Opinions

Everybody has one...

Think outside of our hip pockets

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan

The Transportation Funding Act of 2015 is something we don't want to experience in any part of Georgia. Those who introduced the bill last week tout that it will answer the funding issue for Georgia's transportation efforts for years to come. They also tout that it comes without a tax increase.

It all depends on how you look at this; it is without a doubt a tax increase and I'd say 7.5 cents a gallon increase is a tax. Just as gas prices get into the realm of being affordable, the Georgia General Assembly wants to stick their hand in the cookie jar.

Let me explain. With gas prices not eating a chunk out of families' disposable incomes, people are able to go to the store. Not just the grocery store, they're able to go to Alexander's, Walmart, Sears and have other uses in mind for their money rather than the General Assembly's jack up the gas prices game.

You're asking folks that make $8 an hour at McDonald's in the mountains to pay the same price as those making mega bucks at their mega jobs in the Metro. If those folks at the Gold Dome had put on their thinking caps, they might have found that people are more willing to pass T-SPLOST now that they are saving money at the gas pumps.

Rather than let Georgians catch their breath from the years of out of this world gas prices, our legislators went straight for the hip (pocket).

We all know that this is about making the Downtown Atlanta commute much more accommodating for the Metros. It doesn't do anything for the rest of the state - especially our mountain counties.

Yes, we understand that Atlanta and the surrounding metropolitan area bring money to Georgia. Well, let's figure out a way to put money in the pockets of those further North of Spaghetti Junction.

For once, it's time for state lawmakers to think of Georgians outside of the Metro. It's time to help the folks at the Top of Georgia, that's Union, Towns, Rabun, Fannin, White and Lumpkin counties.

We ask the General Assembly if there is anything in that goody bag for the mountain folks? If not, than, there certainly should be. We're tired of being counted as the other folks. We're Georgians, and we expect to be treated with respect.

Transportation funding has nothing to do with the North Georgia Mountains - it's obviously all about the Metro. We're starting to like our gas prices. So, we hope you can keep your hands out of our hip pockets. And, don't tell us the Transportation Funding Act is not a tax.

Finding Freedom

All Things New

Wayne Fowler

In his recent book, *Why Suffering*, Ravi Zacharias recounts a conversation with an inmate in the infamous Angola Prison in Louisiana: "I asked him, 'How do you handle the prospect that you will never get out of here, and that this is where your life will now be spent?' He answered, 'You know sir, if you knew the kind of person I was before I came here, and what I have now become because of the freedom Jesus Christ has brought to my soul, I can only say that if this is what it took to bring me to my senses, I am happy to spend the rest of my life here.' Then he paused and said, 'Please pray for my parents. They think they are free, but they are in a prison of their own darkness without God.' That evening it was all I could do to fight back the tears as I watched this same man leading more than 700 prisoners in worship."

There is a man changed by freedom, though in prison for life! Christians believe that Christ sets us free, which implies that we are in a kind of bondage. It's usually offensive to suggest something's wrong when you didn't ask, but consider me a former prisoner trying to show others the way out.

Look, life is not supposed to be like this. Temporary love, broken trust, and subjective truth are too common. Children are at risk, addicts choose wrongly, and money is loved. The big Ten are just suggestions. Our churches can be showcases for saints instead of hospitals for sinners. We do what we don't want, and don't do what we do want. We have conflicting passions and goals. Such is the human condition – it is bondage, and it hurts.

What can you do? Attend meetings, join something, set new rules, cover bad by doing good. But all that just leads to more bondage. If you've tried it, you know what I mean.

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah foretold a Savior who would release captives and set free the oppressed. Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of that message. He explained that if we continue in his word, we are his disciples. His disciples know the truth which sets us free. Free indeed, but from what? Free from the demands of the law by his gift of grace. Free from sin to live godly lives. Free from death to be eternally alive. Author

*See **Fowler**, page 5A*

Questions and Answers

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris

Q. When was the Animal Ordinance adopted?

A. The Animal ordinance was first adopted in September 2001 and has since been amended several times, usually in response to changes in state law. We adopted this ordinance a few months after I took office and it was in response to a horrific dog attack on a child in Union County. With the help of a volunteer committee at the time, we were able to come up with a very good ordinance that has stood the test of time, with just a few adjustments.

Q. What is considered a "dangerous" dog?

A. As defined in the ordinance, a dangerous dog is any dog that:

- Causes a substantial puncture of a person's skin by teeth without causing serious injury; provided, however, that a nip, scratch, or abrasion shall not be sufficient to classify a dog as dangerous under this paragraph.
- Aggressively attacks in a manner that causes a person to reasonably believe that the dog posed an imminent threat of serious injury to a person although no such injury occurs; provided, however, that the acts of barking, growling, or showing of teeth by a dog shall not be sufficient to classify a dog as dangerous under this paragraph.
- While off the owner's property, kills a pet animal;

Q. What is considered a "vicious" dog?

A. A vicious dog means a dog that inflicts serious injury or death on a person or causes serious injury to a person resulting from reasonable attempts to escape from the dog's attack or is owned, possessed, kept, harbored, trained, or maintained for the purpose of fighting.

Q. Who determines if a dog is dangerous or vicious?

A. The animal control officer will make such investigations and inquiries as may be necessary to identify and classify dangerous and vicious dogs.

Q. What happens after a dog is declared dangerous or vicious?

A. When a dangerous or vicious dog is classified as such by the animal control officer, the officer will notify the owner in writing within 72 hours of such classification. The notice will include a form to request a hearing. The owners of the dogs classified as dangerous and vicious will be expected to be issued citations for nuisance and/or failure to exercise reasonable care. The animal control officer may also immediately impound the dog pending compliance with this

*See **Paris**, page 5A*

Letters to the Editor ...

Progressive Liberal Spin No. 2

Dear Editor,

So "the will of the people" tossed one of the fair haired boys in Virginia early on. However this was not an eye opener to the political elite. Nor did this happen by the act of a "small but vocal minority." This happened from the disconnected efforts of a whole bunch of TEA Party conservatives and like minded groups. And armed with that victory they went on and did it again to a whole bunch of political elitists, well placed in high places. So the "notion" that the pol does not have to respond to what he perceives as a small vocal majority turned out to

*See **Blanchard**, page 5A*

Are you ready?

Dear Editor,

If you have ever noticed on national television good news is not always broadcasted, but you can bet the bad news will come to the top, like bears to honey. I often wonder what if all the good stuff would be broadcasted across the globe, would it not make most of the folks feel better and not so downcast and gloomy. Well I have good news to share and it's all about what God is doing in the world that never gets on television. First of all let me tell you listeners that God is not dead, He never was and He never will be and that God is in complete control of everything. Yes even though bad things happen every waking and sleeping moment and we sometimes question God, Why? God is not upset with our request, but He wants us to completely trust in His ways, His purpose and plan for each one of us who have been born again, meaning accepting Jesus Christ by acknowledging Him as our Lord and Savior, repenting of our sins and surrendering our will over to His.

Is God on the move today? Yes, in a mighty way as we hear reports of tens of thousands of folks all across the world coming to Him daily. This is the good news of the gospel that whoever

*See **Combs**, page 5A*

Another take

Dear Editor,

Mr. Cheves claims that Thomas Jefferson "wanted to keep religious beliefs out of the government of our country." I fear Mr. Cheves will be shocked to learn that this same Thomas Jefferson (1) authorized (Christian) worship services to be held in the House Chamber of the U.S. Capitol, (2) authorized Congress to print thousands of Bibles to be used to teach school children how to read, (3) as a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses declared a "Day of Fasting and Prayer" to be held on June 1, 1774, in response to the Crown's Boston Port Act.

*See **McKechnie**, page 5A*

Congrats

Dear Editor,

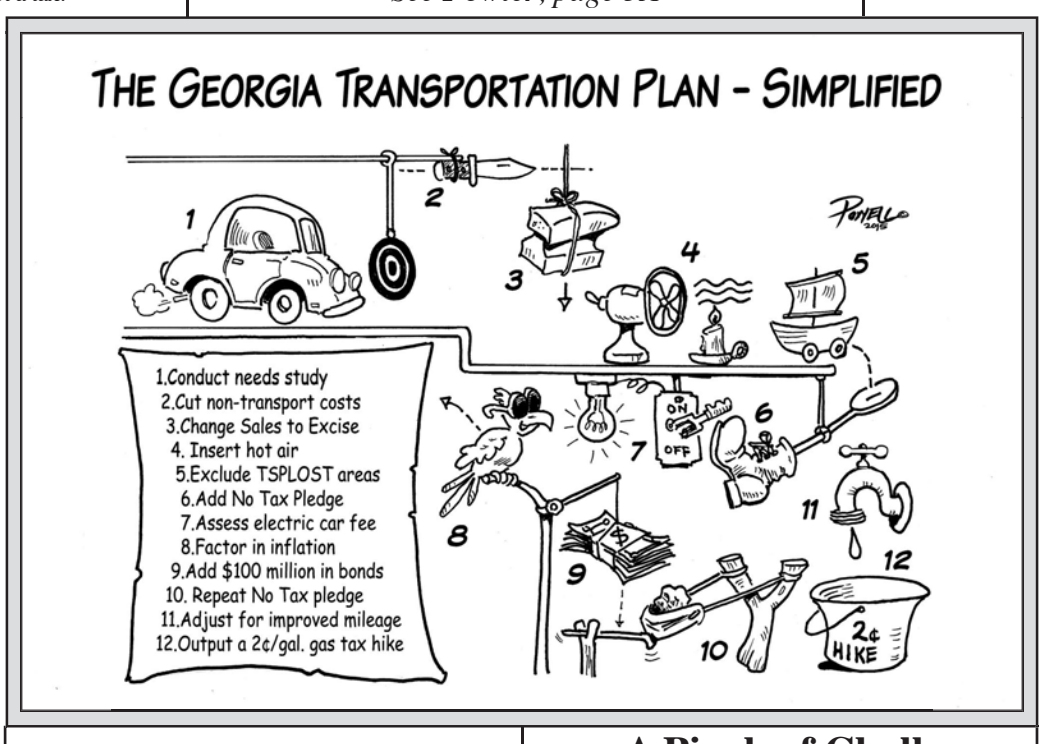
To the teachers of the Union County schools: Well done on the scores your students have earned! You get a thank you from the Associate Superintendent and Superintendent and brief mention in the *North Georgia News*.

Teachers of the Year typically receive a Certificate and pose for photos with the Associate Superintendent and Superintendent. That's about it.

The Associate Superintendent and Superintendent received $22,000 in raises (paid for, by the way, through property taxes — which have doubled since 2000). I suppose that's because they both have Doctorates in Education.

Then, too, Union County schools have all those Directors. Maybe that's why the students scored so well. If each administrator taught just one class per day, just imagine how much higher those test scores would be.

George Mitchell



Waste and Folly

Dear Editor,

Those boys in the House of Representatives down at the Capitol are at it again. Give with one hand and take away with the other. There is nothing like confusion and discord by those boys and girls to get the voters to believe they are doing the people a service while stripping their pocketbook of more money. Waste and folly is the national past time for Georgia politicians, both local and state level.

Presently Georgia's Tax on a gallon of gas is 27.5 cents per gallon, made up from 7.5 cents excise tax, add in 20 cents of other State taxes, including Local option taxes anywhere from 2 to four cents per gallon. Add in the Federal tax of 18 cents per gallon and the total is approx. 45.5 cents of tax per gallon of gas.

Through the "Transportation Funding Act of 2015" (TFA), the Georgia House wants to do away with local taxes on a gallon of gas, increase the State excise tax to 29.5 cents per gallon from the present 7.5 cents. This while doing nothing to the other 17 cents per gallon. One must keep the slush funds full.

I have advocated an increase in the excise tax in the past, specifically during the TSPLOST vote several years ago. Never in my dreams did I foresee the House coming up with such a botch

*See **Sims**, page 5A*

Prayers for our troops

Dear Editor,

I'm weeping. I went to see the movie American Sniper because of the mixed reactions to it. Some say he was a hero; others that he was a cold-blooded killer. It was a hard X-rated movie, but it is up for an Academy Award for best picture and the subject has personal meaning for me. It was one of the most difficult two hours I have ever sat through—a gripping, gut-wrenching, emotional ordeal to watch, especially as the mother of a career military person.

It brought me back to the day my own son, then a gangly teen, announced that he wanted to attend the Air Force Academy, after we visited there during a summer vacation trip through the U.S. His announcement surprised me, since he was a quiet, studious, non-aggressive young man whose favorite movie was "Friendly Persuasion" (the story of the Quakers who refused to fight during the Civil War); and his favorite book was about Chief Joseph, whose words were, "I will fight again no more forever." My surprised reaction was, "I hadn't realized I was raising a warrior," but he retorted, "Mom, I don't want to die and I don't want to kill anyone, but some other mother's son has been standing behind you all your life, saying 'let the little lady speak,' and now it's just my turn." It was true that he had seen me speak out in city and county matters, but I couldn't believe he wanted to serve in the military. Though not what I would have chosen for him, he did persevere through the rigorous physical and strict character training at the USAFA—to become a disciplined and courageous young man. This is the background I had in mind when I went to see the movie.

The scene in which Chris Kyle reacted to

*See **Gray**, page 5A*

A Pinch of Chalk

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings

Many of you will remember Mrs. Cummings. She was my second Grade Teacher at Trapptown School. Mrs. Cummings was married to my Papa's first cousin. She taught at least two generations of people in our family. So, she was very familiar with my Dad, and I as well as our ways of doing things. I could always tell when I was in trouble with Mrs. Cummings because she would call me by both names, "Mickey Paul."

I never received a whipping from Mrs. Cummings. But, if you have ever seen my writing you would swear I have the worst penmanship of anyone you have seen. I owe it all to Mrs. Cummings. When I would get into trouble she would make me write sentences on the blackboard. I usually had to write 250 of these sentences. One day right before Christmas our latest assignment was due. We had to write a paper about the real meaning of Christmas. Each student had to read their paper aloud in front of the class. It came time for me to read my paper so, I made my way to the front of the room.

My route to the front of the room took me by Kathy's desk. Kathy was the prettiest girl in class. But, who notices pretty girls in the second grade. The only thing I knew about girls were that they interfered with fishing and baseball. Anyway, Kathy tried to slip me a note as I walked by her desk. To my horror Mrs. Cummings also noticed that Kathy was trying to hand me a note. Mrs. Cummings told me to bring her the note. I did and she threw it in the trash. I was really worried she would read the note in front of the class. So, when the note hit the trash can I was relieved. But, Stephen also noticed the note and he hollered out at the top of his lungs, "Kathy likes Mickey." Let me remind you that it is not a good thing for a second grader to get embarrassed.

Before I could think about what to do I realized there was a chalkboard eraser in my hand. The eraser was leaving my hand and I exhibited perfect follow through just like my Dad taught me on the baseball field. The eraser hit Stephen right between the eyes and he let out a howl that reverberated throughout the little school. Before I could feel the satisfaction of a job well done Mrs. Cummings had me writing, 250 times, the following sentence, "I will not throw erasers at Stephen Cummins."

I was very embarrassed and angry. Somebody had to pay for my anguish. All at once I noticed Mrs. Cummings had just refilled her coffee cup. The coffee was almost white due to the excessive amount of cream. So, each time Mrs. Cummings turned her head I placed a little pinch of chalk dust in her coffee cup. She must have turned her head a dozen times. Each time

*See **Cummings**, page 5A*

Take 5 with Patrice Kilpatrick

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams

I am excited to announce that the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce has hired Patrice Kilpatrick as our new Information Specialist. Patrice joined the Chamber team on January 15, 2015 and oversees the Welcome Center operations. Like the rest of the Chamber staff, she shares a deep love of Blairsville-Union County and brings an impressive skill set and friendly personality to our front office. Here are a few of her candid responses to my Take 5 questions.

1. What is your favorite quote?

Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be. ~ Abraham Lincoln

2. If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do?

I would pack up the family in our camper and head out to the top ten National Parks in the Continental U.S. I would also make an effort to stop at every featured restaurant on the Food Network. I am a big foodie, and I always wanted to try the cuisine from all across our great nation. From lobster rolls in New England to California's Mr. Chow's noodles, I would travel the country and try something new every day.

3. If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?

I'm pretty sure singing is not an option for

*See **Williams**, page 6A*

That's Amore

Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone

"When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that's amore." And that's exactly what it was like last Monday night at the Community Center at Butternut Creek. Close to 700 spaghetti dinners were served, some without salad, and some without dessert, as the kitchen was drained clean by the numbers who showed the love and attended this nearly spontaneous fundraiser.

I've always been a true believer in the karma "what goes around, comes around", and rarely does it come from the same place it was delivered. For the last four weeks, since the news traveled that one of our own was in trouble, this community has hit the pizza pie with an outpouring of amore for Tricia Spear. It's her "comes around". It's what she gets because she gives and has given, and given, and given to this community, our businesses, our animals and we, the people, for well over a decade. She's a transplant that dug a deep hole, buried her roots and has called Blairsville her hometown.

Tricia has been attacked by the "big C', seemingly, out of nowhere. I want to say that Tricia is loved by everyone, but nobody is that perfect. Her detractors will say she's stubborn, bull headed and as tenacious as a bulldog (though she, being an avid Clemson supporter, would hate that chosen breed to be compared to). And I'm so glad she's all those things, because that's what she needs right now to fight the fight. That, and the best medical care that is available to her. We can only hope that her physicians are as tenacious as she, as stubborn and will go outside the box of traditional care to help her fight the fight.

What those of us who have had our lives and our hearts touched by Tricia in some blessed way can do is help her and her family focus on nothing else but her care and well being. That's what the fundraisers are all about.

A team of researchers collected data from nearly 400,000 adults, evenly split between those who had been treated for cancer and those who were cancer-free. After checking to see which of those adults had filed for bankruptcy between 1995 and 2009, the researchers found that cancer patients were 2.5 times as likely to go bankrupt in that period.

Although the study didn't specifically look

*See **Leone**, page 5A*

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