

Opinions

Everybody has one...

National Preparedness Month

September is National Preparedness Month. We know that most of you are not like us; we eat, sleep, and breathe emergencies and preparedness. We are not asking for you to stop everything and worry about the worst case scenario but we would like for you to think about some questions...What would I do during a disaster? How would I get in contact with my family if communications are down? What will I eat, drink? What would I do without power or heat for a long period of time? What would I need if I had to evacuate? Where would I go?

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



If the answer to these questions is, "Oh don't worry, the government and emergency services will take care of us." Then you would be making a wrong assumption. The government and emergency service will do everything in their power to respond and save lives but everyone must understand that there are only so many responders and during a disaster, we cannot get to everyone right away. The recommendation is that a family must have supplies and be self-sufficient for at least three days. We recommend five days.

National Preparedness Month is a reminder that being prepared for an emergency or disaster is everyone's responsibility. Department of Homeland Security's Ready.gov provides a great deal of information to help people get prepared for disasters. This month is broken down in to several themes for each week. Week one was the kick-off week which reminds everyone that it is everyone's responsibility to be prepared. Week two involved how to prepare family and friends. The main theme that week was to have a communications plan so that family and friends can get in touch with each other during emergencies. Remember cell phones, internet and even land lines may not be working.

Week three's theme encouraged members of the community to get involved by preparing through service. Community members can volunteer in emergency programs such as CERT - Community Emergency Response Teams. It also reminded people to check on neighbors and to lend a helping hand during emergencies. Week four talks about how we need to plan for individual preparedness. Individual preparedness involves knowing how to stay informed; how to make an emergency plan and how to build an emergency kit for your home and your vehicle. The last week is a week to put it

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Regret

As he told his story, I could hear pain, if not see it in his eyes. The story was not unlike mine and yours, since we all would like a redo on events of the past. But even though we cannot change the past, we can deal with it in the present and future.

His story was a case of "what-if." As a young man, his father invited him on a business-related road trip, with a lot of driving in a short time. He felt like his reason for not going was trivial, especially given the consequences. There was an accident. His father may have fallen asleep at the wheel. We'll never know for sure. "What if I had gone with him?" Even if he had, the outcome could have been worse, not better. His mother may have been burying a son also, not just a husband. His regret was a cancer of the soul.

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Regret over missed opportunities, wrong choices, and unfortunate reactions can harangue a person with troubling voices. "That was a stupid thing to do. I'm stupid." "I failed, so I'm worthless." "I'm unlovable and I'll never forgive myself." The term "skeletons in the closet" implies they're always there, ready to rattle their bones and haunt you. It doesn't have to be that way.

Christian truth is for life today, not just eternity. You see that in Jesus' many ordinary encounters with hurting people. If there was ever a man to have regret, it would be Jesus' disciple Peter. He followed Jesus for years, watching him heal, teach, and prophecy. He had ample reason to love and trust Jesus. Then came that dark night when fear and self-preservation overcame that love and trust. Peter thrice denied even knowing Jesus. Remorse. Shame. Regret.

Jesus understands the human condition. He knew Peter loved him and meant no harm. So there on the beach, after a breakfast of fish and bread cooked over charcoal, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him. Each time Peter responded "yes," Jesus gave him an assignment showing he was forgiven, loved, and needed. Jesus wanted no haunting skeletons in Peter's closet.

Nor does he want any in yours. Faith in Jesus means accepting that only He can restore that image of God in you that

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Commissioner's Questions

Q. How did the Union County Farmers Market and Cannery do this year?

A. The season is not over yet, but the crowds and sales have exceeded all years before and the canning plant is also looking to break their record this year. We could not be happier at the success of the Union County Farmers Market. It is one of many special success stories of the county.

Q. Someone suggested that the Farmers Market should not have been built in a flood plain. Does this cause a problem for the market?

A. Absolutely not. Before building the market, our engineers required that the building portion of the property be built above the 100-year flood level, raising it at least one foot above the flood plain. If you have been to the Farmers Market other than just riding by, you would know that the area of the building and canning plant is well above the parking area. Only the parking area is in the flood plain and floodway.

Q. Why was the Farmers Market built in a flood plain?

A. It was not built in a flood plain. It was built 1 foot above and out of the flood plain. However, it was built in an area along a creek because that is where the property was the least expensive and since the parking is the only part of the project in the flood plain, it is not a problem. It is simple, if it is flooding then do not park in the flood plain.

Q. Have we had a situation where the parking lot was flooded on a Saturday market day?

A. While we have had some flooding through the years, we have not had any during the Market time. This is Butternut Creek that goes through the property and it is a beautiful stream with a nice cool stream buffer along most of its path. As with any creek anywhere, they are prone to occasional flooding. In a very few circumstances, the creek has gotten up and may have washed a little along the banks or bridges, but nothing that was difficult for the county to repair. This is the same creek that flows through Butternut Creek Golf Course and Meeks Park. All streams flood occasionally, but we have seldom had any real significant damage in any of the three facilities. If you are a golfer or

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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Letters to the Editor...

It is Time to Come Together

Dear Editor,
There is no blue America. There is no red America. There is only the United States of America. We have to come together as a country and tackle some of the big problems of our time. One such problem is climate change. Even if we disagree on climate change, we can all agree that clean energy is a good thing. Numerous studies have shown that for every dollar spent on clean energy, we reap 3-4 dollars in benefits. There are several good conservative plans for converting to clean energy. A carbon fee and dividend plan gets big government out of the way and lets the free market take over.
It is time to put aside our differences and unite to convert to clean energy to make America healthier and more prosperous. For the love of our children, we must do it!
Vernon Dixon, MD



"I must be getting old. I can remember when rural issues mattered in politics."

Business of the Quarter - Comfort Inn

Every three months the Chamber recognizes a member business in the community who has gone above and beyond the call of duty to make Blairsville-Union County a great place to live, work, and play. This quarter we are pleased to recognize Comfort Inn of Blairsville as the recipient.
Suresh Kishan and his wife Vina Patel joined the Chamber in 2009 and have had an active role in the viability of our town. Suresh and Vina started in the accommodations business in Blairsville with their previous hotel, the Holiday Inn Express. As all of us know, change is a constant and they were faced with a decision that led them to leave the Holiday Inn Express brand and join the team of Comfort Inn. This was not a
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Blairsville - Union County Chamber
Regina Allison



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Halloween

Dear Editor,
With October coming, and Halloween falling on a Monday night this year, I have been thinking, and the counties around and about should consider doing the Halloween on the Square event this year on the Saturday eve before Halloween, giving Halloween night for the chance for the kids and parents to do it the "old fashioned" way by going house to house if they choose to want to do that.
We omitted doing the Square event altogether last year and went house to house with the grandkids and they loved it! Said it was all they wanted to do from now on, but did miss the square too.
They also got way much more and better things too by going house to house.
Give it a try any way.
Thank you,
Delores Barnes

Constitutional Amendment

Dear Editor,
Residents of North Georgia are familiar with local judges who may have committed ethical violations resulting in their being removed from the bench either voluntarily or involuntarily. In the November 8th general election citizens of Georgia will be asked to vote on a constitutional amendment concerning the State's Judicial Qualification Commission which currently has authority over these judges.
The Judicial Qualifications Commission was created by Constitutional Amendment in 1972 to conduct investigations and hearings with respect to complaints of ethical misconduct by Georgia judges and is also authorized to issue Advisory Opinions regarding appropriate judicial conduct. The Commission is composed of:
Two (2) judges of any court of record selected by the Supreme Court of Georgia;
Three (3) lawyers, each of whom must have had at least ten (10) years' experience, appointed by the State Bar of Georgia;
Two (2) citizens, neither of whom shall be members of the State Bar, appointed by the Governor.
All members serve four (4) year terms and until their successors are appointed and qualified.
The question on the Ballot reads: "Shall the Constitution of Georgia be amended so as to abolish the existing Judicial Qualifications Commission; require the General Assembly to create and provide by general law for the composition, manner of appointment, and governance of a new Judicial Qualifications Commission, with such commission having the power to discipline, remove, and cause involuntary retirement of judges; require the Judicial Qualifications Commission to have procedures that provide for due process of law and review by the Supreme Court of its advisory opinions; and allow the Judicial Qualifications Commission to be open to the public in some manner?"
In short, the proposed constitution-
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Synthetic Drugs: The New Threat

There are two types of synthetic drugs the government has issued warnings about -- cannabinoids and cathinones. Cannabinoids is often called synthetic marijuana, K2 or Spice. It is sold in legal retail outlets as "herbal incense" or "potpourri".
There are more than 120 known chemical variants that make up synthetic cannabinoids, with 50 or so of these chemical either regulated by U.S. law, or that are illegal in the United States. The bulk of synthetic marijuana is produced in China where the "recipe" is altered to skirt U.S. law.
Cannabinoids are sold in packets which carry more than 500 brand names such as Spice, Ace of Spades, Demon, King John Pot Pourri, Mojo and Mr. Bad Guy. Because they are labeled "not for human consumption" they are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. Cannabinoids and other synthetic drugs are also readily available via the Internet.
After the chemical mixture is created it is often sprayed on plant material. The material is chopped up and packaged. According to the government, the synthetic cannabinoids gives users a high similar to marijuana because it mimics THC, the primary psychoactive ingredient of marijuana.
Synthetic cannabinoids on plant material were first reported in the United States in Dayton, Ohio, in December 2008. In 2009, two synthetic cannabinoids were identified by authorities. In 2012, fifty-one new synthetic cannabinoid chemicals had been identified.
According to a survey in 2012, one in nine U.S. high school seniors reported using synthetic cannabinoids, making it the second most frequently used illegal drug after marijuana. The effects of synthetic cannabinoids include severe agitation and anxiety, nausea, vomiting, a fast, racing heartbeat, elevated blood pressure, tremors and seizures, hallucinations and dilated pupils. Suicidal and other harmful thoughts and/or actions have also been reported.
The second type of synthetic drug is cathinones, a naturally occurring stimulant found in the leaves of khat. Khat is a flowering evergreen shrub native to East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. The plant (*Catha edulis*) contains two alkaloids, cathinone and cathine, which act as stimulants much like amphetamines.
Like cannabinoids, most cathinones are produced in China. They are referred to as "bath salts," and distributed under trade names such as 'Ivory Wave', 'White Lightning' and 'Vanilla Sky.' They are also labeled as "not for human consumption" to avoid penalty under the Analogue Enforcement Act. Bath salts are generally
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The mission of the Union County Anti-Drug Coalition is to support an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

Prohibition Days

I enjoy spending time with Sheldon Henderson and Milton Bradley. They let me tag along with them on grouse hunting trips. There are few grouse left in these mountains, but, Sheldon and Milton have some really good dogs that I enjoy watching. Even better than hunting are the stories Sheldon tells of his ancestors and his childhood. He and Joan Bilbo have written a couple of books about their ancestors and these mountains that you would enjoy. One such story is about a group of ladies which decided to do something about the abundance of illegal whiskey being made in the area.
Sometime during the 1930s several women in a local community decided to do something about illegal making of whiskey. They were tired of their husbands and other men of the community wasting their money and lives on moonshine. So, a group of these ladies decided to go and smash up the still of a man they knew well. They knew him because he was a Sunday School Superintendent in a local church. For some time the ladies had watched in disgust as he led Sunday School knowing what he was selling to their husbands. They tried in vain to persuade him to quit the illegal manufacture of the evil spirits. But, he refused to quit.
The business was just too good and he stated that his family needed the money to pay the bills. Nor could he find anything in the scriptures which prohibited him from making "shine". This discussion went on for months to no avail. So, the group of ladies gathered at Mrs. Mamie's house and began the 25 minute walk to the home of their Sunday School Superintendent. Just before his house the group of five ladies turned south and walked up a branch into a cove. The cove led up toward the top of Ivy Log Mountain. The ladies didn't try to hide their approach. They were on a mission and didn't care who knew of their approach. They had to wade through an Ivy thicket breaking many limbs which tore at their coats. Finally, they emerged at a spring head. There was their superintendent running his operation. Instead of standing his ground or fighting he lit out in a dead run. The ladies chopped up and smashed the still. Thereafter, the Sunday School Superintendent never made any more evil spirits.
The other night Charles Jenkins told me this story about one of his ancestors. Ransy was one of the local Revenue Agents. His territory covered Towns and Union counties and his adventures in preventing the illegal manufacture of whiskey were many. One day Ransy received a tip regarding a man he had been trying to arrest for a long time. The man had eluded him for a long time and was a notorious moonshiner. Ransy and his crew went to the place and sure
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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Fruit Trees

With fall quickly approaching, many of us are ready and raring to go harvest some ripening fruit from our trees. Whether you want something fun for the grandkids to pick, or you want something for your own enjoyment, there are a variety of fruit trees that do well in our area. The major steps to having a productive fruit harvest are the three p's: picking, pollination, and pruning. If you know the basics of these three important characteristics, you will have plenty of fruit for yourself, your family and even your neighbors!
The most common fruit trees I see up here are, of course, apples. A wide variety of apple trees do well in the North Georgia mountains, but red cultivars are the most resistant to diseases such as cedar apple rust. Apples ripen throughout late summer and early fall, and are perfect to pick when their color has peaked and they are easily plucked off the stems. Though it may be tempting to prune your apple trees after the fruit and leaves have dropped, the ideal pruning time is in early February. Remove any diseased or dead wood and any branches that are rubbing against each other. You always want to take back about one third of the tree's volume to allow for air flow and to maintain structural integrity. Finally, always make sure you have multiple apple trees that flower at the same time. If you only have one tree, you will not have any fruit because it will not be pollinated.
Pears are also a common tree grown here. Unlike apples, they need to be picked before they are ripe. A good rule of thumb is to pick them when you can see little brown dots (lenticels) appearing on the skin. Early February is also the best time to prune these trees, and you will definitely need to prune them because their branches grow almost straight up and form narrow crotches. Just like with all trees, you want good air flow through the canopy to prevent disease. Even if a pear may be advertised as "self-fertile", it is good to have at least two that flower at the same time to increase your fruit yield. More pollination always means more tasty fruit!
Despite the fact that North Georgia is not traditionally considered a suitable site for fig trees, I have seen several varieties such as Hardy Chicago, Celeste and some Brown Turkey do well in the area. Figs ripen throughout the warm summer months into fall, depending on environmental conditions. Again, late winter is the ideal time to prune as figs typically yield better when they are kept a little short instead of growing into a large tree. February is also a great time to make cuttings. If you are unsure of what variety to get, the best thing may be to ask a friend or neighbor with a successfully producing fig tree if you can take a cutting to propagate your own tree. Cuttings should be made from one year old wood
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From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



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