

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Debris Management

Emergency management has four phases. These include mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Some even add a fifth phase of prevention. Most people only see the response phase when a major incident or disaster strikes. However, Union County Emergency Management Agency (UCEMA) is constantly working within the other phases to better prepare our community for disasters. One major part of that planning involves the management of debris left over from a major weather event or disaster.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



UCEMA has just completed a review and update of the Union County Debris Management Plan. This process, which usually takes six to nine months, has taken the department more than a year to complete due to the response to COVID-19. The Debris Management Plan is one of 11 plans that UCEMA maintains to be better prepared for disasters and for the County to get a higher reimbursement rate from FEMA during declared disasters.

The plan explains the process for the assessing, collecting, and disposing of debris caused by a major weather event or disaster. Hurricanes, tornados, floods, ice storms, and hazardous materials are examples of incidents. The debris may include trees, stumps, household materials, or anything that was damaged or left over from the incident.

The plan starts with assessing the damage from an incident. This is important to get an idea of how much damage and debris must be dealt with. This information is also passed to the Georgia Emergency Management Agency to make a determination of a Georgia State of Emergency or a Presidential Disaster Declaration.

The response phase of the plan calls for the initial clearing of roadways for emergency access which means that the debris in the roads is cleared to the white lines. The next phase will involve collecting the debris then completely disposing of it.

We also included two stand-by contracts in the Debris Management Plan to assist the County on major events. These contracts include a debris removal specialist who will respond to Union County and clear the debris "from cradle to grave" thus completely eliminating it. The other contract involves an independent debris disposal monitor who will collect data on the debris eliminated.

See *Fire*, page 5A

Abiding Joy

Joy is a theme of Christmas. "Joy to the World" the carol proclaims! But why is it that joy can seem so elusive?

We pine for happier times. The COVID virus and the economic shutdown have affected so many families. Some are avoiding traditional family gatherings this year. Even worse, this may be your first Christmas without a loved one. Life happens, and can steal your joy. Or not! I submit to you that happiness and joy are different. Suffering hides happiness, but joy abides in sadness.

British theologian Jo Vitale writes, "What sets joy apart is, whereas happiness is dependent upon our circumstances, biblical joy is experienced in defiance of the circumstances." The Psalmist thanked God saying, "You have turned my mourning into dancing for me. You have untied my sackcloth and encircled me with joy" (Psa. 30:11). Jesus' followers experienced this, too. After a flogging for speaking about Jesus, they went on their way "rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and preaching the good news of Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:41-42). That is the abiding joy that keeps you living with purpose.

You have reason to live with joy despite your circumstances. Jesus said, "Rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven" (Luke 10:20). Sadness doesn't change the joy that is yours by faith. Peter writes, "Though you do not see Him now but believe in Him you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible (1 Pet. 1:8).

Jesus changed the circumstances of the world, and in your life. In the words of Tolkien's character Sam Gamgee, "Gandalf! I thought you were dead! But then I thought I was dead myself. Is everything sad going to come untrue? What's happened to the world?" "A great shadow has departed," Gandalf said, and then he laughed. If there's a sadness that has become untrue, it is the hopelessness of evil and separation from God. Jesus overcame those so that joy may abide in you.

How can you have this joy? C. S. Lewis wrote, "Joy is the serious business of heaven." Abiding joy is what God offers. It does not exist apart from Him. Then consider this: Jesus "has

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



See *Fowler*, page 5A

Commissioner's Questions

This week's Q & A is about the flu, or influenza. Over the past couple of weeks, Union General Hospital admitted five to six cases of the flu. Union County residents are encouraged to get a flu shot if at all possible.

Q. Do a lot of people in Union County have the flu?

A. Not yet; however, I just want to remind our residents that each year influenza affects a lot of people in Union County, across Georgia, and the entire country. The flu virus can cause serious illness or even death if not treated properly. Complications with COVID-19 cases and hospitals could find themselves short of beds and staff this winter.

Q. Is it too late to get a flu shot at the Union County Health Department?

A. IT'S NOT TOO LATE! If you haven't already had the flu shot, please consider getting one now. Vaccines are available at the health department and from many other providers and pharmacies around the county. The flu shot protects against multiple strains of flu like H1N1 and Influenza B and is a good match for those types of flu. CDC reported that influenza activity could last until May.

Q. How do you usually contract the flu virus?

A. Flu viruses travel through the air in droplets when someone with the infection coughs, sneezes, or talks (similar to COVID-19). You can inhale the droplets directly, or you can pick up the germs from an object — such as a telephone or computer keyboard — and then transfer them to your eyes, nose or mouth. To avoid this, people should stay away from sick people and stay home if sick. It is also important to wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This routine should sound very familiar in this day and time of COVID-19.

Q. When someone sneezes, how far can the germs travel?

A. Up to 20 feet if you do not cover your sneeze with your hand or preferably covering your mouth with your elbow or handkerchief to contain the germs. This practice is a good idea whether flu season or not.

Q. Is the flu highly contagious?

A. Yes, it is, and this year more so than in most years past.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



See *Paris*, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Re: "Trust Shaken"

Dear Editor,

To Ms. Claypool and any other true Americans who believe in truth, justice and right and wrong, I totally agree with her Dec. 2 letter to the editor.

I have been appalled and saddened by the visible, rampant corruption everywhere and even here in my own state. Why have a recount of votes if the same illegal ballots will be recounted and not challenged? How about the corrupt software and faulty voting machines that convert my votes over to someone else?

How can anyone look at this election with all the eyewitnesses and affidavits detailing the corruption, and have any faith that this was a clean and honest election? How can I ever vote again knowing my vote will not count, that it can be converted electronically over to someone else? And magic boxes of paper ballots all for one candidate found at 3 a.m. with the chain of custody totally in doubt. Trailers of ballots coming from one state then delivered to a different state.

What a sham and disgusting display of law breaking all over this country. Ms. Claypool is right, everyone should demand better election laws and safe, free and honest elections. What disgusts me the most is so many states took part in this sham.

See *Lausier*, page 5A

President-Elect Joe Biden

Dear Editor,

Biden gets a lot of flak about being too old and being senile, and some folks don't know that Joe Biden was born with a speech impediment, and so he takes his time expressing himself so as not to have words come out wrong. My dad had to speak slowly as he had a condition called MS, but he had a photographic memory, so speaking slowly was not a sign of senility.

Do you know, for years, Biden commuted by train to Washington. His first wife and child were killed in a car wreck, and this was the way he traveled to his home, to be with his children, and back to DC.

Biden and his present wife have a combined wealth of about \$9 million. She works as a college professor and will continue to work after Biden becomes president. When Biden left the vice presidency, they had a combined wealth of about \$1.2 million. Their income comes from her salary as a professor and his book deals and speaking engagements.

I took this off the internet and anyone can do it. As Mark Lowery of the Gather Quartet says, don't take my word for it, look it up for yourself.

Bob Gibby

Between Us and the Devil

Dear Editor,

We are moving toward an historic runoff election that will choose our two U.S. Senators from Georgia. However, because of the need for the Democratic Party to have both of their liberal candidates to win in order to push forth their liberal agenda, we have attracted attention and money from all over the country, but mostly from New York and California. Wish we had a law that only Georgians could contribute to candidates for Georgia positions.

I write this to Georgians who are Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, Independent, Trumpers or Trumpettes, from me, a grandfather. I listen to what Democrat leaders have said they want to do if they can control all of Congress and the presidency, and for my grandchildren, it scares the stew out of me.

Nancy Pelosi says she wants to impeach Justices Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett; Chuck Schumer says he will do away with the filibuster, stack the Supreme Court with liberal justices, give statehood to Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico in an attempt to control Congress

See *Allison*, page 5A



Letters to the Editor

Rationale for Masking

Dear Editor,

Let's explore the rationale that people have espoused for not wanting to wear a mask. The three main arguments being:

- 1) Mask mandates infringe on their constitutional guarantee of freedom.
- 2) Faith will protect them, and if God wants them to catch COVID, then so be it.
- 3) Going for herd immunity.

These are extremely important arguments right now, as the pandemic's effects are reaching critical mass this Christmas season. I implore everyone to examine your motivations in light of the inevitable consequences.

Yes, our Constitution guarantees certain rights and freedoms, but freedom isn't free. "It's just another word for nothing left to lose" — and that's just what we'll have if we don't fight for it. This fight is against an invisible enemy, as the president called it, but an enemy just the same. Our weapons for this fight aren't guns, but the willpower to wear masks and self-distance.

Righteous and moral responsibilities to protect your fellow Americans in a national emergency against a deadly pandemic is our call to arms as much as any war was. Here's your chance to earn the freedom you desire. Don't hide behind the Constitution if you're not willing to fight for it.

Ironically, these same freedom seekers are the loudest voice against closing parts of the economy to curb infection when the closings are largely their fault for not wearing a mask in public. The freedom they claim is robbing the rest of us of our freedom of normalcy and most assuredly our health or life. You won't ever know who you saved from this virus by wearing a mask but know that you did. There's no excuse for being an apathetic spreader of this virus. "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few... or the one."

Now for the "God will protect me, and if God wants me to get sick, so be it" excuse. My God isn't cruel, vindictive, assuming or stupid. God gave us a brain so we can protect ourselves from life's destructiveness. God gave us his words so we know to love and keep and protect our fellow man. When life was created, it would have been ridiculous to assume it wouldn't evolve and sometimes become dangerous to humans.

Think of COVID as you would lions and tigers escaping from the zoo. Would you be OK with your neighbors being harmed or killed, or would you do everything possible to prevent it? The human race's intelligence has greatly increased since creation. We haven't gotten any smarter, but experience and intellectual curiosity over thousands or years has eroded our ig-

See *Magee*, page 5A

Special Farm Christmas

We talked last week about how special the Baker Farm was to my mother. Shirley's grandfather, Dad Baker, owned two farms, and both of these helped to raise my mother as well as her many cousins.

Christmastime was special for the Bakers, Adams, and Sims families because the farm brought all the families together and provided a much needed respite from the hard work they all experienced.

A wonderful tradition that was a part of everyone's life in the community was serenading, or as the people called it, "serenating." A big group of people would go to someone's house and sing for those residing there. The one's singing would dress up in old clothing and try to disguise themselves. The ones hosting the singers would then try to guess the identity of the singers. The hosts were obligated to feed cider, cookies and cakes to the singers until their identities were determined.

One cold day before Christmas, Aunt Tudler, along with Mom and some of her cousins, went to Fat Morgan's house. Fat was a brother of Aunt Tudler. Before getting to the house, Shirley stepped in a mud hole causing her to fall. This fall resulted in the little girl losing her shoe, and as Tudler and Athel tried to help the girl, they fell, and all three got wet. Eventually, the shoe was found and the party made its way to the Morgan Place.

Songs were sung and the Morgans could not guess the identity of the singers. So, sorghum cake and apple pie were consumed along with hot cider. The Morgans kept trying to get my mother to talk so they could guess their identity. They asked why her clothing was wet and they asked about her wet feet. However, she never said a word. Well, old Fat Morgan next went eyeball to eyeball with his sister, Aunt Tudler. He stared at her and asked her questions. She never said a thing, and the party continued eating cake and pie for more than an hour. Eventually, they left very satisfied that their identity was never determined. Mr. Morgan could not even guess his own sister's identity.

Another Christmas tradition was greeting everyone with the phrase "Christmas Gift." Beginning immediately after Thanksgiving, when meeting someone you know, each party would try to say the words quicker than the person they met. You might be entering church or the local country store. You might meet your neighbor on the road or you might see someone working in the logging woods. Wherever you had the opportunity, the idea was to say out loud "Christmas

Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



See *Cummings*, page 5A

Chamber of Commerce

Take a drive through Blairsville-Union County where residences are adorned with strands of glowing lights and blow-up snowmen provide a friendly welcome, where the downtown streetlamps have been draped in greenery, and where thousands of lights and the giant silver star top our beloved Holly tree on the courthouse lawn, and you just can't help but hear Vince Guiraldi's lyrics, "Christmas time is here, happiness and cheer . . ."

Happiness and cheer were out in full swing at the Chamber's Annual Holly Jolly Christmas where over five hundred came to see Santa and ride in the Mayor's Christmas train. Every temperature was checked, hands sanitized, all touch-points disinfected between each person, and masks were required, but despite those COVID-necessary precautions, what really sticks out to me is the fact that we were able to come together as a community to provide an event filled with Christmas cheer in a safe, distanced fashion.

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



Mistletoe

Around this time of year mistletoe is sometimes a popular decoration in doorways or homes. You'll see it hanging above doorways for use by romantically inclined couples. Nowadays you can buy plastic mistletoe at stores to put up in your house. Let's talk about the effect that mistletoe can have on trees in the nature.

The origins of hanging mistletoe come from Norse mythology and Celtic Druids.

You can find mistletoe outside on trees year round as it is an evergreen plant. Usually in December it will become more noticeable because trees are bare after dropping their leaves. If you see a green bundle of leaves in the branches of tree around this time of year, chances are that it's mistletoe. In the plant world mistletoe is considered a parasitic plant. Mistletoe will send its root, called the haustorium, into the bark of a host tree. The mistletoe will take nutrients and water from the host tree.

Mistletoe is usually found in the southern United States, because it is susceptible to freezing temperatures, ranging from Virginia over to Texas and down to Florida. It can infect more than 105 different species of trees. Some trees often infected by mistletoe are maples, buckeyes, birch, hickory, oaks, and a whole bunch more.

Mistletoe can be shaded out by surrounding branches. Therefore, fast growing trees that can cover mistletoe from above will have success in preventing infection.

Mistletoe creates a large draw for water and nutrients on the tree. Mistletoe will pull these things to itself away from the roots of the tree. This process can lead to a lot of stress on the tree, especially in a drought. Mistletoe tissue will have 1.6 times more nitrogen, 2.3 times more potassium, and 2.5 times more phosphorus than the host tree tissue. During times of drought mistletoe water and nutrient uptake from the tree will increase while the rest of the tree is in decline. Research has shown that moderately infected trees can have a 66% mortality rate after a severe drought period. Mistletoe is able to pull water from the tree more effectively than the tree can pull the water up.

Mistletoe infections can be very common. Trees that are taller than surrounding trees and trees that are not densely packed in with other trees are most likely to be infected. Infections will be begin at the top of the tree and move downward and inward over time. Advanced symptoms on the tree of infection can be branch die-back, reduced tree growth, increased stress, and in massive infestations, tree death.

See *Williams*, page 5A

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