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it for notification of all their ambulance drivers of special information to prevent having to call them all. The Fire and Rescue Dept. uses the service to notify volunteers of different events and staff for special needs. One of our banks utilizes the service to notify employees.

Q. Does the school use this system?

A. No. But they have a similar system that they use to notify parents.

Q. Is this service available to other agencies in the county?

A. If there is a need, we will find a way to make it available. If a Water Authority needs to notify its customers for a need to boil water or an impending water outage, it can pinpoint only those who live in certain areas of the county. In the future, it could be used to send you a notice that Flu Vaccines are here and it is time for your flu shot. We are also considering using the system for winter weather county road and state highway condition reports next year.

Q. If I receive one alert, do I have to receive them all?

A. Only with weather. Since it all originates from the National Weather Service. But there will be an option of other events that you can subscribe to.

Q. Will the Alert System benefit us in the future?

A. If enough of our citizens eventually sign up for the service, it has so many other options. Currently, only 1,500 (10%) of the public has signed up. Notifications can be set up simply by the E-911 staff drawing a circle or other design around a certain portion of the county on a Google map and everyone located within that boundary would receive the notification. If, for example, we

had a prisoner break out of jail that was spotted in a certain part of the county, or a forest fire that could spread, a vehicle chemical spill that required evacuations, or a notice that some of our roads would be closed due to an emergency, all could be handled with this system with very little additional cost.

Q. How do we sign up for the system?

A. You can sign up either by mailing your phone number and/or email address, name and address to 76 Hunt Martin Street, Ste. D, Blairsville, GA 30512, or call 706-439-6056, or simply register from your cell phone by texting UCALERT to 69310. If you want to be taken off the list you can call or email Amy Tatum at the contact info above.

This is really a very valuable service. It has now been in use for over two years and has responded very favorably. Only recently when the weather warning calls went out early in the morning did we receive about ten complaints and cancellations. But remember, that was a weather "warning" and while it turned out to not be severe, it could have been. You can also choose to receive your notice from email or text.

The choice is yours and this service is available for anyone living in our county or even for those who may live out of town but want to keep a check of the weather or other issues for protection of a friend or relative, or maybe you want to keep tabs in case you own a home here but live in Florida part of the year. Receiving a Flood Warning could be very helpful in looking after your property. A special thanks goes to Amy Tatum and the Staff at the E-911 Center for operating and making this service available to the public.

Cummings ... continued from Page 4A

ers Market begins on March 1. First, let's discuss the Corn Production Meeting. It will be held on March 1st at the Mountain Research and Education Center at 6:30 PM. Dr. Dewey Lee will discuss "Obtaining High Yields in Field Corn Production. Tom Bible will discuss varieties and I will give an update on Pesticides. The evening meal (Jim's Smoking-Q) will be sponsored. An hour of Pesticide re-certification will be offered. If you would like to attend please call (706) 439-6030.

If you are a farmer and would like to sell your produce at the Farmers Market please visit the UCFarmersmarket.com website and print a registration form. Complete the form and take to the Union County Commissioner's Office with a check for \$209.

This fee covers every event of the season at the Farmers Market. Farmers have from March 1st until March 15th to RSVP. The market will then open for last year's vendors. Have a good week.

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ments/Industries/Tourism/IndustryResearch/2010_Economic_Impact_Report.pdf The U.S. Travel Industry Report is the leading authority Governments use for insight to institute policies to improve tourism in their respective locales.

Second, the local School Board paid out over \$2 million in interest on the present ESPLOST tax out of approximately \$16.5 million collected. The Board has said it will take out another Loan for 6 percent interest on the new tax if it passes. The interest on that loan also will cost taxpayers over \$2 million. More than \$4 million is a lot of money that will be wasted on interest payments that should be used to improve our School system, not to improve Investors pockets.

Third, the Union County School System consists of five Schools with approximately 2,600 students as of present count. In 2008 Union Schools had 2,659 students according to the Georgia Department of Education and

in 2009 Union Schools had 2,591 students. Today we have approximately 2,600 according to our local School Board. One of the things the Board is saying are the Schools need more classrooms. I have to ask the question why do we need more classrooms. We have no more students than we did in 2008, in fact we have less today.

Fourth, the School Board has put no prioritization on any of the things they say they will spend the money on. They have put forth a list that everyone should be convinced as to whether or not the School system really needs at this point in time of a depressed economy, or whether it is a wish list on the School Board's part.

I will be attending the Town Hall meeting the School Board is putting on Thursday night, Feb. 28 at 6:30 p.m. in the Middle School Gym. I encourage everyone who can to attend.

**Mike Sims,
Blairsville**

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larly offensive piece of work.

Dear Mr. Allison: I live in Blairsville and must say that House Bill 282 represents "crony capitalism," if not outright restriction of trade, at its worst. Windstream contracted with me to provide 3MB DSL service; they routinely run at 1MB, and DSL service crashes entirely, for hours at a stretch, two or three times a month. Windstream has written DNOC and DSLAM tickets for the Trackrock area of Blairsville, and their technicians have told me that their equipment is "outdated" and "not up to the service demands being placed on it."

New equipment is scheduled to be installed "sometime" in 2013. Until that mystery date arrives, we endure DSL speeds that rival dial-up in their slowness, and reliability that reminds me of tales of the utilities in Venezuela and Brazil.

In their arrogance, Windstream has NOT contacted their DSL customers and offered a rate reduction until such time as they upgrade their equipment.

Indeed, if one takes the

initiative and contacts Windstream's "loyalty team" employees, one confronts an uphill battle in negotiating a rate discount.

So now certain Georgia legislators want to reward this inefficient, arrogant, non-customer-oriented utility company by outlawing competition, and fail to hold Windstream accountable for, at minimum, breach of contract and attempted restraint of trade?

Public utilities traditionally have been granted monopolies to protect their investments; when said utility companies fail to provide the service they contract for, their monopolies need to be ended. I intend to publicize this issue as widely as possible, via as many means that I can access, until the citizenry understands the caliber of the six representatives (Hamilton, Parsons, Stephens, Roberts, Harbin, and Burns) who are supporting this bill. As a fiscal conservative, I must say, y'all oughta be ashamed.

**Roger Beal,
Blairsville**

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While most of you are aware of my personal support for this initiative via my letter in the *North Georgia News*, I think it is critical that every registered voter have the real facts before making a decision in the voting booth. So invite your friends and neighbors to

attend this important meeting, get the facts and make a well-informed choice in the voting booth.

See you at the Middle School Gym on February 28, at 6:30 p.m.

**Patrick Malone,
Blairsville**

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membership meetings, sponsored the largest and best ever July 4th Fireworks display, and held our first ever Christmas Tour of Trees.

Buy Local Campaign

- Eat, Shop, Play, Stay Local is now a common sight in the windows of local retailers. Over 50 local businesses have upgraded to the BEST of Union County and our Jingle Bell Buys shop local campaign was estimated to have generated over \$10,000 in additional local revenue.

Top 2013 Chamber Initiatives

Website Upgrades - New website features as well as enhanced Search Engine Optimization are in store for 2013.

FERST Foundation

- The Chamber's Education Committee will be working with the FERST Foundation for Childhood Literacy to assist in launching this valuable program in Union County. The FERST Foundation provides free books in the mail each month to children from birth to age five.

New Programs - New programs for 2013 include an upcoming Maximum Money Series through the UGA Small Business Development Center, membership orientations,

an email marketing seminar, a joint After Hours event with the Towns County Chamber, and an upgraded version of last year's Christmas Tour of Trees.

Agritourism Trail

- Chambers of Commerce along the Georgia Mountain Parkway (Hwy 515/76 from Gilmer County to Towns County) are working on a joint promotion of an Agritourism Trail to be unveiled in 2013!

Travel Trip - Ireland anyone? The Chamber is organizing a community trip to Ireland in October 2013! Come find out more on March 14th at 9am at the Union County Community Center. Further details will be shared in next week's column as well.

The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce is proud to serve what we consider the greatest county in all of Georgia. Thank you for being part of our success in 2012 and we look forward to many great opportunities throughout 2013. Please be sure to visit our website www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com for events, coupons, and travel ideas. I can be reached anytime at President@BlairsvilleChamber.com.

Ramsey ... continued from Page 4A

teenage driver; "innocent until proven guilty" was conspicuous by its absence. Talk show host Neal Boortz, although licensed to practice law in the state of Georgia and should have known better, dedicated an hour of his show to castigating the driver; effectively tainting any possible jury pool who might have heard his diatribe.

Originally charged as a juvenile, "community" pressure no doubt was responsible for the Juvenile Court Judge's action in transferring the case over to the Superior Court, where he would be tried as an adult. The defendant's attorney appealed to the Georgia Court of Appeals; and it has just issued its ruling. In effect, the Court determined that the interest of the "community" in having "a full public trial" outweighed the interest of the teenage defendant.

One "community interest factor" cited by the Appeals Court judge was "limited options for detention and supervision available in the Juvenile Court in dealing with the defendant." But, whose fault is that - surely not the teenage defendant? Is this deficiency not the fault of the "community"?

Neal Boortz was fond of saying that we are a nation of

laws - not majority rule. While we may all be appalled at this teenager's actions, he still has his Constitutional rights. If not, then the bell tolls for all of us. Perhaps the Christians in the "community" - instead of demanding their pound of flesh - should stop and ask "What would Jesus do?" and act accordingly. Too, if this matter ends up with a jury trial in Superior Court, can we expect that the defendant will be granted a jury of his teenage peers, as is his Constitutional right?

**Ruth Elizabeth Ramsey,
Blairsville**

Leone ...

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baked into the dough. The texture is so light, due to the eggs in the recipe, as well as the sugar.

Sicilians are noted for their small, compact vegetable gardens, and also for their recipes created from the vegetables that are harvested wild from the fields. My favorite wild vegetable is "cardone." It's the Italian name for burdock, that old roadside weed that makes those annoying burrs that stick to everything they touch. Mickey Cummings assures me that he can find me patches of this delicacy this spring.

The cardoon is time consuming to clean, string and prepare. After the stalks have been prepped and blanched, they are then dipped in an egg batter; rolled in a seasoned flour mix then fried individually in hot olive oil. Cardoons were always at our St. Joseph's feast day table. In my estimation, it is one of Mother Nature's finest creations.

Honea

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patriot dares to speak out in support of the Constitution, the false-patriot attempts to silence him by accusing him of complaining.

If this type person was not so misguided and his work so destructive he would be almost comical.

**Robert Honea,
Blairsville**