

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Severe Weather Preparedness Week

Severe Weather can happen at any time and can cause significant damage to a community. We must always be aware and prepare for these events and disasters. Preparing for Severe Weather Events is one element of Union County Emergency Management Agency's (UCEMA) goal of creating a prepared and resilient community.

Our weather is ever changing and at times unpredictable. At a moment's notice, tornadoes, thunderstorms, floods, or other severe weather events can strike Union County. That is 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 6-10, to prepare for the possibility of a disaster.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Severe Weather Preparedness Week begins with Family Preparedness/NOAA Weather Radio Day on Feb. 6. 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.

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. They may also sign up for CodeRED alerts through UCEMA.

The rest of the Severe Weather Preparedness Week dedicates time to practicing response to specific emergency events and going through the procedures 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. 6 – Family Preparedness/NOAA Weather Radio Day; Tuesday, Feb. 7 – Thunderstorm Safety; Wednesday, Feb. 8 – Tornado Safety; Thursday, Feb. 9 – Lightning Safety and Friday, Feb. 10 – Flood Safety.

See Dyer, page 5A

Nothing But the Truth

In the Declaration of Independence, America's founders held certain "truths to be self-evident." I wonder if today's politicians regard truth with such respect. Recently, Vice President Harris declared, "We are each endowed with the right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness." True, but she redacted "endowed by God" and "right to life." It wasn't the whole truth. Politicians on both sides do that.

We live in a skeptical age when "truths turn into dogmas," per G. K. Chesterton. That means it's true only because you believe it, not because it is self-evident. In the early 20th century, Chesterton predicted the day when defending the self-evident would be a struggle. "Fires will be kindled to testify that two and two make four. Swords will be drawn to prove that leaves are green in summer." We are there. In some quarters, to stand on common sense or self-evident truth as revealed by God is to risk being insulted, canceled, or fired. Not even a groveling apology will fix it.

Personal opinion is the rock that shipwrecks truth. For example, "It isn't just that I don't believe in God and hope that I'm right in my belief," philosopher Thomas Nagel wrote. "It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that." At least he's honest about what he wants truth to be, but opinion cannot change truth. Truth should change opinion.

Philosopher Lawrence Krauss makes that point. "The universe is the way it is, whether we like it or not. The existence or nonexistence of a creator is independent of our desires." He was arguing against God. But his point applies equally to the evidence for a Creator as revealed in nature. "Our beautiful, expanding, and finely tuned universe," scientist Stephen Meyer writes, "and the exquisite, integrated, and informational complexity of living organisms bear witness to the reality of a transcendent intelligence – a personal God."

A season three episode of "The Chosen" series portrays Jesus returning to his hometown of Nazareth. Friends and village leaders are excited to see Him until He applies Isaiah's Messianic prophecies to Himself. He says, "Today this Scripture has been

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



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Commissioner's Questions

Not a day goes by that someone does not come up to me in a grocery store or at a community event asking about population and commercial growth in Union County. There is a growing concern that Blairsville/Union County will become over-commercialized – eliminating the small mountain town appeal that we all love so well. It is very difficult trying to maintain a delicate balance in this area of interest.

Q. Do you have a concern that we are having too many new homes built in Union County?

A. We can and will continue to try to find the best way to control growth; a lot of factors influence growth such as the economy, environment, population, and employment. We all want our community to flourish in these areas and all others. In turn, this draws many people looking to join communities that are flourishing as well. One of our salvations is the large number of acres owned and controlled by the National Forest and TVA and Lake Nottely – about 50% of our county. This federally protected land surrounds us, helping us to control our growth.

Q. Are there other features that help us to control our growth?

A. Two of the most important are lot sizes and farmland!

Q. How do these two features assist us in controlling our growth?

A. The lack of sewer county wide is a great deterrent. With public sewer and without strict real estate guidelines, it is hard to limit the number of residences that can be built either as compact housing or apartments. However, if there is no sewer, lot sizes are limited to single family residences of 3/4 of an acre if the property has a public water system. If there is only a well and no public water then the minimal lot size is 1.5 acres. While these numbers may not seem significant, they are if you are a developer and you need more density to make your development successful financially as well as visually.

Q. How does farmland assist in slowing growth?

A. Farmland is given a high property tax break by the state of Georgia and the county. This allows property owners to be able to continue to farm these tracts instead of feeling the financial pres-

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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Habitat for Humanity

Isaiah 25:4: You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in their distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall.

Last week I attended a conference held by Western North Carolina Restorative Center. WNCRC is a non-profit organization that provides resources and housing to those experiencing homelessness. The mission of WNCRC is to act as a hub to connect existing resources and advocate for individuals and families in need of a new start.

As a society, we tend to forget that not everybody has the opportunities and support systems many of us are blessed with. Housing is a human right; it is our moral responsibility to help those less fortunate, whether they can return the favor or not.

Ninety percent of America is one paycheck away from becoming homeless. One myth about

See Habitat, page 5A

Habitat Happenings Executive Director
Charlotte Randall



Chamber of Commerce

Can you believe that it's February? Georgia's own Ground Hog Beauregard Lee did not see his shadow, and that means Spring is right around the corner for the South. Whether you believe in the folklore or not, Spring will be here before you know it.

For all the romantics, don't forget to take care of that special someone and shop local for that one-of-a-kind gift and/or make your reservations now for that unique evening out. Be sure to check out the Chamber's website for all your Valentine plans whether it is a romantic horseback ride, a tasting at a local winery or distillery, or forge your own gift with a "Forged in Fire" runner-up. If you are less adventurous, visit one of our fabulous restaurants. Make it a Valentine's Day they won't soon forget!

I've mentioned it before but be sure to call the Chamber about the Blairsville Bucks eGift card. This is a fantastic way to give an eGift card and keep the money local in our community. Any-

See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

On Free Expression

Dear Editor,
To everyone, including "Yes, Too Preachy":

This is the Land of the Free, the Land of the Free Press and Free Expression. I appreciate the fact that North Georgia News publishes contrasting comments. Never boring.

Possibly the biggest problem facing our country today is the recent contagious Marxist culture of "Cancellation." If you don't agree with a published opinion, you have the God-given right to NOT READ IT. Duh.

I'm a militant Roman Catholic. I'm such a fervent pain that even my pastor avoids me. But I honor and welcome the faithful of the many denominations here in the upper reaches of the shrinking "Bible Belt." It sure beats the hatred and divisiveness so prominent in the Metro Atlanta area we escaped from five years ago. Here we are as likely to get a fervent "Have a blessed day" as a "Thank you" on the Square.

And that's great! What a deal.
We need to "unite the clans" because we have real issues in our country that threaten us all. We have fraudulent politicians hiding behind their nominal religions dismantling the Grand Experiment we have based on the Judeo-Christian values of our brilliant Founding Fathers.

A free press is the first line of that defense.
Orémus (let us pray) Y'all,
Murray Tarter

A Kind, Thoughtful Action from a Stranger

Dear Editor,
When the Union County Clerk canceled the Neighborhood Recycling Program last year, we recognized a legitimate need to continue the service for residents in our remote area of Gum Log. The County Manager negotiated a compromise arrangement allowing us to continue operating by footing most expenses ourselves, including transportation.

Shortly before Christmas, we hauled a big load of cardboard to the transfer station, and three of us volunteers were busy cutting large sheets into smaller sizes that would fit into the collection carts. I was on the truck working with a pocket knife when a stranger walked by, noticed our predicament and offered to loan us his box cutter. That outstanding tool made quick work of the cutting job.

When I returned his cutter to the man, I commented that it was a great tool and that I should request that Santa bring us one. To my great surprise, he handed the cutter back to me

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Letters to the Editor

Christian Editorial Debates

Dear Editor,

I would like to express my thoughts regarding the recent Christian editorial debates. I read our hometown newspaper weekly, although not every printed word. If I have no interest in an article, I simply move on to one of more personal interest. Why folks would condemn another for doing exactly what our Lord, not asked us to, but commanded us to do (Matt 28:19-20) is a bit disconcerting to me.

I personally take great interest in the letters that are the subject of this debate. After all, the First Amendment does give "us all" the right to free speech, expression of our beliefs, and freedom "of," not "from," religion. I thank you and

See Radcliff, page 5A

Mini Motels

Dear Editor,

A recent letter to the editor about the proposed STR Ordinance was very interesting. The STR Ordinance – standing for short-term rentals, or MINI MOTELS as they should be known – is an attempt by our duly elected government to help protect the full-time residents against the mini-motel abuses. While I am happy that the people who own the mini motels have enough money to have two houses, I find living next door to the mini motels is often very frustrating and, frankly, awful at times.

Often these owners are in a far away state, or don't live in the county and have the San Francisco-based Airbnb handle the money and reservations. Works great for them. But not me. You and Airbnb are not next door to greet the partygoers and vacationers. I am.

While the letter indicated that they are

See Lausier, page 5A

Re: "Too Preachy" and "Yes, Too Preachy"

Dear Editor,

In response to two recent letters to the editor complaining about a Christian letter writer, last time I checked, we live in a free country where we have our First Amendment right of free speech. The letters to the editor are mostly people's opinions. To say, "normal intelligent people" don't need to hear anyone preach about religious matters, "in my opinion," is a condescending statement. To say the newspaper should not be constantly publishing these writings is not an "intelligent" statement and would go against our First Amendment right. If you don't like what is being put in the letters to the editor, then

See Vandereedt, page 5A

Walton's War & Elliot Rock

The year of 1804 saw a small war occur between the citizens of Georgia and North Carolina. Maybe not really a war, but, more like a border skirmish between the two states. There was a small tract of land called the "Orphan Strip" which was in question. This tract was originally inhabited by the Cherokee.

The region was avoided after the war for American Independence due to its ruggedness, and only the Cherokee, outlaws and fugitives inhabited the area. The area was lawless, causing North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina to hesitate to claim ownership. In 1802 Congress passed the Act of Cession giving Georgia authority over the area. However, the law was vague and did not specify which state had the right to govern the area.

During 1803, Georgia took possession of the area and created a county called Walton County in honor of George Walton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The skirmish occurred in 1804 when citizens of the area refused to pay taxes to Georgia, sparking the confrontation. One source of this information states that a number of citizens of Georgia were killed and captured. Another source states that John Hafner, a North Carolina official, was killed by Samuel McAdams, a Georgia official. It seems that the Georgia officials fled and the North Carolina militia gave chase. The Georgia officials escaped and our state soon gave up on governing old Walton County due to its remoteness.

During 1811, the three states decided to try to work out their disputes, and Georgia hired Andrew Ellicott to help settle the conflict between the states. For years I have heard of a place on the Chattooga River where Andrew Ellicott inscribed the letters N and G on a rock. This rock was the place where North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina all come together. I have been to this place four or five times and have never been able to find the rock. My son Will and I have been to the star. I have visited the place twice with Tom Starett. A few years ago Tom and I went with a friend from Rabun County, and still we did not find it. I was beginning to think I was on a wild goose chase.

So, a couple of years ago I convinced Tom, along with Shawn Kight, to come with me once again to find Ellicott Rock. I usually go through the Warwoman area, but, I read that it was a quicker trip to drive on 64 to Highlands. So, I set my Waze navigation app for Burrell's Ford Campground and left at 7 a.m. We drove on 64 to Franklin and then dropped down to Highlands. The app gave us direction to turn on to

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Egg Prices

If you have been to the grocery store lately, you may have noticed that egg prices have risen a lot. Let's talk about why egg prices have risen so drastically in such a short period of time.

I don't claim to be an agriculture economist. A lot of the information that I'll be sharing is from an agriculture economist from Mississippi State named Josh Maples. Here is the link to that article: <https://southernagtoday.org/2023/01/record-egg-prices-driven-by-supply-disruptions/>

In December 2021 egg prices were \$1.79 per dozen. In December 2022 egg prices averaged \$4.25, and I would expect to see the prices for January 2023 to be even higher. A common term nowadays is supply chain disruptions, and that is the culprit in this case again. However, with eggs the supply chain disruption is a bit different. It's not because we can't get the eggs from the coop to the store, but because our layers have been hit hard by Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI, commonly called bird flu). In 2022 HPAI was detected in 307 commercial flocks and affected 57 million birds in the US. 40 million laying hens were lost to HPAI in 2022. Typically, we have 320 million to 335 million laying hens in the US each month. From April 2022 to October 2022 there were 299 million to 310 million layers each month. Decreased supply is the main cause of the high prices that we've seen. Another factor is the increase in input costs. Feed and production costs have risen, also leading to raised prices. We have seen that demand for eggs is pretty inelastic. Meaning Americans will still buy eggs even with high prices, which only drives prices higher. Demand reaches its peak annually in the holiday season.

If you have birds you should create strict biosecurity measures to protect your birds from HPAI. HPAI is almost always fatal for chickens and spreads very rapidly. It is most commonly spread by wild fowl to domesticated flocks.

One response that people have had more expensive eggs at the grocery store is to raise their own or to buy local eggs. I always encourage people to buy local and to support local farmers. To be able to sell eggs you are supposed to have an egg candling license. To receive the license, you must go through a class and pass a test. The Georgia Department of Agriculture is responsible for administering the course. During the pandemic, very few classes were offered. Now lots of people want to become licensed and it is difficult to get in a class. If you are just raising your eggs for yourself, and not for sale, you do not need to have a license, but it is still a good

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Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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sure to sell unused property - to not only save on property taxes but to add value to your property. According to the Tax Assessor's Office, approximately 12.77% of Union County is involved in some type of agriculture. This is one very important reason why the Union County Farmers Market was established - to give the farmers a market for their products. Additionally, the new UCHS Agriscience Center promotes farming in our community.

Q. What is the positive side of new homes being built in the county?

A. Chain stores and local retailers require a certain amount of employment and population in an area before they will look to our county for starting a new chain business or any new local retail business. So, population growth is what feeds these corporate decisions. Some of our residents seem to feel differently about this topic, but I occasionally hear people complain about the traffic and growth in our county and then say, "I wish we had an Olive Garden, Publix, Kroger, or Target store in the county." The only way these stores come to a community is if they have a certain amount of population growth and wealth. We also have to provide a labor market (potential employees). I think many of us sometimes want it both ways.

Q. How do we stop growth?

A. You cannot stop growth and if you do, it cannot be done without negatively impacting those of us who already live here. Since I have

been in office, my goal has always been to increase our quality of life by improving roads, public safety, public facilities, library, farmers market, horse arena, and parks, etc. The only problem is that as we make the county better for those of us already here, it is also an attraction to those looking for a great community to move to. We also have a strong building and development department that helps ensure that any construction done in our county is done to high standards. These qualities do not go unnoticed. People want to be part of a good thing. So much of our current population moved here within the last 30 years. Who has the right to draw a line in the sand to tell others they can't move here too? It is a difficult position to try to find a compromise. Government wants to do what is best for everyone, but it simply is not always possible.

Q. We have heard rumors of new stores and restaurants moving here. What can you tell us?

A. I can't tell you much at this point. Oftentimes new businesses want to have all the details worked out before they announce their intentions. The Development Authority and county officials involved in new projects such as these are bound to secrecy until the company decides to make an announcement or gives us permission to make an announcement. In other areas, companies have backed out of community projects when information leaked out too early. We try to inform the public as soon as any company gives us permission.

Radcliff... continued from Page 4A

your staff for defending that right by printing the editorials. He is simply following the command of the God on which this great, but declining, nation was founded. I vehemently applaud this letter writer and his God, who is also my God, Jesus Christ, who shed His blood, not exclusively for him, but also for me, and everyone else

in this fallen world.

Remember: the Bible is the bestselling book of ALL time. If one has not read it, perhaps one should. I join the Christian writer in prayer for this world and for those that do not know our savior. Thank you and may Jesus Christ bless you all.

Gary L. Radcliff

Lausier ... continued from Page 4A

responsible renters and have signs to remind people to be noise-aware and even have tenants sign promises to contain the noise, how do you know they do?

ANSWER: They don't. You are not here when the original group that rented the motel arrive, get settled and welcome the six other people who showed up to stay. But wait, you only have three bedrooms, well, they wanted to have a family get-together so they all brought sleeping bags and will rough it on the floor.

How about when they all pour outside and take the two large dogs off the leash "to run a bit" so the dogs run right over to my lawn and use it as a toilet, then check out my garbage to see what's in the bags. SO SORRY!! Little Jimmy was supposed to be watching the dog, sorry it made a mess. I get to clean it up.

Wait, you don't allow dogs, well guess what, you're not here to enforce that.

Or when they all go outside, there's 12 of them now, a few more stopped by for s'mores around the large bonfire, and they all get in a fight and start yelling at 11 p.m. at night, and go inside to let the BONFIRE burn unattended. If they sign a paper, will that keep all this from happening? Don't think so.

How about the seven cars in the driveway and street, coming and going all hours?

Or the guys that rent your mini motel to have a trail bike weekend up in the mountains and need to tune those ear-piercing, destroying machines to be ready in the morning? Hey Jake, lets test 'em out now, so up and down the street they

go and in the adjacent yards, yeah, in my lawn.

How often do I call the sheriff? And for what, to complain that there are eight cars on our little street, dogs got into my garbage, trail bikes are making ruts in my lawn and destroying the peaceful back porch cup of tea I was trying to have? That there are 12 people in a rental when there should be four? All the lights in that house are on at 2 a.m. and there's loud talking and laughing? No, the cops have better things to do.

How about if you have a house with a dock, you can forget a peaceful morning coffee on your dock, or restful afternoon fishing.

Living next door to a STR can be awful, and even if you ask some people nicely, or politely, to stop yelling, or turn the radio down, you will still get the middle-finger salute. You are not here to see how your renters act.

You indicated you did not like the ordinance, but in my experience the ordinance does not go far enough.

I hate that the government has to get involved in this, but rules and regulations get put in place because enough people have had enough bad things happen, and the full-time residents are really, really tired of this.

While I know this will not happen, and it may stir a controversy to mention it, but I wish that the STR or mini motels had a higher property tax bill than the full-time residents. I know some of the fees of the STR will go to the county, but is that enough to cover the extra policing, infrastructure, and impact on the county?

Eva Lausier

Williams...continued from Page 4A

idea to take the class, so that you can learn about the difference between a good and a bad egg. You can check the Georgia Department of Agriculture website for a schedule of their programs.

The USDA expects egg prices to moderate in the coming months. Demand should come down from its holiday

season high. Easter is an exception. HPAI will continue to be an issue in 2023, but hopefully this spring we will see a slowdown in the spread of HPAI.

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

Cummings...continued from Page 4A

Glade Mountain Road. After turning, the road soon turned to gravel and then to a single track. We crossed a ridge and dropped into a deep cove. Soon I switched my Ford truck into four-wheel drive. We began climbing up another ridge over the rutted road bed, and after coming into a gap we again dropped down into a cove and came to a deep mucky area. Beyond this area there were three high berms which prevented us from traveling any further. The app told us we were within a mile of our destination.

We backed up and turned around to travel the seven miles back to the pavement. Halfway out we met a bear hunter on the single track road. He moved by backing his new truck over a

Habitat...

continued from Page 4A

homelessness is that providing services to them will only attract more. In reality, 75% of homeless people are still living in the city in which they became homeless.

WNCRC is actively seeking partnerships to include support staff, transportation, handyman chores, board members, fundraising, and grant writers.

Individuals or families that are at imminent risk of homelessness can apply for admission to the program.

Potential candidates must meet admission criteria, and participants are held to a standard to work in the community garden and work towards the goal of self-sufficiency.

If you are interested in partnering with this cause or to find help for someone in need, reach out to Wncrc1@gmail.com.

Fowler...

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fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). That's not what they want to hear, so they turn on Jesus. This new information has no bearing on their opinion.

Jesus said he came to "release the captives." It is only too human to be a captive of borrowed opinions or your own self-deceptions. The good news is that Jesus has a solution! "If you continue in My word," He says, "then you are truly disciples of Mine and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32). Nothing but the truth, so help me God!

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

On Wednesday, when tornado safety is emphasized, residents, schools and businesses statewide can participate in Ready Georgia's PrepareAthon!, a statewide tornado drill. Residents should know what to do during a tornado and practice these skills.

We encourage everyone to take the time to research and prepare for these severe weather incidents. For more information about Severe Weather Preparedness, visit www.ready.gov/severe-weather.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Gibson...

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as a very generous gift to our recycling program.

Thank you, Brother, for your unexpected kindness and generosity, and God Bless You!

Wm. Ronald Gibson

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

one can purchase a card, but the business must be registered to be able to except the card. It's quick and easy, so learn more today and make it easy to shop local.

Life is better in Blairsville!
Happy Valentine Day!

Vandereedt...

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quit reading them. This is still a free country where we have freedom of speech whether you agree or disagree with what people have to say.

Concerned Citizen
Cindy Vandereedt

S.A.F.E.

Board Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Directors of S.A.F.E. (Support in Abusive Family Emergencies, Inc.) will be February 21, 2023 at 5:30 PM. Call 706-379-1901 for location.

I scrambled down the bank, and 15 feet later, there was Ellicott's Rock. The initials "N" and "G" were carved into the rock. Two hundred and nine years ago Ellicott carved these letters, and the states still disagree about the correct location of the state line between Georgia and North Carolina and the state line between Tennessee and Georgia. If the state line between Tennessee and Georgia was about a mile further north than it currently is today, then Georgia would have Tennessee River frontage close to Chattanooga and water rights

to that body of water. Andrew Ellicott is a name almost lost in history. However, his work had major implications on the history of our area.

The area around Ellicott's Rock is pristine and beautiful. Just walking through there is worth the effort. But, a couple that with the historical significance of the area and you can really have a most enjoyable day. For more information on Walton's War, please see the article "The Walton War" written by Jonathan Martin, or "The Walton War" on about-northgeorgia.com.