

Opinions

Everybody has one...

How You Can Help

As a hurricane passes through the lower part of Georgia, we are reminded what how weather can affect our lives. The flooding in from the major rains in Louisiana is devastating and the statistics are alarming. The death toll, as of last week, was up to 13 people. There were over 30,000 rescues of all kinds ranging from the US Coast Guard to people in small boats helping their neighbors. According to The Advocate, a local newspaper in the area of Baton Rouge, 110,000 homes were affected with an estimate of \$20 billion in damages. Needless to say, the people and the region are having, and will continue to have, a difficult time recovering. When a disaster such as this occurs, we ask ourselves what would we do and how can we help these people?

One thing that we can do is volunteer our time to help at the disaster site. Some people would want to pack up and go to the area to help. This can be helpful but most of the time it would have little impact without some form of training. People who wish to volunteer during disasters should join an accredited organization who deals with disasters. They will then be placed in disaster training to better prepare them for the response. When a disaster strikes, the organization will call up volunteers who have such training and deploy them to an area that is in need.

The best way to help is through cash donations. Donation can be channeled through many disaster relief organizations. The cash donations provide funds for the disaster relief organizations to be able to purchase supplies and materials that are needed. They can also provide some cash flow in the area. Organizations will purchase a great deal of the needed supplies locally which will help the devastated businesses thus helping the local economy.

If you are asking how you can get involved, here is how. The National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster has a list of the various organizations that provide help during disaster situations. You can visit their website at www.nvoad.org/voad-network/national-members/. This site provides a list of organizations, information on each, and how to volunteer or donate. If you wish to get very specific with your donations to Louisiana, you can visit www.lavoad.org/members/ for a list of organizations that is part of the Louisiana volunteer organizations.

As I mentioned before, cash donations are the best way to help the people in disasters. Do some research and choose the right organization for you. Also, do not forget that the recovery can take weeks or months. Once the disaster has reached the recovery phase, many media outlets are no longer interested and do not cover the story. The general public then is not aware of the needs and donations decrease. Most organizations will ask for donations during and after

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Fire Dept. from Union County Chief
David Dyer

Football

It happened while I was in attendance at a football game of my alma mater, Auburn University. It was early in the season like now, not exactly cool fall temperatures. When the crowd roared as the team entered the field, I had an odd revelation. Football is a metaphor for the church.

In a football game, the audience focuses on the participants on the gridiron stage, and is prepared to celebrate if the team does well. If a worship service is people watching a stage performance, and congratulating the preacher with “Nice sermon!” at the end, it deserves a penalty flag. But when those on the stage lead the audience to be participants who focus on God, it is a worshipful celebration of a win that already happened. On a cross long ago, Jesus defeated sin and death for us. “Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57). When you participate in God’s grace by faith, the celebration is daily, not just on Sundays.

As I watched that game, I thought about how unexercised I had become since high school football. Another revelation. The players and coaches on the field did all the preparation, planning, and work while the lazy audience just paid to observe. Churches are dysfunctional when they view their pastor and other staff members as the hired guns who are supposed to do the ministry. The New Testament description of the church is that leaders equip every Christian to be a minister, ambassador, and worker for Christ. Applied to football, the coaches and players would be training the rest of us how to play our own scrimmage. “To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7). What is given to us in love, grace, and kindness, we reinvest in the people around us.

Followers of Christ are teammates that help each other. I was privileged once to meet Coach Dan Reeves during the time of his success with the Atlanta Falcons. In a private moment, I asked if I could point out something that might be a blind spot. Maybe he was amused that a pastor thought he knew about football. I said, “I just wanted to make sure you know that when a call goes against your team, they focus the camera on your face,

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler

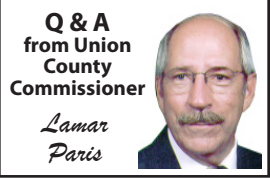
Commissioner’s Questions

Q. What is the condition of Union County Finances?
A. Exceptional. Union County finished 2015 with a balanced budget, plus the largest cash unrestricted fund balance we have ever had at \$5,803,111. This was an increase of \$1,803,210 over 2014 which was an increase in government terms from 3.1 months operating reserve to now, 4.7 months operating reserve. In addition, we have lowered your property tax mil rate 1/10 of a mil this year, while many counties are raising their taxes. Our last two sales tax checks have broken revenue records, building permits are at the highest level since 2008, hotel/motel tax revenue is at their highest levels ever and we had one of the best county audits since I have been in office in nearly 16 years. It just does not get much better financially than this!

Q. What do all of these good economic numbers mean to Union County?
A. It is a sign that our policies and the general economy are working to make Union County a place where people want to move, play, work, and visit. It also means that our restaurants, builders, trades and many others are all working and making money. Our unemployment rate for July was 4.8%, the lowest since the great recession and one of the five lowest in our region. Our industries are breaking financial sales records and some are either already expanding or considering expansion projects. We could not be more excited. We know this may not last, but while it does, we are celebrating by tightening our belt anyway.

Q. Does Union County have a lot of long term debt?
A. Government accounting considers anything over 1 year to be long term. We only have a six year SPLOST Bond remaining debt of slightly under five years of \$6,865,000. This includes pay-off of the Union County Community Center and \$2,160,000 that is set aside to fund future SPLOST projects. Each month before any funds are spent on other SPLOST projects, funds are set aside for this bond payment. The SPLOST bond will be paid off in full at the end of our current SPLOST in June of 2021. This has no impact on the county operation budget. This was also part of the SPLOST referendum voted on by over 70% of the county voters.

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Fifteen years and it still seems like yesterday.

SR 180 Bridge Reconstruction

Dear Editor,
A letter submitted to GA DOT and Senator Steve Gooch regarding possible closure of SR180 for Bridge Reconstruction at Winfield Scott.

Dear GA DOT,
I am writing to express my concern for the erroneous commitment to close SR180 in Suches (8/25/16 - SR180 at Slaughter Creek (Detour OH)). I am using email because your website does not accept “comments”.
You will have blocked access by Suches Rescue and Fire to those areas on the Blairsville side of the bridge past Lake Winfield Scott. Blairsville cannot respond in time to save a dwelling or a critically injured motorcyclist gone off the road and down the mountain. You will have blood on your hands. Requiring school buses to make the unbelievable detour will place them in a statistical probability of accidents. Causing small children to die is unconscionable.

Your presentation did not include alternatives, only the DOT way and no other way, nor was public input and local expertise used in the design of this misguided aberration. The perfect example of how appointed bureaucrats work (fail).
Our elected “officials” showed their true colors at your presentation by rolling over like dead cockroaches. So it is up to the people to defend their rights and needs. But in addition to all of the above ineptitude you have more than affirmed the peoples position to stand against government over reach and a government gone out of control. Success on that account!
For the Republic,
M. J. Blanchard

A reply from Senator Steve Gooch:

Mr. Blanchard
I appreciate you sending me a copy of your letter to the DOT regarding the closure of Hwy 180 in Suches.
I did not see you at the town hall meeting in Suches, but if you were, I am sorry we missed one another.

As an elected official, my job is to represent the good of the community and their interest as a whole. In this situation, I have been working behind the scenes with Commissioner Paris and the District Engineer of the DOT to first understand the problem with the bridge and to find reasonable alternatives to the proposed road closure as presented at the town hall meeting. It is not our job to instruct the DOT on design or construction specifications. They are highly capable of that responsible and do an excellent job of building and maintaining our roads and bridges when given the resources from the General Assembly.

This bridge definitely has deficiencies that need immediate attention according to the engineers who have made the evaluations and have determined that the structure is essentially “functionally obsolete”. The location and sensitive nature
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The Cat

Paul and Bud Cummings were just young boys when they first encountered Aunt Mabel’s old Tom Cat. These two young boys would follow their father to the barn each morning. Upon reaching the barn the boys would perform chores which included fetching sweet feed for the cow while she was being milked. The boys didn’t milk the cow that was Papa’s job. Dancing Betty would only stand still for Papa while she was being milked. After she was milked the boys would carry the milk pail to the corn crib to dip out some milk for the cats.

The cats were always fed at the corn crib because the crib was where the rats stayed and it was the job of the cats to keep the rats away. The boys’ favorite cat had just had a passel of kittens and they were enjoying watching the kittens grow up. One morning the boys went to the crib and found all but one of their new kittens dead. They realized the culprit immediately. Aunt Mabel’s old Siamese Tom Cat had been visiting the farm on a regular basis. The old Tom Cat had killed every kitten on the Cummings Farm.
The boys were upset and wanted to punish the old cat. So, a plan was hatched. The boys obtained some white liquor from their Uncle Dennis. They spiked the cat milk with this liquor and fed it to old Tom. The cat lapped up most of the bowl of milk and liquor. Much to the amusement of the boys the cat staggered around all over the barn yard. The boys soon decided they could catch the cat and begin to chase it. The cat took off running and tried to run underneath the crib. The unfortunate cat must have been seeing double because it ran for a small opening in the crib and actually hit a board head on.

By this time the boys were laughing hysterically. But, then Bud became serious and pointed to another cat and then another. Now, three of their cats were staggering around the barn yard. The boys knew they would be in trouble if Papa saw these inebriated cats. So, they gathered the drunken cats and hid them in the crib until they could sober up. The boys then walked over to Old Tom. To their amazement the cat was still alive, but, still in a drunken stupor. The boys knew they had to hide the cat from Papa. They looked around and the only place the cat could be hidden from view and protect the one remaining kitten was the mailbox.

So, the cat was placed in the mailbox that sunny morning in October. Throughout the morning the boys would shake the box in hopes of terrorizing the old cat. The idea was to scare the cat so bad that it would never visit the farm again. They were going to turn the old cat loose, eventually. But, the boys forgot about one thing. The boys had shook and pounded the mail box so much the cat was in a complete state of terror by
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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings

Well water testing

The first thing most of us do after a long day of working outside is pour ourselves a nice glass of water. For many of us, that water comes from a well on our property. While you may not have had well problems, it’s important to not take well maintenance for granted. Though water may smell fine and taste fine, if the well has not been properly maintained, contaminants may have slipped through, especially after a heavy rain. Because of this, it’s important to occasionally test your water and check on your well to make sure everything is in the best condition possible.

The water in our wells comes from rainfall that filters down through the soil and rock layers beneath it. Movement through these layers removes large contaminants such as insects, plant material, and other particles. However, it does not remove metals and bacteria. Though most wells and filters that are adequately maintained seldom have any issues filtering these out, certain conditions can cause a higher risk of contamination than others. Shallow wells are more likely than deep wells to become contaminated after a heavy rain. Also, wells that are located within 50 feet of a septic tank or within 100 feet of petroleum, manure, pesticide or chemical storage areas are much more likely to have problems.

Sometimes, a contaminated well does not show any external signs that anything is wrong. However, some common indications are water that stains clothes or sinks and tubs, has a strong odor, has particles floating in it, or a metallic, sour taste. Also, if the pH of the water is too high, it could eat away at your pipes, which doesn’t contaminate the well but still affects household water. High levels of certain metals, such as copper, can even cause adverse health effects. If you do suspect your water is contaminated or are not sure about the status of your well, you can have your water tested by a variety of organizations, including the extension office.

Water can be submitted for several different tests, but the most common are a basic water test and a bacterial test. The basic water test looks for several metal and mineral contaminants, as well as hardness and pH of the water. The bacterial test shows the presence or absence of any harmful germs possibly contaminating your well. For a basic well test, it is important to do what is called a “first draw.” This means that you need to take the sample before any other faucets in the house have been used. It is recommended to test a kitchen faucet early in the morning, as those are usually the most active faucets in a household. For a bacterial test, all faucet attachments, such as nozzles and aerators, must be removed and the neck of the faucet itself must be sterilized using a very specific procedure.
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Blairsville - Union County Chamber
Regina Allison

From time to time we run “take 5” articles about Chamber Members to give people an opportunity to get to know them better. We recently taped our third episode of the Chamber Connection, which will air the weeks of Sept 12th and the 19th, featuring this member. We know him best as Dr. Larry, the voice of WUCG-FM 93.1. Larry and Jan Flegle’s story is like so many others that have chosen to make Union County their home. They bought a vacation home in 2005 as a getaway from Atlanta. He fondly recalls these visits as he jokingly says they did it in reverse from so many others. Instead of spending their weekends here, they would visit for a day or two during the week. He and Ms. Jan were very active in their church in Woodstock so weekend
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Letter to the Editor...

SR180 Bridge Reconstruction

Dear Editor,
A letter submitted to Mr. Eric Duff of GA DOT regarding possible closure of SR180 for Bridge Reconstruction at Winfield Scott.

Dear Mr. Duff:
As a resident of Suches, I would like to state my opposition to the current proposed closing of SR180, for a multitude of reasons.
Suches is a very unique community in many ways, one being that there are basically only two ways in and out—State Hwy. 60 and State Hwy. 180. By closing State Hwy. 180, you have reduced our ingress and egress by 50%. Suches residents, by virtue of our geographic isolation, are very self-reliant and self-sustaining, but there are times when we must travel outside of our little community. The minimum travel time to a grocery store, gas station, pharmacy, doctor’s office, or hospital is 35 to 40 minutes, which makes our need and ability to travel vital.

The most important impact of closing 180 is in regard to emergency services. In our community, we have no ambulance, no doctor’s office, no police station, and no stationary officers. We do, however, have many elderly residents and thousands of acres of forest which make us somewhat susceptible to forest fires. The proposed DOT detour more than doubles the response time and miles traveled of the already half hour drive directly from the hospital in Blairsville—where our ambulances are dispatched—down 180 to Winfield Scott. One of our oldest and most respected citizens, veteran Clyde Harkins, lives just south of the bridge at Winfield Scott, as well as the local nursing home being just beyond there, which puts these people and others at the greatest distance from emergency transport via the detour. This would, of course, apply to law enforcement and outside fire assistance response times, as well. Denying residents access to reasonable and timely emergency response times, and actually doubling those times could literally mean the difference in life and death.

Another concern is the safety of our children. Re-routing school buses via the proposed detour puts our children on buses an additional hour a day, adds over 42 additional miles to their commute, and takes them across two counties on very treacherous stretches of 129. Not to mention the added wear, tear, maintenance, and gas costs to our county buses.

As small as we are, we do have a few businesses in Suches. Closing 180 would have a major financial impact on those businesses. Budget Propane would have to re-route trucks in order to service their Blairsville customers, and I would imagine that we, the consumers, would eventually see our rates increase in order to compensate for the added expenses. TWOS (Two Wheels of Suches) depends on the support of motorcyclists who come to this area because of our roads. Closing 180 would eliminate many of those riders and affect the business at TWOS. Another affected group would be the owners of vacation rentals, which would include myself, as limiting access to the area would greatly affect interested renters.

Lastly, and dearest to my heart is “the store” as people in Suches refer to Wolf Pen Gap Country Store, located at the intersection of 180 and 60. The store is not just a store—it is the hub of this community. It is where we go to buy drinks and food items, but it’s mostly where we go to chat, catch up on news, visit with our neighbors, and just gather as a community. It also serves as a satellite post office and is a gathering place for a dedicated group of men every Monday morning for coffee and gossip. The store provides much needed staples for times when
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