are rare but they do happen. There was a camper explosion several months ago which completely destroyed the camper and damaged many mobile homes around it. Several people were injured and there was one death as a result of the fire. However, we have not had such a devastating explosion of a home such as this in Union County.

The E911 center was initially flooded with calls stating that there was an "explosion" in the area. Soon after, calls were coming in from neighbors who saw the debris field and the home burning. Arriving on scene, the first units had to move debris to get to the fire. An attack was made on the fire and it was quickly controlled. Unfortunately, firefighters discovered that the homeowners were casualties of the incident.

There has been a great deal of speculation as to what happened. The full investigation has been turned over to the Office of Commissioner of Insurance and Safety Fire who investigates fire incidents and arson through the State Fire Marshals. The investigation is ongoing, and it is expected that it may take several weeks or even months to know the exact cause of this incident. Union County Fire Department is assisting in areas where we are needed.

Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner John F. King has asked for assistance from the public. Commissioner King released a statement on May 4 stating, "We are asking that anyone in the area with video or audio footage of Sunday morning's explosion in Blairsville to reach out to our office at 1-800-282-5804. Our investigators are working around the clock to determine the cause of this incident and any new audio or video could prove instrumental to these efforts."

These types of incidents are difficult on families, friends,

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A Senator's Redemption

U.S. Senator Tim Scott spoke to the nation last month. Setting politics aside, surely you can appreciate his life story of hope and redemption.

Broadcasting to a national audience on multiple platforms he said, "Growing up, I never dreamed I'd be standing here tonight. When I was a kid, my parents divorced. My mother, my brother, and I moved in with my grandparents. Three of us, sharing one bedroom. I was disillusioned and angry, and I nearly failed out of school. But I was blessed. First, with a praying momma. Then with a mentor, a Chick-fil-A operator named John Moniz."

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Moniz had noticed and felt compassion for the young Scott. Motivated by his Christian faith, Moniz hoped to positively impact one million people. For four years he taught Scott the life lessons that had helped Moniz find success and significance. He wanted Scott to look beyond athletics and entertainment to more realistic goals, packaged as a "back-up plan." He said, "If you have a job you're doing well, but why not become a job creator?" Turns out that Scott needed a backup plan.

Driving on the freeway, Scott fell asleep with his mother in the car. He awoke with a start and snatched the steering wheel. The car flipped and rolled into the opposing lane. They survived, but a broken ankle ended his big hopes for athletic success. He attended a small college where a fellow student, John Rickenbacker, resumed the conversation that Moniz started. The result, Scott explains, was that in 1983 "I accepted Jesus Christ as the Lord of my life." He also implemented his backup plan, focusing on academics and entrepreneurship.

Scott sees God's sovereign hand in the near tragic accident and in the men who invested in him. When telling the story he recites, "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). In Scott's story, that means an angry young man becomes a U.S. Senator, speaking to the nation.

Only four years after meeting Scott, Moniz died at age 38. Scott's national audience far exceeded the number of people Moniz had hoped to impact, and they heard this uplifting mes-

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Commissioner's Questions

The following questions relate to the Air Methods contract which provides medically necessary helicopter flights to the residents of Union County. You have seen these questions and answers before, but we are re-publishing them again this year to make sure everyone has the correct information.

Q. Is Union County renewing their contract with Air Methods to provide the life flight emergency helicopter membership free to residents again this year?

A. Yes, we are! The contract with Air Methods will be approved at the County Meeting on May 20, 2021. Everything is the same as last year and you do not have to do anything to be covered. Union County residents are automatically covered.

Q. Who is covered by the Union General Hospital stationed helicopter?

A. Anyone who lives in Union County or has a home in Union County.

Q. I have a second home in Union County, and we are only there in the Summer and Fall. Will we be covered under this membership with Air Methods?

A. Yes, if you have a home here, on or before June 1, 2021 you are automatically covered while in Union County - whether you live here full time or not.

Q. Will we receive any paperwork on this emergency helicopter membership?

A. No, you will only receive paperwork if you must utilize your membership.

Q. What does this Emergency Helicopter Membership cover?

A. Union County has basically signed all residents and homeowners up for this membership at no cost to the individuals. This membership covers only emergency medically necessary helicopter transfers to another hospital. It does not pay for the entire cost of the service but it does pay for the amount that your medical insurance does not pay. If you happen to be uninsured, it will pay for the total cost.

Q. Who pays for the medical emergency helicopter service?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



The History of Memorial Day

There are so many celebrations that we as Americans observe throughout the year, although I believe that most of us do not know just how far back the origins of what is now known as Memorial Day go. Let's look back.

A Civil War Holiday

The origins for our modern-day Memorial Day were born from a grassroots effort to honor the dead. Citizens were the first to identify and properly bury the fallen soldiers. Clara Barton, a Civil War nurse and founder of the American Red Cross, established the Missing Soldiers Office to help families find information about their missing loved ones. Edmund Burke Whitman, a quartermaster during the war, became the superintendent of America's new national cemeteries, established by Congress in 1867. Major organizations of prominence were joining the fray. There were dedication ceremonies commemorating the finding, identifying and burying of the

Military Musings

Janice Walters-Taylor



See Walters-Taylor, page 5A



Chamber of Commerce

I would like to take a few minutes to thank everyone who participated in the Shoot for the Stars golf tournament last week. We are so thankful to be able to partner annually with the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC and Butternut Creek Golf Course to raise monies for scholarships to be awarded to local students. We are proud of all of our Union County Graduates, and this year's graduating class is certainly worthy of our attention. The Class of 2021 will include 179 students, of which 133 will graduate with a GPA of 3.0 or higher. All of these students will qualify for the HOPE scholarship. 150 of these students will be attending a University or Technical College when they graduate, and 56 students will graduate with honors. We are also very proud of those students who have chosen to enter the military to serve this country and those who will be entering the workforce. I must say having attended the University of

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



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Letters to the Editor

Carr vs Biden

Dear Editor,
The North Georgia News from April 28, 2021, carried a statement released by the Office of the Attorney General of the State of Georgia that a lawsuit was filed against the executive order of the President of the U.S. over the "social cost of carbon." My immediate response is in the form of a question:

"When did the economy of one generation become more important than preserving the eternal life-giving properties of Earth?"
Thomas G. Tornabene

Seven Hundred Years in Play

Dear Editor,
In the mid-14th Century, when King Edward ordered all of his male chattel to train and to become proficient with the longbow, he unintentionally set in motion the mantra of individual peasants defending their homes and to equalize their individual capabilities against mounted and armored noblemen.

The longbow prevented mounted and armored noblemen from closing with the ranks of peasants. The battles of Agincourt and Crecy are definitive proof of the superiority of individually armed peasants pitted against privileged elites. It was a lesson that the British on their return from Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, had to learn.

The spirit of the Second Amendment is at least 700 years old.
George A. Mitchell

A Response to Hatred

Dear Editor,
This past year we have seen Sin rear its ugly head. It has been rough enough to struggle through the impacts of living in a sin-fallen world as so many have been separated, sickened, and killed due to the pandemic. We have seen the burdens of anxiety, fear, and despair over health and finances that sin has placed to weigh so many down. In addition, as we now see so many communities come out of isolation, we are seeing so many who are turning inward to themselves as they look to regain their own sense of justice, comfort, and peace.

We have watched fallen humanity turn inward on themselves with the incidences of violence throughout the US. The horrific passing of a man choked to death. The senseless re-creation of burning and looting in response. The nationwide protests that have caused damage to personal property and brought injury and death

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Letters to the Editor

Long Black Train

Dear Editor,
My wife Jane and I attended a Josh Turner concert over in Hiawassee, and Josh sang a song called "The Long Black Train" representing Satan's last ride of destruction for those who have not accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. This long black train carries lost souls on a trip of no return, called hell, where each soul in this life on earth had a choice to make to whether or not they wanted to live totally separated from their Creator, God, by their own choosing, or to jump on board the Old Gospel Train headed to heaven and live with Jesus Christ for eternity.

Folks down through the ages of time have had numerous opportunities that God has showed them to turn from their evil ways, confess their sins and ask for forgiveness, which God is willing to do to each one who comes as they are and accepts His precious salvation plan. God doesn't force anyone to come to Him; you must come by faith, believing upon His Holy Name, and accept Jesus Christ into your heart, and you will be on that Old Gospel Train headed to glory.

Don't let Satan dupe you into thinking he has a better plan for you than God. Satan is the author of all lies and confusion and wants nothing more than to see you on his long black train which is headed into a tormenting state of eternal fire and brimstone from which you can never escape. Hell was never meant for humankind, just Satan and his fallen angels, because of their rebellion against their Creator God. God will not be mocked. What one sows in this life, they will reap for eternity in the next. That is a promise God intends to keep. Please heed the warning before you step out into eternity on that Long Black Train of regrets.
Frank F. Combs

Upholding Fair Elections

Dear Editor,
Public confidence and trust in the validity of election results is key to increasing voter participation. Americans deserve a fair and accurate election process. This means not only making sure that every eligible individual is able to vote, but that his or her vote is not stolen or diluted through fraud. The Democrats "For the People Act" (H.R. 1 / S. 1) unfortunately would both enable and increase fraud.

H.R. 1 / S. 1 would sabotage state voter ID laws, which currently combat impersonation and voter registration fraud, duplicate voting, and voting by ineligible individuals like illegal aliens. Under H.R. 1 / S. 1, someone could simply sign a statement in which they claim to be who they say there are. This would be on top of

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Things That Are of No Use

I have wondered many times about the purpose of certain living organisms. For example, can anything good come from poison ivy? Do yellow jackets have a good purpose in the scheme of things? What good is a plant like kudzu? Why must we deal with deer flies each year beginning in mid-June? I hear people talking about the hereafter and what they will do when they get to the pearly gates. There are many questions I have about life that I wish to learn the answer to, but one that I would really like to ask our maker is, "What is the purpose of some of these organisms?"

I think I can logically determine some of the answers. For example, kudzu is a plant that was introduced to the USA from Asia. In the Far East, kudzu is grown as a food source. The roots are consumed as we consume sweet potatoes. But the primary reason for which it was introduced in the USA was to protect soil from erosion. Early on, the plant was used as a cover on mine spoils and old abandoned farms. The plant is aggressive, meaning one vine can grow 37 feet in a year, quickly and easily covering the area on which it was planted. The leaf litter of the plant quickly builds the organic layer of the soil the plant covers. So, even though we all disdain the plant, it does have a positive use.

During the late summer we have all had nasty encounters with yellow jackets. The closer we get to fall, the more aggressive they become in regard to protecting their offspring. And when you are weed eating your yard, they can sting you before their presence is known. Years ago, in August, I was helping an elderly friend cut some firewood. We were at a house where a couple was hosting a formal dinner party later in the evening. A tree had been felled, and I was in the process of limbing the tree. I was just about to begin on the trunk portion of the tree when I felt something wasn't right. Then the stinging began. The yellow jackets had crawled up my overalls and were stinging me up and down my legs. I began running while disrobing. When I finished, I was wearing nothing but my underwear, and I found myself standing at the edge of the patio where guests were gathered for the upcoming dinner party. I had received 18 stings from my knees to my waist, but all I heard was laughter coming from the guests at the party. But, in my scientific deductions, I determined that even yellow jackets have their good purposes.

Yellow jackets eat animal protein and will prey upon detrimental insects and other critters. Also, I found a recipe for Yellow Jacket Soup in an old Cherokee Recipe Book. One of the

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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Galls

Today I am going to talk about insect galls. I've gotten several questions from people that have seen something strange looking growing on their plant, and they wanted to know what it is. Galls can make a leaf look alien, but they rarely harm the tree. Let's talk about some of them, what causes galls, and the damage that they do to a plant.

Insects usually cause galls. They look like an extra growth or tumor on the plant. They can take a variety of colors and shapes. Use of pesticides is not recommended in most cases to treat galls. Most pesticides will be ineffective because the insect or disease causing the gall is inside the plant.

Oak apple galls are somewhat common. These galls form on oak trees. They look like round balls that are attached to the oak leaves. They start out green, but turn brown, and are about half an inch to 2 inches in diameter. Oak apple wasps cause these galls. Oak apple wasps are really small wasps. These small wasps are not dangerous to people and won't hurt you. Inside the gall is a single wasp larva. Once the larva emerges the gall will turn brown, and you can probably see the hole where it emerged, if the gall is still intact.

Azalea leaf gall is another fairly common gall. This one is not caused by an insect, but is a fungal disease. The disease overwinters inside the plant. Then in the spring and summer, you'll start to see whitish swollen tissue appearing. That tissue has spores that can be moved to other leaves or plants by rain or wind. Fungicides are not an effective way to treat azalea leaf gall. If you see one of these galls, just pick it off and throw it in the trash, which will reduce its spread. Azalea leaf gall can also infect rhododendrons.

Maples can have a couple of different types of galls. One of those is called maple eye-spot gall. A midge causes it. A midge is a really small insect. These insects will lay their eggs on the underside of leaves. The eggs hatch and the larvae feed on the leaf from inside the gall. The hormones that the midge injects into the leaf causes a dark red ring to form that has a yellow inner ring and a dark red center. The baby midge will then drop to the ground and finish growing into an adult. These galls rarely do real damage to the tree. Using an insecticide to treat is not recommended because the midge is protected inside the gall.

One type of gall that is problematic for farmers is phylloxera. This louse like insect will feed on roots, which causes roots to swell and die. One of their favorite plants to feed on is

Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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vice in Union County?

A. Union General Hospital and Union County Government share in the costs. There are no out of pocket costs to the user. You also do not need to sign up or fill out any forms.

Q. How exactly is the bill paid?

A. Generally, a bill will be delivered to the patient's home and the "membership" covers all costs not covered by your personal medical insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid. If you receive a bill for this portion you need to contact the company to provide evidence that you do in fact live in Union County or have a home here, on or before June 1, 2021.

Q. Can I decide to use the membership to be transported to another hospital in the helicopter versus being

transported by ambulance?

A. No. The hospital and doctors determine if it is medically necessary for a patient to be transported by helicopter or by ambulance to another hospital. The helicopter is reserved for life and death emergencies and is utilized when a patient needs to get to a different facility as fast as possible.

The membership with Air Methods only covers medically necessary flights.

Q. Where do the funds come from to pay for this life saving helicopter service to Union County residents?

A. It comes from the property tax paid by homeowners and property owners, although the county and hospital get an excellent deal from the helicopter service to pass along this service to you.

Walters-Taylor... continued from Page 4A

dead from the Civil War.

After one dedication ceremony in Charleston, crowds took to the streets in celebration. This is one of the earliest references to Decoration Day, where banners and flowers decorated the graves of the fallen. Many other cities, primarily in the South, lay claim to be the progenitor of Memorial Day, birthed as Decoration Day.

For example, the Ladies Memorial Association of Columbus, Georgia, set aside April 26 as a day to "wreath the graves of our martyred dead with flowers." The group strongly fought for women elsewhere and everywhere to do the same. In many Southern states, April 26 is still celebrated as Confederate Memorial Day.

Decoration Day did not take on a widespread prominence and become a shared day of celebration until May 1868. John A. Logan, a retired general in the U.S. Army and commander in chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, set aside May 30 of that year "for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating, the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, hamlet, and churchyard in the land." Logan's orders were heeded, and three years after the Civil War ended a crowd of 5,000 gathered at Arlington National Cemetery. At the ceremony, Congressman and future Presi-

dent James A. Garfield spoke, and veterans and orphaned children decorated the graves of their fallen comrades, countrymen and family members. Similar ceremonies were held that day at 183 cemeteries across 27 states. The following year, 336 cities in 31 states, including in the South, observed the call to remembrance.

Memorial Day:

Beyond the Civil War

In 1873, New York became the first state to institutionalize the observance of Decoration Day on May 30th, and by 1890, all the Northern states had done so. Sadly, with more than 116,000 Americans killed in World War I and 405,000 in World War II, Memorial Day broadened its scope even further to honor all of America's war dead as well as a day to pray for peace.

In 1968, Congress finally declared Memorial Day a national holiday and moved the celebration from May 30 to the last Monday in May. Communities across the nation hold similar ceremonies, decorating graves, attending parades, giving speeches, remembering the dead, just as the first American celebrators of Memorial Day did 150 years ago.

There will be a Memorial Day 2021 ceremony on Saturday, May 29th, at Veteran's Park in Blairsville starting at 10 a.m. Bring your own chair or blanket; please plan to be a part of our town's pledge to honor those who have perished in service for our nation's sake.

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

ingredients was yellow jacket larvae. The soup was actually consumed by the Cherokee as well as early colonials here in Georgia.

Poison ivy is another nasty plant which we avoid at all costs. I was playing "Fox and Hounds" as a 15-year-old boy with a group of friends. Like everyone else, I had been taught to avoid plants that have leaves of three. However, it was late October, and all the leaves were gone. I had no idea the vines in which I was hiding were Poison Ivy. In three days, I had a rash that caused me to run a fever. The rash was cured after three trips to the doctor.

My father knew someone which claimed to be immune to the stuff. They had gone "Coon Hunting" and the dogs had treed a big "Boar Coon" up a yellow poplar. However, they could not spot the coon due to all the leaves on the tree. Usually, in a situation like this, my Dad would climb the tree and force the coon to jump out. But this time the tree was covered in poison ivy, and Dad knew he was allergic to the stuff. So, another man volunteered to climb the tree. He pulled off his shirt and shoes and rubbed the leaves all over his face. He then climbed the tree and forced the "Coon" out of the tree. Three days went by before the man was taken to

the hospital with a severe case of rash. But the plant does have a good purpose. You can see this example in February and March. Just walk through any woods and you will notice the tips of poison ivy vines have been nibbled upon. White-tailed deer will actually eat the vines at this time of year because there is nothing else for them to eat.

But there is one organism for which I can observe no positive purpose. I really enjoy walking in the woods. It matters not the time of day or the time of year. I can always feel at ease when I am in the woods. But, beginning in mid-June and lasting until late July, I can go outside and immediately I get bombarded by deer flies. They land on the back or top of my head to test my reflexes at slapping them. Then they begin biting my neck, ears and the backs of my arms. To ward them off, I walk through the woods swatting them with short branches I have ripped from shrubs or trees. Thankfully, the critters seem to fade away by mid to late July, but, for six to eight weeks, they can be a holy terror. This critter has always perplexed my thinking. Everything I know has a good purpose, but I cannot find one for this persistent little insect. I hate very few things. But a deer fly cannot be tolerated.

Johnson... continued from Page 4A

allowing same-day voter registration. The combination of these two policies that H.R. 1 outlines would open the door for massive fraud.

The bill would also require automatically registering individuals to vote who partake in government programs such as receiving welfare or obtaining a driver's license. This

would automatically enroll ineligible voters such as illegal aliens who take advantage of government programs. In addition, it limits states' ability to verify eligible voters and remove ineligible voters from registration rolls.

In addition to these dangerous policies, it would turn the Federal Election Commission into a hyper-partisan body. Currently the FEC is bipartisan, with six members (three from each party). H.R. 1 / S. 1 would reduce the number to five, giving one political party a majority and the opportunity to essentially rig elections in their party's favor.

Sometimes legislation proposed by Congress is bad policy, sometimes it is unnecessary, and sometimes it is unconstitutional. "For The People Act" includes policies that are all three.

Penny Johnson

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

Georgia, this year we have the largest group accepted to the University of Georgia in recent history. To say that we are proud of our graduates is an understatement.

It's our hope that the monies raised in 2021 will help next year's Class of 2022's graduates as they too pursue their dreams.

This year's partners are: Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, Butternut Creek Golf Course, South State Bank, Rick Urban, Granddaddy Mimm's Distilling Co., Union General Health System, Mountain Top Furniture, Chick-Fil-A, Tank Town USA, King Ford, Abide, Coosa Creek Marketing Products, and Noontootla Creek Farms.

Together with the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and the Union County Schools, these businesses speak on behalf of the entire community and say to our future students, "Your lives and your future matter significantly to this community. It is our hope that your branches spread as high as your roots run deep."

Dyer...

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neighborhoods, and communities. They can also be difficult on the responders who are dedicated to protecting life and property. Our hearts and prayers go out to the family and friends of the victims of this tragedy.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Williams...

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grape. Nowadays grapevines are grafted onto a rootstock that is resistant to phylloxera insects. Phylloxera is native to North America, so our native grapes like muscadine and fox grape are resistant to it.

However, European grapes are not. In the mid 1800s, some American vines were shipped to Europe that were infected with phylloxera. The arrival of phylloxera in Europe and other countries around the world nearly destroyed the winemaking industry.

For the vineyards that did not die, they had to rip out their vines and replace them with ones that were grafted onto resistant, American rootstock.

If you have questions about galls contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Fowler...

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sage: "Original sin is never the end of the story. Not in our souls, and not for our nation. The real story is always redemption." I hear Moniz' voice loud and clear. Through the one he impacted his million, and more.

Some do the work of Christ as fast food managers, fellow students, or redeemed senators, but all do it for the glory of God. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

Wesche...

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to involved people. The Twitter feeds and Facebook rants that continually stoked the fires of disgust, anger, and hatred.

However, as we have experienced venomous debates about certain people kneeling, there is another to add... the Good Samaritan kneeling next to the beaten man by the side of the road. Indeed, humanity is the man beaten by sin, death, and the power of the devil.

At times, you and I have been the ones who are beaten and close to dying. At other times, you and I have been the ones beating down others with our attitudes, words, and actions.

Again, we need the Good Samaritan... the Good Shepherd... the Son of God... the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind to come and kneel over us. As Jesus gave Himself up for us, we, the Redeemed, now should be the Good Samaritan with our attitudes, words, and actions to bring about healing to the others' hurt.

Jesus has destroyed sin, death, and the power of the devil. He now calls us to resist Satan and the hatred that he stirs among us, standing firm on the Word and in the faith that we profess.

Dave Wesche

Pastor, All Saints Lutheran Church

May God bless each graduate.

We will again be partnering with the Union County School System to place images of our graduating seniors on the square, and Union County Recreation Department is displaying the seniors on their sign at the entrance of Meeks Park.

Bravo to all and congratulations to the parents and guardians of these outstanding young men and women.