

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Habitat for Humanity

Can you believe that 2021 is almost over? They say that the older you get, the faster time flies. It does seem so, anyway.

Here at Habitat for Humanity, Towns/Union Counties, Inc., we have fought through COVID, adjusted to having a brand-new ReStore in Blairsville, hired some great people, and formed some amazing partnerships with our community organizations. We are so thankful for our loyal ReStore customers and donors. Our ReStore is a part of our fundraising, but it's not the only way we raise money to build affordable housing.

Donations from generous people in our community are an important part of our fundraising. We use donated materials and volunteers to keep the cost of homes down, but it still takes an average of \$150,000 to build a house. The faster we raise the money, the faster we can build another house. We coordinate several small fundraisers throughout the year. "Share the Love with Habitat," "Pictures for Santa Paws," and "Scarecrowville" are just a few of those. We also apply for grants and ask for donations from our local businesses. Even with our ReStore and our fundraising events, our individual donors are the cornerstone of our fundraising efforts.

... And speaking of which, I just read something really exciting! First, let me make sure you know that I am NOT a financial advisor of any kind, and I would urge every one of you to consult with an accountant or a tax professional before making any major financial decisions. BUT... I just read that the IRS has changed the rules regarding deductions of charitable contributions!

If you itemize your tax return, you have always been able to deduct charitable contributions, dollar-for-dollar. If you used the standard deduction, you may have been able to write off a small, standard charitable contribution deduction (usually up to \$250). It seems that the IRS has changed the rules, and those of you who take the standard deduction can now claim \$300 of your charitable donations, or \$600 of your charitable donations if you are filing as a married couple! This is a big deal, because, according to the IRS website, nine out of 10 people take the standard deduction. So, if you are one of those 90% of taxpayers, you can contribute more money, and claim up to \$300 or \$600 (whichever applies to you) as

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Habitat Happenings
Cathy Wheeler

Peace on Earth

I knew it was a risk. I meant it as an opportunity to express uplifting hope, and some saw it that way. Others didn't.

My social media question was, "What do you hope happens in 2022?" Responses included Jesus coming and COVID going. Some want peace for our sharply divided country. Others were content to bicker over politics and COVID mitigation measures, which illustrates why people want peace. I looked away for a minute and when I came back, the admin had mercifully disabled the commenting. I deleted the post. Sigh. "Can we all get along?" (Rodney King, 1992).

Among the many reasons America has no peace is this: we no longer have a common source for understanding what's real, right, and true. We live in an age characterized by, "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). When a disillusioned country paints that picture long enough, it looks like Haiti. Division, corruption, hostages, violence, lawlessness. The beautiful, decent, God-fearing Haitian people don't want that for their country any more than we want it for ours. They need a peace their country cannot provide. So do we.

Jesus is the only hope for the abiding peace that you need. He warned of the ruler of the world coming, then promised to send His Spirit. "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27). That peace is His very presence with you.

One way to answer my social media question is the lyric penned by Linda Thompson, recorded by Amy Grant. "No more lives torn apart, that wars would never start, and time would heal all hearts. Everyone would have a friend and right would always win and love would never end" (Grown-up Christmas List). But even though that won't happen until Jesus comes back, all is not lost. Trust the Prince of Peace and live by His abiding presence. Then you'll have your own peace on earth.

www.mountainchristian.net



All Things New
Wayne Fowler

Commissioner's Questions

Q. When does the Winter season officially begin?

A. For 2021, it began Tuesday, December 21. Similarly, the winter solstice, which marks the astronomical first day of winter in the Northern Hemisphere and also marks the shortest day of the year, was recognized on Dec. 21, 2021.

Q. What kind of predications are being made about Winter weather for 2022?

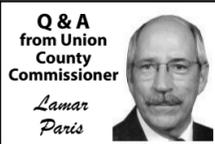
A. According to various resources (Weather Trends and the Farmers Almanac), average temps for January will be a low of 27 and a high of 47. Average temps for February will be a low of 29 and a high of 51. The long-range comparison shows that southeast Winter temperatures will be below normal on average through mid-February. Precipitation is predicted to be above normal.

Q. Sometimes snow feels different. Sometimes it feels colder than other times. Why does it feel that way?

A. When snow falls, it is referred to as either a wet or a dry snow. Snow that falls when the temperature is very cold - usually below 28 degrees - would be classified as a dry snow. This type of snow is light and fluffy. This is typically the type of snow you always see in Colorado and it is great for skiing. Snow that falls when the temperature is a little warmer - usually 30 to 35 degrees - would be classified as a wet snow. This is the type of snow we often have here. A wet snow is wet to the touch and is great for making snowmen and snowballs since it packs so well. This type of snow also sticks to tree limbs and powerlines causing power outages all over north Georgia.

Q. What is the difference between a dry and wet snow in relation to the difficulty the county has in getting and keeping the roads clear?

A. Dry snow quickly packs on the roads and highways and becomes very difficult to scrape off with our trucks. Normally we spread gravel and salt to help melt the snow to make it easier to remove. The biggest problem is that when cars and trucks drive over the snow, it packs it down. When this happens, it becomes even more difficult to remove with our snow plows. However, this type of snow also gives you a little better traction with your ve-



Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris

See *Paris*, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

What's a person to do?

Dear Editor,

Imagine Florida with a hurricane coming toward Miami. The Governor orders an evacuation. All cars head north. They all need to be charged in Jacksonville. How does that work? Has anyone thought about this? If all cars were electric and were caught up in a three-hour traffic jam with dead batteries, then what? Not to mention that there is virtually no heating or air conditioning in an electric vehicle because of high battery consumption.

If you get stuck on the road all night, no battery, no heating, no windshield wipers, no radio, no GPS (all these drain the batteries), all you can do is try calling 911 to take women and children to safety. But they cannot come to help you because all roads are blocked, and they will probably require all police cars to be electric also. When the roads become unblocked, no one can move! Their batteries are dead.

How do you charge the thousands of cars in the traffic jam? Same problem during summer vacation departures with miles of traffic jams. There would be virtually no air conditioning in an electric vehicle. It would drain the batteries

See *Morris*, page 5A

Thank You

Dear Blairsville/Union County,

On behalf of the Blairsville Police Department, I would like to personally thank you for your continued support of the Blairsville Police Department Shop With A Cop Program. As you know by now, we were able to take 125 Union County Students Christmas shopping this year.

Our community came through in so many ways, such as supporting our annual Rubber Duck Derby, making monetary donations, and volunteering their time to make a young person's Christmas a reality.

Again, thank you for your love, time and support of our local families in need. We believe if we can positively change one young person's life, we have accomplished our goal.

Happy Holidays, and May God Bless You All!

Sincerely,
Michael "Bear" Baxter
Blairsville Police Chief

Taxpayer Savings

Dear Editor,

The sole commissioner and his county "manager" have made accumulated salaries of \$435,916 (almost one half million dollars) over the last two years. Data is available by filing an open records request on the commissioner's website.

Commissioners in multi-commissioner boards of counties with similar populations made on average \$12,150 in 2020 and make \$12,217 this year. Data is available on the Georgia Department of Community Affairs website.

A five-member board of commissioners, then, using a county manager with a non-bloated salary, would cost the taxpayers approximately \$137,000 per year - a nice reduction from the quarter million we now pay.

Inquiring minds would like to know, of the 3,007 counties in the United States, why does North Georgia have all seven of the counties in America with sole commissioners?

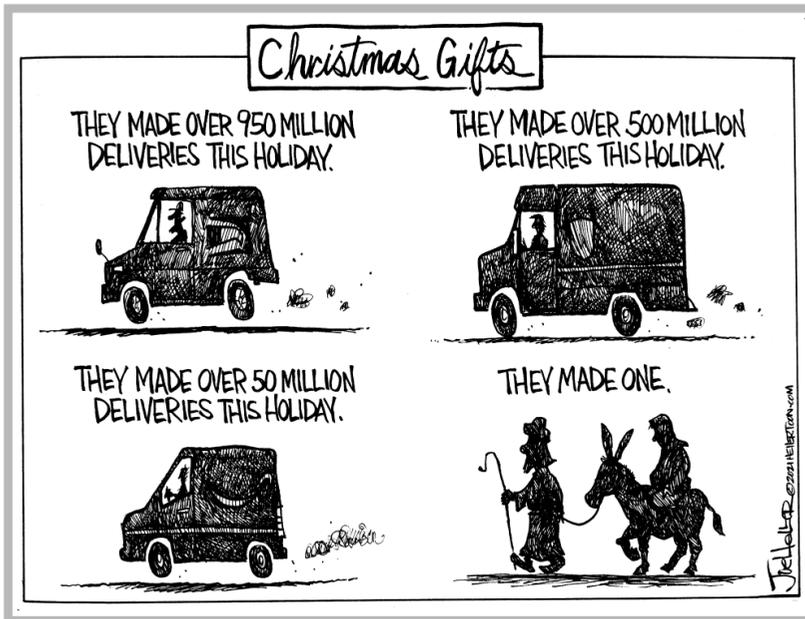
Zeb Blanchard

Who Is Worthy?

Dear Editor,

Are you worthy of God's gift of salvation that was purchased for you on the cross of Calvary where the son of God, Jesus Christ, died for your sins? Can you sing Worthy is the Lamb that was slain for all of mankind? Do you measure up to God's expectations, or do you fall short of what He expects of you? How can you ever get right with God? In the book of Romans Chapter

See *Combs*, page 5A



Letters to the Editor

Intimidation

Dear Editor,

In response to the article in the newspaper dated Dec. 22, 2021, on the front page saying "Changes coming to meeting format": I have been a resident of Union County going on 15 years. After watching the direction our county is taking since the last election, I decided I wanted to get involved in what was going on in our county. I have been attending commissioner meetings, city council meetings and school board meetings.

There have been several articles in the newspaper over the last few months commenting on how our commissioner is spending our tax dollars. After doing some research on what was being said and reviewing open records requests into the way some of the SPLOST money is being spent, I got on the agenda for the December county meeting to give what I thought would have been a solution to the questions being raised in the meetings. Usually, we have five minutes to speak; it was cut to three minutes with no advance notice. I was only able to present half of what I had written. What was presented was a sample of an Annual Report required by O.C.G.A. 48-8-122, which is county SPLOST

See *Vandereedt*, page 5A

Intersection Concerns

Dear Editor,

What a colossal, and dangerous, waste of taxpayer dollars is the Restricted Crossing U-Turn in SR 515 at the Georgia 325 intersection! I live on Nottely Dam Road (325) and cross 515 (the four-lane as it's known locally) several times daily. The line of sight for this intersection is totally adequate for a crossing driver who is paying attention to see oncoming vehicles.

Forcing drivers who wish to turn left from Nottely Dam Road south (by the Valero) onto 515 East to first turn right, then make a U-turn into the eastbound lanes is a big mistake. Making a U-turn is slower and more difficult for larger vehicles, and any vehicle towing a trailer is in real danger. Union County Saddle Club is on 325 right next to the highway, and dozens of trucks towing two, four and six-horse trailers cross weekly, especially on weekends when there are events held there. Trucks towing livestock trailers and campers navigate the intersection daily.

Does the Georgia Department of Transportation plan to completely restructure the intersection so that drivers heading north on 325 would also be forced to take a U-turn to get onto 515 West? Do they plan to block traffic from going straight across on 325? Has anyone asked the Fire Department and Police Department if such

See *Malone*, page 5A

Dink

He was known by many names, but, our family called him Dink. Dad gave him the nickname when we were all much younger. He couldn't have been more than 6 months old when he began to walk. Dad had just received a promotion and we'd moved from Chicago to Kankakee, Illinois. Dad was painting our new house and went out to get us a hamburger. Upon returning home he came into the front door and Dink went tottering toward Dad and his unproven legs gave way causing him to fall into a table which split open my brother's eyebrow. We rushed to the emergency room where the Doctors worked on stitching him up.

The medical staff suspected Dad of abuse on our brother and the police were called. Dad, dressed in paint-stained overalls, forgot to bring his wallet and identification amidst all the confusion, and the police didn't believe his story about Dink walking across the floor and falling. The only thing which saved my father from jail was that the nurse placed the little boy on the floor, and he got up and walked to Dad during all the heated discussions.

Another time our family was traveling back home to Alabama in a car. Somewhere in Kentucky late in the night a carload of men began harassing us by driving close to our bumper and flashing the headlights. The intoxicated passengers of the other car were hanging out the windows yelling obscenities and trying to run us off the road. We pulled into a town and stopped at a red light. Dad told us all to get on the floorboard, which we did except Dink. As the car pulled alongside of us, he rolled down the window and said, "Hey, you bunch of nuts! My Dad has a gun and he is aiming to shoot every one of you." The carload of crazy people did not wait for the light to turn green. They sped away down the road toward Missouri.

The late 1960s found our family living in Chickamauga with Dad working in Chattanooga. We were in town one Saturday and Dad had to check on something in his office. We pulled up to the curb and he went inside. His office was just down the street from some kind of club, and while he was inside, two men came from the club. One man holding a knife was chasing a man holding a gun. They ran to our car, and the man with the gun hid behind our car while the man with the knife was at the front of the car. The two men were screaming at one another, and the one began shooting at the other one. Mom screamed for us to get into the floorboard, which we did, except for Dink.

See *Cummings*, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



La Niña Winter

The weather around us is always changing. Sometimes the things that cause the weather to change happened a long way away. Today I want to talk about a phenomenon called the La Niña, and how it affects the weather, and how we feel it in winter.

There are many different methods that people have used over the years to try to predict how cold or how much snow in winter we'll get. People have used the length of the orange on woolly worms, and the shape of persimmon seeds. The La Niña/El Niño finds its roots in a more scientific approach. La Niña means little girl in Spanish, El Niño means little boy.

El Niño is part of the El Niño Southern Oscillation, or ENSO. La Niña occurs when the Pacific Ocean water temperatures are lower than normal. El Niño means that the Pacific waters are higher than normal. As waters temperatures go back and forth between high and low, it's called La Nada. Under normal conditions, trade winds blow west along the equator. This takes warm water from South America toward Asia. To replace that warm water, cold water rises from the depths. La Niña/El Niño break these normal conditions. Under La Niña, the trade winds are stronger than normal, so more warm water is pushed towards Asia. This imbalance is fixed by more cold water rising from the depths. The result is that the jet stream moves northward and weakens over the eastern Pacific. Scientists don't know why the trade winds that cause the movement of water ebb and flow as they do.

NOAA has declared that we are in a La Niña winter. This is actually the second La Niña winter in a row that we've had. Meteorologists call that a double-dip. Generally speaking, La Niña winter means warmer, drier conditions in the Southeast. It doesn't mean that we won't have snow, or that we won't have some really cold and wet days. It means that the probability of those events occurring is lower. The northern half of the United States is more likely to be wetter than normal. In El Niño years, we are more likely to have more rain and colder temperatures.

Typically, an episode of La Niña/El Niño lasts nine to 12 months, but they can last longer. Most likely, we will see the strongest effects of La Niña from January to March, but it could linger into spring.

We have the names La Niña/El Niño because South American fishermen had observed the change in water temperature in the Pacific occurring around Christmas time for centuries. They started calling it El Niño after baby Jesus.

See *Williams*, page 5A

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Paris... continued from Page 4A

hicle; you can drive on it easier. A wet snow usually melts upon contact with the roads surface. In this particular case, the wet snow makes for easier and more efficient road clearing – as long as dropping temperatures don't create additional hazards in the form of ice.

Q. Are most of our snowstorms wet snow?

A. Temperatures are the driving factor behind the types of snow we get in north Georgia. Historically for many years, we rarely had dry snow. However, the past few years most of our snow has been dry because it has been colder snow with colder temperatures.

Q. We often have to drive in the snow. What types of things should we consider

when running errands in the Winter time?

A. Please do not drive in snow unless it is absolutely necessary.

B. If you have to drive in snow:

(1) Make certain your tires are properly inflated and have plenty of tread.

(2) Keep at least half a tank of fuel in your vehicle at all times.

(3) Never warm up a vehicle in an enclosed area, such as a garage, and

(4) Do not use cruise control when driving on any slippery surface, such as on ice and snow. These are just a few things that come to mind when planning to drive in a wintery mix.

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

By this point the two men moved to opposite sides of the car still yelling and cursing one another. Dad came from his office and saw the two men standing beside our car. He tried to come toward the car, but, each time he made a move the man with the gun pointed it at him. At this point little brother rolled down his window and told the man with the gun, "My Daddy is about to beat your butt." The fellow and the one chasing him took off running, allowing my Dad to get to the car to check on us.

A short time later we were visiting my Maw Maw Adams. She took us down to Little Bear Creek and introduced us to Baker Rock. This rock was strategically placed on the left side of a bend in the creek. The water was 3-4 feet deep in the pool under the rock. We worked hard for 45 minutes placing small rocks across the creek to dam up the slow-moving stream. We had improved this ancient family swimming hole and were enjoying its cool waters when one of my cousins said, "Let's climb up the rock and jump into the water." We all sat there wondering who would be first when we noticed Dink was not around. Someone hollered at us from atop the rock, and there was my 6-year-old brother. He had climbed up the rock, and before anyone could stop him, he jumped into the refreshing water of the Creek from the top of Baker Rock. He couldn't even swim. All the rest of us had to fetch him from the water.

Later in the fall Dad found out about a boxing club for boys in Chickamauga. Dad took Dink and I to the club and we learned to box. I thought I was pretty good until I boxed

against a boy who nearly knocked me out. I wasn't very enthusiastic about boxing after that fight. However, my younger brother loved it. He would win a fight and then lose a fight. He fought some folks his size and he fought some boys twice as big. But he never backed down, and I actually think he looked forward to boxing each person no matter their size.

One evening while we were eating supper our doorbell rang and I was told to answer the door. When I opened the door, this woman began screaming at me. It seems that I had been accused of bullying her fourth-grade son. I had never seen the boy and tried to explain, however, she kept screaming. My Dad came to the door to investigate and was followed by my second-grade brother. The boy which was nearly as tall as me came from behind his mother and pointed at Dink saying, "That's the one who beat me up, Mom." The mother looked from me to my brother and grabbed her boy by the ear, saying, "You let that little kid beat you up? Well, just wait until we get home. You are about to get another whipping."

One day in the sixth grade he fell asleep in class and was called upon by his teacher. She asked why he was so tired and he responded without thinking, "I have been up all night because my father passed away." The teacher was horrified and ran from the class to the Principal's Office. He called my Mom to express his condolences. In those days whippings were still given in school, and Dink received one from the teacher, the principal, and from Dad when he got home.

Vandereedt... continued from Page 4A

law. It would list each project in detail with the actual cost and many more details, unlike what is usually presented in the paper, which is what raises questions of how much money is being spent on these projects.

After I was done, our commissioner proceeded to take to the podium to say that what was said was mean and disrespectful. Nothing I said was mean or disrespectful. Mr. Paris did not like what I had to say and what I presented. The part that was most troubling to me was what he said after that. He proceeded to give out and tell everyone present at the meeting my personal information which had nothing to do with my presentation. When challenged by someone in the meeting for doing that, he then started giving out personal information about them, saying how her family is ashamed of her. He was then challenged by her for giving out her personal information and there was an exchange back and forth, and he then had her removed from the meeting by one of the deputies. There was never any profanity or violence shown.

In the newspaper article, Mr. Paris calls me out personally for wanting more "transparency" from our local government. Isn't that what all the residents of this county would want? The article paraphrased Paris' remarks from the meet-

ing, saying he "disagreed with Vandereedt's conclusions and tied her comments to what he believes to be a larger effort by a group of vocal detractors that has been spreading incorrect information about him and his office this year." He then went on to say, "Since I've never had to deal with people on the agenda for 20-something years — we've just opened it up at the end and let people just talk, and they've always been reasonable." Mr. Paris, I am sorry if you have never been challenged in the past or had the people of this county question the way our taxpayer SPLOST dollars are being spent. My comment to that is maybe we need some new leadership in our county that is willing to listen to the citizens of this county.

I believe our elected public officials are supposed to listen to the concerns of the citizens and taxpayers of this county even if they don't like what is being said. It is our First Amendment right to speak freely. It is your obligation, Mr. Commissioner, to hear out what the people of this county have to say. We do pay your salary.

You can go to the "Voices of Union County, GA" YouTube channel to watch and listen to the recorded videos of the meetings and make up your own minds.

Cindy Vandereedt
A Very Concerned Citizen

Combs... continued from Page 4A

2:23 in the Bible it says: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. In God's word He has revealed to us how we should live, but no one can live up to God's perfect ways.

No one can live up to what God created us to be; again, we hear His words, we all fall short of His glory. We cannot save ourselves, because as sinners, we can never meet God's requirements. Our only hope is faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus died to provide redemption, which means He died to pay the price required to ransom sinners. By paying the penalty of their sin through His death, Jesus can free people from their sin and transfer His righteous-

ness to those who will accept Him as their Savior.

I have a question for all who have not chosen to believe upon the Name of Jesus Christ, the only hope anyone has of eternal life with God after we pass on from here: we all search for information of how to live better in this old sinful world, which is not our eternal home, so why would you not search out the truth of God's word that gives you the info you need to get from earth to heaven and live with Jesus Christ forevermore in glory?

So, are you worthy? You bet you are, for the cross says so.

Frank F. Combs

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

our promotion efforts.

As we celebrate the Chamber's 40th year in business, we invite everyone to join us on January 20th at our Annual Awards Gala at Brass-town Valley Resort. We will be naming our Business and Ambassador of the Year, and the Person of the Year who has contributed to and been a positive impact on our community. The program has been expanded to include DJ Cote and an opportunity to dance with your special someone. Come and help us celebrate our beginnings and our future with all your friends and community partners.

We can't finish out the year without giving a special

thanks to our Chamber pivotal partners that contributed to our efforts throughout the entire year. Thank you to Union General Health Systems, United Community Bank, Nelson Tractor, the Downtown Development Authority, Enotah Valley, The Barn at Young Harris, Homestead Hospice, Sharon Davis Realtor, and Cozy Cove Realty & Cabin Rentals.

We hope you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and thank for your support!

Habitat...

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another deduction.

Many of our donors wait until the end of the year to donate, so here's your chance to give to a great cause, and also get a better tax break! Our Organization is a certified 501(c)(3) Charitable Corporation, and your donations to us qualify.

I know we are down to the wire for 2021 contributions. But there's still time to stop by our offices (connected to the ReStore at 225 Wellborn Street, Blairsville, GA, 30512) and drop off a check, or you can mail it to the same address. Just be sure to write your check before the end of the year, so even if we get it soon after the first of the year, you can use it as a deduction.

Thank you for your continued support.

Williams...

continued from Page 4A

In the 1980s, scientists discovered La Niña. NOAA tracks Pacific Ocean temperatures and will announce if there is going to be a La Niña/El Niño event. It also influences the severity of storms. La Niña usually means that there will be more hurricanes coming out of the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.

If you have questions about the climate or weather and how that affects us contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Morris...

continued from Page 4A

quickly. Where is this electricity going to come from? Today's grid barely handles users' needs. Can't use nuclear, natural gas is running out. Oil-fired is out of the question, then where? What will be done with billions of dead batteries? Can't bury them in the soil, can't go to landfills.

The cart is way ahead of the horse – no thought whatsoever on how to handle any of the problems that batteries can cause.

The liberal press doesn't want to talk or report on any of this.

In France, thousands of taxis are now stored as inoperable because the batteries are dead and to replace them would cost more than the value of the vehicles themselves!

Yet another interesting American hoax that rates right up there with stolen elections, "gun control," illegal aliens, and china flu.

Jim Morris

Malone...

continued from Page 4A

changes will slow emergency responses to homes on Nottely Dam Road?

Posting "Dangerous Intersection" signs approaching all four directions and perhaps lowering the 515 speed limit to 55 mph on the approach to the intersection would be a smarter and safer alternative.

Cheryl Malone

Georgia Mountain Pregnancy Center

The Georgia Mountain Pregnancy Center offers free first Trimester ultrasound, pregnancy test, and counseling. The center is located at 136 Hospital Drive Road, Suite A, Blairsville, GA; (706)994-3364; gmpcmedical.org

Adult Education Program Course

Are you ready to earn your high school equivalency diploma? North GA Technical College's Adult Education program is offering free day and evening courses. Classes are held in Blairsville at the Shirley Miller Building (behind the public library). Call 706-439-6342 to schedule your registration appointment.

Our next enrollment date is January 10th.