

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Preparing the Home for Winter

Winter is approaching and we have seen some cool mornings over the last week. That means it's time to prepare the home for winter. Preparing the home for winter from a fire department point of view, means it's time to inspect the heating system, ensure that there are working smoke alarms, and if you have gas appliances, ensure that you have a working carbon monoxide detector.

Heating the home is one of the leading causes of house fires. Every home has some type of heating system and these heating systems, regardless of the type, need maintenance and attention before use.

For people who have a fireplace or a wood burning heater, there are several things to consider. First, the chimney should be inspected and maintained. Homeowners should have the chimney inspected each year by a certified inspector. Chimney fires can quickly turn into house fires.

Gas fireplaces are no exception. Homeowners should know how to operate and maintain their gas heaters. If a gas fireplace is not burning correctly, contact your gas company. It is also very important to have working carbon monoxide detectors if you have any gas burning appliances. If you have a central heating system, it should be cleaned, inspected, and serviced by a certified HVAC contractor. It is also a good idea to change your air filters on a regular basis.

Even though we may follow all these steps, accidents happen. With this in mind, we should consider other safety measures for the home before this winter. If you do not have smoke alarms, now is the time to get them. Smoke alarms have been proven to save lives. You can purchase a smoke alarm at most home improvement stores. They are easy to install. If you are unable to purchase or install your smoke alarms, our Smoke Alarm Program offers and installs free smoke alarms to residents of Union County.

All smoke and carbon monoxide alarms should be inspected and tested regularly. We recommend once a month. Testing involves inspection and making sure they will alarm. Smoke alarms may be hard wired or battery operated. Batteries should be changed every six months. If your smoke alarm is chirping, it needs a new battery.

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Give Credit

So, Captain Kirk made a trip to space! William Shatner struggled to express himself after his trip in the Blue Origin rocket.

Moments after landing he told Jeff Bezos, "Unbelievable. The covering of blue... it's so thin, and you're through it in a moment. What you see down there is light. What you have given me is the most profound experience I can imagine. I am so filled with emotion about what just happened! I hope I never recover from this. It's so much larger than me and life. It has to do with the suddenness of life and death! OMG!"

I understand Shatner thanking Bezos, but he could have said more. If Shatner is still struggling with words, here's a cue: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers..." (Psa. 8:3).

Consider a down-to-earth story. The widowed lady's grandson, Adam, lives hours away. She enjoys their fleeting moments together. His parents bring him to visit a few times each year. She decides to create a permanent reminder that she loves him, something that would be meaningful now and after he's grown up.

She begins to sort through her closets. She sets aside the cowboy-themed linens from his dad's childhood and shirts his grandfather wore. She finds the blue gingham dress she wore as a young mother, and the colorful, embroidered curtains from their first house. She still has some of Adam's baby clothes left behind from a visit a few years ago.

With material in hand, she begins the months-long task of making a full-size quilt. The arthritis in her hands and the fatigue in her eyes reduce the pace of the work but not her dedication to the task. When it is finished she says, "It's beautiful, if I may say so myself. This is good."

She holds onto the treasured gift until Christmas. She wraps the box and marks "Adam" on the tag. "They will know it's from me," she muses. During their visit, the boy opens the box. "I've never seen anything like this!" he marvels, showing his parents. They are delighted with the colors, design, and usefulness of the quilt. But they never acknowledge how the quilt came to be. They do not recognize the sacrifice, creativity, and

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

This week wraps up my three-part series explaining the proposed T-SPLOST sales tax for funding transportation projects in Union County (roads & bridges). I sincerely hope you will take this information into consideration when you vote. REMINDER: Early voting began Tuesday, October 12, 2021 at the Union County Courthouse downstairs in the Jury Assembly Room, and will continue on weekdays October 12 - 29 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and on two Saturdays - October 16 and October 23 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The actual election day at your home precincts will be Tuesday, November 2, 2021 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. This is the only issue on the county election ballot, and it is very important that all of you vote and express your opinion on what is the best for Union County moving forward.

Q. We have seen in the past few weeks where letters to the editor have been written against supporting T-SPLOST and encouraging us to vote no. How are you going to vote on T-SPLOST (Transportation Improvement Tax)?

A. I am voting in support of the new sales tax. Voting Yes! Everyone has the right to their opinion on the topic. The purpose for an election is for the public to make the final decision. Therefore, it is important for Union County residents to be educated on the facts. The information that you receive from my office is not misrepresented - anyone can do their own research to verify it. Everyone is never going to agree on any particular subject, but we continue to try to give you the information you need to decide for yourself.

Q. Why are you voting in support for the additional penny in sales tax, taking us from 7% to 8%?

A. I have been your county commissioner for 20 years. My staff and elected officials have all worked so very hard at making this the best county possible, with the highest quality of life and the best place to live, work, play, raise your family, and to retire to. The single most important projects we must provide and maintain for you is the safe and secure roadways and bridges in this county. THESE ARE YOUR ROADS AND BRIDGES! The cost of maintaining our roadways and bridges adequately is impossible at the current pace of inflation and the increased traffic at our current

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Habitat for Humanity

Welcome to the newspaper's newest editorial column, "Habitat Happenings!" Did you know that there is a Habitat for Humanity Chapter in Towns and Union Counties? Our local Habitat was started in 1995 by Elizabeth Lashley and a group of other ladies from Sharp Memorial Church in Young Harris.

Through the years, we have completed 20 houses for deserving families in Towns and Union Counties. We are so excited to announce that we are starting on our 21st home, and are looking for potential homeowners!

Here's the way Habitat works... we partner with a chosen family to build a house. Habitat holds orientation meetings to explain all about the requirements to become a Habitat Homeowner. In a nutshell, the family must meet a pre-determined household income requirement.

The Homeowners need to have decent credit, pass a background check, and pay a small down-payment. Also, the family has to donate 350 hours of "sweat equity," which means they need to put in some time working on either their home, working on someone else's home, or working in our ReStore in Blairsville. Our Habitat hires contractors to do the basic builds, then volunteers from our community come together to help finish the houses! We have connections with lenders, so the mortgages for our houses usually have an interest rate of only 1%-2%.

Homeowners get to pick out their floor plans from several examples that we use. We have floor plans that have either three or four bedrooms, and a lot of flexibility with regard to how the rooms are arranged. They can also pick out their cabinets, floors, paint colors, and exterior colors. Habitat volunteers will even provide some landscaping as a finishing touch! It doesn't end there... we have a group of volunteers called the "Family Support Committee" that helps our selected families throughout the whole process, even after they are moved into their new houses.

Do you know someone who might be interested in applying to be a Habitat Homeowner?

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Habitat Happenings

Cathy Wheeler



Letters to the Editor

What happened to the Transfer Station?

Dear Editor,
Going to the Transfer Station used to be a dreaded task. It stank terribly, especially in hot weather. Dropping off larger items, under the canopy, was so filthy I kept a special pair of shoes in the truck so I didn't ruin my good ones and didn't track it into the house.

Then the new area was built and life was wonderful. At least now it was nowhere near as bad, and special shoes weren't needed.

Enter Union County: A while back I heard Union County took it over again, and a short while ago I had to drop off a couple bags. The price had gone up by 50%, and the regular dumpsters had been exchanged for long, narrow ones, probably so more garbage could fit. Considering the recent price increase, I assumed the county was looking to save a few bucks.

Yesterday, I went to drop off a couple bags and was shocked! Broken glass was everywhere, loose trash all over, and no one around to pick it up. Only the front of the new bins was filled so they weren't working!

Who wants to walk through garbage and glass to throw their garbage out? I certainly don't, and I don't blame others for not wanting to either. I don't know if this silly idea is Union County's problem or if it's Waste Managements, but, either way, it's terrible.

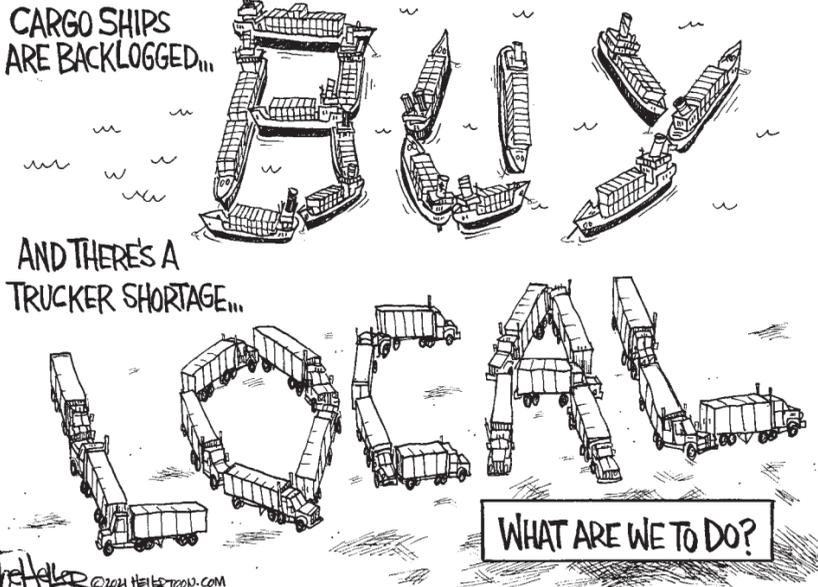
I don't want to worry about getting a flat tire or go back to needing my "dump" shoes. What was so nice before isn't any longer, so I have an idea... Let's go back to the way it was!

Dean Antalik

CARGO SHIPS ARE BACKLOGGED...

AND THERE'S A TRUCKER SHORTAGE...

WHAT ARE WE TO DO?



Letters to the Editor

Thank You So Much

Dear Editor,
I know All Saints' Day is coming up but to the "saint" that blew the leaves out of my driveway while I was gone - thank you so much. I've got some great neighborhood friends; whoever you are!

Pat Shaffer

Christian Plumbing

Dear Editor,
As a resident of Branan Lodge in Blairsville, I would like to commend Christian Plumbing for their above and beyond call to service for finally restoring the hot water service to the 150 residents who had been without hot water for seven days. The employees of Christian Plumbing worked diligently to obtain parts needed and to make them fit our old system. Their efforts even included a trip to another state to retrieve the necessary parts. For myself and my fellow residents, we thank you for your hard work and are grateful to have hot water once again.

Roseanne Ashley, President Resident Council

A Faithful Christian

Dear Editor,
What does it take daily to be a true follower of Christ? What moral values must we depend upon to stay true to God's commands? Billy Graham once wrote in His devotion book called "Day by Day" - "The world today is an immoral binge such as has not been known since the days of Rome. We are in a hedonistic society, and what we are seeing is human nature expressing itself without God. Many have fallen into denial of moral laws in which they believe intellectually and then go out and live like the devil, imagining that God will forgive them and take them to heaven. Billy goes on to say: I believe there is an obedience to the Gospel, there is a self-denial and a bearing of the cross, if you are a follower of Christ. Being a Christian is a serious business. End of quote."

Another good author named Beth Moore quoted from her book called "To Live For Christ" - "Oh, God forgive us when we act like modern day Pharisees. Convict us at the very moment of our departure from the law of love You have written on our hearts. Give us hearts of devotion, not heads of religion. End of quote."

To sum it all up, God would like for us to get rid of religion and just come to Christ. Religion is the greatest barrier for many folks today. It is not a religion that Jesus Christ is looking for, it's a personal relationship. Do you have Christ in your life or not? If one is truly born again in

See Combs, page 5A

A Good Kind of Tired

My grandfather was about 13-15 when their home burned. It was later found out that a disgruntled renter had intentionally burned their home over a dispute. The family lost most of their earthly possessions and moved into one of their rental houses on their farm. The family of eight was under a great deal of stress for a short period of time. My great grandfather, Lon, was running a grist mill, blacksmith shop, cotton farm and sawmill while trying to rebuild their home, all at the same time.

One very hectic day in late summer, Lon asked his son, my grandfather, to take the wagon and mules to pick up a load of logs and deliver them to the sawmill. These logs would be sawed into planks for their new house. This was the first time my grandfather had been asked to do a job like this by himself. He loaded the logs and started to the mill. While crossing a creek the wagon turned over and all the logs rolled out of the wagon. My grandfather made the choice not to go after help. He knew his father was busy trying to get other things done, and since he had lost the logs, it was his responsibility finish the job himself. He spent the next few hours loading the logs himself with no help.

Papa got home just as the sun was setting. His father met him and was told the story of the day's events. Lon smiled at Papa and told him to go wash up for supper. Papa was so tired that he fell asleep while trying to change clothes. Lon told my great grandmother to let her son sleep, that "he was feeling a good kind of tired."

As I write this article, I realize that he would now be 106 years old. Columbus Cummings, aka Coon, had a tremendous influence on me and all others of which he knew. He never finished school, only completing seven years of education. Yet he was able to buy and pay for a 300-acre farm. His farm was a model for producers and conservationists. He cleared his property by hand and installed his own terraces to protect his topsoil. His poultry operation led the area in feed conversion for broilers. His family was always well fed and had plenty of milk, butter and meat. Enough to give to less fortunate families in the area.

Coon Cummings was a hard worker and set the example for those of us around him. He awoke at 4:30 a.m. to carry out his farm chores and then ate and left for work as a poultry service crew leader for Marshal Durbin Poultry Company. And he always found time for us grandkids when he came home. We would go fishing 1-2 times per week and then come home and eat what

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Chamber of Commerce

Does anyone know what time it is! To me, it's one of the best times of the year to live in Blairsville-Union County and the North Georgia mountains. The weather is cool and crisp, the leaves are changing, and who doesn't like to build a fire in the fireplace.

Thanks to all those that attended and helped with all the festivals and events in our area and a big thanks to all who helped make the Sorghum Festival a great fall event while helping CASA raise money to continue their work in our area.

Be sure you sign up for Halloween in the Park as we continue to add new events and activities. You don't want to miss the Haunted Hike or an opportunity to get a great family photo. Be sure to wear your best costume and enter the Halloween Costume Contest. If you or your business would like to be a part of this fun event, be sure to contact the Chamber. There is no fee to participate or to attend.

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Bats

In the vein of talking about spooky creatures around Halloween, I'm going to talk about bats! Bats usually creep us out. They can be a pest if they get into your attic. However, they are also good at mosquito control, and mosquitoes are the real bloodsuckers that I don't want to have. Let's talk about bats, how to keep them out of your attic, the services they provide, and how to build a bat nest.

In Georgia we have 16 different species of bats. The gray myotis and Indiana myotis are both endangered. Several of the others are species of concern, due to low population. A single bat can eat hundreds of mosquitoes in one hour. They will also eat moths and beetles that cause damage to crops and trees. A couple of bat species have specific requirements for humidity and temperature. Those will reside in caves. Otherwise, bats are opportunistic in finding lodging. These bats may roost in dead trees, old barns, or in your attic.

Bats don't cause problems in the house by gnawing or chewing. Their droppings do cause an odor. If you have bats in your house, don't use exclusion practices from April 1st through July 31st. This is the maternity season for bats. If you put up a one-way door to keep them out during that time you will likely trap flightless pups inside your house. Openings that bats have used for a long time will usually have brown discoloration along the sides. There are a couple of different types of one-way doors that you can use. The first one is a mesh covering. Secure the top and sides of the mesh, but leave the bottom open. This way bats exiting will be able to squirm out through the bottom, but not be able to get back in. If you have openings in tight spaces outside you can use pipe (PVC, flexible, caulk tube) that is 2 inches in diameter and 10 inches long. Insert the pipe about a 1/4 inch into the opening and secure it with caulking, staple, nails, or screws. Bats will be able to exit through the pipes, but not fly back into them.

Sometimes it can be difficult to completely bat proof your home. Bats can enter through holes that are as small as half an inch. If you are continuously going through the process of excluding bats and then finding new ones, you may want to buy a bat box to house those bats outside your home. Or you may want to buy a bat box so that you can have bats to eat the mosquitoes around your home. Bat boxes are placed about 15-20 feet off the ground in a spot that gets lots of sunlight. Make sure that the box stays wasp free, because they are a nuisance to bats. It can take a couple of years for bats to move into a

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Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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funding level. We will require more funding going forward and we have to choose where we want that money to come from.

Q. What are our choices of funding our roads and bridges in the future?

A1. An additional penny in sales tax, which means the cost to you is 1 additional penny per dollar or if you spend an additional \$100 on an item subject to sales tax, then your cost would be an additional dollar. If TSPLOST passes, every person that spends money in Union County as a resident or visitor would be helping contribute to this payment, which would reduce the financial burden on our property owners.

A2. The other option is property taxes. This would be the only other source of revenue to cover our current and future transportation road and bridge cost.

Q. During these tough times of inflation, is it a good idea to increase our sales tax rate now?

A. It is never a good time to increase taxes, but it is also never a good time to let our road and bridge infrastructure fall behind on maintenance and repair. Lumpkin County just passed their TSPLOST last year and it has been a huge positive impact for them in trying to lower their property taxes and maintain their road system. The decision to put this on the current ballot happened almost a year ago. So whereas the funding may not be perfect, at least you - the public - can vote on this and make your own personal decisions about funding.

Q. What happens if we do not fund our roads and bridges adequately? Don't we have pretty good roads now?

A. We are blessed in that our general road system is average, but each year we are falling further and further behind in keeping up our roads. If you have been on most of our fairly recent resurfacing projects, we are only able to resurface one mile a year. On some roads that is not adequate. Resurfacing cost is approximately \$130,000 per mile, and new construction and paving costs can run over \$300,000 per mile of new construction - including aprons and tie-ins.

For each year we delay resurfacing needed roadways, it means that it is only going to cost more in the future. An average tier one roadway - Pat Colwell for example - usually has about a 15 year life.

Q. Will TSPLOST allow us to pave and improve more roadways?

A. If the TSPLOST passes, we should have about three to four times the funding we currently have - which means instead of being able to resurface 6 or 7 miles or county roads, we should be able to pave and resurface 20 to 25 miles. We will also be able to still keep up with our patching and bridge maintenance.

Q. We have seen several letters to the editor about T-SPLOST and voting against it. Why are these people against voting for T-SPLOST?

A. This is why we have an election for the public to make the final decision. Everyone is never going to agree on any particular subject but

we are trying to give you additional information to help you decide how you want to vote.

Q. Why are roads and bridges so important to keep maintained?

A. SAFETY for our residents and visitors!!! No infrastructure is more important to maintain than Roads and Bridges. Our kids and teachers regularly travel to school, our adults travel to work and on vacation and over the mountain to work and our seniors utilize our roadways for travel all over the county to the hospital, library, farmers market, dog park, Meeks Park, pickle ball, business and restaurants and much more. Additionally, with impaired vision of many adults, maintaining great roadway signage and striping is one of the most important considerations for our residents.

Q. Who will control what roads and bridges are paved and repaired?

A. If TSPLOST passes, the county will appoint a committee made up of citizens from every district of Union County to assist the Road Dept in making the final determination of which roads will be resurfaced. Since the GDOT (Georgia Dept of Transportation) will assist the county in partial payment of some projects, they will certainly have to approve those roadways paved by LMIG (Local Maintenance and Improvement Grants).

Q. I saw a list in the newspaper of some of the roads that will be on the first list and those were also showing up on the GDOT site. Are we double dipping?

A. Absolutely not. We turn in many more roads each year for GDOT to help on the funding than we know we will get the money for. Some of the roads may only get partially funded so a road may stay on the list for more than a couple of years so that in the end, we should be able to complete all the desired resurfacing of particular roadways.

Q. Is it difficult to decide which roads need resurfaced and or repaired?

A. First, I will not have any input on which roads are to be resurfaced, but I will advise when I feel striping or new signage is necessary and required on certain roads. These decisions will be made by the Union County Road Department, by GDOT, and by the new TSPLOST Road Committee mentioned above.

Q. Can projects be adjusted if a greater need comes along?

A. Absolutely, so long as GDOT and the Road Committee agree.

Q. When will TSPLOST be collected?

A. Collections begin on the first day of the calendar quarter following an 80 day period after the vote (4 months). If a successful referendum is held in November, the collections would not begin until April 1 of 2021.

I'm going to repeat myself, but it is very important for all Union County residents to understand: This is the only issue on the county election ballot, and it is crucial that all of you vote and express your opinion on what you feel is best for Union County moving forward.

Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

love that went into it. It never occurs to them to thank her. She loves them, nonetheless.

You don't need a ten-minute trip in a Blue Origin rocket to be inspired to give credit where credit is due. "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (Psa. 19:1). Consider the beauty and design of creation and worship the Creator! "Worthy are You...for You created all things" (Rev. 4:11). One day you'll see Him face to face and "O my God" will have new meaning.

Williams...

continued from Page 4A

bat box. Also, use a bat box that is a dark color because it will absorb more sunlight and be warmer. Bats like it to be 80-100 degrees inside the house. Bat boxes are fairly easy to build. <http://free.woodworking-plans.org/bat-house-plans.html> has plans if you'd like to build one.

If you have questions about bats in your home contact your Count Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

Several other events that you don't want to miss are Eggs & Issues with Insurance and Fire Commissioner John King on November 10th and if you are a Non-Profit, time is running out to sign up for our Board Training to be held on November 16th. And, best of all, the Board Training is free if you are a Chamber member.

Do you want to be part of a movie? Check the North Georgia News or follow the Chamber Facebook page for opportunities from being a part of the crew, acting or maybe you have always wanted to invest in a project. For more information be sure to stay tuned.

Don't forget our health care workers, first responders and teachers for all they are doing for our community. Help us to keep life Better in Blairsville!

Combs...

continued from Page 4A

Christ, then he or she will be allowed to enter into a glorious and perfect place called heaven. There is no other way, accept through the shed blood of Christ on the cross. Period.
Frank F. Combs

Habitat... continued from Page 4A

All potential Habitat "Partners" need to attend one of four orientation meetings to find out more details and pick up applications.

There are two orientation meetings in Union County, one on Thursday, Nov. 11, at 7 p.m., and one on Saturday, Nov. 13, at 10 a.m., both held at the First Baptist Church in Blairsville.

The two orientation

meetings in Towns County are on Saturday, Nov. 6, at 10 a.m., and Tuesday, Nov. 9, at 7 p.m., both held at the Hiawassee Civic Center.

It is only necessary to attend one of these meetings, but please call our office at 706-745-7101, or email us at development@townsunion-habitat.org, to reserve your spot.

Children are welcome.

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

we caught. In the fall/winter we spent a lot of time in the hollows around the farm chasing squirrels and raccoons.

He cared about our history as well. He took me many times over to the Coon Dog Cemetery on the Mississippi line and regaled me with stories about the dogs interred there. We also traveled over to the Civil War Battlefield called Shiloh just outside of Corinth, Mississippi. I can remember him being very sad as we walked through the solemn place. He would tell me about the sacrifices the men that died there made for their country.

Papa also always made time each Sunday for worship. We never missed Church, and he could always be found on the Deacon's Bench at Union Hill Congregational Methodist Church each Sunday.

I think one of the most important things he gave to

me were his stories. Many of the things of which I write first came to me as a result of his experiences and memories. I would like to have him back with me. I wish that you could meet him. But, he is in a better place, and as my great-grandfather Lon said all those years ago, "Let the boy sleep. He is feeling a good kind of tired."

Papa lived a good life and deserves his reward.

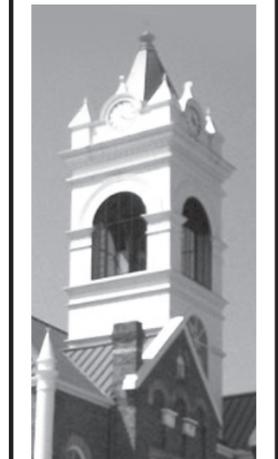
Dyer...

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Winter is almost here and now is a good time to consider how to safely heat your home. Maintaining your heating system and ensuring that there are working smoke alarms as well as a carbon monoxide alarm can help keep your home safe.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse



- October 1, 2021**
in memory of
Bill Meeks
in remembrance of his birthday
By: Ginger and Terry Meeks
- October 15, 2021**
in honor of
Coralee Daniel
in celebration of her birthday
By: Judy and John Daniel
- October 17, 2021**
in memory of
Jim Ketchen
in celebration of his life, date of death
March 26, 2020
By: Barbara Waldschmidt
- October 22, 2021**
in memory of
John J. Meeks
in remembrance of his birthday
By: Ginger and Terry Meeks
- October 27, 2021**
in loving memory of
Ricky Rivas
on the anniversary of his death
"We love and miss you"
Mom and Dad
- October 27, 2021**
in memory of
Beth Bowles
on her 30th Birthday
By: Kim, Barry, Abby, and Brady Bowles

Bell ringing information at 706-745-5493