

A New Year

People see a new year as a starting point. There will be New Year's Resolutions, gym memberships, and everyone wants to start that new diet.

To me, there are two types of people in this world, planners and non-planners. I am a planner. I like to have an idea of what we need to do, how we are going to do it, and most importantly, why.

Every November, we sit down and update our strategic plan. We start with a SWOT analysis where we review our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

Objectives that were completed are expanded upon as needed. Objectives that were not completed during the year are evaluated. They are then either scrapped or moved to the next year.

Two major elements that branch from the strategic plan are programs and projects. These are created to fulfill our goals and objectives. A program is something that is on-going.

A project is something that has an ending date. Examples may include apparatus purchases or the building of fire stations. We create goals and objectives for each program or project and evaluate/update them each year along with the strategic plan.

The overall strategic plan is an all-encompassing, broad view of how we would like to see the department in the future. Does everything go as planned? Sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Life-giving Light

Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired many with his words and deeds. During his 1957 Christmas sermon in Montgomery, Alabama, he based his strategy of non-violence on Jesus' admonition to love your enemy.

Light is a metaphor for truth in the Bible. "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all," John writes. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth"

It's a dark world that misunderstands human origins. The resulting confusion leads people to believe they can create themselves in their own image. What some call "expressive individualism" has led to the hubris of medical interventions and autonomous truth claims that deny the Creator.

It's a dark world that denies any ultimate meaning. If you are but the product of an impersonal and material universe, then you must create your own meaning if any is to be had.

It's a dark world that has no destiny. If this is all there is, your expectation is "when I die, I shall rot." Hope is limited to life in this fallen world.

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



See Fowler, page 5A

Commissioner's Questions

Q. I am confused about all our local governments. I received my property tax bill from the county in September and they were due by December 20th.

A. Georgia government can be very confusing for newcomers to the state and sometimes to those of us who have been here a while. There are three main levels of very independent government in all Georgia counties.

Q. Can you explain each form of government and how they function? City, School and County?

A. Yes, I offer the following three explanations:

1. City of Blairsville Government - The City of Blairsville has five elected council members who are elected at large.

2. Union County School System - The school government is made up of five Board of Education members elected from certain voting districts in the county.

3. Union County Government - The county government is completely separate from the school and the city government.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



See Paris, page 5A

The Need for Israel...

"The Need for Israel in a Modern World"

By Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher

In recent weeks, Jewish communities worldwide have been captivated by the timeless tale of Jacob and Joseph as narrated in the latter portion of the Book of Genesis, as they are studied in the weekly Torah portions each week.

Echos from Sinai "Torah for Everyone" Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger



The classic story goes that after being sent to Egypt by his envious brothers that were jealous of his close bond with their father Jacob, Joseph underwent a remarkable transformation.

See Hambourger, page 5A



Chamber of Commerce

Did you know that Jan. 9 was National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day? On Tuesday morning, we were honored to be able to host "Coffee with A Cop" where the community was able to get together to thank our local Law Enforcement for all they do.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Our Annual STAR Student Banquet is next month, and we are excited to recognize two STAR Student winners. The STAR Student must have the highest score on a single test date on the SAT and be in the Top 10% or Top 10 students of their class based on grade-point average.

See Chamber, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Thank You, Ava

Dear Editor,

I have been following the North Georgia News stories about Ava Sharp, the Union County High School senior who has spearheaded the effort to supply Type 1 diabetics with needed materials.

As a retired physician who often diagnosed Type 1 and Type 2 diabetics two or three times a week and had many diabetics in my practice, I often urged the Union General Hospital Administration to start a Diabetes Education Center here in the county.

See Quigley, page 5A

Re: "Clyde Gets It Wrong Again"

Dear Editor,

As we've asked before, does anyone with an ounce of sense think that any U.S. Senator or Congressdoobie would even bring to the floor a resolution to cut Social Security or Medicare?

It would be permanent political suicide. The only people seriously talking like that are Leftists trying to throw that and make it stick to Conservatives.

If we were \$34 trillion in debt, we wouldn't see that pass or even considered in D.C. Oops, we are \$34 trillion in debt.

Proves my point though. Heck, Congress would vote for term limits or a line-item veto first, and those ain't happening.

See Tarter, page 5A

Loneliness I

Nearly one-half of adults in the United States experience feelings of loneliness daily.

(U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy)

Everyone on planet Earth has to deal with loneliness from time to time. It is no respecter of persons. It can occur in babies, children, adolescents and adults - in marriage and in single life.

Successful Mental Health

Dr. James Ray Ashurst PH. D.



Loneliness can disturb our peaceful souls, and stir up dismal feelings. Even in a room filled with people we love, we can still feel lonely. It doesn't provide us much notice that it's waiting at our doorstep.

The real challenge in dealing with loneliness is realizing that we need to have some type of contact with a living creature, and then actually doing it. Our loneliness is propelling us toward receiving some type of attention.

Loneliness can be paralyzing because one feels miserable and forgotten. You and I may feel lonely and forgotten, but you and I are never truly alone.

Loneliness occurs in the young, old, rich and famous. In the book "Invitation: Billy Graham and the Lives God Touched," the authors Basyle and Adam Tchividjian (grandsons of Billy Graham) tell the story of Dr. Graham being in south Florida for a board meeting.

Loneliness can be sad, painful, corrosive, and depressive. Its power can turn a sunny, bright day into a dreary, lackadaisical, miserable one.

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See Ashurst, page 5A

Legacy

During my younger days I was told many stories about my ancestors. These stories dealt with many varied subjects; some told of far-off places like the old world, some told of happy events like weddings or births of children, some were funny and some were sad, and some of the stories dealt with my family's past.

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



These stories are a legacy from my ancestors. From this legacy come many lessons. There are things we can learn from our past because if we do not learn from the past we are sure to repeat the same mistakes many of our ancestors experienced.

There are a couple of things I have always wondered about in regard to my family history. First, I wondered if all the stories I have heard about being descended from the Cherokee are true, and second, I wondered why my family is so blessed by God? Regarding the second question, there are both scoundrels and saints in my family.

I remember learning something many years ago in Genetics 101. I learned that we are the way we are for two reasons: Reason No. 1 is that we acquired certain traits from our parents, and Reason No. 2 is that our environment influences those traits.

During the past few months I have been researching my family history and found some information that answered both of the earlier questions. Below are the answers for which I have been looking.

Hiram Baker was born in 1805 in North Carolina. Sometime after the Indian Removal, he and his family moved to the area around what is now Towns, Union and Clay County. He is listed as living in both Union County, Georgia, and Swain County, North Carolina, in the 1850 census.

See Cummings, page 5A

Blueberry Pruning

Blueberries grow pretty well in Georgia. Rabbiteye blueberries are native to the southeast, so they're well adapted to our climate.

Blueberries don't need to be pruned every year to be fruitful. However, if you start doing some cane renewal pruning every year on a mature plant the bushes will be more fruitful and have more longevity.

Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



The ideal time to prune blueberries is late winter because the plants are dormant. February is late winter for us in the mountains. Plants in their dormant state are going to be less prone to infection or stress from the pruning.

Blueberry is a multi-stemmed bush. Each one of the stems that comes out of the ground is called a cane. Cane renewal pruning is removing old canes from the plant so that there is space for new canes to grow. Ideally, under cane renewal pruning you'll remove old canes each year so that in five years all the canes on the plant will be completely different.

New plants should be pruned to have the healthiest plants. Prune back 2/3 of the top growth on bare root plants, and 1/2 of the top growth on potted plants.

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Cummings... continued from Page 4A

lived somewhere around the county lines between what is now Towns County and Clay County. I suspect it is in the present location of the Southern Nantahala Mountains close to High Tower Bald. Shortly after the 1850 census his wife named Mary died and is buried somewhere in these mountains. Many of his children remained in the area.

But Hiram moved with his youngest children to Marion County, Alabama. While living there he met and married a lady by the name of Martha Borden. Her parents were David and Sara Borden. They had been living close to his parents in what is now the Sipsey Wilderness in a place called Borden Creek. David was 3/4 Cherokee and Sara was full-blooded Cherokee. So, my Grandmam Adams was correct when she told me her family had descended from the Cherokee. But, that is not all of the story.

David and Sara had a very large family, meaning they had many children. But, he is also listed as a minister. So, now I can see more of a connection. They were the in-laws of Hiram Baker. Hiram was the grandfather of my great-grandfather, Charlie, who was married to Alvie Motes Baker.

When my Mom and Dad began dating, they went to a family dinner at the Baker home where Mommy Baker (Alvie) asked Dad the following question, "Son, are you a heathen?" Dad responded, "No, I am a Cummings." She smiled at Dad and explained that she had been praying for years that her granddaughter would marry a Baptist Preacher. Dad was a long way from being a preacher. He was taught to be a good person. But, his family did not attend church regular-

ly. Later after I was born Dad was converted and became a preacher because of the prayers of Mommy Baker. And she was influenced by the first preacher in our family which was a Cherokee Indian by the name of David Borden. His influence upon our family has lasted five generations.

The Cherokee people were ripped from their homeland and forced to another place now called Oklahoma in the 1830s. Some of them escaped and tried to live normal lives among the whites, and their genetics live on in many of us now. There is a place not too far from my grandparents home called the Rockbridge. It is a natural limestone arch that has Cherokee carvings on the rocks under it. These are much like ones would see at Track-rock Gap. An old story among my relatives is that during the Indian Removal, one Cherokee woman ran across the bridge through the woods while carrying her baby and screaming as she ran from the soldiers. Now, sometimes late at night, I am told you can still hear her screams as she runs across the Rockbridge. This must have been a really sad time.

I am glad that my ancestor Hiram made his way to North Alabama and met Martha Jane Borden, whose parents somehow escaped the awful Cherokee Removal and the Trail of Tears in the 1830s. David and Sara Borden must have prayed for their children and grandchildren, because their influence on my family's life, physically and spiritually, has lasted for generations. They influenced their grandson Charlie and his wife Alvie, who influenced my Mom and Dad, which had a great influence upon me.

Quigley... continued from Page 4A

require too much "time." But that is exactly what a diabetes education program is designed to do.

The Georgia Department of Community Health and Medicare have programs and materials already available to set up these programs. According to the CDC, our county ranks at the bottom 25% of counties with Diabetic support in the state (https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsdp/maps/gisx/mapgallery/GA_DSMES.html).

And according to the Georgia Department of Public

Health, approximately 1 million people (12.4%) in Georgia have a diagnosis of diabetes with an additional 230,000 people with diabetes but are unaware. Undiagnosed diabetes can lead to kidney failure, blindness, cardiac disease, neuropathy, and other symptoms, even Alzheimer's.

Isn't it about time the county hospital put prevention above treatment? Thank you, Ava. Sincerely, **Debora Quigley**

Tarter... continued from Page 4A

Just scare the good folks on fixed incomes.

And most Americans are smart enough to see that electric vehicles are impractical, expensive, environmentally dirty and dangerous.

They go very fast for 200 miles on a warm day and then need plugged in for a few hours after you get to the end of the queue.

You can buy a fuel-efficient luxury car for the same price and drive two states over on a tank of gas and refill that tank in five minutes.

The rare earth metals and other goo for the battery packs are ransacked from other countries that don't worry about pollution or damaged

employees.

Ask any first responder what they think about putting out a fire at an accident involving these lead sleds. They are very heavy, high voltage/high amperage and tend to explode at odd intervals.

As soon as the Left gets us all driving these goofy vehicles, they will pull the plug on vehicle and recharge availability, and we will all live in a Utopian City like Atlanta taking robot "Ubers" to church if they are allowed to be open for services.

That's why the "EVs" are piling up in dealer back lots. "Beep beep." **J. Murray Tarter**

Ripma... continued from Page 4A

ward spiral, with so many top players entering the transfer portal or opting out. Not so long ago, like maybe last year, playing in a bowl game was an honor and a privilege. Most players wanted to compete and support their teams and their schools, even if it meant risking injury. It appears that that ideal is rapidly disappearing.

Before you attack me, I do get that college players generate millions for their schools and the entire sports complex. And sustaining an injury can be life-changing for that player. But, for the fans, college football could be losing its shining end-of-season crown.

Could it be that the complete commercialization of college football has a dark side? For me, the decline of

the bowl games began with the rebranding of traditional bowls with the names of well-known and important commercial enterprises. The Goodyear Cotton Bowl, The Capital One Orange Bowl, The Allstate Sugar Bowl, and I can go on.

I'll end this rant with the dumbest bowl name yet, The Pop-Tarts Bowl. **John Ripma**

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

for their contribution to the success of the Union County School System by going above and beyond to help others. The winners will be announced in the NGN in the next week or two.

Thank you to our local Law Enforcement for making Life Better in Blairsville!

Fowler... continued from Page 4A

terial. Indeed Jesus said, "Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:26).

It's a dark, fallen world, but there's hope! Civil rights gains show King got it right: Light overcomes darkness. That has personal implications for you. So much of human misery is caused by a failure to walk in God's truth! To borrow from King, have you not come to such an impasse in your life that you must embrace God's life-giving light – or else?

Hambourger... continued from Page 4A

ravaged the nation. This dire period ultimately led Joseph's brothers to leave their land of Israel for Egypt to seek his assistance, resulting in a sincere apology and mending of relations, followed by a heartfelt reunion with his father, who never gave up hope of reuniting with his son throughout the 17 years he was missing.

Moreover, this period of hardship and resilience culminated in the establishment of a vibrant Jewish community in Egypt. This community not only thrived but also garnered the respect and appreciation of their Egyptian neighbors, who acknowledged the Jews' vital role in helping establish Egypt as a prosperous nation and the recognized superpower of the day. This legacy endured for centuries, marking a chapter of peace and prosperity for the extended family of Jacob and Joseph in a foreign land.

But in this week's Torah portion, the first of the book of Exodus, the Jews experience a radical change in fortunes. There arises a new king "who did not know Joseph," which the sages interpret to mean he did not acknowledge the contribution Joseph and the Jews made to Egypt and sought to enslave and enact policies targeting the Jewish community of his time.

Such has been the story of the Jewish people throughout history.

Time and again throughout history, the Jewish community is welcomed for their wisdom and contributions, and celebrated for a number of years, before 'a new king arises' and the classic tropes begin playing on the minds of those who have always sought to harm the Jewish people. The Jewish people's contributions are then twisted against them and framed as a malicious attempt to control the rest of the population. Public resentment is stirred and before long, the

Jewish community is attacked and expelled, and forced to start this cycle all over again.

Until the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948, Jews were thrown out of ancient Egypt, medieval Babylonia, and modern Europe. Between the year 250 and the year 1948 – a period of 1,700 years – Jews in Europe experienced an average of one expulsion every 21 years.

Fresh off the largest annihilation of Jewish people in history, thanks in large part to the leadership of the U.S.A., the world – in a rare moment of compassion for the Jewish people – recognized the need for the Jewish people to have a state of their own in their ancestral homeland, smack in the middle of 22 mostly hostile Arab countries. For the first time in 2,000 years, the Jewish people lived autonomously in their homeland and had a state that would serve as the home of a displaced people and could be responsible for ensuring the protection of their own coreligionists. Never again would the Jews be subject to the whims of a volatile leader and citizenry.

Faced with so many existential wars and attacks

since its re-establishment in 1948, what is Israel's secret? How have they managed to repeatedly defeat their enemies and fend off the world's continuous demonization and obsession with its legitimacy, while simultaneously absorbing hundreds of thousands of penniless Jewish refugees threatened with mass slaughter by the Arab countries where they were living for 2,000 years?

Well, it's a mixture of faith and fortitude, and a recognition of that fact that then-Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir told now-President Joe Biden in 1973: "We have nowhere else to go."

Those who say there is no need for Israel as a Jewish country in a modern world in favor of a pluralistic and naive "one-state solution" ignore the realities of escalating antisemitism in Europe and around the world, and the role Israel plays in ensuring the safety of the global Jewish population.

Antisemitism has been on the rise in Europe and beyond. Jewish communities, particularly in France, have witnessed a mass exodus due to the alarming surge in antisemitism. In England, the occurrence of over 50 daily antisemitic incidents, including large rallies promoting hatred

and division, has been deeply unsettling. Australia, too, has seen troubling events that underscore the ongoing threats faced by Jewish populations, with riots featuring chants of "gas the Jews" capturing worldwide headlines.

The United States is a truly friendly and welcoming country thanks to the ethos of our founding fathers, the divinely inspired U.S. Constitution, and the demonstrative support from the 'faith-based' community, and so many others. Jews have flourished in this great country and have made enormous contributions as well. We pray that all of us who love our great country will stand united against the onslaught of those that want to end the American way of life that we all cherish, and that the Jewish people will remain secure as well. Jews in many other places around the world are safer for Israel's existence and the knowledge there will always be a home for them when the tides turn, as history tells us they always do.

Yonatan Hambourger is an Atlanta-based rabbi working with Chabad of Rural Georgia to teach the richness of Judaism, while Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer currently residing in New York.

Paris... continued from Page 4A

The county budget and some of the operation is managed by the Sole Commissioner, who is elected. But there are also 6 other county elected officials who run and operate their own county departments independent of the commissioner. They are the Union County Sheriff, the Clerk of Court, the Probate Judge, the Magistrate Judge, the Tax Commissioner and the Coroner. Each of these officials must have their budget approved by the county Commissioner, but they are totally in charge of the employees and operation of each of their departments.

Ashurst... continued from Page 4A

A definition of loneliness is being in a state of mind of wanting or even expecting things from a relationship. In other words: wanting and actually getting in specific relationships and acknowledgment. More on loneliness next week.

Honor Flight trips to Washington, D.C. for Veterans

Sponsored (no cost to Veteran) Honor Flight trips to Washington D.C. to see the memorials to the Wars in which they served.

Veterans do not have to have been deployed overseas ... just to have served during the War period. World War II, Korea, and Vietnam veterans are included. Spring and Fall flights.

If interested, call Paul at 615-232-4445. Thank you!

Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse



January 2, 2024
In memory of **Virginia B. Meeks** on her birthday by Ginger and Terry Meeks

January 21, 2024
In memory of **Dollie C. Meeks** on the anniversary of her death by Ginger and Terry Meeks

Bell ringing information at 706-745-5493

Williams... continued from Page 4A

weak looking canes, thin out the buds to prevent over fruiting, which can cause permanent bending of canes from the weight.

Each year after harvest is completed cut plants back so that they don't become too tall. Tall plants are more difficult to harvest for people; bears and birds probably won't have that same problem.

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