

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Needing a prayer

I'll be headed back to Gainesville next week in preparation of my 15th surgery since October 2015.

Dr. Salem Sayer will perform the task of reparations on my pacemaker. It sounds like a simple procedure, but, nothing in my life over the course of the last nine years has been simple.

I've experienced two open heart surgeries, an arterial bypass, had five toes on my right foot removed, and my left leg was lost due to a blood clot.

I've experienced multiple angioplasties, and have spent much of the last two years in a hospital bed.

In the words of one of my nurses: "If you would have known you would live this long, I'm sure you would have taken better care of yourself."

She's right, I probably would have. I've been losing sleep over the upcoming surgery. It breaks my heart to continue to go under the knife. I'm thankful that I have so many prayer warriors watching over me.

I must ask once again for your continued support of me as a human being. It seems like I was just getting back in the swing of things again.

Dr. Sayer says I won't be down long, but that a hospital stay is required before I'm expected to begin the healing process. I hope to be my old self again in six weeks.

So, if you don't see me in the office in the near future, just remember I'm on the mend again.

If you need some assistance before then, the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald* staffs are more than happy to work with you to resolve any issue that may arise.

Look at the front pages of the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald* a little closer. You'll discover that both newspapers have a new assistant editor.

Shawn Jarrard, a graduate of the University of Georgia Grady College of Journalism, and the son of a Union County native, has taken the reins of the assistant editor position.

I've heard nothing but rave reviews from the community regarding Shawn. People love him, he's dedicated to making sure the news hits the newsprint.

See *Duncan*, page 5A

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Hope and Fear

What is something you would like to happen in the New Year? What is something that is possible, but you do not want to happen? These were my poll questions recently. How would you answer those?

Not surprisingly people want good things for family. A cure for a disease and pain affecting a grandfather. Calm at home. A single mom wants to buy a home for her children. A safe delivery of a healthy baby. For children to make friends and enjoy school. A stable job, steady work for husband. For the soldier to come home safely.

On the national scene, respondents want politicians to "come to their senses." Better immigration policy. Truth from the media. Less crime.

Believers want people to experience true repentance and turn to Jesus. "If people don't know the Lord, they're missing out," one said.

The second question elicited less varied responses. Some expressed concerns about their past decisions and the culture of sexual assaults and harassment. But most respondents had the same concern: nuclear weapons, North Korea and WWII.

The final answer to saber-rattling is not more military might. God's answer to the threat of war is the Prince of Peace. "For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, and cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire. For a Child will be born to us..." (Isa. 9:5-6). People united in Christ have reason to avoid killing each other, so let us pray for a great awakening in both the DPRK and the U.S.

God has spoken to our hopes and fears. We hope for good things to happen, but that hope is temporal. Our ultimate hope is for creation to be set free from corruption and for the redemption we have in Christ. We eagerly await His promised return because He is our hope (Rom. 8:18-25, Col. 1:27).

As to fear, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27). Why?

Because He was going away, only to return again. The answer to both our hopes and fears is that Jesus is coming again!

See *Fowler*, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. What is the actual population of Union County?

A. According to the most recent data for Union County, the estimated population in 2016 was 22,928, with 576 of those living inside the city limits of Blairsville. Our population has slowly but steadily increased over the years. For the 2010 Census our population was 21,324. Work has just begun for the upcoming 2020 Census.

Q. What is the Unemployment Rate in Union County?

A. The most recent statistics we have are from October 2017. The Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research has Union County's Unemployment rate at 4 percent. In January 2017 the Unemployment Rate was 4.9 percent, so it has been steadily decreasing throughout 2017.

Q. How does Union County's unemployment rate compare to other counties close to us?

	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
Union	4.3%	4.1%	3.7%	4.0%
Lumpkin	4.5%	4.2%	3.7%	3.7%
Rabun	4.8%	4.7%	4.2%	4.4%
Towns	6.7%	5.8%	5.8%	6.1%
White	4.2%	4.1%	3.5%	3.4%

Q. How does our region compare to the state's unemployment numbers?

A. The average unemployment rate for our North Georgia Mountain 13 county region was 3.8 percent in November. This region includes Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union and White counties. The Northeast Georgia Region rate (counties located just below our region) is 4.1 percent and the Northwest Georgia Region (Rome, etc) is 4.3 percent. The Atlanta Region has a rate of 4.2 percent while the Southern Georgia Region is 5 percent. This makes Union County's rate of 4 percent lower than the average of most Georgia regions. Since all of these numbers are relatively low, it at least lets us know that our county is doing better or on par with the rest of the state.

See *Paris*, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Anti-Drug Coalition

Workplace Drug Testing

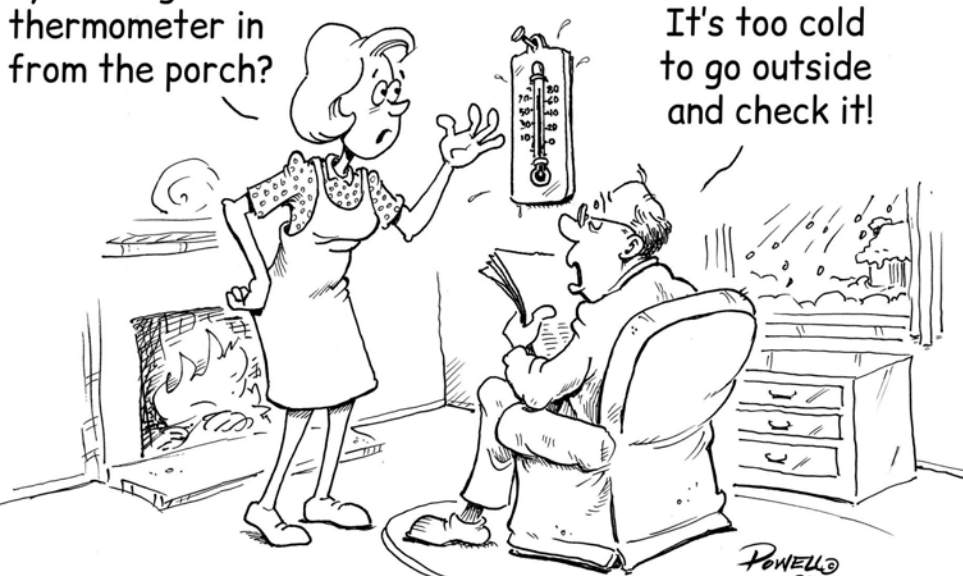
Employers have a right to drug test you, but you have rights too. The federal government requires testing by employers in a few safety-sensitive industries (including all DOT regulated agencies, and contractors with NASA and the Department of Defense), but federal law doesn't otherwise require, or prohibit drug tests. For the most part, this area is regulated by state and local laws.

Employers who establish a Drug Free Workplace program, as certified by the state's Board of Workers' Compensation, can qualify for a discount on their workers' compensation insurance premiums. However, employers must follow the state's rules to get their discount. In Georgia, employers must test in certain circumstances, and must observe certain procedures intended to protect employee and applicant rights.

Georgia employers who have a drug-free workplace program can drug test applicants who have been given conditional offers of employment. Limited testing is allowed if it is conducted based on reasonable classifications of

See *Coalition*, page 5A

George, why did you bring the thermometer in from the porch?



Letters to the Editor

How Pat's Hallmark saved Christmas

Dear Editor,
This is a true story that will warm the hearts of most all your reader's hearts. Papa and Nana are visiting our daughter's family for Christmas in Ooltewah, Tennessee.

They blessed us with two grandsons: Logan (8) and Carson (6). About two years ago, we purchased a recordable storybook from Hallmark.

It was "The Night Before Christmas," which Papa recorded for them and they both greatly anticipated listening to it with us on Christmas Eve.

In checking to see if new batteries were needed, Papa found that the recording was broken and would not play. The boys were very disappointed.

We called every Hallmark store in the area and not one store had a replacement book for us

See *George*, page 5A

Burning Bowl

Dear Editor,
Year's end is always a time of reflection, renewal and reaffirmation, so why not also take the opportunity to clear out the debris field of the past and begin 2018 with mind and heart ready for what comes next?

The Burning Bowl is a powerful symbol of forgiveness and letting go to grow. If we so choose, we can hold on to anger and resentment and warm ourselves by the burning fires of turmoil in our stomach.

Or not.
We can lovingly release that which no longer serves our highest good, thereby clearing the way for spiritual growth in wisdom and understanding. As the New Year unfolds, we claim all the good our hearts can hold.

The Rev. Claudia Naylor,
Unity of Blairsville,
298 School Circle, Blairsville, 30512

Attention Georgia Drivers

Dear Editor,
Georgia State Law can cancel YOUR accident insurance.

Here is how it works: You have an accident and the other driver is at fault.

Before the ink is dry on the police report, the "at fault" insurance company will send a letter stating: (Capital letters are added for emphasis) "Be advised that we are unable to resolve your claim as we have determined there to be COMPARATIVE NEGLIGENCE on both parties. As Georgia is a MODIFIED COMPARATIVE NEGLIGENCE STATE, neither party can recover their damages." This is a direct quote from one such

See *Holmes*, page 5A

Save a Life

It is difficult to believe that with our modern technology and education that people still die in house fires.

The statistics show that there is a downward trend of fires and fire related deaths. According to U. S. Fire Administration from 2006 to 2015, fires in the U.S. have decreased by 19.1 percent, however the deaths due to fires have only decreased 3 percent.

People are still dying in house and apartment fires.

Most recently a major fire in New York resulted in 12 dead and counting. The cause of the fire is unknown at the time of this writing but they were aware of carbon monoxide and smoke alarms not functioning.

A house or apartment fire is probably one of the last things on your mind but here are some things to consider that may save your life or the life of a loved one.

First is fire prevention. Most fires in the home occur due to heating or cooking. Take a look around the house and see where possible fires can occur. Make sure that flammable materials are a good distance away from heating units or stoves. Also have heating units and chimneys inspected and cleaned regularly. A fire extinguisher close to areas that have the potential for fire is always a good idea.

Second is to have working smoke alarms. Fires ignite and burn much faster than in years past and the burning household contents produce toxic smoke that can overcome occupants. Smoke alarms warn occupants sooner allowing more time to get out. If you would like more information on free smoke alarms installed in your home, please contact Station 1 at (706) 439-6091 during business hours or visit tinyurl.com/ucsmoke.

Third is to have a plan. If there was a fire in your home, what would you do? The entire family should know what to do if the smoke alarms sound or if there is a fire. Fire grows quickly and the best practice is to get out. Everyone should know two ways to exit, where to meet outside the home, and to call 911. Getting out is the most important.

Material items can be replaced but lives cannot. A life lost due to fire is a tragedy and something that we work hard to prevent.

It takes a team effort from residents and the department to prevent these tragedies. Take time to review and discuss these considerations with your family.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



The Watkins Man

The Traveling Salesman was a fixture among many Americans for generations. My family is no exception. The first story I can remember happened to my great-grandmother, Laura.

She was a tiny woman, but you know the expression, "Dynamite comes in small packages" don't you?

Lon and Laura Cummings lived eight miles from Phil Campbell. They had a large farm, sawmill, gristmill, and blacksmith shop on the banks of Cummings Creek. Laura was enterprising and eager to help earn a living for the large family. So, she opened up a gas station on the well-traveled path into town. Hers was the only gas pump between Trapptown and Phil Campbell.

One afternoon a car pulled up at the front of the house. A traveling salesman introduced himself as a Watkins Man selling all kinds of products needed by the public. He asked her if he could get some gas for his automobile further explaining he had no money. But, he assured her he would be back next month and would pay her the money needed to pay for the gas. She was hard nosed, however, her heart was tender and agreed to allow the man a loan for the gas. You need to understand that gas was only 18 cents a gallon. Therefore, 10 gallons only cost \$1.80. But, in 1925 that was a lot of money.

That evening Lon came in from working at the Mill and asked his wife about her day.

Upon hearing about the salesman he chuckled and stated, "You will never see that money." She considered his statement a challenge and told her husband to get ready for supper. Over the next month Laura would perk up and watch when she heard a vehicle pass in front of her home.

Since there were only a couple of vehicles in the community it was easy to spot the Watkins Man as he came traveling by her house that day and the arrogance he displayed as he drove by and waved only caused her anger to reach a boiling point. She told her son and my grandfather, "Columbus, hitch up 'Old Coot' to the surrey." That horse was an easy cantering and quick-trotting horse the family used to take them to the Church House at Union Hill.

Papa hitched up the horse while she readied herself. It only took them about 45 minutes to make the eight-mile trip to Phil Campbell. They found the Watkins Man parked in front of the "Pool Hall." She did not know anything about the place since she was a church going woman and had never been in a place of ill repute. She'd heard that lazy men hung out in the establishment

See *Cummings*, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Lady Beetles

The cold wet weather has left many of us stuck inside and given us a chance to catch up on movies or relax by the fire. However, while we start to battle cabin fever, another critter is trying desperately to seek shelter for herself and her 500 closest friends: the Asian lady beetle.

The Asian lady beetle (*Harmognathys axyridis*) was introduced to the United States in the 1970s as a means to control aphids and other pests on important crops. These beetles may be a symbol for luck and appear cute with their black spots on their orange bodies, but they are in fact voracious predators. They reduce pest populations with ease because both the larval form and adult forms feed on aphids, mealybugs, whiteflies, and other soft bodied pest insects. This may seem like a great idea, but these non-native lady beetles have turned into a major pest and have even begun to displace our native lady beetle populations.

It can be very difficult to tell the difference between the Asian lady beetles and our native species. Usually, Asian species tend to have more white on their speckled pronotum, or "shoulders." Native species' pronotums are darker, and many have a richer red color compared to the Asian beetle's orange tint. However, each species has countless variations in color and pattern, making differentiating between native and invasive almost impossible with the naked eye.

One important distinction between our native and invasive beetle species is that the Asian lady beetles are gregarious, while the native lady beetles are not. Native lady beetles are not and have never been pests in our homes because their life cycle syncs with our climate. However, Asian species will scramble to find shelter to overwinter as the temperatures begin to drop. In many cases, their best bet to find shelter is any opening within a house: window screens, attic vents, door jams. Also, because they are gregarious, they will seek each other out so it only takes a few choosing to invade your home to attract even more.

Unfortunately for both the beetles, and us, many will end up starving in homes throughout the winter because there are not usually enough plant pests for them to eat indoors. As they die, they begin to stink and can often attract secondary pests like carpet beetles that will feed on their bodies.

The best way to deal with lady beetles is to prevent them entering the home in the first place. Make sure all door jams are sealed with weather stripping; all vents have fine wire mesh over them, window screens are secured, etc. This

See *Mattee*, page 5A

From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



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