

Opinions

Everybody has one...

We Need a Miracle

Let me preface this article by telling you it is not meant to be religious in nature. I am simply relating the facts to you as told by my mother. The reason for my telling the story is our time frame. We have entered the Christmas season and yet the world seems to be spinning out of control. There is a major war in Europe. Our own economy is uncertain. And we seem to be deeply divided in this country. The world needs a miracle. So, my gift to Union County is this story of a miracle that was witnessed by the staff at a nursing home where my mother worked.

For the past 50 years my Father has been a minister, and he has served churches in Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama. After my siblings and I moved out of the house, my mother went to work. One place in which she worked was a nursing home in Dunlap, Tennessee. She enjoys serving the elderly. She has a kind heart and is a good listener. So, she was well received by the residents in the nursing home. The story has three characters. Miss Cora was a little old lady who loved everyone. Mr. Brown was a man who couldn't talk and was confined to a wheelchair, and Mrs. Jones was confined to bed and was blind.

Miss Cora was a kind and gentle lady that had been a resident at this nursing home since her husband had died. She was short in stature and always had a smile on her face even when she was in extreme pain. Cora kept a Bible on her night stand and was constantly reading it. When she wasn't reading her Bible, she would visit the other residents to find out about their prayer concerns. Then she would quietly go back to her room and pray for the other residents. It was easy to see her faith, you could hear faith in her testimony and you could feel her faith through her prayers.

But, Cora did not try to push her faith over anyone. She was quiet and unassuming. She would listen to your beliefs and smile. All she wanted you to know was that God loved you so much he sent his son to die for you. She believed this was God's gift to mankind. And she lived this belief every day. She never worried about wars, economics or climate change. Each day before mother left work, Cora would smile at her and say, "I'll be going home soon and I'll get to see Jesus. If I am not here when you come back to work, you'll know where I have gone."

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



The Nativity

Two figures, bundled against the stiff cold, shuffle past the streetlight. "Only college students go out on a night like this for coffee," Joan said, glancing at her friend Kara. "Well, only college students are crazy enough," Kara said, "to wait to the last minute to finish their assignments, then need a java to make the final push!"

The young ladies laugh, hoping the distracting moment of truth would help ward off the cold. There's another bit of chill, which they have been avoiding. Joan brought her Christian faith with her to college. She had invited Kara to the Christmas program at her church the week-end before finals. "That's the last thing on my mind. No thanks!" Kara had said. She was content to leave any thoughts about God back home.

Joan still felt the sting of Kara's rejection. She also had other things on her mind, not uncommon for a first-year student. Was she at the right school, in the right major? Would the student loan debt be worth it? Would she fit in? Would her classmates dismiss her small-town ways as quaint? Those are the thoughts that can push childhood traditions aside. But Joan knew her faith had something to say about her future and who she would be, now that she is on her own. That's why she found being with fellow believers in church comforting, familiar. Why wouldn't she share that with her new friend?

They continued along the downtown sidewalk in silence, anxious to huddle over a steamy brew and a warm blueberry scone. They were approaching that church near the coffee shop, the one with the tiny front yard squeezed between two old, red brick store buildings. Kara remembered Joan's invitation. "You know, I'm sorry I responded that way when you brought up the Christmas program. It's just that, well, I don't know what I believe anymore. I just want to focus on finishing the semester."

"I understand," Joan said. "I just thought it would be a welcome break for you. Besides, if I care, I should want the best for you, not just in academics, right?" Kara felt a bit put upon, but she knew Joan was sincere.

"I'll be honest with you," Kara said. "I don't know if God

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Instead of doing questions and answers this week, I would like to talk a little about our community and the people in it. This year I have been reminded so many times what a remarkable town and county we all get to live in. Not only is it great because of the beautiful mountains and the small-town feeling, it is also great because of the amazing people who live here.

If you really sit down and think about it, the people of our community are the ones that make things happen. For example, the Christmas Parade is organized by the Historical Society and the Downtown Development Authority, but the people, churches, and businesses of our community help make it special by participating! The creative floats and all the candy made for a wonderful community event that adults and children were able to enjoy. Then, you have the Blairsville Sorghum Festival that is organized and operated by a group of volunteers. This is a wonderful community event that everyone likes to attend. There is also the Butternut Creek Festival and the Scottish Festival and Highland Games, both of which are organized by volunteers. Next, think about the Farmers Market. While this facility was built and is maintained by the County there would not be a Farmers Market without all the crafters and farmers and the people who shop there every weekend. All of this is because of the people of Union County.

There are so many other things this year that demonstrate the wonderful people who live in our community: there are new stores opening and established businesses moving to newer and better locations; there are non-profits out and about all the time raising money for their organizations to help people; there are often benefits organized for people in our community who need assistance; and people are always volunteering to take on new projects to fill a need within our community.

So, I want to say thank you to all of the Union County residents for making Union County and Blairsville the best place to live. Your dedication to community and dedication to each other is unsurpassed as far as I am concerned. I want to wish each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! I am excited about 2023 and the great things that will be happening in our community.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

Help Keep MECHS Open

Dear Editor,
We all know the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Currently, the 18 campuses of Mountain Ed schools need some squeaky wheels. Due to HB 153, on June 30th of 2023, Mountain Ed will lose chartered school status. This will force it to be authorized by a local system, none of which have offered to partner to do so. This school system will be dissolved even though it has significantly changed the lives of its graduates and lowered the dropout rate in 18 counties, including yours.

Mountain Education serves students who have returned to school to give themselves a fighting chance in life. Many of these students do not have parents who will advocate for them. Can you imagine the uproar if football programs were cut? Or if the gifted funds were reallocated elsewhere? There would be no shortage of outcry. But for these kids, there are crickets.

If Mountain Ed is dissolved, how many of the 2,520 students served at 18 campuses will finish school? If they don't have the supports they need, the dropout rates go through the roof. The homeless rate goes up. The welfare rolls increase. The prison population increases. The taxpayer burden goes up. Mtn. Ed. is an opportunity for these students to open their own doors and not expect the taxpayers to support them for the rest of their lives.

There has to be a feasible way where the dollars are spent to rescue kids before they become adults who are dependent on the state to care for them. A way that will ease taxpayer burden by creating more taxpayers, instead of more tax users.

Mountain Ed gives students the steps and supports to make getting a job with a livable wage a reality. All Mountain Education students have mentors to help them navigate life itself. Please do not take hope away from our students, it's all many of them have left.

Let's all join together and get some grease. Call and write your representatives asking them to allow Mountain Education to remain a Georgia state chartered special school with a regional attendance zone and funding.

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

Sincerely,
Michelle Gunnin
Mountain Ed Educator

Admiration

Dear Editor,
It was heartbreaking to read the Dec. 7 letter titled "Property Taxes" by Lee Meade but a privilege to know that this person stood ground to the county's Grand Jury. I would love to meet this person and shake hands.

Willena Helton

Keeping Christianity In Christmas

Dear Editor,
A lot of people worry today how to keep Christ in Christmas, and rightfully so, as our culture teeters on becoming a secular, spiritual wasteland.

One simple way to keep Christ in Christmas is with your choice of Christmas decorations for your yard and home of all things. Think about it, the more monsters dressed in Santa Suits you have or the more light-up deer or polar bears with candy canes you put out -- while not also putting out traditional scenes of shepherds, wise men, angels, and of course baby Jesus Himself -- the more people, especially little people who are children now, will associate those things with Christmas instead of Christ with Christmas.

Look around; it's what's happening. So few Christmas scenes with Christ in them; but you can change that simply by what decorations you choose. It may sound minor, but the repercussions may be major. So, please keep Christ in Christmas, including in your decorations, lest we forget the Reason for the Season.

Will Lance



Letters to the Editor

Get Involved

Dear Editor,
In response to last week's letter to the editor entitled "Re: 'Property Taxes,'" the statement was made that young families are struggling to make ends meet. I would say the elderly population are struggling as well. In the last two years we have had two property tax increases that affected the elderly who are on a fixed income. Union County is growing very fast. From my observation, it isn't a bunch of elderly people moving into the area. It seems to be quite the opposite. This county is facing labor shortages, but that is a nationwide problem. When the federal government hands out money for free, why work for it when you don't have to?

One of the bigger issues in this county is how our tax dollars are being spent. I would encourage people to get involved in our local government. Are the citizens of the county well informed by our local government officials when it comes to spending money? There needs to be more accountability for how our money is spent. The school is receiving \$42 million with ESPLOST being passed in the May elections. I have been going to school board meetings for the last year and a half asking for transparency and accountability on how those tax dollars are being spent. The school board has refused to have a meeting with the citizens of this county that have questions.

If we cannot approach our "elected" officials to have a dialogue about how they are spending money then it is time to pursue exemption from school taxes for the elderly population that want to be exempt from school tax. For the elderly that want to pay school taxes... feel free to do so.

I challenge the citizens of this county to educate themselves about what is actually going on in our county. Lots of changes are coming to Union County that will impact everyone. Do you know what they are? Get involved.
Cindy Vandereedt
Concerned Citizen

Be Kind for Christmas

Dear Editor,
Someone you know, or a stranger you encounter, is preparing for their first Christmas Holiday Season without their husband, wife, mother, father, brother, sister, daughter, son, or other family member. Others are preparing for their last. Regardless of the specifics, remember that this season of joy is often a time of sorrow for many.

Be understanding, thoughtful and generous of heart. Give love. Give help; if nothing else, be KIND and don't give others more stress to deal with.
Kristin Parker

Hog Hammock

Hog Hammock on Sapelo Island: Chesta-tee Chattahoochee RC&D is the Georgia Firewise USA liaison and administers the Firewise USA program in Georgia.

Firewise communities are spread from the Northwestern corner of the state all the way down to the southeast coast and everywhere in between. Recently I was called by a leader from Hog Hammock community on Sapelo Island to come down and help the residents become prepared for the wildfire that is coming one day. The Firewise USA program helps residents prepare their homes to withstand an out-of-control wildfire.

Sapelo Island is a state-protected barrier island located in McIntosh County. The island is accessible only by aircraft or boat; the primary ferry comes from the Sapelo Island Visitors Center in McIntosh County, a seven-mile trip. Sapelo is the site of Hog Hammock, the last known Gullah community. Approximately 97 percent of the island is owned by the state of Georgia and is managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The western perimeter of Sapelo is the Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve which is part of NOAA's National Estuarine Research Reserve system. The University of Georgia Marine Institute, which is focused on research and education, is located on 1,500 acres on the south end of the island. The Reynolds Mansion also lies on the south end of the island.

The community of Hog Hammock includes homes, a general store, bar, public library, and other small businesses. Many of the full-time inhabitants of the Hog Hammock Community are African Americans known as Gullah-Geechees, specifically Saltwater Geechees, who descended from enslaved West African people brought to the island in the 1700s and 1800s to work on island plantations. The current population of full-time Gullah-Geechee residents in the community is estimated to be 47. The residents must bring all supplies from the mainland or purchase them in the small store on the island. The children of Hog Hammock take the ferry to the mainland and then take a bus to school, as the island school closed in 1978. The entire 427 acres of the community was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996 as Hog Hammock Historic District.

Sapelo Island is speculated to be the site of San Miguel de Gualdape, the short-lived (1526-1527) first European settlement in the present-day United States and, if true, it would also be the first place in the present-day U.S. that a Catholic mass was celebrated. In the early 19th century Thomas Spalding, a future Georgia Senator and

See Riley, page 5A

RC&D Executive Director

Frank Riley



Holly

Holly trees are often used in Christmas decorations or as landscaping plants. This time of year, they provide some beautiful color with their green leaves and red berries. We actually have several different species of holly that are native to our area. Let's talk about the different types of holly in our area and how to take care of them.

Hollies are members of the genus Ilex. This genus has over 570 members from all over the world. Some species in the Ilex genus are evergreen, and some are deciduous. Two of the more common species of holly that we see here are American holly and Yaupon holly. Both of these species are evergreen. Typically, the holly that you see on postcards around Christmas time is the English holly. As inferred by its name, it is not native to this area. American holly has the prickly leaves that we associate with Christmas holly, while yaupon holly leaves are not prickly.

The American holly and Yaupon holly are dioecious trees, meaning that they have separate male and female plants. The red berries only grow on female plants, but they must have a male tree nearby to pollinate them. The flowers are very small and white. It is not advised to eat the berries as they are mildly toxic to humans and animals. Yaupon leaves can be used to make a caffeinated tea. The time of year that the leaves are harvested changes the flavor of the tea. They tend to do well in our area as they can grow in full sun to part shade, and like a soil that is acidic. You can purchase fertilizers made specifically for hollies. The main difference between a fertilizer for hollies and other fertilizers is that the holly fertilizer will turn the soil slightly acidic over time. You can use holly fertilizer on other acid loving plants like blueberries, rhododendrons, and azaleas.

There are many varieties of American and Yaupon holly that you can purchase and plant in your yard. Some varieties of American holly are able to self-pollinate and produce berries without a male present. There are also some varieties that have yellow berries instead of the typical red.

There are not too many insect pests that affect hollies. Leaf miners, spider mites, scale can have an impact, but usually horticultural oil will treat them. If they are planted in soils that remain wet for too long hollies can have issues with root rot. If root rot takes hold the tree will need to be removed. Sapsuckers are birds that will drill holes in trees to consume the sap. They do seem to like hollies. If you see lots of holes in the bark along a horizontal line that is likely sapsucker damage.

See Williams, page 5A

Chamber of Commerce

The staff at the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and a Blessed Holiday Season. Our thoughts and prayers go out to those who are sick or suffering.

While 2022 is not over yet, we would like to thank everyone that has helped make 2022 an awesome year in Union County, and we are looking forward to having an amazing 2023 year. I also want to thank Mayor Conley, Commissioner Paris, and State Senator Steve Gooch for taking time from their busy schedules to come and speak to us at last week's Eggs & Issues on what is going on in the City, County, and State. We hope to have Senator Gooch and Representative Stan Gunter back later in the year after the close of the session.

While you are marking up your calendars for 2023 be sure to schedule time for our Annual Awards night on January 20th, where we will

See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Kenneth West Publisher/Owner **Shawn Jarrard** General Manager/Editor **Derek Richards** Advertising Director **Todd Forrest** Sports Editor **Lowell Nicholson** Photographer

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

The North Georgia News is an independent and nonpartisan publication. As such, third-party views contained herein are not necessarily the opinions or positions of this newspaper, e.g. advertising, press releases, editorial content, perspectives expressed in articles covering local events, etc.

Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - One Year \$45. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$5. 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.

Phone: 706-745-6343 Fax: 706-745-1830 • P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, Georgia 30514

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

Most of the time Mom worked the evening shift, but her schedule was changed so the next day she worked the morning shift. Over the past few weeks Cora had become weak, and Mom knew her time would come soon. So, she went by Cora's room before leaving work. Miss Cora smiled, patted Mom's hand and said, "It will be over soon."

When Mom came back to work the next morning, a young orderly met her and said you should have been here last night. A nurse working the night shift fussed at Mom for not being at work. Mother explained that her schedule had been changed. The nurse looked at her and said you missed two miracles.

Miss Cora had died at 4:00 a.m. The nurse was with her when she passed, and as she was attending to Cora, the nurse heard singing. So, she walked into the hall and there was Mr. Brown walking down the hall singing "Jesus Loves Me." Then the nurse felt a tug of her arm, and there was Mrs. Jones. Her eyes were shining and she asked, "Do you see that?" as she pointed down the

hall toward Cora's room. The nurse asked Mrs. Jones what she was seeing. The elderly lady replied, "I can see them as well as I can see you. I can see Jesus and Cora walking down the hall."

By the time Mom got to Mr. Brown and Mrs. Jones rooms, the miracles had passed. Mr. Brown was once again mute and confined to a wheelchair. Mrs. Jones could no longer see and was bedridden. However, one nurse and three other staff members all witnessed Mr. Brown singing and walking. They also saw Mrs. Jones walking around looking at things she hadn't seen in years. Every time my mother gets worried about something, she thinks about those miracles that occurred in a nursing home in Dunlap, Tennessee.

As we think about all the bad things going on in this world, we should remember that God loves all of us. He cares about what we are experiencing. He loves us even though we may be unlovable. Isn't that the reason for this season? So, we should celebrate God's love for us during this time of year.

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

name the Ambassador, Business, and Person of the Year. This year's theme will be Casino Night, which should be a fun time for all.

Keep an eye out for the Chamber's February calendar for the STAR Student Awards night. We have so many talented students in Union County, so

come out and help us celebrate their achievements.

As the weather gets colder, please be sure to check on your family, friends, neighbors, and pets to be sure they have a warm place to stay.

Merry Christmas! Thanks for making things Better in Blairsville.

Fowler... continued from Page 4A

is really there. I mean there's so much pain and darkness in the world. If he is there, why doesn't he do something about it?" Joan wasn't prepared to answer that, so she prayed for insight. To hear such transparency from her friend was a gift.

They neared the church. It was hard not to notice. The church had placed a simple nativity scene in the yard, well-lit by floodlamps. Joan caught Kara's hand and stopped. "There's your answer!" She pointed to the child in the manger. "He did do something about it."

Riley... continued from Page 4A

U.S. Representative, bought the island and developed it into a plantation, selling live oak for shipbuilding, introducing irrigation ditches, and cultivating Sea Island Cotton, corn, and sugar cane.

Spalding brought 400 slaves to the island from West Africa and the West Indies to work the plantation and build what would become the Spalding Mansion. When freed, the former slaves established several settlements on the island; the last remaining is Hog Hammock, with approximately 70 remaining landowners. Howard E. Coffin, founder of the Hudson Motor Car Company purchased the entire island, save for the land owned by the former slaves, for \$150,000 in 1912.

Like Spalding, the Coffins embarked on numerous projects. Miles of shell-covered roads were laid, creeks were bridged, old fields were cultivated, and large tracts were set aside for cattle grazing. The Coffins also renovated and enlarged the Spalding house, creating an island paradise unsurpassed on the coast. Former presidents Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover as well as aviator Charles Lindbergh were guests in the home.

Tobacco heir Richard Joshua Reynolds Jr., of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company bought Sapelo from Coffin in 1934 during the Great Depres-

sion, and continued the tradition of agricultural experimentation of the previous owners. Reynolds and his family used his private island paradise as a part-time residence for three decades, consolidating the island's African American residents into Hog Hammock. Sapelo owner R. J. Reynolds, Jr. founded the Sapelo Island Research Foundation in 1949. He later funded the research of Eugene Odum, whose 1958 paper The Ecology of a Salt Marsh won wide acclaim in scientific circles.

Odum's paper helped show the fragility of the cycle of nature in the wetlands. Reynolds' Sapelo Research Foundation also helped fund the University of Georgia's research on the island. Reynolds' widow, Annemarie Reynolds, sold Sapelo to the state of Georgia for \$1 million, a fraction of its worth, in two separate transactions in 1969 and 1976.

The latter sale resulted in the creation of the Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve, a state-federal partnership between the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

I actually get paid to do this, tough job but somebody has to do it! For more information Google Sapelo Island.

Williams... continued from Page 4A

Evergreen hollies will drop leaves in the spring and the fall. They shouldn't drop more than a third of the leaves. If they drop too many leaves, that is a sign that the tree could be under stress from disease, insects, or soil pH that is too high.

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

Supervisors Re-Elected to Blue Ridge Mountain Soil & Water Conservation District

Georgia elections were held on November 8, 2022. Re-elected District Supervisors on the Blue Ridge Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), will serve the Conservation District for another four-year term.



Jennifer Logan has been a District Supervisor since 2019 and will continue representing Union County.



Ann Stanley has been a District Supervisor since 2019 and will continue representing Fannin County.



Virginia Palmer has been a District Supervisor since 1995 and will continue representing Towns County.

Commemorative Bricks Benefitting the Appalachian Veterans Memorial Park Being Sold in Blairsville

By now, many citizens in north Georgia and the bordering counties in North Carolina have heard about the exciting, upcoming addition to Meeks Park proposed for the end of 2023. Earlier this year, Union County Sole Commissioner, Lamar Paris, on behalf of the county, gifted a parcel of land by the entrance to be exclusively to build a veterans park that would unite not just the citizens of Union County, but the entire region.

The Appalachian Veter-

ans Memorial Park will be a dedicated space for residents, their families, loved ones, members of the community and visitors to Meeks Park. Its purpose is to remember those who are serving or have served our nation's military. The park will be a place of solitude, one of retrospection and a gathering place for the recognition of honoring all military branches and Veterans Service organizations of Appalachia.

The committee members, corporate sponsors, and members of the community are incredibly excited about having such an inclusive, beautiful addition to Meeks Park, and are thrilled to announce that personalized, commemorative bricks are now available for sale! The bricks are available in 4" x 8", and 8" x 8" sizes, and can be purchased from our website, TheVeteransPark.org, or purchased locally via cash or check from any committee member (contact@appalachianveteransmemorialpark.org).

Additional information on the bricks, tickets to win a Henry Repeating Arms Ar-7 rifle raffle, architectural draw-



ings, information about the committee, corporate sponsorship, and much more can also be found on the website. All proceeds from the rifle raffle, and the majority portion of commemorative brick sales will be used to build and maintain the park.

Ben's Concrete Creations will be responsible for creating a beautiful 60-foot diameter compass rose, which will be encompassed and surrounded by several monuments and flags to pay tribute to every branch of the military, and every Veteran Service Organization in the tri-state area. A monument bearing the seal of Union County government will also be erected to honor the unwavering support of our veteran community by the wonderful folks who make our county the wonderful place we get to call 'home.'

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.

Union County Runoff Results (Corrected)

December 6, 2022 • Votes By Precinct

Candidate	Blairsville	Coosa	Choestoe	Jones Creek	Owltown	Ivy Log	Suches	Trackrock	Dooley	Gumlog	Pat Colwell	ABM and AIP Voting included in Precinct Totals	TOTALS	Percentage
US Senate														
Herschel Junior Walker (Rep)	1072	1204	779	1083	782	1183	310	581	827	1125	1268	420	3948	80.81%
Raphael Warnock (I) (Dem)	328	204	177	250	226	229	74	147	232	236	323	317	1252	19.19%