

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Thankful

Thanksgiving is more than just eating a lot of food and watching some great football. It's a celebration of being thankful. We celebrate Thanksgiving by gathering family and friends together and reflecting on the many blessings that we have. As a department, we also reflect on the many things that we may be thankful for.

We are thankful for the support of our community. This community has always shown its upmost support for all that the fire department and the emergency management agency does. Without that support, it would be difficult to serve as we do. Our community has shown its support with verbal support, Thank You cards, and of course, donations of all kinds.

Your financial donations to our volunteer stations and special project funds have enabled the department to grow and to be better equipped to respond to all types of emergencies. In the last few weeks and during this unusual fire season, we have seen an outpouring of donations and support like never before. Not only have you supported our efforts but you have supported the efforts of the many visiting and cooperating departments who are fighting the wildland fires. We have been told by the visitors from other parts of the US that they have never seen such displays. We appreciate the time, money and effort put forth by the people of this community. For this, we are very thankful. However, we do request that you contact Station 1 prior to any further donations.

We are also thankful to have the opportunity to be firefighters and to serve our wonderful community. Responding to calls and fighting fire are enjoyable but to be able to serve our community in its time of need has another satisfaction that cannot be described unless you have experienced it. Some of our responses may be on one of the worst days of someone's lives. It is rewarding to know that our willingness to help and our actions may have provided some comfort to someone or made a positive difference in their life. We are very thankful to have the opportunity to serve either as a career or a volunteer firefighter.

We, as a department and as individuals, have a lot to be thankful for. With all that is going on in the world today and all the

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Thanksgiving 2016

We are a nation divided. National election results are so close to 50-50 that polls cannot predict the outcome. Both sides ask the question, "How can they even conceive of voting for that person?" Americans are frustrated over sharply different philosophies of government. Our most notable disagreement in history resulted in the horrific Civil War. Our response now can be well informed by what Abraham Lincoln did then.

Writing to various presidents for 15 years, Sara Hale lobbied for a national Thanksgiving observance on a fixed date. Lincoln agreed with her. On October 3, 1863, 74 years after George Washington's first thanksgiving proclamation, and juxtaposed with the Battle of Chickamauga and its 33,000 casualties just two weeks prior, Lincoln called for a national day of Thanksgiving on the last Thursday in November (later changed to fourth Thursday).

His 500-word proclamation still rings true. Lamenting that Americans are prone to forget the source of our blessings, he listed them beginning with "fruitful fields and healthful skies." Despite the War, "peace has been preserved with all nations." The War had not "arrested the plough, the shuttle or the ship." He noted increased development and population, the productivity of mines and industry, and the growth of the nation. "No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God."

Lincoln also urged "humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience" and petitions for "all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife." He closes with a call to pray for "the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and union."

Americans are still blessed for what we have, and for evil things that were not but might have been. We need forgiveness for the perversity of our times, and compassion for the defenseless and less fortunate among us. But above all thanksgiving implies a source, and Lincoln rightly understood that we thank the

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Is the Burn Ban still in effect?

A. Absolutely! There is no outside burning of any kind for any reason. The Burn Ban will be in effect until further notice.

Q. How bad of a drought do we really have?

A. This is a historic drought and we are being told there has never been one this serious in this century. Apparently most of the entire state is suffering from the lack of rain although North Georgia seems to be the worst. Governor Nathan Deal and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division announced that Union County was part of the Level 2 Drought Response Declaration. This is a directive from the State of Georgia with new water restrictions, separate from the burn ban. There are now new public water use restrictions that must be followed. Everyone in the county should watch their water usage as the weather forecasters are not predicting any substantial rain in the near future. They are also expecting it to be a dry and warm winter which will not help the drought situation at all.

Q. What are these water restrictions the Governor has declared?

A. Below is the list from the EPD on what outdoor water uses are prohibited:

1. Washing hard surfaces such as streets, gutters, sidewalks, or driveways.
2. Using water for ornamental purposes, such as fountains.
3. Use of fire hydrants except for the purposes of fire-fighting, public health, safety, or flushing.
4. Washing any type of vehicle other than at a carwash.
5. Non-commercial washing, or pressure washing, of buildings or structures.
6. Charity or fund-raiser car washes

Q. How many counties are under the Drought Response Declaration?

A. There are 52 counties that are under Drought Level 2 (the most severe) restrictions and 58 counties that are under Drought Level 1 conditions.

Q. It is supposed to be cold this weekend. Is it ok for me to use my fireplace or wood stove for heat?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Getting Trippie With The Hippies

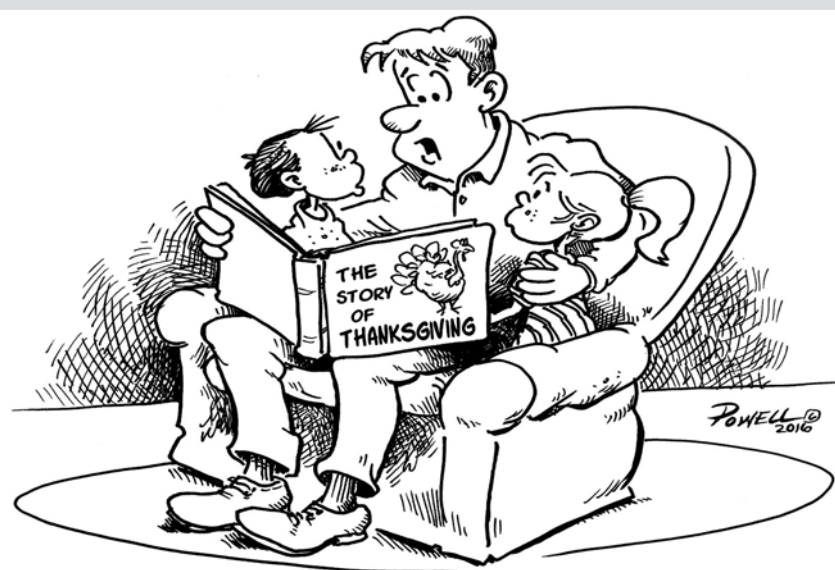
Did you know that LSD is available for purchase in our mountain community? LSD was popularized in the 1960s by individuals such as Harvard psychologist Timothy Leary, who encouraged American students to "turn on, tune in, and drop out." This created

an entire counterculture of drug abuse and spread the drug from America to the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe. Even today, use of LSD in the United Kingdom is significantly higher than other parts of the world. Timothy Leary, who promoted LSD and other mind-bending psychiatric drugs, was eventually arrested and imprisoned for drug-related crimes.

LSD is one of the most potent, mood-changing chemicals. It is manufactured from lysergic acid,

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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.



"On July 4th we celebrate Independence Day. On Thanksgiving Day we celebrate our dependence."

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a very special holiday; not just because it gives us a reason to eat a lot of delicious food and get some great deals shopping! It is a day as a nation to stop and reflect and to give thanks for what we have. From the Chamber Board Members, Ambassadors, and the entire team at the Chamber Office, we want to wish you and your family a very Happy Thanksgiving. We would like to thank our Chamber Members and the entire community for your help and support throughout the year. We consider it a blessing and an honor to promote and help our members and Blairsville-Union County.

The recent fires in the area give us a new reason to say thank you to an outstanding group of men and women in our community. To the Union County Fire Department, EMS, Road

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison



Letters to the Editor...

Transfer Station

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express appreciation to Commissioner Paris and Union County residents for pursuing and successfully establishing a new recycling center at the Union County Transfer Station. As a thirty-three year resident of Union County, I can recall the days when the present transfer station was an open pit landfill and there was a county wide outcry to find a better solution for waste disposal. Citizens learned that open pit landfills harbored toxic wastes, polluted soil and

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Grief Counseling?

Dear Editor,

I have voted in 15 Presidential elections, eight of which my candidate has won and seven of which my candidate has lost. I remember being devastated a couple of times and thinking "What will become of us?" (Particularly when I was younger.) I do not remember ever breaking windows, burning flags, looting stores, rioting in the streets. Nor do I remember ever needing "grief counseling." These folks we see in the news need to ... what? Grow up? Get a life? Study our history? Maybe all three.

Carol McKechnie

It Is Time for Healing

Dear Editor,

The election is over, and Donald Trump will be our next president. Now it is time for us all to come together and push America forward. We have been stalled in gridlock for too long. For those of you that have read my letters before, you know that action on climate change is of prime importance to me. Since Donald Trump denies the existence of climate change and vows to overturn legislation designed to protect our planet from the ravages of climate change, obviously this is of grave concern to me. Despite that, I will pray for him daily and will prayerfully consider all his proposals and will try and sup-

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Electoral College

Dear Editor,

Every four years, around election time, there are murmurs about revamping the Electoral College system and moving toward a direct, national popular vote.

In creating the basic architecture of the American government, the Founders struggled to satisfy each State's demand for greater representation while attempting to balance popular sovereignty against the risk posed to the minority from majoritarian rule.

Some elements of the Electoral College, such as the indirect vote through intermediaries, were hotly debated at the 1787 Constitutional

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Wildland Fire Prevention Education Teams

For the past 4 or 5 years ChestChatt RC&D has been working with local emergency agencies in several counties in Northeast Georgia to create emergency plans to handle the fires that we have been telling you would happen sooner or later and now those fires are here. Maybe not in our backyards, but close enough to get our attention.

With the unprecedented dry weather conditions that we are experiencing now we could very well have one in our backyard, all it will take is one match or spark from many sources. We had a fire last week caused by a squirrel on a power line. It only takes one small spark to start a raging inferno that can destroy ours and our neighbors stuff. Don't be the cause of a disaster, throw your matches away, carefully! Several counties here in the mountains have proclaimed a total burn ban that does not allow any kind of open flame outside, not even charcoal grills. We haven't seen these conditions in our lifetimes and we want to survive this one with everything intact so again we must be extra careful with any kind of spark or flame. Fires have been started by catalytic converters on our cars too close to dry grass, squirrels on power lines, trailer safety chains dragging on the road, campfires, grills, and many other ignition sources that we normally would not worry about, but now is the time to worry about them.

When severe wildland fire situations occur because of extreme fire weather, wildland fires can cause extensive loss of life, property, and resources. As extreme conditions approach or worsen, wildland fire prevention and education is an excellent source of help. Because fire weather conditions are predictable, wildland fire prevention and education teams can be mobilized in advance of fires, when fire danger becomes extreme. National Forests in the Southern Region have utilized the skills of fire prevention teams for many years.

Prevention/education teams are available to support any geographic area preceding and during periods of high fire danger or fire activity. Agencies in a threatened area may request a fire prevention team to come in ahead of a fire and work with residents to prepare them for what is coming at them or prepare them for changing conditions that could lead to disaster in their community. Purpose of wildland fire prevention education teams: Teams assist the local unit in the prevention of unwanted human-caused wildfires. This involves working together to: *complete fire risk assessments and develop fire protection plans *determine the severity of the situation *facilitate community awareness and education in fire prevention *coordinate announcement of

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Frank Riley

Executive Director of RC&D



The Bicycle Ride

The mountains around northwestern Alabama are ridges compared to the Blue Ridge Mountains of Georgia. The highest ones might be 1000 feet in elevation. But, the mountainsides and hollows are very steep. There are many gorges carved by creeks like Cummings Creek. The underlying rock is limestone and the soil of the area is quite sandy. The road leading to Phil Campbell, Highway 81, passes by the old home place which was homesteaded by my great-grandfather, John Cummings. His son, Lon, bought the old home place and operated a sawmill/grist mill at Cummings Creek. Present day Highway 81 passes over the creek where the old mills were located. Just off the pavement is a place where the soil was very sandy.

Actually, the road kind of curved around this sandy area. I can imagine the sand would have been hard going for mules pulling wagons back in the old days. So, when Lon built the first road through the area it was built around the sandy spot. When Lon built the road he could not have known the impact this sandy area would have on his son and grandson. Or could he have known?

Lon's youngest son was officially named C.L. But, to me and everyone else he was called "Poggy". He enjoyed life and was always laughing and joking. And he was known to have a taste for the moonshine. He became friends with my grandfather's brother-in-law who was known as Dennis. Whenever the family got together for some event Poggy and Dennis usually brought the spirits with them. The family's Independence Day celebration of 1948 was typical of Poggy's and Dennis's antics.

The family all began arriving at the home place around 2 p.m. The women folk were preparing the family meal while the men pitched horseshoes outside. As usual Poggy and Dennis kept slipping off to the barn where they would sip their whiskey. They would not drink in front of Lon and Laura because they knew it would not be tolerated. After about an hour the young men were full of themselves and you could tell some mischief was about to happen. As the pair walked back toward the horseshoe contest Poggy noticed the kids playing out front on bicycles. So, the pair walked toward the kids.

Poggy walked up to the group and watched as his nephew, my dad, rode his new bike around with the other kids. Both men were laughing and enjoying watching their nephews when Poggy spoke up. He said, "Dennis, can you ride a bicycle? Why, I believe I can still ride one of them things as good or better than I ever could." The mischievous Dennis saw his chance and said, "Poggy, you know as well as I do that your bike riding days are gone. You know that you can't ride no bicycle". Dad later told me the discussion must have gone on for 30-40 minutes.

It seemed that Poggy was trying to convince himself that he was still capable of riding a bike and Uncle Dennis was thinking that it would be real fun-

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Firewise Practices

The burn bans across the state may seem inconvenient, but as these devastating wildfires have proven over the past few weeks, a spark can burn several thousand acres in hardly any time at all during a drought. Though we may think we're safe as long as we do not burn anything in our backyards or fields, there are ways to make your house even safer and more resistant to uncontrolled fires.

Always ensure that a thirty foot perimeter around your house is cleared of any excess vegetation. This critical area is known as the "home defensible zone" and needs to have as little flammable material as possible. If you have any outbuildings such as sheds, garages or guest houses, this perimeter extends to them as well. Plants are obviously some of the most flammable things homeowners can have in this zone, but responsible landscaping can reduce the risk. Keep plants such as bushes and trees appropriately pruned and prevent them from becoming overgrown and too close to the house and roof. When you do prune, remove all trimmings, and rake away any leaf litter. This is especially important around evergreens such as Leyland cypress and arborvitae because they drop large amounts of needles throughout the year that are highly flammable when dry.

If you are in the process of landscaping, opt for stone or brick materials as opposed to wooden rail ties or other flammable materials. Also, though it may be convenient to have your firewood pile right next to the back door, especially on cold nights, it's incredibly dangerous to have such a flammable area near your home. All firewood piles should be placed outside of the defensible zone and far away from any propane tanks, which should also have a ten foot perimeter cleared around them maintained with gravel when possible.

Though many of us strive to keep the natural forest areas around our home, forested areas on our properties still require some maintenance. Be aware of the vertical arrangement of vegetation. This means take down any vines, dead trees that have fallen against live trees, and shrubby weeds that grow around trunks. These cause what are known as "fire ladders," which allow fire to spread along the ground and up trees that would otherwise have not caught if the ground were cleared.

It is equally important to make sure that your house itself is as fireproof as possible, which can be done with some easy modifications if you are in the process of updating your home. Residing your home with brick or stone and re-roofing with class A shingles or other non-flammable material can make your home incredibly fire-resistant. Also, make sure your fireplace has an effective spark arrester and have your chimney inspected and cleaned annually to remove buildup and check for cracks. Always make sure to clean gutters and roofs to reduce the amount of flammable leaf litter that

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From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



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