

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Public Safety Telecommunicators

National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week: An emergency is defined as a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action. It is not something that we deal with on a daily basis. However, when an emergency strikes, we want to know that we can call for help. We want to know that when we call 911 there will be a person to answer. We want that person to help us. We want that person to be calm, professional, confident, and efficient. We want that person to reassure us that help is on the way. That person is a Public Safety Telecommunicator more commonly known as an E911 dispatcher.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



The Union County 911 Center is recognizing its valuable E911 dispatchers during National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, which is the second full week of April (9-15). This week honors the thousands of men and women who dispatch and coordinate emergency professionals and equipment who render life-saving assistance to citizens.

The E911 dispatcher is a critical part of public safety. They are the calm voices on the phone when someone calls 911 on what could possibly be the worst day of a caller's life. They are not as visible as other public safety organizations but you can rest assured that they will always be there.

Being an E911 dispatcher is one of the most unique jobs in public safety. They answer the emergency call, determine the nature of the emergency, determine who or what should be sent to the emergency, dispatch units to the scene, and record everything in the computer-aided dispatch system.

E911 dispatchers are experts at staying calm and keeping callers calm. They also are skilled in gaining information from excited or even frantic callers who, at times, provide limited information. The most amazing and unique skill that dispatchers have is the ability to multi-task. At times, that may be talking on the radio, listening to a caller, typing, looking at the computer mapping system and sharing information with other dispatchers, all at the same time. It truly takes a special person to be an E911 dispatcher.

The E911 dispatcher is one of the most unsung heroes of public safety. They are the initial point where the emergency is received and communicated. They are the calm voices on the phone that will

See Dyer, page 5A

Trump Indictment

Trump Indictment: Irreparable Injustice

On March 30, our nation was abruptly submerged into uncharted waters as Donald Trump became the first former President in U.S. history to be indicted. This marks a very dark moment — legally, politically, and historically — for our nation.

The indictment of President Trump by Alvin Bragg, the George Soros-backed Manhattan District Attorney, is purely political persecution — serving as living proof of our corrupt two-tiered system of justice. Trump is facing more than 30 counts related to business fraud, which are presumably connected to an alleged \$130,000 payment by former Trump lawyer, the now-disgraced Michael Cohen, to an adult actress back in 2016. Federal prosecutors and the Federal Election Commission dropped inquiries into this bogus case, yet Bragg is determined to escalate the witch hunt while simultaneously failing to prosecute violent criminals

See Clyde, page 5A

United States Congressman
Representative
Andrew Clyde



Letters to the Editor

Re: "Misnamed"

Dear Editor,

I hardly know where to begin in my response to the March 29 letter to the editor titled "Misnamed." First, the name of the group being referred to is Concerned Citizens of Union County, not "Conservative Citizens...whatever..." Please properly identify who you are complaining about.

Second, your implication is that the sole purpose of this group is to push the five-commissioner petition. While this is an important action of the group, it is far from the only action. The group's webpage (CCofUC.org) shows that concern for the education of the children of Union County, concern for the actual governance of Union County (not the structure but the action), concern for election integrity and other concerns. Concerned Citizens is not party affiliated, welcoming republicans, democrats, independents, conservatives, and progressives, as long as they are interested in the well-being of Union County and its schools. Members do not have to agree with everything that the group does but simply join in those areas that are of concern to them.

Now, to the arguments put forth in the let-

See Peterson, page 5A

Trust, But Verify

Dear Editor,

A word to the wise about hiring contractors to do work on and around your home: Verify before hiring!

On referral from a gardener we'd hired, we hired a local handyman to install driveway lights.

The handyman did a good job on the lights, and over many chats, we discussed plans to add a very large deck on the back of our house. He jumped at the chance and, citing his "decades of building decks," offered to do the entire job, taking two weeks, for a flat rate, and the weather would not be an issue. It was our first time hiring someone for something so large, and we were pleased with his work on the lighting. So, we hired him.

Long story short; he couldn't build a proper deck if his life depended on it. Ridiculous shortcuts, sloppy "craftsmanship," chronic absences or lateness, and a remarkable ability to never make the same wood cut twice. After seven weeks, three of which were fixing major structural and safety problems we identified, and MANY discussions about the quality of his work, the deck still wasn't even half-framed. The man put a 65' x 10' deck that's 12 feet off the ground together with literally NOTHING but 4" general purpose screws. He was fired, of course,

See St. Lawrence, page 5A

Endurance

I see the headlines and I wonder how the survivors will cope. Families lost more than 20 loved ones in the Mississippi tornado. More lost their homes. Some lost their whole town. The Nashville school shooting raises more intense questions. Do you wonder if you would find the strength to go on if your child was a victim of such evil?

That question is larger than this short essay. But I'll say this. The Christian faith offers hope in the face of adversity. The worldview of naturalism offers no hope if, as Richard Dawkins said, the universe has "no evil, no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference." Whatever happens is just random, hopeless chaos.

You build a foundation for endurance when you accept that this is a fallen world, infected by evil. "When you encounter various trials..." the Bible says, not "if." Trials in life are inevitable. But neither the trials nor evil have the final say.

People who endure know their identity and values, which adversity cannot touch. As a believer, your identity and values are in Christ Jesus. Nothing can separate you from His love (Rom. 8:39).

You prepare for adversity by adopting a growth mindset. When you face adversity, expect that you will grow in wisdom and faith because of it. The testing of airplanes and pilots increases your trust in them. When you are tested beyond your strength, you learn even more to trust "in God who raises the dead" (2 Cor. 1:8-9).

Adversity in the believer's life brings about a certain reminder. Pain and grief exist in this life, but you are made for another world, one where Jesus has the final say. You can endure the pain better when you know it is short-lived.

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (Jas. 1:2-4). I pray for those hurting families in Mississippi and Nashville, that God give them endurance and a more perfect result.

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Springtime brings families and events to Meeks Park — especially for outdoor activities such as Rec sports, walking and hiking. This week's questions will address some of the inquiries my office has received about the Union County Recreation Department and the folks who keep our beautiful parks in top shape.

Q. What general activities does the Union County Recreation Department manage?

A. The Union County Recreation Department operates all athletic activities for youth, aerobic exercise for adults, pickleball, golfing, fishing, tennis, swimming and swimming lessons for youth, miles of trails for walking and festivals. These activities take place at various Union County properties and facilities.

Q. How many children and adults participate in Rec Department programs?

A. Spring Sport Youth including baseball, softball, soccer, and volleyball number over 650 kids. Spring activities for adults including aerobics exercise, swimming aerobics, and pickleball number over 600 adults. In the summertime, over 350 kids participate in youth Summer camps, swimming lessons, golf camps, volleyball camps and fishing days. Over 725 youth participate in Fall activities such as football, soccer, basketball, and cheerleading, and over 400 adults participate in Fall aerobic exercises, pickleball, and dancing. The Union County Rec Department is always entertaining and working with Union County residents of all ages. Unique activities are also held such as the Daddy/Daughter Dance and the annual Easter Egg Hunt.

Q. I see Union County Rec Department personnel all over the county taking care of properties. Where are the Union County Rec Department offices officially located?

A. The public will find the Rec Department offices at the Sports Center located at 519 Industrial Blvd/Gooch Bypass, Blairsville, GA 30512. It is located adjacent to the Union County Health Department and across the street from Union County High School. The Sports Center is a double basketball gym with meeting rooms downstairs and departmental offices on the second floor.

Q. What physical locations does the Union County Rec Department have?

See Paris, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Chamber of Commerce

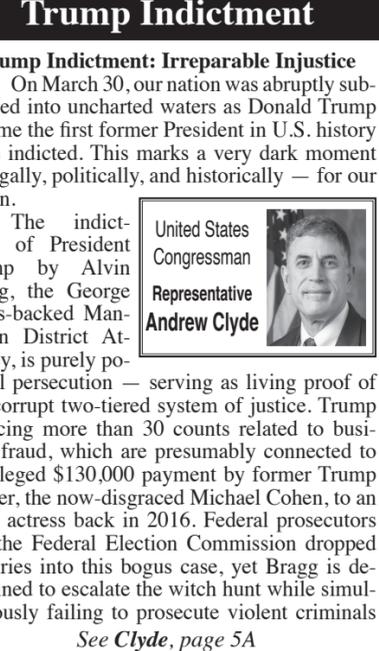
If you're from the Southeast, you're probably familiar with the yearly tradition known as the Georgia Florida switch. Every year, like clockwork, Georgia residents flock south for some fun in the sun during their beloved Spring Break. Meanwhile, Florida residents make their way up north to experience all that the Peach State has to offer. It's a time of year when we get to welcome new friends from across the border and rekindle old friendships from past Spring Breaks. And now that they've returned to their palm trees, we can only hope they had as much fun as we did hosting them. But let's be real, we know they'll be back for more of that southern hospitality soon enough. All jokes aside, we always love having visitors from our neighboring state and look forward to the next switch.

Spring Break is also the start of the season where you've got a crazy amount of events and holidays to look forward to. I'm talking

See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Georgia Agriculture Facts

Georgia Is one of the leading states for agriculture and when we are enjoying a delicious meal, we can thank a farmer and many times it will be a Georgia Farmer that produced the food we eat.

We need to buy Georgia Grown food to support the local farmers and the supporting industry around the state. By buying Georgia Grown products, we are pretty sure it will be produced safely and will be fresher than food imported from South America, Mexico, or other country around the world. Think about how long it takes for food to get to your table when it starts outside the United States, with the processing, storage, shipping, storage again when it reaches the US, transport to warehouses, to stores near you, and then finally to your refrigerator.

Georgia Grown food will be much fresher, more nutritious, and usually more tasty than that grown where the standards are not as strict as here in Georgia. The Georgia Department of Agriculture has a very good food inspection program that helps ensure that we get the best and safest food in the world Here are some interesting facts about Georgia and Georgia Agriculture. Georgia's humid subtropical climate with mild winters and hot moist summers is characteristic of most of Georgia. This, combined with a variety of soil types from the coast to the mountains, makes it an ideal place to produce a diverse variety of crops and livestock.

* Monthly average temperatures range from a high of 92.2°F to a low of 32.6°F. The average annual rainfall varies from 40" in central Georgia to more than 75" in northeast Georgia. Geographically, Georgia can be divided into eight soil provinces or major land resource areas. They are Southern Appalachian, Sand Mountain, Blue Ridge, Southern Coastal Plain, Black Lands, Southern Piedmont, Sand Hill, and Atlantic Coast Flatwoods. Georgia is the leading kaolin clay-producing state in the U.S. Georgia is also a leader in the production of marble, barite, and bauxite. Georgia produces almost half of the peanuts produced in the U.S. each year. Their value was more than \$721 million in 2021, number 1 in the US. Georgia was the first colony to produce cotton commercially, first planting it near Savannah in 1734. Georgia ranks second nationally in cotton production. Its value was more than \$944 million in 2021. Although Georgia is called the Peach State, it actually ranks third in United States peach production behind California and South

See Riley, page 5A

RC&D Executive Director

Frank Riley



Lou and Sam

Sometime in the 1920s, the community of Trapptown was to have a brush arbor singing. There was no church building at this time. Three neighbors were wondering what would happen to their singing if it stormed or turned cold. Matthew Thomas looked at his friends and said, "Boys, I'll donate the property if someone wishes to put up a church house." They all agreed that would be a good thing, and Doc Mays said, "Reckon I can log some timber to be sawed into lumber." Lon Cummings looked at his two friends with a grin and told them he'd be glad to saw the trees into boards to be used for the lumber of the new Church House. That is how Union Hill Congregational Church in Trapptown, Alabama, was built. Not only were these men involved in building this church, they were a part of the church activities. They served as deacons, and Lon even played an old pump organ each and every Sunday at the worship services as well as Church Singings and Singing Schools.

He treated others as he wished to be treated. As an example, back in the days before funeral homes, he was known far and wide as the man who built coffins for folks in the community which passed away. Dad says that his grandfather built somewhere around 300-500 coffins in his lifetime and never took a dime for his service. He always said that making one of the coffins was the least he could do to help out a neighbor. The old man preferred the wood of an American Chestnut tree from which to make the coffins because the wood was of such a beautiful color and it was resistant to rot.

Columbus, my grandfather, was just a young lad when he first became acquainted with a funeral and the grief with which it was associated. Imogene Stein, a girl a little older than him, had passed away with the Scarlet Fever. Lon built a little coffin for the girl. Columbus and his Papa drove a wagon carrying the coffin to the Stein home. It was a windy and blustery day as the young boy stood outside and watched as the girl was placed into the coffin. The boy had a difficult time understanding the reason for the girl being placed inside the coffin. He'd never been exposed to death, so he was at a loss for understanding why this was happening. He asked his Papa, "Why is Imogene a laying in that box?" He was encouraged by his father to keep quiet.

Next, the men picked up the lid and placed it on the coffin. To the young boy's horror they began nailing the lid shut. Again he asked his father what was happening to the girl. Patient-

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Freeze Damage

A couple of months ago I wrote an article on the possibility of damage due to the very cold temperatures that we experienced over Christmas. I would like to revisit this topic, because now we are seeing more and more plants starting to try and grow that have freeze damage. Let's talk about what to look for and how to treat plants that have freeze damage.

All plants have some level of cold tolerance. Some plants have more than others. In perennial plants the amount of cold tolerance that plant has depends on its level of dormancy. Plants that are 100% dormant can experience some very cold temperatures and not sustain any damage when they start to regrow. There are some things that can affect the level of dormancy that a plant has. Fluctuations in temperature affect dormancy. Plants do better in winter if it gets cold and stays cold. When the temperature goes up and down plants can get confused and think that spring is on its way. This is a common issue that we have compared to places further north. Plants that are stressed don't go into dormancy as easily either. Not enough water, disease, insect pests, not enough sunlight, and age are some of the things that can cause stress on plants. If you have plants that are experiencing stress their dormancy won't be as deep, leaving them more susceptible to freeze damage. Plants that are not in their correct USDA zone will not handle the cold as well.

Freeze damage occurs when the temperature inside of plants is cold enough for ice crystals to form. This will break plant membranes causing that portion of the plant to dehydrate and die. Because the damage occurs inside the plant it can be difficult to know if your plants have freeze damage, until they start to grow. In perennial plants with large trunk and branches you can start to look for splits in the coming weeks, as evidence of freeze damage. Some plants may look fine, but then as we get into summer have large brown patches in them. These are plants that had some damage to their xylem, and were able to grow until summer when their xylem had to move more water because the plant was transpiring more.

You will need to go through and examine your plants on a case by case basis. Some will have damage and some won't, it depends on how well they were able to handle the cold. Look for dead tissue. If plants were frozen they will have dead leaf buds that just crumble in your fingers. If you find dead tissue the best thing to do is to prune it out. On some plants this might result in you cutting them back pretty far. The dead tissue

See Williams, page 5A

UGA extension

Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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Publication No: 001505

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Paris... continued from Page 4A

Department manage?

A. The list is long and impressive! The Rec Department maintains the Sports Center (including pickleball courts), Meeks Park I & Meeks Park II, the disc golf and dog park at Meeks, the farmers market & cannery, and the Dogbarket (dog park) on the farmers market property. The Rec Department also oversees Poteete Campground (with swimming beach & pavilion rentals), and 5 boat ramps (Canal Lake, Poteete Creek, Deavers, Hannah's and Arrowood Place.) Elan Soccer Fields & Complex, Byron Herbert Reece Heritage Center, Farm, and Village (rental properties & pavilion rental), Union County Saddle Club, Butternut Creek Golf Course, The View Grill, Community Center, Choestoe Schoolhouse (and rentals), the Suches Community Center, and the new shooting range. The Union County Rec Department provides many many locations and activities for residents and visitors in Union County.

Q. When it comes to maintaining the parks, what types of upkeep is required?

A. To really keep Union County's parks looking good, there is quite a bit of maintenance including mowing and weed eating. The trees must

be pruned, and the leaves must be blown on the paved sections. The ball fields must be planted and over-seeded with rye grass as well as sprayed with special types of fungicides and fertilizers. Ball fields also require special dirt/sand mixtures. There is metal and wood fencing work, painting in the restrooms and other buildings and safety fixtures have to be replaced from time to time. The pool and splashpad require special chemicals and water treatment throughout the pool season. Playgrounds need constant safety inspections. Tennis courts and outside basketball courts also need to be resurfaced periodically. Additionally, all county pavilions require constant maintenance. These are just a few of the maintenance tasks that have to be done on our properties.

Q. Is there a Rec Dept manager or director?

A. Yes, the Union County Recreation Department is managed by the Director of Parks and Recreation, Scott Thompson. His office is located at the Sports Center located at 519 Industrial Blvd/Gooch Bypass, Blairsville, GA 30512.

The Rec Department staff in Union County are incredible in dealing with the facilities and also with the public. We are so proud of them.

Peterson... continued from Page 4A

ter, I would ask the writer to not take their actions from the playbook of the far-left progressives and label those who think differently as newcomers who want to change everything and as people unable to see the truth and as creating a mess. There are people supporting the petition who have lived in Union County for over 50 years while others are newcomers who have lived here for a few years. Most believe that having a five-member board will aid in making county government more open and transparent to the citizens. Letting the citizens vote and decide for themselves on the structure of the government is the democratic way.

As regards seeing the truth, is a single commissioner county government the truth? Too many people see what they believe as being universal truth. Personally, while I believe in some universal truths, the single commissioner form of government is not one of them. But I am not so sure

of myself as to assert that the five-commissioner form is the "truth." The two sides are differing opinions, not a question of true or false.

It is long past the time that rational dialog and debate should be brought back into our politics. Putting a referendum on the ballot to change to a five-commissioner board would allow the electorate of Union County to make a democratic decision regarding the structure of the governance of Union County. The attempt to shout down the opponent is not the way of the America I grew up and wish for my family to live in.

If the petition is successful, I would hope the sides would engage in reasonable debate over the issue, both sides putting forward their arguments and refraining from name-calling; from claiming truth is on their side; or using ad hominem attacks. Then abide by the will of the people in a fair and free election.

Vince Peterson

Riley ... continued from Page 4A

Carolina. In 2021, the Georgia peach crop sales totaled \$35.6 million. Vegetable production has increased significantly in Georgia. Georgia's top five vegetables are onions, watermelon, tomatoes, sweet corn, blue berries, and bell peppers. In 2021, broilers were valued at \$4.2 billion dollars no 2 nationally and eggs at more than \$635 million dollars, no 3 nationally. Beef cattle are raised in all of the counties in Georgia, 29th nationally. One of out of seven Georgians works in agriculture, forestry or a related sector. Agriculture cash receipts were \$9.45 billion in 2021, ranking 16th in the US. More than 65% of Georgia is in forestland. Forestry is a \$16.7 billion per year industry. Georgia's top ten commodities in order of their rank are broilers, cotton, eggs, timber, peanuts, horses, beef, greenhouse products for ornamental horticulture, dairy, and container plants from nurseries. Georgia ranks first in the U.S. in the production of peanuts, pecans, and broilers. Georgia was the first state to charter a state university, The University of Georgia, was founded in 1785. In 1986, Georgia passed legislation giving Vidalia onions, known by many as the sweetest onion in the world, legal status and defining the 20-county production area. The Vidalia onion was named Georgia's official state vegetable in 1990.

Other crops produced in Georgia include apples, berries, cabbage, corn, cottonseed, cucumbers, grapes, hay, oats, onions, peaches, rye, sorghum grain, soybeans, tobacco, tomatoes, vegetables, and wheat, as well as ornamentals, turf grass, and other nursery and greenhouse commodities. Miscellaneous livestock such as meat goats and sheep, catfish, trout (aquaculture), and honeybees are also produced. Georgia is host to over 42,000 farms encompassing more than 9 million acres spread throughout the state. Though sometimes overlooked as part of Georgia's thriving small business community, 88 percent of these farms are considered to be small businesses in terms of annual sales (2021 Agricultural Census, USDA). The Bureau of Economic

Analysis reports nearly 35,000 farm proprietors, consisting of both sole proprietors and non-corporate partners as owners. These facts demonstrate that the robust Agriculture and related sectors not only contribute to our state and national and worldwide prominence but comprise a critical part of the small business sector as well. On a local level, the economic contribution of these food and fiber industries – including landscape services – ranges from a few million to a few billion dollars of county output and often boasts thousands of jobs for the local agriculture and related sectors.

Georgia has it all when it comes to agriculture so remember when you are shopping for food, buy Georgia Grown to support the Georgia farmers and the many businesses that support our Agriculture industry which is the driving force behind Georgia's robust economy.

For more information go to www.agr.georgia.gov.

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

do everything in their power to help you. Take the time to thank an E911 dispatcher.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

St. Lawrence...

continued from Page 4A

and a new, licensed and insured crew tore his mess down entirely and started over.

We're attempting to collect a refund of the money we paid up front (half, and then half upon completion). But, as you can guess, he has ghosted us. We have more documentation, receipts, and photos than we need, as well as videos verifying the whole fiasco. So this story isn't over, not by a long shot.

But the message is clear: Don't hire based on promises. Check their work history. Get references, and photos, and all their contact information. Don't learn the hard way, like we did. Cover your you-know-what. After all, a bucket of promises is just a bucket.

Gary St. Lawrence

Cummings...continued from Page 4A

ly, he was again encouraged to keep quiet. The coffin was loaded into the wagon and the mules quietly hauled them and the body to the cemetery. Little Imogene Stein was one of the first ever interred into the Cemetery at Union Hill Church. The boy watched and could not fathom the reason for lowering the coffin with the girl's body into the ground. He had many questions. First, he wanted to know the meaning of death. Second, he wanted to know why his Papa, whom he thought was a good man, was allowing this little girl to be placed into a hole in the ground and why were the other men throwing dirt on top of her. He also wanted to know why his

Papa, another good man, nailed a lid over her while she laid in that box. Each and every time he asked a question his Papa told him to keep quiet.

Finally, on the way home he mustered his courage and asked another time, "Papa, what is death and where is Imogene now?" He noticed a tear falling down the face of his father. Papa just told him to ask his mother when they got home. All his mother would tell him was that death is something which happens to everyone. This answer only stimulated more questions, and the boy was unable to sleep well for many days after the death and burial of Imogene.

His Papa, Lon, was a man which knew much about death but didn't like talking about it, especially to his son. He rarely showed any emotion about people being buried. But, the death of Imogene had a profound impact upon him and my own grandfather. And really she had an impact upon the generations after her, for we are still talking about her death nearly 100 years later.

Clyde...

continued from Page 4A

in Manhattan — exemplifying a stunning abuse of prosecutorial authority.

Make no mistake — this is all about 2024. The establishment is terrified that they can't legally defeat Trump in the upcoming election, so they're yet again abusing and misapplying the law in a dangerous and desperate attempt to take him down. This brazen political persecution should righteously anger every American, regardless of their political stripes. Our Founders wisely established a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Yet this government is withering away before our very eyes as the political ruling class flagrantly pursues sham charges against their political enemy and opponent.

Let me be clear: I stand with President Donald J. Trump, and I will do everything in my ability to prevent these corrupt political crooks from getting away with this abuse of power and irreparable injustice.

As we await additional information, please know that House Committees of jurisdiction are already seeking answers on behalf of the American people. I remain committed to working with my colleagues to hold Alvin Bragg to account and fully investigate this matter — including whether federal funds are being weaponized to advance this political persecution. Rest assured, we resolutely refuse to idly stand by while individuals subvert our democracy and interfere in our elections.

It's time for answers, accountability, and transparency.

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

about Mother's Day, graduation, summer break, Memorial Day, and all the amazing festivals that come along with them! It may seem like they're still miles away, but trust me, they'll be here before you can say "fun in the sun." So, start planning your celebratory activities now, whether it's a special brunch with mom or a downtown festival with your friends. Don't let these opportunities to make unforgettable memories slip away!

And, as always, life and the memories are always better in Blairsville!

Williams...

continued from Page 4A

is an opportunity for disease to enter the plant. Some plants may have died back completely and will need to be removed. If a plant is mature and is completely dead on the top, it may be able to regrow from the roots.

If you have questions about freeze damage contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Free GED Classes

Are you ready to earn your high school equivalency diploma? North GA Technical College's Adult Education program is offering free day and evening courses. Classes are held in Blairsville at the Shirley Miller Building (behind the public library). Call 706-439-6342 to schedule your registration appointment. Our next enrollment date is April 10th & 24nd.

Library Board of Trustees Meeting

The Union County Public Library Board of Trustees will have its regularly scheduled quarterly meeting on Thursday, April 13, 2023 at 5 p.m. at Union County Public Library in Blairsville.

The Towns County Public Libraries Board of Trustees will have its regularly scheduled quarterly meeting on Tuesday, April 18, 2023 at 9:30 a.m. at Towns County Public Library in Hiawassee.