

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Proud

Each week when I write this column, I always try to keep it informative, useful and current so that people can apply any reminders or suggestions. It is rare that I write about how I feel. I love my job, and it makes me feel like I am making a real difference. It can be stressful and demanding at times, but the one thing that comes very easy for me to be proud of the people and the departments.

A job in public safety is unusual to say the least. The hours are crazy; the job is demanding; and there is little sleep. You can go from nothing to a high-stress situation in a matter of seconds. Doesn't sound like a very good "help wanted" ad, does it? Why do people do it? It's because they have an underlying desire to help people and to make a difference.

There are many people who have this desire. The firefighters, both career and volunteer, dispatchers, and staff are out there every day. They are up at all hours of the night, weekends, holidays, etc. It makes me proud to know that they are that dedicated and they have that desire.

People do not get to see what I see. I see dispatchers who take a call and have so much concern for the caller. They want to help. I see firefighters who have been working all day and sometimes all night responding to calls. They are tired, but they always talk about the calls and you can tell they feel like they made a difference. I see volunteers leave their families and stop what they were doing just to go to an emergency. Who wouldn't be proud of that?

There are many people who work behind the scenes. Battalion Chief Richard Jones runs the day-to-day operations of the fire department. He ensures that we have people and equipment ready to go. Jeannie Matheson is the Administrative Assistant at the EMA/Fire Department. She does many administrative duties every day to make the department run smoothly.

Millie Baxter is the Lieutenant at the 911 Dispatch Center. She operates the day-to-day activities of the county communications and ensures that the 911 center is operating correctly. It would take several columns to list all the various jobs that these people perform behind the scenes to make sure that the emergency services function properly.

Being proud of these departments and these people is easy

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



MTV Truth

Chris Pratt made news last month because cultural icons don't usually speak about matters of faith in a venue like MTV's Movie and TV Awards.

I'd never heard of him, nor his movie "Jurassic World." So, please don't take this as an endorsement of the actor or his work. I invite you to consider, though, a few of his Nine Rules offered as he was accepting the Generation Award in front of his peers and fans. His Rules speak about the relationship between God and man.

"You have a soul. Be careful with it." It might be more correct to say that you are a soul that lives in a body, for now. The Hebrew word often translated "soul" means "living being." Your soul is who you really are, and you are worth protecting.

"God is real." You don't have to take a "leap of faith" to believe God exists. Evidence abounds. Dallas Willard said, "We live in a culture that has cultivated the idea that the skeptical person is always smarter than one who believes. You can almost be as stupid as a cabbage as long as you doubt." Many intelligent people accept the evidence that God exists.

"God loves you, God wants the best for you." The Bible says, "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love" (1 John 4:16).

"Learn to pray. It's easy, and it is so good for your soul." E. M. Bounds said, "Prayer is the language of a man burdened with a sense of need." If the burdens you carry aren't enough to warrant your prayers, ask God for more burdens. Not really. Don't you have enough already?

"Reach out to someone in pain. Be of service." Jesus calls you to love "your neighbor as yourself." A lawyer asked Him, "Who is my neighbor?" He replied with the well-known story of the Good Samaritan who showed mercy to a stranger. Then He said, "Go and do the same" (Luke 10).

"You are imperfect... grace is a gift. Like the freedom that we enjoy in this country, that grace was paid for with somebody else's blood. Do not forget that." Wow, did he really say that on MTV? Americans memorialize our war heroes who died for our freedom. But far greater is our eternal freedom from the power

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

This week's questions and answers focus on the Tax Commissioner's Office. The Tax Commissioner's Office is an elected office with Lee Knight being the elected official. These questions contain general information, and if you have further questions, you should call their office at 706-439-6017, or stop by their office located in the Union County Courthouse at 65 Courthouse Street, Blairsville.

Q. What is the process for renewal of motor vehicle tags?

A. Motor vehicle tag renewals are due on the owner's birthday. If you were a resident of Union County last year and renewed your tag in Union County last year, then you should receive a bill 60 days prior to your birthday if your address has not changed. If you did not, bring your registration with tag number to the Tax Commissioner's Office. You can also renew by phone with a credit/debit card, but there is a 3% fee to do so.

Q. What is the penalty for late motor vehicle registration?

A. The penalty for late registration is 10% of the tax and 25% of the tag fee. These penalties begin immediately following the due date (midnight of your birthday). This is unless you fall under the new TAVT system.

Q. Please explain what the new TAVT system is.

A. TAVT stands for Title Ad Valorem Tax which is a one-time tax (fee) replacing the "birthday tax." Generally, any motor vehicle purchased on or after March 1, 2013, and titled in Georgia is exempt from sales and use tax and the annual ad valorem tax, also known as the "birthday tax." These taxes are replaced by a one-time tax called the title ad valorem tax fee (TAVT). Unlike sales tax, which is imposed on the price of the vehicle, the TAVT is imposed on the Fair Market Value of a used motor vehicle, or the purchase price of a new vehicle. The tax is 7% and also applies to people registering their vehicle when moving into the state of Georgia from another state.

Q. What do I need to do if I buy a new car?

A. If you buy a vehicle from a dealer, all vehicles must be registered within 30 days of purchase. No one can register a car in the state of Georgia without a title applied for at the time of reg-

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

Keeping Your Kids Occupied During Summer Vacation

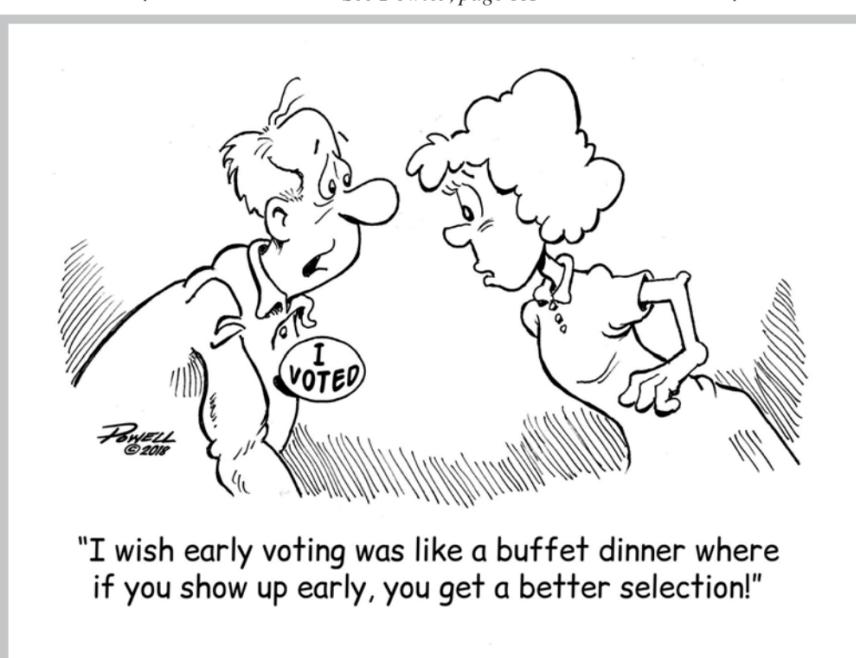
Teens are amped for summer vacation, but as the school-free weeks go on and on, boredom usually sets in. And that's where problems could start. According to reports, summer break is when a lot of teens take drugs for the first time. Along with underage drinking, first time use of marijuana, hallucinogens and inhalants are higher during the summer than it is during the school year.

Here are some activities to keep your young loved ones engaged, to hopefully have a drug-free summer vacation.

Be a Boss: If your teen has a money-making mindset and marketable skill, he or she may want to start their own summer gig. From mowing the lawn, babysitting, or tutoring, to creating

See Drug Free, page 5A

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.



"I wish early voting was like a buffet dinner where if you show up early, you get a better selection!"

Letters to the Editor

Is English a Lost Language?

Dear Editor,
Ours is a dying language, like, you know, lost. We use expressions that are supposed to convey our thoughts or needs but are really words that have recently been invented. Slang. These words are understood by only a few select groups. Teenage slang is used to the extent that it is carried over into adulthood and therefore creates an entirely new language. The language that has been taught to the elderly is no longer understood by the younger generation, and vice versa. I listen, inadvertently, to conversations conducted by some of our younger "dudes," and though I can understand the words and get the

See Sowers, page 5A

Independence Day

Dear Editor,
In 1776, the Continental Congress declared that the 13 American colonies regarded themselves as a new free nation and the United States of America was no longer part of the British Empire, as they adopted Independence Day of July 4th, 1776. There is a long tradition in America to celebrate this historical occasion by folks having picnics with their families and celebrating this event by singing songs like: "The Star-Spangled Banner," "God Bless America," "My Country Tis of Thee" or "Stars and Stripes Forever." America has had a long history of going to war, whether far away or on our own shores, to protect our freedoms from those who would take it away and enslave us into some type of tyranny or dictatorship, which is far from be-

See Combs, page 5A

Climate Change

Dear Editor,
In the July 4, 2018, *North Georgia News*, a writer in a letter to the editor made many (with no source citations) unsubstantiated claims about science and climate change. He claimed climate change is taking a great toll on human life and economic losses, but provided no cited facts or analysis to make such a statement. He made statements as indisputable facts which are based on his opinion. Science is based on the analysis of data, not on believing the science.

The writer's solution to stop what he believes is a danger to the planet was a plan that greatly increased the cost of energy. He claimed that by greatly increasing the cost of fossil fuel, you would grow the economy. Analysis of data from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, and the Union County Tax Assessors printed in the

See Burch, page 5A

Plant Diseases

We've been getting lots of rain this year. According to U.S. Climate Data, we average 4.8 inches of rainfall for the month of June. However, according to U.S. Geological survey, we received 7 inches of rainfall in June 2018. Additional rainfall can be beneficial for recharging underground water aquifers after periods of drought. Unfortunately, high amounts of rainfall can lead to problems with disease. Let's talk about why diseases occur, what are some general disease types to look out for, and methods of control.

A useful tool for understanding why plant diseases occur is the plant disease triangle. In one corner is plant susceptibility. Susceptibility is predetermined by the plant's physiology. The second corner of the triangle is the pathogen. It may seem like a no-brainer, but the disease causing pathogen must be present for plants to get sick. The third corner is a favorable environment for the disease to occur. Most diseases like wet conditions, which is why all the rain we've been getting can be problematic. If any one of the corners is missing from the disease triangle, then disease will not be present in your plants.

Root rots are a problematic disease in Georgia. They love humid, wet conditions, with poorly drained soils. Root rots do most of their damage below the soil line, so they may not be obvious at first. Some symptoms to look out for are wilting leaves, yellowing leaves, and poor growth. Root rots attack the roots, decreasing the plant's ability to uptake water and nutrients. Incorporating organic matter into your soil and reducing plant stress will make a less favorable environment for root rots.

Fungal leaf spots cover a wide range of plant diseases that are often specific to certain plants. Symptoms are small spots on leaves that have tan or gray centers, and dark brown to purple margins. Fungal leaf spots survive on fallen plant debris, so it's important to remove debris after it's fallen to keep your area sanitary. Leaf spots also like high humidity. Pruning your plants to increase air flow can help reduce the risk of disease. If you are irrigating your plants, try to do it in the morning so that the foliage has time to dry off by the nighttime. Wet, cool leaves is a like an all you can eat buffet to fungal leaf spots.

Rusts are easily identified by the raised pustules on the undersides of the leaves. The pustules will break open and release an orange-powder. Keeping leaves dry and removing infected leaves will help keep disease pressure down.

Finally, Botrytis is a specific disease that

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Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Around The Farm

Home Cooking Baseball

My Dad and his brother played baseball during the summer with a bunch of boys from Trapptown. In those days, all the little communities had baseball teams which traveled all across Alabama and Tennessee playing baseball against anyone wishing to play. Magical sounding names like Pebble, Dime, Bear Creek, Hackleburgh, Leighton and Russellville all had traveling baseball teams. But, everybody's dream was to play the big boys down in Birmingham. One day, Roy Reeves, the manager of the Trapptown team, announced to his boys, "I have secured a home-and-home series with the boys in Birmingham."

The Trapptown team made the trip to Birmingham to play baseball in front of a crowd of 1,000 spectators, which was more people than most of them had ever saw. Yes, they were nervous, but they were good players. Dad was playing shortstop. Uncle Bud was playing first base. Harold Cohen was in center field while the Trapp brothers were playing third and catcher. The boys were really good and the game was a tight one.

The score was 1 to 0 in the top of the 5th inning. Dad was at bat and hit a ball over the head of the center fielder. There was no fence and the ball was hit so well that it rolled 150 yards after it hit the ground. As Dad rounded the bases, the home plate umpire told him to go back to second base. It seems the hit was ruled a ground rule double because there was no fence and the runner on first was sent back to third. The next batter struck out for the third out and the score remained 1 to 0.

In the bottom of the 6th inning, Uncle Bud was batting and hit a line drive that went under third base. While the third baseman from Birmingham was looking for the ball, Uncle Bud ran all the way to third base. Finally, the third baseman found the ball under the base and the umpire ruled the hit as a foul ball. The boys from Trapptown lost that game 1 to 0.

The next game was played in Trapptown. Skeeter Trapp was an old man of 38. Skeeter made it to first and was leading off a little when the pitcher tried to pick him off. As Skeeter tried to get back to first the young first baseman of Birmingham tried to block the bag.

Skeeter told the young man he should not try to block the bag because he would get knocked down. The young boy tried to block the bag again after the next pitch. As Skeeter came

Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



RC&D

Full Community Costs of Wildfire

The main goal of our wildfire education and risk reduction programs (Firewise, Ready-Set-Go, and FAC) that we promote around north Georgia is to make citizens aware of the total impact of a destructive wildfire in our mountains.

The damage that we see with burnt landscape and buildings is only a small part of the total cost to the community and surrounding areas. If a fire destroys our mountains, all the features that make people want to come here to vacation, camp, and retire will be gone for generations to come.

Recovery from a wildfire takes many years for nature to heal the scars left in a fire's wake. Almost half of the full community costs of wildfire are paid for at the local level, including homeowners, businesses and government agencies. Many of these costs are due to long-term damages to community and environmental services, such as landscape rehabilitation, lost business and tax revenues, and property and infrastructure repairs. By comparison, analysis suggests suppression costs comprise around 9 percent of total wildfire costs. The remaining costs include short-term expenses, or those costs occurring within the first six months—and long-term damages accruing during many months and years following a wildfire.

Communities at risk to wildfires can reduce wildfire impacts and associated costs through land use planning. Analysis of the literature suggests nearly half of the full community costs of wildfires are paid at the local community level by government agencies, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and homeowners. Almost all wildfire costs accrued at the local level are the result of long-term damages such as landscape rehabilitation, lost business and tax revenues, degraded ecosystem services, depreciated property values, and impacts to tourism and recreation.

The remaining wildfire costs are paid at the state and federal level, or are paid by a combination of local, state, and federal organizations. State and federal agencies are responsible for paying the bulk of suppression costs. While substantial, suppression costs comprise only 9 percent of total wildfire costs; additional short-term expenses and long-term damages account for 91 percent of total wildfire costs.

Overall, short-term expenses such as relief aid, evacuation services, and home and property loss comprise around 35 percent of total wildfire costs. Related costs from long-term damages, which can take years to fully manifest, account for approximately 65 percent of total wildfire costs. Wildfire costs greatly vary depending on factors within the built and unbuilt environment. Socioeconomic context, housing density, the duration and size of a wildfire, and other variables influence the overall cost of a wildfire.

In general, upward trends in urban growth and development in areas at risk to wildfires suggest a parallel rise in total wildfire costs. Additionally, climate change is influencing the frequency, intensity, and duration of wildfires and will likely exacerbate wildfire costs in the future. California's wildfire season in 2017, for example, demonstrates the extent of devastation that can result when wildfires spread into dense housing developments and are fueled by dry and windy weather conditions. While early projections of the full costs of California's historic wildfires are preliminary, some estimates are into the hundreds of billions of dollars.

In the aftermath of a wildfire, local communities shoulder the responsibilities and costs of ongoing recovery. Homeowners, businesses, local organizations, and agencies can take years to financially rebound, and perhaps longer to heal emotionally and psychologically. Yet as more people continue to build in harm's way and as wildfire trends rise, wildfire costs will increase.

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