

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Planning for Disasters

Last week we presented the month of September as being National Preparedness Month. Each week of the National Preparedness Month has a different theme and guidelines on how to prepare for a disaster. Week 2, September 8th through 14th, is one of the most important and involves creating an Emergency Plan.

The process of developing an emergency plan starts by discussing four questions with your family: 1) How will we receive emergency alerts and warnings? 2) What is our shelter plan? 3) What is our evacuation route? and 4) What is our family/household communication plan? Knowing the answers to these questions will help you and your family during a disaster.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



The Union County Alert Emergency Notification System (Union Alert) is one of the best ways to keep informed. Union Alert is an alert system operated in cooperation with Union County Government, Emergency Management and 911 Communications Center. It is designed to instantly reach registered cell phones, landline numbers, and emails when an urgent alert needs to be communicated. Receiving Union Alert messages is voluntary. People who wish to receive these alerts must register with the system. You may register on-line by visiting tinyurl.com/ucwens.

There may be incidents where sheltering is required. There are two types of sheltering: sheltering in a location away from the incident or shelter-in-place such as staying where you are with some preparations and supplies. If it is necessary to take shelter at another location, families should know where to go and what they will bring with them. Sheltering in place may be required. People should research what may be needed to do this and what supplies may be needed.

If people need to evacuate, they should know where to go and several routes to get there. Depending on the incident, the evacuation may be planned or immediate. Go-Kits with emergency supplies should be taken. It is also a good idea to have some maps in the event that there is no cell or navigation services.

The next step is to create a communication plan in order to get in touch with your family if separated. Ready.gov has a family communication plan that can be customized to fit your needs.

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A Lasting Home

One of the last paintings Rembrandt completed (1669) was "The Return of the Prodigal Son." This impactful art piece, about eight feet tall and wide, is in the collection at the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

The subject of the painting is the final in a series of three stories as told by Jesus (Luke 15). The sheep, coin, and son share the theme of something lost, yet found. The prodigal son parable is the longest of the three. At first it's about a wandering son, but it quickly becomes more about a loving father. Perhaps that's why Rembrandt has only the father's face in full view.

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Rembrandt's masterpiece had a particular impact on Henri Nouwen (d. 1996). Nouwen was a Dutch academic in psychology and theology. After being a professor at Harvard, Yale, and Notre Dame, he set that career aside. For the final ten years of his life, he served L'Arche Communities, an inclusive home for the disabled in Ontario.

Nouwen struggled with loneliness, and reflected deeply on Jesus' parable and Rembrandt's painting. He visited The Hermitage Museum to see the painting in person. He was so moved that he authored a book about it, "The Return of the Prodigal Son - A Story of Homecoming." Nouwen writes, "So there I was; facing the painting that had been on my mind and in my heart for nearly three years. I was stunned by its majestic beauty. Its size, larger than life; its shadowy recess and bright foreground, but most of all the light-enveloped embrace of father and son surrounded by four mysterious bystanders... It has brought me into touch with something within me that lies far beyond the ups and downs of life, something that represents the ongoing yearning of the human spirit, the yearning for a final return, an unambiguous sense of safety, a lasting home."

That need for unambiguous safety and a lasting home touches something deep in your soul, and Jesus knew that. Two times Jesus has the father saying that the son was dead and came to life again, was lost but now is found. Is there anything more threatening than your own mortality? Can you be more lost than when you have no home? In the story, the prodigal knows where the father is and returns to him seeking safety, home, and life.

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Commissioner's Questions

Q. Recently through the course of conversation I was made aware the new digital radio system has been implemented for the 911 dispatch center. How is this going?

A. Thank you for asking. Like with any new system there are things that we are still learning and getting accustomed to. The differences between the analog systems that we had for so long and this new digital system are quite vast but despite a few initial new learning bumps, we are extremely pleased. This is the biggest, most advanced and best upgrade we have made to the communications system for our 911 dispatch system and county ever. We are so very grateful that we can provide our public safety personnel with the state of the art equipment that could make a huge difference in the event of an emergency. This is all in an effort to continue to make our county residents as safe as possible.

Q. Why did our county have to switch over to digital radios and communication equipment?

A. In 2013 the Federal Communications Commission started "narrowbanding" of licensed public radio frequencies used by analog technology. This basically meant analog radios would have a narrower bandwidth available after the switch, which could lead to more static and weaker signals. Since our changeover to digital we have been well pleased. We have been able to get radio service in areas that were before questionable, and sometimes not even attainable as well as helping to improve the static issues greatly. Our E-911 department will still continue to monitor the old analog system in case someone is trying to reach us, and if necessary can be used as a backup.

Q. Is there still a program for smoke alarms with the Fire Department?

A. Yes, they still have the Smoke Alarm program. If you are in need please call our Fire Department at 706-439-6091, and they will answer your questions and schedule an install.

Q. I would like to burn my leaves but I don't know the number to call to get a burn permit. Could you help me with that?

A. In order to obtain a burn permit you need to call the

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



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Drug Free Mountain Life

Risk of Prescription Painkiller Addiction

The most fatally abused drugs are legal and sitting in the medicine cabinet: opioid pain relievers.

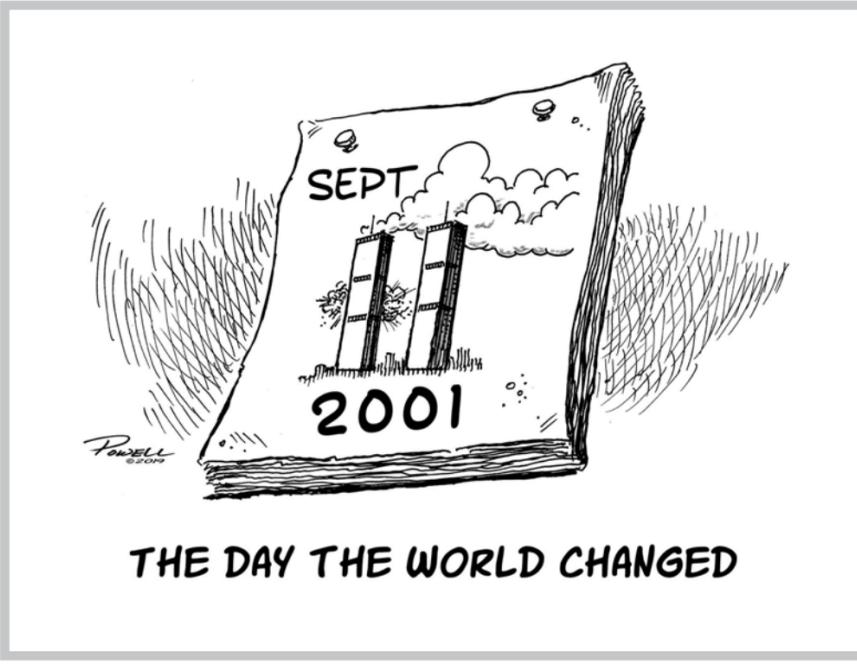
Sixty people die every day as a result of overdoses from opioids. In a year, that's 22,630 deaths, a total roughly equal to the population of a small town.

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.

Americans know opioids are addictive, but they do not understand how addictive, according to a public opinion poll conducted by the National Safety Council. Nine out of 10 opioid painkiller users said they were concerned about addiction. Yet, nearly 60% reported at least one addiction risk factor in looking at personal or family history.

In part, these findings help explain the steady increase in prescription drug overdoses, which has raised death rates for white adults

See Drug Free, page 5A



Chamber of Commerce

As you drive down 129 South, it appears the paving project is almost done. It's been a long process to improvement, but the smooth new asphalt is surely worth it. When the project is complete, we'll all enjoy a safer and more pleasant drive to Gainesville. If you travel frequently, you know everything that Commissioner Paris, Mayor Conley, and City Council do to improve transport in Blairsville-Union County. We have many people working to make our region the best place in the state to live.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



We had an amazing time and a big turnout for Taste of the Mountains on August 24. If you were unable to participate, you don't have to wait long! We are getting excited for our annual Buy Local Extravaganza happening on October 3rd at North Georgia Tech College. With an attendance of over 750 people last year, this is a great opportunity to showcase your business and gain exposure. For restaurants that want to pro-

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Letters to the Editor

Time to Move Forward

Dear Editor,
What are we afraid of? Why do so many cling to the past? Can we not see that life changes, times change, and we either have to adapt or be left behind? We should be grateful for all the progress that fossil fuels have brought us, but now it is time to look ahead and see that there is now a better way.

The damage from burning fossil fuels is becoming more obvious every day, and almost all experts agree that they have to be put aside for something better. With all our technological advances, we now have the opportunity to rapidly switch from fossil fuels to wind, solar, and other alternative energy sources while at the same time creating millions of new jobs and expanding our economy.

Presently, China is beating the U.S. in the Green Energy Revolution and creating millions of new jobs in the process. We cannot allow that to continue!

Now is the time to contact our Congressmen and tell them we want them to take strong action to combat climate change and lead America to a new age of prosperity.

We are America, and we can meet this challenge!

Vernon Dixon, MD

The Hoax of Global Warming Due to Fossil Fuels

Dear Editor,
As Paul Harvey used to say, "Here is the rest of the story" about the truth of global warming. Our politicians have been talking about global warming and reducing all sources of burning fossil fuels that produce carbon dioxide, which is greenhouse gas.

A sudden stoppage of burning fossil fuels is not very practical because we cannot make enough energy without using such fuels. Water power, nuclear power, solar power and wind power cannot replace our fuels and supply enough energy for our needs.

You can research the decrease in the strength of our magnetosphere around Earth, which is causing more global warming than carbon dioxide. The poles of Earth are changing as our magnetic North Pole is moving 40 miles a year toward Russia. During this polar shift, the strength of our magnetosphere will decrease, and it is decreasing 5% every 10 years.

This is a big story that overshadows all of our attempts to stop burning fossil fuels.

The carbon credits are a hoax to control nations. The sun is heating up the Earth more, which overshadows any green plan.

Richard Lee

Letters to the Editor

Simple Courtesy

Dear Editor,
I must confess, though a bit embarrassing, that I was never a big fan of "History," because even as a teen, history seemed so long ago, and I was more interested in what was in store for the future.

My naive attitude surely made a direct about-face a dozen years ago, when I suddenly couldn't find enough information about what made America and her Constitution and Bill of Rights so valuable. My insatiable turn brought me not only knowledge, but a deep reverence for the founding of this country. And while I do not claim that it is a flawless government, or that there have never been some wrongs — most of which have been corrected — I still stand beside her and proudly put my hand across my heart whenever I see a flag or sing "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Recently, a letter to the editor was printed as a "Response to 'Demofascists on the Loose,'" and it was filled with the kind of real facts that surely warm the cockles of any patriot's heart! I do not know the author, but I wholeheartedly hope there will be additional letters submitted to pique our interest and encourage a search for additional information. It was written so cogently and convincingly that its form overshadowed all the hateful vitriol that has become the law of the land in the past several years.

I am old enough to remember how to disagree with others yet not call them names and still maintain a viable relationship with them. That was called simple courtesy. I recall being able to speak without offending the one person in a room whose sensitivities were so fragile I was banned from uttering my previously-held free speech opinions. And I remember having dinner with homosexuals who did not expect me to have a parade celebrating their lifestyle.

And does anyone ask me if I ever sent money to a black candidate... because if they asked, they'd find out I supported Ben Carson, who rose from abject poverty to become a world-renowned brain surgeon, because his mother forbade her children from more than two hours of TV a week and required them to read a book weekly and write a book report about it. [They had to read their reports to her, because she only had a third-grade education, but she refused to allow her kids to believe they weren't able to succeed and live beyond the rat-infested tenement they occupied — that's the kind of child-rearing to be celebrated!] If all that makes me a racist, a homophobe and — heaven forbid — a Christian, then I stand willing to be convicted. And before I'm executed, I hope to see more letters from the writer who jump-started my response.

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The Swimming Hole

My grandfather, Columbus, was raised with a bunch of his cousins and friends just outside of Phil Campbell, Alabama, in a little community called Trapptown. The people of this little community were extremely close and they managed to enjoy life even though the country was in turmoil due to the Depression. The boys of the family enjoyed playing-baseball, fishing in the creek, coon hunting, and in the summertime, they swam at the mill pond on Cummings Creek.

During the 1930s, parents were very conservative with their children. You never saw a girl wearing a pair of shorts. Young men and women didn't go on dates by themselves. Boys and girls didn't go swimming together. The young people around the little community of Trapptown had different swimming times for the "Swimming Hole on Cummings Creek."

Actually, the boys didn't even wear bathing suits. So, the boys swam from 1:30 until 3:30. After the boys left, the girls would swim until 5:30. This arrangement allowed the boys and girls to swim for the same amount of time, and it worked well for most of Coon's teenage years. But, then Coon began to notice girls. There were three girls in the community who were sisters. Even though the girls had been a part of Papa's life since he could remember, he'd never noticed them. But, one day all of a sudden, Coon noticed the Lauderdale Girls, and they were beautiful. That is when the trouble began.

One particularly hot day during the Dog Days of August, the boys were having a great time at the swimming hole. When it came time for the boys to get out of the water so the girls could swim, they refused. The girls hollered at them from the top of the bluff, "Your time is up. It's time for us girls to swim." Papa said, "We just laughed and kept swimming." Not only were the Lauderdale Girls pretty, but, they were also smart.

While the boys were still swimming, the Lauderdale Girls slipped down to where the boys had left their clothes. The eldest girl knew Papa was the ring leader of the boys, so Sarah placed her underwear in the bib pocket of his overalls. After a while, Coon and his brothers got out of the water, put on their clothes and made their way home. By the time they got home, it was suppertime. When Papa and his brothers walked into the house, their mother, Laura, told them to take off their dirty clothes and place them on the back porch.

Coon was bad about leaving items in his pockets. So, his mother went through his pocket-

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



Lichen

Have you seen moss growing on trees? Lichen is the term used for the blue green, papery growth that is often found on the bark of trees and other perennials. Sometimes folks are concerned over the growth of lichen, because they think it may be damaging their tree. Let's talk about what lichens are, what causes them, and what you can do to control them.

Lichens are really made up of a couple of different organisms. They usually will have a fungus and an algae. These organisms work together in a relationship that is mutually beneficial. Together these organisms produce the thallus, which is the leaf like growth that people see and recognize as lichen. Each organism has its own role in the relationship. The fungus provides a physical structure for growth, because the algae is slimy and has no structure. The fungus also provides water and minerals from the air or the material that the lichen is growing on. The algae are capable of photosynthesis, so they provide the carbohydrates needed for life. Some algae are also able to pull nitrogen from the atmosphere that the lichen need for development. Together they are able to combine and sustain life.

Lichens grow all over the world. Different species will grow on different surfaces. For instance lichen that you see on a rock will not grow on a tree. Different colors are also possible. Lichen will begin to grow more on a plant if that plant has lost some of its leaves. When leaves fall from a tree, more sunlight is able to penetrate to the branches and trunk of the tree that will enable to growth of more lichen. Lichen is an opportunistic grower, meaning that healthy, actively growing plants will not have as much lichen on them. If there is an abundant amount of lichen on a plant that means there could be something that is stressing your plant, allowing the opportunistic lichen to grow. That could be a nutritional deficiency, a root disease, or an insect pest among other things.

Lichen does not kill plants. An abundant amount of lichen can be an indicator that something else is affecting the plant. There are not any products that are recommended for use on lichen that is also safe for plants. Products that you spray to kill lichen have potential to damage the plant it's hanging onto. You can remove lichen manually by gently scraping it from the bark. If you see a tree that has a lot of lichen growing on it carefully examine the plant. Here are some things to look for. Has the plant already lost its leaves? Are there holes in the bark from insects boring? Has the plant been receiving enough wa-

Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



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