

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Volunteering for CERT

Volunteering in your community can be rewarding. It is a noble calling to spend your valuable time to help your community and to help the people in that community. People volunteer for many things. Union County Emergency Management Agency (UCEMA) and Union County Fire Department (UCFD) have a variety of volunteer opportunities for citizens who wish to give back to their community.

One opportunity for volunteering in the community is the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). CERT members, by definition, are members of a neighborhood or workplace who want to be better prepared for the hazards that threaten their communities. The CERT members were initially developed to be used in their neighborhood. Their main responsibility was to take care of themselves and the community during a major disaster in the event emergency services were overwhelmed or unable to reach them. However, as the concept began to develop, CERT has proven themselves to be an active and vital part of their communities' preparedness and response capability.

CERT members are trained by UCEMA instructors to be able to take care of emergencies in their neighborhood and to respond to major disasters where they are needed. During training, CERT members are taught to prepare for hazards; size-up the situation and report to the command center; locate and turn off utilities; extinguish small fires; identify hazardous materials situations; triage and treat victims; and conduct light search and rescue. Members who have completed training receive a CERT backpack containing needed equipment to perform their assigned duties.

During a major event or disaster, CERT teams work through the Union County Emergency Operations Center (UCEOC). They provide valuable information to the UCEOC and perform functions as assigned by the Incident Commander. CERT members also provide help for non-essential duties during a major disaster or other events. These duties can include administrative work, damage assessment, shelter work, communications, or staffing of the UCEOC. There are many areas where CERT members can be a great help to the overall response to an emergency.

Volunteering is rewarding and when it comes to emergency

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



The Cross

Christians tend to be a little excited this time of year! Sunday, April 1 is the day we especially celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But that miracle is meaningless without the cross.

The Bible notes that the message of Jesus' death on a cross seems foolish (lit. "moronic") and scandalous. God dying may seem inconceivable, but it is the crux of the gospel. "The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

What is the cross really about? It's about reconciliation and peace between you and God (Col. 1:20). The cross exonerates you because God nailed to the cross the certificate of debt against you, and makes you alive with Christ (Col. 2:13-14). On the cross, Jesus bore your sins in His body, so you might live to righteousness (1 Pet 2:24). It brings people together (Eph. 2:16). It's about us.

We know Jesus agonized over his impending death, as he anticipated the weight of the world on his shoulders. What motivated him? Love and joy. "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16). Jesus, "who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2).

At age 95, Billy Graham recorded his final message in a video called "The Cross." In it he says, "With all my heart I want to leave you with the truth. God loves you, and is willing to forgive you of all your sins. The cross is offensive because it confronts people. We deserved the cross, hell, and judgement, and all that that means. Sin is a disease in the human heart. How can we be set free? "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17). There is no other way of salvation except through the cross of Christ. Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father but through me" (John 14:6). Turn from your sins to Jesus Christ, and say 'I'm a sinner, I need forgiveness. You're the only one that can change me.' Today, I'm asking you to put your trust in Christ."

The great Methodist hymn writer Charles Wesley wrote, "Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me? Fast bound in sin and nature's night; I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; my chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose,

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. We keep hearing rumors that you are not going to run for Union County Commissioner again. Is that true?

A. No, it is not true. I have never said to anyone that I would not run again for Commissioner this next term. It is a tough job, but one that I enjoy very much. As long as I have the support of my wife, my health is still good, and I am still enthused about my job, there is no reason not to run. We have been able to make a lot of progress in Union County over the past 18 years. I am thankful that I have been able to be a part of this progress. However, I have to give the credit to our dedicated county employees, elected officials, the public, who are always willing to volunteer and help others in need in this community, and finally God who has blessed us all with the most beautiful scenery, rushing trout streams and natural resources that it is our job to protect as much as possible.

Q. When is your election for Union County Commissioner?

A. My election does not come up until November of 2020.

Q. Who all is running this election cycle?

A. The election season can always be confusing with trying to figure out what offices are up for re-election and who is running for those offices. The *North Georgia News* does a great job of keeping the public informed about elections and candidates. You can look at the article in last week's paper for all the information on local elections. Basically, Union County only has three school board seats with one of those unopposed. Our two Superior Court judges, Judge Murphy Miller and Judge Raymond George and District Attorney, Jeff Langley, and State Senator Steve Gooch are all running unopposed. Mickey Cummings from Blairsville, will be running against Matt Gurtler, the State Representative from Rabun County.

Q. We heard there is going to be a new entrance to the Farmers Market. Where is this going to be located?

A. This is a project that I am very excited about and with the continued growth of the Farmers Market has become necessary. The existing roads will continue to be utilized, but a new entrance and exit will be located at the red light where the Glen Gooch Bypass intersects Highway 76/515. Union County was just

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

Substance Abuse Lowers Chances For Success In Life

The American dream of success is a lot harder to attain for teenagers who use pot and alcohol, especially if they become substance abusers, a new study reports.

Teen pot smokers and drinkers struggle to achieve some of the hallmarks of adult success, including obtaining a college degree, getting married, holding down a full-time job and earning a good living, the researchers found.

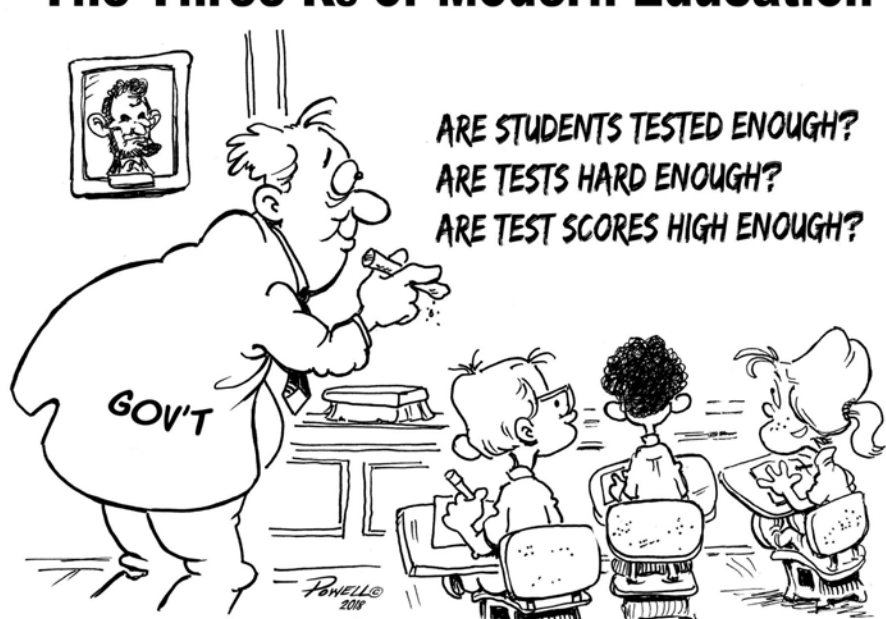
"Parents should try to delay their children's onset of use as much as possible," said research supervisor Victor Hesselbrock, chairman of addiction studies at the University of Connecticut. "If you can push regular use back well into adolescence, the kids do a lot better."

The researchers have been tracking the

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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.

The Three Rs of Modern Education



Letters to the Editor

Cleaning Up Blairsville

Dear Editor,

Congratulations to Commissioner Paris for a sensible and sensitive approach to cleaning up Blairsville. There is no doubt that some owners have exceeded a "reasonable standard" for maintaining their property. Others have made this beautiful mountain community an eyesore for Union Countians.

It appears to me that Mr. Paris has taken every precaution to respect the property rights of residents. This is an admirable approach but if improvement is not forthcoming in 60-90 days, the force of existing laws should be followed. No doubt some will ignore polite notification, to some people that is their nature, but they are flying in the face of businesses and responsible persons who value their environment.

It is my opinion that we are fortunate to have a politician of Mr. Paris' caliber. I hope he will keep the clean community issue at the top of the list. Resolve the problems with persistence and the law when necessary. A thriving city is always seeking improvement. Only a small percentage of Union County citizens are causing the junk, trash, and foreign objects which detract from our attractive mountain scenery. Stay the course, Commissioner, the majority is with you. Do not stop and do what is necessary! "Make Blairsville Beautiful Again!"

Richard E. Hyer

E-SPLOST

Dear Editor,

The preamble to our Constitution states that one of our government's guiding principles is to "provide for the general welfare" for "ourselves and our posterity." One of the ways that we accomplish this is through a publicly supported school system. Such a system ensures that all children have access to an education. In order to support our public educational system we pay taxes. Our state government isn't always forthcoming with funds for our local system, so we as citizens can help our local system by paying an extra tax in our local community and have that tax dedicated to our system, hence the "E-splost."

We have a large population of "Boomers" here in Union County. Most of us benefitted from the public school system. I certainly did, here in Union County, graduating 50 years ago this year. My education was paid for by the adult tax payers of the day. We didn't have an "E-splost" back then, so we received a good, but very basic education. When I look at what the current E-splost has done for our kids, I am amazed. A medical wing to help to create an interest in our young

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Letters to the Editor

God Help Us

Dear Editor,

As a nation what are the things we glory in? Yes, we trust in human wisdom, in riches and in power. We need to be reminded that our trust doesn't lie in Washington or in the White House or Wall Street. Our strength doesn't lie in the stock market, the economy or some clever politicians and for sure our strength doesn't depend on having nuclear weapons. Any strength that we have must lie in our spiritual values, our moral values, our character and our purpose for being here and sadly these values are not taught in our schools or colleges today. We have raised up a generation that is rude, uncontrollable and has no sense of moral values and we think we are better off than the average Joe. We are slowly coasting into a culture of self-gratification, not having any concern for others in need and when

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World Happiness Day

Dear Editor,

World Happiness Day is March 20th. According to a United Nations Report, 156 countries were ranked on six variables — income, life expectancy, freedom, social support, trust and generosity. Finland came out on top... followed by Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and Australia. The countries are "characterized by lower wealth inequality, high taxes, good access to healthcare, long life expectancy, low corruption and support for those who need help from the state or communities". The U.S. was ranked 18, down four places from last year. Top factors for the American decline in happiness

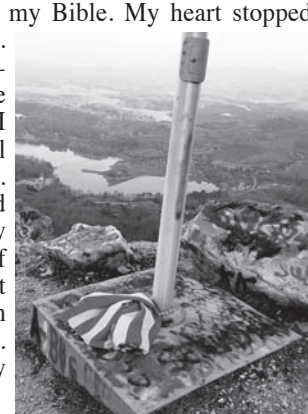
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"Pray for our Nation"

Dear Editor,

I went to the top of Bell Mountain this morning to read my Bible. My heart stopped when I saw this. Our beloved American Flag in a pile on the ground. I went to City Hall and reported it. They promised to call the county and take care of it. Such disrespect for Our American Flag. Very sad. We need to pray for our Nation.

Teresa VanZee



Your Influence

Have you ever contemplated the influence of people upon our lives and what type of influence you may have on someone's life? There were two instances in my father's life that had profound influences upon his life as well as the lives of his not yet born children.

My father played summer baseball with a group of boys from Phil Campbell. These boys were managed by Roy Reeves. He set up games with neighboring towns and arranged transportation to the games for the boys. Roy funded the team through his wagers on the games they played. Roy owned a little gas station in town where many of his players worked for extra spending money. Most of the boys had no money to buy equipment. So, when a boy needed a new glove, spikes or a bat Roy made sure the boy got what he needed. These purchases were not loans. They were gifts.

After my dad and mother graduated high school they settled down on our family farm.

Dad went to work at a textile mill in Hackleburgh, Alabama. Dad worked and also played summer baseball for the mill. After I was born Dad hoped for advancement at the mill.

However, he was told the mill would soon slow down and they were even disbanding the baseball team. Shortly afterward Dad was laid off and he decided to move to Chicago to find work. Dad had no money so Roy Reeves loaned \$200 to make the trip and get settled into an apartment.

Papa didn't want Dad to leave home to find work in Chicago. Papa was also a proud man that didn't like to borrow money. After Dad had left on the train Papa found out that he had borrowed money from Roy Reeves. So, Papa went to Phil Campbell to pay off the money Dad had borrowed. Papa walked into the service station and asked, "Roy, how much money does my boy owe you?" Roy told Papa, "That's none of your business Mr. Cummings. That loan is between me and Paul. I know he will pay it back." Papa grinned and walked out of the service station. He was still mad at my daddy for leaving. But, he was proud because he knew Roy would pay back the money he owed Roy Reeves.

Years later my dad became a minister. He received news that his old friend, Roy, was sick with cancer. So, Dad went to see him. When Dad walked into his house Roy began to cry and said, "Paul, I need to apologize to you and the other boys because I was not a good influence on you". Dad couldn't believe his ears and said, "Roy, you'll never know the influence you had

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



RC&D

Smokey's Tips for Safe Debris Burning

This is my annual reminder about the risks of Spring yard cleaning with fire. The yard looks good after we burn off all of the winter debris and leaves and grass and daffodils start popping up to transform the dreary winter landscape into the bright colors of spring. Spring-time is when we emerge from our winter hibernation and start cleaning our yards to get rid of all the debris, leaves, limbs, and pine straw that has collected since fall. The usual method to do this is to pile it in the yard, light a match and watch it burn. While this debris burning is easy, quick, and smells good, it is also very hazardous for our property. All it takes is one spark from the burn pile to fly up and land on the roof and you can be the object of a 911 call which brings trucks with flashing red lights and water hoses. A flying ember from your burning pile can travel up to a half mile with the right wind and land where it is not detected and cause a fire that you or your neighbor may not be aware of until it's too late. Debris burning is Georgia's #1 cause of wildfire, and it accounts for over 50 percent of all wildfires in the state and burning yard leaf piles is the most common cause of these wildfires.

All debris burning requires a burn permit from the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) with the exception of agricultural fields or pastures, which require GFC notification. The burning of household garbage is prohibited and not permitted by the GFC. A major cause of debris burn wildfires is not obtaining a permit and burning during improper weather conditions. Permits are obtained by calling your local GFC county office or dialing 1-877-OK2-BURN. It's free and only takes minutes. Fires should not be initiated before 8 a.m. and should be completely extinguished before dark. Burning permits are for hand piled natural vegetation and existing small garden spots only, including leaf piles on the premises where they fell, existing small clearings to plant vegetables and flower gardens, vegetative debris disposal from storm damage, weed abatement, and disease and or pest prevention. This permit does not include the burning of debris generated by machine clearing or an area for establishing a garden spot or other clearings. If your unpermitted fire gets out and damages your neighbor's house, you can be held liable, or if it burns your house, your insurance company may not pay, but if you have a permit, you are off the hook. You can also be held responsible for

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RC&D Executive Director
Frank Riley



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