

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## Driving Safety

Over the last couple of months, we have seen some significant motor vehicle accidents. There has been an increase in highway traffic over the last couple of years, especially during the summer. It stands to reason that the more vehicles we have on our roads, the more likely there will be an accident. Union County Fire Department would like to provide a few driving tips.

First, wearing a seatbelt is essential. We have seen a couple of accidents where wearing a seatbelt would have made a significant difference in the outcome. Car safety designs are centered around the driver and passengers wearing a seatbelt to keep them in place during an accident. Seatbelts work in conjunction with the airbags and crumple zones to provide a safe area for passengers.

Another issue that has become a major cause of automobile accidents is distracted driving. There was a time when the only major distraction was changing the radio station but today there are multiple distractions. The No. 1 distraction is cellphone use. Drivers may be texting, emailing or even browsing the internet while driving, all of which are illegal in Georgia. It is unlawful for a person to use a wireless telecommunication device to write, send or read a text-based communication while operating a vehicle. It is also unlawful for drivers to "physically hold or support, with any part of his or her body," a "wireless telecommunication" or "stand-alone electronic" device while operating a vehicle.

Texting is the most dangerous cellphone distraction. It involves holding the phone, looking and typing. How dangerous is texting and driving? An article by Jacob Masters of the Brain Injury Society compares texting and driving to drinking and driving. The article states: "Drivers who are texting while behind the wheel have a 23 percent higher chance of causing a crash. That is equivalent to drinking four beers and then getting behind the wheel." There are many driving distractions, and everyone should avoid anything that diverts their complete attention from operating their vehicle.

The last issue is speed. We live in a very fast world, and people are always in a hurry. That increase of 10 to 15 miles per hour will only shave a few seconds off a short trip and only a few minutes on a long trip. However, that same increase in speed reduces your

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**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**  
David Dyer

## Love Elegy

Former Sen. Zell Miller resisted the term "hillbilly" as derogatory. But J.D. Vance claims to be one, and writes from that perspective in "Hillbilly Elegy."

The short version of Vance's story is that his grandparents were dirt poor and in love. They married and moved north to escape dire poverty. Their grandson (Vance) would graduate from Yale Law School.

Vance moved in with his Mamaw during his high school years when his mother could no longer provide for him. He thought education was pointless, opportunity was elusive, and life was hopeless. But Mamaw believed he had a chance to escape the misery. Once, she bought him a calculator. In her salty way she yelled, "Have you finished your math homework?" "No Mamaw, not yet." "Well you (dang) well better start. I didn't spend every penny I had on that little computer for you to (laze) around all day!"

She challenged him because she loved him and he knew it. When he was at Marine boot camp she wrote daily, sometimes multiple letters. He writes, "I read every day that Mamaw was proud of me, that she loved me, and that she knew I wouldn't give up." She loved him too much to affirm his fall into the familiar trap of bad choices and underachievement.

That's too rare these days. "We are in a culture that says the most loving thing you can do is to affirm someone in their own choices," says John Stonestreet of the Colson Center. What if those choices are culturally embraced but personally destructive? Can true love affirm what is harmful or untrue?

As followers of Christ, we love like He did. He did not affirm a young man's reliance on wealth but said, "With God all things are possible" (Luke 18). He did not affirm Zaccheus' fraud, but was willing to associate with him (Luke 19). He did not affirm the Samaritan woman's lifestyle, but offered her "a well of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4).

Today's chaotic and confusing cultural moment begs for displays of the clarifying love of God. That doesn't mean you must change people or fix all that's wrong in the world. But you can "be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other,

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**All Things New**  
Wayne Fowler

## Commissioner's Questions

**Q. I saw something regarding Governor Brian Kemp introducing the Georgia Safety Promise. What is this?**

A. The Georgia Safety Promise is a statewide campaign from the Governor's Office and the Georgia Department of Health that encourages businesses and the public to agree to simple measures that can be taken to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and keep Georgia open for business. This is not a formal agreement that individuals or businesses agree to, but it is a commitment that can be made to do what has been recommended since the threat of COVID-19 became a reality.

**Q. What safety measures are being recommended for businesses and individuals through this program?**

A. The recommended safety measures (not requirements) are basically the same as they have been since the beginning of the COVID-19 protocol. Business owners would promise to promote social distancing within their businesses, promote wearing face coverings, clean commonly used surfaces, and wash and sanitize hands. Individuals would be promising to adhere to social distancing, wearing face coverings, and washing and sanitizing hands often.

**Q. So, what does an individual or business need to do if they decide they want to participate in the Georgia Safety Promise?**

A. You would go to the website: [georgia.org/SafetyPromise](http://georgia.org/SafetyPromise). On this website you will find promotional materials available for individuals to print or to use on social media. For businesses, there is a section to input your business name and basic information about your business. You then receive a full digital toolkit of resources to share your commitment to the Georgia Safety Promise, including suggested social media posts and signage for your business.

**Q. What is the purpose of the Georgia Safety Promise and what is the result supposed to be?**

A. The goal of this campaign is to keep Georgia businesses open. If everyone, including businesses and individuals, will follow these simple guidelines, the possibility of having to close Georgia

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**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**  
Lamar Paris

## Drug Free Mountain Life

### Parents and Early Prevention Series - Part 4

Have you ever wondered what struggles other parents or caregivers of teens encounter when dealing with drugs and alcohol today?

You may feel that you are the only one with questions and concerns and are reluctant to discuss this topic with others due to the stigma surrounding alcohol and drug use. Here is the GOOD NEWS!! You are not the only parent with questions and concerns about how to manage your teen and the topic of drug use.

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.

Partnership for Drug Free Kids recently conducted eight focus groups across the country with a diverse set of parents of 11 to 16-year-olds and found that an overwhelming majority shared similar concerns and reservations about how to manage early prevention strategies with their teens. Some were certain that their kids had

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## Letters to the Editor

### Only Addicts?

**To the Editor,**  
Questions, questions, questions after reading the news account of the Gowder brothers/Heaton defense:

1. If they were "only addicts," why was a multi-jurisdictional law enforcement task force needed to gather evidence, and how many millions of dollars in salaries, vehicle expense and digital equipment did this take out of our local taxpayers' pockets while all three got off with  
See Senart, page 5A

### A Time for Healing

**To the Editor,**  
It is time for America to put aside partisan politics and to act for the common good. The rhetoric coming from both sides of the aisle is filled with anger and bitterness. Each side tries to vilify the other, and each side seems so entrenched in their viewpoints that proving that they are right is more important than doing what is right. How did we come to this?

The only way we can ever solve the monumental problems of our day is to treat each other  
See Dixon, page 5A

### Wear a Face Mask; Save Lives

**To the Editor,**  
I reflected on the golden rule while returning home from a trip to Walmart this morning ("So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you"). Maybe 10 percent of the people in the store wore a face mask. Many ignored the directional arrows at the end of every aisle to help people social distance. I had to ask the person behind me in the checkout line to move back. Even one of the employees stocking shelves had pulled down their face mask.

As the number of coronavirus cases skyrocket and the death toll increases, it is difficult  
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### Americans United

**To the Editor,**  
In reference to the letters to the editor on July 1, 2020, I want to thank Mr. White, Ms. Boudreau and Mr. Braddy for their letters. Their comments echoed my own thoughts so very well and, I believe, those of many others in this time of turmoil in our country.

As to Mr. Gearheart's letter, I respect his opinion and agree that it was inappropriate for Mr. Floyd's family to receive a tri-folded burial flag that is traditionally reserved for service members, police officer or veteran family members upon their passing. But I take issue with  
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## Firewise and the Pandemic

Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D is the Georgia Firewise Liaison, and we have worked hard to recruit 110 recognized Firewise communities across Georgia. It has taken a lot of hard work by everybody connected to the Firewise program in Georgia, and we are not going to let something like a pandemic stop our progress, because wildfire doesn't know any difference. We cannot let our guard down, and we must keep our momentum going to keep our homes and communities safe from the wildfire that will come our way one day when it finally stops raining, and it will stop and then turn dry quicker than you can imagine. That is the dangerous time when we have become complacent and look up and there is smoke coming up the hill toward our homes, so we must continue to be prepared.

Despite the challenges of quarantines and social distancing, safety advocates are finding innovative ways to prepare their communities for wildfire. This year's wildfire preparation season coincided with the nation's all-consuming COVID-19 response. Most states recognize May as Wildfire Awareness Month, with the first Saturday designated as Wildfire Preparedness Day to kick the month off when wildfire safety advocates typically preach neighborly activities and gatherings to reduce wildfire risks in communities. As the pandemic overwhelmed much of the country, however, we were forced to pivot as businesses closed, travel was restricted, and stay-at-home orders were issued.

Precautions against the spread of the virus not only meant that people could not conduct their typical Wildfire Community Preparedness Day activities or annual Firewise events, but also presented an enormous distraction from concerns beyond the immediate health and safety of citizens. In other words, typical gentle reminders about doing your wildfire prep work were easily ignored or set aside while people coped with how to stay safe, feed their families, and tend to children learning from home. National Fire Prevention Association's (NFPA) message around wildfire preparedness emphasizes that there are in fact simple steps people can take to protect their homes from wildfire. Sometimes that message gets lost among all the different wildfire messages out there, as well as the sensationalized news that's often generated when wildfire losses occur. Our message is all the more important when groups cannot gather. NFPA and other wildfire safety advocates see the silver lining of people staying at home. It's the perfect time for home maintenance activities that target roofs,

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**RC&D Executive Director**  
Frank Riley

## A Good Kind of Tired

My grandfather was about 13-15 when their home burned. It was later found out that a disgruntled renter had intentionally burned their home over a dispute. The family lost most of their earthly possessions and moved into one of their rental houses on their farm. The family of eight was under a great deal of stress for a short period of time. My great-grandfather Lon was running a grist mill, blacksmith shop, cotton farm and sawmill, and trying to rebuild their home, all at the same time.

One very hectic day in late summer, Lon asked his son, my grandfather, to take the wagon and mules to pick up a load of logs and deliver them to the sawmill. These logs would be sawed into planks for their new house. This was the first time my grandfather had been asked to do a job like this by himself. He loaded the logs and started to the mill. While crossing a creek the wagon turned over and all the logs rolled out of the wagon. My grandfather made the choice not to go after help. He knew his father was busy trying to get other things done, and since he had lost the logs, it was his responsibility to finish the job himself. He spent the next few hours loading the logs himself with no help.

Papa got home just as the sun was setting. His father met him and was told the story of the day's events. Lon smiled at the story of him to go wash up for supper. Papa was so tired that he fell asleep while trying to change clothes. Lon told my great grandmother to let her son sleep, that "he was feeling a good kind of tired."

As I write this article, I remember Papa, because July 10th is his birthday. If he were alive, he would be 105 years old. Columbus Cummings, aka Coon, had a tremendous influence on me and all others of which he knew.

He never finished school, only completing seven years of education. Yet he was able to buy and pay for a 300-acre farm. His farm was a model for producers and conservationists. He cleared his property by hand and installed his own terraces to protect his topsoil. His poultry operation led the area in feed conversion for broilers. His family was always well-fed and had plenty of milk, butter and meat. Enough to give to less fortunate families in the area.

Coon Cummings was a hard worker and set the example for those of us around him. He awoke at 4:30 a.m. to carry out his farm chores and then ate and left for work as a poultry service crew leader for Marshall Durbin Poultry Company. And he always found time for my grandkids when he came home. We would go fishing  
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**Around The Farm**  
Mickey Cummings

## Chamber of Commerce

Last week, I had an opportunity to spend time at the GACCE conference. It was interesting to hear how other communities are doing and how they are responding to today's current events and COVID-19. Many towns have businesses that have yet to reopen, with still more that have opened but continue to suffer. Some estimate that more than 20 percent of other area's businesses may not survive.

Knowing this, I am encouraged when talking to our own chamber members to hear that most have positive things to say. Retailers report an upswing. Restaurants, continuing to operate under CDC guidelines, report a return of lost business. And while it may be true that many restaurants would prefer fewer restrictions, they would nevertheless continue to exercise caution to protect their employees and customers. The same can be said for other businesses. Grateful to reopen, owners are still saying safety remains their top priority.

Considering the good news of our own  
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**Blairsville-Union County Chamber President**  
Steve Rowe

## 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 either over the mounds, or in a four-foot 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. 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 3 gallons of boiling water onto a mound will sometimes 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.

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 in-  
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**Watching and Working**  
Jacob Williams

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