

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### COVID-19 Guidelines

COVID-19 is a major topic that everyone is talking about and, at the same time, everyone is tired of hearing. It is a subject that we, at the Emergency Management Agency and Fire Department deal with on almost an hourly basis. We deal with the ever-changing guidance from the various organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH). We are constantly looking at information that is provided to us in order to get an idea of the situation. We are responding to calls and seeing, firsthand, how the virus is affecting people and patients.

Most would agree that the virus has, and is continuing, to spread through our community. People in our area have either had the virus; know someone who has; or has heard of someone who has. We have seen the number of confirmed cases rise significantly in the last couple of weeks. For example, roughly four weeks ago, the number of confirmed cases for Union County was 89 with three deaths. We have more than doubled those numbers.

The numbers have gone up and that is why we should follow the guidelines and procedures now, more than ever, to flatten the curve and slow the spread. That is what the guidelines are designed to do, to slow the spread. They were never designed to stop the virus. We will continue to see more cases but when we see a spike as we are seeing now, we should put more effort into following the guidelines to slow that spread.

On July 17th, Governor Brian Kemp and Georgia Department of Public Health Commissioner Dr. Kathleen Toomey asked Georgians to do four things "for the next four weeks" to continue to flatten the curve and slow the spread. These four things are 1) wear a mask when out in public or when you cannot keep distance inside, 2) practice physical distancing - six feet from those you don't live with, 3) wash your hands for 20 seconds several times throughout the day with soap and warm water, and 4) follow the Executive Order and heed the guidance provided by public health officials.

The best course of action is to continue to remain vigilant and follow these guidelines to help slow the spread and protect our most vulnerable population. Everyone should take responsibility for their health as well as the health of people that they come in

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



### Honesty and Courage

What happens when two professors who have little in common other than that title, decide to write about what our country needs right now? Attack and acrimony? Cat fights and dog whistles? Nope.

Robert George is a white, conservative, capitalist professor at Harvard. Cornel West is a black, liberal, socialist professor at Princeton. The Boston Globe recently published what they wrote. It was a single article. From very different anvils, they forged a common piece.

They appeal for unity even if on their "deepest, most cherished beliefs," they do not agree. Both of these men identify as Christians in the article, and that worldview seems to be what unifies their thoughts.

They write, "We need the honesty and courage to treat decent and honest people with whom we disagree — even on the most consequential questions — as partners in truth-seeking and fellow citizens of our republican order, not as enemies to be destroyed. And we must always respect and protect their human rights and civil liberties."

Today's degraded public discourse does not treat people as fellow truth-seekers. The standard is to shout the worst possible motive at the first hint of disagreement. "Racist!" "Communist!" "Radical!" Ad hominem at its worst. The Bible says, "Wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts" (1 Cor. 4:5). It is so common today to assume and attack motive that you may not have considered it out-of-bounds. When you disagree, let it be on what someone says or does in the light of day because you can't see what's in the darkness.

The professors warn about treating disagreeable people as enemies to be destroyed. Once, Jesus and his disciples were traversing unfriendly territory. The locals refused to accommodate them. James and John felt the burn. "Do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9). It is a decidedly Christian virtue to seek the best for people, even when they are at their worst.

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**All Things New Wayne Fowler**



### Commissioner's Questions

**Q. I saw on Facebook that the Lake Nottely Improvement Association (LNIA) was asking the public to write you and Mayor Jim Conley regarding their notice that the city was drastically increasing the leachate water they were processing and releasing into Lake Nottely. Why is the city doing this?**

A. Unfortunately, this was a misinterpretation by LNIA of a public notice in the North Georgia News. The notice in the newspaper did not have anything to do with leachate water, but only to do with a permit application, through the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, that the City of Blairsville had applied for with their 5-year sewer system renewal license.

**Q. The Facebook post states that the leachate water capacity in Blairsville was to be increased from 400,000 gallons a day to 1,000,000 gallons a day. This really seems excessive.**

A. This is a totally inaccurate. The Wastewater Treatment Plant only processes 11,000 gallons of leachate water per day, while they do have a permit to process up to 25,000 gallons per day. They are not requesting an increase in the amount of leachate water they are processing. The permit being referred to in the North Georgia News is in regard to the entire sewer system. While they are permitted by the EPD to process 400,000 gallons of sewage per day, the city has the ability if necessary to increase to 1,000,000, which is reflected in the draft permit. The numbers being put out there by LNIA are correct numbers, but they are not in reference to leachate water.

**Q. How does someone make this large of a mistake when reporting information to the public?**

A. LNIA is very passionate about their cause, but before any organization goes public with information or asking people to write letters or complain, no matter how intense your thoughts are, just please be sure you take the time to fully research what you are writing to the public.

**Q. Why is LNIA trying to partially blame Union County Government for the leachate water issue?**

A. First, Butternut Creek watershed begins about halfway

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



### Letters to the Editor

#### MountainTrue Responds

**To the Editor,**  
I am writing to respond to comments about MountainTrue's water quality monitoring reported in your article "Paris, LNIA disagree over leachate concerns" (July 22, 2020).

The Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition - now MountainTrue - has been monitoring water quality in the Butternut Creek and Lake Nottely watersheds for nearly 20 years. The data we collect represents direct measurements of specific water quality parameters which are the same ones recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a screening tool and promoted by Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) through its Adopt-A-Stream water quality monitoring program.

MountainTrue samples E.coli, an indicator of pathogens that present a risk to human health, in Butternut Creek above and below the wastewater treatment plant. Both Butternut Creek sites on average fall within the EPA guidelines for "infrequent swimming areas." Sites sampled in the lake in the vicinity of Butternut Creek regularly meet the 235 CFU/100mL guideline for designated swimming areas.

While it was concerning to see a single  
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#### Is Civility Dead?

**To the Editor,**  
Our cities, our nation = so divided that we can hardly speak to one another without blatant animosity -- no matter the subject. This is NOT the country I grew up in; in fact, I hardly recognize it anymore.

As a great-grandmother, I've witnessed much chaos, wars and differences of opinion, but this new mode of behavior toward one another on such a national scale is truly saddening. I have seen people being aggressive toward anyone who strays from what is the "correct theme of the day," to actual violence, verbal and physical abuse, and even death.

My beloved country isn't perfect, but its founding is based on a system of laws and foundations that have faced the test of time, and which is why millions of people from around the world have wanted to live here.

Is it no longer possible to hold and express differing opinions without being told our voice is no longer valid? When did it become OK for college students to riot when they didn't want a scheduled speaker -- at a non-required event -- to burn and destroy college property? Why didn't they just not attend? How did this behavior morph into violence and looting against cities, businesses and individuals?

As I watch statues commemorating founders of our country being broken, the desecration of war memorials and the blazing hatred streaming from the eyes of those who are (no longer peaceful protesters) now anarchists, my heart breaks. It seems as though there is a vile puppet master working the strings to divide us from one

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#### Something Stinky

**To the Editor,**  
Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, on his own initiative, bought property once owned by convicted criminal Mike Gowder.

Now reading from news supplied by North Georgia News, one can only scratch one's head and ask, what in the heck was he thinking the Union County taxpayer might make of this whole transaction?

Private negotiations between Scotty Fain, who somehow (hold your nose) became owner of the property, and Commissioner Paris, through some last minute dealing, was finalized.

I only ask that you read the entire NGN article, make up your own mind.

If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it must be... well, you know.

I will leave this here for now.

Phillip Sanchez



### Letters to the Editor

#### Support Castoff Pet Rescue

**To the Editor,**  
Castoff Pet Rescue is a 501(c)(3) organization. They save a tremendous amount of dogs and cats for our community and surrounding communities. They take in animals that other shelters do not want or turn away. They are in critical financial condition with the COVID. They don't take government money so they are free from red tape, allowing them to do more good for animals. They run bingo at the community center in Blairsville to raise money to keep the shelter running, but they have not been able to have bingo fundraising for months and most likely will not be able to until sometime in August. Their thrift store location at 19 Cobalt Street, Suite C, is new and has also been hurt because of the virus, and they themselves need to dig out from back rent, etc.

They are reducing the number of animals at the shelter and are not taking in any animals due to the critical funds. They have one full-time and one part-time employee. Their shelter can house 25 dogs, and I don't know the number of cats. They need the community they serve to step up and help them right now! Without bingo, the rent, employees, dog and cat food, medicine, spay/neuter... they cannot keep meeting the need. If they are forced to close permanently, it will be a loss to our communities beyond imaginable.

I have personally rescued dogs that Castoff Pet Rescue took in every time. Dogs on chains 24/7 without proper food and water, dogs left behind when a renter moved out, puppies from folks that don't get their pets spay/neutered. They make sure the animals are spay/neutered, get shots, food, shelter, love, vetting, which is sometimes extremely costly, and best attempts at finding them homes. They have tireless volunteers, but we just cannot lose them! They have dogs that might be with them till end of life because they are problem dogs that are almost impossible to place in homes. They keep them and continue and will until the day they die.

They are just beyond amazing, and they do it all on a shoestring budget.

They need our support and generous donations... they are on the verge of having to lay off employees, and they only have two! As a community, we must help. They are too important to lose.

Shannon Elliott is the angel that is the president and runs the shelter... on top of her full-time job as an RN at Union General.

Navigate to castoffpetrescue.org, select "Donate" from the menu, and you can donate online through PayPal, or there is an address to mail a check.

Let's not let them down...

Lucille Heil

### The Big Fight

It was a hot July day in 1968. All of us cousins had finished working in the chicken house and garden. We were on our way to Baker's Rock swimming hole. Robin was the eldest cousin and she was left in charge by our Maw maw Adams. We had no problem with her being in charge except that she was bossy. Each day when we arrived at Baker's Rock we would make the swimming hole deeper by adding another layer of rock to the dam across the creek. Next, we would clean up any debris which had floated down the creek. Then we would jump off Baker's Rock and swim in the cool waters of Little Bear Creek. This afternoon was no different, and soon Robin was barking out orders, as usual, to all of her younger cousins. She was good at barking out orders and had all of us younger cousins buffaloed.

I was next in line to Robin, and behind me was Dewayne. He was two to three years younger than me. Robin was a few months older than me, and her continuously ordering us around was grating on all of us. It would've been different if she had helped. But, all she ever did was bark at the rest of us telling us what to do while she sat on a rock. We were nearly finished with the task of piling up rocks when she told my younger cousin to get a couple more rocks for the dam. Dewayne looked at her and said, "I don't have to listen to you, and I am sick and tired of your bossiness." All work stopped at that point, and we all looked at Robin to see what she would do next. She calmly walked to Dewayne and tried to negotiate, but, he stood his ground.

I am sure Dewayne thought he could bluff Robin and she would back down. They were standing nose to nose when she pushed him. He pushed her back in response which was a mistake. She grabbed him and placed him in a headlock. By this time they were standing in knee-deep water when she told him to say uncle. He screamed out "NEVER." At that point she sat down in the water and pushed his head under. I began to worry when the bubbles came to the surface of the water.

Robin yanked up Dewayne's head and said, "Say Uncle." He was resolved to fight to the end and said, "No." Dewayne had painted himself into a corner. He could not give into Robin in front of all the rest of us boys. Tony would think he was some kind of sissy. His little brother, Danny, was looking to him for leadership. And I was there watching in amazement and wondering how this stalemate would turn out. We had fought snakes, rode hickory trees off

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**Around The Farm Mickey Cummings**



### Roadside Beauties

In the mountains, you don't have to look very far to see the beauty of the land. Whether it's fog rolling off the mountains or the sun shining off the water, the beauty is apparent. However, you really don't have to lift your eyes to the horizon to see some brilliant colors. Oftentimes, the roadsides will have some great colors for you to see in wildflowers growing on the side of the road. My wife has helped at me more than once for veering slightly off the road trying to get a better glimpse of something flowering. Let's talk about some of those plants that often bloom along the roadside.

Joe-Pye weed is a perennial plant that grows to about 3-7 feet tall. It has leaves that come out in a whorl at each node. Usually there will be about five leaves in each whorl. It likes to grow in partial shade, so you'll see it beneath trees. It puts on flowers starting in late July through September. The flowers range from pink to purple in groups of 4-7. The flowers are found at the top of the plant.

Jewelweed is a self-seeding annual. It also likes semi-shady areas. It is actually in the impatiens genus, which means it's related to the impatiens that people like to plant around their house. They'll grow 3-5 feet tall. The flowers are a sordid like with an orange-yellow color. In the early morning, they are covered with dew, which gives them a jewel like appearance when the sun glints off them.

Ironweed is a perennial that grows to be 3-10 feet tall. You can often find it in overgrown pastures. It blooms from August to September. It can look similar to Joe-Pye weed but the flowers are a darker purple. The leaves are also a darker green.

Goldenrod is a perennial that will grow to be 2-7 feet tall. We actually have several different species of goldenrod, but they all look very similar. The flowers are yellow and create a plume that lays over at the top of the plant. It blooms in August and September. This is another one that you'll commonly see in old fields. Sometimes people confuse it with ragweed. Ragweed pollen can cause allergies, but goldenrod is not as much of an allergen.

Butterfly weed has brilliant orange flowers. This perennial is an important pollinator plant. It grows to be about 2 feet tall with clusters of flowers at the top. As part of the Asclepias genus, it is a native milkweed. Milkweeds play a pivotal role for monarch butterflies, because they will only lay their eggs on milkweeds. Monarch caterpillars only eat milkweeds. Butterfly weed needs full sun.

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**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President Steve Rowe**



**Watching and Working Jacob Williams**



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