

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Severe Thunderstorms

Summer brings fun and sun but it also brings the possibility of severe thunderstorms. The summer heat and humidity provide the right conditions for the development of these severe thunderstorms. They can pop-up suddenly and produce heavy rain, dangerous lightning and flash floods. Union County Fire Department wants you to understand the potential of these thunderstorms and what you can do to keep safe.

The first thing is to stay informed. Television, radio, internet and social media can provide information on severe weather events. Knowing the difference between a Severe Thunderstorm Watch and a Severe Thunderstorm Warning can be very helpful. A Severe Thunderstorm Watch means severe thunderstorms are likely to occur. A Severe Thunderstorm Warning is issued when severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar. Warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property to those in the path of the storm. Be prepared for possible severe weather and plan events accordingly.

Lightning that is associated with severe thunderstorms can be very dangerous. If you can hear thunder, then there is the potential for lightning in your area. The best practice when there is lightning near you is to get indoors and avoid possible conduction areas. If you are outdoors, The Department of Homeland Security's site, www.Ready.gov, has several suggestions to reduce your risk depending on the area. If in a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees. If in an open area, go to a low place such as a ravine or valley. Be alert for flash floods. If on open water, get to land and find shelter immediately. According to Ready.gov, on average in the U.S., lightning kills 51 people and injures hundreds more each year.

Thunderstorms can not only produce lightning but can produce heavy rain in a small area and in a short amount of time. This heavy rain can make driving very dangerous due to water on the road and lack of visibility. The best practice is to slow down; increase distance between vehicles or even pull into a parking area until it passes. The heavy rain can also produce flash flooding. Avoid moving water and never drive through running water. Just six inches of moving water can knock you down and two feet of water can sweep your vehicle away. If there is a chance of flash flooding, move immediately to higher ground.

We all want to enjoy our summer but we must keep safety in mind. Stay informed on the weather when making plans. Be aware of any possible thunderstorms or severe weather and know the watches and warnings. Be ready for lightning, heavy rain and possible flash

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Identity

The cultural mood of the day is that people can and should create their own identity. Anyone who fails to recognize that identity, even unknowingly, is a bigot. It is bewildering.

I can't imagine being a young person growing up in such an environment. Back in my day, my fellow students were known by what they were good at, or what they enjoyed doing, like sports, music, or academics. Now it's not what you do, it's who you are that you must define and enforce.

Cameron McAllister, a young Christian speaker, recently spoke with students at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He was surprised by the questions students asked about meaning, purpose, and the nature of existence. He notes, "Our culture has replaced self-discovery with self-construction. Everybody is expected to create and manage his or her own identity. The pressure that this mindset creates is devastating."

In the movie "Catch Me," Leonardo DiCaprio played a teenager that re-imagined himself in various criminal ways. He found success in passing as a pilot, an attorney, and a doctor. What became clear during the course of the movie is that his character was miserably tied up in knots trying to find elusive happiness in his next adopted identity. But no identity could change what he really was, an unhappy, heartless, and destructive young man.

God offers us a new identity in Christ. This identity is secondary to none, including profession and work, sexuality and gender, politics and worldview. Our identity in Christ is crafted by God and defines all others. We are part of something larger than ourselves, the Providential work of our Father who is accomplishing his purposes for creation. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 3:20).

The New Testament is replete with details of our identity. Just in Romans 8 we find that we are alive to God, the dwelling place of His Spirit, and heirs with Christ. God leads us, turns all things to good for us, and calls us to join his purpose. We have no fear and no condemnation. Nothing separates us from God's great love. The Holy Spirit prays for us and Jesus intercedes for us. In short, we are children of God. To embrace this identity is to remove dividing distinctions, "for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. There have been several issues on roads and intersections where the county government has worked on State Highway. Why do we use our taxpayer money to work on state or federal property and roads?

A. It is very simple. Government, no matter what part, should be a partnership. This saves everyone money. Whether the County cooperates with the City, State or US Forest Service in building or repairing projects, the bottom line is what is best for the taxpayers. Someone grumbled because the county spent time and equipment working on Helton Creek Road a few weeks ago improving it down to the Waterfalls. It was so rough and full of deep potholes, it could easily take 30 minutes to navigate the two miles. It is summertime now when so many local and out of town people visit Helton Creek Waterfalls which is one of the few around you can actually swim in. USFS asked us we could assist, since they no longer have a motor grader or operator in this district. The first two miles of the road are county maintained and the next three miles are gravel which the USFS typically maintains. So, we were glad to assist them because it could be another couple of years before they could get it done. We used our manpower and grader and the USFS furnished the gravel.

Q. What recently occurred at Helton Creek Falls that is a good example of why this was a good decision to repair this road?

A. About three weeks ago, a lady from Atlanta and her family were staying at Vogel State Park for a week. For the past seven years they had been coming up and going to Helton Creek Falls and it was one of the highlights of their trip. However, this year the 70 year-old mother slipped off a rock and fell and broke her hip at the base of the falls. They could not get a cell phone call out so one of the daughters had to drive out to get a cell signal to call 911. Then the ambulance had to be brought in and driven out with the lady in pain from a broken hip. There is no telling how much time was saved on both ends of this call. As it turned out, it was not life threatening, but easily could have been had the lady not been in good condition. I happened to be on my way to a meeting in Atlanta and was able to assist a very small amount prior to the am-

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



It Is Never Too Early To Talk About Drugs And Alcohol

You have more influence over your kids' attitudes and decisions about alcohol and drugs before they start, than you do afterwards. Start early! Children go through many different stages as they grow up and what's appropriate to tell an 18-year-old and a 9-year-old about alcohol and drugs can vary quite a bit. Yet, it's never too early to begin the conversation. The more informed children are, the more these issues can be discussed as "matter of fact" issues, the better off they'll be.

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.

It is important to know that parents play a significant role in preventing and dealing with alcohol and drugs. Fostering healthy and responsible attitudes, talking openly and honestly, encouraging supportive relationships, fostering the development of positive interests and showing children that their opinions and decisions matter, are all ways to help prevent the use of alcohol and drugs.

In fact, research has shown that kids who have conversations with their parents about the dangers of alcohol and drug use are 50% less likely to use alcohol and drugs than those who don't have such conversations. Unfortunately, one in five kids report that their parents don't talk to them about these topics.

It can be challenging to develop the communication skills needed to talk with your children about drinking and drugs, but it will be well worth the effort you put into it, as you help them build the coping skills they need to handle the anger, stress, peer pressure, loneliness and disappointment that are part of being an adolescent.

Taking advantage of "teachable moments" when alcohol or drug issues come up so you can have a frank

See Drugs, page 5B

Letters to the Editor...

Our Men and Women in Blue

Dear Editor,
Like most of the country I am deeply saddened by the attacks on our law enforcement. As a former law officer I found myself fighting back tears the Sunday three officers were killed in New Orleans. The law enforcement community is the only thing separating us from anarchy. Just imagine one day without police. I urge every one reading this to pray every day for our men and women in blue asking God to protect each and every one of them.

Chris Crawford

Performing Arts Center

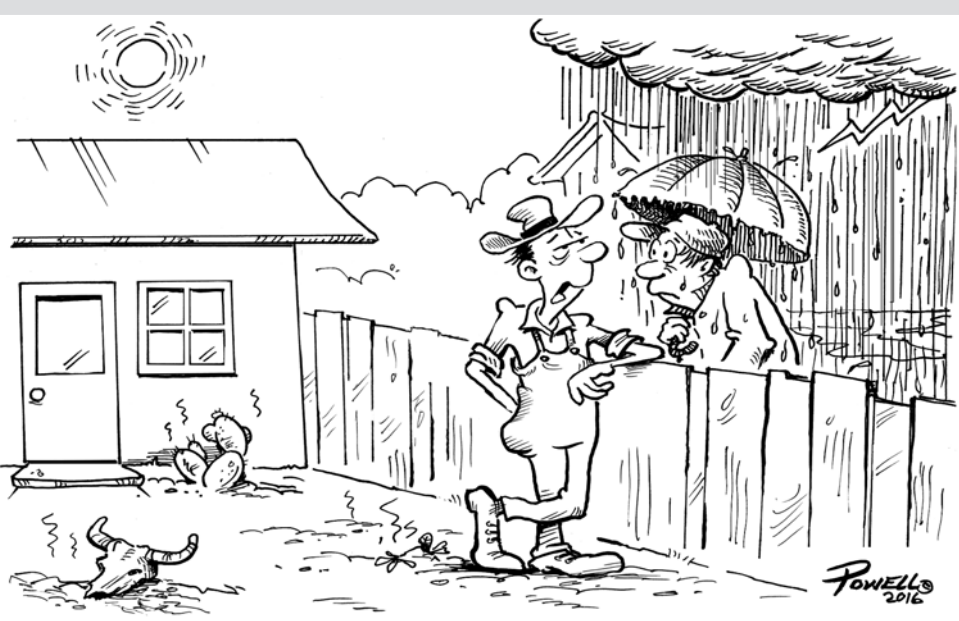
Dear Editor,
We are wondering why we are not seeing some performances this summer in the new Performing Arts Center financed jointly by the school system and the community. We attended both the ribbon cutting event and a high school play in March and were excited that such a fine structure was built to be used both by the schools and the community. I am sure that there are continuing costs for air conditioning and maintenance over the summer, but why no performances? We are surprised that there are not other community events scheduled, in addition to the school performances.

Al and Jean Nethery

Back to School too Early

Dear Editor,
For what is the real reason and issues, can the school systems not go back to the "old fashioned way", and start school back around the middle of August like it once used to be, giving the kids three full months of Summer Break instead of just two measly months? Not enough to hardly do anything, and way too hot in July for outside practices and activities.

No wonder so many players and all are collapsing and even dying from heat exhaustion. Thank you,
Delores Barnes
Hiawassee, Georgia



"Can you believe how dry it's been this summer?"

Smithgall Woods Conservation Area

The Oconee Chapter of the Society of American Foresters (SAF) is a local north Georgia group of foresters who are member of the national Society of American Foresters.

The Oconee SAF Chapter meets every other month in various places around north Georgia and the July meeting is always held down of the river at the Blue Hole in Towns County where we meet to fish, shoot skeet, swap stories, enjoy a low country boil, and just relax on the banks of the Hiwassee River.

We always have a program pertaining to forestry, wildlife, or some natural resource area of interest. Today we met for our tenth meeting on the river and our program was presented by William Wagner, the DNR manager of the Smithgall conservation area and Hardman Farms which are south of Helen in White County. Will gave the group a history of Smithgall and Hardman Farms that was very interesting. If you haven't been there you need to put it on your bucket list since it is a hidden jewel right in our back door. It is only fitting that one of Georgia's early environmental disasters is one of Georgia's newest state parks designed to preserve and protect the environment that had once been devastated by gold miners and lumber companies.

Smithgall Woods is just one of the lasting legacies of Gainesville businessman and philanthropist Charles A. Smithgall and his wife, Lessie. This was Cherokee Indian country until 1819, when a treaty with the United States ceded all remaining land in the area of the Chattahoochee River. When gold miners first moved in 1829 they began looking for alluvial deposits of the valuable mineral, easily found in Smithgall Wood's Dukes Creek with a good panning technique (panning for gold within the park is strictly prohibited). Along Dukes Creek and other rivers the miners built shanty towns, living a meager existence in hope of finding wealth. Hydraulic mining was introduced to the area in the 1850s. The land, much of which is now preserved at Smithgall Woods, was destroyed by this mining technique until it looked like the western deserts.

Hydraulic mining was so destructive that Georgia led the way in banning the practice, outlawing it in the 1880s. The land slowly began to recover when lumber companies were enticed to the area by a new railroad, the Gainesville and Northwestern, which allowed access to the Georgia forests. Soon the lumber companies were stripping the trees from the mountains, including those now protected by Smithgall Woods.

Starting in 1911, the U. S. government began to purchase the area land under the direction of Arthur Woody and Roscoe 'Nick' Nicholson, but the 5,500 acres now part of Smithgall Woods was not part of their plans. It was held by "Old Ben" Allison, and local Helen natives called them

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Frank Riley

Executive Director of RC&D



Lon Steele and Hoover Baggett

Daddy (Paul) and his brother (Bud) owned a pair of outstanding coon hounds during the 1950s. Daddy was about 14 years old when they traded for the pair of Black and Tan Hounds. Papa and his sons trained the hounds on Squirrels and Raccoons. The family enjoyed squirrel dumplings while a boy could sell the hides from the coons for a little money. Old Sam and Lou hit their stride around 1956-57 when they treed more than 100 coons during the fall and winter.

The pair of dogs became widely known and everyone wanted to hunt with that fine pair of coon hounds owned by the Cummings boys. Daddy was particular about who he would let go hunting with his dogs. So, he never let anyone borrow them. However, anyone could go hunting with him and his dogs. One day Daddy was stopped in town by Lon Steele who asked if he could borrow Daddy's dogs. Daddy explained that Lon could come and hunt with Daddy and his dogs anytime. But, the dogs could not be borrowed by anybody. So, Lon told Daddy that he and Hoover Baggett would meet him at the Mon Dye bottoms on Saturday evening.

Dad met them at the old bridge over Turkey Creek. Dad said as he was releasing his dogs he knew there would be trouble because Lon took a swig from a flask located in his pocket. The dogs struck a trail and treed a coon in 30 minutes. Hoover and Lon celebrated by passing around the bottle. By the time the men reached the dogs at the next tree Hoover Baggett and Lon Steele were in high spirits. This time the dogs had treed a big old boar coon. The coon must have weighed 25 pounds. The men celebrated once again with their flasks. It wasn't long until the dogs struck another track. Dad noticed Lon stumble a couple of times as he began walking toward the dogs.

The dogs trailed their quarry across the creek and treed next to a rock (the size of a house) next to a tall bluff. The area was rough and it took the two men a long time to walk the couple of miles up the creek bottom. Dad said he wasn't sure if Hoover and Lon were just out of shape or if the alcohol was affecting their ability to walk. But, the men had fell down a number of times before they got to the tree and big rock. This boulder was the size of a house and it was about 50 feet high. Dad said the tree was a Hemlock and it was difficult to locate the coon. So, they all climbed up on the rock to try to see the raccoon. Finally, the three fellows found the coon and Lon decided to shoot it. He pulled out his pistol and shot a couple of times with no success. Lon was too inebriated to shoot out the critter. He claimed the raccoon was moving too much.

The tree was close enough to the tree so

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Buy Local Weekend

This weekend is Buy Local Weekend in Blairsville-Union County! On the heels of our recent overwhelmingly successful Buy Local Extravaganza, the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce presents our next big opportunity to support local businesses and save money. The Buy Local Weekend is a three day event starting Thursday, July 28 and ending Saturday, July 30 during regular store hours. It is coordinated by the Chamber and sponsored by Alexander's Store. The event offers residents and visitors an opportunity to explore various local businesses and save 50% on hot selling, featured items. Local shoppers can expect great deals at restaurants, gift shops, attractions, apparel boutiques, service companies, and more.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison



Residents and guests who are interested in receiving the list of participating businesses and the half priced featured items should notify the Chamber and ask to be added to our distribution list. This can be done by calling 706-745-5789 or emailing admin@blairsvillechamber.com. This year's coupons are also currently available online at www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com, at the Chamber of Commerce office located at 129 Union County Recreation Road, and at participating local businesses. There is no excuse for ever missing another great deal in Union County!

This year's sponsor, Alexander's Store, is offering a variety of great deals including: 50% off select Vera Bradley and select Spartina 449. Select Yellow Box Flip Flops are also 50% off

See Allison, page 5B

Cedar-Apple Rust

Cedar-apple rust is a fungal infection that affects a variety of apple trees and cedars. It is caused by a fungus with a very complex life cycle that takes almost two years to fully complete. Though it is not all that harmful to native cedar trees, it can cause a lot of fruit and leaf damage to apple trees throughout the summer and fall.

On apple trees, the first symptoms are greenish yellow spots on the upper surface of leaves. Eventually, these turn an orange-yellow and are surrounded by red bands and are visible from the underside of the leaf. By summer, the spots on the upper side of the leaves develop black spots which are actually used in reproduction of the fungus. The spots on the undersides develop little hairs, and the area around the spot becomes thickened.

The symptoms of cedars infected with this fungus are much different from apples. Small green-brown galls form on the foliage and grow throughout summer. In the fall, they turn dark brown, become kidney shaped, and grow to about two inches across. The following spring, bright orange tendrils grow out of the galls and produce spores that can affect other cedar and apple trees.

The life cycle of cedar-apple rust is a very complex one. Cedar needles are infected by spores released from lesions on apple trees in the summer. The galls do not appear until the following summer, and even then, it takes several more months until they finally mature the next spring. After a few spring rains, the galls produce large, jelly-like orange tendrils from all sides. This usually happens about the same time that apple blossoms are in the pink stage. Once the tendrils are done growing, the whole gall can reach the size of a baseball. Spores form on the orange tendrils and are distributed on the wind to any surrounding apple trees.

A few weeks later, if it is moist and cool (between 56 and 61 degrees), the spores will infect the apple leaves they land on and yellow

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UGA extension FROM THE GROUND UP

Melissa Mattee



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