

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## The Career Firefighter

Your Union County Fire Department is similar to most fire departments in the United States; it is a combination department. That means that the department has both volunteer and career firefighters. The career firefighters are paid employees who are on the job every day responding to emergency calls and performing the many other duties that are required to operate and maintain the department. This week, we will briefly discuss the career firefighter.

There are four career firefighters who work at Station 1 and one at Station 5 in Suches each day. They report before the shift starts which is at 8 a.m. They are dressed in their uniform and they bring with them everything they need to stay at the station for 24 hours. The firefighter clocks in and takes report from the previous shift. Firefighters will then spend the next 45 minutes to an hour checking-off their turnout gear, assigned apparatus, and equipment to ensure that everything is ready to respond to an emergency.

During the day, there are various other duties that are performed. They include hose testing, hydrant maintenance, smoke alarm installation, training, etc. Each firefighter is also responsible for a department division. The divisions include water systems, SCBA maintenance, public education, and fleet maintenance just to name a few. Firefighters work on their assigned divisions when on shift.

The most important thing that the career firefighter does is respond to incidents. The department responds to an average of seven emergency incidents per shift, day and night. Some incidents are short only taking 30-45 minutes and others, such as fires, can last for hours. Career firefighters are able to respond to these incidents within one minute from the dispatch of the incident.

Medical calls make up about 65% of the total incidents. These are usually major medical emergencies such as a heart attack, stroke, seizures, or unresponsive patient. The department responds to assist Union General Ambulance Service on these major medical incidents. The other 35% involve other incidents such as structure fires, car fires, brush fires, motor vehicle accidents, rescues, searches, etc. The career firefighter must be a "jack of all trades" having knowledge and training on many emergency situations that they

See Dyer, page 5A

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



## Who Am I?

Jane Blasio's search for her birth parents led her to discover a dark secret. Soon the newspapers picked up the story, and the whole world knew.

In 1997, Blasio discovered that Dr. Thomas Hicks had arranged for as many as 200 illegal adoptions during the 1960's and earlier. Often he led a birth mother to believe her baby died, then he sold the baby to families from a distant state. Blasio was one of those babies.

Paul Reymann saw the story and noticed some similarities. He, too, had been adopted. His birth certificate listed Hicks as attending physician. He learned that his parents had traveled out of state, paid the doctor in cash, and received him at the back door of the clinic.

Using DNA testing, Reymann located his birth father who welcomed a relationship with the son he didn't know existed. Reymann said, "He could have just swept all of (his past) under the rug and I'd still be out there wondering. He is a man of great character, strong faith in the Lord and I just knew that everything was OK when I hugged him."

Blasio's and Reymann's converging stories have a common theme: the search for identity. That's not a quest unique to adopted people. "Who am I?" is the question we all ask in some way because it is connected to ultimate meaning. Today's world offers a menu of answers. Your identity can be sexual, political, occupational, or digital. You can even take a personality test to "discover who you really are." These identities are incomplete at best, flawed at worst.

You will never know who you are meant to be if you remain alienated from your Creator. Jesus Christ came to fix that. You are created in the image of God but the image is marred by sin, which separates you from God. By faith in Christ, you are recreated and restored. God has "reconciled us to Himself through Christ" (2 Cor. 5:18). The result is that sin no longer defines you. "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. You are not your own. Therefore, glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

It is touching that Reymann found peace in the embrace of his birth father. How much more your Heavenly Father offers

See Fowler, page 5A

**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



## Commissioner's Questions

We continue to try to explain the property tax revaluation. As I have been telling residents - do not panic. All the numbers about your property tax doubling or tripling are unfounded and very unlikely to occur unless you have a very expensive house on a tract of property that has previously been valued way below what it is actually worth.

**Q. Why did you have the county do this revaluation?**

A. I did not bring this up. The Tax Assessor's Office voted on the revaluation, and I had to approve their budget - which I did. A lot of people don't know that the State of Georgia holds all counties responsible for making sure that their taxable property values are up to date as compared to similar properties that are sold in the community. For example, the state does a Sales Ratio Study every year of property sold in Union County and of how those property values compare to the actual values that were placed on the same homes or properties by the county. If your property values are below or above a certain percentage when compared, then the state gives the county two years to get the property values in order or YOUR COUNTY WILL BE FINED.

**Q. Why did you wait until our property values were at their highest to have them revalued?**

A. I absolutely DID NOT do that. This was a Board of Assessor's decision. Let's look at the sequence of events as they occurred: First, the contract with Georgia Mass Appraisal Service (GMASS) to revalue every property parcel in the county was signed on April 24, 2019 - almost a year prior to COVID-19 hitting north Georgia in March of 2020. So, this re-evaluation process started way before COVID-19 officially arrived in north Georgia. Secondly, the contract was certainly signed before the most recent sharp increase in home sales/values. There are approximately 22,500 parcels, homes, businesses, and industries. The entire tax structure of Georgia county governments is based on the fair value of property. Union County was susceptible to a fine by the State of Georgia unless an attempt was made to reevaluate the values of local property.

**Q. If I do not agree with my new property values, how**

See Paris, page 5A

**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**

Lamar Paris



## The Buffalo Soldier

July 28th is National Buffalo Soldiers Day, a day to celebrate the contributions of African American troops in the United States Military. Post-Civil War activities which included security and law enforcement on the western front were authorized in 1866 by Congressional legislation that formalized the creation of six Black U.S. Cavalry and Infantry units.

How the name came about is a bit of a mystery. Some seem to think it is because of the buffalo skins that were worn during the winter to keep warm. Others refer to less flattering explanations such as personal aesthetics. Nonetheless, these troops that were assembled at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, fulfilled a vital role in our military history.

Units created by the legislation were the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments, and the 24th, 25th, and second 38th Infantry Regiments. In addition to security and law enforcement efforts on the western front, there are also early accounts

See Walters-Taylor, page 5A

**Military Musings**

Janice Walters-Taylor



## Letters to the Editor

### Stick to Football

Dear Editor,  
Who are the idiots at NFL headquarters who are instituting a black national anthem at all NFL games? To me, this is a giant insult to all black American citizens. What's next? Are they going to add black toilets and black water fountains to all NFL stadiums?

We have one national anthem for all U.S. citizens representing all races, religions, sexes, and financial status. We are "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

NFL, stick to football and stop trying to divide our country!  
Jim Harrison

### Re: "Let's Pass TSPLOST"

Dear Editor,  
We were part of the "moaners and criers" on our little street who opposed paving. The gravel of the dirt road provided much needed traction in winter and controlled traffic and development in the quiet neighborhood that we had enjoyed for many years.

But property on the street was acquired by the commissioner, and soon after, it was paved with the sub-standard paving in use at that time. Most recently it was paved over to proper specifications.

See Blanchard, page 5A

### Revival of God and Country

Dear Editor,  
Yes, I am going to talk about God and country. Some say that it's too late or that nothing we do will make a difference. Well, this God-loving patriot does not believe it for a minute.

It's true that our country is in dire straits right now with all the far left, far right, racism, division like we have never seen, antifa, black lives matter, COVID-19 pandemic, crisis on our southern border, riots in our cities, crime rates sky rocketing, critical race theory taught in our schools and military, our God given rights being chipped away little by little, voting integrity issues, gender confusion, trusts in our government dissolving, and the list keeps growing! There is light at the end of the tunnel, and it is God, calling us to unite, stand up and speak out.

We have to come together as Christians and Americans. There is power in the church, power in prayer, and power in numbers. We are being called to be God's warriors and to stand up to this evil. God is with us and is showing us the way. I am feeling it and I know you are, too.

See Johnson, page 5A

## Letters to the Editor

### TSPLOST Referendum

Dear Editor,  
Sole Commissioner Paris has proposed another tax on top of the recent property assessment increases. He is proposing an additional 1 cent to the county sales tax. This is in addition to current SPLOST taxes, increased tax rates and property assessments. His lengthy recent newspaper ramble tries to confuse county residents and obfuscate the recent and proposed tax increases. This is on YOU, the residents of Union County. Vote NO on TSPLOST and VOTE FOR a referendum to replace the Sole Commissioner system with a more responsive (hopefully) elected Board of County Commissioners.

See Swaim, page 5A

### Listen about Vaccination

Dear Editor,  
I worked 35 years in the medical field to satisfy my need to help others. Now retired, I still feel that need. We need to come together against a common enemy - the COVID-19 virus. This is not about politics, about choosing a side. Not about Biden nor Trump. Not about being a Democrat nor a Republican. It is about the resurgence of the virus mutating into the delta variant. It is 225% more transmissible than the original virus, 60% more than the last variant. It is also believed to be more deadly. In our area, Towns County is highly vulnerable to the virus due to a low 45%

See Grazis, page 5A

### Another Increase

Dear Editor,  
First let me say the opinion part of the paper should be expanded to include more opinions. It is more interesting than the regular contributors and gives you a good idea of how the people living here actually feel.

My main reason for this opinion is, along with the recent property assessment increases, we now have a sales tax increase. You can call it TSPLOST, SPLOST or ESPLOST, it's just another increase. It is always sold as a much needed increase to make our community better. Obviously, this will not sit well with the citizens, including me. I always thought it would be a good idea to include how they have tried to control costs along with requests for more money. If local government has plans for all these improvements, would it be logical to give some specifics? What roads do you plan to repair or pave? Where are you putting sidewalks? What equipment are you buying? Basically, justify what you plan to do with the sales tax increase. While you note how you have tried to control costs, have you

See Mackey, page 5A

## An Early Settler

I have a good friend with which I worked in the field of agriculture for nearly 30 years. George Daves is now retired, and we get together every now and then to reminisce. Recently we were talking, and he told me a story about one of his ancestors. Green B. Daves was born in 1803 and came to this area for the first time in the 1830s. I learned from my friend that his ancestor first came here as a soldier serving under General Winfield Scott while removing the Cherokee from their homeland to what is now Oklahoma. He fell in love with these mountains, and as payment for his service, he was given land here in Georgia. The settler homesteaded 160 acres of land in the Wilscott Valley, which was named in honor of a Cherokee Chief, Will Scott.

Daves brought his wife, Mary Margaret Rudisiel from Rutherford County, North Carolina, to settle in Wilscott in 1837. The area at that time was part of Union County, Georgia. The family came in a Conestoga wagon which is now housed in the Fox Fire Museum in Rabun County. He was a typical frontiersman, being self-sufficient, a good hunter with a keen eye and a very good shot with his muzzle-loading rifle.

Soon after settling in the beautiful valley, some outlaws came through the area stealing and generally terrorizing the people. Two or three of the men tried rob the Daves House. He was in the field nearby and heard his wife scream. The thieves heard him coming and made a hasty escape without much loot. The would-be thieves soon found out that Green Daves was not a man to test. It has been told that he could shoot a flying wasp with his .34 caliber flintlock, which had been converted to a percussion rifle.

After securing his house and family, he gathered his belongings, including the rifle which had been issued to him by the federal government when he'd served in the military. During his service, he'd learned much from the Cherokee, the most important of which was the ability to track game and humans. Daves left his home and tracked down the bad men. The job took quite some time. He was gone for 21 days. His family and community feared that some evil had fallen upon him. Upon his arrival back home, he was asked what had happened. All he would tell anyone was that the bad men would not bother them again.

He was also a good craftsman and built more than one log cabin in the area around Wilscott. The man was an expert horseman and always kept a large long-legged horse on his farm. Over the years he accumulated a large amount

See Cummings, page 5A

**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



## Vegetable Diseases

It is prime time for the early vegetable harvest for gardeners and farmers alike in North Georgia. If you planted beans, squash, tomatoes, cucumbers, or sweet corn in May, you should expect initial results soon, if you haven't already picked those first ripe beans or crisp ears of corn. However, if you venture out to the garden one cool dewy morning and notice that your plants have not fared as well as you expected, here are a few common ailments that may be causing trouble.

In tomatoes, two of the most common reported ailments are blossom end rot and late tomato blight. Blossom end rot is not actually a disease, rather it is a nutrient deficiency common in tomatoes. It occurs when the tomato fruit does not get enough calcium to aid its growth. The fruit becomes soft at the blossom end, and is then susceptible to a secondary infection, causing loss of the fruit. The best way to fix this problem is to add calcium to the soil, using products like lime or gypsum prior to planting, or by calcium nitrate fertilizer after the problem is noticed. If you have blossom end rot, a soil test before applying fertilizer is a good idea to see how much calcium should be added to the soil.

Late blight will also begin to affect tomatoes this time of year as the growing season is at its warmest. It is caused by the Phytophthora fungus. Signs of late blight are yellowing to brown dead spots on the leaves, stems and fruit of tomatoes. Plants that are treated earlier in the progression of this disease are likely to survive it, although they may not produce as well. The best treatment for late blight is to remove plants that have excessive damage (and be sure to burn them or tie them in a trash bag and throw them away) and spray the rest of them with a fungicide listed for late blight on tomatoes, such as Daconil or Bravo (chlorothalonil is the active ingredient).

On vegetables like squash, cucumbers, gourds, zucchini, beans and peas, mildew is a common disease that slows production and makes the plant less healthy. There are two common types in North Georgia: Powdery and Downy mildew. Powdery mildew is identified by large gray-white patches on the upper side of the leaves, whereas downy mildew causes many smaller light green to yellow patches on the leaves. The treatment for both diseases is the same: Remove heavily damaged plants to the burn pile or garbage, and spray with Daconil or Bravo (chlorothalonil is the active ingredient).

Before using, any pesticide always read

See Williams, page 5A

**Watching and Working**

Jacob Williams



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## Paris... continued from Page 4A

**do I respond?**

A. You simply call or go by the Tax Assessors office and let them know why you think your values are too high. Believe it or not, some complain because they are too low. If there is a minor problem, they can correct it, but if larger problems exist you can appeal your property value.

**Q. What are our current property taxes?**

A. Currently, our county portion of property tax rate (mil rate) are ranked as the 12th

lowest in the State of Georgia out of 159 counties. We anticipate that after the revaluation is complete, we will drop from 12th lowest to somewhere in the bottom 6. However, when you put the school tax and the county tax together - which adds to the total of what you actually pay - Union County has the 3rd lowest tax rate in the state of Georgia. This is because our school system does an excellent job of utilizing their budget and keeping it low - despite many opinions.

## Williams... continued from Page 4A

the label and follow its instructions fully. The label is the law.

Another problem during extended wet periods of the growing season is root rot. This disease can affect most plants, but there are different groups of fungi that cause it depending on the plant. Common symptoms include an unhealthy-looking plant, combined with gummy, black roots, and a stem that is easily broken from the ground at the base. The reason the infection begins is usually due to excess moisture in the soil, or inadequate drainage of the soil. For the vegetable garden, the most effective way to control it is to prevent it. If you planted

something there last year that got it, plant that thing in a drier area of the garden next year. If you use mulch, while it has many benefits, it may be holding too much moisture in the soil. When you water plants, remember to water deeply and less frequently, and let the soil surface become dry for a day or two before watering again.

If you suspect any of these ailments to be troubling your garden, or have any other questions or concerns related to agriculture, landscape or natural resources, please feel free to contact your County Extension office or email Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

## Walters-Taylor... continued from Page 4A

at the turn of the century of the Buffalo Soldiers being early "park rangers," protecting some of the natural lands prior to the creation of the official National Park Service. Many were Medal of Honor winners, including Mark Matthews, who lived to an amazing 111 years old, dying in 2005. Imagine that, living in three centuries. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Celebrating National

Buffalo Soldiers Day first happened in 1992, with Gen. Colin Powell dedicating a monument at Fort Leavenworth in honor of these troops.

A Buffalo Soldier Museum also exists in Houston, Texas. Although the 28th is not a federal holiday, we should take a moment to remember the contributions of the Buffalo Soldier to our nation.

We Salute you! And until we muse again, I bid you, "At Ease!"

## Mackey...

continued from Page 4A

improved efficiencies, made better deals with suppliers, improved productivity, avoided overtime? Tell us what you are doing to avoid increases, not just business as usual.

I would think this would go a long way toward justification on any increase. On a personal level, wouldn't I be more receptive to an increase if local roads I travel that need repair were listed? It just makes sense to tell the public specifically where the money is going. Local government needs to be up front and honest if they want to ask the public for any additional funds. Justify what you do and trust will improve dramatically.

Thomas Mackey

## Swaim...

continued from Page 4A

Union County is ONE of only eight counties (Bartow, Bleckley, Chattooga, Murray, Pulaski, Pickens, Towns and Union) in the entire U.S. that operates under this medieval system. An elected board may be more responsive to the voices of the citizens. Walker County, in northwest Georgia, just implemented a county board system for this very reason. Such a proposal was a straw vote on the Republican side (Paris is a Democrat) of a Union County primary ballot and lost by less than 1%. Instead of a SPLOST referendum, how about one on a modern, representative form of government? He's scheduled a TSPLOST Referendum, how about adding one for a Board of County Commissioners?

D.B. Swaim

## UC Emergency Management Agency to test Emergency Notification System

Union County Emergency Management Agency (UCEMA) will be conducting a county-wide test of Union County's Emergency Notification System, CodeRED, on August 4, 2021, at 2 p.m.

This alert is being conducted to test our emergency notification system. We will perform this test twice a year going forward. During this test, you may receive a text message, email, and/or a phone call with a recorded message stating that is the test of our notification.

If you would like to reg-

ister to receive emergency notifications and weather alerts for Union County, you can do so at [www.unioncountygga.gov/CodeRed](http://www.unioncountygga.gov/CodeRed). If you do not receive the message on August 4th, you are not registered in the system.

If you need assistance registering, you may call the Union County EMA office at 706-439-6091.

Please visit [www.unioncountygga.gov/CodeRed](http://www.unioncountygga.gov/CodeRed) for additional information and frequently asked questions regarding Union County's Emergency Notification System, CodeRed.

## Collision...from Page 1A

and enjoyed reading, riding motorcycles and spending time with his family, especially his granddaughters.

"He was a member of several HOG chapters and was a past director of the Corning HOG chapter.

"Vern" is survived by his wife Mabel of Wellsboro, PA, and two sons Neil Miller of Coudersport, PA, and Cory (Gina) Miller of Lawrenceville, PA; brother Meredith (Joyce)

Miller of Manheim, PA; sister Carolyn (Roland) Longenecker of Manheim, PA; several stepbrothers and sisters; and granddaughters Kamryn Miller, Mara Miller and Brenna Miller.

He was predeceased by two brothers, Marlin Miller and Lamar Miller.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Green Free Library, 134 Main St., Wellsboro, PA 16901.

## Cummings... continued from Page 4A

of land in the Wilscott Valley, and as each of his sons married and began their own families, Daves was able to give each of them a nice tract of land. He nor his sons owned slaves. However, they were pro-Southern and viewed the Civil War as one of Northern aggression. And because he was too old to serve in the army, he served in the Home Guard.

While serving in this capacity, he was very stern with people who roamed this area, because many of them were robbing and stealing from his friends in the community. Years later, age began to catch up with this Mountain Man and forced him to walk with a cane or a stick. One day when he was in his 80s, while in Morganton, he was confronted by a group of six men. These rascals had been drinking and wanted revenge for the way he dealt with them during the Civil War.

The men surrounded Daves and backed him against a building. He used his heavy stick on three of the men, and the other three ran from the scene. The Mountain Man walked back to his buggy leaving three bullies sprawled on the street moaning in pain.

Green Daves was a man which could take care of himself, and yet he was a devout Christian and devoted husband.

## Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

may be called to respond.

The career firefighters work with the many volunteer firefighters who are on the department. They are one part of a wonderful team of public safety professionals who are dedicated to the health, safety, and protection of Union County.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

## Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

you a place in the family! "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are" (1 Jn 3:1).

As for Blasio, her birth mother died before they could meet. But that doesn't mean she doesn't know her identity. She writes, "If there's one thing in life I'm sure of... it's that God loves you and knows who you are and has known you from the beginning." She has found the answer to the question. Have you?

## Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

time and a chance to help a good cause! Vendors scheduled to compete are Rib Country BBQ, Papaw's Trading Post & Backyard BBQ, Jim's Smokin' Que, Dam Good BBQ, The Smoke Out & BBQ, Chill & Fill Café, and Greg Staffins. You do not want to miss this!

Many of you may have noticed the big yellow school bus in front of United Community Bank. The bus is for "Stuff the Bus" which helps collect school supplies for our local students. The Chamber has issued a challenge to all local businesses to help Stuff the Bus and help a local student. Let's pull together and help our children as they start back to school!

And remember, It's Better in Blairsville!

### Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse



**July 4, 2021**  
In Memory of  
**Earl Warren**  
on his 90th Birthday  
By Mike and Janice Marsh

**July 10, 2021**  
In Memory of  
**William T. Meeks, Sr.**  
on the Anniversary  
of his Death  
By Ginger & Terri Meeks

**July 19, 2021**  
In Memory of  
**Sybil Harkins Tyre**  
on her 83rd Birthday  
By Exola and Leola

**Bell ringing information**  
at 706-745-5493