

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Winter Weather Preparedness Week

The only constant in Georgia's weather is its unpredictability, especially in the mountains. Instead of having four seasons, we have about 16. Temperatures and weather patterns can vary greatly in just a matter of days, sometimes hours. We take most of these changes in stride, but when winter weather hits, the freezing temperatures and the associated effects such as snow and ice can have a major impact. Union County Emergency Management Agency/Fire Department is partnering with the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency, to encourage all residents to participate in this year's Winter Weather Preparedness Week.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Winter Weather Preparedness Week, from December 5-9, was created to raise awareness of winter weather hazards and reinforce understanding of winter weather terminology. Throughout the week, Union County EMA and GEMA/HS will provide information to assist Georgia residents in preparing for winter weather.

Each day concentrates on a different aspect of winter weather. The focus for Monday, Dec. 5, will be "Winter Weather in Georgia" where we learn about winter weather hazards that can impact the state of Georgia and especially our mountain area. Tuesday's focus will be "Winter Weather Terminology" where we learn about the winter weather "alerts" (watches, warnings and advisories) and what each of them mean. These are very important to keep us aware of what is happening or may happen in the near future.

The focus for Wednesday, Dec. 7, is "Winter Weather Preparation Tips." This focus is extremely important. Here we learn how to best prepare for winter weather events by putting together a "Ready Kit" and making a plan before winter weather strikes. Thursday, Dec. 8, will focus on "Winter Weather Driving Tips/Safety." Mountain roads can be dangerous during winter weather. Drivers should learn "best practices" for driving (if necessary) in winter weather conditions and how to pack a mobile "Ready Kit" just in case. On Friday, Dec. 9, we will look at the Winter Weather Outlook for 2022-23 season and discover resources for learning where and how to stay informed of weather forecasts.

Winter weather in our area can be diverse and unpredictable. Weather conditions can change rapidly and may even be different

See *Dyer, page 5A*

Advent Vulnerability

The CDC issued a Level 2 Alert about a new outbreak of Ebola in Uganda. You may recall the Ebola plague of 2014 in Liberia. During that outbreak, Dr. Kent Brantly was serving in a hospital in Liberia with Samaritan's Purse. Because of his love and dedication, he chose to stay and face the risk of treating infected people. Despite his meticulous attention to safety protocols, he contracted the disease. He received an experimental treatment and eventually recovered at Emory Hospital in Atlanta. To Dr. Brantly, love meant being vulnerable.

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Vulnerability is not the same as weakness. "The world does not understand vulnerability," writes Brennan Manning. "Neediness is rejected as incompetence and compassion is dismissed as unprofitable. The great deception is that being poor, vulnerable and weak is unattractive." In fact, it takes courage and sacrifice to be vulnerable, whether it means facing risk, admitting need, or telling the truth.

Christmas recalls the historical moment when God became as vulnerable as a baby. The Word became flesh and embraced the risk of the human condition, but not just to reveal truth. He made Himself vulnerable to death on the cross to pay the penalty for your sin. Why do that? "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Love moved God to become vulnerable.

For you, being vulnerable may never mean fighting Ebola in Africa. It does mean loving someone enough to own your mistakes, to admit your contribution to the situation. It means loving God enough to confess your need. In "It's A Wonderful Life" George Bailey prayed, "Dear Father in heaven. I'm at the end of my rope. Show me the way." That is raw vulnerability. What happened next changed his life. Then he prayed, "Please God. Let me live again!"

In a mysterious, joyful moment, our Savior who is Christ the Lord, was born for you. Your response is to trust Him for what you need most - forgiveness and a renewed life. Could you be so vulnerable?

Commissioner's Questions

Q. Does Union County operate a public water system?
A. No. Coosa Water Authority and Notla Water Authority are independent legislatively enacted entities that are not controlled by Union County or the City of Blairsville. They are governed by their board of directors who are voted on by the water users in their area.

Q. How are the Water Authority service boundaries separated?

A. Coosa Water Authority mostly covers West of Blairsville along the Blue Ridge Highway and parts of Owtown. They have 1797 water customers. Notla Water Authority mostly covers the Northeastern part of Union County and they have 6474 water customers. The City of Blairsville covers the city and they extend slightly out of town in all directions including near the Airport Industrial Park and Walmart. They have 1847 customers, and many of those are commercial accounts.

Q. Why don't you leave the Lake Nottely at full pool (full water level) throughout the entire year?

A. That would be so nice and easy and I could certainly be a local hero. However, Lake Nottely is owned and controlled by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the county has absolutely no say in the water levels. That is strictly controlled by TVA. They have many priorities they have to balance with recreation certainly not being at the top. Flood control and power generation are two of their top priorities.

Q. Does TVA change the lake levels differently at certain times of the year?

A. Absolutely! During the summer they do a pretty good job of maintaining lake levels at or near full pool for boating and other recreation, but if the rainfall levels are low, lake levels typically fluctuate accordingly. TVA does have a web site (TVA.com) and an app for your phone so you can keep up with lake levels and it shows their normal guide that they try to maintain assuming normal amounts of rainfall.

Q. What are normal lake levels on Lake Nottely?

A. According to their guide, the lake is at the lowest levels in the winter. Generally, it begins to rise in the later part of March

See *Paris, page 5A*

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

Property Taxes

Dear Editor,

My property taxes have doubled, so I filed an appeal. Today (Dec. 1) I appeared before the county's Grand Jury. As you might guess, I lost. How do you prove your home is worth less? I was told that we of Union County sold many more houses this year than last year, so everyone's houses are worth more. Now we double your home's worth, and the new value is taxed on 40%.

I'm 78. I have chickens, and they taxed my chicken house. My tractor was in the rain and snow, so I installed a pole barn. I'm taxed on that. I said I worked 20 years to pay for my house. I stated I own my home. I was advised that, no, you must pay rent in the form of county taxes. If you don't pay your rent, we, as in the Tax Commissioner, will take it!

Everyone should know we no longer own our property. Divide your taxes by 12, and that's your rent. Many counties drop school tax on seniors over 65. Not Lamar. What has he done for the elderly? Many of us must maintain a budget. Not our government. You need more money, raise everyone's taxes. Why should people who own their land be taxed? Let the value go up but not be taxed on it when you want to spend your life there!

Lee Meade

Unfair Government?

Dear Editor,

The USA is a constitutional republic. In a republic, laws are made by representatives chosen by the people and must comply with a constitution that specifically protects the rights of the minority from the will of the majority. Recent letters to the editor have suggested that our system of government is unfair. Here are some fact-based observations:

Concerning Elections: Georgia counties were allowed to hold early voting on Saturday, Nov. 26, in the U.S. Senate runoff election between Democratic incumbent Raphael Warnock and Republican challenger Herschel Walker, under a ruling from the state Supreme Court. The justices are elected in statewide non-partisan elections for six-year terms.

About Transparency: The Board of Elections was created in 2001 by Georgia Legislature HB 798. The legislation requires that two appointments be made from each of the two major parties as determined by votes received in a presidential election. I have found our local board members to be sincere, competent and open-minded. The Board of Elections meets monthly on the second Wednesday at 3 p.m. at 76 Hunt Martin Street. Meetings are open to the public.

See *McKinney, page 5A*

Storms Of Life

Dear Editor,

We who read God's word daily are familiar with the story in the Bible about a storm that arose on the lake with Jesus sleeping in the hinder part of the boat when the disciples went and awoke Jesus and said: Master, we are about to sink, and why are you sleeping as we perish?

Why was Jesus sleeping? Because He knew this storm was coming and He wanted to test the disciple's faith to see if they could trust Jesus in their moment of need. Are we like the disciples when a storm or circumstance arises that we can't handle? Yes, most of us are fearful or afraid of the unknown. This is our human nature to fear instead of trusting that God is in the midst of our storms.

Trusting God though we don't know the outcome is like playing the lottery. It's not always a safe bet on the lottery, but it is totally worth depending on God for the outcome when He is at the helm of our storms. Ever been in a fierce thunderstorm with the lightning striking everywhere around you and you need to seek

See *Combs, page 5A*



Chimney Fires

Chimney Fires Can Burn Your House: Here is your yearly reminder about a common danger in your home. This is the time of the year when we want a cozy fire in the fireplace, and we do not think about the things that have come to live in our chimney over the summer like bird nests, cobwebs, explosive soot, and other things that can burn with the first fire of the season with disastrous results.

RC&D Executive Director
Frank Riley



Chimney Fires occur at an alarming rate in our country, over 25,000 chimney fires account for over 120 million dollars in damage to property every year. Thousands of injuries and even many deaths result every year from chimney fires that spread to the structure of the home. Chimney liners or structural problems can allow high temperatures, sparks, and embers to escape to combustible areas in walls, roofs, or attics.

A common cause of chimney fires is creosote inside the chimney catching fire and burning inside the chimney. Creosote is a by-product of burning that coats the inside of your chimney that needs to be removed during regular annual chimney cleaning. There are two different types of chimney fires that can cause substantial damage to your chimney and possibly your home. Free Burning - These are the fires that sound like you have your own freight train or roaring airplane in your chimney. Oftentimes dramatic flames or billowing smoke may lap out of your chimney top. Slow Burning - With this quieter version of a chimney fire you may not even know it has taken place. These undetected fires burn slowly and at high temperatures that can cause more than just structural damage to your chimney, they can easily catch flammable parts of your home on fire as well.

As with any other type of fire, the first step is to get everyone out of harm's way and call 911. After everyone is safe and assuming the situation permits without putting yourself in danger, you can first try to cut off the air supply leading to the chimney. To do this close the damper on the chimney or any other pipes to attempt to smother the fire this way. Then close the glass doors or any other fire grate and leave the home. Once outside, take a garden hose and spray water on the roof around the chimney to prevent the roof from catching on fire. Once the fire is completely put out, it is best to monitor the wall temperature of any surrounding walls for the next few hours to ensure no other part of the home catches on fire.

The danger with chimney fires, even after they have been put out, is that if it happened

See *Riley, page 5A*

Billy

I first met Billy in 1968. He was a seventh grader at Osborne Elementary School and I was a fourth grader. I and all the other younger kids in our school looked up to Billy. Although he was considered as one of the tough kids at our school he never bullied or picked on us. He may have been the most popular kid in school. All the pretty girls liked him and he was funny.

Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



However, Mr. Keebler didn't like Billy. Mr. Keebler was our janitor. All of us kids were afraid of him. He was a dried-up old man that growled at every kid in the school. Back in those days our teacher would line us up and march us single file to the lunch room. On the way to lunch we had to cross the main lobby where Mr. Fischer's (the Principal) office was located. Every class had to pass through this area and there was always a traffic jam of students and teachers. Mr. Keebler spent a lot of time at this junction because it also served as the main entrance into the school.

Each day at this traffic jam Billy's class would be leaving the lunch room as the fourth graders would be arriving. Billy would sneak straws from the lunch room and shoot spit wads through the straws to the ceiling above the hallway. Spit wads are spit moistened bits of paper shot through a drinking straw. Mr. Keebler, Mr. Fischer and every teacher in the school knew Billy was shooting these spit wads. But nobody ever caught Billy in the act. Each day Billy would call out to Mr. Keebler, "Look, Mr. Keebler, there is another spit wad." All of us kids would snicker while Billy was talking to Mr. Keebler. He would then turn to us and grin. We all loved Billy, but the staff at school labeled him as a troublemaker, and I guess Billy wanted to change his reputation and he got his chance in the springtime of 1969.

We sold candy for the first time that year. Our school was trying to raise money for field trips. I remember the candy man talking to us before the big sale. We were told to sell as much candy as possible and the kids that sold the most would be awarded prizes. We had one month to sell the candy and each week were to report our totals back to our teachers. At the end of the first week Billy had sold 62 candy bars. We were astonished that anyone could sell that many candy bars. Mr. Fischer announced Billy's success over the intercom. Everyone but Mr. Keebler was impressed.

The next week Billy's total was up to 158. All the teachers and the staff were rubbing Billy's blonde hair and patting him on the back.

See *Cummings, page 5A*

Feed Hay Efficiently

Winter-feeding is one of the most costly parts of running a livestock operation. It is also necessary to get livestock through the winter. I know that everyone is being stretched this year, financially, emotionally, and mentally. As we are stretched, we have to find new ways to make do with fewer resources. Let's talk about how to improve the efficiency of your hay, and some practices that you can use to make it go further.

Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Feeding hay in a hay ring is one of the largest gains in efficiency that you can have if you haven't been using one. Research has shown that cattle will waste 45% of hay if it is fed by simply put out on open ground. Using a hay ring can reduce waste to 20% or less. Modified cone rings are the most efficient design at 5% waste; they are usually the most expensive too. Hay rings are not cheap, but they will pay for themselves over time, because they make your hay go further. Hay trailers or wagons will reduce waste, and are in the 15-20% reduction range. The advantage of using a trailer is that you can move where the hay is fed so that the manure is spread over the pasture more evenly.

Chopping hay increases your efficiency because your hay comes in shorter pieces. This makes it easier for the cattle to get the hay out, resulting in less waste. It's estimated that shorter pieces of hay reduces waste by 5-10% because less hay ends up on the ground. Chopped hay is also easier for cattle to digest in their rumen. This is because smaller objects have a larger surface area to volume ratio than small objects. A larger ratio means that there is more space for the bacteria in the rumen to break down the hay.

You can sort feeding by groups, which means evaluating which of your animals need the highest quality hay, and which ones can take the lower quality hay. Lower quality hay (50% total digestible nutrients and 7% crude protein) can be fed to cattle in mid-gestation. Mid-quality hay (55-58% TDN and 8-9% CP) should be fed to cattle in late-gestation. Your highest quality hay (59-65% TDN and 10-13% CP) should be fed to first calf heifers throughout gestation, growing calves, and mature cows during early lactation. Understanding cattle's body condition scoring also helps you sort which cattle need which hay.

Hay testing is important so that you know what your total digestible nutrients and crude protein are. Ideally you want to wait about 2 weeks after baling to test hay to let the moisture settle. For haylage or baleage, you should wait about a month before testing. A basic hay test

See *Williams, page 5A*

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and continues until full pool by the middle of May and remains at that general level until August or September, if there is adequate rainfall. This data is all shown on the TVA Operating Guide for Lake Nottely. This guide shows the range that TVA attempts to keep the lake levels between. In red, it shows the actual levels of the lake this year.

Q. A few months back, some Lake Nottely property owners approached Union County about leachate and PFAS levels in the lake. Can Union County control what goes in and out of Lake Nottely?

A. While we understand concerns about the quality of the water in Lake Nottely, the authority for water quality is the Georgia Environmental Protection Department (EPD). TVA manages the reservoir, and they do some testing; however, the Georgia EPD has the authority to enforce the Federal Clean Water Act – controlling what goes into and out of Lake Nottely through “Permitted Discharges.” Union County Government has no authority to control these discharges. Union County does issue permits for grading and construction to help prevent silt from entering our streams.

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once, it would happen again if no further measures are taken.

The key to preventing a chimney fire is to have a cleaning burning fire. Only burn seasoned or dried out wood. Start fires with clean newspaper or dry kindling – never use Gasoline or kerosene. Never burn cardboard boxes, wrapping paper or your Christmas tree. Get regular chimney inspections and cleanings to remove the excess creosote from the chimney walls and ensure safe burning. Creosote build-up is the main cause of chimney fires. The creosote comes from particles that were not fully burned during the fire and when the temperatures in the chimney are lowered, they attached to the chimney walls forming the creosote.

In fact, when the temperatures within the chimney are below 250 degrees Fahrenheit, the substance in the smoke will condense and stick to the walls. When the temperature drops below 150 degrees Fahrenheit, the substance again changes form, this time to a dark, sticky substance. This dark sticky and sometimes flaky material can easily catch on fire, and thus is the root cause of the chimney fires. The type of chimney and the strength of the fire determine how much damage is done to the chimney.

Masonry Chimneys – A chimney fire can cause severe damage to the structure of the masonry chimney. The walls may crack, and the tile or clay liner pieces may break or even

collapse from the high heat. A chimney fire can get up to 2000 degrees Fahrenheit. Oftentimes the first fire will do some type of damage to the structure and the liner will crack or the mortar will be displaced. Then when the issue is not addressed, the second chimney fire will utilize the pathway created by the first fire and make nearby flammable materials of the home go up into flames. The heat is often hot enough to even catch the roof or other wood around the chimney on fire.

Prefabricated Chimneys – these factory-built chimneys must stand up to high temperatures. This does not mean they are immune to damage from chimney fires though. The metal liner of prefabricated chimneys can collapse or be distorted by high temperatures. If this happens to this type of chimney, it is very important that the liner is completely replaced before the chimney is used again.

Chimney fires are a dangerous problem to experience first-hand, but the good news is that they are also entirely preventable. It is important to always take care to burn only the materials that are meant to be burnt and not use ones that could harm the chimney. A clean chimney will not burst into flame, therefore proper care and regular cleanings are necessary to ensure the safety of your family and your home.

For more information on Chimney fires, contact your fire department or www.Fireliner.org.

McKinney... continued from Page 4A

Regarding Pro-Life: Planned Parenthood is a non-profit organization that provides reproductive health care in the United States and globally. Abortions represent 3% of total services provided by Planned Parenthood. The group does receive federal funding, but the money cannot be used for abortions by law. Planned Parenthood is a tax-exempt corporation under Internal Revenue Code section Section

501(c)(3), which is the portion that allows for federal tax exemption of nonprofit organizations, specifically those that are considered public charities, private foundations or private operating foundations. It is regulated and administered by the U.S. Department of Treasury through the Internal Revenue Service.

Frank McKinney, Chair, Union County Democratic Committee

Combs... continued from Page 4A

shelter, but none is to be found and you believe this could be your last storm? Then you see a sliver of light in the corner of the sky that burst onto the scene and the storm passes and the thunder and lightning cease to be and perhaps even a rainbow appears and your heart rejoices once again.

What do storms teach us? First, that they are only temporary, and second, they test our faith to see if we have enough courage to trust God whatever comes our way. We are so frail and weak in our faith, but ev-

ery storm that comes teaches us to put our trust in God, not the storm. They will come when least expected when life is easy and the waves are calm, then boom, another storm is fast approaching and catches us unaware. But if we know the One who can calm the storm we can have the blessed assurance that God has a way of escape, if we put our faith in Him... Remember two things about God. The storm will end. The Lord will see you through it. Amen.

Frank F. Combs

Rabies Identified in Four Cats in North Hall County



Encounters between wild animals and domestic pets, including some that involve people, sometimes occur in our area. Incidents of exposure are common but can be prevented if residents take precautions to protect themselves and their pets.

Maintaining current rabies vaccinations for your pets and keeping them away from wild animals is the best way to protect them. To protect yourself and your family, do not attempt to capture or feed feral or stray cats. Leave them and other wild animals alone.

People should always avoid contact with unfamiliar dogs, cats, and wild animals. This includes feeding or attempting to help an animal that appears injured. If you feed your pets outside, pick up any uneaten food so wild animals, including feral cats, will not be attracted to your property. Feral cats are born in the wild and should be treated as wild animals.

Rabies is a viral infection transmitted in the saliva

of infected mammals. It is almost always fatal. Wildlife remains the most common source of infection for both humans and domestic animals in the United States. Rabies in humans can be prevented by eliminating exposures to rabid animals or by providing exposed persons prompt medical treatment. Post-exposure vaccine can be found at all the major hospitals within District 2 and information about vaccine assistance programs can be obtained from your local Environmental Health Office.

There have been four cases of rabies found in cats in Hall County this year, all of which have been in the North Hall area. When rabies positives are identified in Hall County, Hall County Animal Services provides notice to the public through media releases, as well as signage within a 1-mile radius of the incident area. In addition, Hall County Animal Services has been working in partnership with Best Friends Animal Society to reduce the number of feral cats in the community by providing free or low cost spay/neuter options and vaccinations through the Community Cat Program.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

I believe that Billy was enjoying his new image. He was no longer viewed as a troublemaker. All the teachers treated him with respect and admiration. That is everyone but, Mr. Keebler.

By the end of the month of candy sales Billy had sold \$350 dollars of candy bars. At 50 cents per bar, it is easy to calculate that Billy had sold 700 candy bars. But, if you knew Billy and watched him closely, you could tell he had gained weight as well.

The announcements about the winners of the sale were made on the final day of the sale. During lunch everyone was rubbing Billy's head and congratulating his success. Everyone except Mr. Keebler. As Billy walked by him in the hallway, Mr. Keebler's only comment was, "Billy, I think you have gained some weight."

For the first time in weeks I noticed a troubled look in the eyes of Billy. I guess he was worried about the next day. That day was Friday and we were to bring our money from the sales back to the school. The next morning I walked into school and noticed Billy standing in the office as his Dad sat in a chair waiting for Mr. Fischer. I learned later that Billy could not sit down. Sitting would be very painful for Billy for a while.

No one ever determined the number of candy bars

Billy consumed. But he only turned in \$48.50 of the \$350 he should have turned back to the school.

Billy's one month of fame went to his head and now the only people that still admired him were myself and a handful of fourth graders from Osborne Elementary School. That day at lunch Mr. Keebler grinned and asked Billy if he had a belly ache.

Billy grinned back and said, "No sir. I have a butt ache."

Williams...

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will tell you about how digestible your hay is and how much energy is in it. Armed with this knowledge you can make decisions about which animals will get which hay. Animals have a limited amount of space in their belly, so making sure that space is filled with forage that will provide them with enough energy is important. If you would like to test your hay, let me know. I'd be happy to help.

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

Dyer...

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from one area to another. It is everyone's responsibility to be aware and to be prepared. Winter Weather Preparedness Week is a great way to learn about winter weather and how to better prepare for it.

For more information, please visit gema.georgia.gov/plan-prepare/ready-georgia.

Union County Fire Department ~ Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Chamber...

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December 15th at which time we will host Senator Steve Gooch and Representative Stan Gunter to update us on what to expect during the 2023 session. Be sure to call the Chamber to purchase your ticket today.

Check out the Chamber website to see other exciting upcoming events for the new year. We have added several new opportunities for your business that you'll want to take advantage of.

Be sure to say a kind word and help make life Better in Blairsville!

Bell Ringing



December 2nd
In loving memory of **Larry Ashley** in remembrance of his birthday
Bell ringing information at 706-745-5493