

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## High-Risk Unified Commander

On March 5th, Blairsville Police Assistant Chief Shawn Dyer and I attended a course called High-Risk Unified Commander (HRUC). This course was developed to provide front-line supervisors and public safety executives with contemporary and realistic strategies, tactics, and related information they can then use to lead their personnel during the first 30 to 60 minutes of an incident involving active violence.

Active violence incidents are definitely "High-Risk" events and usually involve mass murder. These incidents may include knife attacks, active shooter events, bombs, terrorist attacks, vehicle attacks, and/or any other violent attacks against a multitude of innocent victims.

Active violence incidents happen very fast and are considered high-risk/low-frequency events. This means that the stakes are high for the public and for responders. It also means that responding units do not deal with these types of incidents often and time is limited. Responding to these incidents requires quick action, planning, and a strong unified command.

Unified command is essential for control and coordination of resources on the scene. People may have heard of the Incident Commander, which is defined as the single person with overall command of an incident; however, Unified Command is a group of public safety leaders (Commanders) coming together and taking overall command of the incident as a group. Needless to say this requires communication, coordination, and people working together to resolve the incident.

The participants of this High-Risk Unified Commander course were a mixture of public officials, Emergency Medical Services, Fire Departments, and Law Enforcement personnel. Each have a distinctive point of view and all have a role to play in the planning and responding to an active violence incident.

The course reviewed many case studies of active shooter and violent incidents. Tactics, command strategies, and best practices were provided and discussed with the main focus of quick, coordinated response by all involved. An interactive tabletop exercise utilizing Unified Command was the culmination of the course. Each department responded to fulfill their role while at the same

See Dyer, page 7A

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



## The Lightweight Skater

Scott Hamilton won Olympic gold in 1984 as a figure skater. He became successful as a professional skater and media personality. But something was happening behind the scenes. That's the rest of the story.

Hamilton was adopted at 6 weeks old. As a child, a rare disorder stunted his growth. But he found he could skate as well as healthy children. His first competition was at age 11. During his amateur career, he was no taller than 5 feet 2 inches.

His parents financed his training at great personal sacrifice. Just before his first major victory, his mother died of cancer. Carrying that loss framed his soul-searching after his own bout with cancer at age 39. "I survived something that took the most important person in my life off the planet," he said. "What's my purpose now? What do I need to do?" He sensed that "there was something welling up in me that needed to get out. I didn't know what it was."

He began dating Tracie, now his wife. She posed a question that caught him off guard. "Where are you in your relationship with Jesus Christ?" He realized it was questions about faith that had been "welling up." Her pastor pointed Hamilton to the Bible for answers. "Christianity is a faith of history," he said. "These things actually happened. It's not so much about the characters and their stories, but about how God interacted in their lives."

As he read, the words came alive. He gained a perspective on his sufferings and success. "I was an unintended child of a woman who had other options. I was sick. You feel like your life is a turbulent storm... and it was all for my good. Every bit of suffering was meant to build my character and endurance." He was primed for the next step of his spiritual journey.

Hamilton was a husband for two years and a new father when the doctor discovered a brain tumor. When he told Tracie, she grabbed hands and prayed. "It was honestly the single most powerful moment in my life," he said. "In that moment I knew where I was going to put my faith, everything."

After coming to Christ, "I felt lighter," he said. "When you surrender your old life for a new life in the power of Je-

See Fowler, page 7A

**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



## Commissioner's Questions

**Q. When does the Farmers Market open this year? We can't wait!**

A. The Union County Farmers Market is scheduled to open June 1 this year. The hours will be 8 AM to 1 PM on Saturdays and 9 AM to 1 PM on Tuesdays. We are looking forward to another busy season this year with many return vendors and some new additions. For more information, you can visit their website at [www.ucfarmersmarket.com](http://www.ucfarmersmarket.com) or you can call them at 706-439-6043.

**Q. Can I bring my dog to the Farmers Market?**

A. If you would like to bring your dog, the Humane Society's Mountain Shelter has volunteers there offering pet sitting for a donation to the shelter, however there are no pets allowed under the covered area of the Farmers Market, with the exception of legitimate service dogs. This is because of safety regulations pertaining to the sale of food. It is the same reason you cannot take your dog into the grocery store.

**Q. I grow tomatoes and peppers in my back yard. Can I rent a booth at the Farmers Market this year?**

A. Many of the current vendors return year after year. This means that very few booths come available each season. Locals looking to schedule a booth for a season can download a copy of the application from the Union County Government website or can call or drop by the Farmers Market. A few spaces are left available each season for walk-up vendors. Walk-up vendors can obtain a space on a first-come first served basis. Preference is given to agricultural products.

**Q. What can be sold at the Union County Farmers Market?**

A. All vendors must meet and abide by license requirements from the Georgia Department of Agriculture, the Union County Health Department as well as those required by the USDA. Vendors can sell food in its raw or natural state including fruits, vegetables, grains, herbs, honey, USDA-approved meat, candied eggs. Bedding plants and potted plants grown from seed, plugs, cuttings, bulbs, and bare root. Woody plants and bedding plants may be re-potted and sold if they have been in the seller's posses-

See Paris, page 7A

**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**

Lamar Paris



## Recovery II

There are ways to deal with Loneliness. Besides joining a club or an organization, a person can establish a new hobby. It allows a person to feel more engaged in life. It also permits the individual to be less alone as one mixes with others. Learning to cook new varieties of food dishes, or enabling oneself in an exercise class, or taking classes at a community college can be wholesome and fun. For the lonely individual, the new hobby of learning a new language can really stretch the mind if one chooses to become a student once again. The educational environment is an excellent way to become involved in the lives of fellow students. As a result of having a new hobby, there is the fantastic opportunity of sharing with others what has been learned and accomplished. The lonely person can strike up engaging conversations about the hobby to people in the new club. Such conversations can remove the element of loneliness because it opens the

**Successful Mental Health**  
Dr. James Ray Ashurst  
PH.D.



See Ashurst, page 7A

## Letters to the Editor

### Questions for Joe Biden

Dear Editor,  
1) Do you realize that under the 1952 (!) Immigration and Nationality Act, you have long been authorized to suspend the entry of migrants, past, present and future?

2) Why are you, and have you been, more concerned with the murder of the Russian dissident Alexei Navalny than the murder of the Georgia co-ed Laken Riley (say her name!)?

3) Do you realize that the "slap on the wrist" justice system that you and your vice president have allowed (and she has recently praised) has resulted in Girl Scouts robbed, law enforcement personnel assaulted, home squatters, retail theft, kids shot in school and at parades, recidivism ad nauseum?

See Spears, page 7A

### Help Me Understand

Dear Editor,  
I love living in North Georgia. We have beautiful mountains and caring people. Many of us are retired and do volunteer work to help make the community a better place to live and enjoy. I do have a huge problem trying to understand the political leanings of 80% of our population.

The presidential candidate that most are choosing is the most problematic candidate we have ever seen. He is facing four indictments and 91 counts stemming from election interference and financial crimes. He is a serial liar and auto-

See Retter, page 7A

### I'm Not a Genius

Dear Editor,  
Last week, an Op/Ed writer who identifies as an "Independent" felt compelled to write in and inform us that all we conservatives are too uneducated as to possibly know what's going on in the world. They gave us their educational resume and then proceeded to attempt to tell us how wrong we are, about our current president. Well, I'm no genius, nor do I have the educational resume that the letter writer boasts, but I know what I see.

No. 1: When I see our current president pursuing a climate policy that extolls electric vehicles and lambasting gas, oil, and coal - even going so far as to issue executive orders against them and call for their use to be stopped almost immediately to aid in the restriction of their use and driving up their prices making everything that is transported by those means and costs to anyone using them more expensive - I KNOW it's the president's fault.

See Rains, page 7A

## Letters to the Editor

### Meeting Agendas & Minutes

Dear Commissioner,  
Please post the Official Union County Meeting Minutes for the Jan. 18 and Feb. 15 meetings posted on the Union County website. Union County does a very poor job of timely posting of meeting notices, agendas (often the day of or hours before) and meeting minutes (months afterward). Requests for additional information at meetings are often deferred to "File a GORA" to put off a direct response to the general public in attendance.

Union County citizens should expect more direct and timely responses from the Sole Commissioner.  
D.B. Swaim

### The Cure

Dear Editor,  
Because of the sin nature of mankind, our planet is plagued with all kinds of diseases, illnesses and airborne droplets that can make us sick, and we wonder how we cope in times like these when our world has no cure, only gloom and doom is our future with no hope in sight. In the bible there were many plagues and calamities that killed millions of people, plus all the evil kings would kill Christians because of their faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot escape sicknesses or any other illness that comes our way, but what if there was a cure for all? A cure like no one has ever experienced before.

Let's suppose you went to your doctor, and he said your test results of cancer don't look good and you only have two weeks to live, but then the doctor says with a smile on his face, I have a cure for you. If only you drink this liquid, you will be healed. But you hesitate because you don't believe what your doctor said, so you go home downtrodden with a sad face of gloom and doom. The cure was right in your grasp, but you chose not to partake of it because of your unbelief.

It's the same when people don't accept the cure that Jesus Christ died for because of their unbelief of who God is. They cannot grip the reality that there is a cure for the sin in their life because they don't want to admit it, so they live a life without any hope in sight. Yet it's right in front of them if only they would read God's word and come to the saving knowledge that God has an eternal cure for sin. No one needs to stand before God and say they didn't know there was a cure for sin. Even folks who only go to church on Easter and Christmas must sense that there is a God out there who loves them dearly and has made a way for all to be cured and headed to glory. I pray you reach out to God before it's too late.  
See Combs page 7A

## Living History

Trees Are A Living History Book - We recently celebrated Arbor Day at the Union County Historical Society by recognizing some living legends of the Blairsville area. These legends are a group of trees some of which are older than Blairsville and Union County. A couple of these are nearly as old as our country.

Trees have always fascinated me as one of God's greatest creations. They provide protection for various species of animals and insects. They provide food for humans, animals and insects. They produce the oxygen we breathe. Trees protect the earth by binding soil around their roots and keep it from being eroded during storms. I have been known to simply lie down underneath a tree and gaze up through its limbs to the sky above and thank God for the magnificence of a tree. I think Joyce Kilmer had the right perspective when he wrote, "I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree."

Years ago I found a Hemlock tree in Level Land Cove that could be as old as 400 years. The U.S. Forest Service treated the tree to provide some protection against Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and guessed its age. This tree probably sprouted in the early 1600s. Many times I have wondered what it was like in Georgia when settlers first came here to see Chestnut Trees that were 8-10 feet in diameter. As you know those trees are gone and we will have to settle for a few large trees that are scattered here and there that attest to what once was.

When looking at these large trees, my mind wonders what one of these giants would say if it could talk. I think we could hear a history lesson. One of the oldest trees I could find is located on Hunt Martin Street at the old Rogers Home Place. The tree is a Southern Red Oak measuring 59.8 inches in diameter, and we estimated the age at 239 years, which means the tree sprouted sometime around 1785. George Washington was the President of the United States while Samuel Elbert was the Governor of Georgia. Also, the oldest Land Grant University in the Nation, the University of Georgia was founded. James Audubon, the American ornithologist, known for his illustrations of North American Birds, was born this year as well. And Ben Franklin is said to have invented bi-focal glasses during this year, too.

A couple of streets over, another elderly tree can be found close to the Circle K south of the Old Courthouse on US 129. The tree is close to what was once the site of Jackson's Blacksmith Shop. This man was the father of Bobby  
See Cummings, page 7A

**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



## Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Have you seen small white cottony balls on hemlock trees? If you have then that means those trees are infested with Hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). Let's look at why it's important to preserve hemlocks, what is the pest that is killing them, and what you can do to save them.

We are getting to the time of year when they really start to come out.

Hemlocks are a native species that ranges from Maine to Northern Georgia. They are a keystone species that provides habitat for about 120 species of vertebrates and over 90 species of birds. Hemlocks are unique in their ability to thrive in shade. This attribute makes them common in ravines and along rivers and streams. Their proximity to streams and rivers means that they are crucial in reducing erosion and watershed protection. Hemlocks can be identified by their needles. They have short flat needles with two distinctive pale white stripes on the underside. The needles are wider at the base and taper to a rounded tip, unlike firs that have parallel sides the whole way down.

HWA is a very small insect. The white cottony sacks on the hemlock trees are what the HWA wraps itself with for protection. They are an invasive species from Asia that doesn't have a natural predator here. HWA feeds on the sap inside of hemlock trees. Wind, birds, deer, or humans can spread the HWA. Once a tree has become infected, it will die within four to 10 years. Therefore, it is important to treat trees as after finding that they have been infected.

It is important to treat your own trees with cultural and chemical controls. Cultural controls include keeping hemlocks well mulched and watered. Hemlock trees don't have very deep roots and droughts can make them more susceptible to infection. Don't place any bird feeders or deer feeders near your trees. Birds and deer can carry the eggs for long distances. If you are hiking in an area that has HWA wash your clothes afterward because you may be carrying eggs. Be careful to not over-fertilize your trees as that could make them more enticing to HWA. Cultural controls may keep your trees healthy, but when they become infested, chemical controls are the only option. Chemical controls involves treating your tree with either Imidacloprid or Dinotefuran, and is the most common and effective method of control. An imidacloprid treatment will last four or five years. However, it may take one year before it is effective. Dinotefuran will last for two years in the tree and will take about four to six weeks to take effect. The ideal way to apply either of these insecticides is by soil drench. Put-  
See Williams, page 7A

**Watching and Working**

Jacob Williams



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**Paris... continued from Page 6A**

tion for 45 days (no resale of pre-finished plants is allowed). Fresh cut flowers and cultivated mushrooms are permitted if grown by the vendor on their property. No foraged items are permitted.

B. Value-Added Agricultural Products are those grown by a vendor and modified/enhanced by the same vendor such as cheese, cider, dog treats, fiber products, etc. Vendors selling these types of products must have any applicable licenses from the Georgia Department of Agriculture (ie Dairy or Feed Licenses) and meet all federal, state and local regulations.

C. Pre-packaged foods prepared by any process other than washing such as breads, rolls, biscuits, cakes, pastries, jams, granola, etc., can be sold. These must be prepared from scratch meaning there shall be nothing sold using commercially prepared mixes, crusts/shells, or fillings. Vendors selling these products must package, label, and have a Cottage Food License in accordance with the Georgia Department of Agriculture and meet all federal, state and local regulations. A full list of product qualifications is available online at: [ucfarmersmarket.com](http://ucfarmersmarket.com)

**Q. Can non-food items be sold at the Union County Farmers Market?**

A. All crafts are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. They shall be a product of a home or cottage type industry and include handmade soap (not produced by a farmer), woodworking, pottery, quilted/knitted/crocheted products, jewelry, cutlery, candles etc. Members selling these items must have created them. The items must be handcrafted, original, and exhibit a high level of quality and design.

**Q. When is the Trash to Treasures open at the Farmers Market?**

A. Trash to Treasures is open every Friday from May 20 – October 14. It is open to customers from 8 AM to 1 PM. Vendors can begin to set up at 6:30 AM and must be packed up and exited the market by 2 PM.

**Q. What items can be sold at the Trash to Treasures sales?**

A. Anything can be sold including crafts, new items for resale and gently used items. Generally, food items are not sold at the Trash to Treasures weekly event. There are a few things which cannot be sold. These items include home canned foods, produce, and other food items.

Also, people selling plants must obtain a live plant license from the Georgia Department of Agriculture.

**Ashurst... continued from Page 6A**

avenue of communicating with others. The lonely individual can actually feel connected to others and less lonely.

When a person parks his or her state of mind in a chair all day, every day, there is an opening to loneliness. There is an innate need to connect with the outside world. An excellent way of connecting is being a volunteer. Every community has non-profit organizations that would welcome a volunteer with open arms. The magic of volunteer work is that the lonely person halts the focus on self and places it on helping others. When this takes place, the lonely person develops a wonderful sense of purpose in life. One's life stops becoming

self-centered. It has a reason for getting up each day. The individual is out the front door to be of service to another person or just maybe to an animal in an animal facility. One of the advantages of volunteering is that the lonely person feels good about oneself. That particular inner feeling is worth its weight in gold. It colors the person's day in bright colors. Another advantage is that volunteering will expose one to new life experiences and people. No longer is the person confined inside a secluded, lonely dwelling, but has a reason to venture out among people who just might also be feeling lonely. Next week: Recovery III

**Williams... continued from Page 6A**

ting the insecticide in the soil will mean quicker uptake by the plant and reduce the chance of off target drift. A soil drench does not require any special equipment. Soil injection can also be used, however, I only recommend using an injector if you are treating a large number of trees. Soil injection and soil drench are equally effective.

You can also purchase imidacloprid in tablet form, so you don't have to mix with water. If the trees are near open water, a trunk injection of insecticide is necessary, which will require a professional. Whenever applying a pesticide follow the label.

The Union County Extension Office has a soil injector that is available to be

checked out. Checking it out requires a \$250 dollar deposit that will be returned when the injector is brought back. If you would like instructions on how to treat hemlock trees contact your County Extension Office or email me at [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu). The organization Save Georgia's Hemlocks have a website that also has lots of information.

Contact your local Extension Office or send me an email at [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu) if you have any questions about HWA.

**Chamber...**

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workforce, or they can take advantage of work-based learning and gain the valuable experience required by many employers.

If you are interested in learning more about the Union County College and Career Academy, be sure to visit their website for more information. It is great to live in a community that has a school system that is built on the philosophy "Success for All."

As the weather heats up, so do the Chamber events. Be sure to visit the Chamber events calendar at [visitblairsville.com](http://visitblairsville.com) for a list of the speakers, events, and learning opportunities.

Help us make Life Better in Blairsville.

**Cummings... continued from Page 6A**

Jackson, and I can imagine a couple of old wagons tied to a hitching post under that tree while waiting to be repaired. This tree is a Post Oak and measures 45.7 inches in diameter. This particular tree species is slow growing, and we estimated the tree to be 229 years of age. We determined the age of the tree by measuring its diameter at breast height and then multiplying that by a growth factor (algorithm) associated with the species of tree. George Washington was serving in his last term as President when this tree sprouted. John Adams was Vice President, and the Georgia Governor was George Mathews. The Northwest Indian War ended during the year this tree sprouted.

Another tree can be found close to the Old Middle School. It is a Southern Red Oak which measures at 53.3 inches in diameter and is estimated to be 213 years old. James Madison was our President and David Birdie Mitchell was our Governor. During this year the New Madrid earthquake in the Mississippi Valley actually reversed the course and flow of the Mississippi River for a short time.

Over in the Blairsville Cemetery across from the First Baptist Church stands a Southern Red Oak aged at 171 years old. During the year of its sprouting, Franklin Pierce was

elected as President and Howell Cobb was our Governor. In the Old Blairsville Cemetery located across from the School Board you can find a Southern Red Oak aged at 149 years old. The year in which this tree sprouted U.S. Grant was our President and James Smith was our governor. And located close by is a Poplar Tree that is approximately 130 years old. The year of its sprouting Grover Cleveland was our President.

Close by I found a Catalpa Tree that is located on the property of the Mayor. This tree is only 120 years old. But the significance of the tree is that I have never seen a Catalpa this large. This species only lives about 150 years. So this one is nearly done with life. It was a part of the Mayor's childhood and he can remember playing and climbing the tree when he was a little boy. During the year it sprouted my all-time favorite President was serving, Theodore Roosevelt. That same year the U.S. Army engineers began working on the Panama Canal and the ice cream cone was invented.

There are trees in our County that are older than these, and the Union County Historical Society hopes to find them and tell people about them. If

you know of any that deserve to be recognized please notify us. Also, please remember that the Historical Society offers Bell Ringings from the Courthouse in memory of people, and bricks can be engraved and placed in

our walkways in memory or honor of someone special which should be recognized. The cost of these two recognitions is \$50. If you are interested in recognizing someone please call us at 706-745-5493.

**Spears...**

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4) Do you realize that the world's top (four-years running) carmaker Toyota sold 11.2 million vehicles last year, but only 104,018 were fully EVs?

And 5) Why should the USA, via your administration, expend tax-generated resources for the welfare of migrants when the basic needs of America's impoverished citizens are already not being met and the middle class has trouble making ends meet as a result of your Bidenomics, inflation and misguided spending?

**Claudos G. Spears**

**Rains...**

**continued from Page 6A**

No. 2: When I see our current president, on DAY ONE of his administration, issuing 94 Executive Orders completely undoing the last administration's immigration policy and causing an explosion of illegal immigration of atomic proportions – almost 8 million to date not, including "gotaways" – I KNOW it's the president's fault.

It's almost as if the Op/Ed writer is the fictitious Wizard of Oz and he's telling us to "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain." Dear Letter Writer: In spite of how you say you were taught, you are not as objective as you think you are. We are not as uneducated as you think we are, and we see behind your Op/Ed's curtain.

**Claude Rains Jr.**

**Retter...**

**continued from Page 6A**

cratic lover. We have never had a candidate who praises dictators and fascists yet puts down democratic leaders around the world.

He has zero endorsements from 16 past respected cabinet members. Please do your research before casting your ballots. This may be the last fair and free election for quite a while.

I do expect blowback but hopefully some of our good people will choose the side of hope and kindness. We can't go back to the old days – they were not so good for many of us.

**Candy Retter**

**Fowler...**

**continued from Page 6A**

sus Christ, it's extraordinary how you don't worry about the same stuff anymore. All those memories, regrets of the past... you now have permission to let those go forever." The lightweight skater finally had his greatest burden lifted by the One who can.

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29).

**Combs...**

**continued from Page 6A**

late. When death comes there is not a second chance. Only hell awaits those who reject the cure of the cross.

**Frank F. Combs**

**Alzheimer's Association Caregiver Group's Meeting**



The Alzheimer's Association Caregiver group will meet on Monday, March 18, 1:30 PM in the Parish Hall, St. Clare's Episcopal Church, 777 Ledford Road, Blairsville.

The group is open to any caregiver of a person living with Alzheimer's Disease

or any other dementia. It is an open group meaning you can begin attending at any point.

The caregivers are able to share their experiences with others, support each other, and learn from each other.

The meetings are held on the third Monday of each month. For information contact the Alzheimer's Association at 800-272-3900 or email the facilitator Harriet Hoke at [hhoke1234@gmail.com](mailto:hhoke1234@gmail.com).

**UCHS Class of 1989 35th Reunion! March 23, 2024**

UCHS Class of 1989 35th Reunion! Saturday, March 23, 2024 5 PM at the Stable in the Mercantile and Tack Room, at Brasstown Valley Resort. For discounted room rates mention "Class of 89" event.

Join our FACEBOOK page called "UCHS CLASS OF 89" for all of the details on where to send payment, upload pictures, share memories, and connect with classmates or call Rehnee Hampton Herr 706-897-1087. We can't wait to see you!