

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Have a Safe Fourth of July

During this Fourth of July weekend, people will be enjoying their time with family and friends as we celebrate the Independence Day of the greatest nation on earth. People will be camping, swimming, cooking out, and other summer activities. People may also be displaying their own local fireworks shows. Each year, Union County Fire Department reminds everyone of some safety tips for enjoying the festivities and having their own fireworks show.

As we have said many times, safety is always first. Fireworks are fun and exciting, but they can also be very dangerous. The last thing that we want is to spend our holiday weekend in the emergency room or worse, in a burn center. In 2021, there were over 5,000 injuries on the Fourth of July due to fireworks, and 36% of those were children. People should respect the hazards and dangers of all fireworks.

Here are a few tips and considerations when using fireworks. Never allow young children to handle fireworks, and older children should only use fireworks under close adult supervision. Use fireworks outdoors in a clear area away from flammable materials. Ignite one device at a time and maintain a safe distance after igniting. Never hold fireworks in your hand, and please do not make your own fireworks.

The weather this time of the year has been extremely hot and abnormally dry. Do not utilize fireworks in areas which are in danger of igniting such as dry grass fields, piled leaves, or dry woodland areas. It is a good idea to have a water hose or gardening tools nearby just in case some of the fireworks do cause a brush fire.

Another consideration is the laws that apply to fireworks. There are too many elements of the law to be explained here. The laws and ordinances cover things such as the minimum age to purchase fireworks, the time of day/night to ignite fireworks, the location, and the distances from certain areas. It is a good practice to research the laws and to follow them. The laws and ordinances are designed for the safety and wellbeing of the people. They are also designed for the consideration of neighbors.

These are just a few things to keep in mind during the holiday weekend. Union County Fire Department wants everyone to have an enjoyable holiday, but we also want them to be safe. Have a

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Finding Meaning

Heaven is "some fantasy," Arnold Schwarzenegger said. "Anyone that tells you something else is a (expletive) liar." Here's an immigrant from Austria who arrived in the U.S. in 1968 with little to his name. He reached celebrity status as a body builder, actor and politician. But success has not brought him hope, and it's hard to find meaning in life without hope. His words in that same interview reveal frustration and fear. "Who can we blame...that we have to die?" he said.

It is common to the human experience to link thoughts about mortality and the meaning of life. The philosopher Nietzsche observed that people can cope with most things (including death) if they find meaning within them. A full and meaningful life is the antidote to the emptiness of death.

Some regard Leo Tolstoy as the greatest author in history, citing his works "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina." But after finding success, Tolstoy came up short on meaning. Before he was 50, he had health, a wonderful family, a large and growing estate, the respect of his community, and even celebrity. But he was troubled. "Sooner or later my deeds will be forgotten and will no longer exist. It is only possible to go on living while you are intoxicated with life; once sober, it is impossible not to see that it is all a mere trick!"

Schwarzenegger and Tolstoy sound like the Apostle Paul, reflecting on the vanity of success. Paul met all the requirements to be a successful and influential religious leader, even persecuting those who disagreed. Yet, "Whatever things were gain to me," he writes, "those things I have counted as loss" (Phil. 3:7).

It is so human to pursue meaning in success, possessions, pleasure and influence. It is also so human to fail in the chase. Where does one find meaning in the brevity of this life, if not in those things? Paul's answer is, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8). His words reflect a great reset. He found meaning not in himself and his successes, but in Christ Jesus, his Creator and Redeemer.

The noted 20th century journalist Malcolm Muggeridge could relate to Paul's great reset. "I may, I suppose, regard my-

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. When will we receive our property tax bills?

A. The bills should be mailed out sometime this Fall and the property taxes will be due December 20, 2023.

Q. How is my property value determined for property tax purposes?

A. Your property tax is a tax based upon the value of your property, both real and personal. Real property is defined as land and generally anything that is erected, growing, or affixed to the land. Personal property is boats, airplanes, business inventory, and any equipment, furniture, and fixtures needed to run a business.

Property taxes are charged against the owner of record, of the property on January 1st, and against the property itself if the owner is not known.

The Tax Assessors Office is tasked with establishing the fair market value of the taxable real and personal properties in Union County. Fair market value means "the amount a knowledgeable buyer would pay for the property and a willing seller would accept for the property at an arm's length, bona fide sale."

Q. So how does the tax assessor's office determine fair market value?

A. The Board of Assessors does not create property values. Assessors and appraisers merely interpret what is happening in the market place. The appraised value is simply the estimate of what the property is worth.

The assessors use standard approaches in setting the value on all real and personal property. There are three approaches to value:

Cost Approach: The cost approach uses actual replacement cost of the building, less general depreciation, plus the value of the land.

Market Approach: The market approach involves analyzing sales of similar properties to predict the likely selling price of unsold properties.

Income Approach: The income approach is used for income-producing properties. It involves capitalizing the net income to arrive at a probable selling price for the property.

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Illusion of Equal Justice

The Department of Justice's years-long investigation into Hunter Biden came to a head last week as the President's son reached a plea agreement on charges related to taxes and gun possession. Hunter is expected to plead guilty to two federal misdemeanor counts of failing to pay his taxes in 2017 and 2018, as well as enter into a pretrial diversion agreement regarding a separate charge of illegally owning a gun while being a drug user.

Notably, this agreement will likely result in no jail time for Hunter Biden.

No other American could conceive such a slap-on-the-wrist scenario. Clearly, the President's son stands to benefit under our unscrupulous Department of Justice.

Yet President Biden's sinister scheme and the Deep State's nefarious intentions cannot be overstated. Hunter Biden's sweetheart deal is nothing more than our weaponized government

See Clyde, page 5A

United States Congressman Representative Andrew Clyde



Chamber of Commerce

While I was watching the news, they were warning everyone not to open a text that contained a virus that would transfer all your personal information to the sender and would lock down your phone. These days you never know what you can open and know if it is a scam. A friend was telling me that he clicked on what he thought was a trusted website and set off all kinds of bells and whistles warning him to shut down, that he had clicked on a site that had redirected him to a danger site.

In today's digital age, cyber security is a topic that everyone, whether you are a business owner or using your personal device, should be concerned with learning about. We spend more and more of our personal and professional lives online subjecting our data to threats of cyber attacks. This week of "Mind Your Business" will feature Boaz Networking Solutions and Levacloud, LLC that will be teaching you everything you need to know to help protect your data while

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

An Open Letter to Congress

Dear Senator/Representative, On behalf of all Americans, I implore you to pass permanent legislation that ALL current members of Congress must pass a mandatory, structured, and comprehensive U.S. Civics exam, no less rigorous than that which is required of all immigrants seeking U.S. citizenship. Passage of this same exam must be an eligibility requirement for all future Congressional candidates.

It is not unreasonable to demand that the people who make our laws must understand, comprehend, and comply with those laws to any less degree than those who are expected to obey our laws. The testing and grading circumstances and conditions must be as exact, and failure to pass said exam results in disqualification.

I ask that this proposal be implemented - as well as effective - immediately.

Thank you, Gary St. Lawrence

Our New Postmaster

Dear Editor, I live in Blairsville, in the Choestoe Hills community off Town Creek School Road, about 1/4 mile north of SR 180. Our five community mailboxes had been located on the west (south-bound) side of Town Creek School Road... where the speed limit is 45 mph. It has always been unsafe for all of us to cross the road to get our mail. One community member had been to the Post Office requesting that our mailboxes be moved to a safer location, but the former postmaster said NO.

On Tuesday, April 18, of this year, my husband had a near-miss with a car we believe must have been going well above the 45 mph posted limit. At that time, I became determined to get the mailboxes moved to a safer location.

Earlier this month, the North Georgia News published an article about our new postmaster, Mandy King, who assumed the postmaster position on May 20.

Mandy King, along with our mail carrier, Kayla, finally gave us authorization to move all five of our mailboxes on June 8, 2023!!! They were moved from the west side of Town Creek School Road to the southwest corner of Barnhill Road, a distance of about 50 feet. This is not only safer for us, but safer for Kayla, our mail carrier, as she no longer needs to watch out for cars coming from around the curve at 80 mph!

Mandy has already proven to be a caring postmaster for Blairsville.

Barbara Mazza

Irritability - L & T

Everyone on planet earth has to deal with loneliness from time to time. It is no respecter of persons. It can occur in babies, children, adolescents and adults — in marriage and in single life. It can create a sad, dreary feeling. It sometimes becomes an emotion that we simply have to "ride through" until we get to the other side. The word HALT helps us deal with our irritability. The "H" stands for Hunger, which means we need to get a snack to eat. The "A" stands for Anger, which means that something or someone has caused us to become angry. To halt that irritability requires that we discover what or who made us angry and confront the anger. The third letter of Halt is LONELINESS.

Loneliness can disturb our peaceful souls and stir up dismal feelings. Even in a room filled with people we love, we can still feel lonely. It doesn't provide us much notice that it's waiting at our doorstep. It knocks and comes right on in. This category of irritability has a double whammy. On one hand we feel lonely, while at the same time our irritability is constructing a wall between others and us.

The real challenge in dealing with loneliness is realizing that we need to have some type of contact with a living creature, and then actually making contact. Our loneliness is propelling us toward receiving some type of attention. Whether it's a pet or a person, we crave the acknowledgment. In my own life, there have been times when I would go to the grocery store just to sit and to watch — I just needed to have my loneliness taken care of. My irritability had separated me temporarily from friends because of my irritating mood. I knew that to solve the problem of loneliness and to get rid of the irritability, it would require my being in the midst of others.

Loneliness can be paralyzing because one feels miserable and forgotten. One thing is for certain: you cannot halt your irritability until the loneliness is taken care of. You and I may feel lonely and forsaken, but we are never alone. God is always with us, no matter how lonely we feel: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Hebrews 13:5

Loneliness occurs in the young, old, poor, rich and famous. In the book "Invitation: Billy Graham and the Lives God Touched," the authors Basyle and Adam Tchividjian (grandsons of Billy Graham) tell the story of Dr. Graham being in south Florida for a board meeting. While there, Dr. Graham was feeling lonely. He knew what to do — he looked up some friends who lived nearby and went for a visit.

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Successful Mental Health

Dr. James Ray Ashurst PH. D.



What's in a Name?

Have you ever wondered about the reputation of a family name? What were the personalities of your ancestors? What were their likes and dislikes? How did they interact with other people? My grandmother Delphia Adams' maiden name was Baker. Her father was Charlie Newton Baker. He farmed and logged for a living. He loved to Fox Hunt with a large pack of dogs. Charlie's grandfather was Hiram Baker. Hiram migrated to Alabama from North Carolina. Hiram actually spent some time living here in Union County, Georgia, in the 1850 census.

Hiram's ancestors came out of Pennsylvania. Hiram's fourth great-grandfather was Robert Baker Sr. Robert came from a line of at least three generations of gunsmiths. Sometime early in the 1700s, Robert was called to England by Queen Anne to manufacture arms for the Queen's Army. Robert came back to America and sometime around 1719 acquired 200 acres of land at the confluence of Pequea Creek and the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania, where he built a gunsmith shop and began making rifles for the people of that area. Robert and his son Caleb were some of the first gunsmiths in America. The rifles which were being made at this mill were called Baker Rifles. These rifles were in the style of what we now call a Kentucky Long Rifle. We don't know the name of the inventor of the Kentucky/Pennsylvania Rifles. However, we know that Robert Baker was one of the first to make these types of rifles in the Lancaster area of Pennsylvania.

Robert died in 1728 and his sons took over the family business. When the Revolutionary War began, the English came to the area and forced Caleb and his brothers to make bullets for the British Army. The British didn't know that Caleb's sons were fighting in the Continental Army with George Washington. Also, unknown to the British was Caleb and his brothers were making Kentucky Long Rifles for the Continental Army.

Robert Baker's grandfather was one of the first men to build a fort in Pennsylvania. John Baker traded with the Indians and built a fort and blockhouse in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, sometime around 1650. Later he served as a colonel in the French and Indian Wars.

Go back another 100 years and we find another Baker. Sir George Baker was a doctor. He served as "Surgeon-in-Ordinary" to Queen Elizabeth. He wrote several books about health and the making of medicines. George's grandfather

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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. However, 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. 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 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. When it's really hot during the summer time fire ants will burrow deeper into the ground, making them more difficult to treat. Treatments in the summer are best done in the morning or evening when it's cooler.

Using a bait will be the most effective way of controlling fire ants. Amdro is the main ant bait that is used for fire ants. Broadcast the bait in a circle around each mound. It's important to know that Amdro is not labeled for use in vegetable gardens. It has to be used in scenarios where the plants growing there are not going to be eaten, like your lawn. 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.

I have also seen people using orange oil mixed with soap and other ingredients. This treatment is effective because it eats away the ant's skin. However, it will also kill any other insects, grubs, or worms that are in its path. It could also strip away the outer layer of any roots that it meets.

There are not many biological controls for fire ants in the United States because they are an invasive species. Fire ants are native to South America and have many natural enemies

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UGA extension watching and working

Jacob Williams



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Kenneth West Shawn Jarrard Derek Richards Todd Forrest Lowell Nicholson
Publisher/Owner General Manager/Editor Advertising Director Sports Editor Photographer

Website: www.nganews.com • Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com • Mail: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

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Publication No: 001505

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Q. If I own a \$100,000 home, how much will my property taxes be in Union County?

A. For simplicity, we will assume there are no exemptions on this property. A \$100,000 home would be assessed at 40% of the assessed value, which means it would be assessed and you pay taxes on only \$40,000. You take the assessed value and multiply it by the mil rate to determine the taxes on this example.

\$100,000 assessed value of the home
x 40% of the assessed value
\$ 40,000 amount you pay taxes on

\$40,000 amount you pay taxes on
x .005113 county mil rate of 2022.
\$204.52 Total due for county taxes

\$40,000 amount you pay taxes on
x .008200 school mil rate of 2022.
\$328.00 Total due for school taxes

\$204.52 Total due for county taxes
+ \$328.00 Total due for school taxes
\$532.52 Total tax bill

Q. Are there other factors besides the mil rate that impact property taxes?

A. Yes, there are many. Some counties have different services that are more costly than other counties. Union County has more miles of county roads than many counties and that obviously cost more to maintain. Union County also has over 50 % of our county owned by the federal government, and none of that property can be taxed, where most counties collect taxes on most of the land in the county. In Union County, we have a budget of nearly \$1 million dollars just for our paid fire department while most rural counties do not even have a paid full-time fire department. We feel the safety of the public is worth the cost since our Fire Department not only goes on fire calls, but assists on medical calls, car accidents, search and rescue, and as a citizen, you are guaranteed a response in the event of an emergency. They also work closely with GEMA and FEMA regarding emergency management in the county and are continuously training. So, when you look at all factors available to you, it is obvious that Union County government does, in fact, have a very low property tax rate while providing a very high level of service to you, the public.

Ashurst... continued from Page 4A

Suggestions for L: Visit a friend; call someone; go somewhere there are people; play with your pets; invite guests into your home.

T – Tired: When we were babies, our parents knew how irritable we could become unless we got a nap. The same is true of all ages. Our bodies demand an adequate amount of sleep. This is certainly a “no-brainer,” but sometimes we forget to oil and to tune up our bodies — with rest. When we push ourselves to the “nth” degree, without adequate sleep or rest, the body may have a meltdown. It is tired, exhausted. And it demands our attention — sleep. When the body is forced to keep operating past adequate sleep, it does its natural thing: meanness, irritability.

We can actually become mean-spirited towards others and ourselves. In some cultures, time during the work hours is given for naps. What a brilliant idea! Unfortunately in our American society, taking a nap while working is a no-no. Thus, this category of irritability can be difficult to solve since we are expected to be alert, not napping. And since we cannot get 40 winks at work, we may need to splash cold water on our faces or whatever else does the trick. We have to bide our time until z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z.

Suggestions for T: Get the sleep your body needs; rest during your work breaks; take a stroll; when possible, walk even when tired.

You may find, at times, that you can't place the cause of your irritability into any of the four categories (H-A-L-T). That will be a rare occasion. Two of the categories (hunger and tiredness) are physical in scope while the other two (anger and loneliness) are both mental and emotional. By far, anger and loneliness will present the greatest challenge in which to confront. The reason is that each one has layers. With anger, you may be disappointed in someone or disgusted with yourself for being in a negative situation. Or perhaps you may feel mistreated, discouraged or betrayed. Any number of negative emotions could set the stage for the explosion of anger. If the anger has been allowed to fester, then the irritability can emerge full-blown. If the irritability is due to loneliness, then dealing with the feelings of sadness, misery and disappointment have to be faced.

When hunger and tiredness are the prevailing reasons for our irritable nature, they usually do not carry extra burdens of hidden feelings. Their solutions can be rather simple: food and rest/sleep.

Clyde... continued from Page 4A

attempting to conceal the Biden family's corruption and distract Americans from the truth.

But the American people won't fall for this nonsense.

For years, the DOJ and FBI have blissfully turned a blind eye to the Biden family's crooked behavior and shady foreign business dealings. Even now, as we have troves of evidence detailing Joe Biden's criminal misconduct and pattern of corruption, these politicized agencies maintain laser-focus on obscuring the truth to protect both the President and his family members.

And while Hunter Biden enjoys this unjust protection, President Donald Trump is bearing the brunt of our weaponized government.

As you know, Trump faces more than 30 felony counts in a federal indictment related to his alleged mishandling of classified documents. In crystal clear truth, our sitting President is weaponiz-

ing the Department of Justice against his political rival for the offense that he committed — though these cases are undoubtedly worlds apart.

Rightfully, many Americans cried foul — arguing President Trump's federal indictment is the most damning example yet of our two-tiered system of justice. These concerns led to the conveniently timed news of Hunter Biden's sweetheart plea deal — revealing a desperate attempt by the DOJ to create an illusion of equal justice.

But Americans deserve more than a facade of fairness.

Rest assured, the DOJ-Hunter Biden deal will not deter Congress from fully investigating the Biden Crime Family's corruption — with Joe Biden at the very center. As this congressional probe presses on, I look forward to working with my colleagues to deliver accountability to the American people.

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

“John” had another reputation. I can imagine that as a young man George watched as many of his friends and acquaintances suffered and perished as a result of the Black Death, which must have inspired the young man toward the field of medicine.

John was a prominent man which served in several capacities to the English Throne. He served as the Undersecretary of London in 1520, the Recorder of London, the Attorney General of England, Cabinet Minister, and Speaker of the House of Commons. Sir John “Bloody” Baker acquired this nickname by helping the King of England, Henry VIII, persecute Catholics and protestant dissidents.

History tells us that Henry VIII's wife didn't bear him any male heirs. So, he sought to divorce this woman. When the Pope refused to grant an annulment or divorce to the King, he began persecuting those in the Catholic and the Protestant Faith. My ancestor Sir John “Bloody” Baker helped Henry VIII in this persecution and as a result acquired many lands and homes from those persecuted. He also acquired the infamous nickname.

As you can see, my ancestors are comprised of patriots, saints and scoundrels. I suspect that all of our ancestors are comprised of such people.

Williams... continued from Page 4A

there. Researchers have to be very careful about introducing a natural predator, because the effects of that introduced species are unknown on our ecosystem.

If you have any questions about fire ants and fire ant control, contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Fowler... continued from Page 4A

self as a relatively successful man...Yet, multiply these tiny triumphs by millions, and they are nothing,” he writes. “Indeed, a positive impediment measured against one drop of that living water Christ offers to the spiritually thirsty, irrespective of who or what they are.”

My prayer is that Mr. Schwarzenegger and my dear readers would thirst for living water, and not allow other triumphs to be an impediment to finding it. In Christ, life has hope, purpose and meaning. “In Him we live and move and exist” (Acts 18:28).

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

navigating the internet. Everything from best practices for responding to emails to safe social media will be addressed.

If you have not registered for this class scheduled for Wednesday, July 28, at 8 a.m., be sure to contact the Chamber to save your spot. Don't miss this opportunity to learn how to stay safe online.

Remember to say a kind word to someone and help make Life Better in Blairsville!

Dyer... continued from Page 4A

great Independence Day!

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

VFW Fish Fry

The VFW is pleased to have you come and have Fish Fry with us at our post on Sunny Side for \$12 or \$15 all you can eat.

The nights of the fish fry is still the second (2nd) and the fourth (4th) Fridays of each month Remember no tax and no tip. We hope to see you there.

VFW Bingo

The VFW Post 7807 in Hiawassee has Bingo every Sunday afternoon at 2:30 PM. Doors open at 1:30 PM.

We are located on Highway 288, Sunnyside Road, Hiawassee, Ga. Food and drinks will be available. Come join us and have fun! Starting January 16. For more info call 706 896-8387. NT(June28,A)JH

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Wilderness Pickers ... August 4
Mountain Breeze Band ... August 11
Saved By Grace (Ralph Piano) ... August 18
Mike Lane ... August 25
Tunnel Rats ... September 1
Heritage Festival ... September 2 & 3
Sammy & Samuel Ensley ... September 8
Gavyn Thorsell ... September 15
Jack Miller ... September 22
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Jim Wood/Tommy Townsend ... October 6
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