

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Protecting Our Most Vulnerable

As we head into Christmas during these trying times, let us remember how important it is to stay in touch with family and friends. This has major health implications, as a lack of strong relationships has been linked to “risk of premature death from all causes by 50% – an effect on mortality risk roughly comparable to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, and greater than obesity and physical inactivity.”

Additionally, no matter our individual circumstances, we should all be focusing on improving our overall health with diet and exercise in the new year, because doing so is known to positively influence health outcomes generally. Such considerations are likely to boost the physical and mental wellbeing of our most vulnerable members of society, enabling grandma, for example, to have greater protection against COVID-19 and a more.

Of course, people have been using grandma as a political football all year, charging those not hewing closely enough to CDC guidelines with killing her. Yet with stunning hypocrisy, now that there’s a way to offer grandma much better protection from getting, Very Serious People advising the CDC have been trying to get around doing so because, apparently, she’s too white.

In a time when millions of people are holding out hope for a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine, the independent Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices housed within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has been crafting recommendations on who to prioritize for vaccination after the initial rollout for frontline medical workers and long-term care facilities. This is a vital question, as vaccine supplies will be greatly limited at first, so a phased allocation will be necessary.

Proposals for a phased approach have been forthcoming, with the committee forwarding an updated set of recommendations Sunday following public feedback and further deliberations on interim guidance issued in November. Both the November and December recommendations feature a vaccine distribution plan based partly in race that in effect favors death for many older Americans because, as a group, they are over-represented by white people.

The committee has provided a reprieve of sorts in the latest recommendations, deciding to move up early vaccination for people aged 75 and older, though the guidance continues to leave the rest

See Jarrard, page 5A

From the Editor's Desk

Shaun Jarrard



Peace To You

“In Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” - Jesus

Last week, I gained a new appreciation for Christmas and all it means. It happened in the middle of the night. I had traveled to another state, and was asleep in a nice hotel room. But nice can change in a twinkling, even around 1 a.m. I awoke with a start. A couple yelled at each other just outside my door. Expletives and accusations flew. Should I call the front desk, or 911? Mercifully, after a few long minutes a slammed door ended the chaos.

How sad. What could cause such torment that this couple would forfeit any consideration for each other, and the people around them? The contrast with Christmas was startling. They had punctuated this season of love and giving with selfishness and dis-sension.

Shepherds were minding their business in a nice pasture. In a twinkling, an angel and a multitude of the heavenly host pierced the night. Their announcement was short. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Of all the transcendent meaning packed into that, it also offers a reason not to scream in a hotel hallway. Peace on earth means peace to you for whatever your circumstances might be.

“Long lay the world in sin and error pining,” the carol says. To that world the angels announced the birth of Jesus who was the embodiment of peace. One Bible word for peace is “shalom,” which means to be whole, at rest, tranquil. As a man, that is what Jesus displayed and offered to His followers even though He knew crucifixion awaited Him the next day. He said, “Peace I leave you; My peace I give you” (John 14:27). After His death He visited them saying, “Peace with you” (John 20:19). Jesus clearly understood that you need peace, especially with God. In fact, “He Himself is our peace” (Eph. 2:14).

What does Christmas mean to you? By faith, do you know the peace of Christ? If you do, then you have a peace that can displace the angst of elections, fears of COVID, and the loneliness of memories. You have a deep pool of resources to help you recall the past with tranquility and face the future with confidence. The

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. What is the CodeRED service that is displayed on the Fire Department/EMA digital sign on South Hwy 129?

A. Union County Emergency Management Agency (UCEMA) has changed to a new Community Notification System, CodeRED. This system replaced WENS, Wireless Emergency Alert Notification System. CodeRED is a public safety notification program for delivering real-time alerts. The UCEMA purchased this program so that Union County residents can receive timely notifications.

Q. Why did Union County change alert systems?

A. The CodeRED system provides residents more flexibility in choosing which notifications and weather warnings they receive. The added feature of a mobile app for android and apple devices allow residents to choose up to 53 additional types of weather warnings. This app also allows the resident to view alerts from other locations across the United States that utilizes the CodeRED system.

Q. What types of notifications use this technology?

A. Example: Without any human intervention required, CodeRED Weather Warnings deliver advanced notification of severe weather events as soon as a bulletin is issued by the National Weather Service (NWS). The system can deliver text messages, emails and/or phone calls to subscribed users within the direct path of the storm. These messages provide residents the extra time needed to take precautions and save lives. Alert warnings may include tornado, severe thunderstorm, flash flood and winter storm warnings. The system can also be used to notify the public about community crisis issues such as a boil-water notice, missing person, weather emergencies or evacuation notices.

Q. How much does it cost a Union County resident to sign up to receive the alerts?

A. There is no charge to register for or use CodeRED, and an individual's personal information will be kept confidential.

Q. How do I sign up for the CodeRED service?

A. It is easier than ever to sign-up for CodeRED or encourage friends and neighbors to enroll. Text UCALERTS to 99411 and users are able to sign-up for emergency notifications, general

See Paris, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

State of Climate Change in 2020

Dear Editor,

2020 has been another worsening year for climate change. This year is on pace to be the first or second hottest year in history, and the last six years have been the hottest ever recorded.

California has had a record-setting wildfire year, and its wildfire season is now 78 days longer than it was a generation ago. Antarctica lost six times more ice in 2020 than it did 30 years ago. Sea level rise is rapidly increasing, with predictions of between 2-6 feet rise by 2020, causing catastrophic flooding to coastal areas. Ocean acidification is rapidly increasing.

On the wet side, this year's hurricane season saw an unprecedented 30 named Atlantic storms, with as many as 12 making landfall in the U.S. — the highest number ever. There has also been record-setting flooding in the Midwest. All these natural disasters caused \$76 billion in insured losses in 2020.

It is obvious that we are courting disaster unless we change course on climate change. The good news is that we do have answers that will actually help our economy. Let us hope and pray that we will begin to take action in 2021.

Vernon Dixon, MD



For God so loved the world...

Chamber of Commerce

With only a couple days left until Christmas, my mind immediately goes to the age-old phrase, “Peace on earth, good will to men...” At this time of year, that seems to be a universal wish we all share in common. I can honestly say I have never seen more goodwill toward our fellow mankind

than living here in Blairsville. This year the Blairsville Police Department knocked it out of the park with their incredible Shop with a Cop program reaching 125 kids! WJUL/WJRB Talk of the Mountains Toy Drive is filling countless “empty stockings” through the generous contributions from our community. The HOPE Center Christmas Cottage at HOP has served over 200 boys and girls through toy contributions from the community and Toys for Tots. The CASA program has ensured that all our local foster children will have Christmas, and More Than Enough gave Christmas to eight complete families associated with the SAFE program. The Blairsville Cruis-

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



See Chamber, page 5A

Christmas Prayer Letter

Dear Editor,

Let us take that cleansing breath for prayer. Let us seek quiet from the ego mind of our own terrorist chatter. In the Quiet, we let go of the urge to label, to despair, to blame and to punish. In our cleansing breath, our heart can rest from the division that bombards us from almost every media screen.

A heart divided, chamber against chamber, will lose strength and purpose. A heart in harmony is like a song complete with a timing beat, a flow, a rest and a rhythm sensitive to our every need and every thought.

May we now, in the Quiet, bring our own unique heart into unity. May each chamber recognize its sole purpose is to support the sacred flow of nutrients, oxygen and love to an entire mansion of messengers with assignments and agreements.

We bless, in awe and wonder, the many miracles of unity within this body, each giving and receiving to uplift the whole.

We take another deep cleansing breath into our heart space... We release our fear, our ridicule, and our distrust that distracts us from our true God Source. May I allow the Infinite Love that created me, to cleanse and unify my heart.

May I call forth the courage to Love,

Jeanette Senart

Biden Consequences

Dear Editor,

Dale Allison's letter in the Dec. 16 edition was perfect in describing the consequences of a Biden Administration. I'd like to add one more thing. No matter what political affiliation, if you own a gun, you must keep our senators in office.

The Biden Administration has already caused the gun business to run out of clips and ammunition. I know personally because my nephew owns a gun store. Joe Biden said that, first, he'd go after the gun manufacturers, then the NRA. He's already planning new regulations and taxes on firearms and purchases.

Chucky Schumer said it best: “Now we take Georgia, then we change America.” The senate is the only firewall we have to keep the Democrats from freedom to socialism. Our freedoms have already been eroded, even freedom of religion. I personally don't want to lose any more.

We had to move back to North Carolina to be closer to Duke Hospital, so please, take a couple of friends to the polls and vote for us.

Chris Crawford

Letters to the Editor

Punishment for Offenses

Dear Editor,

I found the article in the Dec. 9 edition of the North Georgia News updating the former CEO of the local hospital's legal battles very unsettling. As most everyone knows by now, Mr. Mike Gowder has been found guilty of over a hundred counts of prescription drug fraud (i.e. illegal drug dealing). In the article, we discover that Mr. Gowder has now twice been granted extensions to reporting to prison. In his latest appeal for home confinement as an alternative to going to prison, he cites his concern for his health due to the infectious nature of prison life that is associated with the density of population, thus the increased possibility of contracting the coronavirus. He argues that this renders the judgement against him a “death sentence.” The new report date is designed to give him four months to find his way to the anti COVID-19 vaccine – a nicety that would not be available to almost any other convicted felon of less status and wealth.

He also argues that going to prison would compromise his health and/or make him uncomfortable in that he has a history of high blood pressure and “back and leg pain.”

What we see here is an example of a member of the wealthy, ruling class being forced to take his own medicine. That is, he is facing having to try to survive an archaic, dangerous, de-meaning, soul-crushing, predator-ridden, counterproductive system of criminal justice. Prisons in general, and American prisons in particular, are environments strong on punishment and almost devoid of anything like rehabilitation. It is our version of “lock ‘em up and throw away the key,” which may seem like a satisfying response to crime but which, as it turns out, is not very smart. What prisons produce, what prisons create in some measure, is a class of people who are meaner, angrier, and less capable of sustaining themselves after they get out of prison than was the case before they went in. What is not smart (not to mention “inhumane”) about this is almost all of the incarcerated are eventually released back into the communities from whence they came. Would we not rather welcome home a person who has benefitted from counseling, therapy, and job training rather than a very angry, deflated and resentful person? This doesn't mean that the offender would have been treated with “kid gloves.” After all, he or she has been denied their freedom, and that is a huge price to pay. And they would have been subject to a 24/7 culture of enforced discipline.

Prisons, by design, are dangerous and are ill-equipped to rehabilitate or to provide anything like adequate health services – either mental or physical. In fact, if we are honest about it, pris-

See Wilson, page 5A

Christmas Miracle

Let me preface this article by telling you it is not meant to be religious in nature. I am simply relating the facts to you as told by my mother. The reason for my telling the story is our time frame. We have entered the Christmas season, and yet the world seems to be spinning out of control. We have witnessed major storms and hurricanes, wildfires have decimated the West, people all over the world are angry, and war is killing people everywhere. Many are questioning our most cherished freedom, being able to vote. The world needs a miracle. So, my gift to you is this story of a miracle that was witnessed by the staff at a nursing home where my mother worked.

For the past 60 years my father has been a minister, and he has served churches in Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama. After my siblings and I moved out of the house, my mother went to work. One place in which she worked was a nursing home in Dunlap, Tennessee. Mother enjoys serving the elderly. She has a kind heart and is a good listener. So, she was well received by the residents in the nursing home. The story has three characters: Miss Cora was a little old lady who loved everyone; Mr. Brown was a man who couldn't talk and was confined to a wheelchair; and Mrs. Jones was confined to bed and was blind.

Miss Cora was a kind and gentle lady that had been a resident at this nursing home since her husband had died. Miss Cora was short and always had a smile on her face, even when she was in extreme pain. Cora kept a Bible on her nightstand and was constantly reading it. When she wasn't reading her Bible, Cora would visit the other residents to find out about their prayer concerns. Then she would quietly go back to her room and pray for the other residents. It was easy to see Cora's faith in her eyes; you could hear faith in her testimony, and you could feel her faith through her prayers.

But, Cora did not try to push her faith over anyone. She was quiet and unassuming. She would listen to your beliefs and smile. All she wanted you to know was that God loved you so much he sent his son to die for you. She believed this was God's gift to mankind, and she lived this belief every day. She never worried about wars, economics or climate change. Each day before mother left work, Cora would smile at her and say, “I'll be going home soon, and I'll get to see Jesus. If I am not here when you come back to work, you'll know where I have gone.”

Most of the time Mom worked the evening shift, but, her schedule was changed, so the next

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Christmas Cactus

Christmas cactus is a popular plant. They are one of the three plants that make up the holiday cacti. Thanksgiving cactus and Easter cactus are the other two. Each of these species typically blooms around the date of their respective holiday. Christmas cactus is a tropical plant, so they take a little extra care to be able to bloom at the right time. Let's talk about Christmas cactus and how to take care of them.

Even though we call it a cactus, the Christmas cactus doesn't like dry and hot conditions. They are native to the tropical rainforests of Brazil. That means that you need to water them more regularly than a true cactus or other succulents. Once the plant has set flower buds, you want to keep the soil evenly moist to keep the buds from falling off. Don't overwater and waterlog the soil. During the spring and summer, you can let it run a bit drier.

During the warm months, you can leave Christmas cacti outside, so long as they are out of direct sunlight. Direct sunlight will burn them up. If you leave them outside, you need to be wary of a frost because freezing temperatures will kill them. Generally, if temperatures go below 50 they need to be brought inside. Too much direct sunlight can damage them inside too.

To fertilize them, begin when new growth starts. Usually this is either late winter or early spring. Fertilize with a balanced liquid fertilizer such as 20-20-20. If you use liquid 20-20-20 dilute it to half strength. Fertilize once a month throughout the month. Christmas cacti need extra magnesium as well. So fertilize with Epsom salts once a month, but not the same week that you that put out the general fertilizer. Fertilizer contains salts, if the concentration of salts is too high in the soil, the water will become unavailable to the plant. Mix the Epsom salts at 1 teaspoon per gallon of water. Stop all fertilizing in the late summer for better flower bud production in the fall.

Sometimes people are disappointed when their Christmas cactus doesn't bloom around Christmas. The trick is that Christmas cacti are photosensitive, like many other plants. Photosensitive means that they will put on flower buds in response to changes in day length. Christmas cacti need at least 14 hours of continuous darkness in the fall to set buds. These long nights should start in September and continue for six weeks to complete bud set. The darkness needs to be continuous. If the darkness is broken for two hours bud set will be inhibited.

You can prune them in the late spring to

See Williams, page 5A

Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Kenneth West Publisher/Owner Shawn Jarrard General Manager/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