

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## Are You Attracting Drug Users?

Is your company or organization an "Employer of Choice" for drug users? Drug users know where to work, and where not to even apply. Drug users share this information and they will tell each other where to put in job applications with businesses that don't drug test. This assures that if they get hired, they can continue to work with their friends and continue to use illegal drugs without the risk of being fired for doing so. Because of this grouping of people who are friends with common interests, companies that do not drug test can end up with a higher than average percentage of drug users on their payroll. The law of supply and demand also ensures that if there are drug buyers at your business, there are probably also sellers.

*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.*

The flip side finds employers with a legitimate basis for concern about the problems associated with having employees who may use illicit drugs both on and off the job. These problems include decreased productivity, increased accident and theft liability exposure, higher turnover rates and higher Worker's Compensation insurance premiums. Employers also have a substantial interest in providing a drug-free workplace for the safety and welfare of their employees as well as their patrons. Aside from the legal issues, drug testing serves as a hedge against increasing costs. Employee drug and alcohol abuse costs employers billions of dollars each year. Further, small business owners could be at risk for negligence lawsuits from customers and employees. For example, if an employee high on drugs accidentally injures a co-worker or customer, the business could be sued. The plaintiff might appropriately ask why the employer failed to drug test.

## Letters to the Editor... GA Senator Gooch's Update

Dear Editor,  
Sen. Steve Gooch submitted a column extolling the Senate's two recent accomplishments: #1 the passing of a Bill regarding allowance of full-property payouts when a residence is completely destroyed by fire. Wouldn't that have been a no-brainer, once arson was ruled out? And #2 allowing retiring police officers to retain their badge and firearm—again, not earth-shattering, and definitely not controversial. Neither issue even merited a blip on my radar screen as noteworthy of who I voted Yea, and who voted Nay, a specific matter.  
*See Gray, page 5A*

## Taxpayer Dollars

Dear Editor,  
Two-thirds of our property taxes go toward education. The Union Schools budget is over \$25 M for 2500 students. The budget for Union County's 21,500 residents is \$15 M, which covers road maintenance, courts, police, fire, the jail, building department, parks... I don't think that Union County's taxpayers are thinking of this at all, and they should,  
*See Mitchell, page 5A*

## The RC&D Council spotlights Towns County

Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council's work area covers the 13 counties of Northeast Georgia from Union down to Forsyth over to Hart and up to Rabun and all counties in between. ChestChatt's office is located in Demorest in Habersham County. Our projects and workshops emphasize natural resource conservation with subjects such as soil & erosion education, farm energy efficiency, wildfire safety education, and alternative farming methods such as Seasonal High Tunnels. For the next few weeks I will spotlight each of the 13 counties where we provide the services and programs to the citizens of the county. Since I live down on the river in Towns County, I will start there. Towns County is located in the north east corner of Georgia up on the North Carolina border.



Frank Riley  
RC&D Executive Director

As of the 2010 census, the population was 10,471 and in the summer months this figure can double with the seasonal residents and vacationing visitors. The county seat is Hiwassee. The county was created on March 6, 1856 and named for United States lawyer, legislator, and politician George W. Towns. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 172 square miles, of which 167 square miles is land and 5.4 square miles (3.2%) is water. The US Forest Service owns roughly 52% of the land in the county.

Towns is mostly in the Hiwassee River sub-basin of the Middle Tennessee-Hiwassee basin, with a part of the county in the Tugaloo River sub-basin in the larger Savannah River basin, as well as a small portion of the county's southwestern corner in the Chattahoochee River sub-basin of the ACF River Basin (Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin), near the source of the Chattahoochee in neighboring Union County.

Towns County is located amidst the Blue Ridge Mountains, (part of the Appalachian Mountains), some of which are protected by the Chattahoochee National Forest. Brasstown Bald, the highest mountain in Georgia, rises in southwest Towns County, straddling the Union County line. The source of the Hiwassee River is located in eastern Towns County, from which it flows northward into North Carolina. Chatuge Lake, an artificial reservoir created by the completion of Chatuge Dam by the Tennessee Valley Authority in the 1940s, dominates the northeastern section of Towns County. State Route 515 from north of Atlanta ends here at the North Carolina state line near Young Harris.

An important facet of early life in Towns County was a road built upon a Cherokee trading path running north to south through the county and passing through Unicoi Gap. It served as a line between settlers and the Cherokees until after the Indian cessions, when it fell solely into

*See Riley, page 5A*

## 2016 Prayer Breakfast

The National Prayer Breakfast is an annual event in Washington, DC on the first Thursday in February. It is hosted by members of both political parties in a rare show of unity. The addresses by the various speakers are an annual update on culture and faith in America.

The keynote speakers this year were Mark Burnett and Roma Downey. This married couple are among the most influential people in Hollywood. He is President of MGM Television and she is a producer, though most remembered for her role as angel Monica in the TV series, *Touched by an Angel*. Together, they produced the miniseries *The Bible* for the History channel (2013), feature film *Song of God* (2014), and *A.D.: The Bible Continues* (2015) for NBC.

In *Touched*, you may recall that each episode had a scene which revealed the angel's identity. Downey said, "Every week Monica offered a message of God's love on national television to millions. It was such an honor to share that there is a God that loves us and wants to be part of our lives." She explained that before every revelation scene, she and others gathered to pray, "Less of me, more of you."

When Downey and Burnett began to plan a new series based on the Bible, their friends warned them that mixing entertainment and religion would destroy their careers. But *The Bible* became the #1 show of the year with 100M viewers. Downey said, "Faith is alive and well in America! The series helped ignite a larger conversation about God and faith. We were Hollywood producers daring to talk about faith in Jesus." Rick Warren once told them that the most dangerous prayer is "Lord use me" because He might just do so.

Between scenes of *The Bible* shot in the Moroccan Desert, the cast and crew read scripture and prayed about emotional, spiritual, and physical challenges. One challenge was snakes, as the wrangler removed one or two per day. During the crucifixion scene, the wrangler found and removed 48 snakes. "The symbolism of the snakes wasn't lost on us," Downey noted.

After her inspiring stories, Downey issued a challenge.

*See Fowler, page 5A*



Wayne Fowler  
All Things New

## Commissioner's Questions

**Q. Will the fact that there have been recent arrests made with personnel at Union General Hospital have any impact on the operation?**

A. The Hospital Board feels confident that the excellent operation of Union General Hospital and Nursing Home will continue as it has in the past. Our excellent employees and doctors will continue to provide the same high quality of care and medical service.

**Q. What all is involved in the operation of Union General Hospital?**

A. Union General Hospital, Inc. operates the following facilities: Union General Hospital and Nursing Home, Union County Dialysis Center, Union County Rehab Center, Fitness Facility including indoor pool, with complete exercise facility and recently have installed a brand new Cardiopulmonary Rehab Center. They have a Sleep Clinic, Imaging Center, Chatuge Regional Hospital and Nursing Home, Glenda Gooch House, Blue Mountain Family Practice, Hayesville Family Practice and the Clinic at Walma in Blairsville and the Day Care Center. The organization employs nearly 1,000 people in this area making Union General not just a hospital but a complex Healthcare system that is one of the best rural facilities in the country, much less Georgia.

**Q. Who operates Union General Hospital?**

A. Union General Hospital was leased to a private corporation, Union General Hospital, Inc. nearly 20 years ago. The Corporation is run by a Board of Directors in collaboration with the executive team.

**Q. How long is this lease to Union General Hospital, Inc.?**

A. It was set up under a 40 year lease ending in 2037.

**Q. Who actually owns Union General Hospital?**

A. Union General Hospital Authority was established through the laws of the State of Georgia as owner of the Hospital. The Authority Board is appointed by members from the City and County. Over 20 years ago the Union General Hospital Authority leased the property and assets to Union General Hospital, Inc. which now runs and operates the hospital assets.

**Q. Is there any danger of Union General Hospital closing due to the recent events?**

*See Paris, page 5A*

## Understanding Your Customer's Perspective

"Many failures in customer service initially seem like a success to us! We get our perception of the facts, and we come up with a solution that makes sense to us. The problem is we didn't get the customer's perception of the facts, so our solution may not be sensible to them." - Jim Georges, CEO, Abilitech



Patrick Malone  
Blairsville-Union County Chamber

Effective listening skills are the key to correctly "reading a situation" or "sizing up a problem." The ability to solve problems, resolve differences and capture opportunities involves these listening skills coupled with another skill, the ability to analyze a situation. This requires asking the right questions to clarify problems, needs, wants and opportunities--what people have now compared to what they'd rather have. This helps you discover other people's perception of the "facts."

Following is a questioning sequence called NIQCL that is highly effective for analyzing needs, problems or opportunities in depth. With the factual information this probing sequence gives you, you'll be able to form "tailored" solutions that lead to cooperation, teamwork or buy-in.

**Need:** Does a need, problem or opportunity exist?

**Importance:** How serious is it? Is it a priority? Critical? Sensitive?

**Quantify:** What is the size and scope of the need? Numbers?

**Consequences:** What is its impact and effect? What if it's not solved?

**Look / Listen:** Is the person open to ideas? Suggestions? Options?

*See Malone, page 5A*

## Soil Sampling- The Basics

With all this snow we've been having, it might be hard for some of us to get out of the winter mindset and start to think about working in the garden or the field. The truth is, though, now is the time to be sending in your soil samples so you're ready to plant in a few months. Whether you've farmed for decades, or you're starting your first vegetable garden this spring, it's important to know what nutrients are in your soil before you plant your crops. If your plants can't get nourishment from the soil, it's going to be awfully hard for you to get nourishment from your plants!

Here are some key steps in getting the most out of your soil samples:

1. Know how to take cores for your sample. A "core" refers to the portion of soil that you remove from the sampling site using either a core sampler or a trowel. The best way to take a comprehensive soil sample is to collect 5-10 cores in a zig-zag pattern throughout the entire area. As you collect your cores, mix the soil together in a clean plastic bucket. Once you've collected all your cores and mixed the soil well, fill the soil sample bag to about two-thirds full.

2. Decide what you want to plant. When you drop off your soil sample to the extension office, you will designate what crops will be planted in the soil you are testing. Your test results will tell you how suited your soil is to those crops and what fertilizers to apply to make sure they have adequate nutrition and soil conditions. You can select up to 5 plant codes per sample bag, so if you have more than 5 crops you want to test for, you will need additional soil bags. You can get soil bags from our extension offices.

3. Make sure the soil sample is clean. If you're assessing your lawn, clear away any grass or mulch to prevent sampling these materials with your core. If you're sampling a wooded



Melissa Mattee  
From the Ground Up

*See Mattee, page 5A*

## Your Fire Department Be Prepared

I remember my days as a Boy Scout. I remember how much fun it was to learn new skills, to hike the mountains and to camp. I especially remember the Boy Scout motto... "Be Prepared!" It is good advice; for the Boy Scouts and for life. It is also good advice for winter weather emergencies. These emergencies can be brief or they can last for days or even weeks. The impact of a large snow storm or ice storm can be devastating. How can we "Be prepared" for these emergencies? Here are several things to consider.

First, we must stay informed. The last thing that we want is to be surprised by the event. Television, radio, internet and social media can help us stay informed of any potential weather event. Union County Fire/Rescue & EMA Facebook page keeps the latest weather information from the National Weather Service. There is also the Union Alert Notification System that can send weather alerts to a cell phone. If you would like to receive these alerts, please call 706-439-6056.

Second, we should have an emergency kit. It is recommended that everyone have an emergency kit that will help you survive at home for at least three days. An emergency kit involves more than just milk and bread. It involves food, water, flashlight, batteries, weather radio, first aid kit and many other things essential for survival. Other things that you may want to consider are medications, pet food, cash money, and games for the kids. For more information and an example of the supplies needed in an emergency kit, visit [www.ready.gov/kit](http://www.ready.gov/kit).

Third, have a plan. That sounds simple but most people fail to plan ahead. Planning helps us prepare and to respond to a winter weather event. Planning should answer questions such as: How do we stay informed? What will we do if the power goes off for an extended amount of time? If we have to travel, is the vehicle prepared? How will we heat the home? How do we communicate with our family? It is always best to have these questions answered and a plan in place before the event.

Winter weather can be fun but it can also be challenging. We must "be prepared" to deal with these events by staying informed, having an emergency kit on hand, and developing a plan. Being prepared helps us to keep our family safe and reduces the stress of the situation. We want everyone to be safe and stress free. If we are prepared, the only worry should be who will be the car in the family Monopoly game.

For more information on how to prepare for winter weather, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

Union County Fire Department  
- Our Family, Protecting Your Family



David Dyer  
Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

## Jim

Harold Dyer, Franklin Hunter and their other friends loved being around Jim an old mountain man with a long white beard and a WWI Veteran. Jim loved hunting and roaming the mountains. He knew more about the mountains than anyone the boys had ever known. He could out walk, out shoot and tell taller tales than anyone they knew. What more could the boys want in a hero?

One day the boys all decided to go camping on the night before deer season. The group drove by Old Jim's house and got out of the car. They walked to the door and knocked while all of Jim's dogs came running to investigate these young teenagers. There was growling and barking, but the boys were used to the pack of dogs and none of them were scared. Soon the old door of the cabin opened and Jim invited his young friends into the house. Harold explained to the old man that the boys were going camping and wanted to know if Jim was interested in going.

The old man hesitated and then began to tell the boys about his rheumatiz and that he couldn't tolerate the cold. He also explained that he couldn't walk as well as he was accustomed to in his younger days. He gave other excuses about not having food and his bedding ready. All the while the old man was lacing up his boots and looking for a coat and hat. After placing the hat on his head and picking up his gun, Old Jim, looked at his wife and said, "See you later".

The old man walked away with nothing more than a coat, hat and gun.

The young men drove the '57 Chevy toward Jacks Gap and into the old Narrowwood Sawmill Camp. They sat up a tarp, built a roaring fire and put a pot of beans over the fire. They sat around talking about the old days and asking Jim about his time in the service. It was quite an enjoyable evening as long as you kept close to the fire. At least the side of you facing the fire was warm according to Harold. The boys gave Jim a spare quilt which he wrapped around himself and pulled his hat down over his eyes. But, just before he fell asleep Franklin asked a question.

"Jim, have you bought a hunting license yet this year?" The old man raised the brim of his hat and replied, "Sha boys, I ain't never had no license and never will". The group looked at Jim and Harold asked, "Well, what will ye do if ye see a deer?" "I'll shoot it. That is what I'll do."

Then the boys wanted to know what he would do if the Game Warden got after him. Old Jim raised up and thought a minute and with a smile he responded, "I'll have to run straight up a ridge and bust his wind". The old man quit talking and was soon snoring.

Morning came early since there were no clouds in the sky and Old Jim got up to shake

*See Cummings, page 5A*



Mickey Cummings  
Around The Farm

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