

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Ladder Training

One of the many things that we do each day is training. We train on various firefighting subjects and skills to stay up-to-date and prepared for emergencies. Most of our training is instructed by firefighters and officers from our department. Occasionally, we have a specialty class where we host instructors from other departments or from the Georgia Fire Academy. Recently, we were fortunate to have representatives from Atlanta and Dekalb fire departments instruct a training class on Ladder 1 and ladder operations.

The training was conducted over two days. The subjects included ladder apparatus safety, maintenance, inspection, deployment, placement, master streams, and operating ground ladders. Firefighters were provided classroom lectures on these various ladder apparatus subjects.

Firefighters were given hands-on instruction on how to operate the ladder controls. Each firefighter was given an opportunity to practice operating the ladder by running through pin-point drills. These drills involved a traffic cone which was suspended from a short rope at the tip of the ladder. The objective was to place that suspended traffic cone on top of other stationary traffic cones which were placed on top of several buildings.

The firefighter had to control the movement of the entire ladder using small corrections to keep the traffic cone steady and place it in the correct position. The placement was difficult to judge due to the distance and the sight angle from the turntable. It was a great experience for firefighters who have not operated a ladder before.

Firefighters were also taught several techniques for deploying ground ladders. Ladder apparatus not only have the main aerial ladder but carry many other ground ladders to the used on the fire scene. Firefighters were given tips from the instructors who use these ground ladders every day. Each was shown new ways of deployment; tricks of the trade; and how to do more tasks with less firefighters.

The last day of training involved using the ladder apparatus master stream. This involves using the fire pump on the ladder apparatus or having fire engines pump to the apparatus. Once water supply is established, the main water pipe attached to the ladder can be used to spray a large amount of water. Firefighters were taught

See Dyer, page 5A

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Peace Cross

Wow, I wish I could have been in the Supreme Court on Feb. 27, 2019! Justice Elena Kagan declared the good news in plain language.

On that auspicious day, the Court heard oral arguments about the WWI Memorial in Bladensburg, MD. The American Legion erected the memorial on private land in 1925 to honor their 49 war heroes. In 1961, the land became state road right-of-way, so public dollars were used to maintain the Memorial.

In 2014, the American Humanist Association took offense. The Memorial, you see, is the quite conspicuous 40 foot tall concrete and granite "Peace Cross." They sued, referencing the First Amendment establishment clause and its modern interpretations. Hence the recent deliberations.

I pity the legal minds untangling the confusing snarl of prior rulings. In 2005, a Ten Commandments display in a Kentucky courthouse was disallowed, but allowed on the Texas capitol grounds. In 2010, then Solicitor General Kagan argued convincingly that the WWI memorial cross on public land in the Mojave Desert could stand. That cross was so "toxic" that officials covered it with plywood while awaiting adjudication.

One attorney argued that the history and secular purpose of the Peace Cross have stripped away its religious meaning, as though that's not offensive. Justice Kagan countered, "To many Christians, secularizing the cross is blasphemy." Then she uttered these powerful words: "It is the foremost symbol of Christianity, isn't it? It invokes the central theological claim of Christianity that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross for humanity's sins, and he rose from the dead. This is why Christians use crosses as a way to memorialize the dead because it connects to that central theological belief. Isn't that correct?" Yes ma'am. I hope you believe it!

Justice Ginsburg tried to frame the dilemma. "From its founding, this was an overwhelmingly Christian country. But now, we're told that 30% of the US population does not adhere to a Christian faith." That's the national context that invites dissent.

The cross is offensive because it contradicts today's zeit-

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Do you have a concern that we are having too many new homes built?

A. We cannot control growth; a lot of factors influence growth. Such as the economy, environment, population and employment. We all want our community to flourish in these areas and all others, in turn this draws many people looking to join communities that are flourishing as well.

Q. What are the positive side of new homes being built in the county?

A. Chain stores and local retailers require a certain amount of employment and population in an area before they will look to our county for starting a new chain business or any new local retail business. So, population growth is what feeds these corporate decisions. I occasionally hear people complain about the traffic and growth in our county and then say, "I wish we had a Publix, Aldi, or Kroger, etc., store in the county". The only way these stores come to a community is if they have a certain amount of growth and wealth. I think we all sometimes want it both ways.

Q. How do we stop growth?

A. You cannot stop growth and if you do, it cannot be done without negatively impacting those of us who already live here. Since I have been in office, my goal has always been to increase our quality of life by improving roads, public safety, public facilities, library, farmers market, horse arena, and parks, etc. The only problem is that as we make the county better for those of us already here, it is also an attraction to those looking for a great community to move to. We also have a strong building and development department that helps insure that any construction done in our county is done to high standards.

Q. We have heard rumors of new stores and restaurants moving here. What can you tell us?

A. It is now official that a Popeye's will soon be built near Cooks Country Kitchen on Highway 515 and Bob Head Drive. It is also official that the Development Authority has been recruiting national retailers including grocers and merchandisers to the former Food City site and are hopefully getting closer to securing a new anchor tenant for that plaza.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

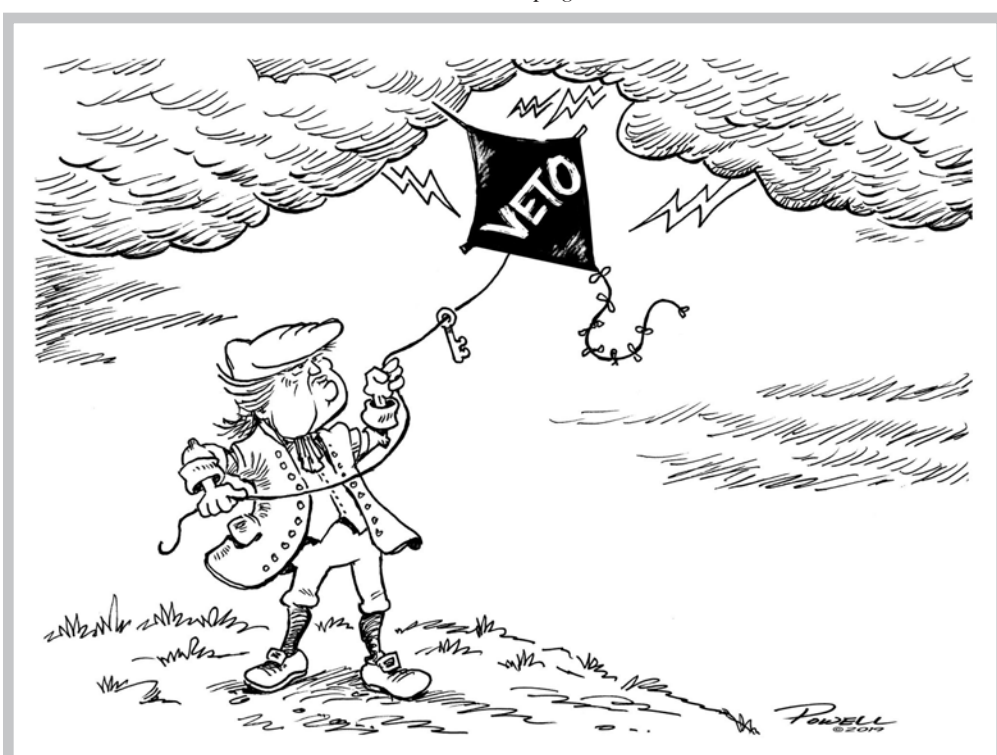
Did You Know...

Prevention is about advancing knowledge and understanding of the risk associated with drug and alcohol use. The goal of prevention programs is to deliver the facts and provide resources to people in hopes that they can avoid the pitfalls of substance use and abuse. Prevention programs are not just for children, adolescents and teens. Every person in our community benefits from substance abuse education and resources.

Drugs are abuse are evolving and becoming more accessible and they are often purchased legally at the local convenience store. Not all drugs use can be detected in over the counter drug screens that you can buy at the pharmacy or big box stores. Synthetic drugs are just as addictive and dangerous as illicit street drugs purchased from the local drug dealer.

See Drug Free, page 5A

The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.



Chamber of Commerce

Did you know that Union County was the 8th fastest growing county in the nation based on the last census report?

What's all the construction at Meeks Park and across from the high school?

Have you heard rumors of a restaurant coming to downtown Blairsville?

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



These are many of the exciting things going on in Blairsville and Union County. If you're interested in learning about the latest news affecting our community, please join us for our new local Eggs and Issues on March 28th at 8 am at the Union County Community Center. Both Mayor Conley and Commissioner Paris will be sharing their continuing visions for Blairsville - Union County. We'd love to have you come join us for breakfast and learn more about what is happening in our area. If you are interested in attending, please call the Chamber at 706-745-5789.

Last week, we were honored to host a re-

See Chamber, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Open Letter to BRMEMC

To: Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors and General Manager
Subject: Plan to increase EMC Customer Charge to \$40 per month

This is in regards to articles in the North Georgia News Jan. 23, and Feb. 20, by Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Manager Jeremy Nelms stating his proposal before the EMC Board to increase the Customer Fee in increments to \$40 per month and decrease the electric kWh cost. This plan is to shift the cost of operating the EMC from the high power users (mostly commercial) to the home owner who uses a small amount of electricity. For example, a home owner using 1000 kWh a month would have their customer charge raised to \$40 per month while a usage of 220,000 kWh or more per month would stay at \$75 per month. This is simply WRONG to shift this cost from the HAVE'S to those (many) that are retired, living on a fixed income and struggling to meet their financial costs of the necessities of life; food, clothing, shelter and health care. Towns County has the highest percentage in the state of citizens age 65 and over and is among the counties with the highest percentage (50%) of public school students on reduced cost of meals, which is based on their family income.

Let me point out to the EMC Board Members that the members they represent in the other EMC counties of Union, Fannin, Clay and Cherokee have similar demographics on age and income. A Towns County friend checked with his sister living in Tennessee who is getting her electricity from the same TVA. She pays \$11.71 Customer Charge per month and our EMC is charging \$21.37, almost double. She also pays less per kWh. Our EMC Customer Charge has increased almost 50% over a six-year period from 2012 to 2018. Our EMC members have not received 1/3 as much of an increase in their wages, salary or retirement.

One lady I talked with was very distressed. She and her daughter each have a meter. She works two jobs trying to make financial ends meet. This increase would mean the Customer Charge plus 7% tax for one year for the two of them will be \$1,027.20 plus the cost of the electricity they use. I urge you to not shift this financial burden from those that have plenty to those living on a fixed income. I appreciate the time and courtesy shown by Towns County EMC Board Members and Manager Nelms in listening to my concerns and request that they NOT follow through with this plan.

Sincerely,
Bill Kendall
Former Towns County Sole Commissioner

Honeybees...

Honeybees - Essential Link in our Food Chain: The Mountain Beekeepers' Association is hosting a free Beekeepers' Field Day Saturday, March 23, at the Blairsville Farmers Market. The 10-station "round robin" symposium is designed for experienced beekeepers to share management techniques especially with less experienced and novice beekeepers. Sponsored by the Union County Farmers Market and Chestatee-Chatahoochee RC&D, registration starts at 8 a.m., with the seminars starting at 9 a.m. Lunch will be provided by CCRC&D.

It's that time of year to start planting gardens and High Tunnels because spring is just around the corner, and honeybees are an essential part of growing fruits and vegetables and without them to pollinate the blooms the plants will not produce their fruit. Bees are an essential part of our food chain so when you see bees on your picnic plate be assured, they are not trying to find a tender place to sting, just foraging for pollen to take back to the hive to feed the queen mother and 59,999 other hard-working worker sisters and a few dead-beat drone brothers.

Domestication of bees is shown in Egyptian art from around 4,500 years ago, simple hives were used and honey was stored in jars, some of which were found in the tombs of pharaohs such as Tutankhamun. It wasn't until the 18th century that European understanding of the colonies and biology of bees allowed the construction of the moveable comb hive so that honey could be harvested without destroying the entire colony.

A colony of bees consists of three castes of bees: A Queen Bee, which is normally the only breeding female in the colony; The queen is the only sexually mature female in the hive and all of the female worker bees and male drones are her offspring. The queen may live for up to three years or more and may lay half a million eggs or more in her lifetime. At the peak of the breeding season, late spring to summer, a good queen may be capable of laying 3,000 eggs in one day. The queen is raised from a normal worker egg, but is fed a larger amount of royal jelly than a normal worker bee, resulting in a radically different growth and metamorphosis. The Queen produces pheromones and one of these chemicals suppresses the development of ovaries in all the female worker bees in the hive and prevents them from laying eggs. The queen emerges from her cell after 15 days of development and she remain in the hive for 3-7 days before venturing out on a mating flight. Mating flight is otherwise known as "nuptial flight." Her

See Riley, page 5A

RC&D Executive Director
Frank Riley



The Scoundrel

The names of the participants in the following story are original. When I was a boy there were very few turkeys in north Georgia. Then things changed for the better and turkeys were stocked all over north Georgia. Turkeys came quite common at places like the Cohuttas, Blue Ridge, Chestatee, Coopers Creek and many other Wildlife Management Areas. And all of my friends wanted to be able to take a turkey. One particular friend wanted to take one so bad that he studied Turkey hunting. He studied it more than he studied math or any other subject.

Patrick read a book written by a great Turkey hunter which said that using a ghillie suit would help the hunter to conceal himself from the turkeys. So, he went to the local Army Surplus store and purchased one. These are camouflaged, netted suits used by snipers in the military. So, he began using the ghillie suit while he chased Gobblers all over the hills of north Georgia. But, he still had problems taking a turkey because he was young and inexperienced. So, he hit upon a plan.

The young man took some corn from his Dad's corn crib and found a place where turkeys had been roosting. He poured the corn on the ground under the trees. Then he seated himself against a tree with big log lying on the ground next to the tree. Fats would strike his slate Turkey Call every 15-20 minutes. After an hour or so he noticed the bushes moving and heard leaves crunching as if an animal were walking toward him. As the hunter peered through the bushes he saw a man's head and then his whole body and then another man was with him. It was easy to recognize the men. They were the local Game Wardens. Everyone knew that Mr. Burnette was a fair, but, tough man. The boy also knew he was in trouble. So, he laid himself down next to the log and covered himself with leaves. He listened as the Game Wardens came closer and closer. Soon he could hear each and every word the wardens spoke. Patrick said, "They walked so close I could have reached out and grabbed either of their feet." Despite looking for 20 minutes the wardens never saw my friend.

Finally, the wardens sat down on the log and rested. The unknown warden spoke first and said, "Looks like he just baited the area and I think we must have scared him off." Mr. Burnette said, "Nope, the little scoundrel is close by because, I can feel it in my bones."

Eventually, the wardens left and so did my friend. This incident scared Patrick straight and he never baited turkeys or any other game

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



Fertilizer

As we get closer and closer to spring and plants begin to come out of their winter slumber, I'd like to talk about fertilizers. There are many different types out there. I'll talk about some basics of fertilizers. Next week I'll talk about some of the different types that are out there, so that you can make an informed decision about which kind fits your needs this spring.

First thing to talk about with fertilizer is what's in it. Usually a fertilizer will have a series of three numbers on it, for example 10-10-10 or 16-4-8. These numbers are percentages. The first number is always nitrogen, the second phosphorus, and the third potassium. These can be abbreviated to N-P-K, which are the symbols for these elements on the periodic table of elements. These three elements are the most important for plant growth. That's why we make recommendations based on them. If you had a 100-pound bag of 16-4-8, that bag is 16% N, 4% P, and 8% K. Meaning in that 100-pound bag you have 16 lbs of N, 4 lbs of P, and 8 lbs of K. Now, you make be thinking, "I paid for a 100-pound bag! Why am I only getting 28 pounds of nutrients from it?" The rest of the poundage in that bag is probably going to be some other nutrients that are needed for planted growth, but in much smaller quantities, and other inert materials that keep those nutrients in a form that's usable by plants; there could be a special coating on the pellets that make them easier to apply as well. But now that you have this knowledge it brings up an important point, that when purchasing a fertilizer it is good to look at how much N-P-K you are getting for your money, because it will vary.

Now let's talk about when to apply it. It's best to apply fertilizer when plants are actively growing. Fertilizer that is applied when plants are in a dormant state can be washed away before the plants wake up and need the fertilizer. Nitrogen is very mobile in the soil, meaning that when it rains your nitrogen will likely be leached out of the soil. Phosphorus and potassium will stick around a lot longer in the soil, but can be lost by erosion. Never apply fertilizer to a stressed plant. If the plant is wilted from lack of water applying fertilizer can do more damage to the plant.

Where you apply fertilizer is important. Don't just dump all of it at the base of the plant, instead spread it around so that the roots growing out from the plant can reach out and receive it. Applying it too heavily in one spot can result in burn or keep the plant from properly taking up water. If you're fertilizing trees remember that tree roots extend out beyond the canopy of the leaves, so you're going need to make that ap-

See Williams, page 5A

Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



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