

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Reflecting Back

The year 2021 is gone and we welcome 2022. As we start a new year, we have the opportunity to reflect back on the happenings of the previous year. We look at the past and we learn from it. We collect information from the previous year and we determine if we met our strategic goals and objectives. We also use this information to plan for the future.

The year 2021 was a strange and bizarre year much like 2020. Most of that was due to COVID-19. The department continued to provide the usual emergency services as in the past but there were many changes due to COVID-19. We learned a great deal in 2020 such as how to respond and what was needed from the department.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



In 2021, we saw an increase in cases and deaths in Union County. January, August, and September were particularly bad months for increased cases and deaths. This placed a strain on the emergency services and the health care system. We saw the introduction of the vaccine in January. We were involved in helping to organize and administer the vaccine to the population in several mass vaccination clinics. COVID-19 is still a major factor in our operations every day.

In January, ISO (Insurance Services Office) conducted a survey of Union County to determine the Public Protection Class (PPC™), essentially the community's fire protection. The PPC™ is one tool that insurers use to calculate fire insurance premiums. The PPC™ ranges from class 10 (worst) to class 1 (best). Union County Fire Department, E911 Dispatch and the various water companies of the City and County were proud to announce that Union County's PPC™ class has remained a 4/4Y thus keeping insurance rates low.

There were many other achievements during the year; too many to list in this column but here are some highlights. We were able to continue some of our community programs including our Smoke Alarm program which provides free smoke alarms to Union County residents. The department took delivery of a new fire engine for station 1 which is the first custom cab designed for UCFD. There were other purchases and donations of equipment that better enable us to service the community.

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Disruptive Faith

The word "disruptive" comes to mind when I learn of someone who does not go along with the crowd. They stand out because they're different, hopefully in a good way.

I recently became aware of a University of Georgia professor, Henry Schaefer. He is the Graham Perdue Professor of Chemistry and Director of the Center for Computational Chemistry. He's a graduate of MIT and Stanford, and is a pioneer in his field. He's also disruptive.

As an eager young professor in 1978, his research demonstrated that a Nobel Prize-winning chemist was wrong. He has since published over a thousand scientific research papers. In 2004, scientists convened for a week-long conference in Korea to review and celebrate his work. He has directed over 100 doctoral students who are now professors all over the world. He is disruptive because his use of computers in chemistry caused scientists to think and research differently.

Dr. Schaefer is disruptive in another way. Many of his colleagues in the lofty airs of the academic community are proponents of scientific materialism (physical matter is all there is) and evolution (random mutations and natural selection explain life). He disagrees. In fact, he is an outspoken Christian. "There is no plausible scientific mechanism for the origin of life, i.e., the appearance of the first self-replicating biochemical system," he says. "The staggeringly high information content of the simplest living thing is not readily explained by evolutionists."

Dr. Schaefer speaks around the world and explains his greatest discovery. "In 1973, I discovered the Jesus Christ of history, the Jesus whose life is described on the pages of the New Testament." He says, "I discovered that the resurrection of Jesus is not only historically true, but that it's one of the best-attested facts in all of ancient history." In 2003, he published his talks in a book, "Science and Christianity: Conflict or Coherence?"

Are science and faith in conflict? That's certainly what some would have you think. It matters because humans are born with ultimate questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny. To trust only science for answers is to make it something like a religion. The irony here is that modern science developed be-

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



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Commissioner's Questions

Happy New Year to you all. We are excited that 2022 will be another great year in Union County. Thanks for your support of our county through your volunteerism, donations to churches, to the community, and simply just caring about your neighbors. We are very blessed to be able to live in such a beautiful area with such beautiful people.

Q. Do you have any budget concerns for the upcoming year?

A. I am always concerned about our budget and the amount of money that it takes to operate Union County. As you know, we had to raise property taxes a relatively small amount for the 2020 year, and that was very frustrating for me and many of the employees. In 2021, we were able to adopt a rollback rate of 6.024 mils, down from the previous year's county millage rate of 7.178 mils. We were able to adopt a new budget for 2022 that should let us continue to provide good services, and facilities for our county residents. Keeping our expenditures and revenues balanced is a major portion of what we do.

Q. What is the county budget for 2022, and how much did it increase this year?

A. Our new 2022 operations budget was adopted on December 27th, 2021 at an advertised meeting at the courthouse. The 2021 budget was \$21,748,780. The 2022 budget will be \$22,878,191, which is roughly a 5.2% increase. In this case, it is excellent with all the expense increases we have faced and will continue to face until the U.S. supply chain issues are resolved.

Q. Since this is the first North Georgia News printing of the New Year, what does the county have planned for 2022?

A. First, we are always looking for ways to save money and lower expenses. At the same time, we believe that it is necessary to continually improve our quality of life with facility improvements and additions, so that the people living in Union County have a great place to live, work and play. We will address some of these new projects in future Q & A's.

Q. Is there anything in county government in 2022 that you want to change?

A. There are always adjustments that need to be made in

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



See Paris, page 5A

Habitat for Humanity

Let's talk "Habitat history." Most of you reading this column have heard about Habitat for Humanity, and know that it's a worldwide organization that builds houses for people who normally don't qualify for a conventional home mortgage. But I'll bet that most of you have no idea how all this started!

In 1942, some members of the Rehoboth Baptist Church near Americus, Georgia, decided to pool their resources and create a community farm. Clarence Jordan owned some land, so he and several other members of Rehoboth Baptist Church started Koinonia Farm, where all people were treated equally, resources were shared, and they acted as caretakers of the land and stewards of the natural resources.

In 1950, Rehoboth Baptist Church excommunicated the members of the Farm, because people who lived there were treated equally, regardless of race, and this was not an accepted practice at that time. Many of the local business-

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Habitat Happenings

Cathy Wheeler



Letters to the Editor

The Fall of a Nation

Dear Editor,

The fall of a nation is not an event. It is a process that takes place over time. It has been accurately predicted by history, which illuminates the present through the past. It is evident through history that all great countries have been conquered from the inside before being destroyed from the outside. Great nations have started their success by relying on principles and beliefs in liberty, humanity, freedom and justice. The cement of this foundation was belief in the teachings of God, such as morality, humility, virtue, charity and loyalty. Our forefathers were no fools — proud before man and humble before God. Through the Constitution, they saw principles and virtue not only as a path to success but as a bulwark against failure. They expected those chosen to govern to place country before personal interests or partisan politics by becoming leaders not followers.

So why are we now failing? What is destroying us on the inside? To some degree it is prosperity. The rich are weakened and made lazy by prosperity while our poor are weakened by the dole and entitlements that are driven by socialism and keep them in poverty as rapid inflation and slow income growth drives the base of our middle class into poverty. The claim that socialism will cost the middle class

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Vogel Christmas Gratitude

Dear Editor,

Volunteers from various churches came out at the end of November and decorated the ballfield for the Vogel State Park Christmas Program. It looked so festive and beautiful when finished. The week before the program was to be on December 11th, the weather was gorgeous with unusually warm temperatures. Then the next week turned cooler with rain. There's something about the second week in December for the last several years, it almost always starts raining with colder weather.

Park Manager Jack Becker checked the weather on Thursday before the event on Saturday and it looked almost positive there would be rain all day Saturday. Jack called Janet, facilitator of the event, and said we need to go with plan B. Plan B is to move the event down to the pavilion. Janet in turn texted the volunteers and gave them the news. When plan B is executed, that means the volunteers have to meet on Saturday of the event at noon and decorate the Lake Trahlyta pavilion. Jack in turn has to rent several stand-up heaters to keep the pavilion a little warm. This

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Letters to the Editor

Thank You, Union County

Dear Editor,

Union County restored my worried mind, enhanced my faith and gave me eye candy.

Having to make a necessary trip to Chattanooga, Tennessee, I decided to extend the stay during the early week of Christmas to see the lights by night, which I had up to this point neglected to search out.

Dinner in the Art District as the sun went down gave rise to a walk across the Walnut Street Bridge to view the city's elaborate decorations.

Can you imagine the dismay when viewing the city lying in black and white, with a humble one and only Christmas tree viewable from a many storied high rise window? It was ghastly. Ghostlike. I felt sick, as if seeing my future in America from some Charles Dickens Christmas Carol scene.

The next evening, at home in Blairsville, I drove through town on a necessary errand. I was astounded at the lights, counting them with ex-

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Educate Yourself

Dear Editor,

There is a manual online: ACCG SPLOST Guide for Commissioners. For anyone interested in how SPLOST is set and the money is to be used, this is a very detailed guidebook. I am providing a sample of some of the information that can be found in this manual.

"A very important aspect of any capital improvements planning process is the involvement of citizens in all phases of CIP development. This involvement can ultimately build a base of community support necessary to pass a SPLOST referendum.

"The law is specific as to the series of steps that must be taken in order to levy a SPLOST, as well as the time frame within which the county must proceed. The county is responsible for estimating the SPLOST revenues expected to be collected over the life of the SPLOST, as well as the costs of all projects to be financed. The county should also ensure that the sum of all projects, including those submitted by municipalities, equals the estimated revenues.

"SPLOST projects can only be used to fund capital outlay projects. 'Level one county-wide project' means a county-wide project or projects of the county to carry out functions on behalf of the state and is limited to a county courthouse; a county administrative building primarily for county constitutional officers or elected officials; a county or regional jail, correctional institution, or other detention facility; a

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Logan Turnpike Trail

I first heard about the Logan Turnpike from C. R. Collins. There have been many times which I heard him talk about traveling over the Logan Turnpike with his father.

According to the late Ethylene Dyer Jones, who had written many articles about the road, the Union Turnpike was first constructed in 1821 by John Lyon and Joel Dickerson. They later sold the rights to the road and some extensive land holdings on the southern slopes of the Blue Ridge to Major Willis Logan for \$3,000. He operated the road for 30 years. But, other members of the family operated the toll booth on the south side of the mountain until Highway 129 opened in 1925. The road was 7.5 miles long and made its way from Louisville through the Tensatee Gap to Choestoe.

A stage coach from Augusta, Georgia, to Athens, Tennessee, used the Turnpike, and Major Logan established a stagecoach stop which entertained overnight boarders. Wagons with four wheels were charged 2 cents per mile. Market animals driven over the Turnpike to Gainesville were also charged on a per animal basis. Once again according to Ethylene Dyer Jones, many farmers in Union County would drive animals such as sheep, hogs, cattle and turkeys across the mountain to Gainesville to market the animals.

Jones says in her written accounts that Jack Shuler and his family lived at the foot of Tensatee Gap where they operated the Ponder Post Office and a store. The family was paid by Major Logan to maintain the Logan Turnpike on the north side of Tensatee Gap.

C. R. Collins once told me about a killing at Spiva Bend in Union County. There was a Spiva fellow hiding out during the Civil War. He refused to fight for the South. The Home Guard caught him by a large outcrop of rock. He refused to be captured so he was shot by that group of people. Also, at a spot near Tensatee Gap where the Appalachian Trail crosses the Turnpike, the Runyon Boys were hanged from a Chestnut Tree for refusing to fight for the Southern Cause. They were made an example of by the Home Guard.

Harold Dyer and Bud Akins are two people which have traveled the Turnpike and know much about its history. Some years ago Harold and I walked the southern portion of the Old Turnpike. We walked from the Gap down the southern flank of the Blue Ridge toward Helen. Approximately 1/2 mile from the Gap we walked through an extremely steep section of the trail onto a little shelf that would hold perhaps 10 wag-

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Apple Tree Pruning

Deep winter is prime apple tree pruning time. Pruning apple trees is important early in the tree's life so that it gets started off right. Later on, if you properly prune the tree each year the tree will be more productive, more disease resistant, and have a longer life. Keeping all these things in mind, let's talk about apple tree pruning today.

The general advice that I give people when it comes to pruning apple trees is to prune as much as you feel comfortable, then go back and prune a bit more. Most of the time people are afraid of damaging the tree if they cut too far back. However, if trees are pruned at the right time of year and the right branches are cut off, it will be better for the long-term health of the tree.

If you have a tree that has not been pruned regularly, and you're trying to get it back into shape you'll want to start out by pruning out and dead or diseased branches. Second, you'll want to cut out any crossing branches. Crossing branches create open wounds that can be easily infected. After you've pruned out dead, diseased, and crossing branches you want to try to open up the canopy. An open canopy will allow airflow. That's going to reduce the humidity, and therefore reduce the severity of disease occurring. The saying is that you want the canopy to be so open that a bird could fly through it without hitting any branches. A tree that has too many branches will not be as productive. An apple tree is only able to effectively produce a certain amount of fruit. Adding fertilizer can boost the productivity. Therefore, pruning might affect the number of fruit you tree produces, but you'll have better quality and they'll be more likely to make it all the way to maturity.

Trees that have been properly pruned their whole lives will have more of a Christmas tree shape than a teardrop shape. If you have a newly planted tree, you'll need to prune it as well. If you have planted an unbranched whip, you'll need to cut it back to 24 to 30 inches above the ground. This is going to encourage the new tree to branch out. If you don't prune an unbranched whip, you'll probably end up having a 20-foot tall tree that doesn't have any branches on it.

Sometimes people will plant a seed from an apple core that they've eaten. This can be a fun experiment for kids to see an apple tree grow. An issue that you may run into with this is that there is no telling what kind of apple tree will come up. If you plant a seed from your favorite apple, that fruit could have been pollinated by a different variety, leaving you with an unknown cross. Another issue is that nowadays most trees

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Steve Rowe



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Cummings...continued from Page 4A

ons. Harold told me that it was a two-day trip coming home from or going to Gainesville. And if the wagons got a late start coming home from Gainesville they would sometimes stop and camp at this little shelf. Harold's Dad made many a trip over the gap. And his grandfather, upon the end of World War I, had come via the Logan Turnpike from Europe.

Harold was told by his father that people traveling over the Turnpike would cut logs in the gap and tie them to the wagons when going downhill to help them brake their speed. While standing at the camping spot, he said, "I can just see some old wagons and a bunch of farmers including my grandfather sitting around a big campfire." We walked a little further down the old roadbed to a place where a tornado had knocked down perhaps 15 acres of timber. Looking toward the east you could see rock outcroppings that witnessed much history on

the old roadbed. If you looked to the west you could see the top of Cowrock Mountain and its rock faces on the southern slopes of the mountain.

Along the trail there are at least three nice little waterfalls with the largest located at the bottom of the steep part of the trail. Once the trail reaches the flatlands, you walk perhaps another 1/2 mile until you reach the end of the trail. The total length we walked was about 2 miles. We turned around with about 1/2 mile of trail left. All along the trail there was an abundance of wildflowers. We could see Squaw Root, Wild Violets, Trillium and Squirrel Corn. Going down the trail is not difficult, but, coming back up is another story. If you are interested in walking the trail, it is easy to find. Just take Highway 348 south from Highway 180. When you get to Tesnatee Gap park on the right side of the road, the trail is marked by a sign just to the east of the parking lot.

Chamber...continued from Page 4A

submit questions or comments, and then leave at their leisure.

Any questions about the public involvement process can contact Adam Hazell of the GMRC at (738) 538-2617 or ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov.

Have you signed up for the Chamber's 40th Anniversary Gala? We invite all Chamber members and those interested in becoming a mem-

ber, to join us on January 20th at Brasstown Valley Resort to help celebrate our 40th anniversary, and to name the Business, Ambassador, and the Person of the Year. Contact the Chamber for more information or to RSVP.

I hope everyone has a safe and happy new year, and I look to an even better Blairsville on 2022!

Hummel...continued from Page 4A

nothing has been proven to be a lie. Socialism has been proven to be the most expensive social experiment because those receiving the dole become greater in number than those paying for the dole.

Fear is also a prime factor. Our finest and best minds will not run for office due to the fear of character assassination by radicals. The oppressive weight of taxation on the middle class and the printing of money we do not have to support the dole, entitlements and costly lost wars such as we saw with Afghanistan.

Inflation cause by rapidly increasing national debt. Our very poor position in the balance of trade, which causes the fall of American companies, the lack of production of American products and the loss of jobs. The lack of faith in a leader who broke the nation's most devout promise to leave no American behind. It is growth in human depression driven by excessive spending, lawlessness and partisan politics. It is the attack on our first and finest responders because of the mistakes of a very few. It is cutting military budgets when we know that only strength keeps the enemy peaceful. It is the now common belief that men lie most when they govern states.

And most dangerous is a manufactured racism that has been blown out of all reasonable proportion in hopes of gaining the minority vote. It is open borders that do not allow the time for leisurely assimilation and absorbing of our classic culture as well as the importing of enemies whose only aim is to destroy our culture.

And possibly most dangerous is our growing dependence on foreign nations as experienced by the shortage of microchips and new large dependence on China and foreign

oil. It is the lie that almost everything that has gone wrong is caused by COVID-19 or the former administration. And though socialism is the major player in the fall of nations, it is not the only player.

However, it is critical to understand that the major fear of those who control socialism, communism and dictatorships is fear of rebellion, which in many of them has taken place. Therefore none of these countries allows the ownership of guns, which makes it clear that we must protect the Second Amendment.

Under conservative government from 2017 through 2020, we were rebuilding our economy, producing jobs and expanding our nation's production, eliminating reliance on other countries, showing that we will not be abused by any foreign power, and successfully fighting intolerance.

Now, we are seeing splinter groups pushing extreme liberalization through using freedom and liberty as an excuse for wrongdoing while hiding within the anonymity of a violent destructive crowd. Those of us who just stand by are a contributing cause to the destruction.

Even some of my brothers in Christ must share the blame by thinking more of the hereafter than fighting for their children who must live through their future.

It is the courage of the good, not the brutality of the bad, that builds and preserves nations and defends the will of God. Those are not my words. They are the words of history. I am simply a messenger, the first born of a family that came here many years ago to escape what is taking place here today. I have written an echo of the past that I hope one day will die.

Chris Hummel

Pack...continued from Page 4A

county health department facility; or any combination of such projects.

"'Level two county-wide project' means a county-wide project or projects of the county or one or more municipalities, other than a level one county-wide project, which project or projects are to be owned or operated or both by the county, one or more municipalities, or any combination thereof.

"(Per O.C.G.A. 48-8-122), the governing authority of the county and the govern-

ing authority of each municipality receiving any proceeds from the tax under this part or under Article 4 of this chapter shall maintain a record of each and every project for which the proceeds of the tax are used ... (to be published) not later than December 31 of each year." A sample annual report form can be found on page 66 of the ACCG SPMOST Guide for Commissioners. Check the manual out and educate yourself.

Frank Pack

Hill...continued from Page 4A

program, he also bought a real tree to use for the tree lighting. The volunteers showed up at noon and started decorating, and by 3:30 the pavilion was beautifully decorated.

At 4 p.m., the attendees started coming in and the night was started. There were cookies, hot chocolate, hot cider, water, juice, candy canes, and Santa dressed in his beautiful Santa suit. All this provided by churches and organizations in our area. The night was warm and cozy with a feeling of family as the wonderful program was presented by great musicians and the telling of Christ-

mas and its true meaning.

Thank you to all who contributed to such a wonderful night, those being Baptist churches: Antioch, Choestoe, First Baptist, Harmony Grove, New Union, Pine Top, Redeemer, Youngstown, Zion and others, House of Prayer and Fellowship of the Hills and several outside our county.

Thank you also to United Community Bank and G&G Bakery. Last but not least our Park Manager, Jack Becker, and Vogel Volunteer Chair Stephanie Gray.

Janet Hill,
Facilitator

Habitat...continued from Page 4A

es in the area started a boycott of the Farm's products, in an attempt to drive the people out of the area. This boycott lasted well into the 1960s, but in 1957, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote a letter of support for the Farm owners, and that encouraged everyone not to give up.

In 1965, Millard and Linda Fuller joined the farm. It was around then that the concept of "partnership housing" was developed. Houses would be built by volunteers and sold for no profit. Mortgage payments from housing partner families would be combined with no-interest loans provided by supporters, along with money earned by fundraising, to build more homes. The "Fund for Humanity" was established.

The first partnership house was completed in 1969 in Sumter County, Georgia. The homeowners were Beau and Emma and their five children. Their house was made of concrete block with a modern kitchen, indoor bathroom, and a heating system (which was much better than the uninsulated one-room shack with no indoor plumbing and no heat where they used to live).

In 1973, the Fullers took the partnership housing concept to Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), and spent three years there building houses with the local farmers. When they came back to the United States in 1976, their organization was officially named "Habitat for Humanity," and Habitat for Humanity International was established.

Paris...

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county government as we move throughout the year. County government staff along with public input often impacts what changes need to be made.

Q. What is the phone number I can call to ask anything about county government?

A. You can call my office, Union County Commissioner at 706-439-6000 and they can either connect you to a department to assist you, or get the answers for you by returning your phone call.

Williams...

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have been grafted onto a rootstock. The grafted rootstock will provide more protection from root diseases and may dwarf the tree, which cuts down on the difficulty of managing the tree.

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

Fowler...

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cause early scientists assumed an intelligent creator. Now we know the universe had a beginning, is fine-tuned for life, and contains genetic information to make life possible – all evidence for a creator who is not part of the material world.

That leads to the Jesus Dr. Schaefer discovered. "By Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible... all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16-17). You have reasons to believe that, even if it's disruptive.

Haizlip...

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hilaration, for there were more than one and many colors. Oh pomp and circumstance! It brought my JOY back into Christmas. Ahh. Blairsville!

Hope and faith displayed thusly can sustain one for a Happy New Year 2022. Thank you, Union County!

Brenda Haizlip

Dyer...

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The department responded to the usual incidents as well as other not-so-common in 2021. We responded to a tragic home explosion that resulted in two deaths. Several unusual calls were the "fire alarms" this summer which ended up being Cicadas. The department also responded to several major accidents including a semi-truck overturned on Richard Russell Hwy and a plane crash near the lake.

The year 2021 brought its own challenges and opportunities. We reflect back on this year and look forward to serving our community in 2022.

Union County Fire Department ~ Our Family Protecting Your Family ~