

City of Blairsville...from Page 1A

slip their emergency brakes from rolling from the Circle K, across Jackson Street and over the retaining wall at the Blairsville Animal Hospital.

Eric Seifarth joined the teleconference to address the council about the problem, saying that it has happened several times in the last few years, most recently in January. Seifarth is the husband of DeAnne Livingston-Seifarth, who is the veterinarian-proprietor at Blairsville Animal Hospital.

Councilman Tony Dyer concurred that the situation is dangerous, recounting his own personal experiences with cars – including his own – rolling downhill where the Circle K stands today, which is the site of his former business, the Penny Wise convenience store, that he operated in the 1970s.

The timeline and cost of the guardrail project were not known at press time.

After some discussion, council members approved a contract with the Georgia Department of Corrections for a work detail to conduct

landscaping and other services around the city.

Several council members were concerned that the city would be paying for a service it wasn't using, as detainees are not currently being allowed to operate due to COVID-19. Fortunately, the city has learned that it will only have to pay for services rendered.

The annual contract price for these services increased nearly \$10,000 in 2020 to \$49,318, which is the first increase in the 10 years the city has been contracting for the services, Conley said.

In other business, the city agreed to match the county in

donating \$7,000 toward the annual Fourth of July fireworks conducted by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce at Meeks Park, which will help the chamber offset raffle ticket revenues lost due to COVID-19.

WoodmenLife is donating \$1,000 as well, and the rest of the cost will be paid for by purchasers of premium parking packages at the park. As usual, a rain date is available should inclement weather interfere with the patriotic show July 4.

The council approved a Georgia Department of Transportation contract to accept \$30,000 in CARES

Act funding as part of the coronavirus federal relief package to reimburse the city for airport operating expenses.

Mayor Conley and council members welcomed Clay Pilgrim of Rushton Accounting & Business Advisors to present the city's 2019 audit, which they thereafter approved.

Pilgrim reported an unmodified, or "clean," opinion regarding the city's financial statements, saying that the report had actually been ready to present since April if not for COVID-19, which he called a testament to the record keeping and cooperation of the city.

Masks...from Page 1A



More and more people are getting outdoors in the nice summer weather, despite the pandemic.
Photo by Jarrett Whitener

maybe we are cutting down on a little.

"I think people should wear their masks and gloves still in stores, though. Virus or not, we have improved on hygiene a lot, and I think that it was a good change in a bad time."

Like Burke, other people are saying that masks are a great way to stay protected in the current environment, even if they are not the most comfortable things to wear.

"I think the best way for people to be safe is to keep wearing their masks and keeping their hands clean," said Olivia Burns Saturday while shopping at Ingles. "I bet everybody says that, but I agree with it."

"Good hygiene is really all we can do. I know that we don't have the best masks for keeping the virus away, but it

helps a little. I think people just don't think about it the right way. We aren't wearing the masks to stop us from getting the virus, but to help stop spreading it to others."

"There hasn't been a lot of information on people without symptoms, but it is still worth it to wear a mask just in case, and only until this all blows over. I'll be the first to admit that the masks are annoying to wear and a nuisance, but it is still necessary for us to consider others. The virus isn't gone yet."

This time in America is a confusing one for many, and more and more folks are asking themselves what the best thing to do is, whether that be returning to work or taking more precautions.

"I don't know what to think about the virus anymore," said Dianne Stewart, a shopper

at Home Depot on Saturday, June 6. "I'm from around Atlanta, and I actually had some friends that had the virus, so I know how big of a deal it is and how easy it spreads."

"The scary part about it is that you can't see it. You just don't know where it could be and when it would be there. I'm worried that people protesting might cause the spread of the virus again, and I just don't think that we would make it through this next one."

"On the drive here, I saw at least five places shut down permanently, and people are hurting for money. We can't shelter forever. If I had to say anything, it would be to wear your masks, because it doesn't hurt you to do it, and every little effort helps. People say they want normal, but they aren't helping us get there."

Reflections from Hamilton Gardens

A Banner Year

The entry into 2018 was off to a good start with many projects already in progress as work continued on the infrastructure. The beautiful, but aging, glass greenhouse needed a complete overhaul, and because of its age, there were no resources to guide the volunteers on the best way to put it back into service. New greenhouses are made out of plastic, not glass.

An operating greenhouse offers the potential to propagate native azaleas and rhododendrons from our own garden for selling at the annual plant sale; which can be a ticket to participate in Georgia Grown, and offers some limited tax relief. But first, the greenhouse has to be operational! Panels of glass were replaced, the misting system was overhauled and the potting tables rebuilt. And it still was not ready.

Another needed improvement was replacement of the original trail signs with a new and improved version. Signs were redesigned, given a new color and soon graced the entire garden.

A scary occurrence was the discovery of kudzu! The scourge of the south and a killer of gardens had suddenly invaded. The Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition came to the rescue. Armed with the only herbicide that effectively kills kudzu at the root, Tony Ward became the hero. He had to treat it twice and unfortunately, we discover a bit more each year. Did you know kudzu is a legume?

One very special activity in 2018 was the dedication of the Children's Memorial Daffodil Garden that was planted in the fall of 2017. This was a long sought-after project and a proud moment for Towns County to be recognized as a part of this initiative. The Daffodil Project is sponsored by the International Holocaust Commission whose goal is to plant 1.5 million special daffodil bulbs in honor of the 1.5 million children who were murdered in the Holocaust. Our 600 bulbs are part of that goal.

The sole donation receptacle at the front entry gate be-



came a" family "and received a name. Mr. Rhodie, the green man with the big eyes, was named by Doug Canup, the first President of Hamilton Gardens. Mrs. Rhodie stands at the back entrance to the Memorial Garden, and Rhodie Jr. (a rising junior at Towns County High) is near the Paris Pavilion.

The summer of 2018 introduced the Full Moon concerts to the Gardens and became an instant success. What better way to spend a summer evening than to bring your chair and picnic, listen to easy music, and watch the sun set in the west and the moon rise in the east. Another exciting premier was the engraving of the first memory/honor stones in the Celebration Plaza.

A new goal to add a pollinator garden got off the ground with a plan and the initial planting. These are perennial gardens and will become an official certified pollinator garden once all the required plants are in place and growing. Finally, but not the least

of the 2018 accomplishments, was the completion of the two-year Strategic Plan for the Gardens, on which the Board worked diligently throughout the long hot summer and fall: a significant milestone.

2018 was a sad year also in that we lost Marsha Elliot, one of our founding Board members and a very special friend.

For more information call 706 970-0011, hamiltongardens.org, follow us on Facebook. NT(Jun10,F2)SH

Conservation District meeting

The regular meeting of the Blue Ridge Mountain Conservation District will be held Friday June 19, 2020 at 10 a.m. at Meeks Park Pavilion located at: 490 Meeks Park Rd., Blairsville, GA 30512. (Upon entrance the pavilion will be on your left, just beyond the basketball courts).

For additional information, please call 706-745-2794 x3. T(Jun10,F1)SH