

Motor Vehicle Accidents

There have been several columns written explaining the need for a firefighter to be a jack-of-all-trades. This is due to the various jobs that a firefighter may be called upon to perform. Most people are aware of the most obvious job of a firefighter which is fighting all types of fires. Although firefighting is our main job, it is not our only job. We also respond to hazardous materials, search and rescues, medical calls and motor vehicle accidents.

In 2018, Union County Fire Department responded to 183 motor vehicle accidents in Union County. Of those accidents, there were 106 accidents with reported injuries that required transport to the hospital. There were also 11 accidents that required the use of specialized extrication tools to remove the victims from the vehicles. These are usually major accidents that can involve serious injuries or fatalities.

Responding to motor vehicle accidents can be challenging due to the damage to the vehicles. Modern vehicles are designed to withstand an accident. They are equipped with occupancy safety zones, crumpling areas, and various other safety features such as air bags and seat belts. They are designed to withstand an accident at a certain speed. When a vehicle is involved in an accident, the crumpling areas absorb a great deal of the impact leaving the occupant safety zones intact. If the vehicle has an accident at a higher rate of speed than it is designed, the occupant safety zones can collapse on victims. Firefighters must know how to extricate the victims from the collapsed zones.

On an accident, extricating victims is the primary role of a firefighter. They must know how to perform this quickly and safely because every minute counts. Union County Firefighters complete the Auto Extrication Course conducted by the Georgia Fire Academy or Georgia Emergency Management Agency within their first year on the department.

During the course, firefighters learn the construction of various automobiles; the kinetics of motor vehicle accidents; and how automobiles react when various parts are bent or cut with extrication tools. The class reviews the basic extrication tools used to remove victims. Once students are proficient in using the basic tools, the class introduces firefighters to the hydraulic power tools com-

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



“Re” Words

Taking stock of your life is so human. The changing of the calendar is a natural time to do it, especially when you have holiday time off to ponder how your relatives have changed since you last saw them. Or, as in the case of some of us, how our families have one less member.

Wanting things to be better, to be renewed, is a common longing. Every decent longing has a sublime object, even if we do not realize it. This one is no different. We yearn for renewal because God does. In “Restoring All Things,” Warren Smith writes, “The Bible is not a book about how to have a better life or how to handle life’s problems. It is a book that explains the universe and how God is in the process of redeeming and restoring it to its original good, true, and beautiful state.”

The Christian faith understands the world as it is, one that includes evil and brokenness. That falls on each of us human beings, so God offers us a fresh start, a re-birth. That is the way Jesus reached out to Nicodemus, who countered, “How can these things be?” Jesus proceeded to explain His identity as the Son, His atoning sacrifice, and His offer of eternal life. By faith you are reborn (John 3).

As you reflect, you may realize you need to change course. The word for that is repentance, but in the Bible it means far more than “turning over a new leaf.” It means you have turned away from what you were, and embraced your new identity in Christ. It means you “walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

Once I was speaking to dear souls recovering from substance abuse. One said, “Sometimes I wish I could take my brain out, wash it, and put it back in.” What a revealing statement about the junk habits and memories you can accumulate, to your detriment! The Bible says you can be transformed by the renewing of your mind. This happens when you present your body to God as a living and holy sacrifice, no longer conformed to the world (Rom. 12:1-2).

As you review your life, remember that as God has reconciled you, you are now a reconciler. This is how you participate in

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner’s Questions

Q. Do you have any plans or solutions to the litter problem in the county?

A. Litter is a total frustration for me. Over the years we have tried so many different methods including having a special phone number for anonymously reporting littering. We have been a part of a regional group of counties, North Georgia Resource Management Authority to combat littering and promote recycling. We are a “Keep America Beautiful” affiliate member since 2000, and have secured grants from them for recycling trailers and teaching anti-littering in the schools. We have utilized hidden cameras, and the list goes on and on. But basically, nothing has really worked.

Q. Do you have a long term solution for littering problems?

A. It is so frustrating to continue to see our beautiful county have litter and junk disbursed in so many parts of the county. However, I guess we have to take comfort in the fact that it is better than it use to be, just not by enough to satisfy me. It is so frustrating to know that we still have people who will simply throw out or allow it to be blown out of their trucks or vehicles. However, we continue to work on it and we will never give up. We are always open to new ideas.

Q. How much money does it take to pick up litter in the county?

A. We spend over \$200,000 a year on litter in the county. That is such a waste (literally). However, it is a fine line between too much enforcement, if you can catch them, and the increase in garbage being illegally dumped. At least we are not having the illegal dumping problem many counties have, except in rare instances. When it does happen, we go all out to trace it and prosecute the violators.

Q. We still love the new recycle area and trash dispensers at the transfer station. It is awesome. Do we have any future plans there?

A. Mostly now, we want to continue to improve on the commercial area, since our residential area is working great. Thanks to Advanced Disposal, our contractor, soon a new concrete floor will

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

The Signs and Symptoms of Drug Addiction

The U.S. National Library of Medicine states that there is no hard, fast rule on how long it takes for an individual to become dependent on drugs or develop a drug addiction.

The length of time can depend on the type of drug you’re using, the amount of the drug you take, and whether you abuse a combination of drugs (including alcohol). Other factors, like your physical and psychological health, can also influence drug dependence.

Certain drugs, like cocaine, meth, heroin, and prescription drugs in the benzodiazepine family, are known to cause physical and psychological dependence very quickly. For some users, the signs of drug tolerance and physical dependence can develop after only a few uses, while others may take weeks or months to be-

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The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

"Thanks! As rainy as it has been, I just can't go anywhere without my umbrella!"



Chamber of Commerce

We are excited about beginning a new year and the opportunities that we will be providing for our members and the community. We have two exciting events coming up this month, the first one being the Chamber Awards Night.

During this evening dinner, on January 24th, we want to take time to recognize those individuals, businesses and Ambassadors that played a significant role in making our community great in 2018. We will also be hosting a Member’s Breakfast on January 29th that will provide an opportunity to for Chamber members to learn about the extensive benefits included in their membership. Attendees will hear about the various resources and opportunities that are available to their businesses and how to best utilize those resources. Any members interested in participating in these events can register by either calling the Chamber or visiting the Chamber website.

While close to 700 local businesses and or-
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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

Heartburn

I’ve had heartburn most of December, but not from the stomach, but the heart.

Out of hundreds of television commercials only about five even mentioned Christmas. Most all referred to Christmas as “this holiday.” The cultural grinch of our society have all but tried to take Christ out of Christmas. As Christians, we know why we celebrate Christmas. It’s the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who came to take our sins upon himself so we could become the children of God.

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Lest We Forget

Sometime between Jan. 2 and Jan. 4, 2008, while hiking Blood Mountain, 24-year-old Meredith Emerson was murdered by Gary Michael Hilton.

Her dog, Ella, was found in Cumming. On Jan. 30, 2008, Gary Michael Hilton pleaded guilty to the murder of Emerson. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility for parole in 30 years. Hilton was later linked to and then charged with three additional murders: the October 2007 murders of elderly couple John and Irene Bryant in North Carolina; and the December 2007 murder of 46-year-old nurse Cheryl Dunlap in Florida. In 2011, Hilton

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2018 Rainfall Data

One of my hobbies is measuring and recording rainfall in the Gumlog Valley where we live. In 2018, I measured 85.5 inches. The driest month was January with 2 inches and the wettest was May with 11.1 inches.

The following data at our same location show how greatly rainfall has varied from year to year. There are also wide variations from area to area:

2008 (44.2”); 2009 (72.5”); 2010 (47.7”); 2011 (56.4”); 2012 (50.0”); 2013 (87.0”); 2014

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Christmas in Blairsville 2018

Downtown Blairsville has never been decorated so pretty for Christmas as this past year! The shops and businesses, especially the square, were just magical! It could have been the setting of a Hallmark Christmas Movie. Thanks to all who made this happen so everyone could enjoy its beauty. Happy New Year to all.

Ella Tiburski

RC&D

Georgia Association of Conservation Districts

Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council (CCRCD) has many partners with the programs, events, and field days that it administers and facilitates each year.

Our closest partner groups are the Soil & Water Conservation District Supervisors that cover most of the counties in Georgia.

These groups are made up of local farmers and business people who monitor and oversee projects that involve soil and water and the supervisor’s purpose is to monitor these projects thru the NRCS to prevent erosion and damage to our streams, rivers, and lakes. These district supervisor groups are monitored and supported by the Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC) which is a state agency under the Georgia Department of Agriculture.

The (GSWCC) was formed to protect, conserve and improve the soil and water resources of the State of Georgia. The Commission’s goal is to make Georgia a better place for its citizens through the wise use and protection of basic soil and water resources and to achieve practical water quality goals.

In Georgia there are 159 counties and 40 Soil & Water Conservation Districts. Each county has at least two supervisor representatives on the District Board of Supervisors. Serving as the coordinator and guide to all these efforts is a Commission, appointed by the Governor and comprised of five supervisors from different regions of the state. The Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors (GACDS) is a nonprofit organization made up of Soil & Water District Supervisors, and is dedicated to help the 40 districts with the protection and conservation of our state’s natural resources.

The 370 members volunteer in each of Georgia’s 40 soil and water conservation districts to promote conservation, educate citizens about the importance of conservation, and inform policy makers about natural resource issues. Conservation districts host educational events throughout the year, covering topics such as best management practices for agricultural production, erosion control, water conservation, and improving wildlife habitat. GACDS partners with several organizations to maximize the impact of the efforts we dedicate to conservation activities. Whether they are conducting educational events for the general public, working with agricultural producers to implement conservation practices, or advising developers and mu-

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RC&D Executive Director

Frank Riley



Around The Farm

The Well

Papa’s younger brother Clay, was a young man who enjoyed life. He was the smallest of Lon Cummings’ sons. Clay loved being around other people and he enjoyed laughter.

Whenever, a crowd was gathered and you could hear laughter there was a good chance Clay was in the middle of the group telling one of his tales.

Lon Cummings raised 2 girls and 4 boys in a 3 bedroom house on the hill overlooking Cummings Creek. Mabel and Inez slept in one room while Pick, Papa, Clay and Poggy slept in another room. Pick and Poggy slept in one feather bed while Papa and Clay slept in an event.

One evening in late summer an another occurred that effected Papa for the rest of his life. The boys had worked out an order of cross ties for Lon. The railroad between Hamilton and Phil Campbell was being worked on and Lon had secured the contract for 30 miles of cross ties. The boys worked at the sawmill for 10 hours a day of milling cross ties. This was a bog order and they’d been working for weeks while trying to meet the order.

The next day they would be making their usual delivery of the cross ties to the railroad. Poggy was the youngest of the boys and he was so tired that he fell asleep while eating supper that evening. He dozed off and his face fell right into his mashed potatoes. All 4 of the young men collapsed into bed that evening. Papa said he was beyond tired and his sleep was filled with crazy dreams. The last dream he remembered was of him being robbed. And it scared him plenty. He said, “The dream was so real and then all of a sudden the robber reached out and grabbed me by the neck and began to choke me. I began to kick and scream for help and then the two of us rolled off the bluff and under a big rock. The fearful part was that he never let go of my neck.” Actually, Clay had an epileptic seizure and was choking Papa. The 2 boys had rolled off their bed and then wound up underneath the bed.

Upon hearing the commotion Lon had run into the room and with Uncle Pick’s help pulled Clay and Papa from under the bed. His grasp of my grandfather’s neck was strong enough to require both Lon’s and Pick’s strength to break him free. The young man’s neck was bruised for days. After which he was always afraid of being in a tight place due to his experience under the bed. Clay’s epileptic seizures would plague him intermittently over the next several years.

During the 1930s Papa and each of his

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Radon

Radon is an invisible, odorless gas that causes lung cancer. Every 25 minutes someone dies from radon induced lung cancer, making it the second leading cause of lung cancer. During Radon Action Month this January, UGA experts are advising you to test your home for radon gas.

I’d like to talk about what this dangerous gas is, how you can find out if you have it, and what you can do to reduce the radon in your house to a safe level.

When uranium, which occurs naturally in Georgia soil and rock, breaks down, it produces radon gas. Radon is a heavy gas which seeps into homes from the ground and concentrates in the lower levels of a house. Radon can be present in any home, regardless of the age or type of home. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that about 6.7% of homes nationwide have elevated levels of radon gas; however, in some counties the levels are higher. Homes in north Georgia can have high levels of radon. In Union County, between March 2003 and July 2017, about 46.5% of the homes tested had elevated levels of radon. In Towns County it was 33.1%. An elevated level of radon is anything at, or above, 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L). Being exposed to a level of 4 pCi/L has similar health effects as smoking 8 cigarettes per day.

The only way to know if your home has a high level of radon is to test for radon. Radon test kits are available from several sources, including local retailers, the Extension Office, and by ordering online at www.UGAradon.org. Purchasing a kit from the Extension office costs \$10.

If the radon level in your home is high, it is fixable. Installing a radon reduction (or radon mitigation) system will reduce high levels of indoor radon to acceptable levels. The system most commonly used is a vent pipe system, which includes a fan that pulls radon from beneath the house and vents it to the outside.

Just because your neighbor has had a negative radon test does not mean that your house isn’t affected. Also, if your neighbor has had a positive test it doesn’t mean that you have radon in your home. It is advisable to still test your own home. Experts usually advise that you have your home tested regularly to make sure that radon levels are low.

Radon may also be found in drinking water. This is primarily a concern for individuals whose drinking water comes from private wells. In Georgia, wells drilled into granitic crystalline rock aquifers (pretty common for wells around here), are at risk of naturally occurring radon contamination. This is where the uranium that

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Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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