

Opinions

The Stress of First Responders

Stress. It is something that every First Responder is familiar with. They deal with high consequential incidents, which could have life-changing consequences for the public and First Responders, on a daily basis. All First Responders...911 dispatchers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, law enforcement officers, and many others are all exposed to this stress.

The stress of the job has been an unspoken burden in the past but recently it has been moved to the forefront of public safety. Studies have shown that health issues, alcohol abuse, post-traumatic stress, and suicide rates are much higher in public safety than the general population. Many organizations are recognizing the need to deal with these situations by increasing awareness and prevention.

Stress can be defined as “a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.” There is good stress and bad stress. Good Stress is stress that can motivate or drive a person. Most First Responders appreciate this type of stress and use it to focus.

Bad stress is stress that can be damaging, mentally and physically, after long-term exposure. People are under many types of stress and handle stress in many different ways. First Responders not only have the stress of the job but, like everyone else, have personal stress as well.

There are many contributing factors to stress for First Responders. One factor is the work hours. Shifts range from 12 to 24 hours and are day and night shifts. These often leave the person sleep deprived. Another is the pace of the job. We never know when or what the next call will be, and we can go from a normal status to a highly stressful situation in just a few seconds.

There are many other factors, but the major contributing factor to stress is dealing with extreme emergency situations. Most people may never witness or be involved in an emergency, but First Responders deal with it every day. We may have the training, but when there is a constant exposure to emergencies, it can start to affect the people who are there to help.

I think the bottom line is that every First Responder wants to know if they are making a difference. The thanks and appre-

See Dyer, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Re: “Time to Speak Up”

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to a recent letter to the editor regarding President Trump’s Executive Order to expand American timber production, which includes portions of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.

While walking through our new construction home in Union County this spring, I happened to glance at the ink stamp on a 2x4 interior wallboard and was shocked to learn our home was being built with wood imported from Austria. While conducting research, I learned the American timber industry is the gold standard of sustainability for the rest of the world.

According to the Timber and Forestry Foundation, “We are growing through natural regeneration, more than twice the volume

See Jensen-Veney, page 5A

Keep the Facts Straight

Dear Editor,

This is a response to the July 2 letter to the editor titled “Immigration”:

The “cages” holding illegal immigrant children that the leftists continue to refer to were famously actually first used by the Obama Administration to protect minors by separating them from adults in the same facilities. No one back then complained.

Trump’s ICE has plenty of “illegals” (as opposed to “immigrants”) to round up, they are not deporting legal guest workers, green card holders and like that.

The real problem is that the Democrats inundated the system with millions of “illegals” who are felons, not just folks committing misde-

See Tarter, page 5A

Blood Assurance

Dear Community Partner,

At Union General Hospital, we care for our neighbors, coworkers, friends, and family. Every day, someone from our community walks through our doors in need of a blood transfusion. For them, it’s not just another day. It’s a life-changing moment. In that moment, blood can mean the difference between life and death.

Whether it’s a child battling cancer, a mother facing complications during childbirth, or a car accident victim fighting to survive, their chance of recovery often depends on the kindness of a stranger. Someone who took the time to donate blood.

Blood Assurance is the nonprofit blood center that serves as the sole provider of blood and blood products for Union General Hospital.

See Bierschenk, page 5A

Re: “Immigration”

Dear Editor,

An Op/Ed writer sent in a contribution last week telling us all the wonderful things that immigrants do for our country. Some of what this writer said was true. However, some of the things touched on by the writer weren’t true.

1. The first President who built cages at The Southern Border and then separated kids from their parents and put them into those cages was, drumroll please, Barack Obama (See Snopes: “Did Obama Admin Build Cages That House Immigrant Children at U.S.-Mexico Border?”)

2. The writer mentions that illegal immigrants pay income taxes. This is what’s called a “Half-Truth” and needs further explanation. In order to pay income taxes, an illegal immigrant who doesn’t have a Social Security Number must be issued what’s called a Tax ID Number. Here’s the problem with that. Do y’all recall that economic hiccup we had around 2008 called The “Subprime Mortgage Lending Crisis?” I do. There were many illegal immigrants who had been issued Tax ID Numbers who attained no-money-down subprime loans. These people with

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Everybody has one...

Signs of Intelligence

“Cool shell formation on my beach walk,” former FBI Director James Comey posted, along with a photo. The shells formed the numbers 8647 on a canvas of sand. The post kicked up some alarming chatter and got the attention of the Secret Service. But it’s what was NOT said that I find more interesting.

The chatter focused on the numbers and a message they might convey. No one questioned that the shells formed numbers. No one said a natural process arranged these 40 shells into a legible pattern. Pundits questioned the intended message but not the presence of information, which could have been placed only by a sentient being with knowledge of Arabic numerals.

We humans can distinguish between naturally occurring phenomena (random shells on a beach) and intelligence (shells forming numbers). Scientists rely on this innate ability. Disciplines like archeology and cryptology infer intelligent agency. The SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) program listens for patterned signals, which would indicate intelligence elsewhere in the universe.

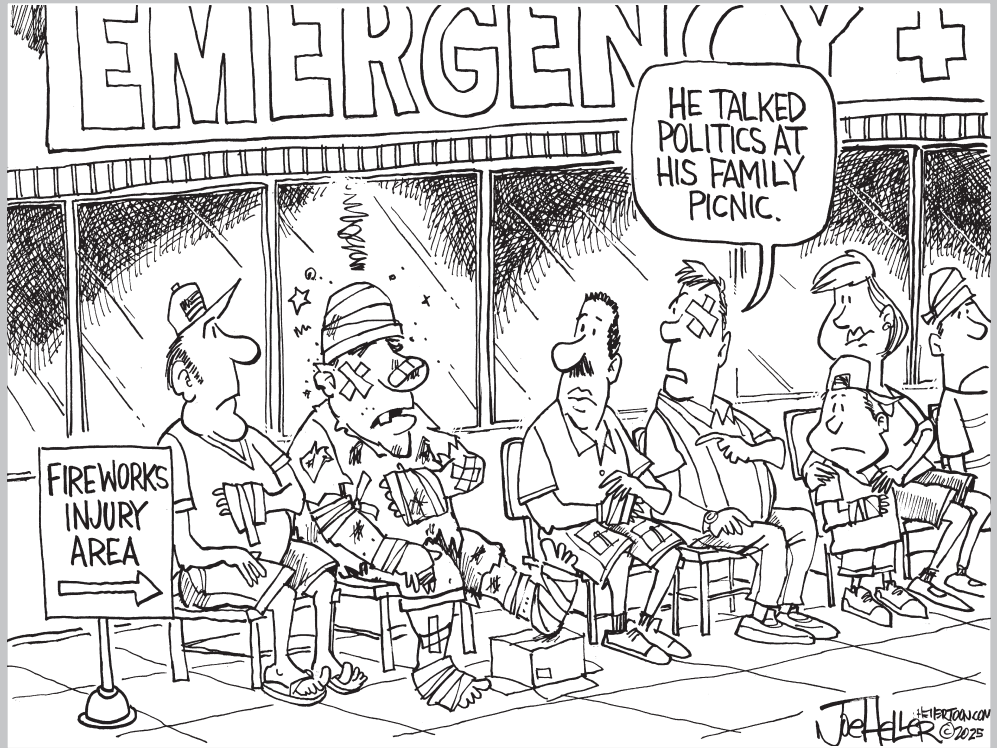
So, how can a biologist consider the 3 billion base pairs of DNA in the human genome, and not recognize that this detailed trove of information came from intelligence? Professor John Lennox said, “If we are prepared to look for scientific evidence of intelligent activity beyond our planet, why are we so hesitant about applying exactly the same thinking to what is on our planet?” The answer: an unwavering, prior belief in a materialistic worldview.

But scientists are questioning that worldview. Gene Meyers, a genome mapping scientist said, “What really astounds me is the architecture of life... the system is extremely complex. It’s like it was designed... There’s a huge intelligence there. I don’t see that as being unscientific.” Scientific advancements challenge belief in a materialistic worldview. Anthony Flew explained that he left atheism behind because DNA research “has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce life, that intelligence must have been involved.”

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Family Gathering

The critical role of a family who has a depressed individual in it is to stay closely involved. After the possible shock of finding out that a family member is suffering from clinical depression, the members must prepare themselves for potentially radical changes in the household. What used to be will no longer be. Depression is not only a life changer but also a “family changer” for all the inhabitants.

One of the first issues is to gather everyone for a family meeting to explain and to discuss what changes within the family arena may need to be addressed. It’s important to emphasize hope, optimism, love and bonding. Family members should be encouraged to ask questions, and the depressed person needs to do the same, along with providing insights about the ordeal and struggle of the depression. The meeting of the family members must focus on hope and optimism.

Guarding Justice...

Guarding Justice, Guarding Humanity

Every community, no matter its era or place, relies on trust and justice to hold it together. Societies flourish when people believe they will be treated fairly, that their lives and property are protected, and that wrongs can be righted through just means. Remove that foundation, and the results are plain – mistrust, fear, and sometimes chaos.

Jewish tradition has long understood the central role of justice. Centuries ago, a wise sage taught, “Pray for the welfare of the government, for were it not for the fear it inspires, every man would swallow his neighbor alive.” The message is straightforward. Laws and the institutions that uphold them are not bureaucratic inconveniences, but essential safeguards for peaceful life. They allow individuals and families to build, to trust, and to hope for the future.

Yet, justice is more than rules or enforcement. At its heart, it is about recognizing the inherent value and dignity of every human being. This principle is reflected in Jewish law. The Torah, in Deuteronomy, commands: “You shall appoint judges and officials... in all the settlements that the Lord your G-d is giving you, and they shall govern the people with due

Echoes from Sinai

“Torah for Everyone”

Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger



See Hambourger, page 5A

The Georgia Land Lottery

As you may know, a new walking trail has been constructed at the Union County Farmers Market. The Blue Ridge Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District worked with the Chattahoochee RC&D to obtain a grant to install the trail called the Butternut Creek Trail, which meanders through the fields along the creek. The main goal of the establishment of the trail was to provide a place where people could take a leisurely walk and to show people the heritage of the Union County Farmer.

A series of signs will be placed along the trail which will show people how farming in Union County has evolved through the years. This history was researched by Steve Procko and Kathleen Thompson. They created the material for each sign and a sign company printed them. Let’s begin with the Cherokee which lived here before settlers came to Union County.

Two hundred and twenty-five years ago this land was home to the Cherokee, and before that it was home to the Creek and Catawba Indians. Ownership of the land was something which the American Indian really didn’t understand. Their view of the land was that one lived on and coexisted with it, and that no one actually owned it. This view of the land clashed with the U.S. government’s westward expansion, and then gold was discovered in 1828 in the Dahlonega area. This discovery led to the influx of white settlers which constantly encroached on Cherokee lands.

The nail in the coffin of Cherokee lands in Georgia was the election of Andrew Jackson as President, who wanted to remove all the Eastern Indians to the West. In the early 1800’s Georgia held many land lotteries, and the final ones were held in 1832 and 1833. These targeted the Cherokee lands in Georgia. In 1832 The Cherokee Land Lottery offered 160 acre tracts of land to eligible Georgians. The eligibility requirements were that one must be a white male citizen of Georgia. However, war veterans, their widows and orphans could receive extra draws in the lottery. Smaller, 40-acre gold lots were distributed in another land lottery for areas with known gold deposits. Most of these are in what is now known as the Suches and Coopers Creek area of Union County.

The lottery drawings were held in Milledgeville, which was Georgia’s capital at that time. A person’s name was pulled from one drum, while their matching land parcel was pulled from another. The winners were required to pay \$18 to receive a formal land grant. But, 90% of the winners never settled the land which they had won.

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



From Your Commissioner

You have probably heard us talking about the new E-911 Center that is currently being constructed on the Glenn Gooch By-pass. On April 18, 2024, the Commission gave approval for schematic designs, design development, construction documents, and construction administration for the new E-911 Call Center. Site preparation has been completed, and the concrete walls for the lower part of the building have also been completed. The new building design can be described as a modern office building which will hold Mapping and the E-911 Center. The new call center will include state-of-the-art technology, and it will be capable of accommodating more dispatchers than the current facility can hold. The dispatch room will be set up with a four-console design and with the capability of a fifth if needed. The dispatchers will have modern workstations with multiple computer systems, a full display of monitors at each station, as well as monitors on the wall to be able to share information with each other. We are in the process of evaluating all of the latest updates, upgrades, and technology for the new call center. We plan to upgrade all equipment and software. This will include dispatcher consoles, radio equipment, telephone equipment, recorders, computers, monitors for cameras, etc. The software will be upgraded to enable dispatchers and public safety to share information through their computers in their vehicles as well. We are currently researching and working towards advanced call taking and information sharing technology, which may include Next Generation 911.

We currently have nine dispatchers, and we hope to be hiring one more dispatcher this year. We also have three part-time dispatchers and an Operations Officer. We have two employees in the Mapping department.

It is anticipated that the building will be completed by next Spring/Summer, though it is difficult to determine an exact date due to the many factors that go into new construction. Once completed, there will be a “move over” period when systems are tested, as we prepare to go live. Once all systems are thoroughly tested, we will schedule a “cutover” time where we will stop receiving 911 calls at the old center and begin receiving calls at the new

Union County Commissioner

Harold Collins



Chamber 2025

A few weeks ago, Michelle and I were returning home from attending a Brave’s game (they won this one), and as we normally do, we were talking about everything from what happened last week to what is on the calendar for the next. As we traveled farther north and left the 90+ degree confines of Truist Park, I pointed out that the outside temperature continued to get cooler the closer we got to home. We enjoy visiting other locations and spending time together, but as we topped the hill entering Union County, Michelle made a statement that I must agree with, “The view of those mountains never gets old.” She grew up in the mountains and has seen that view a number of times, so that statement carries some weight. I will have to agree, whether you are entering Union County for the first time or for the umpteenth, enjoying a meal with a view or sipping your favorite beverage from a deck, there is no place like the mountains of Blairsville-Union

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Blairsville -Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Yellow Jackets

Yellow jackets will become the most active during the late summer and fall. I’ve received a few calls from people saying that they have encountered some around their homes. I have a few around my own house, so I know they’re out there! Yellow Jackets can look similar to wasps. Wasps are usually unaggressive unless threatened. Yellow jackets have a thicker waist, shorter legs, and wings that press more flatly against the body when resting than wasps.

Wasps’ nests are usually under eaves or beneath porch railings and have hexagonal cells. Yellow jacket nests are usually built in old rodent holes or cavities that have been left behind by a small critter. They can build nests in wall spaces, although this is less common. Yellow jacket nests will die out over the winter and start anew with a new reproducing female each year. This means that yellow jacket nests will be the easiest to eradicate in the spring while the nests are still small. The flipside is that the nests will be harder to find in the spring because they only have a few individuals in them at that time. Nests can grow up to 5000 yellow jackets, and will grow larger in years with a long dry spring.

Solitary yellow jackets can often be seen foraging for food for the colony. Yellow jackets feed on a variety of insects pests. They will also eat meat and like drinking coke. They will also attack bee hives. Yellow jackets are able to discern at a pheromone level which hives are weak. They’ll choose those hives to attack, making them more of opportunistic pests to bees than actual predators. If they are able to get inside past the guards, yellow jackets can take out the entire hive killing bees, eating larvae, eggs, pupae, and honey.

The longer before you start to control a nest the more difficult it becomes because the nests control in size. Pyrethroid insecticides that you can buy at the store will be effective at killing yellow jackets, but only when you make contact with them when you are actively spraying. If you can block the hole that they use as an entrance you may be able to eradicate them this way too. Yellow jackets aren’t diggers, they use holes other critters have made, so they can be trapped inside if there is only one entrance. There are yellow jacket traps that can be effective at controlling them too. Another method of control is to use hot water mixed with dish washing soap and pouring it down the hole. Whenever you are working with yellow jackets the safest time will be at night. They will be less active at nighttime, so your chances of being stung decrease.

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UGA extension

Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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Cummings...continued from Page 4A

Many of these never even seen the land which they had won in the lottery. The great majority of these people sold their land to others seeking to settle here in these mountains.

Many of the new owners came to Union County through one of the gaps like Tesnatee. It has been said that wagons had to have tree saplings tied to them coming down the Old Logan Turnpike to help in braking. I have been told that the first people coming down the Logan Turnpike beheld the cove leading down the mountain and one lady exclaimed, “Lord a mercy,” because of the beauty of Union County. The name stuck, and the cove is still called Lord a Mercy Cove.

An influx of settlers came to Union County beginning in 1833, and these settlers found many of their land claims occupied by Cherokee people. Some of the Cherokee welcomed the white settlers and even helped them survive by teaching them about how to survive the harsh winters. They were also taught about which plants could be used for medicine or food. However, some of the Cherokee people viewed the white settlers as trespassers.

Rains...continued from Page 4A

no ties to the community would then buy a home that they knew they couldn’t afford and move sometimes up to four families into that house. Everything’s fine while the economy’s good, but when the economy went bad, what did they do? They moved back to the countries from which they came and defaulted on their loans, which only made a bad situation worse. From the news article I cite below: “Although there is no formal tally, Mexican consular sources say a growing number of illegal immigrants across the United States are starting to pack their bags and return home. Illegal immigrants were able to buy U.S. homes during the boom years, either by showing evidence that they pay taxes or by simply presenting false documents. Many of them took out high interest fixed-rate loans or subprime mortgages with a low entry rate that later rose sharply. Experts say language difficulties made them more vulnerable to being offered, and taking, bad deals.” So if hard times hit again, what can we expect? More illegals defaulting on loans and going home. When you’ve come here ILLEGALLY and have very little or no skin in the game, which is The U.S., it’s

In 1838 the U.S. Government initiated the forced removal of the Cherokee to Oklahoma. We now call this removal the Trail of Tears. Thousands of Cherokee were marched west in brutal conditions, and yes, thousands also died while walking to Oklahoma. The settlers which lived here had mixed emotions about this removal. Many of the Cherokee were friendly to the settlers, and some had intermarried with the whites. Some even hid out in the mountains to avoid removal.

The land along Butternut Creek where the Farmers Market now sits was a 160-acre lot, number 236. It was granted to George Clack of Walton County in 1832. He sold the land, and by 1849 it was owned by the estate of James Epps. His widow, Rebecca Ledbetter Epps, owned it until 1867 when it was sold to Silas L. Ledford. The Ledford family owned the land until the very early 1900’s.

This information was discovered by Steve Procko and Kathleen Thompson while researching for the signs which will be created that tell the history of agriculture in Union County.

the easiest thing to do. (See Reuters: “Immigrants hit hard by slowdown, subprime crisis”) Perhaps had they come here LEGALLY, assimilated, and learned English, that might not have happened, but it did, and since those people returned to their home countries, there was no way to track them down and get them to pay the money they owed.

3. The letter writer states that the President has decided to lay off of MS-13 gang members due to that gang’s ties to the El Salvadoran President. I looked that up, and the only place I found that story was in the “Latin Times,” which, by the way, happens to be rated a left-leaning publication. Why, it’s almost like the Op/Ed writer has an agenda contrary to that of the President. Oh wait, he does.

One Final Thought: I’m NOT against legal immigration or legal immigrants. The U.S. needs legal immigrants. That being said, illegal immigration is a CRIME. If we can’t trust the people coming here to abide by our immigration laws as they are currently written, how can we trust them to abide by the rest of our laws? Answer: We can’t.

Claude Rains Jr.

Bierschenk... continued from Page 4A

When someone donates with Blood Assurance, their gift stays right here in our community and helps patients in this hospital. Every donation they collect supports local patients. These are people you may know, and people you may love.

But here’s the reality: only about 3% of eligible individuals donate, and there is no substitute for blood. It can’t be manufactured. It must come from someone willing to give.

The need is constant, and right now it’s critical. You can make a powerful impact by hosting a blood drive with Blood Assurance and encouraging your community to donate.

Your compassion and

leadership could bring hope to someone in their most vulnerable hour. You have the power to save lives! Please consider partnering with Blood Assurance to host a drive that helps ensure our friends, neighbors, and loved ones have access to the care they need, right here at home.

Give local. Save local.

For more information on hosting a drive, please contact Garry Allison, Senior Vice President of Operations for Blood Assurance, at GarryAllison@bloodassurance.org or 615-917-4659.

Thank you,
Kevin Bierschenk
Chief Executive Officer
Union General Health System

Tarter...continued from Page 4A

meanors. Real guest workers have green cards or other ID which they carry in case they are confronted. Of course, duh.

The Southern Border is littered with identity papers discarded by illegals crossing.

MS-13 leaders are being rounded up and deported to El Salvador prisons rather than prosecuted here in the U.S.

The Left, as always, paints this to mean they are coddling MS-13 leaders. Look it up.

“Dishonesty is the defining characteristic of the Left.”

I feel bad for the otherwise good people who came here illegally due to Biden’s wide open borders. I also feel

bad for the Christians being persecuted in Africa and China. But the U.S. cannot solve other countries’ economic problems.

The situation has been alleviated for the future by the now almost complete stoppage of illegals coming across the Southern Border, but the millions upon millions of illegal aliens (they don’t actually pay Social Security) will be a challenge and a drag on the economy for decades to come.

Let’s keep the facts straight here in Union County since Legacy Media no longer will.

J. Murray Tarter

Jensen-Veney... continued from Page 4A

we harvest, and have twice the volume we did 50 years ago.” Timber is a renewable resource, and with sustainable harvesting and planned forest regeneration, we can balance the need for lumber as well as maintain healthy forests.

The timber industry is guided by certification standards of many organizations to ensure that harvesting practices follow environmental and social guidelines. The United States imported \$183 million in wood from Austria in 2024, yet as a country we are nearly 117 times larger.

Increasing timber pro-

duction is a viable option, and if we continue working to be the gold standard model for the world, then President Trump is correct in encouraging more harvesting of American timber. This could be a step in the right direction by making housing more affordable for everyone. Timber is one of our most precious renewable resources. With continued sustainable management, our forests will provide us with endless benefits. Lumber stamped with “Grown in America” is what we should see in every home across our great Nation.

Amber Jensen-Veney

Hambourger ...continued from Page 4A

justice.” Justice is not a peripheral concern. It is woven into the fabric of communal life, a responsibility shared by all.

Jewish law makes a striking distinction in how different types of cases are handled. In matters involving property – such as a dispute over lost or stolen goods – a person’s confession can be accepted as sufficient evidence. The Talmud, the central text of Jewish law, teaches: “Admission by a litigant is equivalent to a hundred witnesses.” This respects the power of personal responsibility in civil matters.

Yet when it comes to matters of life and death, Jewish law sets an especially high standard. In cases where capital punishment is possible, a confession alone is never sufficient; instead, the Torah requires the testimony of two reliable witnesses before a court can impose the death penalty. This approach does not abolish capital punishment, but it surrounds the process with rigorous safeguards. The intent is not to weaken justice, but to affirm the unique value of every human life. By requiring clear and corroborated evidence, the law seeks to ensure that justice is served with the utmost care, reflecting the belief that life itself is a sacred trust from G-d.

What underlies this distinction? The Torah teaches that our lives are not simply our own possessions. In the opening chapter of Genesis, it is written: “And G-d created man in His image, in the image of G-d He created him.” To be made in the image of G-d is more than a theological statement; it is a call to see each human being as infinitely valuable, worthy of respect and protection. This idea is why the justice system must exercise the greatest caution and care when a life hangs in the balance. While property can be returned or replaced, a life,

once taken, cannot.

Being created in the image of G-d carries profound implications. It means that each person possesses the ability to choose, to reflect, and to act with purpose. It also means that we are called to use those gifts wisely: to pursue justice, to show compassion, and to uphold the dignity of others in both public and private life. Even when we cannot control the circumstances we face – whether sickness, disappointment, or the challenges of an ever-changing world – we retain the freedom to choose our response. That freedom is itself a reflection of the Divine.

At a moment in history when the meaning of justice and the value of human life are often debated, these ancient teachings remain urgently relevant. A just society is not built by accident. It is created, day by day, by the choices of individuals who remember that every person is a bearer of the Divine image. When justice is pursued with humility and care, it strengthens the bonds of community and brings us closer to the world that G-d intends.

This calling – to honor

Williams...

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crease. It is still a good idea to wear protective clothing. If you have a serious yellow jacket problem it is best to call a professional to control them.

If you have any questions about yellow jacket identification or control please call your local Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Collins...

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center.

These are exciting times for Union County residents as we continue our mission to provide the very best in public safety. I appreciate and have much respect for everything that our public safety officials do.

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

County!

Be sure to check our calendars for all the upcoming events! A big thanks to all those that helped make the July 4th Fireworks possible! Without the entire team from the County, NGTC, Chamber volunteers and Staff, and all the sponsors, the show would not be possible. Thanks to all who work so hard to make life better in Blairsville. And God Bless the USA!

Fowler...

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A message in numbers formed from shells is not derived from random wave action, but from intelligence. We recognize information as a sign of intelligence whenever we see it. Since the Earth’s biosphere is teeming with information, from what intelligence did it originate? The Bible has told us all along about the cosmic Mind behind the universe. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men” (John 1:1-4).

Dyer...

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ciations from the public go a long way to help answer that question. Speaking for all First Responders, we want to return that thanks to everyone who supports us each and every day.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

the image of G-d in every person, and to let that awareness shape our pursuit of justice – is as vital today as it has ever been. It is a legacy worth upholding, and a responsibility that binds us all.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. You can contact him at y@tasteoftorah.org.