

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Preparedness Fair

The month of September, which is National Preparedness Month, is coming to an end. This year's theme was "Prepared, Not Scared." We have reviewed the various themes for each week including saving for an emergency; making a plan; teaching youth to prepare; and getting involved in community preparedness. A perfect way to wrap up National Preparedness Month, and to reinforce these subjects, is by attending a preparedness fair.

Union County Community Emergency Response Team and Union County Emergency Management are hosting a Family and Community Preparedness Fair at North Georgia Technical College on Saturday, September 28th starting at 9 a.m. and ending at 4 p.m.

A preparedness fair is an event that brings together various organizations, businesses, and individuals who provide information on preparedness supplies, equipment and practices. This preparedness fair will present basic topics including fire prevention, first aid, hands only CPR, Stop-the-bleed, basic survival skills, water purification, sheltering, Go Kits, pets during an emergency, and much more.

Emergency service organizations that cover Union County will also be present such as Union General EMS, Union County Fire Department, Airlife 14 helicopter, Georgia Forestry Commission, and HAM radio operators. Each service will be providing demonstrations on skills and equipment to better prepare people for emergencies or disasters. The fair will also have presentations and lectures throughout the day on various preparedness subjects such as alternative energy, neighborhood home security, and "What If" scenarios.

The themes for each week have reminded us of why we should be prepared and provided some tips on what we can do. The preparedness fair will provide information on how to do it. If you are looking for ideas on how to be prepared for emergencies and what supplies are needed, the preparedness fair is a great opportunity to learn.

Although National Preparedness Month is coming to an end, we should never stop preparing for the next emergency or disaster. Everyone should review the preparedness subjects presented during

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Follow the Evidence

A dairy cow has a strong maternal instinct. She objects to the standard practice of removing her days-old calf and challenges any barrier to it. That natural instinct is the basis of a curious historical event.

The Philistines captured the Israelites' holy symbol, the ark (think Indiana Jones, not Noah). They began suffering plagues and suspected the ark's presence. To test this theory, they hitched milk cows to a cart and loaded the ark. They took the calves away, and waited to see what would happen. Overruling their natural instinct, "the cows took the straight way in the direction of (Israel). They went along the highway, lowing as they went" (1 Sam. 6:12). The natural gave evidence to the supernatural.

For a modern example of the same, Watson and Crick discovered the 3D double helix structure of DNA in 1953. DNA stores coded information which can be transmitted to make new cells. It also contains the instructions to make the de-coding machinery of RNA. The DNA code is made up of four nucleotide bases, abbreviated as letters. The human genetic code requires three billion letters.

How did that happen? How did all that information become packed into tiny cells? Such questions became disruptive to English philosopher Antony Flew. For most of his life, he taught and wrote as an advocate of his atheist beliefs. To his credit, he also believed in following the evidence. At age 81, he did just that, and it was in part due to scientific discoveries about DNA.

He said, "DNA has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together. It's the enormous complexity of the number of elements and the enormous subtlety of the ways they work together. The meeting of these two parts at the right time by chance is simply minute. It is all a matter of the enormous complexity by which the results were achieved, which looked to me like the work of intelligence."

In 2007, Flew published a book, "There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind," describing

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



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Commissioner's Questions

I really enjoy my job and work very hard at it every day. While there are always a few people who do not realize what myself and our employees do, or do not care if they know, I wanted to print this statement I recently received.

Q. "Sir, I have seen your replies about the grass cutting. I drive through many counties for my job and even in N.C. they have been able to keep their road ways cut if the county crew can not keep up you should come up with a contract service like the other counties do quit hoarding the money you get under the table."

A. If you are simply driving through the county and witnessing long grass on the highway, I wonder if you are speaking of the State GDOT (Georgia Department of Transportation) roads, Hwy. 19/129 North and South, Hwy. 515, East and West. If so, Union County has no control over when or how those highways get mowed. However, our county roads are all in pretty good shape. Granted with all the early rain, our mowing crews did get behind, but most are now caught up since we have had about three weeks of relatively dry weather.

We choose to use county employees, some part time, to do our mowing because there are many obstacles in the right of way on many of the county roads that need some local knowledge to protect. Even though we always strive to do our best, still some damage to personal property will sometimes occur. Your types of statements are certainly frustrating for me as I am very proud of Union County and the work that is done by our employees.

Q. I don't understand why when I am trying to exit my subdivision onto Hwy. 19/129 the grass is so tall that I can't see to safely pull out onto the road. Why can't you do something about this?

A. Anytime you ever have a safety issue like this please call the Road Department at 706-439-6062, let them know about the situation and they will try to get a crew out as quickly as possible to weed eat the intersection to improve visibility. Hwy. 19/129 North and South, and Hwy. 515 East and West, are State GDOT (Georgia Department of Transportation) roads, as I stated above. Union County does not have any control over when or how these

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



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Letters to the Editor

Traffic Problems

Dear Editor,

I imagine all the people residing in the county, and Blairsville specifically, have recognized the recent growth in our area. Even the commissioner mentioned it in his weekly column on Sept. 11: "We continue to work on looking out for problems with this new growth so that we may be proactive and always do what is best for Union County." It would appear that some common sense and good judgement are not being applied to the traffic problems this new growth creates. Access, parking and traffic flow need consideration.

Let's take a look at what making a new ramp from Hwy. 515 onto Bob Head Street did to create dangerous conditions at both ends. The intersection at Pat Haralson has traffic backed up daily, and on the other end, people who enter 515 heading west create a dangerous situation. Once the new building in front of Foodland is under construction and eventually finished, the bigger problems will appear. I think those who travel through this area recognize how poorly designed it is and will continue to be.

Another area that will cause traffic headaches will be when the Lophorn Restaurant is completed. Although I think most folks will agree it is a welcome addition to our area, getting into it from Hwy. 129 will be a future problem. The entrance going north on 129 in front of Kentucky Fried Chicken is not designed for left-hand turns, and without better engineering will cause traffic problems. Yes, there will be an entrance off of 515, but not everyone will know that.

These are just examples of what happens when you don't seriously consider traffic when approving new growth. I may be wrong about these problems, but I'm sure most of us have already experienced these traffic issues and most of the new building isn't complete.

While we crowd more fast food places into the downtown area, a little common sense should be applied, and the traffic flow should be considered first.

Thomas Mackey

Two Questions

Dear Editor,

I have two questions:

First question - when are we going to have a new grocery store in Blairsville?

Second question - if all the fast food businesses have signs wanting to hire people (how's that going), who is going to work in the new restaurants?

Lorraine Harris

Hunting Regulations

Dear Editor,

I read an article in the paper recently that bow season has opened, and the article went into how many bucks and does the hunter is allowed to kill and where to report the kill.

My concern is, are hunters allowed to come into residential areas and kill deer on private property?

The deer are everywhere, not only in the forests, but sometimes in your own backyard.

I can understand a hunter getting a four-point buck as long as they eat the meat.

Times have changed. There are a lot more people now in Blairsville and surrounding areas, and we are still growing.

I don't really call it a sport if a deer is traveling through your backyard and you kill it.

There are people here living in residential areas that leave for the winter. But they still are living in residential areas and private property. My neighbors love to go walking at dusk in the woods hopefully with hopes not to get wounded or killed.

Please put in the paper what are the regulations regarding where hunters are allowed to hunt. With an owner's permission, if you are in a residential area, it is too dangerous.

Charlotte Thompson



North Georgia Firewise

On Oct. 15 at 1 p.m., the Towns County Citizen's Firewise USA Coalition will hold their monthly meeting at the Towns County Rec Center. All citizens who are interested in reducing their risk of a wildfire in their backyard are invited to attend, and especially the leaders of any recognized Firewise USA communities no matter what county. We are here to help take the worry out of Firewise USA renewals.

Georgia has 108 recognized Firewise USA communities across the state and Towns County has 22 of them! This is a testament to the dedication of our Citizen's Coalition. The meeting will be an update on Firewise USA, the current wildfire situation around here, Ready-Set-Go, and other wildfire risk reduction programs available for our citizens. There will be computers set up at the meeting for community members to enter their Firewise USA annual renewal information so bring your username and password for Firewise USA. Coalition members will be available at the meeting to help navigate the new Firewise USA website and portal in order to enter annual renewal information. Refreshments will be served.

The keynote speaker will be Shawn Alexander, recently retired from the Georgia Forestry Commission as the Fire Management Officer for North Georgia. Shawn was responsible for managing all firefighting activities in North Georgia for the Georgia Forestry Commission. As soon as Shawn retired he began contracting with communities for Firewise mitigation work in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). He knows from many years of hands-on experience how to prepare your home to better survive a wildfire. The first job, or challenge, we gave him was to tackle Tate City and he has been creating defensible space around buildings and reducing the risk of property loss in preparation for the next wildfire that could sweep over the community. This defensible space buys time until the volunteer fire departments can get to your house and gives the firefighters a safe place to defend your home. Tate City survived the wildfires in 2016 because of quick work by a large group of wildland firefighters from across the country. We may not be that lucky again so the community is taking steps to reduce the wildfire risk before the next one comes blowing in, (and it will).

The Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council has been awarded grants to fund these mitigation activities and is administering the grants for these programs. These grant funds originate with the US Forest Service because

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RC&D Executive Director



Frank Riley

My Favorite Foods

When I was a little boy, my Dad lost his job at the textile mill and he was forced to move north to find work. We soon found ourselves in Chicago. None of us liked it much. But, at least we had enough money to live on. Home is where the heart is, and our hearts and homes longed for the South. To get our minds off of being homesick, Mom took us swimming.

Lake Michigan has the coldest water in the world. Mom says that it was so cold I wouldn't even get in the water. I have swam in Helton Creek and even up at Lake Winfield Scott. That water is warm compared to the water in Lake Michigan.

I also had a hard time in school while we lived in the North. During the first grade, I attended school at Mark Twain Elementary School in Kankakee, Illinois. Mrs. Kilbright told my Dad that I had two strikes against me. First, I was a boy, and everyone knew little girls were smarter than little boys. Second, my father was told I was a hillbilly, and everyone knew people from the South were not very bright. That is the only time in my life where my Dad almost committed a crime. After he calmed down, Dad came home and told us to pack our bags, because we were going home. We soon found our family living in Tullahoma, Tennessee.

For supper on Fridays, my Dad would always stop at a local hamburger stand and bring home a bunch of burgers. When we lived up North, he always stopped at a place called White Castle. This place served little burgers about the size of a small biscuit. The very first Friday after moving to Tennessee, Dad found a new hamburger place. It was called Burger King. As was his custom, Dad went in and ordered 14 hamburgers. There were only four of us in the family, and it took 14 of the little White Castle burgers to feed all of us. Dad did not realize these Burger King Whoppers were huge.

Dad wondered why the people looked at him so funny when he ordered the burgers. This amount of burgers required several bags, and Dad needed help getting them to his car. But, he was too embarrassed to tell the store clerks that he had made a mistake. Dad got home with the burgers and Mom fussed at him for buying so many large hamburgers. She told me that she wished she had a camera to capture the look on my face as she unwrapped the huge hamburgers. I thought I was in heaven, and to this day, my favorite meal is a good hamburger. I knew at that point we had come home to the South.

When growing up in the 1960s and '70s, I spent a lot of time with my grandparents. Some

Around The Farm



Mickey Cummings

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Chamber of Commerce

The cool fall air is beginning to roll in and with all the many events coming up on our calendar, it's going to be challenging deciding what to do next. Consider taking a ride across Neel's Gap for a peek into the upcoming leaf season.

Several of the trees have already started changing, so roll the windows down and appreciate the mountain breeze as you take it all in. And please be mindful of bikers that are taking advantage of the beautiful weather as well, and drive carefully as you travel our winding mountain roads.

We are so excited for our upcoming Buy Local Extravaganza on October 3 and have a fantastic group of vendors on the roster—amazing restaurants (providing some tasty samples), wonderful retailers showcasing their merchandise, and an array of other unique entrepreneurs who can't wait to tell you more about what their businesses can do for you. The event is held at North Georgia Technical College and starts at 4

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President



Steve Rowe

Composting

Composting is a popular and effective method to improve the quality of your soil. It can also help you get rid of lawn debris such as grass clippings or leaves as they are beginning to fall. Composting is not difficult to do, but here are some tips so that you can start your own compost pile.

Compost is rich, dark humus that is the end product of the natural decomposition of plants or plant products. Using a compost pile will speed up the natural decomposition of plant material. Compost can improve soil drainage, structure, and help hold water and nutrients. The nutrients in compost will not be enough to replace fertilizing, but it will improve soil health.

You can use just about any organic material for composting. Leaves, grass clippings, twigs, old annual or perennial flowers, old vegetable plants, straw, and sawdust can all be thrown into the compost pile. Try to avoid using insect or disease infested plants to reduce the spread of those plants the following season. You can put things like kitchen peelings and coffee grounds into the compost pile too. However, be careful because adding too many of those things will attract animals. Avoid using highly processed foods because these will take longer to break down.

When making a compost pile, it's helpful to have something to contain it. A lot of different materials can be used from wire, fencing, wood pallets or concrete blocks. Leave some open spaces on the sides for ventilation. Good air circulation is important for successful compost. The bottom of the pile needs to be open to the soil to allow good drainage. Construct your pile in an out of the way place in your yard, in full sun.

Once you've constructed your container for the compost pile, start adding organic matter. Smaller pieces will decompose more quickly than large pieces of organic matter. Once you have a layer of organic matter in there add in some garden soil or animal manure. These will add fungi, bacteria, insects, and worms to the pile. They're the critters responsible for breaking down the plant material into the humus that you add to your garden. You'll want to keep the pile moist, but not soggy.

Sometimes a concern with compost piles is that there might be an odor. If you turn the pile with a shovel about once a month this will reduce the smell. A good functioning compost pile will heat up from the activity of the microbes decomposing organic matter. The heat produced will kill off the odor causing bacteria. If you add manure to your pile there will be some initial odor, but as the pile matures the smell will go away. A well

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UGA extension Watching and Working



Jacob Williams

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