

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Habitat for Humanity

I often write about the importance of Habitat for Humanity in our community and the blessing of shopping local in our ReStore for gently used items, however, I never explain the moral compass, or the range and depth in which the Habitat for Humanity reaches and stands for every day.

Habitat for Humanity at its core is a nonprofit organization with Christianity at its core. We are not just located in the United States or in local communities like ours; we are a global phenomenon. Habitat's values include a focus on shelter, advocating for affordable housing, promoting dignity and hope, and supporting sustainable and transformative development.

A Focus on Shelter: I think of the verse in the Bible that speaks of a house built on solid ground, and the house built in the sand. A house built in the sand cannot stand. Matthew 7:24-27. "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." The storms came but the foundation stood strong because it was built on the rock. "Everyone who hears the words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand." The storms came and the foundation crashed and crumbled because it was built on sand. Habitat puts a focus on shelter, ensuring a firm foundation, for our community members, creating a reliable place to call home.

Advocate for Affordable Housing: I often think of the work we do here at Habitat as being the hands and feet of God. Here at Habitat, we advocate for those in need working to be the helping hands to our community. Ephesians 2:10, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Promote Dignity and Hope: Galatians 5:13, "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love." I love this verse and think it correlates perfectly to this value. We lift each other up, and love one another, bringing about hope for a future, and dignity in the fulfillment of this life.

Support Sustainable and Transformative Development: This value has me thinking about the strong tower our God is. He is

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Habitat Happenings

Madelyn Bailey



Faithful in Prayer

"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (Jas. 5:16).

War is horrible. What's happening in Ukraine is no different. We have the technology to watch it unfolding in real time. That gives the illusion that we know everything that's happening and why. We can know this: laying siege to cities, killing people, and destroying property are evil.

War doesn't change. Ancient history records Assyrian King Sennacherib invading the land of Judah. His tactics were the same as Russia's only without tanks, jets and missiles. At one point, he sent a letter calling for surrender by Judean King Hezekiah. Hezekiah's response was to remain faithful to God.

His response is worth considering as you face your own personal trials. Hezekiah's prayer (2 Kings 19:14-19) reveals the heart of a faithful believer.

(1) Hezekiah "spread it out before the Lord." He acknowledged the problem was beyond his control, and took it to the Lord as an act of worship.

(2) "You are the God of all the kingdoms of the earth." There is no place on earth that is beyond God's reach or view. He has the power to intervene.

(3) "The kings of Assyria have devastated the nations." It helps you to name the specific dangers or difficulties you face.

(4) "Deliver us from his hand." Jesus taught us to pray that the Father deliver us from evil. We are aware of evil because of the moral law embedded within us by a moral Lawgiver. He causes things to work together for good (Rom. 8:28).

(5) "That all may know that You are God." May God make Himself known to a doubting world, and may His will be done.

This is not a formula to persuade God to fix everything that's wrong, like forcing Russia to withdraw its army from Ukraine. (To be sure, THAT would be a miracle). Rather, this is the posture of a believer who acknowledges the hand of Providence in human affairs. The believer who trusts that God will accomplish His purposes in the world is the believer who is faithful in prayer.

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

My office has received several calls concerning trees that appear to be leaning or about to fall. These trees become troublesome mostly when they threaten to fall across a roadway. There are many scenarios that could play out when this happens. This week's questions address those scenarios and they discuss the situations when the county road department can help and when they cannot.

Q. If there is a tree leaning towards a county road, will you ask the road department to take it down?

A. If you see a tree that is dangerously close to falling on a county road, please call the Road Department at 706-439-6062. They may not cut every tree you call about, but they will inspect it and make the decision as to whether it really needs to be cut. If you are not sure, it is better to err on the side of being cautious. We aim to ensure that people driving on county maintained roads are safe in their travels.

Q. What do we do if a neighbor's tree is leaning towards our property and we are afraid it will fall on us?

A. The obvious answer would be to first call your neighbor and see what they think. Like many other issues, people sometimes view problem trees differently. Some people are afraid of every tall tree near their house and some are not. Some people do not like pine trees or especially large white pines or hemlocks and want them all cut. Others love these trees and will not cut them. However, if there is no evidence of the tree being diseased, more than likely it is ok. You can contact the UGA Extension Office at 706-439-6030 or a Certified Arborist to come inspect the tree and give their opinion.

Q. Who bears the responsibility of a tree that could potentially fall?

A. If it is a tree that may fall on a power line, BRMEMC may be able to cut it. If the tree is threatening to fall in a county road, the Road Department may cut it. However, if it is on your property or that of a neighbor's, it is purely a local cost to one or both of the property owners.

Q. A tree on a neighbor's undeveloped property is leaning towards our private road. Will you ask the road department to take it down?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

Consider and Speak Up

Dear Editor,

I was named in an article of the NGN dated March 16, 2022, and this is my response:

I made a number of open record requests to Union County since September 2021. The Commissioner's Office knows my home address, my phone number and my email address. If the County had indeed decided to transfer the property mentioned in the article, a simple outreach to me about their plans should have occurred, since my efforts to encourage the Commissioner to initiate that transfer was an 11-year effort. An outreach from the Commissioner's Office telling me their intention to transfer that property would have resulted in me not filing my petition with the Court. Even after filing with the Court in mid-February, an outreach to me would have produced a withdrawal by me of my petition, but I never heard from them.

I never got a phone call, an email or a letter. So excuse me if I don't believe their initial intentions were to transfer the property.

The Commissioner is noted in that same issue of the NGN saying he "hopes the Board will keep the Corporation open," whereas I am

See *Sims*, page 5A

Re: Gas Prices

Dear Editor,

Last week we were treated to two Op/Eds on why the price of Gas is so high.

One was short, concise and to the point. The other decided that the better course to take was to regurgitate propaganda from an extremely left leaning website Vox and their leading Climate Propagandist Rebecca Leber. Here are some Facts.

Biden made no excuses about The Left's war on fossil fuels during his campaign. Even going as far as to say, "We are going to get rid of fossil fuels" and "There will be no more coal plants." Look it up! On the first day of his administration, he canceled The Keystone XL Pipeline. Gas prices at that point started to go up but slowly. "Mr. Biden shut down oil and gas lease sales from the nation's vast public lands and waters in his first days in office, citing worries about climate change." (ABC News March 23, 2021, "Why is Biden Halting Federal Oil and Gas Sales"). As Biden slowly shut down the fossil fuel sector of our economy, prices started to rise faster. Then, knowing that we would still need fossil fuels, Biden goes out and pleads with oil producing countries who hate us, such as IRAN, RUSSIA and Saudi Arabia, to produce more oil. YES, we've been buying oil from IRAN. LOOK IT UP!

Here are more facts. We have enough oil in our own country to drown Russia and The Middle East. Biden, however, is far too concerned with keeping a promise to his Climate Base to rid our country of The Oil and Gas Industry than to help struggling American Families and Businesses.

His administration has increased regulations on The Oil and Gas Industry, further hindering their ability to supply our country with the energy it needs. Some might be asking, at this point, what is the president's solution to this problem? It's simple. We must ALL buy electric vehicles. I find that hilarious seeing that the AVERAGE PRICE of an electric car is \$55,600 according to caranddriver.com. Do YOU have a spare 55 grand laying around somewhere? I know I don't.

And the dirty little secret about electric cars is the electric power they run on comes mostly from coal-fired power plants. So you thought you were saving the planet by buying an electric car? I don't think so. One more thing about electric cars. No one knows where or how the toxic batteries from these cars will be disposed of when the cars have reached the end of their life expectancy.

I don't know about you, but I'm sticking with the truck I have presently.

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Letters to the Editor

More on Gas Prices

Dear Editor,

I am writing this letter in response to the narrative that was printed in last week's edition of your newspaper entitled, "Real Reason For Gas Prices," wherein the author of said diatribe took unwarranted and prejudicial shots at not only the oil companies and the GOP, but also in his last paragraph against past-President Donald Trump and FOXNEWS. In the last paragraph, and I quote, he fully acknowledges that President Biden is "a poor president," but he then goes on to slander our former president with his statement that "Trump was the worst we ever had." In his final opinionated sentence, the writer states: "I write here occasionally to post facts about issues, since so many here post lies and conspiracy theories from FOXNEWS."

Now, let's regroup for a moment and look at the "REAL FACTS." When President Biden took office in mid-January 2021, we as a country under Donald Trump's administration had become totally energy independent to the point that we literally had begun exporting a surplus of fossil fuel to other countries, rather than now having our current President Biden begging foreign non-allied, autocratic, and corrupt countries to produce more oil to supply our existing needs, at least one country of which will not even accept the call from President Biden, as he is perceived by that country as being a "wuss."

On the other hand, if President Biden was not being held hostage by the far left Socialist wing of his Democratic Party and had not canceled the Keystone XL pipeline his first day in office, as well as later canceling numerous leases and associated permits on public lands, and continued to allow drilling in Alaska's ANWR region, we would still have energy independent.

See *Prevost*, page 5A

Think Twice Before "NO" Vote

Dear Editor,

I came to Union County in August of 1975 and began a teaching career that spanned 34 years. I retired in May of 2009. I was privileged to have been a part of the group of educators who worked together over the years to make the Union County School System the strong school system it is today.

I began teaching in a system that had meager means. The classes were large and teaching materials and educational supplies were scarce. I taught for 10 years in buildings that were badly in need of repair or in some parts actually beyond repair. However; early in the 1980s, the county had to vote for a school building bond to build a new elementary school. In August of

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Craytonia

Late one afternoon I received a phone call from Milton Bradley asking me if I wanted to go and see an abandoned town. So, the next morning, Milton and myself along with Sheldon Henderson and Tom Starrett drove over to Skeenah Gap and then down a Forest Service Road to Payne Gap. This particular day also happened to be the coldest day of 2022. When we began walking, the outside temperature was 24 degrees, and the wind was howling through the gaps at 20 mph.

We followed the Benton McKaye Trail along the ridge top before it dropped down an old logging road. Finally, we made it to a hollow, and Milton grinned as he pointed down through the trees toward a stand of Hemlocks. I didn't ask any questions because I knew that was where we would find the first remnants of Craytonia. The old rock walls and foundations were easy to see in the light snow which had fallen during the night. There were old farmsteads with fallen chimneys and rock walls designed to keep cattle and hogs out of the community's fields.

We soon found a spring head which had been cleaned out and then someone stacked rocks along the bank to keep the water clean. The area was about 5 1/2 feet deep by 4 feet wide. A hand-dug flume led from the spring site to the old Moses Payne House. The only thing left of this old homesite is a partial chimney. This chimney was part of the old Payne Boarding House which was also home to the Post Office. You can google Craytonia, Georgia, and see a photograph of the old two-story house which was used by early travelers through this part of the country. Located nearby was an old apple orchard and a shed where the apples were dried and sold for a cash crop.

Conducting further research one can find that the community existed up into the mid-1930s. No reasons were given about the demise of the community. However, times were extremely hard during this time. Kids were transported to Wilsco School via a wagon and later in an old T-Model. Apples appeared to have been a cash crop. But also, Chestnut bark as well as Chestnut and Locust posts were sold in nearby Mineral Bluff for \$1.50 per ox-cart load. During the Depression times became so hard that eventually all the families sold their farms to the U.S. Forest Service and moved away.

For many years I have heard of a balanced rock sitting on a cliff face on the side of Cow Rock Mountain. So, the four of us plus Patrick Fix decided to find this rock and afterward walk

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Raised Bed Soils

Last week I talked about the different materials that can be used to construct a raised bed. This week I want to talk about what we put in the raised beds. There are many different options out there, some are better than others are, and some are cheaper than others are. So let's talk through some options for soil in your raised garden bed.

Before filling up your raised garden bed figure out how many cubic feet of soil you will need. This is a simple calculation of multiplying length by width by height. Let's use the dimensions 8 feet X 4 feet X 10 inches. In this case, we would multiply 8x4x0.833 because 10 inches is 0.833 feet. The answer is 26.66 cubic feet. If we wanted to convert cubic feet to a cubic yard, we would divide our cubic feet by 27. This means that we have close to one cubic yard of volume.

Now that we have the math out of the way and know how much material we need let's talk about what materials can be used. Obviously, you can use top soil to fill the raised bed. If you have extra top soil nearby this might make sense for you. Otherwise, I don't think that it's a great option. Top soil is not regulated in terms of what is in it. So you might have many chunks of bark that haven't started decomposing. If you don't know the source of top soil, it could also contain weed seeds that will grow and compete with your plants.

Another option would be to go to the store and buy bags of soil that are made for raised beds. This would give you quality soil in the beds. The flip side is that you're going to spend a lot of money doing it. You could easily spend \$\$\$ for soil using the dimensions I talked about earlier. If the money is not a problem, this is a quick and easy solution.

Compost is a great way to fill your raised beds. Compost that has completely composted will provide many nutrients to the soil. If you have your own compost you can use that, or you can buy compost in bulk. Some companies will deliver or if you have a pickup truck, you can use that. You can also buy compost in bags. A product like Black Kow is an example. Buying bags will be more expensive. One drawback to using compost is that the pH will most likely be high. This can lead to some nutrient shortages. Another thing to keep in mind with compost is that it will continue to decompose. This means that the amount you have will decrease and more will need to be added periodically.

The lasagna method is a popular way to fill raised beds. You alternate layers of brown and green material. Brown material is dry leaves,

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ment to take it down?
 A. Some people do not want to belong to neighborhoods with homeowners' associations. Actually, I've spoken with many who feel very strongly against these types of organizations. While that view is very much respected, there is a downside. Homeowners' associations usually address such things as dangerous conditions within a neighborhood. In the scenario above, "private property" and "private road" are the two key terms that in conjunction determine what the county can and cannot do. The word "private" means exactly that. Union County cannot go on private property and take down a tree that could potentially fall on a private road. The owners of the property with the leaning tree are responsible for their property - including any danger that is imposed such as leaning trees. The owners of property that are accessed by the private road are responsible for

the road to the degree that is agreed upon by the property owners.
Q. Is there any scenario whereby the Union County Road Department might take down a tree on private property on a private road?
 A. I cannot think of a scenario when the County can take down a tree in a totally private scenario. The volume of requests of that nature could potentially impact the Road Department's ability to handle County-related business. However, should a tree actually fall across a private road - blocking the road, the Road Department could be dispatched to cut up the tree so that emergency vehicles would have access in the case of an emergency. In this case, the Road Department would not remove the tree or its cuttings. It would only provide ingress and egress, leaving the remainder of the tree to decisions made by the property owners.

Rains...continued from Page 4A

Much has been made about the number of oil leases allowed by this administration and that it's the fault of oil companies that they aren't drilling on these leases. Here's how the administration shifts the blame on subjects like this one. Say that you are an oil company and you have leases on federal lands in the middle of nowhere. You manage to get enough of your people along with some equipment to the property to find out whether or not there's actually oil there. Once the oil's been found, you then go to the federal government and say we've found oil on these leases but there are no roads to them. We need permits to build the roads so we can get our people and equipment to the site and start extracting the oil. Under the former administration, the answer probably would have been yes, here's your permit, but under this administration, an administration that has SWORN to destroy The Oil and Gas Industry, the answer is no permit will be issued.
 It doesn't matter how many LEASES have been granted by this administration if there's NO WAY to get to that lease with the equipment needed to start extracting the oil.
 Biden and the Democrats with their reckless energy policies are slowly de-

stroying our economy. Every major transport system in the supply chain relies on either oil, gas, or diesel fuel. Driving the prices of fuel up leads to not only high fuel prices but high prices on EVERYTHING that is transported by ships, airplanes, trains and trucks. By the way, most EVERY product in this country is transported by one of these means.
 Here's the biggest rub of all. Joe Biden ran for president as a "Moderate" Democrat. Since his election, he has been governing as a Far Left Democrat. He had a chance about a week and a half ago to become a president for ALL the American People and not just his base and his party. All he had to do was to announce, the same day he announced we would no longer be importing Russian oil, that he was cutting the red tape involved in oil and gas exploration, giving all the pipelines he cancelled the green light and turning our energy sector of our country loose to bleed Putin and ALL those countries who have oil but hate us dry. This present crisis is ALL Joe Biden and the Democrats' fault!
 People, PLEASE, don't fall for the propaganda. Investigate EVERYTHING for yourself.
 Good Luck and God Bless,
Claude Rains Jr.

Prevost... continued from Page 4A

dence and still be exporting oil and liquid natural gas, as we were under President Trump. Additionally, as a result of the "war on fossil fuels" approach taken by Biden and his administration, no oil company in their right mind, within today's political "green energy climate" mode of thinking, is encouraged or so inclined to further explore and drill oil in our country from a pure business standpoint! If, again on the other hand, the Biden administration were to shift gears and take a "warp speed" approach and show their support of further oil and natural gas production and re-approve the building of the Keystone XL pipeline, similar to the approach that past-President Trump took with respect to COVID vaccines, we would be out of our current oil dilemma in a relatively short period of time; as it is, they totally fail to realize or simply refuse to acknowledge or admit that currently better than 80% of our country's current energy supply is still produced and driven by fossil fuels and will be for years to come, as they continue to desecrate our beautiful country's landscape with solar panels imported from China

and ugly windmills that kill thousands of our native migrating birds each year.
 As to his personal thoughts regarding our past president, I can only pose this question: Do you really think that we would be in the same geopolitical standoff with Putin that we are in today, if our past president was still at the helm? As I recall, President Obama, with his Vice-President "Sleepy Joe," was steering our country's ship when Crimea was annexed by Putin back in 2014, and since "Sleepy Joe" has become our president, Putin now decides, after our country's recent calamitous withdrawal from Afghanistan under Biden's watch, to invade Ukraine.
 It isn't a matter of just happenstance; the REAL FACT is that Putin would never have dared to invade Ukraine under a Trump presidency, because Trump would not have sat idly by and allowed it to happen. Trump isn't the "wuss" that Biden is and would have upheld America's strategic role as being the world's leader of not only NATO, but other world countries seeking democratic rulership!
Paul Douglas Prevost

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1984, the school was completed, and we moved into the new school which was designed to house 400 students in grades K-5.
 Within a few years of rapid population growth, Union County was forced to build a new High School and a new Middle School. Overcrowding at the elementary level was alleviated by dividing grades K-5 into a primary school that remained in the old Elementary School, and grades 3-5 became an elementary school housed in the old High School and old Middle School complex. By this time we were able to pay for these changes with funds from the approved Education SPLOST tax allocations. The county has been able to continue to provide added spaces and improve the quality of education for every student with the continued use of ESPLOST funds.

It would have been a nightmare trying to accommodate the continuing population growth that we have experienced in the last few years without the monetary support of the ESPLOST tax revenues.
 HOWEVER, THE SCHOOL POPULATION IS STILL GROWING!!!!
 This year Union County has 3,000-plus students. And if you don't think that involves a lot of people, just visit any of the four school campuses during morning drop-off or afternoon pickup, and you will be amazed. Now is not the time to drop the ball and cause a sharp rise in your property taxes and to lose much of the advancement our county has achieved in the education of our students.
 Respectfully submitted,
Mildred Thompson
 Retired Educator

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

from the top out into the Boggs Creek area. So, the climb out of Tesnatee Gap was made to the top of Cow Rock on the Appalachian Trail. After attaining the top, we veered off to the south on a lead which would take us toward the location of this balanced rock. The rock was found after about a mile. And it looked just as it was described. The rock was 8 feet high by 12 feet wide and sat right on top of a 40-foot-high cliff. Some of us climbed to the top of the rock and sat on it. We could see for at least 50 miles, and one of the group spotted a truck on US 129 some 7 1/2 miles distant. While we were up there, an inscription was noticed. It read "A. B. West." The date was not legible.

Our group climbed off the rock and down to a ledge which connected the rocky area to another knob. After climbing down the ledge, we found an old rope which had been tied to a tree. Undoubtedly the rope was used as a hand hold to help climbers climb up to the rock. We crossed this 3-foot-wide ledge toward the other unnamed knob. Many old timers in the area call the ledge the "Devil's Shinbone" due to the narrow width of the ledge. We climbed down from there to Cow Rock Creek and a nice waterfall. At the base of this waterfall, we found an old still site. After taking many photographs, we continued down the creek and found an old Beech Tree with the letters "4-H" carved into the trunk of the tree.

After going home, we did some further research on the name A. B. West. He was born and raised in Choestoe. And as a teenager he was hired to work on and maintain the old Logan Turnpike Road leading into Union County from White County. Research also showed that he served his

Williams...

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 shredded newspaper, peat, and pine needles. Green materials are vegetable scraps, garden trimmings, and grass clippings. The green materials contain nitrogen and the brown materials contain carbon. Make the brown layers twice as thick as the green layers and it will compost down into a good material into which you can plant.
 If you have beds that are very deep another option is the put branches in the bottom to fill up space. The branches will break down over time, giving you good material in which to grow.
 If you have questions about filling your raised bed contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Habitat...

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 always transforming us and renewing us as we stand under his protection. Proverbs 18:10, "For the name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe."
 Habitat for Humanity works hard to uphold these values, being the hands and feet of God. Our organization here in Towns and Union Counties continually strives to be better at what we do everyday so that we can spread the truths of Christianity through the work that we do in our community.

Chamber...

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 Two events coming this week are the Compass Job Fair at Union County High School and our first Success in 60 at the Community Center. Matt Meeks will be sharing some valuable tips on how to maximize your social media advertising. Contact the Chamber to reserve your seat today.
 Please remember to pray for those in the Ukraine and continue to pray for our first responders and community leaders!
 Life is Better in Blairsville!

Sims...

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 encouraging the Board to close it down. To keep it open would be a disaster for the citizens and voters of Union County for the following reason:
 It takes away the rights of citizens to vote in a referendum on the county going into debt and skirts around State laws on referendums which could lead to all counties in the State doing the same by saying "why have a referendum when we can go in debt without a referendum?" Every citizen should consider and speak up for their rights under the law. With a Corporation, you have no rights.
Mike Sims

country during World War I. Upon completion of his service, he moved to Alabama where he later died and is buried. But, I am told some of his relatives stayed in Union County and their descendants still live here today.
 Still another trip led our group up to the top of Cass Mountain off of the Richard Russell Highway close to Ruth Gap. We were looking for some old mica mines. We found two old shafts. We think one of

them was operated by T. H. Saxon. The mine shaft was dug through a rock face nearly at the top of the mountain. We are not sure about the depth of the shaft because it is full of water. But it appears to go down some 20 feet and then straight into the side of the mountain.
 Back in the day of the mine's operation mica was called eisenglass. This material was used as mirrors and in the making of glass for funeral wagons. It was also used to highlight markings on the dials in old airplanes. The custom

of mine operations in the area was to farm during the warm months of the year, and during the winter people would work the mines for hard cash money. Digging through solid rock to get to the mica had to be back-breaking work.
 All these places in the area should remind each of us that we are not the first people to live and work in Union County. People like Moses Payne, Andrew West and T. H. Saxon were here before us, and we should remember them and their efforts.