

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Station 13 Update

Union County Fire Department is proud to announce that the newest fire station, Station 13, is progressing very well. This new station is located at the Hidden Harbor entrance on Highway 129 North, also known as Murphy Hwy. Construction began in September of 2022 and has been on schedule.

Since the last update, the concrete work for the parking lot, entrance, and bay pad is almost complete. The siding was hung and rock was laid on the exterior walls. On the interior, the insulation, wiring, plumbing, and HVAC have been "roughed in." The walls have been completed and are in the process of being painted. It will soon be time to put some finishing touches on the interior and paint the exterior siding. The construction completion date is on schedule for late summer.

Once completed, the station will be equipped with the required equipment and materials to operate as a fire station. The apparatus for the station will be assigned and ready for certification by Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council.

As we have stated earlier in the plan, the new station will be a career station. This means that there will be career firefighters at the station 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to respond to calls in that area. These calls include medical emergencies, motor vehicle accidents, rescues, searches, hazardous materials, all fires, and various other emergencies. The career firefighters will be part of and support the volunteer firefighters who operate the three volunteer stations in the northern district of the county.

The station is also designed to house an ambulance and crew if the Union General Ambulance Service wishes to place an ambulance in that station. We have also included office space and access for the Union County Sheriff's Office deputies who may be working in that area. This design enables the station to be a public safety station and provides room for future growth as needed.

The fire station will be the third career station, joining Station 1 in Blairsville and Station 5 in Suches. This will provide more career firefighters for any major fire or emergency. Having a fire station in that area may reduce the ISO rating for some home and business owners. We are excited to see the progress of this station and look forward to including it in our operations. Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



The Divine Critic

Ernest Hemingway's Pulitzer-winning novella, "The Old Man and the Sea," is about a Cuban fisherman, a marlin, and sharks. Or it may have been about something entirely different.

In 1950 after a 10-year publishing drought, Hemingway released "Across the River and into the Trees." Critics savaged the novel. Hemingway was devastated. In response, he published "The Old Man and the Sea" (1952). The protagonist is Santiago who, after a long period of not catching a fish, landed a prize marlin after a great struggle. He delighted in his good fortune until the sharks circled and destroyed his hard work.

The novella reads like an autobiographical metaphor. Hemingway is Santiago and "Across the River" is the fish. The critics, well, they're the sharks who shredded what Hemingway thought was good work. If the critics caught on, it did not prevent them from celebrating what became a literary classic.

The story about an old man fighting sharks redeemed Hemingway's reputation as a writer. One wonders if Hemingway would have won the Pulitzer and Nobel prizes but for those critics. He embraced the harsh criticism, wove it into a story, and good things followed.

I see a spiritual parallel. You have your own critics but only one matters. It is He who criticized Job's complaints by thundering, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" Job could only respond, "I repent in dust and ashes." (Job 38:4, 42:6). The divine critic says you have "sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). What have you done with that criticism?

Theologians say humans are "depraved." Sounds harsh but compared to a holy God, not so much. "The depravity of man is at once the most empirically verifiable reality," writes Malcolm Muggeridge, "but at the same time the most intellectually resisted fact." Look at today's headlines to verify that reality. Or look within. You could resist and take offense. Or it could prompt your greatest honor. When you embrace the criticism and the good news of God's grace, you start a new story. It's a story lived by faith in the Lord Jesus, the Creator, Savior, and Shepherd of your

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. What is Pickleball?

Pickleball is a little smaller than tennis, badminton, and ping pong. It uses a ball a little smaller than a tennis ball, but it is hard plastic with holes in it similar to a wiffleball. The paddle is similar to old "hand ball" paddles and are solid wood or one of the many other lightweight graphite products on the market now. The paddles are smaller than a tennis racquet but larger than a ping pong paddle. The pickleball courts are smaller than a tennis court, but the game idea is very similar.

Q. Why have I never heard of this sport?

A. This game was invented in 1965 by three dads, whose children were bored with the other summertime activities. It has just recently gained in popularity across the United States, including here. The game was named Pickleball after one of the original family's dog, whose name was Pickles. The dog would chase the ball and run off with it while the children were playing. Thus, the name Pickleball. The game has become extremely popular over the past 10 years. It can be played by people of all ages, and Pickleball tournaments can now be found throughout north Georgia.

Q. What size and layout is a Pickleball court?

A. These courts are the same size as a doubles badminton court which is 20 feet by 40 feet. You can basically put two Pickleball Courts on one tennis court. The net height is a little different than the net for tennis or badminton. It is 36 inches at the edges and 34 inches in the center. Courts can be specifically designed for Pickleball, but existing tennis courts or badminton courts can be converted into Pickleball courts. The game can be played with 2 or 4 people.

Q. Can this game be played indoors on a basketball court?

A. Yes, it can. You can have four Pickleball courts on a typical basketball court with proper striping.

Q. Where is Pickleball currently played in Union County?

A. Union County built a new Pickleball Complex behind the Health Department and adjacent to the new Union County

See Paris, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Biden Crime Family

The walls are closing in on the Biden Crime Family.

House Committee on Oversight and Accountability Chairman James Comer recently held a newsworthy press conference detailing the Committee's investigation into the Biden family's influence peddling and foreign business schemes. Over the last few months, the Oversight Committee has obtained and reviewed thousands of pages of financial records. In short, these records reveal how the Biden family and their associates created a network of companies during Joe Biden's vice presidency — as well as how these companies raked in millions of dollars from foreign nationals. To cover their tracks, the Bidens used complicated transactions between multiple shell companies to hide these hefty foreign payments.

In sum, the Bidens' web of more than 20 companies received over \$10 million from foreign nationals. That gives more than 10 million reasons

See Clyde, page 5A

United States Congressman Representative Andrew Clyde



Letters to the Editor

So Very Grateful

Dear Editor,
This is a note of thanks to the two families who saved Mother's Day for me this year.

Being alone on Mother's Day was weighing hard on me and I was feeling sorry for myself. So, I decided I was not going to let it get me down and I would celebrate by myself by going to LongHorn's for lunch and watching other families celebrate.

When I tried to pay for my meal, the waiter informed me that my meal and also dessert had been paid for by two families who were sitting nearby. I was so very moved that I could barely hold back the tears, let alone express my appreciation for their very thoughtful gift.

I have four children but none were able to come and share this special day with me. Three of them live in Florida, and the one living closest is a nurse and had to work.

I pray these wonderful folks see this note and realize what a wonderful, thoughtful gift they gave me. I am so very grateful! I pray God's blessings for all of them.

Barbara Alderman,
The Lady in the Booth

Re: "Rep. Clyde Misleads Us Again"

Dear Editor,

Calling a letter writer's bluff from last week, I pored through all 320 pages of U.S. House Bill 2811, The Limit, Save, Grow Act, to find the cuts to Veterans and Social Security funds mentioned.

Exhausting on a smartphone. I've expedited my cataract surgery. There are provisions for restoration of work requirements for able-bodied, age-appropriate Medicaid and other welfare recipients. President Clinton and Newt Gingrich famously and successfully enacted similar requirements back in the '90s. These did not hamper single-parent families or otherwise needy recipients. That did result in savings on the welfare expenditures but, alas, they were also famously removed by President Obama for no particular reason. Allowing a bloated current 2023 budget through but insisting on a return to last year's bloated spending only makes sense. That's called belt-tightening. Every family and business has done that, especially in the past three years. And the bill probably ain't going to fly through the Leftist Senate or White House anyway. It's called an opening bid.

And, as much as the Left harp on it, no Republican is going to touch the "third rail" of cuts to Social Security or to Veterans. It would be suicide at voting time.

Ain't even being discussed, I guarantee you. Right up there with the now-debunked Russian Collusion hoaxes.

That's why, as recommended, I don't take the writer's word on them.

J. Murray Tarter



Letters to the Editor

Why Five?

Dear Editor,
The absurdity of thinking that our county could support five county commissioners has been discussed repeatedly by our current sole commissioner and, recently, in a local radio talk show. I have heard the same list of reasons several times now and it sounds like they are from a script. Listen to what they are saying! The reasons given are meant to deflect your attention from the meat of the discussion.

Why five commissioners? It wasn't my idea. But when I took the time and really listened to the advocates of this plan, it made a lot of sense.

But I like to think on my own and make my own decisions! So, I did some research and some thinking.

My thinking is that:
1) How do we justify five City Council members in Blairsville, who seem to work effectively in managing a city of less than 1,000 people (the highest number I could find online was 825, but I'm being generous)? Why is that workable when it would be a problem at the county level? Because adult professionals can

See Munson, page 5A

Refuting "Misnamed"

Dear Editor,
I would like to respond to a letter to the editor from May 17, 2023, referencing the proposed Board of Commissioners. I will refute the writer's analogy with a bit of History and an event that began 2022 in one of Georgia's southern counties, Camden County.

The History I referenced is the U.S. Constitution and, more importantly, Georgia's Constitution: However, the *GA Constitution, ARTICLE IX., Section II., Para. (2) "HOME RULE FOR COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES"* provides a course of action for redress relating to Government's ordinances, resolutions, or regulations. This is based upon GA's Constitution, *ARTICLE I, Section II. ORIGIN AND STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT. Paragraph I. Origin and foundation of government. All government, of right, originates with the people, is founded upon their will only, and is instituted solely for the good of the whole. Public officers are the trustees and servants of the people and are at all times amenable to them. Paragraph II. Object of government. The people of this state have the inherent right of regulating their internal government. Government is instituted for the protection, security, and benefit of the people; and at all times they have the right to alter or reform the same whenever the public good may require it.*

See Hopgood, page 5A

Dink

He was known by many names, but, our family called him Dink. Dad gave him the nickname when we were all much younger. He couldn't have been more than 6 months old when he began to walk. Dad had just received a promotion and we'd moved from Chicago to Kankakee, Illinois.

Dad was painting our new house and went out to get us a hamburger. Upon returning home he came into the front door, and Dink went tottering toward Dad and his unproven legs gave way causing him to fall into a table which split open my brother's eyebrow. We rushed to the emergency room where the Doctors worked on stitching him up.

The medical staff suspected Dad of abuse on our brother and the police were called. Dad, dressed in paint-stained overalls, forgot to bring his wallet and identification amidst all the confusion, and the police didn't believe his story about Dink walking across the floor and falling. The only thing which saved my father from jail was that the nurse placed the little boy on the floor and he got up and walked to Dad during all the heated discussions.

Another time our family was traveling back home to Alabama in a car. Somewhere in Kentucky late in the night a carload of men began harassing us by driving close to our bumper and flashing the headlights. The intoxicated passengers of the other car were hanging out the windows yelling obscenities and trying to run us off the road. We pulled into a town and stopped at a red light. Dad told us all to get on the floorboard, which we did, except Dink. As the car pulled alongside of us he rolled down the window and said, "Hey, you bunch of nuts! My Dad has a gun and he is aiming to shoot every one of you." The carload of crazy people did not wait for the light to turn green. They sped away down the road toward Missouri.

The late 1960s found our family living in Chickamauga with Dad working in Chattanooga. We were in town one Saturday and Dad had to check on something in his office. We pulled up to the curb and he went inside. His office was just down the street from some kind of club, and while he was inside, two men came from the club. One man holding a knife was chasing a man holding a gun. They ran to our car, and the man with the gun hid behind our car while the man with the knife was at the front of the car. The two men were screaming at one another, and the one began shooting at the other one. Mom screamed for us to get into the floorboard, which we did, except for Dink.

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Chamber of Commerce

I would like to thank everyone who participated in this year's Shoot for the Stars Golf Tournament. As you know, a portion of the proceeds go to the scholarship funds of both Union County High School and North Georgia Technical College. When I spoke with the college admissions office, I learned that many times it's not the large donations that sometimes keep students from enrolling at the next level, but often it is the smaller items such as books, fees, and deposits. As anyone who has enrolled or helped pay for enrollment knows, these items add up. While we love to grow our tournament and be able to give more to our local students, we are grateful to be able to play a part with our sponsors and players that help provide that opportunity.

The Chamber's calendar is full of exciting events, but I would like to call your attention to just a few:

On June 8th we will be having our next
See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

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Leyland Cypress

Leyland cypress trees are a very common and popular landscaping plant. They are planted by people all over Georgia. However, there are a couple of issues that are commonly seen in Leyland cypress trees. Let's talk about Leyland cypress trees, what some of those issues are, and what steps you can take to reduce the chances of your Leyland cypresses getting diseased, because recently I have gotten a lot of calls from people with questions on their Leyland cypress trees.

The biggest issue that people have right now is that their trees are turning yellow and brown on the inside. This is due to the mild winter that we had earlier in the year. Leyland cypress trees prefer a climate that is colder than what we have in the Georgia Mountains. When plants don't have the climatic conditions that they prefer it makes them much more prone to stress. The tree's natural response is to start to drop the needles that are closest to the trunk. These needles turn yellow and then brown before falling off. The best thing to do if you see this happening is to make sure that you are watering your trees during a dry spell. Leyland cypresses have a shallow root system, which makes them prone to drought stress.

Another thing to keep in mind is that these trees have an effective lifespan of 15-20 years. So, if your trees are that age and don't look healthy, they probably aren't going to improve significantly.

The two canker diseases that Leyland cypress trees get are Seiridium and Botryosphaeria canker. Seiridium canker is the most common and destructive of the two in Georgia. The symptoms from both diseases look very similar. You will see individual branches begin to die off. Sometimes you'll see resin in spots on the branches because of the cankers. These cankers are essentially suffocating the branch, leading to the branch turning brown. Once a tree has been infected the best treatment is to remove the dead branch and dispose of the branch.

Stressed trees are going to be more susceptible to cankers. During times of drought, trees that are already infected will spread the disease much more quickly. Ice damage and spring freezes can create wounds where infection is able to occur. Trees that are near buildings that reflect sunlight will also be more stressed. Unfortunately, with canker diseases there is not a fungicide that can be used to eliminate the pathogen.

Passalora needle blight has become more common as well. This is a disease that will cause the needles to drop off of the tree, working its

UGA extension WATCHING and WORKING

Jacob Williams



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Paris... continued from Page 4A

Sports Center. The contemporary design features 8 pickleball courts, and you will find them being utilized every day unless the weather is not cooperative.

Q. What type equipment is required?

A. You only need the paddle, the ball, and comfortable clothes and shoes.

Q. Is there an organized group playing this sport in Union County?

A. Yes there is. You can find them on Facebook when you search for "Blairsville Pickleball."

Williams... continued from Page 4A

way up to the top. It is possible to spray for passalora, but it is not practical. The spray must be applied to the whole tree multiple times a year. If you have a 40 foot tall tree, that is very difficult.

Try to keep plants from becoming stressed by laying mulch around their base. This will increase the moisture retained by the soil, and suppress competitive weed growth. During dry, hot summer days, water the trees if the soil has become dry. If trees are extensively damaged by cankers or needle blight, then they will need to be removed. When planting Leyland cypress make sure to dig out an area 3-4 times larger than the diameter of the root ball. This will improve soil drainage, resulting in your trees being less stressed

Q. Is this sport designed for adults?

A. Anyone can play this sport, but mostly adults play it. Some middle and high schools have incorporated it into their physical education program. It is a great sport for older adults who want to stay active, but it is not as intensive as tennis or badminton. It is a competitive sport, with organized local, regional, and national tournaments.

Q. Is Pickleball a sport that is "Here to Stay?"

A. Yes. Many people are very passionate about the game.

and less susceptible to root rot diseases. In addition, plant trees at least 15 feet apart. A common issue is that Leyland Cypresses are planted very close together to make a better screen. This also invites disease and increases the rate of decline.

There are some alternatives to Leyland cypress trees that are better adapted to our environment. Green Giant arborvitae and Arizona cypresses are both trees that serve the same purpose in landscape and are more disease resistant. For anyone planting trees as a barrier or screen, I would encourage them to look into these alternatives.

If you have questions about Leyland cypress please contact your county Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Munson... continued from Page 4A

work in a collaborative manner and bring multiple opinions and ideas to an effective conclusion.

2) How do we justify five board members running our School Board for a system supporting less than 3,000 students (again, overestimating the numbers)? They work well, get a lot of things done and manage a pretty big budget. And, again, multiple ideas and opinions lead to better solutions.

3) Why does the current sole commissioner often reference Murphy, North Carolina, as a five-commissioner system that doesn't work? That's curious. First, because Murphy isn't in Georgia! And there are a lot of counties in Georgia that could be more effectively referenced. Second, I've never heard complaints in the news about how Murphy is run. Third, we do not have to bash our neighbors to try to make ourselves look good!

4) Why not three commissioners? The advocates for the five-commissioner board explained this well and convincingly. They are the ones to explain this, not me.

5) How does a county population of 25,616 (and I think that's low considering the mass migration of the last few years) warrant only one commissioner when our small city and relatively small School Board each function well with five and justify the cost of five? No one has spoken to these comparisons.

I like to know things and I like to be directly involved, so I volunteered to help the petitioners get signatures to bring this to a vote. 1) I was amazed at the number of people who were excited and supportive of the plan. 2) I was saddened by the number

of people who said they couldn't sign the petition because they were afraid of losing their job or other repercussions to their family. What does that mean? No, I'm not naming names or where they said they work. But I heard this myself and from other people gathering petitions. Why are people afraid? We all need to ponder that one. 3) I don't understand why the current sole commissioner says that the people behind this petition are newcomers who hate our county, our schools, our hospital, our children, etc. . . . because this group of people is made of residents who have been here over 50 years (maybe more, I don't know all of them), people who are both Republican and Democrat, and people who have children in school!

I'm not buying the argument that we need only one commissioner. Yes, a lot of people like (love, worship, etc.) our reigning sole commissioner. But that is not a reason he should be given ultimate power. I'd welcome him as one of the board of commissioners.

Our county has gone through a lot of changes in the last 10 years and really big changes in the last five. We need long-range plans to manage the growth that the county is courting through bringing in new businesses and tourism. We need ideas from more than one person (and his influencers) to be considered for our county.

We are Americans, and in America we vote. We, the people of Union County, deserve the right to vote on this topic. We deserve to have broader representation than a single commissioner.
Sylvia Munson

Cummings...continued from Page 4A

By this point the two men moved to opposite sides of the car still yelling and cursing one another. Dad came from his office and saw the two men standing beside our car. He tried to come toward the car, but, each time he made a move the man with the gun pointed it at him. At this point little brother rolled down his window and told the man with the gun, "My Daddy is about to beat your butt." The fellow and the one chasing him took off running, allowing my Dad to get to the car to check on us.

A short time later we were visiting my Maw Maw Adams. She took us down to Little Bear Creek and introduced us to Baker Rock. This rock was strategically placed on the left side of a bend in the creek. The water was 3-4 feet deep in the pool under the rock. We worked hard for 45 minutes placing small rocks across the creek to dam up the slow moving stream.

We had improved this ancient family swimming hole and were enjoying its cool waters when one of my cousins said, "Let's climb up the rock and jump into the water." We all sat there wondering who would be first when we noticed Dink was not around. Someone hollered at us from atop the rock, and there was my 6-year-old brother. He had climbed up the rock, and before anyone could stop him, he jumped into the refreshing water of the Creek from the top of Baker Rock. He couldn't even swim. All the rest of us had to fetch him from the water.

Later in the fall Dad found out about a boxing club for boys in Chickamauga. Dad took Dink and me to the club and we learned to box. I thought I was pretty good until I boxed against a boy who nearly knocked me out. I wasn't very enthusiastic about boxing after that fight. However, my younger brother loved it. He would win a fight and then lose a fight. He fought some folks his size and he fought some boys twice as big. But, he never backed down, and I actually think he looked forward to boxing each person no matter their size.

One evening while we were eating supper our doorbell rang and I was told to answer the door. When I opened the door this woman began screaming at me. It seems that I had been accused of bullying her fourth-grade son. I had never seen the boy and tried to explain, however, she kept screaming.

My Dad came to the door to investigate and was followed by my second-grade brother. The boy which was nearly as tall as me came from behind his mother and pointed at Dink, saying, "That's the one who beat me up, Mom." The mother looked from me to my brother and grabbed her boy by the ear, saying, "You let that little kid beat you up? Well, just wait until we get home. You are about to get another whipping."

One day in the sixth

Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

soul.

Life's greatest honor is to know the God who laid the earth's foundation and to be accepted into His family. By His magnificent victory at the cross, the stain of your sin (depravity) is removed, and you stand blameless before a holy God. Hemingway's story hints at a greater truth - out of the pain and embarrassment of failure rises the realization of a more glorious reality. For those who believe, that reality is a redeemed life in right standing with Almighty God.

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

Eggs & Issues, and we are honored to have the Georgia DOT Commissioner Russell McMurry to be our quest speaker. Many in Union County have questions regarding traffic, possible road projects, and those new roundabouts that are coming, like other communities have installed.

On June 28th we will continue our "Mind Your Business" series with a presentation on Cyber Security. Boaz Media & Network Solutions and Levacloud, LLC will share their years of experience on protecting your network from cyber threats. Be sure to call the Chamber or go online at visit-blairsvillega.com and register, because both of these classes will fill up fast. Thank you to everyone that helps keep Life Better in Blairsville!

Hopgood... continued from Page 4A

The five-member Board of Commissioners of Camden County, Georgia, gave Spaceport special privileges and approval to build a spaceport there in Camden County without approval of the local "electorate." The "electorate" used a "REFERENDUM" very successfully in guaranteeing GA's Constitution, ARTICLE IX., Section II., Para. (2) "HOME RULE FOR COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES" is alive and well!

If there ever was a question concerning "Rights" of the "Electorate," Georgia's Supreme Court clarified the "Question" February 7, 2023!

The Georgia Supreme Court unanimously rejected a legal challenge by Camden County Commissioners who sought to have declared invalid the results of a referendum by the "electorate." The county "electorate" rejected a particular development in their county. County officials argued that Georgia's Constitution doesn't allow citizens to veto decisions of county governments.

The court strongly disagreed, ruling that language of Georgia's Constitution's "plainly grants repeal and amendment powers to the electorate" over county ordinances and resolutions. The opinion by Justice Carla Wong McMillian said the county's reading of the same provisions "would violate well established tenets of constitutional interpretation. ARTICLE IX, Section II. Para. (2) "HOME RULE FOR COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES." More broadly, it paves the way for county voters across the state to exercise the right to seek a referendum to undo their local

government's ordinances, resolutions, or regulations.

The "electorate" of Union County, Georgia, should be thankful for the volunteers that have stepped forward to defend the "Rights" at the "HEART, of the U.S. Constitution, Federalist Papers, and the Bill of Rights. Apathy and ignorance should not be acceptable means to attack or deny one's Constitutional Rights!
Wesley Hopgood

Clyde...

continued from Page 4A

as to why now-President Joe Biden is compromised.

The Oversight Committee's evidence unveiled a corrupt influence peddling scheme, because the Bidens didn't provide goods or services to foreign nationals in exchange for these pricey payments — they could only offer access and influence. Troublingly, the Committee's breakdown of these bombshell transactions includes both Chinese and Romanian nationals and companies.

I think it's now safe to say that Joe Biden is the most corrupt president in U.S. history.

While the Committee continues investigating the Bidens' financial records and waiting for additional subpoenaed materials, this probe should alarm every solitary American — no matter their political stripes. Rest assured, House Republicans are determined to uncover the truth and deliver accountability to the American people. I look forward to updating you on this critical matter as the Oversight Committee's investigation moves forward.