

Opinions

Everybody has one...

COVID-19 Continues On

Although there are other issues and events that have been in the news lately, the COVID-19 pandemic continues on. The Union County Emergency Management Agency has been working hard to monitor and stay on top of the situation. We have officially had the Emergency Operations Center operating since March 12th. That means there has been staff working with some aspect of the COVID-19 event every day. During that time, we have moved through several phases.

The first phase was planning. This was difficult because there hasn't been an event like this and there was little information to go on. We had to use the strategy of planning for the worst and hoping for the best. We were in constant contact with multiple organizations and stakeholders to gather information and plan.

The next phase was to prepare. When this first started there was a lot of talk about flattening the curve. That was the strategy to slow down the spread. The slowing prevents our health care system from being overwhelmed which could have resulted in many more deaths. It also gave us time to obtain the proper supplies and equipment to safely respond.

As the Emergency Management Agency, one of our jobs is to facilitate the request and distribution of supplies and equipment that may be available for any response to a major event. We do this through Georgia Emergency Management Agency by resource requests. To give you an example of how busy this event has been, we have processed more resource requests for COVID-19 than we had in all of the other events in the last 20 years.

We are now in what we would consider the long response phase. This involves many activities such as providing public information; responding to COVID-19 calls; distributing the supplies; monitoring the progress; and continuing to track the numbers which are going up as expected.

The executive orders and guidelines presented were and still are intended to slow down the spread, not to stop it. It is also to protect our more vulnerable population. We will still see the numbers go up due to the inevitable spread and the increase in testing. We must continue to be vigilant. We still recommend that everyone should be

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Change of Heart

"Change is the only constant in life." – Heraclitus (500 BC)

In a city near you, people have been using both peaceful and violent means to accelerate change. The daily news compels you to form an opinion on the methods or the goal of that change. Some plead for America to honor its original declaration that "all men are created equal." Others want redistributed wealth or property. Some want reconciliation while others want reparations. The reason for so many solutions is that we don't agree on the problem.

Our most basic problem is a matter of the heart, and what we desire above all else. Jesus said "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). When you seek God's rule over your heart, you'll find that you also "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). Jesus loved and associated with people not like him, and they were changed.

Tom Tarrants tells the story of a heart change in his biography, "Consumed by Hate, Redeemed by Love." The subtitle is, "How a Violent Klansman Became a Champion of Racial Reconciliation." Tarrants honestly believed he was a Christian because of his early church experience in the South. In high school in the 1960's he became radicalized, believing his terroristic actions were necessary for God and country.

In 1968, law enforcement shot him several times as he attempted to set a bomb. At the age of 21, he received a 35-year sentence for his crimes. He escaped but was recaptured. He attempted suicide but failed. So he began to read. History and philosophy began his intellectual liberation. His spiritual liberation came when he read, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

He realized that he needed repentance, forgiveness, faith, and change. In 1970, kneeling on the concrete cell floor he prayed, "Lord Jesus Christ, I have ruined my life and the lives of others and committed many sins. Please forgive me, take over my life, and do whatever you want with me." He writes, "In that moment I felt as if a thousand pounds had been lifted off my shoulders."

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. I've noticed the grass getting really tall on the side of my road, or where I'm trying to pull out onto the main road. When will the county be mowing this year?

A. We've had an extremely rainy winter and spring that has turned into being sunny and warm, which has really made the grass grow rapidly. Because of all the rain it has slowed things down, however we will get to all the roads as soon as possible. If you feel like your intersection is dangerous, please call the Road Department at 706-745-6062 and report the problem. They will try to send out a crew to weed eat the area of concern.

Q. I called the Road Department over a month ago about a stopped up culvert and it is still not fixed. What do I need to do now?

A. The road department is busy year round. Once again would like to remind everyone of the extremely rainy seasons we have had. Now, we are headed directly into mowing season along with all of the normal responsibilities they have on a daily basis. I would ask that you touch base with them again just to make sure they still have a work order for your concern. Most of the time, it is just a matter of scheduling and having the time to get to all the projects.

Q. Since the Pandemic has affected so many things, will we still have fireworks?

A. Yes, currently the Fourth of July fireworks are still scheduled at Meeks Park, to begin at 9:30 p.m. For any further information or questions you may contact the Chamber of Commerce at 706-745-5789. It is felt that social distancing can be maintained adequately during this time. Please do your part.

Q. If we want to go to the Courthouse are they open?

A. The courthouse has relaxed some of the restrictions that were in place, but it still varies from office to office for what they are scheduling and requiring upon entering. We suggest you call the office you are interested in visiting and discuss with them what is required; or you may find you can conduct your business over the phone. The phone numbers for county offices are listed below: Animal Control 706-439-6052; Building Inspections 706-439-6045; Clerk of Superior Court 706-439-6022; Commissioner's

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

Synthetic Drugs

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.

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.

Every person in our community benefits from substance abuse education and resources.

Drugs and 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.

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"You know, with this new Father's Day shirt the kids gave me, I don't mind wearing a mask in public."

Chamber of Commerce

The Mission of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce is to positively impact our community & members by facilitating tourism, economic and cultural development. During these challenging times it has been tough to draw the line on how to best support our local businesses and when is the best time to promote Blairsville-Union County as a tourism destination. We have reached out to our members and have developed programs to help disseminate as much information as possible. We will continue to work with our members to assist in this reopening process.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



While not everyone agrees with all the decisions our leaders make, I think we can all agree that North Georgia's leaders work for our communities. Participation in Census 2020 is critically important within our community — and the results will impact us for 10 years. One of the most important task residences in the

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Letters to the Editor

Systemic Racism

To the Editor,
We have all seen and heard the protests/riots against what has been referred to as "systemic police brutality against people of color." The topic seems to be talked about on every evening news program. We have seen an increasing number of references from Democrats about the problem of systemic racism. But no one has ever addressed the question of who is running these systems in the big cities. Minneapolis has been under Democratic control since 1978. Seattle has been under Democratic control for 51 years. Chicago has been under Democratic control for 89 years and its present mayor is a black woman. Philadelphia has had Democratic mayors for 68 years; three of the last five mayors have been black men. Six of the last seven Atlanta mayoral administrations were led by black Democratic mayors, and the present mayor is a black woman. And the list goes on! And, of course, these administrations are the ones who oversee these police departments. So, if there is so much "systemic racism" in these police departments, why hasn't it been corrected over so many years under Democratic leaders? We never get an answer.

Tim Groza

Two Thoughts

To the Editor,
Sad (a) seeing in America looters and arsonists destroying the livelihoods of small business operators and (b) then hearing other incorrigibles calling it merely inconsequential "collateral damage."
Sad reading that in Hiwassee (and perhaps elsewhere locally) some otherwise sensible protestors advocating the abolition/defunding of local law enforcement.

C'mon, folks. Two thoughts: (1) get rid of extremism and understand improvement via compromise is not weakness and (2) "Give peace a chance" never goes out of style.

Claude Spears

A New Body

To the Editor,
When I look into the mirror of my aging body fast approaching 80, I remember God's word in the book of I. Corinthians 15: 53, which reads: "For this corruptible body must put on incorruption and this mortal body must put on immortality." We cannot enter heaven as we are because these old bodies are full of the sin nature of humanity. These bodies are quiet limited. We are almost deaf and blind as far as heaven is concerned, but the good news is, when Christ returns

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Dry Hydrant Advantages

Most of us take fire protection for granted whether from our local urban or county fire departments and we don't pay attention to fire hydrants because they are something that are just in our yards or on the corner of the street.

Those who live in an urban area have fire departments close to our communities and a fire hydrant placed every 1,000 feet which makes the insurance companies happy and they are willing to issue coverage for our homes.

A fire hydrant is not just a place for your male dog to raise his leg on but a source of water for fire tankers and engines to fill up with water to fight a fire. Hydrants are usually connected to a minimum of a 6" water main. If it is any smaller the suction from a fire truck pump can collapse the line. The hydrant gives the fire department a close water source to fight the fire in your neighborhood.

When fire departments need water to fill their tanks, the find the nearest and most accessible fire hydrant and attach a gate valve and hose to transfer water so the water tankers can shuttle water to the pumper that puts water on the fire. A Fire engine can pump 1,000 gallons a minute or more, so it only takes a few minutes to empty the tank and an ample supply of water is critical to putting the fire out. Here in the rural areas of North Georgia, we may have hydrants every 1,000 feet of so where there is county water, but that does not mean that it is near to all houses. Some are up steep, narrow, one lane roads where a fire truck cannot turn around even if it gets to the fire. In our fire department as with all fire departments the number one priority is fire fighter safety and next is keeping our equipment safe so we don't want to put our firefighters and engines in harm's way where there is no way to get out without risking life and equipment.

This is what Firewise is all about, keeping your home safe from wildfire that will buy you time for the fire department to get there with whatever equipment can get to your house. Tate City is one of the communities that are isolated and not close to an easily accessible water source so the Towns County Firewise Coalition is planning to install a fire hydrant at the community center to give fire departments a place to get water without having to shuttle water along the narrow one lane 6 mile road and bridges leading from the paved road to the city. This should give

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RC&D Executive Director

Frank Riley



The Logger and Uncle Bud

During the summer of 1957, Papa wanted to clear some land so he could increase his row crop acreage on his farm. He talked with a logger from Hackleburgh about cutting some timber, and the two men agreed the logger would pay Papa based upon the timber taken from his property each week. During August, the logger began cutting Papa's timber. It was a dry summer and fall, which led to many days of work for the logger.

However, in late September, Papa had received no money for nearly eight weeks of timber harvest from his property.

One evening around the supper table, the family was discussing the problem. Paul and Bud were encouraging Papa to confront the logger about the problem. Papa told his boys, "Mr. Finch and I shook hands, and he promised to pay me. Not everyone out there is a bad person, and sometimes we just have to trust people to do the right thing. He may have some personal problems he is dealing with, but, I believe he will pay me the money he owes." Papa was big on discussing one's problems and coming to a solution. And sometimes he could be just a mite too trusting.

However, Granny was more of a doer, and she would take matters into her own hands if she needed. So, after Papa left the table and went to the barn, Granny told her sons that she would deal with Mr. Finch the next day, which happened to be Thursday. Uncle Bud got home a little early from school that day since football practice was shortened. The first thing he did was to head to the kitchen for one of Granny's fried apple pies. While eating his snack, he heard a logging truck coming from the woods and noticed Granny had left the house. Bud heard the truck stop in front of the house and soon heard the logger's inebriated voice.

Granny had stopped the truck and proceeded to explain to Mr. Finch about their disappointment in not receiving any pay for the timber he'd been cutting for eight weeks. Mr. Finch took exception and directed some foul language toward my Granny, which was a mistake. Upon hearing the language, Bud walked from the house while toting a shotgun. About the same time my Dad wheeled into the driveway to find a man yelling at Granny and Bud holding a shotgun. He ran toward his younger brother to calm him down. Bud was smiling, and that was not good either. Bud asked his older brother, "Did you hear what he called our mother?"

Bud gave the gun to Paul and said, "If anyone else gets out of that truck besides the bigger

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Japanese Beetles

The Japanese beetles will soon be out in full force. They are in west Georgia and will be beginning here soon. They are a huge pest as they munch their way through your yard. Controlling them can be challenging because they are such voracious eaters. Let's talk about some strategies for lessening their impact.

Japanese beetles arrived in the U.S. 1916. They have spread to much of the East coast and across the Mississippi River. They will feed on a wide range of ornamentals, fruit trees, vegetables, and shade trees. Feeding on such a wide range of plants means that your yard may look like an all you can eat buffet to them. They have a metallic green color on their abdomen. They look similar to June beetles. June beetles are typically about 1.5 to twice as large as Japanese beetles. Japanese beetles also have a row of five white dots along the side of the abdomen that can be used to differentiate them from other beetles. The damage that you see from them looks like skeletonizing of the leaves. They'll eat everything between the leaf vein, but leave the veins.

Thankfully, Japanese beetles only have a single generation each year. Usually the adults, which are the beetles that we see flying around eating leaves, will begin to appear in May – June. They live four to six weeks. The females will lay eggs for most of their adult life. The eggs are laid in the soil. They hatch in about two weeks. After hatching, the beetles live in the soil until they come back out as adults in May.

There are three times a year that are most ideal for controlling Japanese beetles. The most obvious is when they are adults and are out feeding on leaves. You can use carbaryl, which is the active ingredient in Sevin to control adults. Sevin comes as a liquid or in dust form. If you don't have a heavy infestation you can also use a cup with soapy water in it. Knock Japanese beetles off plants into the cup and they will drown. The second time to control Japanese beetles is in September. By that time of year all the Japanese beetles are grubs living in the soil. Even as grubs they can do damage to turf by feeding on the roots. Milky spore is an organic product that can be used to kill grubs in the ground. It's a bacteria that feeds on Japanese beetle grubs after they ingest it. September is the optimal time to make a milky spore application. The third time to control Japanese beetles would be in the spring with another milky spore application. Soil temperatures need to be over 65 for milky spore to be effective. The grubs must ingest the milky spore for it to be work. It only works on grubs, so applying it while the beetles are out eating leaves won't kill

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Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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