

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## Wildfires

There has been a significant amount of news about wildfires this summer. The large wildfires in Canada which caused smoke to travel to our area. The devastating wildfire that has killed over 100 people in Hawaii with many more still missing. These are major wildfires which grab headlines and temporarily steer our attention to them; however, wildfire should be a constant concern for us all, especially here in the North Georgia mountains.

As we have seen in the news, wildfires can happen anywhere that has vegetation or woodland. Our area is particularly susceptible because we have both. A large percentage of our total land area is wildland or has some form of vegetation. Fifty percent of Union County is protected woodland of the U.S. Forest Service.

The other major concern in our area is the terrain. The terrain can cause three major problems. First, the steep mountains contribute to fire growth and wind channeling. Fire moves faster uphill. The topography of the mountains can channel winds into a smaller valley which can increase windspeed and intensify the fire.

Second, the limited roads make escaping from a fire challenging. There may be times where the only action that you can do is to escape the fire. Narrow or single-access roads may be crowded with people escaping and/or emergency services trying to get to the fire. Third, the rugged landscape makes fighting the fires very difficult. The steep terrain and remote locations make it tough for firefighters to gain access or hold fire breaks. Even some visiting experienced Hotshot Firefighting Crews from Western U.S. have commented on our rough terrain.

Homeowners and citizens have a responsibility to protect their family and their home by preparing their home and practicing wildfire fire prevention. Homeowners should evaluate their home for flammable materials on or near their home that could ignite due to flying embers. They should create a "defensible" space around the entire home.

Evacuation routes should be planned and practiced. Homeowners should also have a "Ready-Kit" prepared to take with them if evacuation is needed. If there is a fire and you feel that you should evacuate, you should do so. Do not wait on orders from the authori-

See Dyer, page 5A

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



## Rumors of Angels

How do you engage the world? I see two extremes: you may absorb the daily news in all its repetitive outrage, or you are so disgusted you try to ignore it all. I'd like to offer a different way to engage – aware of the cultural context but focused on hope.

Western culture is increasingly secular – it has no need for God. This despite movements to the contrary around the globe, such as in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Sociologist Peter Berger calls secular culture "a world without windows" and a "prison of modernity." You witness darkness and imprisonment when the news delivers to your eyes criminals driven by hatred or hopelessness, politicians motivated by power and money, and people victimized by the sexual revolution and expressive individualism.

But believers live by a steadfast hope that there's more to life! You may not realize it, but all humans have glimpses of transcendence. You experience joy, beauty, and kindness. You experience the thrill of discovery, the satisfaction of success, and the love of family. Berger has a description for this as well: "rumors of angels." The material world and secular culture simply cannot explain everything about the human experience.

Science points to something beyond, in at least three specific ways. Cosmology suggests the universe had a beginning. Logically it could not begin itself. Physics shows that from the beginning to now, the universe is finely tuned for life. Biology reveals the presence of detailed information, which is required to assemble, maintain, and reproduce a living cell. Information like that could only have come from a prior intelligence.

The hope Christianity offers is an understanding of the cultural context of the daily news, both good and evil. It leaves room for the mystical and the mysterious. It gives reasons to believe in the Creator, the Savior who loves you.

"Do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet. 3:14-15).

**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



## Commissioner's Questions

I received these questions about property ownership and they reminded me that there are people who may be new residents or who simply do not fully understand the inner workings of different governments and the laws related to living in Georgia. I will try to explain some of these differences through the following questions.

**Q. I live in a subdivision and my neighbor has given someone permission to hunt on their land. Can you do an ordinance to prevent him from being able to do this in our subdivision?**

A. Residential subdivision covenants and restrictions are not county ordinances, but rules that subdivision owners must follow. Like any rule or law, if no one enforces them then they have little to no impact. Few, if any, subdivisions that have covenants and restrictions allow hunting or gun use. The problem with covenants and restrictions is that no two subdivisions have the same requirements. They are usually all slightly different. Covenants and restrictions are created when individual developers subdivide the property. Homeowners should look carefully at the covenants and restrictions when purchasing property. I suggest that all persons looking to purchase property first look to see if covenants and restrictions exist. Then be sure the requirements are something that you agree with prior to purchasing.

**Q. Who controls subdivision covenants and restrictions?**  
A. Usually it is the property owners as a group. You would need to carefully read your documents and consult an attorney if you have questions.

**Q. How do we change our covenants and restrictions, if needed?**

A. Covenants and restrictions usually provide guidelines on how/when they can be changed or updated. If there is no direct guideline in your document, all property owners will need to get together and agree to any changes needed. Some subdivisions have homeowners' or property owners' associations and these organizations usually have elected officers to help facilitate the change process.

**Q. So, if my neighbor has the legal right to let his friend**

See Paris, page 5A

**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**

Lamar Paris



## Pays to be a Biden

As House Republicans' investigation into the Biden Crime Family ramps up, I believe it's vitally important to keep you and your family informed on the latest developments – especially since the mainstream media refuses to report the truth.

House Oversight Committee Republicans have released a third bank records memorandum detailing newly obtained information about the Biden family's influence-peddling schemes.

The memo outlines how the Bidens and their business associates received millions of dollars from oligarchs in Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan when Joe Biden was Vice President.

These latest bank records bring the total amount of payments that the Bidens received from foreign sources to over \$20 million.

Clearly, it pays to be a Biden.

Alarming, this figure could only grow larger as the House Oversight Committee continues its investigation. Whether it's \$20 or

See Clyde, page 5A

**United States Congressman**  
Representative Andrew Clyde



## Chamber of Commerce

We are your local small business resource center – if your business needs help with something we can create a class and bring in a speaker, connect you with a professional, or there's a good chance our staff already has experience with what you are needing. We are ready to help you with marketing, social media, licensing, insurance, accounting, hiring and employee training, budgeting, and board training through our new "Mind Your Business" classes.

If you haven't already signed up for the next class, please go ahead and mark your calendar and get registered – Matt Meeks at Square-Frame Media is going to teach us about the wonderful new artificial intelligence technology and how it can help you write blogs, social media posts, Google reviews, maybe even a President's Column in the North Georgia News.

This class is on August 29th here at the Community Center and is open to our Chamber members and non-members. We will soon have

See Chamber, page 5A

**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**

Steve Rowe



## Letters to the Editor

### Constituent Mobile Office

**Dear Editor,**  
Nice picture in the paper of three people who were meeting with Lt. Gov. Burt Jones' representative Luke Hetland.

But there were other people that had a meeting with Mr. Hetland, six to be exact. We were there to discuss election integrity and the lack of proper safeguards by Secretary of State

See Lausier, page 5A

### They're lying to you

**Dear Editor,**  
Did you know that, of the 271 Republicans in Congress (49 Senate, 222 House), 241 of them voted against the Infrastructure bill, including our sort-of representative, Andrew Clyde, who called the bill "Biden's Big Government Socialist tax and spend package" and "a horrendous waste."

Union County is in line to receive tens of millions in federal funding for projects like the \$1 million Pat Haralson Drive Roundabout Project that will build a roundabout (also called

See St. Lawrence, page 5A

### Make Elections Secure

**Dear Editor,**  
Calling all Conspiracy Theorists, MAGAs, Patriots, and Freedom Fighters.

What "conspiracies" have you been wrong about? None. Demoning, division, and gaslighting are all part of the game plan of an enemy. Ask why are all these lies and suppression tactics thrown at you 24/7. Complacency, apathy, and disgust are what an enemy count on.

See Brown, page 5A

### School Spend and Tax?

**Dear Editor,**  
Many of us were surprised to see yet another property tax increase proposed by the Union County School Board. Shame on us for being caught off guard, but after at least seven consecutive years of tax increases, significant infusion of federal dollars from the faulty response to COVID-19, and the renewal of the Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOST) in

See Murauskas, page 5A

### School Board Proposed Property Tax Increase

**Dear Editor,**  
Imagine my surprise (chuckle) when I read that the school board has proposed a 9.89% tax increase for this year. In the May 10th edition of the North Georgia News, and I quote, "Thanks to healthy fund reserves, the Board Office staff said there is no plan to raise

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## Self Rewards

Because we are so busy, we sometimes have a difficult time pursuing our dreams and living a life to the fullest. We even manufacture excuses: "I am too tired." "I don't deserve it." "What would people think?" "I'll do it later in life." So many of us have a hard time rewarding ourselves. Isn't it strange that as intellectual human beings, we are more prone to reward our pets for good deeds rather than ourselves? Very mystifying. Whenever our lovable pets do what we want or just show us unconditional affection, we offer them lots of treats from the goodie bag. Not just once a day but countless times daily. They need rewards, and thus we give them. After all, they are intricate parts of our family circle. Then why are we more apt to reward our pets than ourselves?

Bestowing rewards is just not limited to our pets. If you have children, then handing out rewards is natural, automatic, and healthy. Providing rewards is our way to let children know that as parents, we are pleased with their specific behavior, positive attitudes, and mannerisms. The basis for giving rewards is sometimes not just limited to their good deeds. We do it to remind them that they are loved, admired, and appreciated.

However, what rewards do we give ourselves? We are used to being tenderhearted to children, family members, friends, and pets, and yet we forget a very important person—ourselves. If the truth be known, we seldom give ourselves worthy rewards or for that matter any rewards. The reason may be because we feel guilty, unworthy, self-pity, martyrdom, or only Heaven knows why, we just don't. We fail to realize that by our neglect of rewarding ourselves, our self-worth and self-esteem can become damaged. We are not feeding ourselves healthy, wonderful acclamations in life. Whether the rewards are for something we have accomplished or for someone whom we have helped, we deserve the self-recognition. The recognition may not come from another person, but it still needs to come even if we are the ones ourselves who do it.

We are worthy to be recognized for all the responsibilities we do day-in and day-out. Let's face it: we may be the only one who even recognizes our daily accomplishments. Thus, it is necessary that we understand this concept: rewards promote self-worth. Each time we pat ourselves on the back, we are congratulating our self-esteem. It is actually enhanced. Even accomplishing simple things deserve our attention and rewards, such as doing the wash, putting

See Ashurst, page 5A

**Successful Mental Health**

Dr. James Ray Ashurst, PH.D.



## The Snowstorm

How many times have you heard about all the snows that our fathers and mothers lived through in their younger days? So many times I have heard about big storms my parents and grandparents experienced. Once my Great Grandfather, Lon Cummings, told us that it was cold enough in his young adult years to freeze the Tennessee River in Florence, Alabama. He even watched a truck drive across the river over the ice. My grandfather, Coon Cummings, told me that he'd had wet clothes freeze on his person while wearing them during a sleet storm. The following story came from my Mother's childhood.

Early in her life the Adams family lived on the farm of her grandfather, Charlie Baker. Jobs were difficult to come by in 1944 and her father, Bill, had recently landed a job with Franklin County Schools as a bus driver in their community. One day school was called early due to a snow storm sweeping across North Western Alabama. He was summoned to come early to get all the kids from Enterprise to take them home.

Meanwhile Maw maw, Delph, set about her evening chores which were made more difficult due to the fact she was 8 1/2 months pregnant with her third child, Ralph. She was waddling around cleaning house and beginning to get ready for supper. As she went about her chores a nagging feeling began to eat at her insides. Normally, Bill's bus route could be completed in about 1 hour and 15 minutes. He should be home by now and it was almost time for the evening milking of Bess the family milk cow. She had just enough time to milk the cow and get back to the house before dark. So, she bundled up in her wool coat and walked the 40 yards to the barn. This was quite a chore due to her pregnancy, and it was all she could do to walk that distance in the knee-deep snow.

The milking process was not difficult except for Bess's swishing tail which kept striking my grandmother's face. The snow had really piled up by the time she finished and there was just enough light for her to find her way back to the house. She began the trip carrying the gallon and a half of milk trying not to spill it. Soon she came to a place where she knew a ditch was located. However, under the snow everything looked level and she could not find the foot log over the ditch. The cold made her cast aside her better judgement and she decided to walk on regardless of the deep snow in the ditch. Her foot slipped and Delph soon found herself falling into this ditch. As usual she laughed at her pre-

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**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



## Yellow-Legged Hornet

Some of you may have heard of the yellow-legged hornet that has been found in Georgia. This is a new invasive species. This is a different species of hornet from the Asian Giant Hornet that was discovered in Washington state a couple of years ago. These new hornets are primarily a threat to pollinators. They pose the same level of threat to people as most other hornets or wasps. Let's talk about these new invasive species a bit.

They originate from Southeast Asia. They are in the Vespa genus, which means that they are true hornets. Many of the wasps that we call hornets here are not technically hornets since they are not in the Vespa genus. The bad news is that hornets are predators of bees and wasps. Bees are very important for pollination. Even wasps can serve as pollinators. Figs are an example of a food that is pollinated by wasps.

Our native bees and honeybees would struggle to defend themselves against these new hornets. These hornets are bigger, stronger, and have a thick exoskeleton for protection. They will form a nest, which means that they communicate with each other when they find a tasty meal, such as a beehive. These yellow-legged hornets prefer honeybees. They can be identified by their legs, which are dark brown on the top half and yellow on the bottom half. The adults are about 3/4 of an inch long or 2 centimeters. They also have a very narrow waist. Their fourth abdominal segment has a yellow stripe on it.

So far, these hornets have only been found in Savannah. Because pollinators play such a crucial role in agriculture and the environment the Georgia Department of Agriculture has taken a very proactive role in working with the USDA and UGA to trap, track and eradicate these pests. If you think you have found a yellow-legged hornet you can report it at the Georgia Department of Agriculture website (<https://agr.georgia.gov/>). You can also bring a sample by your Extension Office to help with identification. Any samples brought by the Extension Office should be dead or in a tightly sealed jar.

I still get questions about the Asian giant hornet, or 'murder hornet'. The name of this insect has officially been changed to the northern giant hornet. They have not been found in Georgia. They have only been found in the Northwest corner of Washington state. The northern giant hornet has not been spotted in the US since 2021. Hopefully, they won't be found and eradication efforts that were taken quickly prevented them from establishing. Similar efforts at eradication

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**UGA extension**

Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



## North Georgia News

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## Paris... continued from Page 4A

**hunt on his adjacent property, what if he shoots a deer and it happens to die on my property. Who does the deer belong to?**

A. This is one of the places when the State Law has precedence over county or subdivision law. If a hunter shoots an animal legally in proper hunting season, he should contact you - the property owner - to ask permission to remove the deer. It is then expected that the hunter would have a legal right to claim his deer. However, in the many years in office, this problem has not come up before, and I do not look for it to come up anytime soon. It is expected that simple common sense and decency should be observed between neighbors.

**Q. Can you do an ordinance that restricts people from**

**using guns in our subdivision?**

A. No. We can only hope that common decency will prevent anyone from shooting in a subdivision at an inappropriate time, although we have had a couple of instances where this has happened in the past.

**Q. Can we put in our covenants and restrictions that if a property owner does not live in Union County full-time, they have to put up no trespassing signs?**

A. As far as I know, that is a legitimate legal addition to covenants, but I have not seen it before. Again, any issues dealing with your subdivision are controlled by the property owners as a group and/or their attorney. Anytime you have a question about your covenants, you would want to consult an attorney.

## Clyde... continued from Page 4A

\$20,000,000, bribery and extortion by a government official should spark grave concern for every American – regardless of party affiliation.

As we know, the Bidens weren't offering goods or services in exchange for hefty sums of money. Instead, as Hunter Biden's former friend and business partner, Devon Archer, explains, they were selling "the brand."

Folks, "the brand" is the Bidens – specifically, the access and political influence associated with the family.

One of the stunning findings in the newly released bank memo describes that in April 2014, a Kazakhstan oligarch, Kenes Rakishev – who worked closely with the Kazakhstan Prime Minister – wired \$142,300 to one of the Bidens' shell companies after meeting with Hunter Biden. The very next day, the shell company made a payment for

a sports car for Hunter – in the exact amount of \$142,300. Following the luxury purchase, Hunter and his business associates arranged for Burisma, a Ukrainian gas company, to visit Kazakhstan in June 2014 to evaluate a deal between Burisma, a Chinese state-owned company, and the government of Kazakhstan.

In 2014, Hunter Biden also received millions of dollars in payments from Russian oligarch Yelena Baturina. Interestingly, then-Vice President Joe Biden had dinners with both Rakishev and Baturina in Washington, D.C. in the spring of 2014 and 2015.

This is just the latest evidence that Joe Biden allowed the Biden brand to enrich his family while he served in the Obama Administration. Please know that House Republicans are committed to leaving no stone unturned in our pursuit of truth, transparency, and justice.

## St. Lawrence... continued from Page 4A

a "rotary" in other parts of the country) at the intersection of Pat Haralson Drive and Deep South Farm Road. That roundabout will improve traffic flow in and out of Union General Hospital, and accommodate an upcoming hospital expansion.

The Infrastructure bill, called the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2022, secured the money that's paying to rebuild our country's crumbling bridges, repair our potholed roads, install lighting and safety equipment, detect and prevent sinkholes, and expand broadband internet service to rural areas... like Blairsville.

Clyde vehemently, fre-

quently, and loudly opposed the bill. But that isn't stopping him from telling you that HE got the money for you. He didn't. He's lying about that.

Maybe Mr. Clyde could pause his non-stop conspiracy theorizing, and spend some of his time doing something for the district he supposedly represents - unlike any of the eight bills he's proposed in 2023 that have literally nothing to do with 9th District, or even the state of Georgia.

If he won't, we owe it to ourselves and our kids and grandkids to replace him with someone who will.

**Gary St. Lawrence**

## Brown... continued from Page 4A

You won't fall for that. You know you count. Your tax dollars count. Your vote counts. Politicians still need you more than you need them. Demand of them fair elections.

Don't trust our elections? You are not alone. The Dominion voting system is inaccurate, unsecure, and unverifiable to the voter. What data does that QR Code hold? Why don't you get to see that information? Did you know secure paper ballots are significantly less expensive and do not require the burden of costly equipment updates like the latest \$73,500 steel modules your tax dollars just bought and paid for in Union County? Don't let someone try to convince you that hand-counted ballots are impossible. Many first-world countries utilize paper balloting to prevent fraud! Voter roll discrepancies, manipulation, fraud, and Zucker buck infusion, you know what you are up against. Take up the challenge.

What can you do?

Demand that the Legislature call a special session to protect the 2024 election with secure hand-marked paper ballots, publicly hand-counted with full audits. Our Constitution grants all power to conduct elections to the Legislature.

## Bernthal... continued from Page 4A

property taxes within the next year." One month later, in the June 7th edition, again I quote, "School Superintendent John Hill said he does 'not plan on recommending a tax increase' when it comes time to set rates later in the year." Who do you believe? Obviously, the board has a different take on the subject.

BTW, also in the June 7th edition, again I quote, "Importantly, Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris has committed to rolling back the 2023 county millage rate 'to minimize any tax increase.'" I'll be patiently waiting for that shoe to fall also.

As Benjamin Franklin once said, "Nothing is certain except death and taxes." He should have added "rising" in front of the word taxes.

**Steve Bernthal**  
Union County resident since 1993

## Lausier ... continued from Page 4A

Brad Raffensperger.

It was a cordial but direct conversation about the concerns many people have about how poorly the Secretary of State is conducting the election safeguards in this state.

We are proposing a special legislative session to push for paper ballots or an alternative to machines that have been proven in court to be faulty.

Mr. Hetland stated he would bring our concerns to the lieutenant governor.

We shall see.  
**Eva Lausier**

## Cummings...continued from Page 4A

dicament. However, she soon stopped laughing because she was having a very difficult time trying to get up. Her present shape and size would not allow her to pull herself up. The wind was howling and she was really cold and in need of help.

Delph began to holler as loud as possible and soon her 6-year-old son, Ray, and 5-year-old daughter heard their mother. The boy told his younger sister to stay in the house while he went to help their mother.

The little girl later told me, "I was not about to stay inside while Mom needed our help." The pair pulled on their coats and rushed to their mother's aid. They found her in a snow drift of 6 feet. The young pair helped their mother wallow out of the drift and even-

tually she was able to stand up. During the process of falling she found that she had only lost about half of the milk.

Upon reaching the warmth and safety of their house the three of them changed into some drier clothing and huddled up around the fireplace to wait on Bill. But, he did not arrive that evening. Remember he was delivering students to their homes on his bus route.

The road down around the Gray Rock and on to the breaks of Ray Mountain proved to be treacherous. The bus became stuck in a ditch. So he and the 10 students left on the bus sought refuge in an old abandoned house. The lot of them ripped boards from the walls and used them as fire wood. The group survived the snowy night in the old house.

The next day Delphia's father and brothers used a wagon and team of horses to go and find Bill and the students. They found them walking down the snow covered road between the house and the bus.

The students were delivered to their homes and Bill was delivered to his family. That snow storm was one

which is still talked about by those which experienced it.

There were other repercussions as well. Some of the families in the area were upset because Bill did not get their kids delivered home before it began to snow, which was difficult to do because school had not been called off due to the weather. He soon soured on

his job as a bus driver and he was making very little money on the farm.

My grandfather soon left this job and found another driving a truck for the Rockwood Mines. The job paid enough to help him and his family get a new car and washing machine. They were able to move up in the world.

## Williams...

**continued from Page 4A**

ing the yellow-legged hornet are underway in Georgia to keep this pest from becoming established. Most insects that I have received that someone thought was a northern giant hornet were a European hornet. While invasive, these have been around for over 100 years. Some have been the cicada killer, which is a native wasp.

If you have questions about the yellow-legged hornet contact your county Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

## Ashurst...

**continued from Page 4A**

away the dishes, vacuuming the house, and paying the bills. Such achievements are not going to stop traffic or move mountains, but they are tasks nevertheless deserving recognition. Each single one of our finished tasks deserves a worthwhile reward. But to stop to do each reward individually may not be possible, so combining them can be just as effective. As a result, you have taken the time to bathe your self-worth in a wonderful way.

Next week, more on Self Rewards.

## Dyer ...

**continued from Page 4A**

ties. However, if you have been warned to evacuate, you should do so immediately.

Most of these practices can be found at Firewise USA®. For information on Firewise USA®, contact your local U.S. Forest Service or Georgia Forestry Commission office.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

## Murauskas...

**continued from Page 4A**

2022, most of us assumed that Union County Schools were financially sound.

Despite having more money than ever, the proposed FY24 budget of \$55 million actually puts us at \$3 million in the red. The proposed FY24 budget represents a 25% increase over "pre-pandemic" expenditures in 2019. We all know there is a litany of laws, procedures, and comparisons to other school districts to justify these increases. We also know that it is sacrilegious to question funding related to our youth. But maybe it's time to call into question what appears to be a "spend and then tax" approach by UCS leadership?

Public hearings at the Union County Board Office (124 Hughes St.) are scheduled for Aug. 24 at 7:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Let's hope we can get better answers on why local government's hands are getting deeper into our pockets before the final Aug. 31 vote.

**Josh Murauskas**

## Chamber...

**continued from Page 4A**

details out for our training class on boards. We offer this class annually to all non-profits and clubs that work with boards. It's a great way to learn about the different roles and responsibilities of board members, how organizations should flow, and how to do strategic planning, etc.

We are happy to bring back our biggest business resource event of the year, formerly known as the Buy Local Extravaganza, now called the Blairsville Business Expo. It's almost a one-stop-shop for all your business (and personal) needs – we will have banks, web designers, insurance reps, realtors, promotional product reps, advertising agents, medical and health professionals, financial service managers, and so much more!