

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## Disaster Workshops

One of the hardest lessons in life is to learn that you can't do everything alone. It takes other people and organizations; partnerships, who share resources and solve problems to bring things to a successful outcome. This is especially true when it comes to disasters and major incidents.

Disasters and major incidents require an entire community to resolve. Each event brings its own unique set of challenges which cannot be overcome without careful planning. In order for communities to be better prepared, communities plan and practice through workshops, tabletops, drills, and exercises. Union County Emergency Management Agency has been hosting a series of workshops where community partners have been planning and preparing for a major incident.

The current workshops are based around a major school bus accident. The participants are given information from the scenario and they use that information to plan a response. They also share their information with other partners in order for each to be aware and to coordinate the response. One goal of the workshop is to discover previously unseen challenges that the participants must overcome. Each new workshop builds on the previous workshops in order to develop an overall plan.

The participants are finding the workshops very helpful in testing current plans and developing new plans to address the unforeseen issues that were discovered. They also find it helpful to understand what other community partners will be doing at certain times during the incident.

That is one of the greatest advantages to this type of planning and preparing is bringing the community partners together to share information and ideas. Workshops provide a controlled environment where participants can think through problems and plan without the pressure of an actual event occurring. This provides an opportunity to review options before choosing the best plan of action.

The community partners involved in these workshops include Union County Fire, Union County Schools and School Police, Union General Hospital, Sheriff's Office, Blairsville Police, Union General Ambulance Service, E911 Dispatch, Coroner's Office, Georgia State Patrol, Union County Government, and Georgia State Patrol.

See Dyer, page 5A

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



## Intellectual Honesty

In his 1977 album, Billy Joel crooned about a love interest who was "always a woman to me." One of her endearing quirks was, "She never gives in, she just changes her mind!"

Politicians change their minds too. But lest you think poorly of them they say, "I misspoke," or "My thinking has evolved." Translation: his staff told him the electoral winds are blowing in a different direction. Or in today's parlance, he didn't want to get canceled.

Of course there are valid reasons to change your mind. When you think about thinking (metacognition) with an unbiased, honest attitude, you may well gain fresh perspective on truth. That's intellectual honesty. Dishonesty says, "My mind's made up. Don't confuse me with facts."

Allan Sandage shocked the scientific community with his intellectual honesty. In 1953, he earned a Ph.D. from Cal Tech in astronomy. As a prolific researcher and author, he won multiple science awards during his career. He was agnostic about God and embraced a materialistic philosophy.

In 1985, Sandage joined a panel of scientists at a conference in Dallas. The divided panel of theists and atheists were there to discuss the origins of the universe, complex life, and human consciousness. His colleagues were shocked when Sandage sat down with the theists. He had changed his mind. He explained that his research affirmed that the material universe had a definite beginning in time and space, and had been finely tuned since the beginning to support life. That suggests prior intelligence.

The Bible says, "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible" (Heb. 11:3). Cosmology and astronomy gave Sandage reasons to believe, to become a Christ-follower. He said, "It was my science that drove me to the conclusion that the world is much more complicated than can be explained by science. It is only through the supernatural that I can understand the mystery of existence."

It is intellectual honesty to follow the evidence, and change your mind. Sandage did.

**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



## Commissioner's Questions

### Meeks Park (Part 1 of 3)

There have been so many great improvements to Meeks Park over the past several years, and people are continuously calling and sending messages to my office – thanking the Union County Government for the park options available to families. The next three weeks' newspaper columns will attempt to address some of the questions we have received about Meeks Park and as well some offerings available through the Recreation Department.

**Q. Who can use the walking trails and related outdoor activities? Are these activities available to non-Union County residents?**

A. Meeks Park is available to all visitors and residents. The park is open to adults and children of all ages, and it offers activities for people of all ages. However, because a dog park is available down by the Senior Center, animals are not permitted inside Meeks Park.

**Q. I have heard reference to a Meeks Park I and Meeks Park II. What does this mean?**

A. Meeks Park I refers to the original side of the park that faces State Hwy 515. On this side of the park, you will find an outside basketball court, skateboard park, swimming pool/splash pad, tennis courts, soccer fields, a children's playground, baseball fields, batting cages, pavilions, and walking trails. Families can swing next to Butternut Creek or sit at one of the many picnic tables to have lunch.

Meeks Park II refers to the side of the park that faces the Old Blue Ridge Highway. This side of the park is carved out by the Nottely River that flows past the Meeks Park Kayak Ramp. Meeks Park II also offers outside adult exercise equipment, a children's playground, and a picturesque grist mill made with parts dating back to the civil war era.

**Q. How many miles of walking trails are there between the two parks?**

A. Actually, there are three parks associated with Meeks. We've talked about Meeks Park I and Meeks Park II, but there is an on-leash dog park also. It is located next to the Senior Center and behind North Georgia Tech. I mention it now because it

See Paris, page 5A

**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**

Lamar Paris



## Habitat for Humanity

We get truckloads of donated items in everyday to resell in our ReStore. Customers donate items themselves, dropping off clothing, furniture, etc. We also offer a pick-up service to come to your location to pick up furniture or items too heavy or too big to load into a car. Our truck drivers pick up items Monday through Friday, filling our store with items generously donated and lightly used for us to resell and display in our store.

Though we are not an antique store, we often get items in with a story to tell or a history to research. We've gotten old wartime photos of loved ones, dining room tables passed down through generations, and priceless items that stand the test of time like a console record player with a diamond needle.

Last week we had a dining room table in the ReStore with a note on it from the donors stating, "This table was a wedding gift to my

See Habitat, page 5A

**Habitat Happenings**  
Madelyn Bailey



## Letters to the Editor

### Vicious Dogs

**Dear Editor,**  
In regards to the Commissioner's Q&A about vicious dogs in the Feb. 2, 2022, paper being given 72 hours of being classified; even after a panel of six in front of Union County's lawyer telling the dogs' owners the vicious dogs could not be given to someone out of state, they did so anyway. When animal control went to pick up the dogs, they were gone. Nothing was done to the owners. My brother was damaged for life after being mauled and chewed on his arms and legs. Even though there was a reporter at the hearing, it was never allowed to be printed in the paper. This happened June 28, 2017.

Glenda Morrow

### Kudos to UCS

**Dear Editor,**  
I wanted to send a quick note to thank our teachers for all of the hard work they have done over the last two years to make sure our kids get the education they deserve under some challenging circumstances.

We cannot say enough about the three teachers who take after our kids every day — Miss Goddard (First Grade), Kummel (Third Grade) and K. Colwell (Fifth Grade) — and everyone else in the school district who makes things happen each and every day.

Growing up in a broken family and traveling the country myself over the last three decades, I can promise that the education our kids receive here in Blairsville is nothing short of superb. Kudos to Union County Schools for doing good for our families, and thanks to the people who recognize those efforts.

Josh and Mollie Murauskas

### Plastics Problem

**Dear Editor,**  
Have you noticed the ever-increasing problem of plastics in the waterways, along the roadways, and pretty much anywhere you try to escape to? They are very ugly, but also kill lots of animals and plants in various ways. It is a massive problem, requiring much effort on many levels to completely eliminate, but each of us can take steps to contribute to the solution.

One fairly easy one is to stop accepting plastic shopping bags. Most of us have received reusable shopping bags over the years, and they are easy to purchase as travel souvenirs or to support various charitable causes. Put them on a hook in the laundry room until you head out shopping, or keep a couple in the car in case you

See Romaine, page 5A

## Letters to the Editor

### Causing Strife

**Dear Editor,**  
I read in the paper where several people who attended the county commission meeting last month refused to wear masks, or took their mask off once inside. Now, these people had been notified ahead of time that masks were required inside the building. Then, upon being told to put a mask on or the meeting would be canceled, cited multiple vague health reasons for not doing so.

I don't wear a mask, unless it is required by the entity that I am in the presence of. I have to travel for a living, and I have to wear a mask on airplanes. I have to wear a mask if I am anywhere inside any commercial airline terminal.

See Gregoire, page 5A

### In Defense of Commissioner Paris

**Dear Editor,**  
I am a longtime homeowner and permanent resident of our great county. I am sorely distressed by the ongoing, vicious attacks that recently have been published aimed at our county commissioner. If they weren't so serious, I would laugh them off as being folks who are writing about some other county — perhaps the ones they moved from. But, it is serious because of the insidious nature of constant haranguing.

I have observed Commissioner Paris regularly participating in numerous events — weekdays, weekends, holidays, early and late. The

See Hines, page 5A

### Slow Down People

**Dear Editor,**  
This is NOT the letter I started to write. I was going to comment on what can be done about speeders thru Blairsville; but I've already written to the editor twice and did not get published. So, I think I'll just say "slow down people" — the life you save might be your own (or mine).

Jerry Driskell

### Re: Transfer Station Article

**Dear Editor,**  
I just finally finished reading your Feb. 9 article, "Union County takes over bagged garbage, recycling." I cannot express how glad I am to learn Waste Management is going to be out! We are from Florida (part-time here) and have had Waste Management for a number of years. They are so difficult to deal with and, as a homeowner, I was not happy when our County Commissioner renewed their contract for a second time.

See Chomat, page 5A

## Ransy Souther

Many of you know of Charles Jenkins and his knowledge of this area. Charles told me many stories concerning his travels and his ancestors. One such story is about his grandfather, Ransy Souther. You can also read about Ransy and his history in a book by Ethylene Dyer Jones called, "THROUGH MOUNTAIN MISTS, Early Settlers of Union County Georgia, Their Descendants... Their Stories... Their Achievements. Lifting the Mists of History on Their Way of Life." Charles provided the following story about Ransy and his way of life.

He was born and reared in the Choestoe District of Union County. Specifically, he was raised in the Trackrock section of the district. One of Ransy's daughters, Evia Mae Souther, married Charles Swinfield Jenkins. These were Charles Jenkins' parents.

Frank Loransy Souther went to work with the U.S. Treasury Department of Alcohol and Tax Unit in December of 1920. Yes, this man was what many a mountaineer called a Revenue Agent. He knew that he would be dealing with his neighbors and even some of his kin folks that might have illegal stills hidden in the mountain coves throughout this area. He was concerned about the problems illegal alcohol brought to this area. He knew the area experienced some severe problems due to the over-use of illegal whiskey. His life was literally dedicated to busting up these hard to find stills.

Early in his career, he knew of a still located on the land of a family member. Ransy told his kin that the still needed to be destroyed, and that he would bust it up if his relative did not. He gave the man a couple of weeks to destroy the still, and one day, as a lawman, Mr. Souther traveled up through the ivy thicket to the site and destroyed his relative's still. The man was angry, but, respected Ransy for sticking by his word. But, word got out about the incident, and he gained the respect of not only those in Choestoe but, surrounding counties as well.

This Revenue Agent never carried a gun. His tactic was to surround the still site and demand that the offenders surrender. If any of them ran, Ransy would give chase, sometimes running for miles before capturing the moonshiners. On one occasion, Ransy and his posse busted down a site close to Turner's Corner, and one of the operators ran. A deputy gave chase and tracked the man down Bogg's Creek to Dick's Creek all the way to the Etowah River. Eventually, the fellow jumped into the river and swam downstream to get away. The chase must have been 10-15

See Cummings, page 5A

**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



## Chamber of Commerce

The Evening with the STARS event last week was as special as always, for the students, teachers, school administration, and for myself. There is no greater joy than acknowledging the hard work and achievements of those who were presented with awards.

This year we honored Union County High School STAR Student, Emma Thompson, and STAR Teacher, April Krieger, along with Woody Gap's STAR Student, Logan Disser, and STAR Teacher, Althea Cantrell.

Receiving The North Star Award was John Hill, our Union County Schools Superintendent. We were able to catch a quick video from David Harris, Union County High Class of 2009 graduate, accepting the Alumni Pacesetter Award, while he is currently away on active duty. The Shining Star Award was presented to Caley Davis, and Landen Gray received the Reaching for the Stars Award. These students truly are STARS, and I can't wait to see where they are headed after

See Chamber, page 5A

**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**

Steve Rowe



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See Romaine, page 5A

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## Paris... continued from Page 4A

also has walking trails as well as an 18-hole disc golf course. When you add up all three parks, there are approximately 6 miles of walking trails. Walking is one of the easiest, most enjoyable, and most available forms of exercise. All you need is a good pair of shoes and comfortable clothing. The walking trails cross Butternut Creek and go under State Hwy 515 – connecting the dog park. All trails are easily accessible. In the Spring and Summer, you might also see the Union County Middle or High School students practicing for cross country competitions.

### Q. I see many baseball fields in Meeks Park I. Who uses these?

A. The seven (7) baseball fields are used by the Union County Recreation Department baseball program. They are also used for football practice and cheerleading practice. The Union County School System will also use the fields from time to time for middle school softball and baseball.

### Q. Can I reserve a Meeks Park pavilion for a special occasion?

A. There are four pavilions and one gazebo at Meeks Park I. The pavilion on at the upper ball fields has a fireplace. If you wish to reserve a pavilion, please contact the Recreation Office at 706-439-6074.

The Union County Recreation Office will be happy to provide costs and to reserve a pavilion for your special day.

### Q. We heard the park also has a children's memorial. What does it mean?

A. The idea was brought to us by Patrick and Kathy Malone and with their interest, there have been many names added to the memorial. The Children's Memorial Pathway has been furthered enhanced with donations and projects involving various other groups and individuals. For more information on this lovely memorial, please contact Kathy Malone at 706-835-1303.

### Q. Do you allow bicycles on the walking trails?

A. No, we do not allow bicycles, skateboards, or any other wheeled activities on most of the walking trails. Safety of our trail walkers is top priority. However, residents do have a couple of biking options. The portion of Meeks Park I trail that connects the Sorghum Festival Field to the Senior Center will support bicycles; however, we do recommend that this ½ mile portion be limited to small kids on their bikes. Additionally, a TVA maintained trail for off-road biking is available. You will find it out by the Notely Dam.

## Habitat... continued from Page 4A

grandparents in 1919, refinished in 1998, and my family has used it until now. It is time to move on. I hope it finds a good home."

The items at the ReStore all have a story to tell, and we enjoy finding treasures like these, that have value far beyond their current shape. We encourage repurposing items from our ReStore and sending in before-and-after photos of the items you have bought at the ReStore and have restored into a new piece of furniture or décor. You can send these in our Facebook group, "Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties ReStore." We would love to see the treasures you find in our store!

The Habitat for Humanity ReStore is about restoring hope in the hearts that have

none and restoring homes into prime living conditions for community members. Your donations help us succeed. If you are interested in donating items that are gently used, please give us a call at 706-745-7101. We can schedule to come out and pick your items up. If you have items with a story or some historical significance, be sure to tell us or attach the information to the item!

We love to find items like these in our donations. We can resell these items with a higher value, which benefits our cause. In addition, customers can read up on the significance of them. Shop the Habitat ReStore for unique donations and items to repurpose. Everyday we receive newly donated items, and you never know what you will find!

## Cummings... continued from Page 4A

miles. Later in court, this same man came back to watch the trial of his friends. The deputy which tracked him recognized him and started to arrest the man. However, it was decided that the man got away fair and square, and the team thought it best to let him go.

Another occasion found Ransy and his team nearly at the top of a gap on the Blue Ridge in Habersham County close to Tray Mountain. The still was located at the head of a branch right against a rock face, and the only way in was through an ivy thicket. This was no ordinary ivy thicket. The plants were so thick the only way through was to slide and crawl on their bellies. The team made their way up through the thicket to the top of the gap and slowly surrounded the still site. The operators had been working all day and were resting by a fire by the time Ransy's men were in place. All of his men were hidden, and knew not to go in until their boss stepped from the bushes. They watched the still and the men for a time. The moonshiners began to sip a little of their product when one of the nervous ones stated that he just knew Ransy would catch them someday.

Another moonshiner stood up next to a big White Pine and began to pretend that he was hand cranking an old telephone. He leaned in close to a pine knot and spoke into it like he was talking into one of those old phones. He staggered a little and said, "Ransy Souther, you need to get up here close into Tray Gap and bust up our still." The other moonshin-

ers laughed at the drunk man and his antics. He continued, "We are up here, and I'll bet you will never find us." As the drunk man finished, his nemesis stepped from the bushes to the shock of all the other moonshiners. The drunk looked at Ransy and said, "How did you get here so quick."

It is said that Ransy's crew busted more than 300 illegal stills in one year. Some of the people which worked with him include Virge Kelley and a Mr. Jackson from Union County. But, even those he captured knew they were treated fairly by this man. People he captured were turned loose to go home and make a living for their families until their court dates.

Ransy's last raid was on the ridge to the east of Turner's Corner. His crew had received a tip about an illegal operation in the area. The crew made their way to the site. Two men in hiding came out and shot him and one of his deputies. Mr. Jackson almost died at the scene. He was unconscious and his wounded boss went for help by crawling back to his vehicle. Loransy Souther died later that year in 1937 of his wounds. He was a hero and honored as such by a resolution of the Federal Grand Jury of Atlanta presided over by Judge Marvin Underwood. Also, the U.S. Treasury Department honored Mr. Souther in a letter to Judge Tom Candler in Blairsville in 1937. You can find a copy of the letter in "The Heritage of Union County, 1832-1994," on page 56. Ransy Souther was a great man.

## Gregoire... continued from Page 4A

I have to wear a mask inside most government buildings, as well as some private businesses that require masks to be worn. The claim that masks cannot be worn for health reasons is pure BS, and most if not everyone knows it. So, in this case, the people refusing to put masks on once inside a building and a meeting in which they know masks are required, are simply doing so to cause strife, dissension and division. They are doing nothing constructive. They are doing nothing to gain knowledge, insight or further the change they so desperately claim is needed. Ban them, and move on with people who have common sense and are capable of constructive communication and interaction.

Lou Gregoire

## Romaine... continued from Page 4A

make random shopping stops.

It is fortunate that some stores provide recycle bins for light plastics, which is much better than throwing them out the window, but the recycling process itself causes pollution, and only a small portion of recyclables actually make it through the process.

Retailers could assist by charging a small fee for each plastic bag used. This is being done in some of the more eco-conscious communities around the country, and it does help. How do we get our businesses to agree to this?

There are many other littering and pollution problems needing our combined attention to eliminate, but this is one we can each start now.

Teryn Romaine

## Chamber... continued from Page 4A

they graduate. We are blessed to have these wonderful teachers in our community working with our youth, preparing them for their future.

I also want to thank our event sponsors, Blue Ridge Mountain EMC and SouthState Bank. These two, along with our annual Shooting for the Stars Golf Tournament, helped in providing scholarships to the Union County Schools Foundation with a portion going to

these STAR students.

I am grateful to Dr. John Wilkinson, President of North Georgia Technical Institute, who took part in our Annual Evening with the STARS event.

We have a couple of fun events coming up in the next couple of months to get everyone out of the house and into the community. Be on the lookout for info on our Lucky Coin Hunt in March and the Easter Bunny Shops Local starting on March 28th. There are several great prizes to be won!

These events have been a great start to the year and for making everything Better in Blairsville!

## Dyer... continued from Page 4A

gia Emergency Management Agency.

The workshops are essential for planning and reaching our ultimate goal of having a prepared and resilient community. We would like to thank the participants and partners for contributing to these workshops. We would also like for the community to be aware of the time and effort these organizations put in to preparing and planning for these types of emergencies.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

## Chomat... continued from Page 4A

I cannot tell you how many times we called Waste Management and then had to call the County to get some resolution. Long story short, not to worry, Waste Management promised the County Commissioner they'd be "more responsive to customers." I feel so much better, haha!

I also like the fact that the bins will be changed back. The area where residents take their bags for disposal is so nasty-looking since Waste Management took over.

Kathy Chomat

## Hines... continued from Page 4A

man lives and breathes for the benefit of Union County.

We are fortunate to have an excellent county staff working with him. Larry Garrett is just as approachable and interested in residents' opinions as the commissioner. I can't say enough good things about the service we receive from the Roads Department. I also appreciate the help and friendliness I have received from the staffs of the tax, assessors and courts offices. Clearly, we are indeed blessed.

Our county has great services: medical (emergency air evac), recreational (Meeks, farmers market), law enforcement, schools, etc. Whether directly or indirectly the commissioner and his staff have had significant involvement in making these as good as they are.

The laborers are worthy of the pay they receive because of the quality and quantity of their 24/7 on the job efforts. If the complainers want part-time, multiple leadership, they better be prepared for part-time, ineffective results. No doubt, though, these same folks will be complaining about that.

Frank Hines

### Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse



February 2, 2022

In memory of

**Harold Gibson**

By: The Union County Historical Society

February 13, 2022

In memory of

**John & Virginia Meeks**

In remembrance of their wedding anniversary

By: Terry & Ginger Meeks

February 14, 2022

In memory of

**Frank Shuler**

On the occasion of his birthday

By: Betty Jane Shuler

February 18, 2022

In memory of

**Alondra Gonzalez**

In remembrance on her 20th birthday

By: Giusseppe Arrazcaeta

**Bell ringing information at 706-745-5493**