

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Letter Drive

It's that time again. Time that you may receive a letter from your local volunteer fire department. Every year, the volunteer fire stations send out a letter to the citizens and business owners who are protected by their stations. The letter serves several purposes. It informs the people on the operations of the stations. The letter provides information including the number of members; the number of calls; any changes to the stations; any equipment purchases; and any needs that the station may have. They also provide information on the future goals of the station to better respond to emergencies and serve the community.

The letter also provides dates and times for each fire station's annual open house. This is an invitation for the people to visit the fire station. The volunteer firefighters display the station, the apparatus and the equipment. They are available to answer questions. Often there are educational displays and demonstrations of fire and rescue equipment.

The main purpose of the letter is to ask for donations. Although the fire department's budget pays for utilities and maintenance, most of the volunteers' purchases and operations are made possible through donations. The annual letter drive is the main source of donations for the volunteer stations. The volunteer stations survive on the generous donations provided by the citizens and business owners of their coverage area. They use the donations to purchase radios, turnout gear, wildland gear, and various other firefighting and rescue equipment. They also use the funds to purchase fire apparatus, rescue trucks, and to make improvements to the stations.

Every donation is needed to keep the volunteer stations operational; to achieve future goals; and to respond to emergencies throughout the county. The volunteers do not ask for a dollar amount. They ask citizens and business owners to donate what they can to assist the stations in serving their community. The continued support from the citizens, business owners and the community is greatly appreciated by the dedicated volunteers and the department.

So, when you receive a letter from your volunteer fire station, we ask that you read it to stay informed. We also ask you to come to the open house of the fire stations. But most important, we ask

See Dyer, page 5A

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Resurrection Matters

Jesus Christ came back to life after his death on a cross. It is the greatest event in human history, with eternal implications for you. Have you considered this central claim of Christianity, that it actually happened? Or is Easter just a cultural event about bunnies, candy, and the dutiful visit to church?

Centuries before Jesus walked this earth, the prophet spoke in the voice of the coming Messiah, God the Son saying, "You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay" (Psa. 16:10). So before Jesus died, the plan was already in place. They pierced Him to make sure He was dead. His followers buried His body. Then for three days they wondered in fear why the One who saved others could not save Himself. But Sunday was coming.

On that singular day, Jesus returned to life. He appeared to various people in different times and places. They saw, heard, and touched Him. He even made breakfast on the beach for them. Paul explains that Christ "was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time... Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and... He appeared to me also" (1 Cor. 15:3-8). The disciples' encounter with immortality so dramatically changed them that they risked imprisonment for "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2). They were not deceived. They had no reason to lie. They knew the Truth. They were motivated by love for their fellow man.

Jesus' Resurrection matters because "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless" (1 Cor. 15:17). Those who dismiss this historic event as myth or metaphor are entitled to free thought, but such a view is not what the Bible portrays, nor would it have inspired those early believers. When Jesus arose from the dead, he fulfilled prophecy, validated his identity as God the Son, and claimed victory over sin and death. "He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man," writes C.S. Lewis. "He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so."

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Our office has received numerous calls from residents asking about the possibility of installing speed bumps on certain county roads because of speeding vehicles. There are advantages and disadvantages of installing these types of obstacles on our roads, so I wanted to share some of the questions and answers related to that.

Q. Why do people speed through neighborhoods? Don't they realize kids are playing outside and adults are working in their yards?

A. We all seem to be in a hurry to get to our destination. Sometimes we forget that our neighborhoods are DELICATE communities where neighbors visit, children play, residents walk their dogs and pets often roam. Sometimes people are actually "cutting through" one area to get to another. People speed for different reasons, and nothing can ever be good about speeding in a neighborhood or on any road approaching a neighborhood area.

Q. Why isn't the Commissioner's Office doing anything about the speeding in our neighborhoods?

A. Traffic and vehicle control in Union County falls under the authority of the local Sheriff's Office. When vehicles travel at unauthorized rates of speed, very serious safety issues are created. Any resident who has concerns about speeding in a neighborhood can call the Sheriff's Office for advice or for assistance. However, be aware that this is also often frustrating for the Sheriff's Office as it is sometimes difficult to catch someone speeding in a residential neighborhood.

Q. Several households in my neighborhood have discussed the problems we are experiencing with speeding vehicles. Can you install speed bumps along the straight runs of road to slow down the traffic?

A. When it comes to slowing down traffic the first thought that usually comes to mind is the idea of using road obstacles as a solution. People have suggested speed bumps and parking on the side of the street as possible deterrents for speeding vehicles. Of all the ideas we have heard, these two ideas are our least favorite. When speed bumps are installed, it also can impact the safety

See Paris, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



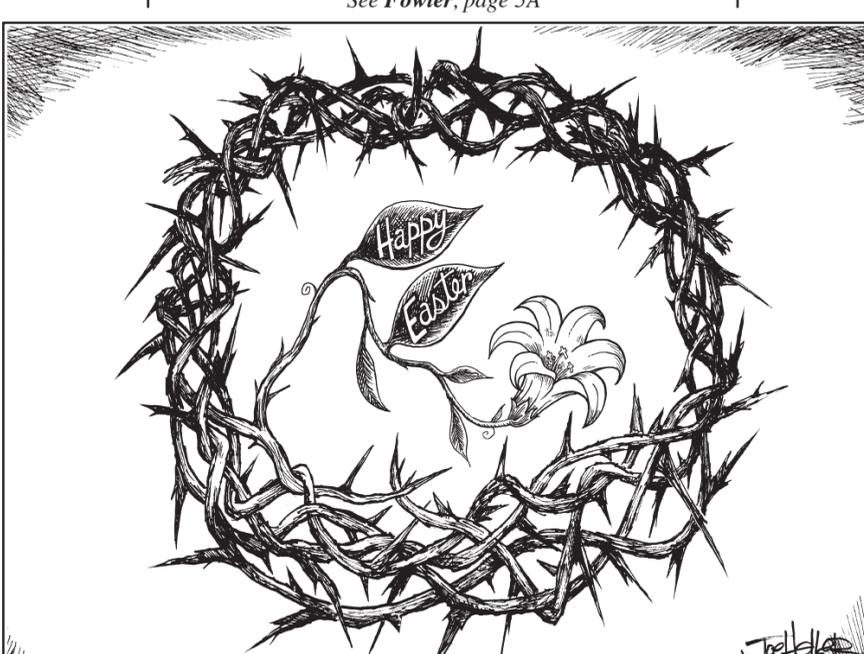
Empowering Parents

For years, the Left has unabashedly waged war on parents — pushing radical policies that hinder children's learning and leave parents voiceless. From woke Critical Race Theory instruction to dangerous gender ideology measures, Democrat officials have worked hand in hand with teachers unions to turn schools across the country into hubs for indoctrination. For example, the Biden Administration is threatening Title IX by allowing the National Collegiate Athletic Association to permit biological men to compete in women's and girls' sports.

Under the purview of the Biden Administration, parents concerned about their child's education have faced unwarranted and unconstitutional tactics to silence their legitimate claims. In fact, the White House and Department of Justice notoriously colluded with the National School Boards Association to target parents voicing their concerns at school board meet-

See Clyde, page 5A

United States Congressman Representative Andrew Clyde



Letters to the Editor

Thank You

Dear Editor,
On March 27 during one of my many trips to Ingles Supermarket to buy some groceries, I found it necessary to use the Men's Room while there.

Afterwards, I continued shopping and then went through the checkout line and discovered that my Debit Bank Card was missing.

I was extremely frustrated about this happening, as the cashier had already totaled my purchase and there were several people in line behind me.

As a Disabled Veteran, I use the scooters that Ingles provides for the handicapped, and there some patrons that sometimes get a little perturbed when inconvenienced by having to stand in line behind one of us.

By now, I am thoroughly embarrassed, when all of a sudden the cashier, a young man named Hayden, came around to the card machine and inserted his personal Debit Card and paid for my purchase!!! He said, "Don't worry about it. It's all taken care of."

I told him "Thank you" several times and told him that I would pay him back, but he wouldn't hear of it.

One of the sack guys helped me out to my car and we searched it for the card to no avail, and he told me that maybe it will turn up in the office if someone may have found it somewhere in the store.

Sure enough, one of the employees found it on the floor of the Men's Room and turned it in. My wife and I have lived up here in these mountains for over 26 years, and it never ceases to amaze me all the truly caring, good, kind and God-fearing people that reside here.

Again, THANK YOU Hayden and also to all of the Ingles Supermarket employees.

Keith Smith

Easter Morning

Dear Editor,
As we approach Easter season, we are once again in awe of what Jesus did for mankind on the cross. Oh, that we might embrace the love of a Savior and the wondrous love He showers on us each day and night. To feel His eternal love cascading down into the depths of our soul. To know the love of Jesus as He hung on that cross and shed His blood for the sins of mankind. Our Lord and Savior, while dying on the cross, still took the time to think of us and even to pardon a thief who called out to Him as Jesus said to the thief, today you will be with me in paradise. Oh, what kind of love comes down from the throne of grace and takes our place that sets us free from our chains that held us in darkness into the glorious light that

See Combs, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

What Ever Happened to Responsible Journalism

Dear Editor,
It is unfortunate that Investigative Journalist Chris Butler (Georgia Public Policy Foundation), who wrote the article "Rural Georgia's rising population..." that was reprinted on the front page of the North Georgia News March 29, did not do his job as an Investigative Journalist in checking the facts regarding the comments of Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris attacking the citizens of Union County. It was an interesting article except for the lies of the Sole Commissioner. Mr. Butler should have followed up by interviewing members of the petition "group" to get their side before publishing the Sole Commissioner's false and derogatory comments.

The falsehoods, lies, of the Sole Commissioner are outlined below. It is unfortunate that some will believe him.

1. Sole Commissioner said the Petition initiative started two years ago. FALSE. It began less than a year ago.

Sole Commissioner has attempted to interfere with the petition process by spreading lies to discredit the petitioners, by intimidation, and by trying to remove petitioners from public property. There are citizens saying they want to sign the petition but are fearful of signing it because of possible retaliation and losing their jobs.

2. Sole Commissioner said the petitioners have been unsuccessful. FALSE. Over 70% of required signatures have been collected thus far.

3. Sole Commissioner refers to the petitioners/supporters as "agitators" coming into his county. FALSE.

They are well informed individuals (taxpayers, property owners, consumers, parents, retirees, Democrats, Republicans) who care about their community; some have lived in Union County for 50 years and longer. Many were born and raised here. They believe that citizens need a representative government for the county's growing population and that one individual should not be making all of the decisions.

4. Sole Commissioner refers to citizens who question his actions as "vile." FALSE. They are decent law-abiding citizens who believe in exercising their Constitutional rights, asking questions, seeking answers, and speaking out in a respectful manner when they suspect wrong or inappropriate actions of their elected officials.

5. The Petition is not about the Sole Commissioner as he seems to believe; it is about allowing citizens to decide how they want to be governed, by one individual or a Board, and doing what is best for the citizens of Union County.

See Harper, page 5A

Lou and Sam

Something within the depths of her being told her things were amiss. She and her litter mate had trailed this wise old raccoon to the Spruce Pine tree standing next to the limestone bluff above Turkey Creek. They found the hot track on the creek below her master's corn patch. The raccoon was racing the dogs to the safety of the big tree. His scented track was easy to follow, really too easy, and now the Black and Tan Hounds were sitting at the foot of the 500-year-old Spruce Pine. Her litter mate was tree barking at the top of his lungs, and the barking made his master's son proud. Papa and his two sons had raised the pair of young hounds from pups and they were a source of pride to the Cummings family.

The young boy was proud of Sam, but, he was also concerned about Lou. She had given a locate bark letting them know the old raccoon had climbed a tree. But, unlike her brother, she had not settled on the tree and had grown quiet. The puzzled youngster, Paul, asked his father, "Papa, why has Lou gone quiet? I believe something is wrong with her." His Papa assured the boy his dog was OK. The middle-aged man smiled as he said, "Lou is learning from that old coon. Do you remember last spring when we thought that old bandit was treed?" Indeed, the boy remembered.

The dogs had run the old coon for more than an hour and at last they treed him up this same giant tree on the edge of Turkey Creek. But, when the boys and their Papa arrived at the tree the coon was nowhere to be found. Papa told them the old coon had taught their dogs a lesson and now for the second time this year Lou was trying to unravel the mystery of this disappearing raccoon. The dogs were well bred and intelligent. Sam was aggressive and gritty while Lou seemed more intelligent and persistent. When she found a track she never left it until the raccoon was treed. So, when she fell silent Papa and his sons listened to see what would happen.

She left her litter mate at the tree and began to circle the tree to see if the coon had tapped the tree. Sometimes when treed by baying dogs a raccoon will go up a tree and then out on a limb. At the end of the limb the coon will jump from the tree and hightail it out of the country hoping to leave the dogs far behind. She circled out to the East toward the creek and found no scent. She then came back toward the West, but, could not travel more than 10 feet from the base of the tree due to the rock face of the bluff. The dog made her way to the North a quarter of a

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Blueberries

I think that most people enjoy eating a handful of blueberries. Eating them always reminds me of my grandfather because he always puts them on his cereal in the morning. Blueberries grow pretty well here, but there are a few things to be aware of so let's talk about those so that you can have a successful blueberry crop.

If you are selecting a site to plant blueberries, choose a place that will receive full sun for at least half a day. They can grow in shady spots, but the fruit production will be less. Blueberries like soil with a pH of 4.5 – 5.2. This trait makes them well adapted to native soils because most of our soils will naturally be in that range. Therefore, lime is probably not needed when planting blueberries. Rabbiteyes do best with 5 – 6 feet between plants in row and 11 – 12 feet between rows. When planting make sure you don't plant too deep. After planting prune back 1/3 to 1/2 of the plant. This will cause the plant to focus on developing its root system. The first year you want to pick off any blooms, because you want the plant to put its energy into growing roots and not fruit. You can apply 1 oz. of 10-10-10 after the plant has begun to put on leaves the first year. The second year after planting put out 2 oz. of 10-10-10 in March and July. Make sure not to over fertilize blueberries, as that can harm them. After the third season, apply 1 oz. of 10-10-10 per foot of height on the bush.

Blueberry bushes do require pruning each year. Once plants reach 6 feet high you'll want to start cane renewal pruning. This means removing 1 – 3 of the biggest canes each winter at ground level. Over a period of 5 years the bush will be completely renewed. New canes are going to bear more fruit than old canes so it's important to maintain this pruning process. If you have bushes that haven't been pruned for a few years, it might take several seasons to get bushes into the 5-year rotation. After you've picked the fruit, you can top plants if they are over 6 feet tall. This will keep bushes at a more manageable height.

Blueberries aren't bothered by many insects or diseases. However, one disease to look out for is mummy berry. It will cause berries to shrivel up and drop. The berries that drop carry the pathogen over to the next year. Therefore, it's important to keep the space beneath your bushes sanitary. Remove any old berries, wood, and leaves. Placing thick mulch around the base of plants will help prevent the disease from spreading as well. Captan is an effective fungicide at controlling mummy berry, but the timing of the

See Williams, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Chamber of Commerce

Last week we had the honor to represent Union County at the State Capitol as Union County was recognized for our "Community Champion Initiative" and as being a model at both the state and national levels as we create a "climate of success." The initiative is to encourage the community to work together to provide young people with career opportunities, life skills and mentorships to help them achieve successful and fulfilling futures.

As the nation encounters a workforce shortage, our local businesses, officials, and educators are working together with the Union County College and Career Academy to ensure our graduates are well trained and have the skills they need to enjoy a well-compensated career. Our local colleges and universities are working side-by-side to provide these students with the best education to succeed.

As we prepare for Easter I am thankful that we live in such a beautiful part of the county.

See Chamber, page 5A

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Paris... continued from Page 4A

of our roadways for salt trucks and snow clearing. Blocking a roadway is never a good idea, and parking on the side of the street might make it impossible for an emergency vehicle to make its way through. Only in very extreme circumstances will the county consider a speed bump.

Q. What are the advantages of using speed bumps?

A. By forcing drivers to slow down, speed bumps greatly reduce the frequency of minor fender benders and serious collisions. More importantly, they are quite effective at reducing automobile accidents involving pedestrians. However, on higher speed roadways, they are sometimes simply NOT safe.

Q. What are the disadvantages of speed bumps?

A. One of the few major drawbacks of speed bumps of any kind is that they are a pain for the traveling public. They are a terrible inconvenience for traveling, school buses, ambulances, and other emergency vehicles. In life-or-death situations, a delay in reaching a person in distress or delivering that person to a hospital can be serious. Also, once speed bumps are installed, salting, and scraping of ice and snow is not always possible because of the danger to equipment, vehicles and employees.

Q. Do speed bumps change driver behavior?

A. Often it is the only way to impact a driver's behavior. However, some will try to avoid the bumps by going "off road" to avoid the bumps or spinning their tires upon leaving a speed bump. Neither is advisable or legal.

Q. Why can't the county just install "Slow Children at Play" signs?

A. Because the streets are not for kids to play on. Any indication such as one of these signs - that kids are allowed to play on the streets and that the activity is known and allowed by the governing authority - is simply not appropriate.

Q. I live in a subdivision where children regularly play outside. Does the Homeowners Association have any authority on this matter?

A. It you live on a private road, one fantastic way to reduce speeding in the neighborhood includes speaking with your Homeowners Association (HOA) if you have one, or at neighborhood gatherings. Your HOA council members or homeowners may know how to slow down traffic in your neighborhood through the use of campaigns, traffic calming solutions, and by working closely with local law enforcement. The HOA will absolutely have the right to step in and install traffic calming solutions, such as speed bumps and speed humps, which help discourage speeding. They might even install a speed monitoring digital sign. But they can do nothing until alerted about the situation. If no one speaks up, then nothing gets done. If you go to an HOA board with multiple families ready to complain, the chances of something being done are much higher.

Q. If speed bumps aren't the answer, what do you suggest?

A. It is the last resort for slowing down traffic in Union County. However, if nothing else works, it is still sometimes necessary.

Q. What is Union County policy on speed bumps?

A. If there is enough speeding on a particular roadway and if it is persistent for an extended period of time, then you can speak with the Sheriff's Office and/or the Road Dept. If warranted, The Road Dept will paint a warning bar on the roadway and place signage nearby, letting the public know that if traffic does not slow down, a speed bump will be installed. The county will then after (a period of time) install a speed radar type instrument that will record the actual speeds along a section of the road. Finally, if the speed limits are well above the legal limit, then the speed bump signage will be converted to an actual speed bump. So, if you do not want a speed bump, then slow down along rural roads and treat it as if you had your dogs or the public walking along the roadway. Abide by how you would want the public to drive by you in similar situations.

Cummings...continued from Page 4A

mile away to a small break in the bluff. She went up the bluff and trotted back toward where the Hemlock Tree was located. Upon reaching the area she immediately smelled the old bandit and let out another locate bark. Almost immediately her litter mate left the base of the tree and ran to his litter mate. That raccoon had climbed high up in the Hemlock and walked out a limb to the top of the bluff. Now he was trying to get to another place where he could lose these Black and Tan Hounds.

Papa and his two sons, Paul and Bud, let out a whoop when Lou found the new track. "I kind of figured that wise old coon was pulling some shenanigans. But, old Lou has him figured out," Papa said. The boys and their father listened as the dogs trailed over the ridge and toward the hollow where the Family Tree was located. Their father had carved his and their mother's initials on this ancient American Beech before they were born, sometime around 1936. The dogs trailed the bandit coon to this hollow. The boys and their father quickly ran to the top of the ridge to make sure the dogs could still be heard. The race was music to their ears, and they were enjoying it.

The dogs were closing in on the raccoon, and he knew it. But, he was going to use every trick he knew of to shake the dogs off his track. There was a small bluff about 10 feet high next to the Family Tree. The old coon jumped from the top of the bluff down into the ancient Beech. He quickly went down the tree and turned up the small branch to a rock face where a small creek tumbled over. The 20 foot high, rocky waterfall was slick and moss covered. The old coon hoped the water would cover his scent and confuse or slow the dogs. But, Lou's nose was good and she practically flew around the rock face and through the waterfall, never losing the trail of the raccoon. But, the masked bandit was

not finished yet.

He ran in and out of the boulders all the way down the creek to a point across from the Family Tree. Soon he found the huge boulder for which he was looking. Underneath the big rock was a short cave which bottomed out in what appeared to be a dead end. However, there was a small opening which led to the outside right next to the creek. The coon entered this cave from the top and scampered down the hole under the boulder. It soon emerged from the small opening next to the creek and ran across the hollow back to the ancient Beech tree. It scampered up the tree and was going to jump from the tree to the top of the bluff. But, Lou somehow understood what he was going to do and was waiting on him at the top of the bluff. Soon her litter mate, Sam, was at the bottom of the tree barking loud and telling Papa that the coon was up this tree. While he was barking treed Lou could see the rascal and was baying the coon from the top of the bluff.

Papa, Paul and Bud arrived at the tree and were amazed at what they found with the two dogs and the cornered raccoon. Papa knew that he had something special in this pair of dogs. They worked well together. However, he also knew that Lou was something special. Not only did she have a good nose, but she was also smart and very persistent. He smiled and said, "Many a dog has been fooled by this wiley old rascal of a coon. But, what you have seen tonight is a smart dog which never gave up. She outwitted the wisest raccoon I have ever seen."

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

that you please make a donation to your local volunteer fire station.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Williams...

continued from Page 4A

application is very important. You must apply it while the flowers are in bloom because that is when the infection occurs. You must spray Captan every 7-10 days during bloom. Serenade is another product that you can spray instead of Captan that is organic, but it is not as effective.

If you have questions about growing blueberries contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

You have two ways to respond to this news. At your great loss you can ignore or dismiss the pivotal event in human history. At your great gain you can embrace it by repentance and faith. "Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die," Jesus said. "Do you believe this?" (John 11:26).

The Resurrection vindicates Jesus' claims of who He is and what He came to do. It is also a harbinger of your own resurrection to eternal life. He is risen!

Harper...

continued from Page 4A

One has to wonder why the Sole Commissioner wants to deprive the citizens of this opportunity.

This could have been a well-written and well-received article if the Investigative Journalist had done his job as an Investigative Journalist by not including the Sole Commissioner's derogatory comments until he had spoken to both sides to get the facts. Sadly, it seems accuracy is no longer necessary or expected in the media.

Maureen Harper

Free GED Classes

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 April 10th & 24nd.

Clyde... continued from Page 4A

ings. As the Weaponization of the Federal Government Subcommittee recently reported, there was no legitimate basis for the Biden Administration to use federal law enforcement and counterterrorism resources on these parents — who were simply exercising their First Amendment rights to protect their children.

Furthermore, the senseless and unscientific education policies pursued by Democrats during COVID-19 severely damaged children's learning. Roughly half of American students started behind in at least one subject this past school year — marking a 13% increase from the national average in years prior to 2020. Undoubtedly, school closures and remote learning also had disastrous impacts on children's mental health and development.

In light of these misguided policies, we must ensure parents remain the primary stakeholders in their children's education — not the radical Left, not woke bureaucrats, and certainly not corrupt teachers unions.

Thankfully, House Republicans are delivering on our promise to create a future that's built on freedom by empowering parents. Last week, we passed H.R. 5, the Parents Bill

of Rights, which guarantees that parents have the:

- Right to know what's being taught in schools and to see reading material
- Right to be heard
- Right to see school budget and spending
- Right to protect their child's privacy
- Right to be updated on any violent activity at school

You may be pleased to know that we also passed numerous amendments that strengthen this critical legislation. For example, we successfully added amendments that require schools to report when transgender students join girls' sports teams or are allowed to use girls' restrooms and locker rooms. In addition, schools must obtain parents' consent to change a child's name, gender, or pronouns.

I proudly voted for H.R. 5, as I believe it's past time that we empower parents by ensuring they have the rights and resources needed to protect their children's education. Please know that I remain committed to supporting policies that restore parents' voices and help students struggling from years of unnecessary remote learning, as well as fighting back against the Left's escalating indoctrination in classrooms across the country.

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

try that we are reminded each Spring of the renewal of life as we watch the trees bloom with exquisite colors as if God is painting a new picture for us to enjoy each and every day. I would like to thank everyone for their support of our community and the Chamber as we endeavor to bring prosperity to

all.

Please pray for those that have been affected by recent storms and the families that have lost love ones in Nashville, and please keep our teachers, administrators and first responders in your prayers.

Help us make Life Better in Blairsville!

Combs ...continued from Page 4A

only a heavenly Father could provide. Oh, the cross that made the difference like living water flowing freely from the Rock of Ages we sing about.

The cruelty and beauty of that cross where Christ died on that Friday Day as Jesus' last words were, It is finished, and then He died and was put into a borrowed tomb and Satan was dancing and shouting, for he thought he had won the victory. But little did he know that on the third day, Sunday, Jesus arose from the dead victoriously over death and the grave and another nail was put in Satan's quiver of defeat. Lord, we cannot express our humble gratitude when you said your final words, It is finished, which means that those who choose to follow Jesus can have the abundant life here and

now, for the old life is gone and a new life begins as the Holy Spirit comes and lives in each believer's heart. No other religion in the world can lay claim to this promise for an eternal life with God when He calls us home or comes back to gather His own upon Himself.

May this Easter Sunday bring you joy unspeakable and be full of praise in worshipping the One true living God that has a better plan in eternity for all who come and embrace the wonder of God's amazing grace and everlasting love. The stanza of "At The Cross"—At the cross where I first saw the light, And the burden of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight. And now I am happy all the day.

Frank F. Combs