

# Opinions

# Everybody has one...

## Being Prepared

The first week in May is Hurricane Preparedness Week. Some people may ask, "Why would we need to prepare for a hurricane when we are so far away from the coast?" The answer to that question is, 1) a hurricane can affect us even here in the mountains and 2) the issues that we face during a hurricane are similar to other disasters that may strike our area.

Hurricanes weaken as they move off the coast and further inland. Although they have weakened, they can still bring significant weather to our area such as severe thunderstorms, tornados, high winds and heavy rain. This can result in flooding, downed trees, and power outages. Everyone should be prepared to be isolated and without power for several days after these events. Here are several recommendations from Union County EMA and the National Weather Service that will help you be better prepared.

The first thing is to build an emergency kit. Water and electricity could be out for a week or more. You should have enough non-perishable food, water and medicine to last each person in your family for a MINIMUM of one week. Also make sure you have extra cash, a battery-powered radio, flashlights, and a way to charge your cell phone.

Next is to check your insurance policy. Call your insurance company or agent and ask for an insurance checkup to make sure you have enough homeowner's insurance to repair or even replace your home. Remember, standard homeowners' insurance doesn't cover flooding. Whether you're a homeowner or renter, you'll need a separate policy for flooding.

Having a plan can be very helpful. Families should write down what they will do when a disaster strikes. Plans should include a relocation plan for when families may be separated as well as a communications plan for times when cell service or land lines are down.

The time to plan and prepare for a hurricane is NOW, before the season begins. Once you're under pressure, having a written plan will take the guesswork out of what you need to do. Know where you will ride out the storm and get your supplies now. You don't want to be standing in long lines. Those supplies that you need will probably be sold out by the time you reach the front of

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief David Dyer

## Pursuit of Happiness

"I have the right to be happy" is at the root of many societal ills. That idea comes neither from the Bible nor the Declaration of Independence, and is salted with entitlement. Jefferson did include the Epicurean idea, "the pursuit of happiness," as an unalienable right. But that expression of individual freedom is reasonable; demanding personal happiness regardless of the cost to others is not.

That's not to say civil society cannot provide the framework for people to flourish. Apparently some countries are better at that than others. According to the World Happiness Report, the happiest countries in the world are Finland, Denmark, and Norway, in that order. The U.S. ranks 19th. Hey, at least we're not China (#93) or South Sudan (last place). The Report generously includes this chapter: "The Sad State of Happiness in the United States and the Role of Digital Media." So, smart phones apparently do not contribute to happiness.

Sociologists use the term "civil society" to describe the way we organize and interact in our communities. Think volunteer organizations, churches, farmers markets, civic clubs, and workplaces. In the 1830's, Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville visited the U.S. and wrote about its "mediating institutions" (civil society) that stand between the individual and the state. He concluded this is where America's strength is. It is also true that happiness is rooted in those. Kevin Stuart of the Austin Institute writes that America "has to confront the truth of what really generates social capital and builds civil society - of what really makes a good life. The most important institutions bar none are marriage, family, religion, and meaningful work. And there's data to prove it." This is one reason Christianity is always relevant. It speaks to these most important institutions that can make life better for all, and offers the basis of a happy life.

Maybe the better word is joyful, since that is a more innate quality. It is possible to retain a sense of joy, even when sad things happen. Under considerable duress and uncertainty, Paul wrote a rather joyful letter to his Philippian friends. He was excited that "Most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without

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All Things New Wayne Fowler

## Commissioner's Questions

**Q. Do you know if the school will offer its Summer Meal Program again this year?**

A. While Union County Government is not involved with this program, we were provided information that the Union County School's Summer Meal Program will be going on again this year. It will be at a different location this summer than in the past. It will be at 683 Ledford Road in the Union General Hospital Daycare facility from June 6th until July 12th. Breakfast and lunch will be available, and children can eat at no cost.

**Q. I've noticed the grass getting extremely tall on the side of my road. When will the county be mowing this year?**

A. First, we've had an extremely rainy winter and spring. Then it turned off sunny and warm, which has really made the grass grow. All the rain has slowed work down, however, we will get to all the roads as soon as possible. If you feel like your intersection is dangerous please call the Road Department at 706-439-6062 and report the problem. They will try to send out a crew to weed eat the area of concern.

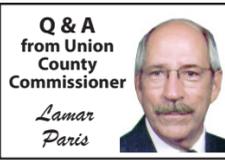
**Q. The different types of roads in the county are confusing to me, can you explain them?**

A. There are three different types of roads in the county. There are "county-maintained roads" which the county has and will continue to maintain. County-maintained roads are represented by green road signs. Then there are public roads which the county does not maintain, but the road has been open to the public for many years. This type of road may have been used by several owners to access their property or it may be a connecting roadway. Lastly, there are private roads which are owned by the property owners. Public and private roads are not maintained by the county and are represented by a blue road sign.

**Q. I called the Road Department over a month ago about a stopped-up culvert and it is still not fixed. What do I need to do now?**

A. The Road Department is busy year-round. Since again, I would like to remind everyone of the extremely rainy season we have had. Now, we are headed directly into mowing season along

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris

## Drug Free Mountain Life

### Mental Health Awareness

Since 1949, May has been Mental Health Awareness month. The goal is to raise awareness about mental health and to reduce stigma related to mental illness.

Stigma occurs when someone judges a person with mental illness in a negative way because they have a mental health condition.

Stigma breeds shame which complicates a person's ability to navigate their mental health condition. Stigma causes people to isolate, therefore avoiding seeking out the support needed to live their best life. Learning how to cope with stigma and how to avoid and address stigma are important for all of us.

Education is the best weapon against stigma. Did you know....

One in 5 (46.6 million) adults in the United States experience a mental health condition in a given year.

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The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.



REMEMBER TO HONOR YOUR DEBTS

## Chamber of Commerce

Last week, we had a great meeting with the Southern Highlands Employer Committee discussing the 2019 Job Fair to be held at North Georgia Technical College. Speaking with our local businesses it is exciting to hear of their growth, but it seems to be a common sentiment that they are unable to find employees. The goal of the job fair is to help connect local employers with those individuals that are looking for a job or for those wanting to change their career path. Many of the employers provide training if needed. If you are a business wanting to participate or to be a sponsor call 706-994-6233. I highly encourage anyone seeking employment or a change in vocation, to visit the Job Fair on Thursday, June 13th at North Georgia Tech from 12 PM - 4 PM.

One of the Chamber's signature events is just around the corner! The Buy Local Extravaganza, a business expo featuring over 75 local vendors returns to North Georgia Techni-

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President Steve Rowe

## Letters to the Editor

### Narrow Brush

Dear Editor,

It appears that I touched a nerve with my letter to the editor in the May 1 edition of the North Georgia News, as I was chastised in a response letter the following week with an implication that I had used a "broad sweeping brush" and essentially accused all of the residents of Union County of ignorance and racism. That was not my intent, but perhaps it hit a little close to home for the writer of the response to my original letter.

Nowhere in my letter did I say that everyone in Blairsville was like this. I said I had seen blatant racism "on occasion," and I pointed out three examples: the KKK trying to sponsor a stretch of Union County highway, the trucks that used to roar around the square with full-sized Confederate flags flying, and the unpleasant incident that prompted my letter in the first place.

In general, Blairsville has been a wonderful, welcoming place to live. I was struck by the friendliness and hospitality of the residents when we first moved here. I respect the people in this town, even the racists, as long as they keep their opinions to themselves. Those who deliberately try to belittle or hurt others just because they look different deserve no respect. My letter asked the people who enjoy harassing people of color to get over yourselves and be kind." I can't imagine anyone being offended over that, unless they see themselves in my description.

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### Two Gulfs

Dear Editor,

It's beginning to look like the Persian Gulf has become Trump's Gulf of Tonkin.

There I was, sitting in the Day Room in Basic Training at Fort Leonard Wood, when I first heard of the Gulf of Tonkin. Walter Cronkite told the world of the heinous attack on our navy by the Viet Cong. Somehow my normal level of skepticism told me that it was a subterfuge, put together by General Westmoreland, with a little help from the CIA probably, for LBJ to use as ammunition for his desire to escalate the war. My skepticism held sway until years later, when Robert McNamara came clean and finally told the world that my conclusions were correct.

Comes along the Liar in Chief, head of the only remaining member of our once-proud tri-partite Federal Government, telling us that, based on information coming from Netanyahu's Mossad (their version of our CIA) that Iran is preparing to attack our forces in Syria and Iraq. Now keep in mind that Netanyahu hates Iran, loves war, is about as far right-wing a leader Is-

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## Good Fires Prevent Bad Ones

A controlled or prescribed burn, also known as a hazard reduction burning, backfire, swailing, or a burn-off, is a wildfire set intentionally for purposes of forest management, farming, or land clearing. Fire is a natural part of forest ecology and controlled fire can be a very efficient and economical tool for foresters to achieve desired results when managing forests. Hazard reduction or controlled burning is conducted during the cooler months to reduce fuel buildup and decrease the likelihood of serious hotter out-of-control fires at the wrong time when damage can occur.

Controlled burning stimulates the germination of many desirable forest trees, and reveals soil mineral layers which increases seedling and shrub growth, thus renewing the forest. Some require heat from fire to open cones to disperse seeds and trees like Longleaf must have fire to stimulate growth.

For many species in our forests fire is a necessity for regeneration and nature has always provided it, but federal policies created by government forest managers decades ago thought they knew better than Mother Nature (Smokey Bear campaign) and put policies in place to prevent and suppress all fires in the forest, good and bad.

This policy of suppression has created the situation we have today with a huge build-up of natural fuel that creates more fires, hotter fires that are more destructive, and leads to a longer season that grows every year. These factors make wildfires costlier because it takes more resources to contain and keep the fires away from houses that are built where forests used to be. There are two basic causes of wildfires. One is natural (lightning) and the other is people.

Controlled burns have a long history in wildland management. Pre-agricultural societies used fire to regulate both plant and animal life. Fires, both naturally caused and prescribed, were one part of natural landscapes in many areas. These burning practices ended in the early 20th century when US fire policies were enacted with the goals of suppressing all fires. Since 1995, the US Forest Service has slowly incorporated burning practices into its forest management policies.

Now when you smoke settling in our valley late in the evening it is probably a controlled burn set by professional foresters under the right conditions using the latest technology to predict where the smoke will go once it leaves the forest. Another consideration is the issue of fire prevention. In Florida, during the drought in 1995,

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RC&D Executive Director Frank Riley

## The Swimming Hole

My grandfather, Columbus, was raised with a bunch of his cousins and friends just outside of Phil Campbell, Alabama in a little community called Trapptown. The people of this little community were extremely close and they managed to enjoy life even though the country was in turmoil due to the depression. The boys of the family enjoyed playing baseball, fishing in the creek, coon hunting and in the summer time they swam at the mill pond on Cummings Creek.

During the 1930s parents were very conservative with their children. You never saw a girl wearing a pair of shorts. Young men and women didn't go on dates by themselves. Boys and girls didn't go swimming together. The young people around the little community of Trapptown had different swimming times for the "Swimming Hole on Cummings Creek."

Actually, the boys didn't even wear bathing suits. So, the boys swam from 1:30 until 3:30. After the boys left the girls would swim until 5:30. This arrangement allowed the boys and girls to swim for the same amount of time and it worked well for most of Coon's teenage years.

But, then Coon began to notice girls. There were three girls in the community who were sisters. Even though the girls had been a part of Papa's life since he could remember he'd never noticed them. But, one day all of a sudden Coon noticed the Lauderdale Girls and they were beautiful. That is when the trouble began.

One particularly hot day during the Dog Days of August the boys were having a great time at the swimming hole. When it came time for the boys to get out of the water so the girls could swim the boys refused. The girls hollered at them from the top of the bluff, "Your time is up. It's time for us girls to swim." Papa said, "We just laughed and kept swimming."

Not only were the Lauderdale Girls pretty, but, they were also smart. While the boys were still swimming the Lauderdale Girls slipped down to where the boys had left their clothes. The eldest girl knew Papa was the ring leader of the boys. So, Sarah placed her underwear in the bib pocket of Papa's overalls. After a while Coon and his brothers got out of the water, put on their clothes and made their way home. By the time they got home it was suppertime. When Papa and his brothers walked into the house their mother, Laura told them to take off their dirty clothes and place them on the back porch.

Coon was bad about leaving items in his pocket. So, Laura went through his pockets after Coon had left them on the porch. She found

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Around The Farm Mickey Cummings

## Fire Ants

Fire ants are very common throughout Georgia. Thankfully, we don't have as many in the mountains as they do south of us. But, once you experience a fire ant bite, you won't ever forget it. Another problem with fire ants is that you rarely get just one bite. Fire ants were first reported in Georgia in the 1950s. They've been found all the way from North Carolina to Texas, and down to Florida.

The summer after my first year of college I worked at an orchard picking peaches. We'd be going from tree to tree picking fruit. You'd look up into the trees when all of a sudden your leg would feel like it was on fire. That person would usually run off into the trees ripping their shoes and socks off trying get the fire ants off. Let's talk about fire ants and things that you can do to control them so that they don't take over your lawn or pasture.

If you can manage to get an up close look without being bitten and stung you'll see that fire ants have two nodes between their abdomen at the end of their body and the thorax in the middle of their body. Fire ants generally like to stay in open grassy areas.

Fire ants are most active when temperatures are between 70 and 85. In the fall fire ants are most active because they are foraging for food. This makes Fall the best time to treat them. Treatment during the spring and summer is also possible, but effective population control will be less likely.

Using a bait will be the most effective way of controlling fire ants. Either broadcast the bait over the mounds, or in a four foot circle around each mound. There are a number of baits that can be used. Amdro B, Ascend, Distance Fire Ant Bait, Spectracide, Once 'n' Done, and Extinguish are baits recommended in the Georgia Pest Management handbook. If a few mounds remain after seven to ten days, a follow up application of Orthene will be effective against those problematic mounds. Take a long stick and quickly put a hole in the center of the mound. Then fill the hole with insecticide to eliminate those mounds. When applying pesticides always make sure to read and follow the label.

Pouring about three gallons of water onto a mound will usually eliminate the mound, if it is done in the morning when more ants are close to the soil surface. It is also possible to coerce fire ants to move from sensitive areas by continually knocking down their colonies.

There are not many natural controls for fire ants in the United States because they are



Watching and Working Jacob Williams

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