

Opinions

Everybody has one...

We Continue to Serve

Union County Emergency Management and Fire Department continue to respond and serve. We have all been dealing with a COVID-19 world over the last year and it has been difficult to work on the other duties and responsibilities that fall under the EMA and fire departments. However, we have completed most of the objectives that we set for 2020. The following is a small recap of some of the major happenings over the last few months.

A couple of weeks ago, we wrote about a reevaluation of our Public Protection Class (PPC™) commonly referred to as the ISO rating. PPC™ is one tool that insurers use for underwriting and to calculate fire insurance premiums for homes and businesses. The Insurance Services Office (ISO) requests a great deal of information from the E911 Dispatch Center, the water companies, and the fire department to evaluate the major elements of a community's fire protection system.

Being evaluated by ISO can be very taxing and stressful but when you add the additional workload of COVID-19, it was exhausting. The information gathering took about two months and was completed in the middle of January. We were told that we may not get the results for six months. We are confident and hoping to maintain our 4/4Y rating.

The other things that EMA has completed were the Debris Management Plan and debris management removal contracts. Union County maintains several emergency plans to be better prepared but to also receive an additional reimbursement from FEMA in the event of a declared disaster. The Debris Management Plan was due for an update in 2020.

Union County EMA's Search and Rescue Team completed a Basic Search and Rescue Class during the month of January. The class involved Union, White, and Lumpkin County members. This class introduces firefighters, CERT members, and auxiliary search and rescue personnel to the basic elements of search and rescue. The course was a 48-hour course which included a final test and scenario. We are planning on conducting another course soon.

Of course, we are continuing to respond to the various emergencies and operations involving COVID-19. We are continuing to respond with the ambulance service to major medical calls. We

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Foolish Delusion

On a recent episode of "Real Time," Bill Maher repeated his charge that religion is "mass delusion." He has suggested before that science and thinking are opposed to faith. By framing faith as ignorant, he would convert you to his irreligion.

Here's the full quote. "The inconvenient truth here is that if you accord religious faith the kind of exalted respect we do here in America, you've already lost the argument that mass delusion is bad." He was criticizing delusional conspiracy theories and found a way to disparage Christians in the same breath. It's true that outlandish conclusions drawn from random facts and innuendo are not harmless. But that's not Christianity.

One of the foundational beliefs of Christianity is that God exists. Is that ignorant? To answer that, let's call British professor and philosopher Anthony Flew to the witness stand. As a long-time atheist he wrote, "It is impossible to establish the existence of God, or even to show that it is more or less probable." But in 2004, he courageously announced a change. He concluded the evidence of modern science indeed establishes the existence of God.

As a new Deist he wrote, "Science spotlights three dimensions of nature that point to God. The first is the fact that nature obeys laws. The second is the dimension of life, of intelligently organized and purpose-driven beings, which arose from matter. The third is the very existence of nature." He also pointed to the DNA genome, saying "that it has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce life, that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together."

Thank you, Dr. Flew, for recognizing the evidence for design and the logical inference that God exists. We don't have space to call witnesses to explore other evidence, such as the logic of the material universe requiring an immaterial first cause and the impossible odds of the unguided appearance of the precise parameters necessary to sustain life. Nor can we explore the questions, how is it we all have an innate sense of morality (how could a material universe that "is" place within us a sense of what

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. What do I need to do if my green address marker is missing or damaged?

A. The green address markers are especially important for aiding public safety personnel in finding your home quickly and efficiently in cases of emergency. Delivery vehicles also find these markers helpful. If your address marker is damaged or missing, please call the Union County 911 Mapping Office at 706-439-6056. They will place it back in the correct spot, and if it is damaged, they will bring a new one and replace the damaged one.

Q. Is it true that our green address number signs tell us how far our driveway entrance is along a particular road?

A. Yes, it is. Every numbering of 1000 equals 1 mile. If your address marker is 1000, it means that your address is 1 mile from the street entrance. If your address is 4725 Blue Ridge Highway, it means that you are located 4.725 miles (4 & 3/4 miles) from where the Blue Ridge Highway starts. So, if your address is 246, that means that you are located 0.246 miles (1/4 mile) from the street entrance. Another way your address is helpful is that even numbered residences are on the right side of the road and odd numbered residences are on the left side of the road. This makes it easy for public safety personnel to find your home. Once they arrive at your road or street, they instantly know when to start looking for your address marker and they know on which side of the road you are located.

Q. Do all counties use the same 911 addressing system that Union County uses?

A. No, we are one of the few rural counties in the State of Georgia to have this. It was something I saw in one of my Commissioner classes many years ago as a suggestion. While it is seemingly a small thing that not many people notice, it is something that is particularly important for the safety of the public as well as for vehicles attempting home deliveries. Public safety is always number one for our citizens and this is a large, silent contributor to that. Additionally, Union County is often praised for our 911 Mapping System during 911 Mapping and GIS Conferences.

Q. Who do I notify if my road sign is missing?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

Major Thank You and Gratitude

Dear Kenneth and Shawn:

Having been publisher of two American newspapers, the Dallas Times Herald and the Los Angeles Times, I know some of what confronts Kenneth West as the owner and publisher of North Georgia News.

Having been a reporter on the Macon Telegraph, for two years editor of the Dallas Times Herald, and having had both news and business responsibilities as CEO of CNN, I think I know some of the difficulties and rewards that come with being in each of your jobs.

This note is to thank you for the wonderful job that you have done concerning the water quality at Lake Nottely. My wife, Edwina, and I have been residents on the lake for almost 20 years.

We've been deeply concerned about decisions that were made that could seriously affect the lake. You've done wonderful reporting on the issues. This shows the enormous importance of journalism in every community no matter how large or how small.

I write on behalf of many others who are grateful to the North Georgia News of caring as you do about the communities that you serve.

Most Sincerely,

Tom Johnson

Re: The Confederacy, Racism and "Normal" People

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to the Feb. 3 letter titled "The Confederacy, Racism and 'Normal' People."

I believe that when a person chooses to fly a Confederate flag, it is to show pride in their part of the country (Southern). No one would celebrate slavery because it will always be a blemish on our history. However, this evil part of our American history is something that we should always remember, lest we repeat it.

When referring to liars, I find that the Democratic Party is right up there at the top. Remember when Trump took office, impeachment proceedings were immediately started. After two years, what was found? Nothing. If something had been found, believe me, the Dems would have shouted it from the rooftops.

I challenge you to find one other president, besides Lincoln, who did more for the blacks.

I tell my friends, "When you want to buy a car, go to different showrooms in order to get the best deal." So, too, I say to this letter writer: listen to all the news channels (local and cable) in order to investigate who is telling the truth. God bless.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Lewis

Three Items

Dear Editor,

I have three items to present to readers.

1. Wear your face coverings in public. Splitting time between Atlanta and Blairsville, I notice a huge variance. In Atlanta, you see very few people without a mask in public, while here, a large portion of the community ignores the science. If not for yourself, then for others.

2. How many more must die in car crashes at 325 and 515 before a signal is installed? Once again, a vehicle not yielding to traffic is involved in a crash. I pass this intersection multiple times daily, usually turning right from the Nottely Dam Road onto 515. I am shocked daily by drivers from 325 turning left onto 515 that either dart across to the center or simply turn left in front of oncoming traffic while ignoring the right of way. A traffic light would save lives here.

3. No more fast food! Blairsville is/was known for its small town charm, yet soon we will have a fast food restaurant on every corner, much like Blue Ridge or Ellijay. When I first bought property here six years ago, I was often told of the desire to maintain the small town charm.

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Letters to the Editor

Trump's Record

Dear Editor,

I found the recent letters to the editor praising Trump for great accomplishments as president of USA to be in conflict with facts. There are three items that Trump and his followers highlight: 1. The "best ever economy"; 2. Trump, the master negotiator; and 3. A personified businessman.

The first highlight: My questions and comments are limited to the first three years of Trump's tenure, prior to the COVID pandemic. Why did the national debt continue to sharply increase during a good economy? For a single year, the annual deficit approached \$1 trillion for the first time since the Great Recession. Was it because Trump's corporate tax cuts in 2017 didn't boost spending due to corporations using the money for stock buybacks and dividend payouts? Lower tax income combined with hefty federal spending on defense sharply raised the nation's debt level. The national debt is now more than 10 times annual tax receipts. Employment only reached 6.6 million job gains under Trump's first three years when Obama recorded 8.1 million payroll gains in his last three years (Bureau of Labor Statistics); however, the median American

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Get Right with God

Dear Editor,

I've heard all my life: "I know what you went through," or "I know how you must have felt." Unless you were there, you can't even imagine.

I've always believed that things happen for a reason in our lives to show us or to teach us something. Remember, God gave us free choice, and with that, responsibility for our actions. I was very sorry about what happened on Jan. 6 in Washington, D.C. But if any good could come out of this, hopefully, it would be to open the eyes of Congressmen and women to the fact that they, too, could experience the same things the rest of our country's citizens experienced across America for months with so-called "peaceful" protests.

Lives were threatened, personal danger and fear to average innocent people and businesses, looting fires, damage to buildings, attacks on law enforcement, murders, etc., and now, attacks on government personnel and law enforcement in the Capitol Building. Congress, to be exact, and death.

But where was all the outrage in Congress when the cities, towns and people were being attacked - mostly silent. But now, they want barbed wire fencing and the National Guard for protection.

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Bowser and Job

When my grandfather was a boy, he acquired a puppy he called Bowser. The pup wasn't much to look at. The dog had a long body built low to the ground with big feet like a Bassett Hound. Bowser's color was yellow like that of a Mountain Cur, and he had a pointed nose like a Feist. The dog had very few socially redeeming features. He wasn't built for speed and could not keep up with the other dogs in a fox race. But, he was Papa's dog and lived to a ripe old age.

Back in those days, dogs got the leftovers from the dinner table. Bowser had a sweet tooth and developed a taste for leftover peach cobbler. One time Bowser was sick and my grandfather nursed him back to health by sneaking the dog some peach cobbler my great grandmother had made. Papa said that his mother frowned on the idea of giving that dog peach cobbler, but, she looked the other way because her son was so fond of the dog. However, this fondness for peaches almost got Bowser killed.

My great grandmother, Laura, was drying peaches on an early July Day sometime around 1933. Papa said you could smell those peaches from a mile away. Laura had placed an old bed sheet on top of a well house. The peaches were peeled, sliced and then placed on top of this bed sheet and left to dry in the sun. There was a stack of firewood adjacent to the well house, and the peaches were nearly dry when Bowser found them. He had to walk up the stack of firewood and drag the peaches off the well house.

Laura walked out of the house and found Bowser lying on top of the bed sheet asleep after he had consumed all those dried peaches. The dog had eaten so many his sides were bloated. Laura almost killed that dog. His stomach and sweet tooth got him in trouble many times. But, the dog was valuable in one respect. He had no fear of critters and was an outstanding varmint killer.

Papa said, "All those years I thought the dog was dumb. It wouldn't back down from any critter. Old Bowser had scars on his nose and face from many a fight with a big groundhog." My Papa hated groundhogs. They dug under the foundations of his barn. They ate up his collards. They would dig deep holes in a cornfield which could cause an unsuspecting horse or mule to break its leg. Papa said, "Bowser was a great groundhog dog. All I had to do was dig out the hole of the groundhog den and expose the critter. Bowser did the rest." The dog would then go into the hole and stick his exposed nose into the den of the groundhog. The groundhog would bite

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Controlling Invasive Plants

Let's talk about some invasive species that are problematic in the mountains. I'll cover Nepalese browntop (Japanese stiltgrass), privet, kudzu, and autumn olive.

Let's start with the Japanese stiltgrass. This is on the only annual that I chose, so its control will be a bit different. Japanese stiltgrass looks like a miniature bamboo. It has alternate leaves. It can grow up to 2 feet tall.

It likes to grow in shaded areas, so it can grow in shaded lawns and in forests. Japanese stiltgrass will put on seed heads during the fall. The seeds are small, light colored, and sticky. Controlling it can be very challenging. In lawns, herbicides or hand pulling can be done. A pre-emergent herbicide that is also effective against crabgrass will prevent it from germinating. A product with the active ingredient prodiamine will work. Japanese stiltgrass germinates earlier than crabgrass so the application would need to be done in early march.

In forested areas there are no herbicides labelled for use. That means that you will have to either hand pull or cut it back in the fall before it goes to seed. Most likely, there is already seed stored in the soil; therefore, you will need to cut it back several years in a row to deplete the soil seed bank.

Chinese privet can be identified in the fall by the BB sized fruits hanging on it. Chinese privet starts out as a bush that can grow to be over 20 feet tall, if left unchecked. The leaves on it are glossy, oval shaped, and a little bigger than a quince.

Most people know what kudzu looks like. It is a vine that is capable of covering entire trees. Kudzu leaves are trifoliate which means they come in threes. They also have purple flowers, but can be hard to find because they're hidden behind the leaves. As members of the legume family they have hairy pods.

Autumn olive is a bush that that can get up to about 15 feet high. Their leaves are a silvery white color on the bottom. They put on a red fruit that has gray specks on it. The fruit is edible and is spread by birds and other wildlife.

Tactics for controlling perennial plants are different from annuals. Cutting them back is an option, but these plants will keep growing back from their roots. It would take several years of cutting back regrowth to eliminate invasive perennials. Hand pulling can be done while the plants are still small, but you need to remove the entire root system.

Herbicides are usually the most effective way of controlling perennial invasive plants.

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber

President

Steve Rowe



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Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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