

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### A Time to be Thankful

When we think of Thanksgiving, we usually think of cooking, eating, family get-togethers, and some good football. What most people forget is that Thanksgiving is the time to be thankful. It is the time for people to stop and think about their many blessings. Each year, we at Union County Fire Department stop and recognize the many things for which we are thankful.

First, we are thankful to have the opportunity to be firefighters and to serve our community. Firefighters, no matter whether they are career or volunteer, have a desire to help and serve others. Helping their community is a lifestyle to them, and they feel that it is an honor to serve. It is very rewarding to know that our actions, as firefighters, may have provided some comfort to someone or made a positive difference in their life. We are thankful to have this opportunity to serve either as a career or a volunteer firefighter.

We are thankful for the community that we live in and serve. A great community does not just fall out of the sky. It takes the people of a community to come together with a common mission to make this a great place to live. We are thankful to be part of this community and thankful for the people and their dedication to our community who make it what it is.

We are also thankful for the support that the fire department receives from our community. From the time that the department was created till this very day, the community has always been supportive. People have donated their time, money, and effort to that support. Some have joined as volunteers in support of our mission. Others have graciously given donations to help fund our volunteer firefighters and stations. Without that support, it would be difficult to provide the quality emergency services that we have today.

We, as a department and as individuals, have a lot to be thankful for. With all that is going on in the world today and all the many things that keep everyone divided and busy, we should stop for a moment, reflect on all that we have been blessed with and be thankful.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

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

David Dyer



### Thanks for Everything

"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thes. 5:18).

The "Reader's Digest" chronicles the stories of random people who shared a life-changing experience. Holly Winter was planning a reunion trip with some of her friends. They planned to surprise a college classmate in his office. But Holly's mom decided to visit her on the same day, disrupting Holly's plans. Crystal Brown-Tatum was engaged and accepted a job in her fiance's city. When things took a turn, she broke the engagement and decided not to move.

George Keith's story is about his car, which was too new to have transmission trouble. He made an appointment at the dealer for the next morning. After waiting for an hour for a simple repair, he rushed toward the office hoping not to be late for his morning meeting. At least he had a job. Laura Gelman lost hers. Her usual morning commute would have taken her through a certain subway station, but not on this day.

All four of these people would have been in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. That is the life-changing experience they share. They live to be thankful for an imposing mom, a broken engagement, new car troubles, and a lost job. It's sobering to realize that life's disruptions can actually be a blessing, though we may never know how. But that is one reason to practice what the Bible says, "In everything give thanks."

Consider some of Jesus' encounters with people. From the perspective of eternity, the one leper from the ten is thankful for the disease because he experienced Jesus' saving power. The man blind from birth is thankful because the works of God was displayed in him. Lazarus is thankful that he endured death because many witnessed and believe in the Resurrection and the Life. And there we are at the foot of the cross, witnesses to the horror and injustice of Jesus' death, with hands raised in gratitude because it means "that we would be holy and blameless before Him" (Eph. 1:4).

"The giving of thanks to God for all His blessings should be one of the most distinctive marks of the believer in Jesus Christ," writes Billy Graham. "We must not allow a spirit of in-

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**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



### Commissioner's Questions

**Q. Why is it so important to shop at home?**

A. I have to answer that by reminding everyone of the three pennies of sales taxes we currently have in Union County. Four pennies of every dollar you spend in Union County goes to the State of Georgia, while the other three pennies go to SPLOST, ESPLOST & LOST. The SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) penny goes to county government sales tax for capital expenditures (buildings, equipment, roads and property). The ESPLOST (Education SPLOST) penny goes to the school system for buildings, equipment and property. The LOST (Local Option Sales Tax) penny goes for operation of county government and comes directly off your property taxes!!!!

The new schools, the roads and bridges and other county buildings and capital projects are paid for with two pennies. However, the third penny saves us SIGNIFICANTLY on our property tax bill. So, shopping at home helps EVERYONE in this county.

**Q. Who all pays these sales taxes in Union County?**

A. The great thing about sales tax is that everyone who shops locally participates. Whether a person lives here, works here or is just passing through or even comes to Union County and Blairsville to eat in some of our great restaurants, they are helping to pay our taxes - and we certainly appreciate them and our local businesses.

**Q. People sometimes like to purchase gas at stations closer to Atlanta. Does that impact Union County?**

A. Absolutely it does. In the past when it only cost a few dollars to fill up our gas tank, it was not such a big deal, but now it is. For example, every time you fill up at a station in another county for \$100.00 (the cost to fill up many trucks and SUV's), that is \$3 lost to another county. It is estimated that we could easily be losing tens of thousands of dollars a year in gasoline sales taxes alone. That additional revenue could help pay for road resurfacing or any other basic county needs.

**Q. Are you telling us to shop at home and pay more for our fuel?**

A. No. Certainly if there is a significant difference in price,

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**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**

Lamar Paris



### Letters to the Editor

**Please Vote!**

Dear Editor,  
OK, Towns & Union County voters, you didn't come out for the midterm elections so now we are in a runoff.

Towns and Union Counties had 69% and 70% turnout respectively of registered voters for the election.

This type of turnout will allow the five counties surrounding Atlanta to dominate us and the other 152 counties in our state. Do we want that to occur? The only way those of us not living in metropolitan areas will have our voices heard is to go to the polls and outnumber them. Towns left 3,000 and Union left 6,000 votes on the table uncast. In our two little counties we wasted 9,000 votes.

Think what that amounts to over the other 152 non-metropolitan counties in our state. There were over 3 million votes uncast in this election, which is nearly as many as were cast. Who are we allowing to shape our future?

Please get out and vote in this runoff election and show our government what "The People" really want!

Early voting begins 11/28 and the election date is 12/6!

PLEASE VOTE!

Sam Wilson



### Fire Learning Network

The Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network: On December 6th, we will again attend the Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network (SBR FLN) annual meeting. The SBR FLN is a gathering of natural resource managers who are dedicated to bringing fire back into our mountain environment.

Fire is a natural phenomenon that has occurred in our forests since the beginning of time and will continue long after we are gone no matter how hard we try to prevent it or ignore it. The Firewise and Fire Adapted programs don't try to prevent fire, but educate people who live in the wildland areas how to prepare and protect their property from the out-of-control wildfire that is coming to their backyard one day.

Partners in the Southern Blue Ridge FLN (SBR FLN) collaborate to develop, share and apply the best available science to restore fire across a vast, diverse region. Partners and stakeholders work in teams in the network's eight landscapes to set and achieve restoration goals in their fire-adapted pine and oak forests. Vegetation maps, models and tools developed by partners help build a cohesive vision and description of restoration needs. Landscape teams adapt a regional treatment prioritization tool and apply it locally, with each learning from other landscapes' work. The SBR FLN has also collaborated with the Cherokee National Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative, Central Appalachians FLN and LANDFIRE to adapt LANDFIRE models to this region. The models, along with a LiDAR-based forest structure analysis and the vegetation maps, have been used to estimate the loss of current vegetation from historic conditions across the National Forests of North Carolina.

This information is informing forest planning and National Environmental Policy Analysis (NEPA) projects in several landscapes. Fire history research on three SBR FLN landscapes is shaping prescribed fire regimes. Evidence that fire historically played a role in maintaining these forests—which are changing, due to almost a century of fire suppression—is also being used to build wider support for the use of controlled fire. Partnership burns across multiple ownerships have become common in most landscapes, and more are planned for the coming year.

A few years ago the SBR FLN regional workshop was held here in Hiwassee. Due to programs presented then, state agencies in North and South Carolina are now performing collaborative burning across state lines. Before this meeting a burn had to stop at the state line no matter what, so now that "my territory" thinking is

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**RC&D Executive Director**

Frank Riley



### The Cotton Gin

The old Cotton Gins of Phil Campbell, Alabama, are long gone, but, one of them influenced the lives of at least four generations of my family. One of the gins sat next to the railroad tracks of our hometown in Northwest Alabama. A team of mules pulling a wagon laden with cotton could make the trip from Trapptown to Phil Campbell in 3 1/2 to 4 hours. It's a 7-mile trip to town, and now it only takes 10-12 minutes, but, in the days of my great grandfather, mules and horses were the modes of transportation.

My grandfather, Coon Cummings, was nearly 7 years old when he made his first trip to the gin. He rode on the wagon seat with his father to the gin. The boy and his Daddy left the house at about 1 a.m. because his father wanted to get in line early because the gin opened at 6 a.m. By the time they came to the gin at 4:45 a.m. there was a line of about four to five wagons waiting by the railroad tracks next to the cotton gin. Just before 6 there were 15 wagons behind them. At 6 the gin opened and the train from Birmingham to Memphis made its stop in Phil Campbell.

The little boy was new to the ways of towns, and he'd never seen a train. He said, "The strange hissing sound and the black smoke coming from the front of this thing made me nervous. The big light on the front of the train reminded me of some kind of strange critter. So, I told Papa that this thing was some kind of one-eyed monster." Lon Cummings grabbed the reins of the mules and told his son to get down from the wagon. After stepping down and walking to the side of his father, he said, "That one-eyed monster let out a shrill whistle and it started to move. Our mules and every other mule at the gin began to prance around." Lon held tight to the mules and his little boy until the thing had traveled down the tracks, and then he explained to his son that the monster was actually a train, and it carried people and supplies from Birmingham to Memphis.

As Papa made the transition from boyhood to manhood, he realized he needed to make money to help him purchase land for a farm. So, Papa and some of his friends, including Skeeter Trapp and Russell Hutcheson, all got themselves a job at the gin. These three worked with a crew which included a fellow by the name of "Prince Albert Column." The young men worked long and difficult hours and made \$1 a day. Sometimes they would go without being paid for weeks at a time, and their boss was a hard man who used profanity often. Prince Albert was goosey, meaning that when you poked him in the ribs he would punch

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**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



### Oh Christmas Tree

Having a real Christmas tree can be a great tradition this time of year. There are a number of places that sell Christmas trees here. Let's talk about selecting a Christmas tree and Christmas tree care so that you can avoid a National Lampoon Christmas Vacation type situation.

Three trees grown in Georgia are firs, cypress, and cedar. Some things to consider when purchasing a Christmas tree are needle retention, strong limbs, fragrance, and dryness.

Before you even leave to buy your tree it's a good idea to select and measure the space where you'll be putting your tree. A good spot is away from space heaters, fireplaces, or wood stoves. Measure how high the tree can go in your house. It can be difficult to gauge if a tree is going to fit inside when you're looking at it outdoors. Trees can appear small outside, and they seem to grow a couple of feet once you bring them inside.

When you are selecting your tree, it is important to make sure that you get one that is fresh cut. A fresh cut means that the tree will be able to absorb water more effectively, and therefore not dry out as quickly. Once the trunk of the tree has dried out you can cut off the bottom 1/2 inch to establish a new fresh cut. You really don't want your tree to be dry for more than 6-8 hours. When you are purchasing the tree give the limbs a good shake and see if many needles fall off. Then grab a branch of a tree and pull the branch through your hand. Ideally you don't want to see many needles fall off the branch. Also check for off color on any of the needles. If a bunch of needles don't fall off and the needles are a good green color you know that you have a healthy tree.

A dry Christmas tree can be a fire hazard in a house. If your tree has a fresh cut it should be able to last the entire Christmas season without drying out if you keep it well watered. There should always be water in the tree stand. Keep the water level above the cut on the tree so that the cut won't dry out and your tree is continually taking up water. Drilling a hole in the trunk does not improve water uptake. Using lights that put off heat will increase the drying of the tree. LEDs are a good option to reduce heat.

There are a couple of ways to dispose of your Christmas tree. You can use them for soil erosion barriers. If you have a pond you can sink them to create fish habitat. Chipping them to use as mulch in the garden is another good option.

Real Christmas trees are beautiful and a sound environmental choice. Trees are recyclable, produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide.

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**Watching and Working**

Jacob Williams



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you might want to go for value. If convenient, I am only asking you to consider purchasing your fuel in Union County. It benefits everyone. Most people do not think about how much we are contributing to building schools and lowering taxes when it comes to these purchases.

### Q. Does this same principal apply to other businesses in Union County?

A. Certainly, it does. I often hear people say they like to shop at Lowe's because they get better service and a different product line. While I am not against Lowe's, we have several hardware stores in Union County. All I am saying is that in these tough times, every penny we can bring to Union County is SO important. It is important to our sales tax, but it is more important to our merchants whose livelihoods depend on it.

### Q. Will the Christmas season impact our economy?

A. The Christmas season is one of the most important seasons for any merchant. We understand that some people may make a Christmas shopping list, go down to a mall in another county, and try to get all their Christmas shopping over with in a day. However, there are very few items that can not be found in Union County or ordered from a store in Union County. We have just

about every kind of store and if you will get creative, you will not have to leave town and get tied up in traffic and waste gas this Christmas season. You will also be purchasing more meals in our county which is vital for our restaurants. The benefit to the county government, schools and your own property taxes will be huge, but not nearly as huge as the positive impact you could have on our local merchants.

### Q. What about purchasing a vehicle? Where does that sales tax go?

A. Vehicles sales tax comes back to the county in which the vehicle is registered or titled. So, if your car is titled and tagged in Union County, the sales tax will come to this County.

### Q. Does the County know how much sales tax comes from individual businesses?

A. The Department of Revenue keeps all information from counties except that they will give us general categories. This makes it impossible to compare month to month or even to know if everyone is paying sales taxes that should be.

We are very thankful for all of you and for all of the spending currently done in Union County and for merchants who return sales tax to the County.

## Riley... continued from Page 4A

over and states work together! A network of monitoring plots established by Forest Stewards enables partners to track the effectiveness of management actions. Consistent, long-term monitoring is essential, since it can take years—and multiple treatments—for the full impact of fire in hardwoods to become evident.

The second comprehensive assessment using these data has been completed and will be used to inform planning for future burns and other restoration work. SBR FLN partners include Georgia Blue Ridge Mountains, Great Smoky & Unaka Mountains Northern Escarpment, Central Blue Ridge Escarpment, Nantahala & Balsam Mountains, Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment, South Mountains, New River Headwaters, Network Partners Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists, Forest Stewards Guild, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia State Parks; Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Forest Watch, Greenville Water Land Trust for the Little Tennessee River, Mountain True National Park Service, Blue Ridge Parkway; Great Smoky Mountains, North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation, North Carolina Forest Service, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, South Carolina Division of Natural Resources, South Carolina Forestry Commission, South Carolina State Parks, The Nature Conservancy, Towns County Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, USFS Chattahoochee-Oconee NF; Cherokee NF; Nantahala NF, Pisgah NF, USFS Region 8 Fire & Aviation, USFS—Southern Research Station, and Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D council.

Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted

Communities (PERFACT), a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Forest Service, and agencies of the Department of the Interior supports the Fire Learning Network. This FLN has helped build the foundation of the Joint Fire Science Program's Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists, and continues to play a key role in providing opportunities for networking among scientists, managers and practitioners. This accelerates transfer of knowledge and feedback that supports adaptive forest management.

Well-attended workshops, collaborative projects, and tools shared by online seminars and other means have helped the SBR FLN build strong working partnerships. These in turn support the steady growth of the network, most recently with the addition of the Georgia Blue Ridge Mountains landscape. This landscape brings a new dimension to the SBR FLN, as it includes Towns County, an original member of the Fire Adapted Communities (FACNET) Learning Network.

For more information go to: [www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org). On June 22nd we will have the 4th annual North Georgia Prescribed Fire council (in person this time!) meeting at Chattahoochee Technical College in Jasper with a very good panel of speakers to talk about the benefits of prescribed fire in our forests. The meeting will be announced late spring and all are welcome. We encourage private citizens to attend to learn more about the benefits of controlled fire in the forests. Go to <http://www.garxfire.com> to learn more about prescribed fire in Georgia.

For more information on either of these programs contact Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D at: [info.ccred@gmail.com](mailto:info.ccred@gmail.com).

## Miller... continued from Page 4A

Ukraine joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear weapons state in 1992 and became free of nuclear weapons by 1996. In return, the United States, Russia (during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin), and the United Kingdom offered assurances of security to Ukraine in the Budapest Memorandum of Security Assurances. Because of these assurances, Ukraine was left particularly vulnerable to a Russian invasion.

This past week, an escalation of Russian missile attacks across much of Ukraine targeted critical infrastructure. In the capital city of Kyiv, missiles landed just a few miles from Government and United Nations buildings, destroying homes and leaving even more people killed or injured. Although the missile that exploded in Poland on the same day, killing two people, was likely a tragic accident from a Ukrainian defense missile, the blame for the deaths falls on Putin and his unprovoked war on Ukraine. Although NATO and Western countries were able to calm fears of escalation while investigating the facts, this incident clearly shows how close we could come to a major nuclear war and/or World War III.

Every day of Putin's unjust war takes the lives of more civilians and combatants.

What can we do? We can let our elected leaders know that we support Ukraine's desire to return to their peaceful way of life. We can urge our leaders to continue to provide U.S. humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine. As a country, we can continue to support NATO and its goals of security and liberty. We can also personally support humanitarian aid agencies that are providing support for refugees and Ukrainian citizens who are still living in their war-torn country. One of many such agencies is the International Rescue Committee, which can be found at <https://www.rescue.org/>.

Let us, as a nation, **STAND WITH UKRAINE!**  
**Martha and Dayton Miller**

## Lodes... continued from Page 4A

though no one was there while the day-of voting ballots were batched.

Also of note was the checking of the count of governor and senate ballots. So, one part of the affirmative action was done. The rest of the affirmative action was to be done at 4 pm on Friday, Nov. 18, so as of print time there was no time to get that information for this letter. Next week I hope to have that information.  
**Marsha Lodes**

## Cummings... continued from Page 4A

whatever was directly in front of him, and the man was big and strong.

One day Prince Albert made a mistake while in the gin and his boss man was railing away using the foulest language that Papa had ever heard. Skeeter looked at the boys and asked if they were ready. All of them said yes. So, Skeeter eased up behind Prince Albert and poked the big man in the ribs while he said, "Punch him." He punched his boss, causing his feet to leave the ground. The older man hit the floor and laid very still. While their boss man was unconscious, the crew closed the mill waiting for their inevitable dismissal. Eventually, the boss woke up with two blackened eyes and afterwards was very nice. He never used profanity toward his crew of men and they were always paid

on time.

During my father's time, he also experienced and made memories at the gin. Dad said it was so cold one fall that his mother had buried him up to his neck in the cotton to keep him warm. Papa stopped the wagon just beyond Uncle Dan's house to take a bathroom break in the woods. While Papa was in the edge of the woods the mules began walking. Papa said, "Whoa mules," to no avail. Again, Papa spoke, but, the mules did not stop. Mind you Dad was still in the wagon buried up to his neck and couldn't move. Papa was crouched over in the woods taking care of business. Dad said, "One of the funniest memories I have is of my Dad running from the woods with his overall galluses dragging the dirt while Papa was trying to catch those stubborn mules." As a Senior in High School, he also worked part-time at the old Gin. And early one Saturday morning he was working and began to get hot. So, he took off his Letterman's Jacket and hung it on a post. Somehow it fell into a pile of cotton and was pushed into the ginning process. Dad still gets angry about that because he suspects it was pushed into the gin on purpose.

By the time I came along, the gin was on its last legs. It closed when I was very young. But, I remember it well and its impact on four generations of my family.

## Fowler... continued from Page 4A

gratitude to harden our heart and chill our relationship with God and with others." For the believer, life's disruptions cannot change the ultimate truth that we are meant for another place, which Jesus went to prepare for us. And we know the Way. That thought chases away the spirit of ingratitude.

You have much to be thankful for, including eternal life by faith in Christ. Knowing this world is not all of reality is the eternal perspective that makes giving thanks in everything our distinct privilege.

## Williams... continued from Page 4A

We have great locations to purchase a real Christmas trees around here, and this is the time of year to shop local, so I encourage you to check them out! If you have any questions about Christmas trees contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu). Merry Christmas and happy tree shopping!

## Chamber... continued from Page 4A

for our local leaders that have the vision to make Blairsville-Union County the community it is today.

If you are not already in the spirit, be sure to drop by the Community Center on December 1st and check out all the trees, wreathes, and the Gingerbread Village. We have so many talented local designers that they will knock your Christmas stocks off with their creativity.

I hope you and your family have a Blessed Thanksgiving! Remember, Life is better in Blairsville!  
Shop Local!

## UC Historical Society's Brick Walk

The Union County Historical Society is still running a special price of \$50 on Memorial Bricks. These bricks make great gifts to honor someone or a memorial for loved ones.

We also have bell ringings for celebration of special occasions and memorials at cost \$50 each.

For more information contact the Union County Historical Society at 706-745-5493.

## Bell Ringing



**November 19, 2022**

In loving memory of **Billy Decker** on the 3rd anniversary of his passing  
Union County Historical Society

**November 22, 2022**

In memory of **Hazel Herndon** In remembrance of her birthday on November 20th and her passing on November 15th  
Mr. & Mrs. Tim Herndon

**November 15, 2022**

In honor of **Janet Engle** on her birthday  
By: Ken & Ingrid Engle

**Bell ringing information at 706-745-5493**