

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## The Need for Volunteer Firefighters

Union County Fire Department would not be able to provide the current level of emergency services without volunteers. The department has a small, highly trained and capable career staff who respond to calls 24 hours a day. They are assisted and supported by a highly trained and capable volunteer force. These dedicated men and women sacrifice their time to learn, train, and respond to emergencies.

Becoming a volunteer firefighter can be challenging and rewarding. The challenge comes from the fire and rescue training. Volunteer firefighters are trained on several different levels, which provides them with a unique and specialized set of skills. The initial training begins with the support firefighter level. The support class teaches basic fire topics and how to safely operate on the fire-ground. Support firefighters perform essential functions to support the other firefighters operating on the emergency scene.

The next, more challenging level is the suppression firefighter. Volunteers are taught how to actually enter burning buildings, perform rescues, and fight fires. Volunteer firefighters must meet the physical and mental challenges of operating in hazardous conditions while wearing turnout gear and self-contained breathing apparatus.

The training can be challenging but the rewards can be great. One of the rewards for becoming a volunteer firefighter is that you learn how to deal with emergencies. Volunteer firefighters respond to fires and many other types of emergencies. There are car accidents, medical calls, and rescue emergencies, just to name a few. There are times when it is not easy but the reward is knowing that you are able to handle these emergencies.

The greatest reward is knowing that you, as a volunteer firefighter, make a difference. The volunteer firefighter is called out to an emergency where someone needs help. That someone may be having the worst day of their life. The knowledge, skills, and actions of that volunteer firefighter can positively change the outcome of that emergency. They make a difference.

Union County Fire Department is currently seeking volunteers. We are looking for dedicated people who are willing and able to take the training and become a firefighter. We need people

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



## Self-Awareness

OK class, our lesson today is self-awareness. Let me show you a variety of ways it shows up. Then we'll get personal.

Jerry Seinfeld is the master of observational comedy. Once, he was thinking about his role in a wedding. "Pretty good title, I thought ... 'Best man.' I thought it was a bit much. I thought we had the groom and the 'pretty good man.' That's more than enough. If I am the best man, why is she marrying him?" His self-awareness is funny.

On rare occasions, self-awareness shows up in politics. A woman politician, Tulsi Gabbard, came to a clarifying realization. She decided to disassociate from a group of people she believes lacks self-awareness. "It is the height of hypocrisy," she said, "for those who claim to be champions for women over decades to deny that there is such a thing as a woman." Her self-awareness led to action.

Here's an example from my (other) profession as a civil engineering consultant. A group of homeowners invited me to discuss options for their failed dam. The lake was a mud bowl and the state regulators were bearing down. For the first 20 minutes we stood on the dam while one guy's mouth was a pipe with no valve. They wanted to hear from me, but he wanted to hear himself. He was completely oblivious that he was wasting everyone's time. I finally said, "Sir, you need to switch from transmit to receive. If you want to hear from me, you must stop talking."

And yes, I'm guilty, too. Not long ago I had one of those days that makes you feel harassed and unproductive. Rather than checking it all at the threshold, that evening I got snippy with the missus. It wasn't her fault. I failed to be self-aware. She has her own story, too. Once she did lunch with friends only for one of them to complain, "I just don't have any friends." Ouch.

Jesus did lunch at Simon's house, only for the host to become critical of a certain sinful woman. Jesus set up a scenario about a banker forgiving the loans of two debtors. One owed much and the other owed little. "Which of them will love him more?" He asked. "The one he forgave more," Simon answered. Jesus' point was that the woman was more than a little self-aware. "Her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved

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**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



## Commissioner's Questions

**Q. Who actually owns Union General Hospital?**

A. Union General Hospital is a tax-exempt non-profit organization that leases the operating assets from the Hospital Authority of Union County. Therefore, the real property and physical assets are owned by the Hospital Authority and the assets are used by the nonprofit entity Union General Hospital to operate the hospital for the community.

**Q. How is the county involved with Union General Hospital operation?**

A. The County provides three recommendations for the Hospital Authority to select one such proposed candidate for the Hospital Authority Board positions when the terms for the Hospital Authority Board members end or when there is a vacancy. The Hospital Authority Board members also serve on the Union General Hospital Board. The County does not have any operational control of the hospital.

**Q. What qualification must a person have to be considered for appointment to the Hospital Authority of Union County?**

A. The members of a Hospital Authority shall be residents of Union or Towns Counties, and they must comply with the conflict-of-interest requirements applicable to hospital authorities.

**Q. Are the Board Members paid for their service?**

A. No. The Board Members receive no compensation for their services but may be reimbursed for their actual expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

**Q. Does Union County Government operate the ambulance service?**

A. No. The Ambulance Service is operated by Union General Hospital but in full cooperation with the Union County Fire Department. Our firemen go on call with any emergency requesting assistance and they automatically respond to every vehicle accident with injuries, as do our deputies and policemen. So, often you will see a Union County Fire Department red SUV following or just ahead of an ambulance going through town on an emergency call.

**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**

Lamar Paris



## Letters to the Editor

### Planning to Vote?

Dear Editor,

Left? Right? Radical Left? Radical Right? Understand? Liberal? Does anyone know and understand what they are voting for these days? Without more specifics versus name-calling rhetoric, which party should lead our country and/or state?

In my 60+ years of voting for both Democrats and Republicans, it has always come down to the Rich vs. the rest of us. I also look at how the parties work together to find a joint solution versus a "my way or the highway" attitude. How can you ever find the best solution when you always take a divisive attitude? I wish I could snap my fingers and make every politician that is funded by the Rich to simply announce: "I don't work for Americans. I'm basically self-serving, and do what the 'Big Shots financing my campaign' tell me to do despite your insignificant contribution." That would make our vote easy to make.

When billions of dollars are spent on name-calling campaign commercials, aren't they essentially saying: "We Want to Buy Your Vote Without Promising You Anything." Have you noticed how insulting it is when all you have to do to get elected is based on How Many Signs You Put in the Yards? No further qualifications. No Commitment. Nothing that says what you stand for to make our state and nation a better, safer place to live, work, grow your families, and retire? When a politician can specifically tell you what they will do for you - build better roads; help enable affordable, competent education; challenge all employers to make their companies better and to enable their employees to have a living wage, and an opportunity to advance - then we need to listen and hold them accountable throughout their term. But as long as they throw up meaningless commercials that we buy into, we will never be the country we could be. If they have nothing meaningful to stand for, they don't get my vote. It's not for sale!

Nixon Childs

### Re: "Yes Really Proud"

Dear Editor,

I just read the letter titled "Yes Really Proud" and it made me laugh. No, I don't know you by name and wouldn't recognize you on the street, but I recognize what I have known for a very long time. Facts are irrelevant to Democrats; they can't absorb them, understand them, or recognize the truth. Mr. Proud skips over the truth like skipping stones over the waters of Lake Notley. I have a long list of examples of facts rather than Democrat fiction. But listing those facts won't matter to this or any Democrat. Anyone that is proud of how the Democrats act today will not be swayed by truth or facts. Onward, proud Democrat, follow the rest of the lemmings.

Eva Lausier

### A Great Place to Live

Dear Editor,

It's always interesting when people find a place they want to live and, upon moving there, try to change things to reflect the place from which they came. I've lived in Blairsville 30+ years, and while there have been a lot of changes, I appreciate the efforts that have been made to keep things moving forward for the betterment of Union County as a whole.

While traffic has increased greatly, a trip to Atlanta can make one realize that we don't really have it so bad.

Of course, there will always be room for improvement, but it's important to keep in mind that change is better when done with a positive approach and not spent trying to destroy those with whom we may disagree.

I like Blairsville's small-town feel, the beautiful surrounding mountains, the availability of activities such as festivals, hiking, horseback riding, etc. It would be wonderful if we could all work together to make our area continue to be a great place to live.

Rose Fox



## Smokey Bear Awards

I recently wrote about one of our own, wildfire education and prevention team member Mark Wiles, receiving the prestigious Silver Smokey national award for 2022 (only one).

The following is a press release from the National Association of State Foresters:

"In the world of wildfire prevention, there is no greater honor than to receive a

Smokey Bear Award. From the 1950s to today, the Smokey Bear Awards program has been managed by the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), the Ad Council, and the USDA Forest Service. "The Smokey Bear Award winners are honored for the dedication, innovation, and energy they bring to wildfire prevention," said USDA Forest Service Chief Randy Moore. "For many years, we have bestowed these awards on only the most deserving people, who show up with the passion and desire to make a difference year after year. We thank all of the honorees for their dedication and work that allowed them to receive the most sought-after award for those in the wildfire profession. The winners are to be congratulated for their dedication, hard work, and passion for creating programs to help citizens who live in the wildland urban interface protect their homes and property from wildfire. To be fair, none of the winners since the 1950's could have done what they have accomplished alone, because it takes a strong team to make wildfire education and a successful prevention program meaningful for the people who need it most, the citizens who live and work in the communities that these wildfire professionals are committed to protect. The award winners are leaders who know how to organize a team to accomplish their goals and a strong, dedicated team is the key to any successful, sustainable program."

Since the mid-1960s, Georgia has produced 15 Smokey Bear award winners, and since 2014, there have been five Smokey Bear winners from North Georgia, and all are key members of our Georgia Fire Adapted Communities and Firewise USA group. That says a lot for how serious we are about helping the citizens do things to protect their property when a wildfire event approaches like in 2016.

In case you haven't noticed, it hasn't rained a significant amount in several weeks, and with the pretty leaf fall the fire danger is very high. Even if we had a shower, the winds, low humidity, and the dry fuel (leaves) all cre-

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**RC&D Executive Director**

Frank Riley



## Calvin and Alvin

My earliest memories of Calvin are those of adulation. He was a real mountain man. He was short in stature, bow-legged and potbellied. He was fearful of no man and loved deer hunting and coon hunting.

He loved to laugh and didn't mind spinning a yarn to get a laugh out of you. I admired the man because he knew about the woods and didn't mind taking a young boy to the woods.

I must have been close to 9 years old the first time I was allowed to go to Deer Camp with Calvin. I was not allowed to carry a gun, but I was allowed to accompany the other men. Calvin took me with him, and I was sitting on top of the world.

I can still remember sitting on top of White Oak Mountain watching the deer move about on those clear mountain mornings. But, the most memorable part of deer camp that year was Calvin's brother Alvin.

Like his brother, Alvin loved to tell yarns about the woods. Just before this particular hunt, Alvin had purchased a brand-new Ruger .44 magnum. It was a good gun, however, Alvin had very poor vision, and I never remember him shooting a deer.

He could tell you how to shoot and he could tell you about finding the biggest bucks. Most people thought he was a great hunter because of his tales. But I cannot remember him ever taking a deer himself. All the venison he consumed was given to him by his older brother Calvin.

The first day of Deer Camp ended with a good hearty meal around a campfire. I sat pretty close to the fire trying to brace myself against the chill of that October night and ate some beef stew and cornbread. Alvin came back into camp and was immediately asked about his day. He told us that one 8-point buck had walked by his stand. He shot at the deer, but the wind had pushed the bullet off his mark. Actually, we had heard the report of Alvin's bolt action rifle four times.

The next day was similar and produced similar results. That same 8-point buck had walked by his stand again. This time the 8-pointer snorted after the man shot at and missed his quarry. However, his excuse was that the sun was in his eyes causing him to miss the deer. Four days came and went, and Alvin always had an excuse as to why he missed the same deer.

Alvin came walking into camp the last day of the hunt and was asked if he'd seen the

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**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



## Chamber of Commerce

We are so excited to be able to be a part of the Dedication Ceremony for the addition and renovation of the Union County College and Career Academy (CCA). Thanks to a grant from the State of Georgia awarded through the Technical College System of Georgia, the Georgia Department of Education Equipment Grants and our community's support of the local SPLOST and ESPLOST, we are now able to provide

students from Union, Towns and Cherokee Counties with hands-on training, using state-of-the-art equipment in a variety of pathways whether they plan to pursue traditional college, technical college or join the workforce after graduation. These facilities offer programs in high demand fields such as Automotive, Construction and Manufacturing; Agriculture; Health Science; as well as STEM, Engineering and Computer Science. By giving students access to tools and equipment that are typically found only in a professional setting, the College and Career Academy

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**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**

Steve Rowe



## Well Water

Most people in Georgia have well water in their homes. Here in the mountains, many people enjoy fresh mountain water as their primary drinking source. Therefore, it's very important that people be aware of potential issues with well water and things that they can do to mitigate issues. Let's talk about some well issues and things you can do to prevent those issues from occurring.

The US Geological Survey keeps track of water aquifer levels. The nearest test site for us is in White County. Because of the high amounts of rainfall that we receive each year, our aquifers drying out is not a concern like it is in the Western US.

The aquifer we access is the Blue Ridge aquifer. It's a crystalline rock aquifer, which means that the gallons per minutes that you get from a well here is going to most likely be in the 5-10 range. Wells can be pretty variable in yield in North Georgia because of the variations in the fractures in the ground. Basically, for well drilling here, you put the well in and hope that you cross some of the fractures where water is present.

You want to make sure that your well is located at least 50 feet from the septic tank and 75 feet from the septic system's drainage lines. You also want to make sure that your well cap is at least 8 inches above the ground. This is going to keep surface water from getting inside of your well. Surface water can carry bacteria and debris that you want to keep out. It's also a good idea to have a well cover to protect the well cap. A well cover makes your well more visible so that it's less likely to be backed into by a vehicle or run over by the lawn mower.

Always be on the lookout for changes in the water. If you see a difference in color, a new odor, new taste, or particles in your water that's a clue that your well has become compromised. There's a lot of water tests that the Extension Office can assist you with to find out what is going with your water. By knowing the symptoms, when the issue started, where the septic system is, what kind of construction might have gone on nearby, among other factors can help narrow down the range of issues that we are dealing with.

Shock chlorination is a common treatment that is effective if bacteria are present. Shock chlorination won't be effective if the source of the contamination is not removed. Sources of contamination could include a septic system, absence of well cap, or a cracked

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**Watching and Working**

Jacob Williams



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helps them to develop practical skills and gain real-world experience.

You may have picked up that the CCA provides for students from Union, Towns and Cherokee counties. That is because the CCA is a regional academy, which means the school districts located in these counties work together to use their resources to provide more pathways for students without duplicating programs. A unique aspect of our CCA is that it is the only College and Career Academy that crosses state lines. We are also known for

the level of involvement of our business and industry representatives in developing pathways and providing direction into the equipment to be used to give our students a head-start when entering the workforce.

The Dedication Ceremony will be held October 28th at 10:00 AM at the new building located on the campus of Union County High School.

Come by and say thanks to our talented team of educators; because of their dedication and hard work, students can learn the essential skills they need to succeed.

## Riley... continued from Page 4A

ate a very dangerous perfect storm just looking for a match or spark to start the raging inferno around your community.

As noted above, since 2014, our wildfire team in North Georgia has received five Smokey Bear awards: 2014, Mike Davis, Fire Management Officer, Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest - Silver Smokey Bear Award for regional wildfire prevention & education work; 2017, Jeff Schardt & the Conasauga Ranger District, the Cohutta Wilderness, Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest - Bronze Smokey Bear Award for wildfire prevention and education work in Georgia; 2020, Thomas Black (aka: Smokey Bear), Firefighter Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest, Chattooga Ranger District - Bronze Smokey Bear Award for wildfire prevention & education work in Georgia; 2021, Frank Riley, Executive Director Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D Council & Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition - Silver Smokey Bear Award

for regional wildfire prevention & education work; 2022, Mark Wiles, Wildfire Prevention Specialist, Georgia Forestry Commission - Silver Smokey Bear Award for regional wildfire prevention & education work.

These professionals are credits to their wildfire profession and are to be applauded for their efforts to help citizens help themselves and save their property and even lives. It's not their homes that are in danger, but yours, so join with them and be safe and be Firewise.

Check out the Smokey Bear awards with a visit to [SmokeyBear.com](http://SmokeyBear.com). These awards say a lot about the dedication by this team to educate the public about wildfire risk and public safety here in the Southeast United States and beyond. And don't forget, as ole Smokey always says, "Only YOU can prevent wildfires!"

For more information on Firewise, Fire Adapted communities, Ready Set Go or other programs available, contact Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council at [info.ccrd@gmail.com](mailto:info.ccrd@gmail.com).

## Friday Night Concert Schedule at the Historic Union County Courthouse

Friday evenings 7 PM

October 28th ... Skillet Lickers

December 2nd ... Roy Perren (Elvis Christmas)

December 9th ... North Georgia Chamber Quintet

## The Meaning Behind Common Masonic Symbols

Part 10a of 10



### The Square and Compass

While there are many symbols associated with Freemasonry, none are more universally recognizable than the "Square and Compasses". It is well-known enough that even those who are not personally acquainted with the fraternity understand the connection when they come across it. Like many aspects of Freemasonry, the precise origins of this symbol are unknown. However, it is thought to have roots in the Medieval stonemasons' guilds.

Of course, for modern Masons, the square and compasses symbol has a unique, profound meaning. It resides at



the heart of Masonic lessons, beckoning all Brothers to live a life that is honest, true, and dignified. Any traveling man understands that when he sees this symbol, whether on the façade of a Masonic temple, the bumper sticker of a passing car, or a lapel pin of a colleague, he is in the company of friends.

## Widespread Flu Activity in Georgia

Protect Yourself and Prevent the Spread of Flu



If you have not gotten a flu shot yet, do not wait any longer. Flu activity is already widespread in Georgia - earlier than we've seen in recent years.

"Every individual over the age of six months should get a flu vaccine - not just for their own protection, but to protect others around them who may be more vulnerable to the flu and its complications," says Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., DPH commissioner. "It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies that protect against flu to develop in the body, so now is the time to get a flu shot."

Flu symptoms and their intensity can vary from person to person, and can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people are at higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications if they get sick. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease, pregnant women, and children younger than 5 years, but especially those younger than 2 years old.

Flu vaccine is widely available at public health departments, doctors' offices, grocery stores, neighborhood clinics and pharmacies. To find a location near you click

<https://www.vaccines.gov/find-vaccines/>. Flu vaccine can be administered at the same time as COVID vaccine, so it's a good time to get your updated booster, too.

In some cases, health-care providers may recommend the use of antiviral drugs that fight the flu in your body. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines and are most effective when taken within 48 hours of symptoms appearing.

There are other tried and true measures you can take to help prevent the spread of flu:

Frequent and thorough handwashing with soap and warm water. Alcohol based gels are the next best thing if you don't have access to soap and water. Cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow or arm to help prevent the spread of the flu. Avoid touching your face as flu germs can get into the body through mucous membranes of the nose, mouth, and eyes. If you are sick, stay home from school or work. Flu sufferers should be free of a fever, without the use of a fever reducer, for at least 24 hours before returning to school or work.

If you are caring for a sick individual at home, keep them away from common areas of the house and other people as much as possible.

For more information about flu and how to prevent it, log on to [dph.ga.gov/flu](http://dph.ga.gov/flu). You can monitor Georgia weekly influenza reports at <https://dph.georgia.gov/flu-activity-georgia>. The reports are updated on Fridays.

## Cummings... continued from Page 4A

8-pointer. He told us the deer had shown up just after 9 a.m. He had a clear shot and slowly raised his rifle. "That buck looked right at me, and I noticed the sun glinting off of his antlers.

"Well, I lowered that gun and motioned for that old buck to come to me. When he walked up to me, he lowered his head and allowed me to pet his muzzle. I scratched around on his head for a while. I told him that I wasn't going to harm him. But he better stay away from that bunch in the camp, because one them sap suckers down there would kill him."

Men in that camp laughed so hard they fell off the stumps on which they were sitting. I sat there amazed that this man had such a big heart. I actually thought he had let that deer go. I learned better on the way home. His brother Calvin told this wet-behind-the-ears little boy about his brother Alvin. His little brother was the biggest man I ever knew. He was well over 6 feet tall and weighed more than 300 pounds. I believe he was the slowest moving human being that ever lived. But he loved to laugh and was always pulling practical jokes on people.

One spring a bunch of us were fishing in a lake at the foot of Lookout Mountain. Alvin came walking up with his arms wrapped around his lizard bucket. Back in those days many of us fished with Spring Lizards (a type of salamander).

The bucket had a small hole in the top in which you could stick your finger to pull back the lid, allowing you to reach in and catch a lizard with which to bait your hook. The way in which Alvin walked we all could tell he wasn't very happy.

When he finally got to the place where we were fishing, Calvin asked, "What you looking so angry about, little brother?" The bigger, yet younger brother grumbled, "That bunch at that Lake Howard Store cheated me a giving me some of the smallest spring lizards I've ever seen. Here, take a look."

Calvin took the bucket and told his younger brother that the Pierces back at the store were having a hard time with their finances.

He further explained that they may have just decreased their quality to increase their profits. After his explanation, he stuck his finger into the hole of the bucket and lifted the lid without looking inside. He was still trying to ease the anger of his younger brother. After lifting, he stuck his nose toward the opening, and all at once a rather large black snake rocketed out of the bait bucket right into the face of my friend.

I have never witnessed such a commotion since that day. Calvin let out a whoop while throwing the bucket straight up into the air. All of

## Williams...

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well casing. You'll want to use three pints of ordinary bleach for 100 gallons of water in the well.

Annual testing of the water in your well will start to build data on what your well normally is like. If you do run into problems with the well then you'll have data to look back at to see what's changed. It's best to test in the spring, because that is generally when our aquifers are recharging.

If you would like to test your well water contact your local Extension Office. We can assist you by providing the resources to test.

## Fowler...

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much, but he who is forgiven little, loves little" (Luke 7).

This is the personal part. The more self-aware you are about your need for forgiveness from a holy God, the more you love Him for taking the penalty of your sin on the cross. Self-awareness makes you a happier and more likeable person. It also makes you a more steadfast and loving follower of Jesus.

## Dyer...

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to volunteer for support roles; however, we also need people to volunteer as firefighters who will enter a burning building and fight fire.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer firefighter, please contact Union County Fire at 706-439-6091 for more information. Union County Fire Department

~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

us standing around scattered trying to avoid the snake. Calvin tried to run. His legs were churning, but, he wasn't moving. He was running in place. Eventually, the bucket fell, landing on his head.

Alvin took advantage of the moment and slowly began to run. After shaking the bucket off his head, his bow-legged brother gave chase. We watched the pair running around the lake and listened to the laughter of the bigger man as his smaller brother chased him toward the barn of Clem Byrd.

I will never forget the brothers Calvin and Alvin.