

Christmas Fire Safety

The holiday season is in full swing and everyone has their decorations displayed. It is nice to see all the lights, Christmas trees, and various other decorations. All this enhances everyone's holiday spirit, however; they can also be dangerous.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief David Dyer



Christmas trees, especially live trees, can be a fire risk. Live trees can dry out quickly. These trees must be watered regularly. Everyone has seen a video on how fast a dry, live tree can catch fire and burn.

Candles are associated with Christmas and the holidays. Increased use of candles, combined with an increase of combustible, seasonal decorations in many homes means more risk of fire.

Electrical fires can be a fire risk during this time of the year. Lights, decorations, and extension cords should be inspected for frays or exposed wires before use.

These are just a few things to keep in mind when decorating for the holiday season. Union County Fire Department would like for everyone to be safe when preparing their home for this holiday season.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Privilege

In today's parlance "privilege" is justification for treating people differently, even unfairly. It has always been true in human history that some are born into privilege due to circumstances beyond their control.

Gaius Octavius was born into the privilege of wealth and power. In 27 BC, he became Caesar Augustus, ruler of the Roman Empire. His conquests ushered in the "Pax Romana" or peace of Rome.

"There has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). The under-privileged, hard-working men were out in the nighttime fields with their sheep.

You may not have been born into privilege as commonly understood. But to embrace the truth about God coming to earth as a babe in a manger, dying on the cross, and rising from the dead is to be born into eternal privilege in the family of God.

God is about equality of opportunity. "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13). We who have done so share the privilege of the shepherds, to make known this good news of great joy!

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Does Union County Government have any ordinance to protect the local natural resources from too much signage or misplaced signage?

A. Yes, the local ordinance on signage can be found by visiting the Union County Government website and navigating to the section on ordinances. A quick "search" using the word "ordinance" will provide Chapter 62 - Signs.

Q. Can I place a sign at a stop sign?

A. No, please don't. Stop signs are very important to our driving safety. Anytime signs or other objects are placed near or around stop signs, drivers can be distracted by these items.

Q. Can candidates for elected office place campaign signs on a county or state road right of way?

A. NO. Nothing should be placed on public property - only on private property. In the past, we had a situation where several campaign signs were placed at the Mulky Gap and Blue Ridge Highway intersection.

Q. Where can campaign signs be located?

A. Generally, they should only be located where you have permission from the property owner to place a sign. However, they are already virtually everywhere.

Q. Are political signs found on roadways any different from signs that advertise businesses?

A. No, we treat political signs and advertising signs the same when it comes to placement on a county road right of way.

Q. Why can signs not be placed on the highway right of way?

A. When these signs are placed in the right of way they become an obstacle for the mowers. As you might imagine, it be-

Q & A from Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris



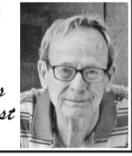
See Paris, page 5A

Expectations

Expectations: an invitation to resentments. --anonymous

Of all the life skills that we have learned in life, one of the most difficult ones to master, if not the hardest, is that of expectations. It becomes a valid and workable life skill only when we can reach that point of expecting nothing from others - absolutely nothing... no expectations.

Successful Mental Health Dr. James Ray Ashurst PH. D.



The very idea of having no expectations is massive in our mind-set, and so very difficult to actually apply in our relationships and in our daily life. Remember the many times we were given a promise by a friend or family member, and it

Letters to the Editor

Cruisers Thankful

I would like to take this time to thank everyone who bought tickets for the Raffle Car and made donations to the Blairsville Cruisers Car Club this year.

And thank you to our sponsors, all the people who worked hard all year to make it possible for the club to go shopping with 93 kids at Walmart on Saturday, Dec. 2, 2023. Thank you to all who came to our cruise-ins on the Blairsville Square and the Farmers Market.

We also would like to thank all who came out to help with Shop With A Cruiser. We sincerely appreciate the Union County Sheriff's Office, Blairsville Police Department, Union

Common Problem

For some reason, a lot of people think that election integrity is a far right conspiracy theory. It's actually a concern for everybody. Elections are being rigged everywhere.

"I continue to think our voting machines are too vulnerable." Democrat Adam Schiff (CA)

"Researchers repeatedly demonstrate that ballot-recording machines and other voting systems are susceptible to tampering." Democrat Sheila Jackson Lee (TX)

"In 2018, Electronic Voting Machines in Georgia and Texas deleted votes for certain candidates or switched votes from one candidate to another." Democrat Jennifer Wexton (VA)

"The biggest seller of voting machines is doing something that violates cyber-security 101 ... directing that you install remote access

What Would You Do?

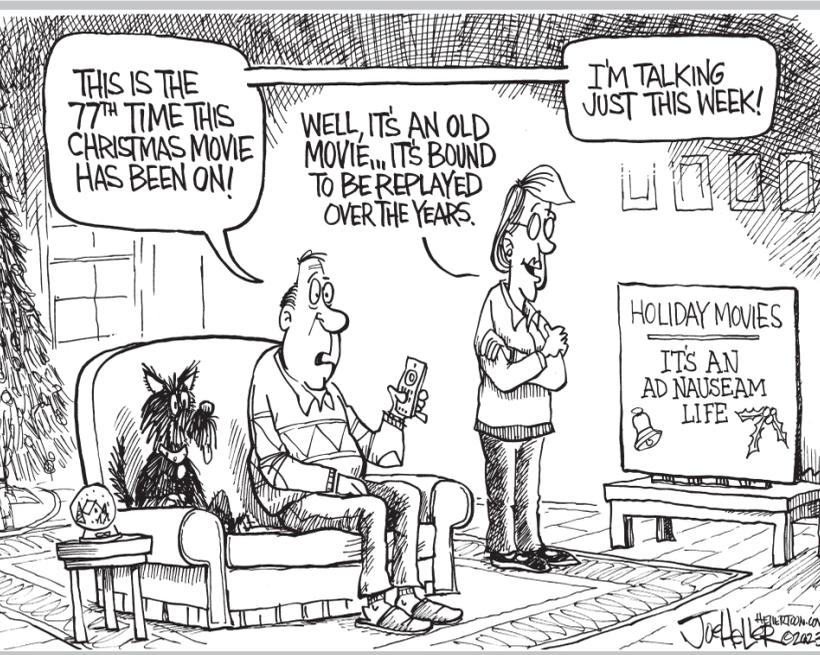
A letter writer last week chimed in on the ongoing situation in Palestine. Unfortunately, that writer left out any history of the region.

Palestine is actually named for The Philistines. If you know your Bible, you know that The Philistines were defeated and driven from the region by The Hebrews. Jews (Hebrews) have been living in that region of the world in organized settlements from 600-1,000 years before Mohamed founded Islam. At that time, the only people who inhabited the area other than The Jews were Nomadic Arabs who were only there at certain times of the year and had no permanent settlements.

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Letters to the Editor

Regarding Recent Letters

Some readers seem to believe a two-state solution will resolve the Israeli/Palestine conflict. Why would Israel, a country that has existed for thousands of years, consent to any agreement with a neighbor whose avowed goal is to kill Jews and remove them from their ancestral homes? Indeed, Palestinians reward their people when they kill a Jew. Israel has tried to coexist with these people, but it has just led to more and more bloodshed.

Paying It Forward

In today's vernacular, I believe it's called "paying it forward." As a senior taxpayer and Union County native, someone paid taxes to support the Union County School System when I was a student. I have no grandchildren in the system, but I have no problem whatsoever with paying my school taxes to provide an education for the current generation of Union County students.

Peace on Earth

We have never had total peace on this earth since sin entered the Garden of Eden and all hell broke loose. It has been about 2,000 years since God sent His son, Jesus, to come to earth and die on the cross so mankind could be reconciled back to God.

In chapter 13 of Revelation, Satan will introduce the Antichrist who promises to bring peace, and the people will say "Hallelujah"

Memories of Christmas

I have been blessed in my life to experience 65 different Christmas celebrations. As I look back through the years, I can remember many special memories from Christmases past. My first recollection of Christmas was in Chicago. My Daddy lost his job in Alabama and we had moved up North to find work.

Around The Farm Mickey Cummings



In 1965 I was able to spend Christmas Break with my Grandparents in Alabama. I went squirrel hunting everyday with Papa. At night we would sit around the fire and listen to stories told by my grandparents. Granny told me about the bitter winters when my Daddy was little. She said, "In those days the mail carriers used wagons or horses to carry the mail."

In 1973 Santa Claus brought me an Ithaca .410-gauge shotgun. As usual the family traveled to Alabama to spend Christmas with our family. I was in heaven that week. We hunted rabbits and squirrels in the day and coons at night. I spent every waking hour in the fields and woods during that Christmas Break.

Normally, my Dad was very outgoing and gregarious. Later, he had been withdrawn. He acted as if something were worrying him. Prior to 1973 my father was known for hitting the bottle hard. He had a lightning-fast temper, and when he thought us kids weren't around, he used profane language. He only went to church a handful of times before 1973. Christmas night of 1973 everything changed. My father accepted the man whose birthday we had just celebrated. My father's lifestyle was changed in an instant. The temper, profanity and drinking were gone. This is the year everything changed in my family.

Christmas of 1980 was another special

See Cummings, page 5A

Chamber of Commerce

It's hard to believe that in a few weeks it will be Christmas. I would like to thank UCB, our ambassadors and volunteers for making this year's Holly Jolly/Breakfast with Santa a huge success. There were smiles all around after visiting with Santa, and our local Post Office helped get those lists in the mail to the North Pole.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President Steve Rowe



Our Annual Chamber Awards Night is coming up on January 19th, and this year is one for the books. We'll be gathering together

See Chamber, page 5A

Mast Crop

A word that you may hear from time to time when talking about wildlife in the fall or winter is "mast." What is mast, why is it important, and can we manage it? Let's talk about these things this week.

The phrase mast crop refers to the fruits and nuts produced by woody plants. Mast can be split into two groups, hard and soft mast. Hard mast includes nuts like hickory, beech, black walnut,

Watching and Working Jacob Williams



and acorns (sometimes pronounced 'aikerns' if you are from the south like me). These nuts are generally ready for wildlife consumption in the fall and winter. They are very important for wildlife to have enough food through the winter, before forbs begin growing again in the spring. Soft mast refers to fleshy fruits from plants like dogwood, blackberry, persimmon, black cherry, wild grapes, sassafras, or poison ivy (yes, poison ivy is a great plant for birds). Soft mast tends to be ready for eating in the late summer and early fall.

Mast crop is very important because it essentially makes up the food that wildlife have to get through winter. Last winter the mast crop from oak trees was very poor. That means wildlife like deer had to find food elsewhere, and generally they found it from your yard. This year the acorn crop has been much better, so hopefully deer damage won't be as severe. Mast crops will vary from season to season, and that is natural. Putting out corn in your yard to supplement the mast crop is unnatural. The weather has a big impact on the mast crop. A late frost or drought can severely affect the amount of mast that is out there in a given year.

Oak acorns make up a big part of the mast crop. All native oak trees can be broken into a white or red subgroup. Species in the white oak will produce acorns every year. Even so, some years will have a bumper crop in what is called a "mast year." Red oaks produce acorns every other year. Wildlife tend to prefer white oak acorns over red oak, as red oak acorns are more bitter. White oaks tend to drop their acorns a little bit earlier than red oaks. Generally, wildlife will eat all the white oak acorns before eating the red.

Is there anything that you can do to support the mast crop? There are a couple of options. The first is to plant more plants that are mast producers. Some mast producing plants are quite attractive, and you may already have them in your landscape. Plants like spicebush, flowering dogwood, or viburnum. The second option is if you have some woods on your property to do some selective thinning. Choosing to leave trees

See Williams, page 5A

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comes a bigger issue in Spring and Summer. When the crew arrives at a road to begin mowing, they have to first remove all the signs before they can even begin. If a sign has blown down in tall grass or weeds, it might be missed. If the mower hits one of these signs with a metal frame, it can cause major damage to the equipment and can be dangerous to the employees and bystanders as well. The resultant litter is also a problem.

Q. If my sign is removed from a county road

right of way, what happens to it?

A. When the Union County Road Department takes up signs to enable them to mow or maintain a right of way, they will collect the signs at the Road Department facility. The Road Department is located on Industrial Blvd (Glenn Gooch Bypass), adjacent to the Health Department. Anyone missing a sign that may have been removed from a right of way can drop by the Road Department to see if it was removed for road maintenance reasons.

Brookins... continued from Page 4A

software which would make a machine like that a magnet for fraudsters and hackers.” Democrat Ron Wyden (OR)

“These voting machines can be hacked quite easily.” Democrat Ted Lieu (CA)

“You could easily hack into them. It makes it seem like these states are doing different things but, in fact, three companies are controlling that.” Democrat Amy Klobuchar (MN)

“There are a lot of states that are dealing with antiquated machines that are vulnerable to being hacked.” Democrat Kamala Harris, Vice President

“We know now how vulnerable our systems were. I know the ‘hack-a-thon’ that took place last year where virtually every machine was broken into fairly easily and quickly.” Democrat Mark Warner (VA)

“You can run the best campaign, you can even become the nominee, and you can have the election stolen from you,” Hillary Clinton said, according to CNN.

Michelle Long Spears, a Democrat, in the Dekalb County

District 2 County Commissioner’s race, the machines showed that she received 0 votes in her home precinct, and in several other precincts – a statistical impossibility, especially since she and her husband both voted. A hand count showed she received 2,810 more votes than her opponent did.

Cynthia Harris, a Democrat, exposed ballot harvesting in Orlando that had been going on for years. The Florida Office of Election Crime and Security said that Harris had “sufficient evidence to warrant a criminal probe.” No probe has been conducted yet.

At a recent fish fry fundraising event, Brian Kemp (R) was recorded as saying that anybody could hack these machines.

Our Secretary of State (R) has been knowing that there is an update for the Dominion machines since 2019, but has stated that there will be no update installed until AFTER the 2024 general election! For this reason alone, every county in Georgia should refrain from using Dominion machines.

David Brookins

Rains... continued from Page 4A

1967 Six Days War, also known as The Third Arab-Israeli War, was owned by Egypt. Weird, huh? While Egypt owned the land, there were no such people as Palestinians and there was no call for a Palestinian Homeland. Once again, weird, huh? Yasser Arafat, who was the longtime leader of The PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) wasn’t even Palestinian. He was Egyptian. Isn’t that strange.

The current situation there is completely the fault of the terrorist organization Hamas. Israelis and the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) do not go into Gaza on any basis whatsoever to behead people, kill children, rape and kill women and kill the elderly. What is happening now is the result of the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th of this year. Hamas hides its fighters and weapons behind and underneath the people who live in Gaza, and they let them do it. Hamas did behead people, kill children, raped and killed women and killed elderly in that attack, and they filmed it with GoPro cameras. Hamas is

a TERRORIST organization. They care NOTHING for the people who presently inhabit Gaza. Hamas’ mission in life is to kill Jews and destroy Israel, PERIOD! If you support Hamas or call for a Palestinian State “From the River to The Sea,” you are calling for the destruction of Israel and the complete extermination of The Jews, and you are no better than the terrorists themselves.

One last thing. The letter writer speaks of the increase of attacks against Muslims. Really? The only people I’ve heard say anything about that are those individuals trying, SOMEHOW, to justify what Hamas did on October 7th as a proper response to anything Israel has done in the past. A couple quick questions. If someone came into your home and did what Hamas, an Islamist organization, did on October 7th to your family, what would you do? Sit back and wait for it to happen over and over and over again, or would you do your best to eradicate the source of the attacks? I’d choose the latter, not the former.

Claude Rains Jr.

Ashurst... continued from Page 4A

didn’t happen? Remember the sadness we felt? We may have also felt anger and frustration when the promise was not honored. Why did it bother us so much?

It is natural to have expectations. After all, we have grown up with the idea that people should keep their word. We place our trust in their integrity to do as they say. If someone tells us that a certain thing will be done, then we expect it to be carried out.

Should be simple, right? But not so. When the promise doesn’t take place, our hearts are broken, our hopes dashed, and our expectations mutilated.

All of us at one time or the other have not lived up to our promises. We failed to be where we said, we didn’t complete the work we promised, other circumstances kept us from doing what we gave our word on – all of these represent broken promises that resulted in someone’s expectations not being met. We have all done it.

What takes place in the minds and lives of the people who expect someone to do what is promised? As kids and teenagers, we filled our heads with the places we wanted to visit, the food we wanted to order, and the activities we planned to do. We waited patiently by the door with the hopes that the doorbell would soon ring by that special person who was going to whisk us away.

Or, as adults, we plan our day around that particular person coming to repair some needed service in our home. Or, maybe if all goes well, we plan to attend a movie with a friend or to shop the mall. We are expecting that individual to be present as promised. When no one shows up, we are left to

process our thoughts and feelings of disappointment and frustration.

It is hard not to judge those who failed to keep their promise, especially when we are the ones who received the hurt. The disappointment can be painful. Our expectations seemed fair to us. We were expecting for someone to do what they said.

Next week: more on expectations with its problems.

Williams...

continued from Page 4A

like white oak or post oak, and thin out the other trees around them. The additional sunlight will allow those oaks to become more productive. It may also allow some forbs to start growing on the forest floor.

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

American Red Cross Volunteers

Make a difference in your community!

As a volunteer with the American Red Cross, you can help families recover after a home fire, train individuals in first aid and CPR, support America’s military families, or take on any number of other roles that make our communities safer, stronger and more resilient.

Get started at <https://www.redcross.org/local/georgia/volunteer.html> or call your NWGA chapter office to ask about volunteer opportunities 844-536-6226.

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

Christmas in my life. It is not the gift I received that made this year special to me. It is the gift I gave. It really was not even Christmas yet. But, it was sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas. I presented Lauren with an engagement ring and she agreed to marry me the next summer. I will never forget that day as long as I live.

In the late 1980s and 1990s came the Christmas celebrations with my sons. Each one has been special. One year Wade received a LEGO pirate ship from Santa. That ship was comprised of more than 1,000 pieces. Lauren helped him put the thing together and it took them all afternoon. When it was done he played with it about an hour and then took it apart.

One year Will asked for a pumper for Christmas. Lauren and I looked at every toy store trying to find a pumper. We could not find a person that knew about a pumper. Finally, Lauren figured out that Will was referring to a pump for pumping up footballs and bicycle tires. And yes, Will received a pumper for Christmas.

White...

continued from Page 4A

against Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Dresden and other cities during World War II? These actions were necessary to defeat evil.

On the subject of school taxes, I would remind the writer Lamar Paris has nothing to do with school taxes. These are determined by the Board of Education. Sixty-two percent of my taxes were for education while only 38% were for the operation of the county. The “full-time residency credit” as well as the 50% reduction in school taxes for those over 70 is utter nonsense. This is a county with a large retired population, and if we exempt retirees as suggested, we shift this burden to young families who are probably struggling more than the elderly. Most businesses in this county are struggling to find employees, and if we increase taxes on the younger generation, they will be forced to live elsewhere, which will just exacerbate the existing employment problem.

As for a multi-commission county government, be careful what you wish for. I have read the cost for five commissioners will not significantly increase the cost to taxpayers. This is laughable. When has the cost of governance ever remained within projections? We are a small county, both in population and land area. We do not need a multi-commission form of government. If we don’t approve of the actions of the commissioner, we can show him or her the door after four years. Try doing this with five commissioners.

In case you are wondering, I am a 93-year-old conservative Republican.

Peter W. White

Combs...

continued from Page 4A

and put him into office. The antichrist comes in on a false platform of bringing everlasting peace to the world, which is the biggest lie ever told in history. But the people are desperate, so they believe the lie and welcome Satan with open arms of gratitude. According to Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, the antichrist will come disguised as the great humanitarian. He will talk peace, prosperity, and plenty, not to lead us to God, but further from God. He will explain guilt away psychologically, make men shrink in shame if their fellowman say they are not broad-minded and liberal. The antichrist will spread the lie that men will never be better until they make society better.

Folks, this is why it’s so important to read God’s truth from the bible for yourself and your family to know that if you don’t accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord before He returns to gather His own unto Himself, you will have to live through the Worst Tribulation Period that history has ever known. Please heed this message, not from me, but from Jesus Christ Himself, for in Him is all truth, as God cannot lie, so you can take Him at His word and His great promises.

Frank F. Combs

Reed...

continued from Page 4A

Granted, I don’t agree with every dollar spent by the system, but overall they are doing a wonderful job providing our young people with a well-rounded secondary education. To destroy that with selfishness is unforgivable.

Thank you,

Ed Reed

Another good Christmas was the year we gave Sugar Bowl Tickets to our son Will. We traveled to New Orleans to watch Georgia beat Hawaii in a very convincing manner. We were able to eat Dreamland BBQ in Birmingham and Crawfish etouffee at a great Cajun place in Louisiana. Now I can say there are two graduates from UGA in my family and personally I was fortunate enough to work for that great institution for more than 30 years. And since that time, I have watched the Georgia Bulldogs win two National Championships.

All these Christmas celebrations have been special to me, and it wasn’t because of the gifts. It was because of the people around me. Please take the time this Christmas season to enjoy the people around you and remember the reason for the season. It is not about physical gifts. Christmas is the time when we received the greatest gift of all time, which is the gift of God’s son and our salvation.

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

to celebrate excellence in our community, and to recognize individuals and businesses who are bringing their A-game day in, day out. You’ll be hearing all about the Keys to Success, while celebrating Ambassador of the Year, Business of the Year, 2024 Citizen of the Year, and Community United Non-Profit Award while enjoying the music from the Andrew Brothers Dueling Piano group. So, dust off your finest outfit, bring your biggest smile, and be prepared for a night that you won’t soon forget.

Don’t forget to check out our calendar on visitblairsville.com for more information and other events happening in our community.

Thanks for making life better in Blairsville.

Tanner...

continued from Page 4A

County teachers, Union County Family Connection, Harmony Grove Youth Group, and family and friends who took the time out of their morning to help kids from our community to have a Merry Christmas.

Wayne Tanner

Blairsville Cruisers CEO