

Dry Conditions and Fire Danger

Last month, we provided a column entitled "Outdoor Burning for Fall" which discussed some fire safety tips for outside burning. I hope that everyone reviewed the information and has put it into practice. This week, we would like to keep everyone informed on the dry conditions, the drought, and the extreme fire danger that it is causing for our area.

The drought in our area is severe and has caused several significant wildfires in Northwest Georgia and Eastern North Carolina. As of November 7th, Union County has been classified by the National Drought Mitigation Center with a drought intensity of D2/D3. What does that mean?

The drought intensity is classified into five levels, D0 to D4. The levels descriptions are: D0 - Abnormally Dry, D1 - Moderate Drought, D2 - Severe Drought, D3 - Extreme Drought and D4 - Exceptional Drought. Most of Union County is a D2 - Severe Drought. Parts of the southwest part of the county are D3 Extreme Drought. This places Union County in a High to Very High Fire Danger rating. When we have a wildfire, it will be difficult to control and extinguish due to these dry conditions.

Union County Fire Department is always ready to respond to wildland fires. However, as prepared as we can be, it is still better to prevent them. This is where the citizens of Union County can take an active part in their own safety and make a difference in their community. Outside burning is dangerous in these dry and high fire danger conditions. Fire can get out of control in a matter of seconds. The best practice is not to burn in these conditions.

If you are considering outside burning, keep in mind Georgia Forestry Commission's "Take Five" before the burn and to remember the acronym "S-S-T-A-R" representing the five points of the outdoor burning safety standard. For more information about outdoor burning and the five safety precautions, please visit www.gatrees.org.

Another area that a citizen can protect their home and property is through proper Firewise practices. Firewise is a program designed to educate and prepare homeowners on how to protect their homes and neighborhoods from wildland fires. We encourage everyone to participate in the Firewise program to learn how to better

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Autonomy Or Freedom

The NFL handed down a four-game suspension to Kareem Jackson, a player for the Denver Broncos. After ejections from games and hefty fines for unnecessary roughness, the fourth infraction cost him his freedom to play. In announcing the suspension, NFL executive Jon Runyan told Jackson, "You could have made contact with your opponent within the rules, yet you chose not to."

Jackson exercised autonomy to make his own choices while on the football field. Playing the game his way cost him some freedom, at least temporarily. So clearly, autonomy and freedom are not the same thing. A life guided solely by personal choices is not freedom. Our current cultural moment invites you into that confusion.

Consider the popular call to "follow your heart" otherwise stated as, "The heart wants what it wants." Selena Gomez's song by that title includes the plaintive lyrics, "Save your advice, 'cause I won't hear; You might be right, but I don't care." She predicts the depressing outcome of the autonomous life. "This is a modern fairytale; No happy endings, no wind in our sails."

The group Glass Animals released a song called "Heat Waves" about a wandering search for reality, goaded by entertainment culture. "Heat waves, I'm swimming in a mirror; road shimmer, wiggling the vision...fake water all across the road. We never think about you and me but today, I see our reflections clearly in Hollywood."

Both of these cultural artifacts cry out with hopelessness about failed relationships. They give voice to a generation raised on the Hollywood promise of autonomy to choose your own truth and reality. But no one is there to keep that promise. To follow your heart is to learn, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick" (Jer. 17:9). It is not a malleable, self-envisioned, autonomous reality that brings peace to the searching heart.

You will find the peace and freedom your heart craves when you believe your Creator. Seeking truth about morality, reality, and eternity elsewhere is a rejection of God, which re-

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

In 2022, the FEED AMERICA organization compiled data on Georgia children who are food insecure. The data showed that 1 out of 8 children in our state suffers from food insecurity. More specifically, the organization identified 3,020 people needing help with food in Union County, which was at that time a 12.5% food insecurity rate. Because of this, there are many organizations who address these food insecurity needs in our community. The focus of today's questions is to talk about the Union County Government Food Drive and how Union County residents can help during the upcoming holidays.

Q. In the past, the county has organized a local food drive. Are you all doing this again this year?

A. Absolutely! This is our annual Christmas Food Drive in support of the Union County Food Bank located in the Pat Harrison Memorial Civic Center. We are coming upon that time of year (the holiday season) when there is a special need for food. The food bank is always running low on their food supply during this time.

Q. Who is participating in the Food Drive?

A. The county disperses buckets to various locations for collection. The City of Blairsville, County Offices and the Union County Recreation Department are all participating. We have in the past placed collection buckets at the following locations: Union County Library, the Blairsville City Hall, Butternut Creek Golf Course (View Grill), the Union County Chamber of Commerce, and the Union County Courthouse. You can take your food donations to any of these locations.

Q. What type of items can we bring to the collection locations?

A. Any non-perishable food such as, canned soups/stews, canned vegetables, canned fruits, instant potatoes, dry soup packets, peanut butter, canned tuna, dry pasta, rice, boxed dinners, snack crackers, snacks for kids, mac & cheese, granola bars, and dry milk. The Food Bank will very much appreciate your donations.

Q. Would it be helpful to donate money? Can we donate money so that items can be purchased?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Word Usage II

We communicate particular words in our conversations that have the potential of creating havoc with those to whom we are speaking. We are so accustomed in using them that we may not be conscious of the damage that they can create. Two such words are "but" and "why" - these words can boldly trample across a person's self-esteem. They are like a double-edged sword - we can be on the receiving end as well as on the giving end. These two words have the potential of making a person doubt one's capability of reaching effective solutions to everyday problems.

Whenever we are asked a question with "why," we immediately put up our defense wall: "Why did you do that?" "Why did you say that?" "Why don't you tell me the truth?" Our defense wall dates back to when, at an early age, we were always being asked "why" - and in order to justify our behavior, we had to come up with

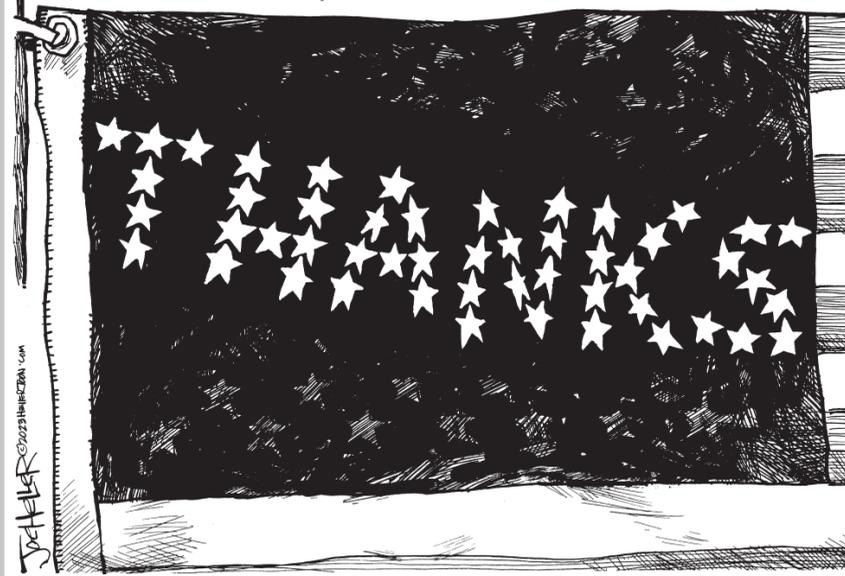
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Successful Mental Health

Dr. James Ray Ashurst, PH.D.



ON VETERANS DAY, THE STATES ARE UNANIMOUS.



Chamber of Commerce

As I drive around town, I am so thankful for the men and women who sacrificed all to protect this community and our country. If not for their sacrifice we would not be able to enjoy the freedoms we enjoy today. I am also thankful for our past and present leaders who helped to grow our community while remembering our heritage. I hope that everyone will take time to visit our local attractions such as the Historic Courthouse, the Byron Herbert Reese Farm, and the displays at the Farmers Market, just to name a few.

The staff at the Chamber wishes everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and safe travels during the holidays. Please remember to shop locally and support our local businesses that contribute to our youth, schools, and community throughout the year.

Remember, freedom is not free. Someone has worked and sacrificed to give us our freedom! Thank someone for their service today!

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

Youth Respecting Veterans

Dear Editor,

During the course of my lifetime, I have watched the youth, in general, of this country change. The "freedoms" of the '60s and '70s brought a culture of distrust of anyone over 30, disrespect and eventually violence if the younger generation disagreed with the establishment and/or did not get their way.

I guess I lived a somewhat sheltered life. I grew up respecting the police or anyone in authority. If anyone got into trouble at school, they were in far more trouble when they got

See Yohe, page 5A

A Letter of Thanks

Dear Editor,

I have noticed that the intersection of State Highway 515 and the Old Blue Ridge highway is dangerous for two reasons: the street light at that intersection was non-functional, leaving one in the dark when trying to make a turn from 515 to the Old Blue Ridge Highway; and the lane markings were very poor, making it unclear as to where to make that turn.

So I want to thank those who helped and are helping to improve that. First, the Blairsville Police Department. I went to them and reported the problem. I was told that they would reach out

See McCullough, page 5A

Yes or No

Open Letter to Rep. Andrew Clyde,

Given your extensive flush of praise for the new GOP Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, I would like you to answer one simple, direct, yes-or-no question. And I ask that you do so unequivocally, without deflection, redirection, political jargon, or any other method of responding but not answering the question.

Johnson has twice proposed - and said he intends to propose again - cutting \$5.75 trillion from Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. The proposals are well-documented and on the Congressional Record.

See St. Lawrence, page 5A

On Speaker Mike Johnson

Dear Editor,

Our representative Andrew Clyde recently bragged about him and the Freedom Caucus getting their man as Speaker of the House. Clyde really wanted Jim Jordan but his fellow Republicans overwhelmingly rejected him. With their fourth choice they got a Jim Jordan lite. Mike Johnson is as extreme as Jordan but presents his

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U.S. Stands with Israel

As Israel continues battling Iran-backed Hamas terrorists, House Republicans stand firm in our commitment to support our ally during its greatest time of need.

Recently, we considered H.R. 6126, the Israel Security Supplemental Appropriations Act - a \$14.3 billion aid bill that strengthens both the U.S. and Israel's defense capabilities. As you may know, this legislation passed the House with bipartisan support.

I proudly voted for this necessary and fiscally responsible supplemental aid bill, and I remain committed to fortifying both the U.S. and Israel's national security amidst increasing threats from our adversaries across the globe.

- In case you missed it, H.R. 6126 would:
- Strengthen U.S. Military Readiness
 - \$4.4 billion to replenish depleted domestic defense stockpiles
 - Bolster Israel's Defense Capabilities
 - \$4 billion to replenish Iron Dome and David's Sling missile defense systems
 - \$3.5 billion in Foreign Military Financing for the procurement of advanced weapons systems and defense articles and services
 - \$1.2 billion for the continued development of the Iron Beam system to counter short-range threats
 - \$1 billion to support artillery and munitions production

- Support U.S. Personnel & Citizens
 - \$150 million for an enhanced security presence at the U.S. Embassy
 - \$50 million for the evacuation of U.S. citizens
- Thankfully, under Speaker Mike Johnson's leadership, this legislation is also fully offset by rescissions from bloated IRS funding in President Biden's severely misguided Inflation "Expansion" Act - providing a commonsense solution to support our ally in its time of need without placing an additional financial burden on American taxpayers.

The Senate now faces a simple choice: Will they support funding Joe Biden's army of IRS agents targeting the American people - or will they support funding Israel's army fighting Hamas terrorists?

I strongly urge the Senate to follow House Republicans' lead by choosing to support Israel and swiftly passing our critical legislation. Failure to do so will dangerously delay both American and Israeli troops from receiving essential support amidst flaring tensions in the Middle East.

Soli Deo Gloria,
Andrew S. Clyde

United States Congressman Representative Andrew Clyde



Bud Akins' Memories

Bud Akins has memories of a much simpler time here in Union County. These include a time when most people walked wherever they wanted to go, a time when the roads were not even graveled, a time when Union County High School made the state of Georgia playoffs for the very first time, and a time when serving in the military made a man out of him.

Tom Coke Hughes came home from the Civil War. He had a little money saved up and gave his daughter \$90. Mary Jo Rogers walked up through Gum Log Gap and down into Rogers Cove and used the money to purchase a 90-acre farm. Now that old road is on the National Forest. But, in those days it was the main north and south road and it was an all-day trip from Blairsville to Murphy. Mary Jo was Bud Akins' grandmother. She, along with his uncles, Grady and Tom Rogers, as well as his mother raised him because his father left the family when he was only 3 1/2 years old. But he thinks that even though times were hard the difficulties he faced caused his family to be close-knit and matured Bud into the man he is today.

He remembers walking south through the gap to attend Pleasant Hill School which was located close to Pea Ridge Road. The family attended church at Pleasant Hill Church which was basically the same building as the school house. Bud not only attended school there, but he also learned about and accepted Jesus at that little church house. When someone in the community died the church bell would ring three times. People would walk to the church and read a note left there, telling them who had died and when to come help dig the grave for the funeral.

His best friends growing up were Jim McAfee and Melva Lynn McAfee, and he remembers many a day spent at the McAfee's Canal Lake Campground which is now under the waters of Lake Nottely. Later, after the lake was built, they loved water skiing and playing on the lake. He remembers having to use a small boat that had two motors on it to pull one person skiing behind the boat.

Bud was a part of the 1955 Union County High School Basketball Team that made the Georgia State playoffs. Some of the players on this team were George Berry, Bud Hill, Charles Hill, Jack Lance, Tommy Wilson, Jacky Payne and of course Bud Akins. The team lost to Monticello (the eventual state champs) 69-66, but not without some controversy. One of the referees was from Monticello and they fouled out Jack Lance early in the third quarter. Jack had never fouled out of a basketball game. The closest any

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Tree Dormancy

The leaves changing color and falling is a sign that colder weather is getting closer and closer. Trees are entering into dormancy. Dormancy is an important process to allow the tree to survive through the winter. Let's talk a bit about how dormancy works in trees and why they need to do it.

Dormant trees will stop growing above the ground. Dormancy is partly brought on by temperature change, but even more so by the change in day length. The college word for this phenomenon is 'photosensitive', meaning the trees change in response to day length. Leaves will begin to change color and fall off. Leaves begin to change color because chlorophyll begins to break down. Chlorophyll is a green pigment that plants use to turn light energy to chemical energy. There are other pigments in the leaves too. As the chlorophyll breaks down the other pigments are left, resulting in the wide array of leaf color that we see. Evergreen trees like pine trees or hollies will have a needle drop in the fall and again in the spring.

As we move into winter trees will enter what's called endo-dormancy. In endo-dormancy an unsatisfied chill hours requirement will keep plants from waking back up. Different plants have a different number of chill hours, or hours spent below 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Chill hours are supposed to keep plants from waking back up too soon. It seems that every year in February we have a couple of days are over 70 degrees. While my pale legs might like to see some sun, February is not time for plants to begin waking up, as we have more freezes that are coming. Hopefully, those plants haven't met their chill hour requirement, so even though I'm wearing shorts, the trees are still dormant.

Endo-dormancy also makes trees cold hardy. Trees will behave in a couple of different ways to make themselves cold hardy. One strategy that trees use is to keep all their water inside their cells. Frozen water expands. If all that water froze and expanded the cells would burst. To combat this trees move minerals and hormones in to mix with the water. Mixing water drops the freezing point, so that plants' cells don't freeze and burst. Another strategy is to move the water out of the cells so that it can freeze safely in the intracellular space.

When spring rolls around temperatures start to rise and trees will start to bud out because they have satisfied their chill hours requirement. However, if plants start to bud out and then we have another freeze, that can kill off the buds and cause damage to the trees.

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UGA extension Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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Website: www.nganews.com • Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com • Mail: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

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Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 (Union County) - One Year \$45 INCLUDING UNION COUNTY CUSTOMER REQUEST MAIL SERVICE. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$10. 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. 24, 1988, 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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A. If you would like to make a monetary donation, please make your check out to the Union County Food Pantry and you are welcome to mail your payment to the Union County Commissioner's Office, C/O Food Bank, 65 Courthouse Street, Box 1, Blairsville, GA 30512, or come by our office in the courthouse. Any money received is used to purchase food items needed.

Q. What other Union County resources are available

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a good reason, at least what we thought was a good answer. Parents, teachers, and whoever else had authority over us at the time demanded an answer. The word "why" came to be a mental exercise of satisfying the person asking us. There were times when we didn't have the foggiest idea of the reason behind our actions, however, we needed to get the "heat" off of us. To save face, we gave whatever excuse we could muster up.

Because memories of the "why" days are firmly cemented into our subconscious mind, we act defensively when the word "why" begins a question. We find ourselves starting conversations with "why" and expect an answer — the very word that we detest, we aim it

to address food insecurity?

A. Various churches provide dry pantry goods to those in need. The Family Connections program also provides a weekend backpack for children as well as addresses short term emergency food issues for children. Additionally, the Union County Senior Center offers a Meals on Wheels service for those 60 and over, and they accept donations for a free lunch for this age group Monday – Friday at 11:30 AM.

at others — irony at its best.

Rather than asking a "why" question, there are two non-threatening words to use: "how come" and "what." "How come you reacted the way you did?" "What was your reason for misbehaving?" The words "how come" and "what" do not usually erect a mental and emotional barrier. And as a result, we are likely to receive truthful answers, plus hopefully have an effective conversation.

Try to use small words.

*It is hard to do, but they say
What you mean.*

If you don't know what

you mean,

Use big words.

They will confuse the people.

(anonymous)

Next week, the word "but" will be the subject.

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During his tenure as chair of the Republican Study Committee between 2019 and 2021, Johnson (R-La.) wrote budget resolutions calling for roughly \$2 trillion in Medicare cuts, \$3 trillion in Medicaid and Affordable Care Act cuts, and \$750 billion in Social Security cuts. There's no misinterpretation or partisan spin to this. It's on page 193 of his 2020 budget proposal, from his Congressional website: <https://t.co/b9a9t-VOIQK>.

So my question to you, Mr. Clyde, is this: YES or NO,

do you support any or all of Mike Johnson's proposal to cut \$5.75 trillion from Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid?

I consider any answer other than "No" to be a "Yes."

If you'd care to tell us, definitively and in detail, whether you support ANY cuts to Social Security, Medicare and/or Medicaid, that would be nice, too.

I, and every one of your constituents, deserve straight answers.

Gary St. Lawrence

Freeman... continued from Page 4A

views with a smile.

Johnson of course voted against the 2020 election and actively worked to overturn it.

Johnson also seems to be obsessed with the personal lives of his fellow Americans. Particularly their sex lives. He stated that legalizing same sex marriage would lead to legalizing pedophiles or people marrying their pets and could be the downfall of the democratic system.

He authored a national version of Florida's so-called "don't say gay law" and worked to advance conversion therapy, which has been banned in many states.

He has sponsored legislation that would ban abortion nationwide at all stages of pregnancy, establishing "right

to life" for fertilized eggs that supersedes women's rights to dignity and self-determination. His sweeping antagonism to abortion has extended to several kinds of birth control including birth control pills.

He has also condemned no-fault divorce and says that women's freedom to leave marriages, along with their freedom to elect out of motherhood, is responsible for mass shootings.

Clyde also bragged about getting a bill out of Congress supporting Israel. What he didn't say is that they tied it to taking funding away from the IRS, which will raise the deficit by well over \$20 billion.

So Congressman Clyde and the Freedom Caucus got their guy. Stay tuned.

Dick Freeman

Yohe... continued from Page 4A

home, and you'd better believe their parents and half the neighborhood knew about it before they arrived at the front door.

America was firmly engulfed in Viet Nam when I was in high school. Feeling patriotic, I enlisted in the Air Force after graduation. On my first trip in uniform in the early '70s, I encountered the "new" culture. Unfortunately, many people of that time confused the soldier with the war, when GIs were simply obeying the orders coming from Washington, or acting in self-defense in a battle not of their making.

As I proudly walked through the terminal to catch my flight overseas, I was spat upon three times. And I can guarantee you many of my fellow GIs suffered far worse treatment when returning from Viet Nam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

But Friday, I witnessed a new breed of young people at Union County High School. I am grateful, proud and have a renewed hope for America's future generations.

The morning started with a breakfast for veterans at the school cafeteria. We were greeted by respectful well-groomed young people, thanking us for our service, offering ceramic poppies that I heard were hand-made by some of the students and cards of thanks, also made by students.

Breakfast was served by students, and other students wandered around the room talking to veterans, bussing tables and offering more coffee or juice. All were cheerful, not being "made" to do the service or resenting it as a duty.

When we moved to the ceremony in the Fine Arts Center, we were once again greeted cheerfully and assisted with seating. Veterans and

their families were seated near the front, and the high school students not participating in the program were seated behind them.

Hope Patton emceed the event, the Civil Air Patrol and American Legion Post 121 Honor Guard posted the colors. The band and chorus performed fabulous music throughout the program, designed to bring a tear to the eyes of the veterans and their families. The ensemble's rendition of "Hallelujah" was especially moving.

Noel Taylor spoke of what Veterans Day means to him, and of his family's service. Four Quilts of Valor were awarded to combat veterans. Tribute was paid to the North Georgia Honor Guard and to Ron Hill, a local man who served America with 40-plus years of distinguished service.

Homage was shown to the fallen and missing, including a gun salute by the North Georgia Honor Guard and "Amazing Grace" by Khloe Ledbetter.

Throughout the ceremony, all the students in the auditorium were quiet, polite and respectful. Following the ceremony, many were shaking the hands of veterans and engaging in thoughtful conversation.

My family is all grown, but if I had a school-aged child, I would be pleased to have him or her attending Union County High School. It is obvious that the principal, staff and teachers are doing something right, that maybe more of the country's schools should emulate.

The heart of this old vet swelled with pride for the behavior of these students. Thank you, Union County High School staff, teachers and students for a heartwarming morning!

Judy Yohe

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

other team got to the team from south Georgia was 15 points.

Bud graduated in 1956 and immediately went to work for the Georgia DOT. However, he wanted an education and enrolled in Southern Tech in the fall of 1960 in the Civil Engineering Program. When Coach Harry Lockhart found out that Bud was a student at Southern Tech, he recruited Bud to play basketball. He enjoyed a three-year career as a student athlete before Uncle Sam came calling. He was drafted right before his senior year at Southern Tech.

While in the military he served in Kansas and then overseas in Germany. While on maneuvers in Kansas during the winter his sergeant became so cold, he could not walk. Although not from Kansas, our Union County young man knew how to take care of a person that was extremely cold. He and another soldier took their sergeant to a warm truck and wrapped him in blankets and sleeping bags. The sergeant, a native of south Alabama, credits Bud with saving his life. Also in Kansas, the 1st Division on another winter maneuver set up camp at a place. One young man placed his sleeping bag away from the other soldiers in a good flat spot. But this spot happened to be in the tank travel lanes. The next morning Bud was asked to find the young man. He noticed a mound of snow a little way from their camp and went to it. He also noticed that tank tracks led right across the mound. He brushed back the snow and found his soldier unharmed un-

der the snow. This fellow had slept through the tanks coming through even though one had driven over the top of him.

Soon his 1st Division received orders to Berlin, Germany. While there, this group of soldiers relished in the fact they were sleeping in the former barracks of their enemies, Hitler's SS Troops. One day while off-duty Bud was shooting pool and an orderly came for him telling him he had visitors. He couldn't imagine who it might be. He was from a little town in north Georgia, and here he was thousands of miles from home with a visitor. He walked through the doors to the visiting area and there stood Leon Davenport along with Barbra and their children Doug and Cayce.

Bud's time in the Army was drawing to a close and he was asked to re-enlist. He smiled and told his commanding officer that he just wanted to go back to God's country. The officer asked where that was and he responded Blairsville in the North Georgia Mountains and there is no better place to live than Blairsville, Georgia.

Williams...

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Evergreens will continue to need water throughout the winter. If the soil freezes for long periods, the roots can't take up the water. Deciduous trees, trees that lose their leaves, will not need as much water. Roots in trees will continue to grow as long as soil temperatures are over 40 degrees. Soil temperatures are warmer than air temperatures in the winter because they are insulated.

If you have questions about trees and dormancy contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Dyer...

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prepare their homes and property. For more information on Firewise, visit <http://firewise.org>. For more information on fire conditions, high fire danger, or other fire news, follow Union County Fire/Rescue & EMA on Facebook.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

McCullough...

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to have the street light fixed. That has already been done. Moreover, the old light was replaced with a very bright LED light that should last many years.

The Police Department referred me to the Georgia Department of Transportation for the other issue. I spoke with Jessica Garcia, who has already drawn up a plan to re-mark the road. So, much thanks to the Police Department and Jessica for quickly responding to my request. I truly believe they have saved lives.

Paul McCullough

Chamber...

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Let's everyone work together to make Life Better in Blairsville!

Fowler...

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sults in spiritual slavery. "Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin," Jesus said. That is the default human condition. Jesus offers the only solution. "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." How is that? "If you continue in My word, you are truly disciples of mine; and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31-36). There is no freedom without truth, and Jesus is Truth writ large on human history.

NFL player Jackson will once again enjoy the freedom to play his position and pop singers may well find reason for hope, but not because they exercise autonomy. Freedom from deception is what the human heart needs, and that comes from the One who is true.