

# Opinions

# Everybody has one...

## Awards Dinner

We all want to be recognized for our work and achievements. That is one of the main purposes of the annual Union County Fire Department Awards and Appreciation Dinner. The dinner is an opportunity for firefighters from all stations to meet, have a great meal and enjoy a relaxing night with each other's company. Firefighters are also presented with various awards and years of service pins during the ceremony. This year's Awards and Appreciation Dinner was held on August 3rd.

**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**  
David Dyer



The evening began with the opening of the ceremony and dinner. There were remarks from Commissioner Lamar Paris and from myself. The guest speaker was Chief Pabel Troche. Chief Troche is the Chief of Training and Special Operations of Roswell Fire Department. He began his public safety and firefighting career in Union County as a volunteer and career firefighter. He considers himself a lifelong member of Union County Fire Department. We were honored by his words.

The ceremony then moved to the awards. There are five categories based on the different levels of firefighter certifications. The first level is the Support Firefighter which is the fire department entry level and consists of 48 hours of initial basic training. There were seven firefighters awarded this certification.

The next category was Registered Volunteer Firefighter. These are firefighters who have completed the Support Firefighter training and have completed an additional 95 hours of training to actively participate in fighting fire. There were two firefighters awarded this certification this year.

Firefighters can take further training and advance to the level of National Professional Qualifications (NPQ) Firefighter I and Firefighter II. These are nationally recognized certifications that meet the national standards for structural firefighting. There were four firefighters awarded Firefighter I and four awarded Firefighter II.

Firefighters were also recognized for years of service. Years of service pins are awarded in five-year increments. There were five with at least five years of service; six with 10 years of service; five with 15 years of service; three with 20 years of service; one with 25 years of service; and four with at least 30 years of service in the department.

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## Home Forever

A young woman paced the sidewalk outside the pastor's home. He and his wife were preparing for a picnic in the park. They noticed woman's tentative attempts to approach their door.

F.W. Boreham wrote about his experience that day. Realizing that the woman needed something, he invited her inside. She poured out the heart-rending tragedy of her baby's sudden death. She needed help with the burial. She confided that the baby was born out of wedlock, and was deformed. That changed nothing for the pastor. The next day he, his wife, and the woman laid the baby to rest during a driving rainstorm in a barren place.

The woman found a home with Boreham's church because they treated her with love, care, and respect. She must have known that the cemetery was not her baby's home. Ravi Zacharias comments, "The respect shown in a cemetery comes not because it is home, but because it is where we bid believing loved ones a temporary good-bye. Jesus came from the Father and returned to the Father to prepare a place for you and for me. That's home." That's your destiny when you believe Jesus.

He refers to Jesus' words, "In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3). Jesus did not just speak of life after death philosophically, but he demonstrated it physically. He assured Martha that her brother would live again saying, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies" (John 11:26). Then he raised Lazarus. Later he raised Himself from the dead.

This life beyond, in a prepared place, is where community, reunions, and love happen. Isn't that what a home is? This place is not just for being with loved ones again, but being with the One who loves us. Jesus wants you to be with Him.

Stuart Hine was a pre-WWII missionary to the Russian people. They sang a hymn that he translated to English. After the war, a displaced man told how he despaired of finding his wife, and longed to meet her again in heaven. That inspired Hine to

**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



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## Commissioner's Questions

**Q. When will the Highway 515 widening going to Young Harris begin construction?**

A. Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) says that they will hopefully complete their purchase of property for the Right of Way this year. Then they will complete all final plans, have the project ready for bid in June of 2020 and hopefully have construction begin by September of 2020, with highway construction completion being summer of 2023. However, these dates are always subject to change.

**Q. Where will this highway go?**

A. The highway will begin at or near the Glenn Gooch By-Pass intersection at Highway 515 and the new Farmers Market Way. The new divided highway will then proceed to the old BRMEMC site on the West end of Young Harris. There will be a large roundabout constructed there which will include a truck bypass around Young Harris. This 4-lane will go around Young Harris on the North side and circle back into the new Highway 515 4-lane near the new BRMEMC.

**Q. Where will the highway proceed from the BRMEMC area?**

A. It will continue as it currently does, East, crossing over the mountain and turn left toward Hayesville, to the North Carolina line. My understanding is that North Carolina is considering widening Highway NC-69 from the state line to Hayesville with a 4-lane road but I have heard no details.

**Q. Why is the grass so high on Highway 515 in the median and on the shoulders?**

A. It is not just Highway 515, but also a lot of county roads. We have never seen the grass grow so fast and so tall. The unique weather this year with the large and regular rain burst along with the higher than normal temperatures is making the grass grow so quickly we nor GDOT is able to keep up right now. Just try to be patient as all the mowers are working as hard as they can.

I apologize for the county roads having such high grass. If you have a yard or any growth around your home, you should have seen this heavy growth as well. It should be a banner year for private mowers and the hay crop. The county and the state

**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**

Lamar Paris



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## Drug Free Mountain Life

### Methamphetamine Facts and Risk

Methamphetamine is a stimulant drug. Stimulants are a class of drugs that can boost mood, increase feelings of well-being, increase energy, and make you more alert. It has dangerous side effects like raising heart rate and blood pressure, and use can lead to addiction. Methamphetamine's pleasurable effects can disappear even before the drug levels fall in the blood, leading people to use more and more, sometimes not sleeping and using the drug for several days.

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.

Methamphetamine use changes the way the brain works by changing the way neurons communicate. Neurons send messages to each other by releasing chemicals called neurotransmitters, telling us how to act and behave. These neurotransmitters attach to molecules on neurons called receptors.

There are many neurotransmitters, but

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## Chamber of Commerce

It's finally here! Tomorrow morning, Mitch Griggs of the Union County Development Authority will present a "State of the County" address at our Eggs & Issues breakfast being held at the Union County Community Center. Beginning at 8 a.m., Mitch will address growth in Union County from an Economic Development perspective. Mitch has been with the Development Authority since 2008 and is currently on the Board of Directors of the Georgia Mountain Regional Commission, the Board of the GRC, a member of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the Georgia Economic Development Board, and the University of North Georgia Community Advisory Board — just to name a few.

**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**

Steve Rowe



With all the talk surrounding development in Downtown Blairsville, the groundbreaking for LongHorn's, and the construction of Popeyes, I know everyone is interested to find out what's next. With an unemployment rate in the low 3%

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## Letters to the Editor

### Stop Sign Violations

I concur with the lady who wrote a letter a couple of weeks ago regarding traffic violations. I live in the county off old Blue Ridge Highway and drive about 10 miles to the Wellness Center (gym) behind the hospital five days a week. Never, never have I seen less than two people slide through stop signs. And I've counted six before. I know we have great police officers and sheriff's deputies, but the old phrase, "Where's a cop when you need one?" is quite true. Some examples are at Airport Road, K Creek Road and a couple of other roads in the county. If Sheriff Mason put a deputy at the park-and-ride, our tax rate would go down from all the people running the stop sign at Blue Ridge Street, the four-way stop at the old Food City.

Simply put, if people saw more blue lights in town and on old Blue Ridge Highway, some might think twice about ignoring stop signs.

Chris Crawford

### Understanding God

It's been the greatest challenge of humanity to understand who God really is and how He operates in His realm of Holiness and if the truth be done the Almighty God I serve with all of my heart will always be a mystery, until I reach my final home in heaven. Serving Him for the last twenty seven years has been the joy of my life, for in Him I have found a contentment and a peace amid all of the chaos that constantly clamors for my attention. I admit I don't always understand God's ways and His thoughts, but I trust Him completely for He has my best interest at heart. Do I understand why good and faithful folks who serve God daily have to go through such pain and suffering. No, but God does and that's where my faith comes in, in knowing that He is working all things out to the good of those who love Him. God never promised us a free pass from trials, temptations, pain and suffering. We are all in the same boat and none are exempt.

Understanding God is like trying to figure out how everything runs smoothly in the whole universe which is mind blowing to say the least, but with our finite minds could we ever count all of the stars if we had a chance in all of the galaxies and yet God has a name for each one. WOW!!!! Where did God come from? Answer — He always was. He never had a beginning and will never have an ending for He is eternal in all of His character and nature and we who love and adore Him will someday rule and reign with Him on a new earth and a new heaven. Do I understand it all. No, but I understand enough to know

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## Marsha Elliott

Towns County's Own Sparkplug, Marsha Elliott: Any successful program must have many components to make it happen, but the first and most important is a dedicated leader who believes that the goal is worthy of the effort and achievable with hard work and a team of workers who are just as dedicated to make it happen. We call these leaders "sparkplugs," who, like the part of your engine, ignite the fuel (workers & supporters) to make the project move forward and most importantly keep moving. There is nothing worse than an explosive start and then a fizzle when the fuel and sparkplug runs out. We have had many leaders in these mountains, but real dedicated sparkplugs are few and far between.

Last year we lost one of the best, Marsha Elliott. When Marsha passed it took 4 people in Sharp Memorial United Methodist church to take over what she did and that was just one of many organizations she was involved in. One project she had that was her passion was the resurrection of Hamilton Rhododendron Gardens at Lake Chatuge. After years of neglect the gardens that contained many varieties of Rhododendron, Azaleas, and other mountain plants had fallen from their glory days where in Spring the flowering plants are breathtaking. Marsha and a group of other visionaries decided that the gardens had to be resurrected and after much negotiation, pleading, and hard work the process was started to make the gardens again a destination for visitors to our mountains.

The momentum continues today due to the hard work and vision of leaders like Marsha. On Saturday, August 10th a memorial garden was dedicated to Marsha at the Hamilton gardens, a fitting tribute to a real sparkplug. That was not the only project that was deep in Marsha's heart. I never could figure out when she had time to sleep. When I asked her to take over the leadership of the successful Towns County Firewise Citizen's Coalition, she of course said Yes as I knew she would.

The nationally acclaimed Towns County Firewise program started in 2008 after an 800-acre fire on Cedar Knob within sight of Marsha's house in Asheland Cove. When Billy Snipes, another sparkplug, told a group in Colorado this fire was 800 acres the comment was made that it would be a campfire out there, but to us it was a big deal that we want to try to prevent. A one-acre fire can be a major disaster if your house is sitting in the middle of that acre! After that fire, local, state and federal agencies began working with community members to get them involved

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**RC&D Executive Director**

Frank Riley



## Laying Out the Dead

Prior to World War II, things were much different in rural America than they are today. For example, there were no funeral homes. So, when a death occurred in a community neighbors banded together to help the bereaved family. Papa, Coon, once told me that his Dad must have made more than 300 coffins during his lifetime and he never took a penny for building one. Lon would saw the timber to make lumber and even go to town to buy linen to place inside the casket. Nearby neighbors would come to the home of the deceased and prepare the body for burial by washing, shaving and dressing the one who had died. Communities were knit closer in those days than now and people depended upon one another to help each other through the tough times.

There was a man in our community, Trapptown, which was a bootlegger. He had a foul temper and depended upon his fists to help him settle disagreements. Also, he did not believe in helping those which were less fortunate. As he aged he began to let himself go meaning he bathed only rarely, never trimmed his beard or hair and his clothing was always dirty. Uncle Hollis used to tell Papa, "I feel sorry for that fellow. Nobody wants anything to do with him. When he passes on I think I'll volunteer to shave him and make him look respectable."

Not long afterward the aged bootlegger died and very few people in the community volunteered to help him. However, Hollis and Coon, both volunteered to prepare the man for burial. And Lon built the man a coffin out of some of the finest white oak lumber you would ever see. The wood was knot free and of the finest grain. He had recently purchased some fine linen from a merchant in Haleyville. The old man would have a good burial regardless of his past. About the time the coffin was complete Hollis and Coon arrived at the home of the old man.

Coon began to wash the man's face while Hollis began at his feet. The man's face was really dirty so my young grandfather stopped washing to rinse out the cloth. He bent over a basin as he was rinsing out the wash cloth and something strange happened. The dead man must've had a spasm in his abdomen. Because he immediately rose up into a sitting position. The spasm and sitting up caused the dead man to exhale. Papa said, "Hollis was washing this man's feet and all at once he raised up and he came face to face, eyeball to eyeball with a dead man. His nose was almost touching his nose and then he breathed into your Uncle Hollis' face." Later Hollis told Papa, "As I looked into the man's eyes I knew he

**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



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## Great Georgia Pollinator Census

The Great Georgia Pollinator Census (GGPC) is coming up soon. GGPC is a new event aimed at bringing awareness to pollinators and collecting real world data on the impact that they have. This is a brand new event that has never been done before. Let's talk about the pollinators, and talk about GGPC and how you can participate.

Pollinators have come into the public's awareness a lot more in recent years. Often times when people think of pollinators honeybees come to mind. Honeybees are certainly very important pollinators, but there are also other pollinators that are needed as well. A lot of our native bees are better pollinators than honeybees are, but honeybees get the edge because of their quantity. Honeybees are important pollinators, but I'd like to talk a little about some native pollinators because they are often under appreciated.

Native bees are usually solitary insects, meaning they don't operate in a colony with other bees. These native bees range from tiny bees in the Perdita genus to large carpenter bees. These native pollinators are very important for the pollination of many native plants. Native bees most efficiently pollinate crops like pumpkin, squash, blueberry, eggplant, and tomato. Building a nest for native bees is pretty simple and you can find the instructions at extension.uga.edu and searching for 'publication 1125'. Generally, bees will have furry bodies that can be used for trapping pollen. You may observe a bumblebee traveling from flower to flower completely covered in pollen. Native bees are generally very docile and are unlikely to attack people. Native bees will often make homes in the ground and holes in trees left by other insects.

The Great Georgia Pollinator Census will be taking place on August 23-24. The idea is to have people all over Georgia out counting the number of pollinators that they see over a 15-minute period on a single plant. We'll also be taking note of the different types of pollinators that you see. We'll be on the lookout for carpenter bees, bumblebees, honeybees, small bees, wasps, flies, butterflies/moths, and other insects. You don't need to be a master beekeeper or entomologist to participate in the count. On the 23rd at 10:30, I'll be at Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge to talk some about the importance of pollinators and how to identify the different types of insects that we'll be looking for. After talking, we'll go out into the pollinator gardens there and start counting. If you can't make it to Hamilton Gardens on the 23rd don't despair! You can still participate in the census on your own at any time on the

**Watching and Working**

Jacob Williams



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