

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### Wildfire Prevention

We are beginning our peak fire season this month. The cooler temperatures will result in more leaves falling and outdoor burning. It has rained very little over the last couple of months and we are still in a drought. It would take six to nine inches of rain to bring the rain levels up to normal. In other words, it is still dry. This makes outside burning dangerous.

If you are going to do some outdoor burning, please follow a few guidelines. Everyone should get a burning permit from the Georgia Forestry Commission by calling 1-877-OK2-Burn or by going online at www.gatrees.org. If they are not issuing permits that day, it is for good reason and you should not burn.

Follow safety practices such as clearing around the fire and having the proper tools to control the fire before it becomes a wildfire. People should never leave a burn unattended and all fires must be extinguished before nightfall. These practices will help prevent wildfires.

When people think of a wildfire, they imagine a wall of fire coming through an area and burning everything in its path. Can that happen? Yes, it can, however, it is rare. Most homes that are victims of wildfire are due to flying embers called firebrands. "Ember" refers to any small, hot, carbonaceous particle. A "firebrand" is essentially an ember which is airborne and carried for some distance in the air.

These firebrands land on or near the home and ignite dry, flammable materials. These flammable materials include leaves next to the home; landscaping bark; landscaping vegetation; trash; and any other dry material near the home. Firebrands may also be blown into attics through vents. Once these small firebrands ignite the materials, they create a larger fire that eventually can ignite the home.

Certain practices can help prevent wildfires from destroying your home. Most of these practices can be found at Firewise USA®. This is a program that provides education and information on how to protect your home from wildfire. For information on Firewise USA®, contact your local U.S. Forest Service or Georgia Forestry Commission office.

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



### Association Agreement

Ellen DeGeneres and George Bush enjoyed a Dallas Cowboys football game together. That should not be such a remarkable story. Yet it is.

The revelation of their friendship wasn't the story. It was the backlash directed at DeGeneres, and her courageous response. Her critics weren't exactly applying the Golden Rule. Abdu Murray, an apologist at RZIM, explains the rule they did apply. "Today's rule is The Crimson Rule: Draw blood from your opponents so they don't draw blood from you. We have exchanged the civil public square - where we would seek understanding even while disagreeing - with the Roman Colosseum in which our ideological champions vanquish our foes." Sharing an AT&T stadium suite is not the way to draw blood.

Jesus modeled civility for us in a personal way. Levi the tax collector hosted a reception for Jesus and invited guests that weren't exactly on the straight and narrow. When self-righteous people criticized Jesus about associating with those guests, he said, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick" (Luke 5:31). So next time, why don't you just enjoy the punch and hors d'oeuvres with us? He didn't really say that. But might as well have.

Jesus is a friend to sinners. That means He is a friend to you and me since "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Why would He teach and model the ethic of association? He made us in His image, male and female (Gen 1:27). So He values us, and places the glory of God within our reach. As followers of Christ, we display that glory when we treat others with the respect due them as fellow image-bearers. His gospel is for people who disagree with you about their need for a Savior.

Do you fear that someone might assume you agree just because you associate? Or, do you accept the deception that disagreement demands disassociation? Not true. You can be kind to, and even friends with people who hold different beliefs and values. In fact, you benefit from such relationships when you discover fallacies in your own way of thinking. Or they may see the light. This says it better: "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your

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**All Things New**  
*Wayne Fowler*



### Commissioner's Questions

**Q: We sometimes hear that our kids have to leave Union County to search for decent employment. Is that the case?**

A: It is much better than it used to be, and there are many more good paying jobs in the area than in the past. You are always going to have some of our young people that will look to larger cities for employment. It is not always because that is where the only jobs are, but sometimes, they just want to move to a larger city to experience that lifestyle. But at the same time, our focus is to continually look for new business, industry, and jobs. We owe it to our young people and all ages to provide as good of employment as possible so that all of our labor does not have to leave the area, and that those who are raised and live here have decent employment opportunities.

**Q: What does Union County do to look for industry and retail in the search for more and better jobs?**

A: When I first became Commissioner, we had an Economic Developer who had worked hard at this for several years. When he retired, the Development Authority Board and I attempted to find the best candidate we could and hired Mitch Griggs. Mitch is one of the best in the state and has done a great job not only looking for companies wanting to expand here but working with existing industry for their expansion. About 80% of the new jobs in a community are typically from expansion of existing industry, and we are certainly seeing that here.

**Q: Does the Economic Development Director only look for new industry?**

A: No. He is also involved in just about every new retail establishment that has come to Union County. He works very aggressively behind the scenes helping secure right of way from GDOT, securing parcels that are needed, working with owners and contractors to assist with any problems that pop up. A lot of the work is spent trying to attract new business that plays one community against the other, and it takes an incredible amount of time and effort just to compete. It sometimes comes down to which community has the most to offer. While we have a lot to offer, we are also competing against communities that have rail service, natural gas, and interstate highway systems.

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



### Drug Free Mountain Life

#### Substance Abuse and High Risk Behaviors

Research shows that the majority of adults who meet the criteria for having a substance use disorder started using substances during their youth. Adolescent substance use is also associated with sexual risk behaviors that put young people at risk for HIV, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and pregnancy. The 2017 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 29% of high school students are sexually active and 19% of those students admitted to using drugs and / or alcohol before engaging in sexual intercourse.

**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.**

Substance use and high-risk sexual behaviors have common underlying factors that may predispose the teenage population to these behaviors. The most common traits among teens who engage in high-risk behaviors include lack of positive parental engagement, peers who use

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### Chamber of Commerce

It's been a beautiful week here in Blairsville with cool morning temperatures dipping into the 30s and warming up with clear blue skies in the afternoons, and more fall colors emerging throughout the surrounding landscape.

I am happy to announce and congratulate the Chamber's Business of the Quarter - Chick-fil-A! We are grateful for all the many ways that our local Chick-fil-A serves Blairsville and we know they will continue to work hard to positively impact the lives of our community members. I am also pleased to announce that Missy Mashburn is our new Chamber Ambassador of the Quarter. Missy has been a great contribution and support to the Chamber, and we are very grateful for everything she does for us and the community.

We are so happy to have the President of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce be our speaker for the Annual Power Lunch this year and hope you will join us for the event as Christ

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



### Letters to the Editor

#### Teachers of the Year

I just wanted to reach out and say I've been pleased of interacting with two of the teachers listed, Nicole Schuknecht and my child's current teacher Jordan Rogers. These two ladies are amazing with these kids.

My child has learned and grown so much with these women. I'm so thankful for both of them and they all deserve so much more recognition for the difference they make in so many lives.

Thank you from the depths of my soul for all you do. My child's life and our life has forever been improved.  
**Christina Tilton**

#### Strangers Unaware

How is it when we first meet a stranger and start a conversation with them that within a half hour or so we are pouring out our life's history to a complete stranger whom we may never see again? I know this has happened to me more than once, and perhaps talking to a stranger frees us up to share things that we might not even talk about to our own family. How is this possible? First of all, this stranger is not condemning or criticizing you for speaking your mind, but perhaps is just a good listener and may even have good advice to help us in some way. Secondly, what are the chances you will ever meet this stranger again?

In God's inspired Word, He often sent  
See Combs, page 5A

#### Bipartisan Hope Emerging on Climate Change

Despite tensions in many areas between the two parties, it appears Republicans and Democrats are coming together on one issue that seemed intractable not long ago: climate change. Republicans and Democrats are seeking common ground on climate change because public opinion has reached a tipping point that cannot be ignored. A CBS News poll last month found two-thirds of Americans view climate change as a crisis or serious problem, and a majority want immediate action. Both the Senate and the House now have a bipartisan climate solutions caucus.

Putting a price on carbon offers promising common ground. Thousands of U.S. economists and 95% of 300 multinational corporations surveyed support carbon pricing as an effective tool to reduce emissions quickly. And according to  
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### Wildland Fire Management

This week, Kim and I (and Linda) are attending the Third Annual National Cohesive Strategy Workshop in Plymouth, MA, ... I know it is a tough job, but somebody has to do it. The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is a strategic push to work collaboratively among all stakeholders and across all landscapes, using best science, to make meaningful progress towards the three goals: Resilient Landscapes; Fire Adapted Communities; and Safe and Effective Wildfire Response.

The National Cohesive Wildland Management Strategy represents the culmination of the three-phased Cohesive Strategy effort initiated in 2009. The National Strategy establishes a national vision for wildland fire management, describes the wildland fire challenges, identifies opportunities to reduce wildfire risks, and establishes national priorities focused on achieving the national goals.

The National Strategy explores four broad challenges: Managing vegetation and fuels; Protecting homes, communities, and other values at risk; Managing human-caused ignitions; and Effectively and efficiently responding to wildfire. The wildland fire environment in the United States is undergoing profound ecological, social, and political changes. We are witnessing escalating wildland fire behavior, increasing risk to responders, significant losses of homes and property, dramatic growth in suppression costs, rising post-fire impacts, continued injuries and loss of lives, and more frequent fire occurrence in wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas causing significant losses to communities and economies. Some characterize these recent unprecedented events as the "new normal" or perhaps more accurately, the "new abnormal." There are many challenges ahead and much to learn. The differences between the environments of yesterday and tomorrow, and what is responsible for these differences must be understood. Recognition of the importance of wildland fire as a key component of healthy ecosystems deeply rooted in the mix of social, ecological, and management requirements is essential.

A paradigm is defined as "a typical example or pattern of something; a model." Managing resources and fire as "typical" events or placing an over-reliance on past practices and "business as usual" on our landscape and in our communities cannot succeed in the rapidly changing environment of the future. As stakeholders, we must enthusiastically reject letting our recent experiences allow a future wildland fire paradigm to  
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**RC&D Executive Director**  
*Frank Riley*



### What is Fox Fire?

In my younger days, I enjoyed going coon hunting with my grandfather. I can remember hunting along Turkey Creek in northwest Alabama on crisp, moonless nights. For a boy less than 9, the woods were a mysterious place. I can remember the chills that traveled down my spine at the scream of a mountain lion, and then I would notice the glow of fox fire in the woods. Then I listened to the tails of the old mountain men that were with my grandfather. All these things happening together were enough to scare a little boy and make me want to go home.

Then one day I heard my grandfather tell the story of meeting what he thought was a haint. He was walking through the woods on his way home from a date. About 30 yards in front of him, my grandfather noticed what he thought was a man without a head standing on the side of the road. He said the man was dressed in a black suit with a white shirt. He also noticed an eerie green light coming from the man's neck. My grandfather picked up a big stick and threatened the man. I think this one-sided conversation lasted about five minutes. Finally, he let out a war cry and charged the man and hit him with the stick and realized it was only a rotten stump.

Sometimes, we let our imagination run wild and it show us things that are not real. My grandfather was talking to a burned stump that was in the process of decay. The eerie light he seen was nothing more than fox fire.

Fox fire can be seen mostly along the ground, in chunks of rotting wood and on old stumps in moist areas of the woods. Fox fire's source is fungi in rotting wood. The eerie glow of the stuff comes from growing fungal cells consuming wood. Setting out to see fox fire can be difficult because of light pollution. You should pick overcast or moonless nights in an area without artificial lights. Let your eyes become dark adjusted by avoiding using flashlights and candles for 20 minutes. Finally, just pick out a trail and wander through a woodland. You will see the fox fire.

Bioluminescence, or BL, is the emission of light from a living organism. BL light comes from a biochemical reaction at air temperature. Light generated from rotting wood is BL. BL is produced by the sudden decay of a high-energy molecule to a lower energy form. Dr. Coder says the difference in energy levels for this one molecule is one photon of light which escapes.

How does BL work? Basically, BL is the reverse of photosynthesis. In photosynthesis, a living organism captures light and carbon dioxide  
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**Around The Farm**  
*Mickey Cummings*



### Controlling Invasive Plants

Last week I talked about the Georgia Forestry Commission's dirty dozen and gave a brief overview of each one. This week I'm going to go more in depth and talk about some ways to identify and control some of these that are problematic in the mountains. I'll cover Nepalese browntop (Japanese stiltgrass), privet, kudzu, and autumn olive.

Let's start with the Japanese stiltgrass. This is on the only annual that I chose, so its control will be a bit different. Japanese stiltgrass looks like a miniature bamboo. It has alternate leaves. It can grow up to 2 feet tall. It likes to grow in shaded areas, so it can grow in shaded lawns and in forests. Japanese stiltgrass will put on seedheads during the fall. The seeds are small, light colored, and sticky. Controlling it can be very challenging. In lawns, herbicides or hand pulling can be done. A pre-emergent herbicide that is also effective against crabgrass will prevent it from germinating. A product with the active ingredient prodiamine will work. Japanese stiltgrass germinates earlier than crabgrass so the application would need to be done in early march. In forested areas there are no herbicides labeled for use. That means that you will have to either hand pull or cut it back in the fall before it goes to seed. Most likely, there is already seed stored in the soil; therefore, you will need to cut it back several years in a row to deplete the soil seed bank.

Chinese privet can be identified at this time of year because it has BB sized fruits hanging on it. Chinese privet starts out as a bush that can grow to be over 20 feet tall, if left unchecked. The leaves on it are glossy, oval shaped, and a little bigger than a quarter.

Most people know what kudzu looks like. It is a vine that is capable of covering entire trees. Kudzu leaves are trifoliate which means they come in threes. They also have purple flowers, but can be hard to find because they're hidden behind the leaves. As members of the legume family they have hairy pods.

Autumn olive is a bush that can get up to about 15 feet high. Their leaves are a silvery white color on the bottom. They put on a red fruit that has gray specks on it. The fruit is edible and is spread by birds and other wildlife.

Tactics for controlling perennial plants are different from annuals. Cutting them back is an option, but these plants will keep growing back from their roots. It would take several years of cutting back regrowth to eliminate invasive perennials. Hand pulling can be done while the plants are still small, but you need to remove the  
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**Watching and Working**  
*Jacob Williams*



### North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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Publisher/Owner

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Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - One Year \$40. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 10, 1981, at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement.  
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