

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Winter Weather Preparedness Week

The official first day of winter is a couple of weeks away. However, the weather in the North Georgia mountains is unpredictable and winter can come along at any time. We have seen some cooler temperatures in the last week or so and it's only going to get colder. With that in mind, it is time for everyone to think about winter weather preparedness.

Union County Emergency Management/Homeland Security Agency is teaming up with Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency, the National Weather Service and the Georgia Department of Transportation, to recognize and promote Winter Weather Preparedness Week, which is Dec. 6-10.

In preparation for inclement weather, all Georgians, especially the citizens of Union County, are encouraged to learn about winter weather threats, review or create a family communications plan, and consider what items are best for their Ready kits, both at home and in the car.

Each day of this campaign addresses a different topic. Monday, Dec. 6, was Winter Weather in Georgia. Winter weather in Georgia can be very diverse depending on the area. Georgians should learn about winter weather hazards that can impact their part of the state, especially here in the North Georgia mountains. Tuesday, Dec. 7, saw a review of Winter Weather Terminology. This is where everyone should learn about winter weather "alerts" (watches, warnings and advisories) and what they mean.

The subject for Wednesday, Dec. 8, is Winter Weather Preparation Tips. This topic encourages everyone to learn how to best prepare for winter weather events and put together a "Ready Kit" while making a plan before winter weather strikes. Thursday, Dec. 9, discusses the most troublesome part of winter, the Winter Weather Driving Tips/Safety. Drivers should learn "best practices" for driving (if necessary) in winter weather conditions and how to pack a mobile "Ready Kit" for each vehicle. Friday, Dec. 10, finishes out the week with the Winter Weather Outlook for the 2021-22 season by providing resources for learning where and how to stay informed of weather forecasts.

Winter weather can be challenging. All Georgians and resi-

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer

Follow the Star

They missed the opportunity of a lifetime. A little curiosity would have led them to witness a miracle. Instead, they are characters in the Christmas story who are not part of a nativity scene. They didn't follow the star.

The magi from the east saw a star and followed it to Jerusalem (Mat. 2). They inquired about the birth of a king. Herod connected their request to prophecies about the coming Messiah. The scribes reported that 700 years prior, a prophet wrote that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). So the magi struck off toward Bethlehem. Alone.

The scribes couldn't be bothered to find out for themselves if something wonderful was happening. Their prophet told of a "child born to us" whose name would be "Mighty God" (Isa. 9:6). The star signaled that defining event of all human history. The light beckoned their attention, but they met the moment with disinterest.

You make the same mistake if you ignore the light given to you. You see it in classic Christmas movies. "It's a Wonderful Life" appeals to your yearning for goodness, selflessness, and love to prevail, and for greed, fear, and meaninglessness to be vanquished. In "White Christmas," you yearn for truth to overcome misunderstanding. The beauty, music, and warmth in the final scene with snow falling behind the Christmas tree is a contrast with the cold horror of war in the beginning scene. Why does the human heart yearn for beauty, goodness, love, acceptance, peace, and restoration? Those yearnings are the stars that lead the curious and guide the wise to truth.

In "The Unknown God," Alister McGrath writes about these stirring spiritual yearnings. "In the end, only God can satisfy - precisely because we are made to relate to God, and luxuriate in His presence. Until we do so, our hearts will remain restless, and we must live with the pain of this desire and longing."

Your heart's deep yearning is your star, pointing you to the One who satisfies. Meet the moment and follow the star to the Light of mankind (John 1:4).



All Things New
Wayne Fowler

Commissioner's Questions

Many people have expressed they have heard the term "Development Authority;" however, they don't fully understand its purpose. This week's questions/answers should help to clarify the organization's objectives and describe what it does for Union County.

Q: What is the purpose and primary function of the Union County Development Authority?

A: The Union County Development Authority is the primary economic development agency for Blairsville, Suches, and Union County. The Authority facilitates quality development that results in new job creation and capital investment for our area. They work to expand existing businesses, attract new businesses to our area, and advance the economic goals of Union County.

Q: Who makes up the Union County Development Authority?

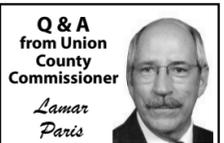
A: The Union County Development Authority is comprised of a Board of Directors with each member serving a four-year term. The members are appointed by the Union County Commissioner. The Authority works closely with Georgia EMC Economic Development, Georgia Department of Economic Development, Georgia Power Economic Development, Tennessee Valley Authority - Economic Development, and the Southeast Industrial Development Association to attract jobs to Union County. You can visit their website at www.ucda.net for more information on what the Development Authority does for Union County.

Q: Who is the Director of the Union County Development Authority and who hires him?

A: Mitch Griggs is the Director of the Union County Development Authority. The Director is hired by the Development Authority Board and most of the funding for the Authority is funded through the County budget.

Q: What makes Union County attractive to new businesses?

A: There are many things. Obviously, we have to work much harder in attracting businesses to Union County than



Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris

See *Paris*, page 5A

Habitat for Humanity

It's finally here! The Holiday Season... complete with our area being decorated with lotsa lights!! By the time you read this, the parades for both Blairsville and Hiwassee will have taken place. I come from an area that does their parades during the day, but I really like the fact that our area does them at night, so we have the added bonus of all of the Christmas lights on the floats. It really makes us all feel as though we are living in a Hallmark Movie!

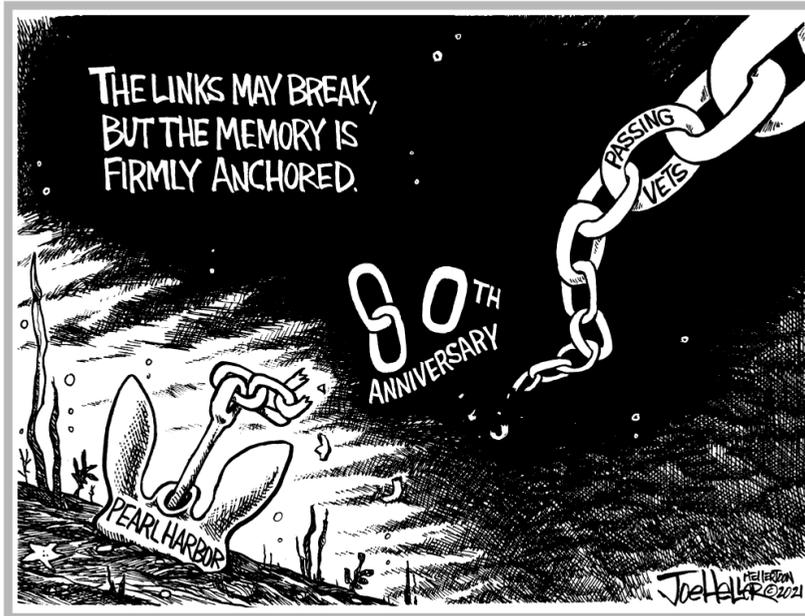
So, last weekend there were all sorts of "kicking off Christmas" events in Hiwassee, Young Harris, and Blairsville. Santa made several appearances, town Christmas trees were lit for the first time, and gingerbread villages made their appearances.

Make sure you stop by the Union County Chamber of Commerce to see their "Tour of Trees." Many businesses and organizations in the area have decorated Christmas trees, and

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Habitat Happenings
Cathy Wheeler

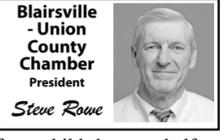


Chamber of Commerce

Thank you to Cabin Coffee and the Jolley's for hosting Business After Hours this last Thursday night. What a fun evening with friends and a great networking opportunity learning about other local businesses and leaders.

We also announced our Business of the Quarter, Enotah CASA, which advocates for the best interest of children of North Georgia that are in foster care. When a CASA volunteer advocates for a child they are half as likely to re-enter the child welfare system. Thank you to all of the 80 volunteers that have become the voice for our children in Union and Towns County.

Cathy Wheeler of Habitat for Humanity was named Ambassador of the Quarter for her contributions to the Chamber and our members. You can find Cathy at almost all of our events greeting new members and pitching in wherever she can. When not helping the Chamber, Cathy is tirelessly working to make our community a bet-



Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe

See *Chamber*, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Re: Lake Nottely's Health

Dear Editor,
This past summer the local regional office of MountainTrue (formerly Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition) launched the Swim Guide E. coli monitoring program in the Hiwassee River watershed. Swim Guide is a recreational E. coli monitoring program for public swim beaches and recreational access points all around the world. We sampled 10 locations in the four counties that make up the watershed, three of which were on Lake Nottely (30%).

In the "About Our Swim Guide Program" section of the report, you will find this sentence that tells where to find these data: "Pass/Fail results are updated every Friday on www.swimguide.org to inform the public about local water quality." If you go to the Swim Guide website, click on "Go to Map"

See *Moore*, page 5A

Haven't we had enough?

Dear Editor,
The China Virus was no question deadly. It was created in a lab. And like all things left up to humans, a mistake was made. Intentional? We may never know. These labs exist all over the world. They will tell you the research done on these viruses is in an effort to protect us from future illness. This is simply not the case. In an effort to gain the upper hand in the arms race, countries realize this is the weaponry of the future. Virtually the same effect as

See *Genovese*, page 5A

Bemoaning Growth

Dear Editor,
As a Union County native, I couldn't help but be amused at the letter by a writer in last week's North Georgia News regarding the changes that are taking place in Union County. I would venture to guess that at some time in the not too distant past, this writer moved into Union County from afar, thus he fails to realize that he is part of the "problem" that he so vehemently described.

It is typical for newcomers to want to close the door to other newcomers. I have heard others of that ilk bemoaning the fact that so many people have moved here, and that we need to keep them out. Furthermore, I can't for the life of me see how a sole commissioner would attract new residents to Union County, other than the fact that the current commissioner has made the quality of life here very attractive to prospective newcomers.

Sincerely,
Ed Reed

Letters to the Editor

Very Concerned Citizen

Dear Editor,
The proposal for "fixing" the problem at the intersection of 325 and 515 for folks that wish to go east, forcing a right turn from 325 and then doing a U-turn in front of the fast-moving traffic, eastbound, on 515 is the most ridiculous idea I have ever heard. It will take no time at all before we'll have a slew of dead - or seriously injured - people, truck drivers, and horses spread all over the highway. It's time for someone at the Department of Transportation to wake up.

All they have to do to help this situation is to move the right turn lane to 325, coming west on 515, further off the highway, just like they did at Walmart. That would greatly improve the visibility of oncoming traffic for left turners. There's plenty of room to do that and it would cost our taxpayers one heck-of-a-lot less than that silly "R-Cut" - and it would probably correct the entire situation!

Jim Holzinger

Being Thankful

Dear Editor,
What was your favorite part of Thanksgiving this year? Being with family and friends is always precious. Help serving meals at your local church is always rewarding. Sitting down at a full course meal loaded with turkey, mashed potatoes and stuffing with gravy of course is a joy indeed. Saying thanks in prayer to God for all the provisions He has given us to partake of is essential, for all things do come from Him. Don't ever think we can boast of anything we have done on our own. All things come from God's gracious hands of love. We sing a song in church that goes something like this: Thank you Lord for giving to me salvation so rich and so free.

Salvation for humanity was paid at a heavy cost of Jesus Christ's life on an old rugged cross that Christians sing often to remind us that we have been blessed greatly of God for sending His Son Jesus to die for our sins, thus bringing us salvation so rich and so free. What we do afterwards depends on our allegiance to Christ and what He expects from us who have chosen Him as our Lord and Savior.

Nothing comes free in this sinful life. There are always consequences to our actions, and how we serve the Lord depends on how much we adore and love Him.

Thank you Jesus for giving to us the gift of eternal life and the blessed assurance that when we close this final chapter of our life and die, we are immediately ushered into glory by an angel of God, and there we shall live in harmony and peace forevermore.
Frank F. Combs

The Moonshine Still

The Cummings boys loved to hunt. Paul and Bud owned a young pair of Black and Tan Coon Hounds which could tree a squirrel in the day time and coons during the night. My Papa owned a row crop farm in Franklin County Alabama, and directly in front of their house was a 30-acre cotton field. East of this field was a stretch of hardwoods sloping down into a limestone gorge. Farther east across Turkey Creek above the bluffs of the gorge are more hardwoods and a large pine thicket. The area was and still is a perfect habitat for squirrels and raccoons. But, the area could also be dangerous. There were cracks and crevices in the rock face where snakes could hide, and there were plenty of places to hide a moonshine still.

Paul and Bud hit the woods early on an October morning in 1951. It was a day to remember. The sky was so blue it hurt your eyes, and there was a nip in the air which bit at their noses. The poplar trees had turned yellow, and the maples were orange-red. The boys crept down the hills into the gorge. Their pace was slow and quiet, and by 10 they had bagged enough squirrels for a batch of dumplings. The boys would soon walk into a peck of trouble.

They came to Turkey Creek and climbed up on top of a huge rock to eat one of their mother's sausage biscuits. Sitting on the rock resting, they noticed the smell of smoke. They looked around trying to determine the source of the smoke. Their eyes led them across the creek where a large patch of brambles and bamboo was located. At the back of this area a spring was located at the base of a 40-foot-high rock of limestone. The boys crossed the creek on an ancient Chestnut log and eased through the thicket and found old Duck's still.

As their eyes found the still, old Duck's eyes found them. A shiver went down Bud's spine as old Duck spat out his chaw of tobacco. The old man leveled his Long Tom 12 gauge shotgun at them and said, "What are you two doing snooping around here?" They explained about the smell of smoke and were afraid of a wildfire. Duck said, "Well the woods are not afar. Now you two get out from here before I fill y'uns with lead."

The two young boys lit out a running and they didn't stop until they found the cotton patch. There they stopped to catch their breath. Their fear soon left them and it was replaced by anger. The closer they got to their house the more angry they became. As they walked into their yard they noticed their Daddy work-

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings

Oh Christmas Tree

Having a real Christmas tree can be a great tradition this time of year. There are a number of places that sell Christmas trees here. Let's talk about selecting a Christmas tree and Christmas tree care so that you can avoid a National Lamppoon Christmas Vacation type situation.

Three trees grown in Georgia are firs, cypress, and cedar. Some things to consider when purchasing a Christmas tree are needle retention, strong limbs, fragrance, and dryness.

Before you even leave to buy your tree it's a good idea to select and measure the space where you'll be putting your tree. A good spot is away from space heaters, fireplaces, or wood stoves. Measure how high the tree can go in your house. It can be difficult to gauge if a tree is going to fit inside when you're looking at it outdoors. Trees can appear small outside, and then seem to grow a couple of feet once you bring them inside.

When you are selecting your tree it is important to make sure that you get one that is fresh cut. A fresh cut means that the tree will be able to absorb water more effectively, and therefore not dry out as quickly. Once the trunk of the tree has dried out you can cut off the bottom 1/2 inch to establish a new fresh cut. You really don't want your tree to be dry for more than 6-8 hours. When you are purchasing the tree give the limbs a good shake and see if many needles fall off. Then grab a branch of a tree and pull the branch through your hand. Ideally you don't want to see many needles fall off the branch. Also check for off color on any of the needles. If a bunch of needles don't fall off and the needles are a good green color you know that you have a healthy tree.

A dry Christmas tree can be a fire hazard in a house. If your tree has a fresh cut it should be able to last the entire Christmas season without drying out if you keep it well watered. There should always be water in the tree stand. Keep the water level above the cut on the tree so that the cut won't dry out and your tree is continually taking up water. Drilling a hole in the trunk does not improve water uptake. Using lights that put off heat will increase the drying of the tree. LEDs are a good option to reduce heat.

There are a couple of ways to dispose of your Christmas tree. You can use them for soil erosion barriers. If you have a pond you can sink them to create fish habitat. Chipping them to use as mulch in the garden is another good option.

Real Christmas trees are beautiful and a sound environmental choice. Trees are recyclable, produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide.

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large metropolitan counties that have advantages such as larger labor forces, better logistics with interstate highways and railroads and clusters of various industry sectors. However, the Authority works hard to get the word out to the world about the business-friendly environment that Union County does have, which includes a low-tax, responsible but reasonable regulation, available sites and a superior quality of life just to name a few. The Union County Development Authority concentrates on Industrial, Commercial, and Retail business development.

Q: We always hear about incentives that a county offers to businesses to move here. How does that work? What are some of those incentives?

A: Union County also offers businesses 100% Freeport. This means that raw materials, goods in process, and finished goods bound for out-of-state shipment being held in factories and warehouses here in the county are exempt from the County ad valorem taxes. Additionally, the Development Authority is able to issue low-interest Industrial Revenue Bond Financing for project-related costs of land; facilities, machinery and equipment. Some property tax relief may also be available for qualifying projects. The State of Georgia also offers incentives such as the Jobs Tax Credit, the Investment Tax Credit, a Child Care Tax Credit, Small Business Tax Relief, and the Sales and Use Tax Exemption on equipment and electricity used directly in manufacturing, to name a few. These are just some of the incentives that can encourage businesses to locate in Union County.

Moore... continued from Page 4A

and navigate to the Blairsville area, you will see the data for the Poteete Creek Park swim beach, the boat ramp near the dam, and the Meeks Park II canoe/kayak launch. We missed a couple of weeks at Poteete Creek Park when a volunteer was out of town, but the other two sites were sampled every week from Memorial Day to Labor Day. At the Meeks Park II site, we also collected water temperature, conductivity and turbidity data in addition to E. coli, and for that reason, I continued to enter data into the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream database for that site.

I apologize for the confusion this obviously caused Mr. Tornabene and possibly others. But, I want to reiterate the highlights of the report: (1) our data shows that the main body of the lake is safe for swimming and (2) even though the Meeks Park II site failed for swimming 53% of the time, it still met the EPA guidelines for less intensive water sports like canoeing and kayaking. You can read the whole Hiwassee Watershed Swim Guide report at this web address: <https://mountaintrue.org/swim-guide-watershed-report-hiwassee-river-watershed/>.

Also in 2021, MountainTrue conducted a pilot

Q: What can a county offer to a new business besides incentives?

A: While it's not a discretionary or statutory incentive like those above, Union County has one of the lowest property tax millage rates in Georgia, which is a significant incentive for businesses to locate here. The Authority can offer pad-ready sites fully served with all infrastructure in the Blairsville Airport Industrial Park for new businesses to build upon. On a case-by-case basis, the Development Authority may provide site improvements to a Union County property for the location of a new business. They may also offer needed infrastructure improvements such as roadway, water, wastewater or stormwater through local, state, and federal resources. The Authority also offers technical assistance for financing, employee recruitment, logistics, supply chain and business-to-business opportunities to new and existing businesses. As noted in Question 4, the local business-friendly climate and quality of life are two of our most valuable non-incentive advantages.

Q. What is the Downtown Development Authority? Does this term refer to the same organization that has already been discussed?

A. No, the Downtown Development Authority is a different organization with similar goals. The Downtown Development Authority is an agent of the City of Blairsville with a focus on the Downtown District – including the courthouse square and the historic central business district. The Downtown Development Authority is active in promoting the businesses and events in the City of Blairsville.

program of environmental DNA testing to help determine sources of E. coli in several polluted streams in the French Broad River watershed. The program was successful, so in February 2022, thanks to funding from Union County Government and private donors, we will begin an extensive eDNA study in the Butternut Creek and Nottely River watersheds above Lake Nottely. The data we collect will give us a better idea of where the E. coli contamination at various locations is coming from, e.g., humans, dogs, livestock, or wildlife. Then we'll be in a great position to seek funding and assistance from existing programs to clean up these waterways.

It won't be the lake report that Mr. Tornabene would like to see published, but it certainly will help us address the conditions in the upstream portion of Lake Nottely that he is most concerned about. I would love to see a lake report, too. Since the Tennessee Valley Authority owns and operates the reservoir, maybe they could produce an annual report? MountainTrue would be happy to share our data.

Callie D. Moore
MountainTrue
Western Regional Director

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

ing on Bossie Flossie. The old milk cow had become bloated, and Papa was trying his best to relieve her condition. A clear liquid like was being poured down the cow's throat. I think it was probably mineral oil. The boys watched as the old cow wandered off shaking her head in disgust at the taste of the medicine. It wasn't long until she raised her tail and her bloated was relieved. "That medicine really loosened up old Flossie's bowels," Paul said as he grinned at his younger brother. Uncle Bud grinned as well, and the boys both had the same thought.

They waited until after lunch and borrowed the bottle of medicine which had been used on Flossie. The pair of young boys crept back across the cotton patch. They felt the softness of the good soil under their feet. The poplars were even more yellow and the maples more orange as they snuck their way down to Turkey Creek. They saw the same house-sized boulder and walked across the same ancient chestnut log to avoid wading the creek. At the thicket they got down on all fours and crawled a ways into the thicket. Halfway through they sat and listened for sounds at the still. There was none, so the young pair continued. Upon seeing the still,

Habitat...

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they are set up all over the Union County Community Center. We have some truly creative individuals, as you can see by the displays! The Community Center has also put up the largest Gingerbread Village display that they have ever had. Not only are their gingerbread houses, but there is a gingerbread marina, and even a gingerbread transfer station (complete with lotsa candy "trash"). The decorations will stay up until after Christmas, so you have plenty of time to go see them. Habitat for Humanity has put up a "Habitat-themed" Christmas tree, covered with ornaments made to look like houses and tools. It even has a hard hat for a tree-topper! There is a Habitat gingerbread house there, too. It's cute, but it pales in comparison with some of the other "houses." Take the kids and let them see the gingerbread village. You won't be disappointed.

Don't miss "Pictures for Santa Paws," a new event, here at the Habitat ReStore in Blairsville. On Saturday, Dec. 11, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., bring your furry friend(s) to get their pictures taken by a professional photographer, in a Christmas setting. Pictures will be uploaded to a website, and the pet parents can just download whatever pictures they would like and have them printed. If you need to get some fancy attire for your furbaby, be sure and stop at The Farmhouse Co. off the square and pick up a new leash, collar, or scarf to make the pictures even more special. If you would like to have your pictures taken WITH your pets, that's fine, too. The more the merrier!

We are asking for a donation of \$5 for this event. All the money raised stays right here with our local Habitat, and helps us with our mission of "everyone having a decent place to live." Have a great week!

Genovese...

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traditional weapons, but leaving infrastructure intact.

As we move from COVID to Delta to now Omicron (which spells "moronic" with rearranged letters), it is clear this virus is losing its punch. While COVID caused many deaths worldwide, Omicron resembles the common cold. Not what the media would have you believe. So many flock to the emergency rooms at the first sign of a sniffle, sending hospital statistics up. Are we now so conditioned to live in fear that a cold virus can affect the global economy? The only ones benefiting from any of this at this point are the pharmaceutical companies, and those invested in them. Two or three jabs for COVID, another for Delta, and most likely one more for Omicron. Haven't we all just had enough?

You want to protect your health? Get some exercise, rest, eat a salad once in a while. And for Heaven's sake, TURN OFF THE NEWS.

James Genovese
A Patriot

a week. But, then everything hit the fan, so to speak. The principal at their school came down with some kind of virus. The Police Chief in Phil Campbell also developed a strange illness. Preachers, teachers and store keepers all became sick. Papa's brother also became sick. He had himself a large stash of Duck's shine and would drink until he became sick.

He would stop for a while and get better, then start drinking again. Old Duck moved his still from this place. Not long before my Papa died, I purchased this property from him. We were walking over the place and came to a rock face, causing Papa to let out a chuckle. He told me the preceding story, making me smile. I hope it made you smile as well.

Williams...

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We have great locations to purchase a real Christmas trees around here, and this is the time of year to shop local, so I encourage you to check them out! If you have any questions about Christmas trees contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. Merry Christmas and happy tree shopping!

Chamber...

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ter place for everyone. Thank you, Cathy!

Time is running out to come by the Community Center to vote for your favorite tree, wreath, and gingerbread house. I know I've said it before, but we have some talented individuals in Union County. This year's trees are like nothing you have seen before and the gingerbread village grew to several tables full, truly making it a very large village. Prepare to be amazed!

Happy Holiday and Merry Christmas!

Dyer...

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dents of Union County are encouraged to review each subject mentioned during Winter Weather Preparedness Week and to get prepared for the upcoming winter weather. For more information, please visit gema.georgia.gov/prepare/ready-georgia for more information on winter weather and preparedness tips on natural and manmade disasters.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~



New COVID Variant reinforces need for vaccination and testing

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is closely monitoring the emergence of a new COVID variant first detected in southern Africa. The variant has not been detected in Georgia at this time.

Named Omicron by the World Health Organization (WHO), the variant has a large number of mutations. Scientists are studying the variant to determine how quickly and easily it spreads, whether it causes more severe illness and how well the current COVID vaccines will protect against it. So far, a few dozen COVID cases caused by Omicron have been identified in South Africa, Hong Kong, Israel and Belgium.

"What is known is that COVID vaccination helps stop transmission of infection which prevents new variants from emerging," said Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health. "Vaccination is more important than ever with the emer-

gence of this new variant and the holidays just around the corner."

All Georgians over the age of 5 are now eligible for COVID vaccination. Booster doses of vaccine are recommended for adults 18 and older who have completed their first series of vaccine.

Individuals who have symptoms of COVID or who may have been exposed to someone with COVID should get tested. Based on available data, PCR testing can detect the presence of the Omicron variant.

To find a COVID vaccine or COVID testing location near you log on to dph.ga.gov.

DPH will continue to monitor information about Omicron and provide updates as new information becomes available.

For updates on COVID-19, follow @GaDPH and @GovKemp on Twitter and @GaDPH and @GovKemp on Facebook.