# **Opinions**

# Everybody has one...

#### Outdoor Burning for Spring

During this time of the year, property owners may be disposing of leaves and other yard debris by outdoor burning. These fires are usually small and are in a person's yard or on their private property. These fires do produce smoke and may be concerning to neighbors or persons passing by. However, most of these fires are well contained, controlled burns, and should not be a concern.

In Georgia, property owners are allowed to burn hand-piled leaves and/or yard debris without a permit as long as they follow the outdoor burning safety standards as explained by the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). It is important that everyone understands the elements and dangers



of outdoor burning as well as the outdoor burning safety standards The outdoor burning safety standards are actions and precautions that property owners must take to provide safety and to prevent out of control wildfires. A GFC awareness campaign was launched a few years ago introducing the theme "Take Five" before the burn and to remember the acronym "S-S-T-A-R" representing

The first "S" represents Space. There must be 25 feet or more between the fire and woodlands. The second "S" also represents Space stating that there must be 50 feet or more between the fire and any structures. The "T" represents Time. Burning can only be conducted from sunrise to sunset. The "A" represents Attendance. A person responsible for the fire must stay onsite with the fire until it is completely extinguished.

the five points of the outdoor burning safety standard.

The "R" represents Reasonable Precautions. The concept of reasonable precautions is to have tools and measures in place to prevent the fire from escaping. These include things such as a continuous pressurized water source on site; man-made or natural barrier to contain the fire; hand tools or fire-containing equipment on site; weather awareness such as red flag warnings, High Fire Danger designation, and other hazardous conditions such as low relative humidity, high winds, etc.

Just as a reminder, property owners are only allowed to burn certain materials. Only hand-piled leaves or naturally occurring yard debris can be burned. Household garbage or other man-made materials cannot be burned.

See Dyer, page 5A

#### Walk of a Lifetime

It was a warm summer morning adorned with birds and flowers. I strolled along the shady, level path, realizing I may never pass this way again. I was on Addison's Walk on the grounds of Magdalen College in Oxford, England, a long way

This is the path where C.S. Lewis took a significant step to-

ward faith in Christ. He and friends Dyson and Tolkien were on a midnight stroll. Lewis had been quite taken with ancient stories, including the "myth" of Jesus. But this night, as the three 30-something English professors conversed and walked in the wee hours of the morning, some-



thing changed in Lewis' erudite mind. He later explained that the story of Christ stood out "with this tremendous difference. It really happened." The truth of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus confronted Lewis. Extra-Biblical sources confirm the basic facts: Jesus of

Nazareth was a real person who lived and died by execution un-

der Roman ruler Pilate. Jesus' followers worshipped Him as God,

claiming that He was resurrected from the dead. In the face of

persecution and death, early Christianity experienced explosive growth throughout the Mediterranean region. When you add the Biblical account, you understand God's purpose in these histori-The message of the early church focused on the convincing power of Jesus' literal and physical resurrection, which was witnessed by hundreds of people including named individuals. One of the earliest Christian confessions places the focus on the resurrection: "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). The empty tomb is evidence that Jesus is

will live even if he died" (John 11:25). The resurrection of Jesus is central to the gospel. Without it, preaching and faith are pointless, and the gospel is a useless canard. Christianity does not exist without a risen Christ. If true,

who He claimed to be. His purpose was to renew and save believ-

ers from being separated from the God of love and grace. "I am

the resurrection and the life," Jesus said. "He who believes in Me

See **Fowler**, page 5A

JELLY BEANS

AND TO PEEPS... I'LL JUST SAY,

#### From Your Commissioner

During my campaign, I spoke about impact fees. We have begun doing the research needed to consider if impact fees would be beneficial to Union County. The Georgia Development Impact Fee Act (DIFA) was enacted into law in 1990. It sets rules for local governments that wish to charge new development for a portion of the additional capital facilities needed to serve it. Under DIFA Union County may impose conditions on developers to help finance

Union the expansion of their infrastructure County systems only through an impact fee Commissione system and only for the specific types Harold Collins

of facilities and infrastructures listed in the law. When a county plans for impact fees, the process is directly tied to the comprehensive plan (5-year plan), and the process is monitored by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). It can take upwards of 24 months to finalize an impact

Primary goals of impact fees would be to help offset what residents now pay in property taxes towards infrastructure maintenance. That's the idea behind it. Taking into consideration time, effort, and money required to lay the groundwork for impact fees. the following questions are examples of those being considered:

fee system. The Commissioner's Office is discussing feasibility

1) Do the costs and labor for following through with the impact fee process make it worthwhile in the long run? (Do we anticipate an amount of growth to make it worth the administrative effort?) Because we know that new development puts stress on

existing infrastructure, do we want new development to bear their

fair share of increased demand on public services and infrastructure? While impact fees would not necessarily positively assist with affordable housing, an ordinance can be written to include a process for variances whereby workforce housing meeting specific criteria could receive impact fee credits to offset the addi-There are many ways to exempt development from im-

pact fees - if a project meets community priority criteria such as workforce housing. Just as with the collecting of impact fees. the spending of resulting revenue does have strict State require-

See Collins, page 5A

BUT, SOME

CHOCOLATE

Minnie, Petunia and Bessie

the year that phone lines came to the Trapptown

Community. I was much too young to remember

the phone lines coming to our community, but,

these lines changed life forever.

touch with each oth-

er. Minnie, Petunia

and Bessie were a

mother and two sis-

ters that lived with

each other. Minnie

was a widow while

Petunia nor Bessie

1951 was an important year because it was

Phones allowed people to stay in better

Around

The Farm

Mickey

Cummings

had ever married. The ladies were my Papa's

aunt and cousins. They lived an isolated life out

toward the Bee Bluff above Turkey Creek. Life

became particularly hard for the women after the

death of Minnie's husband. John owned a nice

little farm that was really too much for the ladies

to work. Also, Minnie, Petunia and Bessie had a

hard time keeping up with the latest community

gossip until the phone lines were installed. So,

my grandfather's brother, Pickens, would go to

see the ladies to visit with them, give them the

been very difficult for the women. All they

had eaten was cornbread for the whole month

of March. As usual Pickens showed up at their

front door with fresh baked cathead biscuits,

sorghum syrup, sweet potatoes, canned beets,

leather breeches and a country cured ham. Petu-

nia told Pickens he had saved their lives with all

this food. Pickens left their house feeling pretty

had in a month and began to eat. In fact, they ate

everything Pickens had brought them. They ate

so much they got sick and thought Pickens had

poisoned the food. Afterward, Petunia and Bes-

sie got on the phone lines and told anyone who'd

listen that Pickens had tried to poison them. By

the next day Pickens' good deed had turned him

into a monster about which the whole commu-

nity was talking. For years afterward the sisters

would fetch a gun if they saw Pickens approach-

came engaged and was soon to marry. He went

for a visit to the three ladies. Petunia met him

at the door and said, "Heered tell that you were

to marry." Uncle Bud told her yes and told her

who he was marrying. Petunia said, "You fol-

low me." Even though she'd never been married,

Petunia took him to the back of the house and

proceeded to tell Uncle Bud about the birds and

the bees. Thanks to those new phone lines, by the

next day, the whole community had found out

that Uncle Bud now knew about the birds and the

See Cummings, page 5A

A couple of years later Uncle Bud be-

The ladies sat down to the best meal they'd

good about what he'd done.

One particular month in early spring had

latest news and take them some food to eat.

HELPS MECOPE,

#### A Guide to Life's Battles

There's profound wisdom in knowing not just how to act, but when to choose one response over another. An ancient narrative offers us a fascinating study in strategic decision-making that remains remarkably relevant today.

Most people know the story of the Israelites at the Reed

Sea - trapped between the advancing Egyptian army and the impassable waters. In that moment of crisis, God's instruction



was clear and perhaps surprising: move forward. The sea split, the people crossed safely, and their former oppressors were defeated without the Israelites lifting a finger in battle.

But what's less commonly discussed is what happened next. After this miraculous deliverance, as the Israelites journeyed toward Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, they faced another formidable enemy: the kingdom of Amalek. This time, the divine instruction was markedly different. Instead of simply moving

See Hambourger, page 5A Letters to the Editor

When Democracies Drift

matic moment. It unravels slowly – through the

erosion of norms, the abandonment of shared

truth and the steady normalization of power

without accountability. What may start as politi-

cal theater can turn dangerous when the systems

designed to constrain power are weakened or

only on its laws and institutions, but on the col-

lective will of our people to defend them. When

legal decisions are dismissed as partisan attacks,

when public servants are demonized, and when

facts are overtaken by slogans, the system be-

gins to falter – not from a single blow, but from

prosecutors face threats for doing their jobs. Po-

litical violence no longer feels unthinkable. Trust

in institutions is giving way to loyalty toward

individuals. And in too many corners of soci-

See **Berkman** page 5A

details of Sheriff, Police and Fire Department

activity contained a listing that is important to

for aggravated assault, cruelty to animals. This

is important because, unfortunately, people who

will harm innocent animals often go on to (if

not having happened already) harm children and

torney offices for recognizing the seriousness

of these types of harmful actions. Intentionally

hurting an animal as a way to further traumatize

assault victims is particularly dark and should

never be ignored "just" because it is an animal,

because situations can continue to get worse,

**Too Late?** 

beyond anyone's wildest imagination, not only

those workers in DC but across this nation.

"Good!" so many folks are saying. Those work-

ers don't deserve the pay they get or provide

any useful services to the rest of us. Now we see

what that demolition looks like. Here's a sam-

See Maloney, page 5A

The Federal Workforce is being slashed

**Cruelty to Animals** 

Last week's North Georgia News weekly

A certain Blairsville resident was arrested

I commend the Sheriff and District At-

The warning signs are clear. Judges and

a thousand quiet compromises.

Dear Editor,

much worse.

Vicki Smith

Dear Editor,

pling of what's happening.

bring extra attention to.

The health of our democracy relies not

Democracy doesn't end in a single, dra-

## Letters to the Editor

### Re: Gunter Lied to Me

I WONT GET EGGS,

A BASKET FULL

THEY COST TOO MUCH.

It is doubtful Representative Gunter lied when he indicated that he would be happy to help as a recent letter indicated. That type of accusation is uncalled for and counterproductive. Not many decent, intelligent people will offer for public office because of this type of hateful politics. Most of us know Stan Gunter to be a person of integrity

The newspaper says he wishes to have town

Readers of this paper know of the recent challenges the Union County Senior Center and many of the senior citizens are now facing. I am asking you to consider helping them alleviate some of the pressure by volunteering two to three hours on one day per week as a volunteer driver delivering hot meals to senior citizens, many of whom are homebound and alone. You will use your own vehicle and gasoline. By delivering meals you prompt the Lord's response to your question, "When did we see you hungry and feed you?" And the King will say, "I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!" (Matthew 25:37-40) The Senior Center's phone number is 706-439-6105.

#### Richard Levine

In response to the letter "Closer Together Again" from April 2, 2025:

beling and using buzzwords. The Left uses buzzwords like "Racist" and "Nazi" and "Hitler" in-

calling" at the drop of a hat?

chronization of accusations across the leftist landscape, like "unelected billionaire" in advi-

In Social Studies, back when it was a classroom subject, we learned that the Executive Branch of government had ONLY ONE ELECT-ED OFFICER, the President. Anyone else in that executive one-third of our Constitutional Republic is appointed or hired but not elected.

# Chamber 2025

Now that the weather has turned warm, people are wondering what is going on in Blairsville. As you may know, the Scottish Festival was moved, but we were able to get a fantastic car show to fill its spot. Come out to Meeks Park on May 2 & 3 and check out all the great cars Whether you need

that special part or accessory to complete your ride or just want to relive those great cars you loved, this is one event you won't

Blairsville County Chambei



The planning for the Sorghum in the Mountains Festival is well underway. If you are a vendor or know one, be sure to visit the Chamber's Facebook page to reserve a spot. We will have traditional music and games, along with a few new attractions. Come be part of starting a new tradition while helping preserve the festival's heritage.

There is a lot going on at the Chamber, so do not forget to check out our calendar for up-

See Chamber, page 5A

#### **BearWise**

Black bears are active again. While people enjoy having them around, it's important to remember that these animals are wild. Sometimes, when you see the bear time and again you may feel a personal connection to that bear. That feeling is probably not reciprocated. Interactions

with bears are inevitable to a certain level, so let's talk about what to do if you see a bear and the steps that you can take to make



sure that your home doesn't become a playground for bears and that we allow these creatures to remain wild.

Firstly, it's important to remember that we live in an area with copious amounts of national forest. That means black bears are out there. Hopefully, though if you encounter one you'll know what to do or how to make your space less attractive to them. Bears will typically live 8 to 15 years. The females can weigh up to 300 pounds and the males over 500 pounds. The females will give birth in their den in late January. Those cubs will stay with the mother until the

following spring when she kicks them out. Bears are omnivores meaning that they eat whatever is easily available depending on the time of year. Their natural diet is berries, fruits, acorns, grasses, insects, and even mammals. Bears can be attracted by the smell of human food if there is not much natural food available for them. Bears are naturally afraid of humans. However, bears that have been feeding on human food lose their natural fear of people, and become a danger. Bears will usually remain in an area where food is readily available, so the best way to make sure that bears don't move into your backyard is to remove the sources of food.

Never feed bears either intentionally or unintentionally. They will learn where food is available and become a nuisance for you and your neighbors. Make sure that your garbage is in a place that they can't reach. That means leaving it inside the garage or if you're out camping hoisting your trash in the air or putting it in a bear proof trashcan. Bird feeders can attract bears because of the high calorie content in bird feed. Bring your bird feeders in when bears are active. Usually, by the time bears are active there is plenty of natural food available for birds. Don't leave pet food out. Just give your outdoor pets enough food for one feeding. If you have a grill, clean and store it after use. Bears will be attracted by the smell of your grill so keep it out of reach for them. And finally, let your neighbors know if you see a bear so that they can take pre-

Most bears are not aggressive, unless they

See Williams, page 5A

OF TROUBLES

who has served faithfully.

See **Hyer** page 5A

# When Did We See You Hungry

#### **Trump's Methods**

#### Dear Editor,

Conservatives are always accused of ladiscriminately and interchangeably.

Psychiatrists call this tendency "Projection," the projection of one's own faults on an-

Which words are conservatives "name

Another weird trait is the apparent synsory roles in government.

See Tarter, page 5A

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Derek Richards Todd Forrest Lowell Nicholson **Shawn Jarrard Kenneth West** Publisher/Owner General Manager/Editor Advertising Director Sports Editor Website: www.nganews.com • Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com • Mail: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

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Uncle Bud and Daddy decided to have some fun. They knew that the sisters could not stay off the phone. They were addicted to the telephone. So, the young men called up the sisters and said, "Petunia, this is John Underwood at Standard Telephone. We are here at Trapptown working on the phone lines. During the next 3 hours if you hear the phone ringing please do not answer. If you do it will electrocute me." Petunia agreed, and the boys hung up the phone. After 30 minutes Dad dialed Petunia's

number and let it ring 30 times. Finally, Petunia answered the call. Upon her answer my Dad gave a long drawn out quivering scream into the phone. Petunia thought she had killed

John Underwood. I now realize the phone lines did not cause all the gossip in our community. But, instead of gossip taking days to reach everyone, it now only takes a short period of time. Nowadays we have all kinds of media outlets with which to spread news. But, I can remember a time when life was much simpler and gossip was a little

### Hambourger... continued from Page 4A

forward, Moses was told to mobilize an army and engage in

These two episodes - occurring in quick succession and seemingly contradictory in their prescribed responses – offer a masterclass in strategic wisdom. Why the dramatic difference in approach? The answer lies not in the strength of the opponents, but in their position relative to the Israelites' goal.

Consider the Egyptians: though they were a fearsome force, they were pursuing from behind. Their presence, while threatening, wasn't directly blocking the Israelites' path toward their destination of Mount Sinai. The Egyptian army represented the past literally chasing the present - former masters trying to reclaim their slaves. In this case, the wisdom was clear: don't fight what's behind you. Move forward.

The Amalekites presented a fundamentally different challenge. They stood between the Israelites and their destination, directly impeding their progress toward Mount Sinai. This wasn't about the past trying to reclaim its hold; this was about an obstacle deliberately positioning itself between a people and their future. In this case, moving forward wasn't enough – the obstacle had to be confronted and overcome.

This distinction offers a timeless framework for decision-making. When confronted with challenges, the crucial question becomes: Is this obstacle behind me, trying to pull me back, or is it ahead of me, blocking my path forward?

Consider someone in recovery from addiction. When memories of "good times" or old drinking buddies try to pull them back to their former lifestyle, the answer isn't to argue or justify their sobriety - it's simply to move forward on their chosen path. Like the Egyptians pursuing from behind, these echoes of the past have no power unless you turn back to face

But when that same person encounters someone who actively tries to sabotage their recovery - perhaps by deliberately bringing alcohol to family gatherings or mocking their sobriety – that's different. Like the Amalekites, these obstacles stand directly between them and their goal of maintaining sobriety, requiring a firm stand and clear boundaries.

Or think about someone starting a new chapter in life after divorce. When well-meaning friends keep trying to rehash the past relationship or suggest reconciliation, the wisest response is to keep moving forward toward their new life. However, when their ex-spouse attempts to interfere with their parenting time or new relationships, that's an Amalek-like obstacle requiring direct confrontation and perhaps legal intervention.

Consider also a young person building their career. When former classmates or relatives remind them of past failures or doubt their abilities, the best response is to keep moving forward, letting results speak for themselves. But when a supervisor deliberately blocks their advancement or takes credit for their work, that's an obstacle that requires addressing directly with management or human re-

The ancient narrative teaches us that both responses - moving forward and standing to fight - have their place. The key is discernment. When childhood insecurities, old fears, or past mistakes chase us, trying to drag us back to who we used to be, the answer is to keep moving forward. But when someone or something actively stands between us and the kind of parent, spouse, friend, or person we're striving to become, that might be the time to take a respectful but firm stand.

This wisdom proves invaluable in daily life. A person rebuilding their life after a setback doesn't need to fight every reminder of their past - they need to keep moving forward. But when they encounter people who try to prevent their progress or undermine their recovery. that's when they need to stand firm in their convictions.

The Israelites' ney teaches us that the path to our destinations isn't always a simple matter of either always avoiding conflict or always confronting it. Sometimes wisdom calls us to march ahead, letting the waters of progress close behind us. Other times, it calls us to stand our ground and overcome what stands in our way.

In the end, it's not about choosing one approach for all situations but about clearly seeing the nature of our challenges and choosing our responses wisely. Are we being pulled backward by the gravity of old habits, past relationships, or former versions of ourselves? Keep moving forward. Are we being blocked from progress by active obstacles that stand between us and our better future? That might be the time to take a stand.

That's how we move from where we are to where we're meant to be - knowing when to march forward and

when to stand and fight. Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer who supports communities throughout the regional South. You can contact them at y@ tasteoftorah.org.

### Maloney...continued from Page 4A

Since Mr. Trump returned to office, dozens of clinical drug trials have been halted, cancer research programs and the development of other lifesaving medical treatments have been shut down, Senior Center meals have been cut back, food banks are experiencing limited supplies, veterans have lost mental health counselors, parents of kids with special needs have been told to expect fewer school aides and Social Security payments are in jeopardy. Cuts to NOAA are impacting the monitoring of atmospheric and ocean systems and weather predictions. Cuts to FEMA are jeopardizing disaster response. And cuts to FDA increase the risk of food-related disease

Health workers, scientists, park rangers, veterans care providers, letter carriers, air traffic controllers and many others are trying to save programs and investments that were providing irreplaceable services to regular Americans.

outbreaks.

Federal Workers don't brag about what they do. They take an oath "to support and defend the Constitution of the United States," not to a president. They work for the federal system because they want to provide a service that we all

take for granted, and they often

get paid less than the private

But now we understand the value they provide for our country. Is it too late? Frank Maloney

#### Hyer... continued from Page 4A

hall meetings to discuss options. That seems like a reasonable approach. Forcing judgment before the issue is dealt with is not an intelligent problem solver.

Gunter was an effective district attorney, superior court judge, and now legislator. There is very little reason to believe he is biased, but he is entitled to an opinion. It is surely difficult to represent everyone. Attacking elected government officials is hardly the manner to encourage effective and fair discussion, but allowing for open meetings should serve that purpose. It sounds like Gunter is offering both sides a chance to be heard.

We won't know what the Union County residents think until there is a democratic referendum. Until then, newspaper headlines, libelous letters and slander will just cause animosity, which has no function in Blairsville and Union County. Richard E. Hyer

Tarter... continued from Page 4A

Congress may have approval rights on some but not all. The Leftists had no prob-

lem with the hiring of 87,000 "unelected" IRS agents. Heck, the democrats didn't even "elect" their nomi-

nee for president, Kamala Harris. She was anointed to that position. You'd think the Left

would lay low until that awkward memory blows over.

And, after the international gut-punch of COVID-19 in 2020, tourism has consistently been on the rise in the

### Collins...

#### continued from Page 4A

ments. However, we do know that money could be used for identified infrastructure such as roads directly impacted by development; bridges directly impacted by development; and for parks and recreation which is also directly impacted when new families move into the community.

To re-emphasize the current situation, Union County Government is only researching the feasibility of charging impact fees. Full processes and formal documentation related to impact fees can be found here: https://dca.georgia.gov/ community-assistance/coordinated-planning/local-planning/ development-impact-fees-cap-

### Williams...

#### continued from Page 4A

have been fed by humans before. Bear relocation is usually not an effective control option. Bears that are relocated might be moved to an area that another bear has already claimed, leading to territory fights, or the bear may try to return to its home and be struck by a vehicle. Relocation is a last resort.

If you do encounter a bear in the open make yourself look big and wave your arms and shout while backing away slowly. Do not get between a mother bear and her cubs. If you are attacked fight back aggressively with anything you can get your hands on. Bears can be dangerous but know that there are no recorded fatalities in Georgia.

If you have questions about bears in our area contact your local Extension office for more information or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

#### Chamber...

#### continued from Page 4A

coming events like Young Professionals and the Shoot for the Stars Golf Tournament. There are only a few spots left for the tournament, so call Abby today to reserve your team!

If you can take time to assist our seniors, please do so, because it is a rewarding way to give back, and you might just learn something valuable along the way. There is so much to be thankful for in our community, and it is the people who give their time and heart that make all the difference. A heartfelt thank you to all the volunteers who step up each day to help make Life Better in Blairsville.

#### Fowler...

### continued from Page 4A

it means life has meaning and death is not the end. The story of Jesus "illuminates and orders all other phenomena, explains both our laughter and our logic, our fear of the dead and our knowledge that it is somehow good to die," Lewis wrote. By faith, we are raised in Christ to new, eternal life, the fearless life God means for you to have.

Follow Lewis' thoughtful stroll along Addison's Walk by considering the reality of Jesus' resurrection. It may well be the walk of a lifetime if you, as did Lewis, come to realize that it is true. The resurrection matters – Jesus did it for you.

#### Berkman...

#### continued from Page 4A

ety, people have become more invested in defeating their opponents than in preserving the principles that allow disagreement to exist peacefully. We are past the stage

of speculation. The trends are real, and they are accelerating. The question now is not if democratic norms are in danger – it's what we are willing to do If there is a way forward,

it lies not in outrage alone, but in clarity, courage, and a recommitment to the rule of law over any one leader or cause. The future of our democracy doesn't depend on any single election. It depends on whether enough of us still believe in the hard, patient work of preserv-

ing it. Michael Berkman U.S. and the Auto Unions DO support Trump's tariffs on foreign-produced vehicles.

By the way, there are no "trillionaires" in the world today. A "trillion" is a lot more than most people can actually visualize.

But that could be the next buzzword.

J. Murray Tarter

#### Dyer... continued from Page 4A

Everyone who burns hand-piled leaves or yard debris should research the law and outdoor burning safety requirements. For more information about outdoor burning and the five safety precautions, please visit www.gatrees.org.
Union County Fire De-

partment ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~