

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### Severe Weather Preparedness Week

A goal of Union County Emergency Management Agency (UCEMA) is to create a prepared and resilient community. Preparing for the weather is a major part of that goal because severe weather can be responsible for many disasters. Our weather is ever changing and at times, unpredictable. It can also spring up quickly.

At a moment's notice, tornadoes, thunderstorms, floods or other severe weather events can strike Union County. That's why Union County Emergency Management Agency, in partnership with the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency, are encouraging all residents to participate in Severe Weather Preparedness Week, February 4-8, to prepare for the possibility of a disaster.

Severe Weather Preparedness Week begins with Family Preparedness Day on Feb. 4. Union County households are encouraged to have a conversation with their family about Severe Weather Preparedness. Families should discuss how to protect themselves during a severe weather emergency and what supplies they may need to store for an emergency. Staying informed about severe weather is also important. We encourage residents to purchase a NOAA Weather Radio which can warn families of imminent severe weather, day or night.

The rest of the Severe Weather Preparedness Week dedicates time to practicing response to specific emergency events and going through the procedures of how to deal with each potential disaster. We urge our residents to take this time now to prepare when there's not any severe weather events. Residents can be better prepared if the necessary steps are taken ahead of time. These steps and safety measures can be implemented at home and at work to ensure that people are ready when severe weather strikes.

Each day will focus on a different severe weather threat faced by Georgians. All of the following days focus on a different threat and how to prepare.

Monday, Feb. 4 – Family Preparedness/NOAA Weather Radio Day

Tuesday, Feb. 5 – Thunderstorm Safety

Wednesday, Feb. 6 – Tornado Safety and PrepareAthon! For Tornado Safety

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**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**  
*David Dyer*



### Live by the Spirit

When I saw the name Ellen Fowler (d.1929), I wondered if we're kin. She was an English novelist, combining romance and religion. I decided to take up her "Fuel of Fire" (1902) just from curiosity.

Her character Rufus Webb is a man who had served as a missionary to China, but suffered great loss. He believed God expected great effort and sacrifice from His pitiful creatures. In one scene, a young lady brought him roses and good cheer, but he dashed them to the floor saying, "For His sake I have put away from me all pleasant things and have abjured the world with its many delights; in the hope that when He sees my anguish and humiliation He may turn again to me and forgive me my sin."

It is a mistake to be misjudged, especially if God is on the docket. Much in the Pauline epistles addresses counter-intuitive concepts about how God intends for us to live as Christians. We struggle with what it means to be free, but righteous.

In 25 years of pastoral experience, I have known many Rufus Webb's who believe Christianity requires a mostly joyless life of toil and servitude trying to meet an impossible standard. The ancient Galatians made that mistake after they received Christ. They abandoned their freedom in Christ for food rules, calendar observances, and circumcision, which only increased their self-righteousness.

It is a mistake for anything to belie the sufficiency of Christ for your righteousness, and the centrality of the Holy Spirit for your freedom. Paul writes, "If righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly," and, "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal. 2:21, 3:3). He contemplates two possibilities: either live by your own ideas, motives, and strength ("the flesh"), or by God's work of grace ("the Spirit").

To say that God's grace through faith makes you righteous is NOT to say that it doesn't matter what you do. Paul expected that charge. "May it never be! Shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (Rom. 6:2). The love of Christ and the presence of the Spirit set you free to live righteously as a new creation. The community

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**All Things New**  
*Wayne Fowler*



### Commissioner's Questions

**Q. The striping on all the state highways in the county needs to be improved. Do you know when and if the Georgia Department of Transportation plans on doing this?**

A. We have had several complaints regarding the need for the state to come and restripe roads here in Union County. Every time someone contacts me about the striping on Highway 19/129 or any other state route, I pass the complaint or request along to the Georgia Department of Transportation. I cannot force them to do anything to the state routes. All I can do is pass along the requests and ask them to consider coming and doing some striping on these roads. Recently, most of the complaints have been regarding Highway 19/129 North and South. The portion of Highway 19/129 South from Blairsville to the top of Blood Mountain is already under contract through GDOT to be completely repaved in the Spring. Of course, this will certainly bring with it new striping. In the mean time we will just need to be careful when traveling on this stretch of highway and especially slow down at night when it is raining (which seems to be almost everyday that it rains).

**Q. Why does GDOT not just come and restripe the roads when they receive a request?**

A. GDOT has a budget that they have to spread over the entire State of Georgia, and they do a very good job of allocating resources to make sure maintenance and repairs to State Highways get done within every county each year. In the past three years GDOT has paved and striped Richard Russell Scenic Highway, Highway 180 to Brasstown Bald, and Highway 180 to Suches. Highway 325 and part of Highway 515 West were restriped. In the Spring, Highway 19/129 South from Blairsville to Blood Mountain will be paved and restriped.

**Q. What about Highway 19/129 North going toward Murphy? When will it be restriped?**

A. I do not know the answer to this. We have forwarded all complaints and requests for restriping of this portion of the State Route and I have sent requests of my own to the Georgia Department of Transportation.

**Q. When will the County be restriping some of the coun-**

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**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**  
*Lamar Paris*



### Drug Free Mountain Life

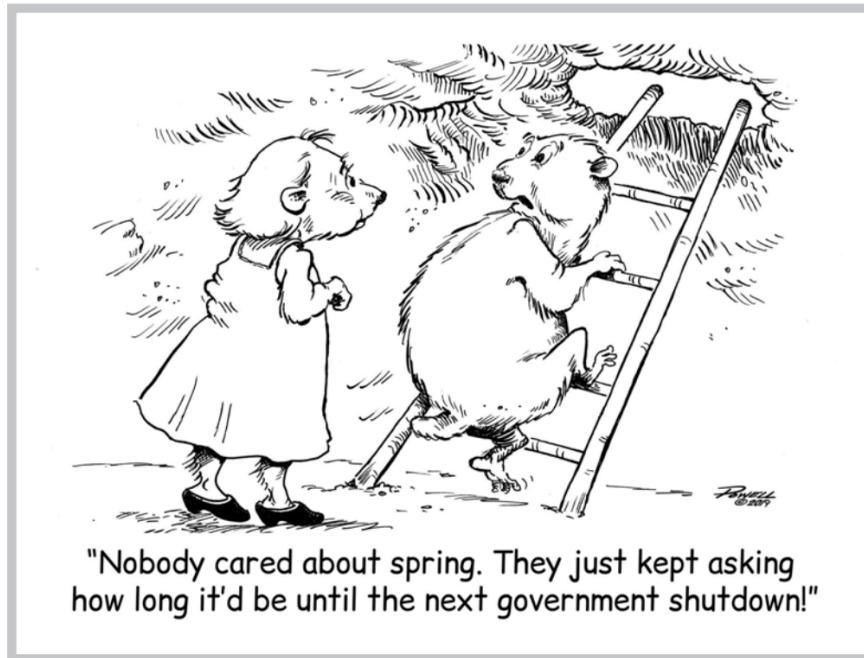
#### How to Talk with Your Kids About Vaping

Vaping's popularity exploded seemingly overnight, and it took many parents and families by surprise. Vaping, or Juuling as it is often referred to by teens and young adults (named after a popular vape device called JUUL), is the inhaling and exhaling of an aerosol produced by using a vape device.

**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.

According to the University of Michigan's 2017 Monitoring the Future study, nearly 1 in 3 high school seniors tried vaping in the past year. Advertising is often geared toward teens and young adults, with brightly colored vape pens and thousands of flavors to choose from. Some kids vape marijuana, too. But for every story or article touting the benefits of vaping, there are an equal number raising concerns about the risks of vaping, especially for teens and young adults.

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"Nobody cared about spring. They just kept asking how long it'd be until the next government shutdown!"

### Chamber of Commerce

I would like to thank everyone who attended the Chamber Awards Night on Thursday, January 24th. We have been blessed to have Directors, Ambassadors and elected Officials that are truly dedicated to serving and supporting both the Chamber and our Community. What a wonderful night to focus on the growth of Blairsville-Union County throughout 2018 and the accomplishments of Mayor Conley, Commissioner Paris and our other community leaders. Those in attendance enjoyed to a delicious steak dinner prepared by Matt Leonard and the staff of The View Grill.

Chris Wadle, our past Chair, did an excellent job recognizing our outgoing Board Members, Marcie Culppepper of M-Design, Doug Davenport with Union County Nursing Home, and Rick Siefken, owner of Budget Blinds, for their dedicated service to the Chamber. Joey Swanson, of Woodmen Life, received an enthusiastic standing ovation when presented with a gavel for

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**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**  
*Steve Rowe*



### Letters to the Editor

#### Promote the Good Things

I realize law enforcement is important and the public wants to know what's going on in the community. The impression I get when I get the North Georgia News once a week makes me and others think that we are surrounded by crime. The most recent edition and many others point out the worst among us. I do not propose a white-wash of community problems, and the public can still be informed of what's going on without it being the first thing they see and read. Life is not all roses, but reporting of crime and indictments should not be front-page headlines if the paper wants to promote the good things about our county. These stories can still be in the paper, just not spread all over the front page. Law enforcement is important, and we all appreciate their efforts.

T. Mackey  
Blairsville

#### Walk in Their Paws

The number of dogs in Blairsville that are left outside in severe cold weather without proper shelter from the elements is disturbing. I served as an Animal Control Officer for 24 years, and when I saw a situation that need attention, my first goal was to educate the owner about proper care for their animals.

The simplest way to understand your pet's needs is to spend 30 minutes in that animal's space. Pit bulls, hounds and terriers have no undercoat to hold body heat and get cold as quickly as a human wearing a light sweatshirt. Dogs like Shepherds and Labs can be comfortable for longer periods at lower temps, but rain and wind shorten that time significantly. All dogs that spend most of their time outside must be fed more good, quality food and get fresh water at least twice a day to keep a healthy body weight.

Dogs that are confined by chains or pens need a house that is dry, keeps out wind and is small enough to hold their body heat. Insulation is essential, and bedding like dry straw or shavings are important. If it's 35 degrees or less, dogs should be brought indoors overnight, and if it's raining, they should spend some time indoors during the day as well.

Everyone loves their dogs and wants the best for them. It doesn't take money to care for a dog's basic comfort and welfare. It just takes a few minutes to walk in their paws and think about the quality of their existence. We don't need to let dogs sleep on our beds, but if we choose to keep a dog for any reason, it is our duty to care for them with thoughtfulness.

Cheryl Malone, Blairsville

### RC&D

#### National Association of Conservation Districts - San Antonio, Texas

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is the national association for the nearly 3,000 conservation districts—almost one in every county in the country—working directly with land-owners to conserve and promote healthy soils, water, forests, and wildlife. NACD represents these districts and the more than 17,000 citizens who serve on conservation district governing boards and these local Soil & Water Conservation Districts across the country.

The Districts are made up of Supervisors who are elected or appointed to these boards to oversee soil and erosion plans for land disturbing projects. The District serving Towns and Union counties is the Blue Ridge Soil & Water Conservation District that meets monthly in Blairsville to discuss and approve (or reject) soil and erosion projects in the area. Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D is a member of 5 of these groups in our Northeast Georgia work area. The NACD annual meeting this year will be held in San Antonio, TX and Kim and I will be there to promote our RC&D work. Representatives from Washington DC agencies (USFS, USDA, NRCS, etc.) that provide our RC&D with funding will be in San Antonio and non-profits like us thrive on grants and contracts from these agencies, so we need to be seen anytime there is an opportunity.

Last year in Nashville, Chest-Chat was the only RC&D there so we had all of the national attention and 2018 was very good for our programs. The world is run by those who show up and we do! We will have our RC&D booth setup in San Antonio to highlight our projects for District Supervisors from across the country who all have the same mission to preserve our land and water for future generations. We will have our banners and literature to promote our work, and our 13' Smokey Bear blowup. Chest-Chat RC&D administers programs across Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia.

In 2018 ChestChatt RC&D facilitated 37 projects and programs with our local, state, and national partners. The NACD's purpose and mission is to recognize conservation districts for their extraordinary work; to promote their stories, to support their initiatives, and to be their voice—the voice of conservation. When representatives from 32 soil conservation districts met in Washington, DC, in 1946 to organize a national association of conservation districts, over 1,600 soil conservation districts had already formed in 48 states. The health of the land and

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**RC&D Executive Director**  
*Frank Riley*



### Old Mills in Union County

Last summer a friend and I were floating our kayaks down the Nottely River. Our trip began out toward Choestoe and ended at the Canoe Launch at Meeks Park. We floated past farms and homes. Much of the way paralleled US 129 and even though we were close to the road the river provided a sense of isolation. As we paddled through the small rapids we observed ducks, cranes, geese and even a few hawks. As we traveled it seemed as though we went back to a much simpler time.

At one place we found some marks carved into rocks along the river. Later research revealed the marks were made by Cherokee or even earlier people, maybe the mound builders. Supposedly the marks were probably used as a kind of map which led down the river and up a tributary to a destination yet unknown to those of us today. Legends of the Cherokee tell us about a group of "Little People" which still reside in places like the Blood and Slaughter Mountain areas of the Blue Ridge. Is it possible these marks lead toward the residence of the "Little People"? That is unknown, however, this is not the only mysterious place on the Nottely River.

Another location on the river was mysterious due to a structure we found. We came upon the small structure and wondered about its purpose. Weeks after the trip my curiosity got the best of me. So, I decided to investigate. I talked with Mr. and Mrs. Jim Bob Dockery who own and operate the Nottely River Campground. They told me the building was associated with an old mill. Back in the 1980s a group of students from Union County High School, one of which was the Dockery's daughter, published a group of articles in an assignment for their English Class. One article was about the Old River Mill owned and operated by A. B. Martin.

Further investigation led me to Bud Akins. Bud was raised here in Union County and has a lot of historical knowledge concerning the area. I asked him about the mill and found some interesting information. Still more information including photographs were found in the book, "Heritage of Union County, 1832-1994" which was published as a joint effort between the Union County Commissioner and the Union County Historical Society.

The Old River Mill was located just south of Blairsville off of old US 129 on the Nottely River. The dam of the mill was built in 1858. It was 175 feet long and 9 feet high. The mill was used to grind wheat, rye, corn and feed corn. People from the surrounding community would

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**Around The Farm**  
*Mickey Cummings*



### Shutdown

As the government shutdown continues there are a number of offices that are closed. I want to talk about the effect that the shutdown is having on agriculture and natural resources. I won't be getting into a political discussion about the shutdown, just simply what the impact is. There is a lot of information out there that is slanted one way or the other, so I'm going to try and cut through that and just talk about some of the effects the shutdown is having.

The Farm Service Agency, including our local office located in Blairsville, is currently closed. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is a branch of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). FSA is responsible for supporting farms and farming communities with programs including disaster relief, conservation programs, commodity price guarantee programs, and loan programs. Commodity loan activity that many farmers rely on has ceased as of January 3. This will become more of a concern if the shutdown progresses into the spring, because that is the time that farmers will be in need of money to pay for the new season that is beginning. Last year USDA gave out over \$5.4 billion in loans. Not being able to have a good sense of their finances is making it difficult for farmers to make financial decisions right now.

The USDA also backs rural development programs that can be used for home loans in rural areas. These programs are also currently closed. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is currently open. However, if the shutdown continues their offices may be closed as well. NRCS is able to provide conservation technical and financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The EQIP program is one that many people have used here to build a hoop house. The NRCS works closely with the FSA, so NRCS will continue to be open but some operations will become more difficult without the FSA.

The Forest Service is still open using non-appropriated funds. Forest Service law enforcement, emergency and natural disaster response, and national defense preparedness efforts are still ongoing. Some Forest Service employees are furloughed through the shutdown. Other employees are on standby in case of an emergency.

I am going to stay away from making any predictions about what will happen agriculturally if the shutdown continues. My crystal ball hasn't been the same since the earthquake a few weeks ago. The services that I've talked about here being open may change if the shutdown continues.

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**Watching and Working**  
*Jacob Williams*



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