

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### Outdoor Burning & Permits

This is the time of the year when landowners conduct outdoor burning to destroy yard debris and those last leaves from fall. Most of the people are not aware that they must obtain a burn permit to burn. We would like to remind everyone what is required to legally burn yard debris and to provide some safety tips.

When burning debris, you must first obtain a burning permit from the Georgia Forestry Commission. The burn permit is usually valid for that day only. It should also be noted that burn permits are for the burning of natural vegetative materials. It is unlawful to burn man made materials such as plastics, lumber, household garbage, etc.

The burn permit is easy to obtain by calling 1-877-OK2-Burn or by going online at [www.gatrees.org](http://www.gatrees.org). Complete the basic information and a burn permit number will be issued if burning is allowed that day. There may be times where burning is not allowed such as days that may have a low relative humidity or high winds. In those cases, permits will not be issued and it is not advisable to burn.

Once you have a permit, it is time to prepare. Landowners are responsible for fire safety, what they burn, the smoke, and maintaining the fire on their property. Prepare tools that may be needed to help control the fire such as shovels, rakes, and a water hose. Wear the proper clothing including long pants, long sleeves, boots, gloves, and safety goggles.

Even though you have a burn permit, landowners should check the weather and know the conditions for the entire day. Windy conditions can spread controlled fires quickly. Drought or dry conditions eliminate the moisture in the leaves which promotes ignition. If a burning leaf or ember from a controlled fire were to get blown into another area of dried leaves, they can catch fire and the fire would spread quickly, resulting in a wildfire.

When preparing the debris pile, make small piles and clear 25 feet or more around the pile. You should never use any flammable liquids to start the fire. Remain with the fire until all debris is burned. If small embers remain, extinguish them with the water hose before leaving the fire. Remember that all fires must be extinguished before dark.

See Dyer, page 5A

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



### Effective Follower

"Follow the science!" is the cry of parents who have lost their patience with school districts in America yet to resume in-person learning. They have heard that the CDC has given a green light to opening schools closed by the COVID pandemic.

The CDC published guidance that "presents a pathway to reopen schools and help them remain open through consistent use of mitigation strategies." It also says, "As science and data on COVID-19 continue to evolve, guidance and recommendations will be updated to reflect new evidence." I appreciate the recognition that science isn't "settled" in this case. In fact, science often overrules previous conclusions based on new evidence. So, to "follow the science," you need to be somewhat circumspect.

The human effort via science to understand our world has yielded fascinating and powerful results. It has provided discoveries and inventions that affect many aspects of our lives. Yet science does not and in fact cannot have all the answers. Take the COVID vaccine, for example. Science has answered the question of how to prevent this infection. But science cannot answer who ought to be the first to receive immunization. That is a moral question, one lost on the people who finagled a way to jump ahead of nursing home residents and health care personnel. They followed the science, right to the front of the line.

Floating around in the minds of people today is the worldview that the universe began with a spontaneous, self-caused event which produced our solar system. Over millions of years, life fermented from a broth of ancient oceans and evolved to what we see today. With such unintentional origins, it follows that you should decide your morality and control your destiny. So why not jump to the front of the line, following your desires?

On the other hand, if God created you then He has much to say about life and morality. Science, then, becomes one means to know the Creator as revealed in the physical world. The more science reveals the mysteries of creation, the more difficult it is to deny the Creator. Follow the science and behold the transcendent! John Lennox writes, "There is an intelligent God who created, ordered and upholds the universe. He made human beings

See Fowler, page 5A

**All Things New**

*Wayne Fowler*



### Commissioner's Questions

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. The lack of sewer county wide is a great deterrent. With public sewer and without strict real estate guidelines, it is hard to limit the number of residences that can be built either as compact housing or apartments. However, if there is no sewer, lot sizes are limited to single family residences of 3/4 of an acre if the property has a public water system. If there is only a well and no public water then the minimal lot size is 1.25 acres. While these numbers may not seem significant, they are if you are a developer and you need more density to make your development successful financially as well as visually.

**Q. How does farmland assist in slowing growth?**

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

See Paris, page 5A

**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**

*Lamar Paris*



### Military Musings

#### Honoring VALOR

According to Merriam-Webster, "valor" is defined as: "strength of mind or spirit that enables a person to encounter danger with firmness; personal bravery." Listed Synonyms are bravery, courage, daring, dauntlessness, fearlessness, gallantry, greatheartedness, gutsiness, heart, heroism, intrepidity, moxie and nerve.

**Military Musings**

*Janice Walters-Taylor*



I finished last week having served, on behalf of the Blairsville American Legion Auxiliary, as hostess for a group of veterans from the VALOR project, ministering to the needs of veterans right here in our community. And honestly, there needs to a word better than VALOR for these folks. The VALOR project, headquartered in Pennsylvania, with branches through the United States, is gaining a foothold in Georgia, right here in the mountains. With visions of creating a Southeastern base of operations, the VALOR project's Mission State-

See Walters-Taylor, page 5A

### Letters to the Editor

#### Thank You, Democrats

Dear Editor,  
Thank you, Sens. Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff! Because of your votes in the Senate, the COVID Relief Act is a reality. If Georgia leaders accept the money, it will provide up to \$2 billion to expand Medicaid for about 500,000 Georgians with health care needs and support for our rural hospitals. The CRA also expands funding for small businesses and nonprofits hardest hit by the pandemic. More than \$4 billion will help Georgia schools to reopen permanently. There are now funds for those persons unable to pay rent, utilities and mortgages due to the pandemic, and money to improve vaccine availability. Unemployment benefits are extended, child tax credit is expanded, and there are \$1,400 stimulus payments to moderate and low-income Georgians and their dependents. Let's all thank our Democratic voters for making this possible in Georgia.

Frank McKinney

#### Continue to Fight

Dear Editor,  
Our Constitution was intended to be the Supreme Law of the Land. It's the rules made not for us, but for the federal government to abide by. We the people have allowed the government to bend, stretch and sometimes ignore this sacred document. This is not new; it has been happening for decades under most administrations. But the Biden administration and the Democrats seem intent on downright shredding the Constitution. An open Southern border, a "COVID Relief bill" that devotes a whopping nine cents of every dollar spent to fighting the actual disease, and an evil bill moving to the Senate that would legalize voter fraud, are all proof of their intentions. That last one is HR1, now S1, and if you don't believe me - look it up. Mandating mail-in ballots, eliminating voter ID, allowing felons to vote and same-day registration are just a few of its nasty components. The federal government must follow the law. Just because the government does it, does not automatically make it legal. I for one am outraged by these unconstitutional intrusions. I will fight peacefully with my voice, but conservative voices are being squelched by social media and the "cancel culture" crowd. I will fight peacefully with my vote, but illegal votes erase my vote many times over. Voter Fraud is Voter Suppression! I promise my fellow citizens that I will continue to fight with all tools at my disposal. What about you? How far will you let them go? Where's your line in the sand? Evil triumphs when good men do nothing.

John Judsky

### Letters to the Editor

#### Who Cares?

Dear Editor,  
I was pleased to see the recent letter appealing to the writer's politically and culturally progressive friends (of whom he counted himself).  
Mostly, I see that he was focused on civility, a term that has gone the way of the dinosaurs in present times. I am distressed that as a "cultural conservative," my views are rarely accepted by the other side and often gain a surly and angry response about my positions, even though civility and clarity is how I express myself. In our present age, many of my affiliates are now part of the "Cancel Culture," something I surely did not anticipate in the many years I have trod this earth. I have even "lost" friends and family if my views deviate from theirs. How did this change occur?

For example, I have been tolerant of the differences in political viewpoints for nearly all of my very advanced great-grandmotherly years. Now, however, the same attitude toward my views are often derogatory and not suitable for discussion or print, surely not in the mainstream media. Does Anybody CARE?

One of my pet peeves has been regarding sexual preference. At one time, NOBODY cared what transpired behind bedroom doors, nor did we want any information about that. Now, however, we are required to not only accept various behaviors, but we are told to accept all of them and even have special awe and celebrate them. Who, I just wonder, even CARES what people choose to do in the privacy of their own home?  
The same goes for sports that used to be designated in the "old-fashioned manner" of women's tennis, volleyball, track, etc. We are told now that there will be no future sports that refuse men who "identify" as women from competing in any and all "women's sports." I reckon all those girls and women who have spent years of grueling time and energy chasing incredible goals - often either to achieve a scholarship or perhaps a gold medal - well, they just have to suck it up and recognize that there are some people to be regarded with Higher Value. My, oh my - where is that Women's Lib organization NOW?

Anybody CARE?  
Respectfully submitted,  
**Arlene Gray**

#### Kudos!

Dear Editor,  
Kudos to the Wendy's workers in Blairsville. They did a great thing finding my phone and would not accept a reward. I just wanted to say thank you to those amazing employees.

Carol Freitag

### Historic Finds

The history around the North Georgia border is very interesting. In 1796, the U.S. Congress decided that the state line between Georgia and North Carolina-Tennessee would be the 35th parallel. So, a couple of surveys were commissioned to place the state line between these states. The first survey was accomplished in 1818 and was begun on the west side of the state at the corner between Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama on what is now Sand Mountain. This corner was wrong from the start, being a mile south of where it was supposed to begin on the 35th parallel.

We all need to remember that the survey crews were using equipment that would be considered out of date and sub-standard in 2021. Their 19th century technology had no electricity. So, the uses of a GPS and of motorized vehicles was just a dream. So, these men used outdated maps, sextants and compasses. Another factor could have also played a role in these mistakes. Much of this land was not a part of the United States at that time. Most of this area was considered part of the Cherokee Nation. Therefore, the men conducting the survey were on foreign ground and probably kept a vigilant watch because they were nervous about being here in these mountains. They walked or carried most of their equipment. So, basically, it was them against nature in a hostile area.

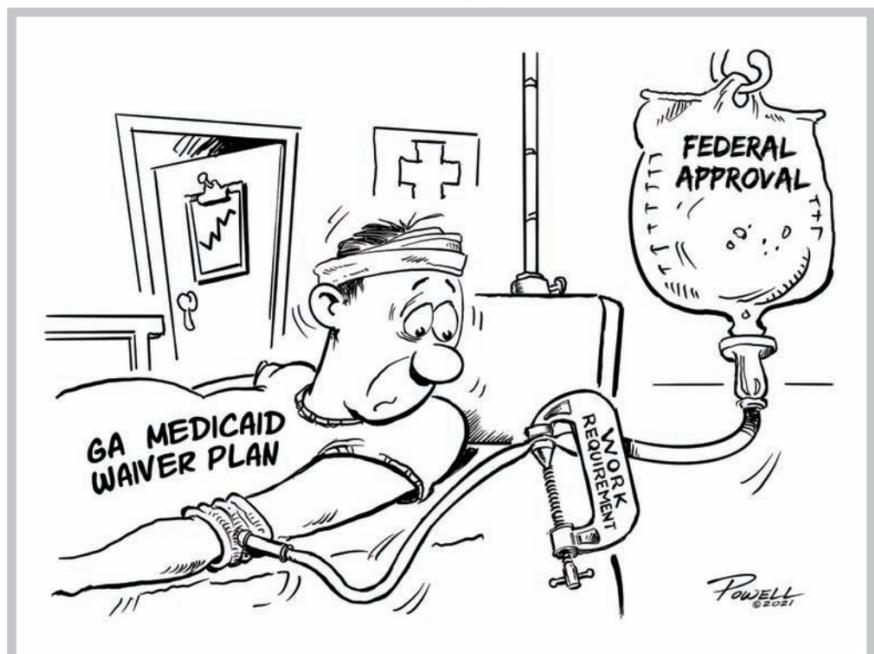
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A few weeks ago, Milton Bradley, Jennings Ivester, Cody Allen, Tom Starrett and I set out to find the 30-mile post and Montgomery's Corner. The quickest way for us involved driving

See Cummings, page 5A

**Around The Farm**

*Mickey Cummings*



### Chamber of Commerce

Spring is here, and things are heating up in Blairsville and Union County. The Commissioner has worked tirelessly to get the vaccine to Union County residents and now those 55 and older or with underlying health conditions can get their shot. Go to [www.phdistrict2.org](http://www.phdistrict2.org) to sign up for a vaccine or call 888-426-5073.

If you attended the North Georgia Wedding Expo, then you know what an incredible event this turned out to be. Not only was this a success for our vendors, but it proved to be a huge benefit for our brides and the many prize winners. We are making plans for next year's Expo already.

An Evening with the Stars, a dinner event honoring our high achieving students, is just around the corner, so contact the Chamber now to reserve your seat. This year's banquet will be at HOP to accommodate distancing and looks to be an exciting event. The Star Student and Teacher will be announced soon, but you must be present to see the other amazing award winners. We will

See Chamber, page 5A

**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**

*Steve Rowe*



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See Cummings, page 5A

### Georgia Ag Week

This week is Georgia Ag Week. In the spirit of Georgia Ag Week, I wanted to write about the importance of agriculture in Towns and Union Counties. Agriculture is the number one industry in Georgia, and has importance in many different aspects of our lives. So let's take a little time to talk about the impact and importance of agriculture where we live.

Over the years, Americans have become more and more distanced from the farmers that feed them. Today the average American farmer feeds 166 people. As the world population continues to increase, that number will only go up. 86% of the Ag products sold in the US are produced on family farms or ranches. One number that is alarming to many people is the average age of the American farmer. This number continues to increase and today is at almost 60 years old.

These days there is a movement to buy your food from a local farmer. This movement is great at putting money back into the pockets of farmers. On average farmers only get \$0.08 on the dollar of the money that consumers spend on food. The rest of the costs are taken up by transportation, wages, processing, marketing, and distribution. Many of those costs are necessary, but the farther we get away from where our food is produced the less money is going back into farmers' pockets. That means buying food directly from farmers either at a farmers market, farm store, or through a CSA will put more money back into the farmers' pocket.

In the mountains, we have a strong and unique heritage of agriculture that has changed over the years. Lately, we have seen a growth of agritourism. The growing wine industry in North Georgia is evidence of that. We also have a number of farms that take visitors, so that you can go on a tour. These too are agritourism. We continue to have many cattle as well. Cattle farms can be a benefit to the economy because they take land that would otherwise not be productive and make it productive. Cattle farms that incorporate conservation practices are great for the environment. Sweet sorghum for syrup is a crop that is unique to the mountains. It can be used for biscuits, pancakes or any number of things. Sourwood honey is another product that is unique to our area. Sourwood trees grow in a large portion of Eastern US, but in most places don't produce the nectar flow for bees to make sourwood honey. The shorter growing season that we have means that we get a higher number of chill hours, as is required by apple trees. The diversity of southern apple varieties is due in large part to the Chero-

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**Watching and Working**

*Jacob Williams*



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