

Opinions

Everybody has one...

National Preparedness Month

Union County Emergency Management Agency (UCEMA) has joined FEMA and countless other organizations in preparing for emergencies during the month of September, which the president has proclaimed National Preparedness Month (NPM). NPM is a time for us all to prepare for emergencies and disasters.

If you've seen the news recently, you know that emergencies happen unexpectedly in communities just like ours, to people like us. We have seen hurricanes, wildfires, civil unrest, and of course, COVID-19 this year. We also have to consider that severe weather including thunderstorms, tornadoes, and winter weather can have a severe impact on our community. It's for those reasons that we should make a conscious effort to join NPM this year and become more prepared to face an emergency.

There are so many things that we can do to prepare. It can simply start with a conversation by asking, "What would we do if this emergency happened here?" By developing an emergency plan with our families, communities, congregations, neighbors, and co-workers, we can ensure that everyone knows what resources are available in an emergency and what we need to do. We can work as a team to make our communities, our neighborhoods, and our own families safer.

The theme for National Preparedness Month this year is "Disasters Don't Wait, Make Your Plan Today" and asks citizens to take action now. Week one encourages people to "Make a Plan." Week two requests that people "Build a Kit." Week three's theme encourages everyone to "Prepare for Disasters." Week four wants everyone to "Teach Youth about Preparedness."

Take time to research each theme, develop a plan, and put it into action. It is always a good practice to educate and involve youth in preparedness. Make sure to consider the costs associated with disasters and save for an emergency. Also, know how to take practical safety steps like shutting off water and gas.

As we here at UCEMA continue to respond to COVID-19, we are also preparing for other emergencies. We encourage everyone in the community to do the same. You never know when an emergency may strike, so prepare for it now because disaster preparedness is everyone's responsibility. For more information on

See *Fire*, page 5A

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Mine or Thine

Whoever says the Bible is boring never read the dramatic events recounted in the book of Esther. It's about loyalty and royalty, love and hate, life and death. The plot twists as a man asserts his will against God's. It doesn't turn out well for him.

Haman was king Xerxes' right-hand man. As such he expected everyone to pay homage to him, but Mordecai would not. Haman was infuriated. He convinced the king to schedule an ethnic cleansing of Mordecai and his people. While waiting, Haman's wife and friends goaded him into building a gallows for his nemesis Mordecai.

What Haman didn't know was that Esther, the queen, was Mordecai's cousin. Mordecai urged her to intercede with the king, suggesting she attained royalty for "such a time as this." Her risk was that anyone who entered the king's court without a summons risked death. She went anyway. When the king did receive her, she invited him and Haman to two banquets.

At the second auspicious event, she announced that her life and her people were in mortal danger. Shocked, the king demanded to know who would do this. "A foe and an enemy is this wicked Haman!" she said. Xerxes then condemned Haman to die on the gallows he built, and issued a new edict to protect Esther's people. Haman was hoisted on his own petard.

God is not mentioned by name in the book of Esther, but it's about His will and sovereignty. Human foibles and willfulness cannot interdict His divine purpose and interventions in human history. Job said it like this: "I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted" (Job 42:2). Esther acted with humility and accepted God's will, risking her life for others. Haman acted with pride and rage, asserting his will over others. She witnessed God's deliverance. He learned that "pride goes before destruction" (Prov. 16:18).

Thomas a Kempis wrote, "The humble are always at peace; the proud are often envious and angry" ("The Imitation of Christ"). That leaves you with a choice. Believe things must always go your way and suffer malcontent, or humble yourself before God and enjoy the path of peace and purpose. That is not easy, and requires a new way of thinking. "Do not be conformed to

See *Fowler*, page 5A

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. I hear people discussing issues with leachate water. What is all this discussion about?

A. I think the first thing that I need to do to answer this question is to explain what leachate water actually is since I had never heard of it until recently. In regards to landfills, leachate water is all the rain water that drains down through the landfill and contains materials "leached" from the landfill. It is retained in either a catch basin or a large pond below the landfill. At some point this water has to be disposed of in a safe manner by being processed and treated by a wastewater treatment facility. Back in May of 2019 The Water Authority (TWA) partnered with the City of Blairsville to process leachate water from an out of town landfill at the City of Blairsville's Waste Water Treatment Plant. The discussion now is if this is bad for Lake Nottely now or in the future due to the type of chemicals that could be contained in the processed leachate water.

Q. Why is leachate water being processed by the City of Blairsville Wastewater Treatment Plant?

A. It was determined that the Wastewater Treatment Plant had the extra capacity to be able to process extra wastewater. The City would also be compensated for processing the leachate water which would be an additional revenue stream for the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the City of Blairsville. According to those I contacted originally, this process is legal, approved by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division and the Federal Environmental Protection Agency.

Q. Based on articles in the newspaper and on Facebook, it seems like you keep saying that you can't do anything to stop the City of Blairsville from processing leachate water. Why do you keep saying there is nothing you can do?

A. It is simple. This is a City of Blairsville project. Not only do I know nothing about wastewater treatment, neither does the county have any drinking water supply treatment plants. If I had any verifiable information from a reliable source that the processing of this leachate water was going to negatively impact the streams or Lake Nottely, you can rest assured that I would be the first person making noise. But, the reality is that even if

See *Paris*, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

It's Not Just Leachate That Smells

Dear Editor,

The recent TV Channel 5 investigative news report concerning leachate dumping highlighted two points:

1. When a state senator will not face the camera to answer a reporter's questions, something smells. Why won't you face your constituents, Sen. Steve Gooch?

2. Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, at least faced the camera, but it was obvious he was an easy mark for this slick senator.

Ask yourself: What's in the water my kids play in? How will these chemicals impact my drinking water? Will my children and grandchildren wonder why we did not prevent this dumping? Our commissioner says his job is to "look down the road" when it comes to operating the county, but seems to wash his hands of the leachate issue.

Our elected officials seem more concerned about themselves than protecting their citizens. Get involved.

Paul Brownhill

Praising Police

Dear Editor,

I greatly appreciate Christian Hummell's letter praising our law enforcement. Our granddaughter, a police officer in Salisbury, North Carolina, is on "light duty" due to a woman who "went crazy" during a domestic dispute and fought the police, spraining our granddaughter's shoulder.

Wonder what the outcome would have been if instead of police, someone called for a social worker?

Chris Crawford

Unilateral Decisions

Dear Editor,

I recently attended several Union County Budget and Tax Increase Hearings on Aug. 20 and 26, 2020, and observed rather "lively" discussion on the proposal to increase Union County property tax rates by 19.98%, an astounding increase for a county that has traditionally been conservative and fiscally responsible. The Sole Commissioner also stated that a reassessment of the value of all county properties will be conducted, and this may result in another tax increase next year based on the increased valuations: a double whammy.

The Sole Commissioner made a presentation of the reasons and needs for the increases. He cited employees, maintenance, capital improvements and other essential services. He then handed out summary tables of how Union County tax increases compared to the current tax rates of other Georgia Counties. From the information presented it appears Union County has slipped from the third or fourth lowest millage rate to 10th or 11th? He also stated that when you consider the current school tax, the increase was only 6-7%. This budget hearing was not about school taxes, and the handout was a lot like starting a dumpster fire to divert attention from the surrounding conflagration consuming the town.

The 19.98% will raise an additional \$1.7 million in tax revenues, not to mention: the \$900,000 in SPLOST spending for a jail site the hopes never to have to build; \$750,000 for another land purchase for a potential unknown use (but it "was a good deal"); and \$500,000 for matching funds for a private/public gun range.

All were unilateral decisions, not requiring authorization, concurrence or approval from anyone else. The gun range was originally proposed to be funded through SPLOST, but it was not an identified expenditure on the last SPLOST referendum. It was mentioned that the jail site might be funded through future SPLOST funds. These three items alone total \$2.15 million, or nearly \$500,000 more than the proposed tax increase. He stated that the Georgia Department of Natural Resources will fund 75% of the estimated \$2-\$2.5 million cost to construct the gun

See *Swaim*, page 5A



Getting in shape for November

Letters to the Editor

Nasty Sludge Water

Dear Editor,

If I handed you a glass full of liquid, wouldn't you ask what's in it? That is exactly what we are asking - what is in our drinking water? What is in the leachate being trucked in daily to the Blairsville Waste Water Treatment Plant and released into Butternut Creek and on into Lake Nottely?

Leachate is a term I had never heard before a couple of months ago. Now I know it's the nasty sludge water that drains to the bottom of a landfill, gets pumped out and then trucked somewhere to be processed. What's in it is dependent on what's in the dump and what filters through. Heavy metals, asbestos, herbicides, pesticides, PFAS (plastics residue); no one knows what lethal stew is being loaded onto trucks, driven over the twisty, turning roads of Blood Mountain, and pumped into the City of Blairsville Waste Water Treatment Plant.

There is no testing being done of each load, or even 1 of every 100 loads. The commercial contaminants that are mostly likely present can't be removed or treated in the City Plant, it doesn't have the equipment to do it. At a minimum 11,000 gallons a day are being trucked in, though some believe it's a much higher number.

So please Mayor Conley, please Commissioner Paris, tell us, "What's in it?" Why would you put our health and that of our families at risk without knowing? Why would you risk the potential contamination of Butternut Creek and Lake Nottely, the recreational lifeblood of our County? Why not invest part of the money that the city receives testing every single load to make sure we are not poisoning our residents and our water. What's in it??? Inquiring minds want to know.

Follow this battle through our Facebook Page at Friends Of Lake Nottely. Contribute to our GoFundMe Page at: https://www.gofundme.com/f/waste-water-keeping-our-drinking-water-safe?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=p_cf+share-flow-1.

Jaune Craft, Resident, Homeowner, Friends of Lake Nottely Founder

Losing Taxes

Dear Editor,

During all the discussion about the property tax increase, many have brought up recent property purchases by the county. One thing that seems overlooked is county-owned property is removed from the tax rolls forever, so every year we lose taxes on those properties.

Keith Hunter

Walton's War

The year of 1804 saw a small war occur between the citizens of Georgia and North Carolina. Maybe not really a war, but more like a border skirmish between the two states. There was a small tract of land called the "Orphan Strip" which was in question. This tract was originally inhabited by the Cherokee. The region was avoided after the war for American Independence due to its ruggedness, and only the Cherokee, outlaws and fugitives inhabited the area. The area was lawless, causing North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina to hesitate to claim ownership. In 1802 Congress passed the Act of Cession giving Georgia authority over the area. However, the law was vague and did not specify which state had the right to govern the area.

During 1803 Georgia took possession of the area and created a county called Walton County in honor of George Walton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The skirmish occurred in 1804 when citizens of the area refused to pay taxes to Georgia, sparking the confrontation. One source of this information states that a number of citizens of Georgia were killed and captured. Another source states that John Hafner, a North Carolina official, was killed by Samuel McAdams, a Georgia official. It seems that the Georgia officials fled and the North Carolina militia gave chase. The Georgia officials escaped and our state soon gave up on governing old Walton County due to its remoteness.

During 1811 the three states decided to try to work out their disputes, and Georgia hired Andrew Ellicott to help settle the conflict between the states. For years I have heard of a place on the Chattooga River where Andrew Ellicott inscribed the letters N and G on a rock. This rock was the place where North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina all come together. I have been to this place four or five times and have never been able to find the rock. My son, Will, and I have been to the place. I have visited the place twice with Tom Starrett. Last year Tom and I went with a friend from Rabun County and still we did not find it. I was beginning to think I was on a wild goose chase.

So, last week I convinced Tom, along with Shawn Kight to come with me once again to find Ellicott Rock. I usually go through the Warwoman area, but I read that it was a quicker trip to drive on 64 to Highlands. So, I set my Waze app for Burrell's Ford Campground and left at 7 a.m. We drove on 64 to Franklin and then dropped down to Highlands. The app gave us directions to turn on to Glade Mountain Road. After turning,

See *Cummings*, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Cover Crops

I have talked about cover crops briefly in the past, but this week I'd like to go into more detail. Planting cover crops year after year provides many benefits to the soil. Let's talk a little more about what a cover crop is, why you should plant one, and how to go about doing that.

A cover crop is a crop that you plant to cover the ground. (How's that for using the word in the definition?) Most of the time cover crops are planted in the fall and grow through the winter to be terminated in spring before you plant your garden. There are summer cover crops that can be grown, but I'm going to focus on winter cover crops, because of the time of year right now. Typically, a cover crop is a cereal grain (e.g. rye, or wheat), brassica (e.g. forage turnip or wild radish), or a legume (e.g. clover or vetch). You can also plant combinations of the three.

Cover crops benefit soil health in a multitude of ways. One of those is that cover crops help build organic matter in the soil. A cover crop like rye produces a lot of biomass, when that biomass is tilled into the soil before spring planting, it gives the microbes in the soil material to work on to turn into organic matter. Because of the rainfall and heat that we have in the southeast, organic matter will decompose faster than it's created. Therefore giving those soil microbes materials to turn into organic matter will allow you to increase your organic matter over time.

Cover crops also reduce erosion. After pulling the crops that you had planted in the summer the soil may be left bare. A cover crop will protect that soil, and hold it in place to keep it from washing away. Cover crops can also reduce weeds. Some crops like rye will release chemicals that are like a natural herbicide. You can also use cover crops as a natural mat, that blocks sunlight, and so make it more difficult for weeds to grow. Certain cover crops like brassicas that produce a large taproot can be used to alleviate compaction. That large taproot will break up the soil and can penetrate hard layers in the soil.

All of these attributes make cover crops very beneficial to the soil. So how do you grow a cover crop? The ideal time to plant a cover crop is around Labor Day. If you're planting a cereal grain, you'll want to plant 3-4 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet. Brassicas need 1-2 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet. Legumes need a quarter pound per 1,000 square feet because the seeds are very small. Legumes are able to fix nitrogen because they have a symbiotic relationship with bacteria. Therefore, it's important to inoculate your soil with the appropriate bacteria

See *Williams*, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber
Steve Rowe



Chamber of Commerce

A recent meeting with Mitch Griggs of the Union County Development Authority revealed some interesting facts concerning Union County's current economic health. Last month the reported unemployment rate for June was 5.1%, well below the 9.7% state average. That's significant! Building permits for June and July were up compared to the same months last year, and Blairsville realtors have been experiencing great success in a market where properties are selling in record time. Blairsville is home to the best school system, the best recreation facilities, and the best health care and first responders that are working untold hours to keep our children and community healthy. We live in a warm community surrounded by good people, those born and raised alongside more recent residents. Without question, our people are our greatest asset.

Among the many wonderful members of our community live leaders who not only care

See *Chamber*, page 5A

North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Kenneth West Publisher/Owner **Shawn Jarrard** Editor **Derek Richards** Advertising Director **Todd Forrest** Sports Editor **Lowell Nicholson** Photographer

Website: www.nganews.com • Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com • Mail: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

The North Georgia News is an independent and nonpartisan publication. As such, third-party views contained herein are not necessarily the opinions or positions of this newspaper, e.g. advertising, press releases, editorial content, perspectives expressed in articles covering local events, etc.

Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - One Year \$40. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$5. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. **NORTH GEORGIA NEWS** is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 17, 1988, at the Post Office in Blairsville. **NORTH GEORGIA NEWS** is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. Phone: 706-745-6343 Fax: 706-745-1830 * P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, Georgia 30514