

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Praying for our nation

As the current political climate continues to unfold, it becomes increasingly obvious that we must pray on a daily basis for the United States of America.

Our society is fed up with the continued spiral of our economy; more and more people are homeless, unemployed and uninsured.

We continue to hear the words of wisdom from Washington as the jingle sounds from our pockets grow less and less.

The Republicans hate the Democrats and vice versa. No one loves the Donald, but, yet every average Joe supports his candidacy for president of the United States.

While career politicians can't put their finger on the pulse of America, they also can't tell you why our economy continues to stay in the ditch.

The truth of the matter is that all the people who are supposed to be working for America are more interested in being on Fox News, CNN or MSNBC.

The leaders in Congress have become more interested in being seen rather than being celebrated as solvers of economic problems.

Our infrastructure is in extreme decline and in need of replacement. In the midst of it all, our leaders are still caught up in the argument of who is the most conservative and who is the most liberal.

At this rate, nothing is going to be done and our nation will continue to spiral downward.

Last week, more than 400 Union County residents observed the 65th National Day of Prayer by gathering at the First Baptist Church of Blairsville to answer the call to prayer on Thursday, May 5.

The National Day of Prayer is always on the first Thursday of May each year, and according to the National Day of Prayer Task Force, it is an occasion for people of all faiths to share in the observance of prayer.

A number of pastors from around the county showed up to pray over various areas of great importance and relevance to Union County residents, from the local level all the way to Israel, one of America's closest allies.

In the grand scheme, it's going to take more than one day of prayer for our entire nation to be helped onto the right track.

Now, let us pray.



Straight Shooting
Charles Duncan

Finding Jesus

In March of this year, in the aftermath of the terrorist bombing in Brussels, a new face appeared in the American media. Because he had just released his latest book *Answering Jihad*, both TV and print media sought out Dr. Nabeel Qureshi to comment.

Dr. Qureshi is certainly in a position to speak to these issues, having been raised as a Muslim. His biographical work, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, documents his struggle to find the truth about God and faith. He is a medical doctor, with master's degrees in Christian Apologetics and Religion, and is currently pursuing a doctorate in New Testament at Oxford.

Born in 1985 in California, Dr. Qureshi spent most of his high school and college years in Virginia. His father, a retired U.S. Navy officer, and his mother are devout Muslims of the Ahmadiyya sect. They trained their son not only to follow that religion, but to be a spokesman for it.

But as he began to seriously seek the truth about life and God, he had questions about those teachings. At first his questions were private, and out of love and respect for his parents, he dared not mention them. As a college freshman, he became close friends with a young Christian man, despite their cultural and religious differences. For the next three years, these friends engaged in a respectful and honest exchange about the truth claims and evidences for their respective religious views. Nabeel eventually accepted the challenge to simply ask God who He really is.

In response to that prayer, Nabeel experienced three highly symbolic dreams that convinced him that God was calling him to accept the gospel of Jesus. Though painfully aware of the risk to his family relationships, he eagerly began to find God in the Bible. His search culminated as he read Jesus' words, "Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it," and at the age of 20 he prayed, "I submit that Jesus Christ is Lord."

I introduce you to Dr. Qureshi as an example of, "My Father is working until now" (Jn. 5:17). Like Saul's Damascus Road experience, the risen Christ found an unlikely convert, and



All Things New
Wayne Fowler

See Fowler, page 5B

Commissioner's Questions

Q. What days are the Trash to Treasures Sales held at the Farmers Market?

A. Trash to Treasures is open every Friday in April through October. There is one day coming up, May 20th, that Trash to Treasures will not operate.

This is due to the Women's Enrichment Center Yard Sale, which is their annual fundraiser.

Otherwise, you can figure it will be operational all the other Fridays.

Q. What are the hours of operation for the Trash to Treasures Sale at the Farmers Market?

A. It is open to customers from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Vendors can begin to set up at 6:30 a.m. and must be packed up and exit the market by 3 p.m.

Q. What is Trash to Treasures Sale at the Farmers Market?

A. It is similar to a yard sale with several other booths mixed in to make it fun and interesting.

Q. What is the cost to rent a stall for Trash to Treasures Sale?

A. Stall rental is \$15 per day.

At approximately 9 a.m. a Farmers Market employee goes to each booth and collects the fee, which may be paid by cash or check.

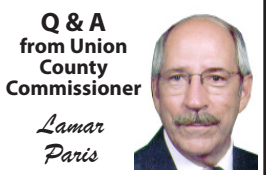
Vendors also need to remember to bring their own vending money to make change for their customers.

Q. What items can be sold at the Trash to Treasures sales?

A. Anything can be sold including new items for resale and gently used items.

There are a few things, which cannot be sold.

These items include home canned foods, other food items unless you represent a non-profit organization, and pro-



Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris

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Letters to the Editor...

Hospitals are an asset

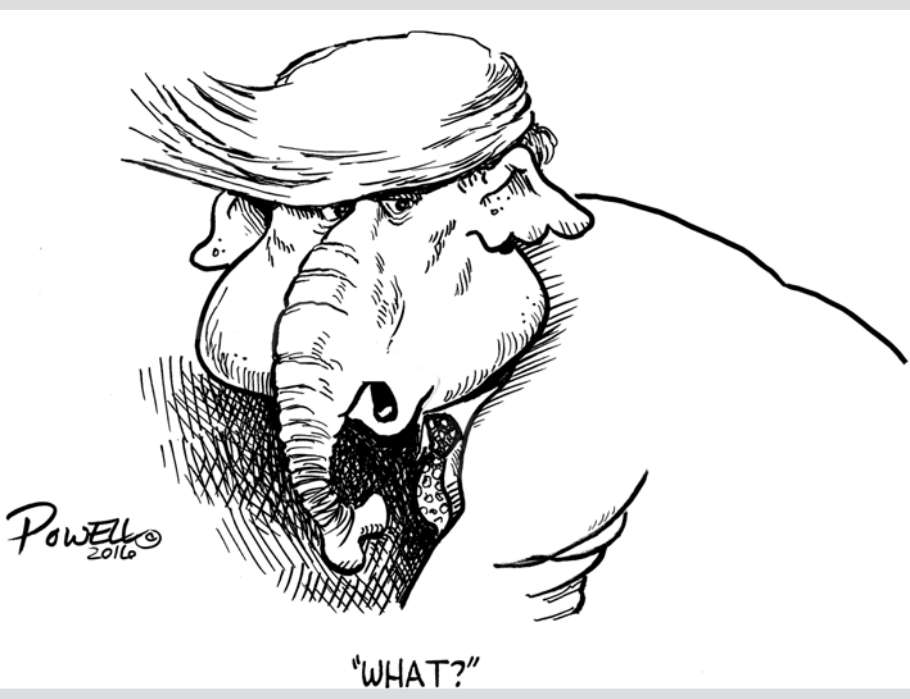
Dear Editor,

When we, or our loved ones, are in need of care, we know that our hospitals will be there for us. Hospitals not only have the best resources to care for the sick and injured, but they also have compassionate, outstanding individuals to provide this care.

On behalf of the Georgia Hospital Association, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and thank each of these dedicated professionals, from nurses and doctors, to ancillary staff and volunteers, in Georgia and across the nation, who make our hospitals run so efficiently. In times of need, whether it is an unexpected emergency situation or a joyous occasion, such as a birth, we know we can count on these people, who are the true heroes of health care.

No matter what, hospitals treat every single patient who walks through their doors. They

See Rogers, page 6A



POWELL 2016

"WHAT?"

Painkiller Abuse Kills More Than Firearms or Auto Accidents in the US

Overdoses stemming from heroin and painkiller abuse are now the leading cause of fatal injuries in the United States, surpassing even firearms and motor vehicle accidents, a Drug Enforcement Administration assessment reveals.

The DEA's 2015 National Drug Threat Assessment, released Nov. 5, also found that Mexican drug cartels are "the biggest criminal threat in the United States" and the nation's primary suppliers of marijuana, heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine.

The threat assessment revealed that more than 46,000 Americans died of drug overdoses in 2013. Half of those deaths were caused by the abuse of heroin or prescription painkillers. Drug abuse is ending lives while destroying families and communities.

To combat this problem, the DEA advocates teaching young people at an even earlier age about the dangers of drug abuse, according to Chuck Rosenberg, acting administrator of the DEA. "Law enforcement must continue to have the tools it needs to attack criminal groups who facilitate drug addiction," he added. "More Americans need treatment options so they can move forward living drug-free lives."

The threat assessment also found that Mexican drug cartels, in addition to causing extreme violence and attacking public officials and civilians, are causing unrest in the United States. "Violent gangs are increasingly a threat to the safety and security of our communities," the DEA reported. "They profit by buying drugs from regional Mexican criminal affiliates and then supply American streets with these dangerous drugs, particularly heroin."

China is another source of drugs that wreak havoc in the United States, the report found. According to the DEA assessment, profits from the sales in the USA of synthetic designer drugs from China make their way to Middle Eastern nations such as Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen, funding political unrest.

More than 700 heroin deaths have been caused by the addition of fentanyl to the batch without the user's knowledge. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is between 25 and 40 times more potent than heroin.

Public awareness is the most important step. The US media has a responsibility to report that more than 120 people die on average every day due to drugs. Pain medications are not without consequences. Using medications to help us cope and manage a life that isn't perfect has consequences. The earlier we begin talking with our children about the dangers of drugs, the better chance they will have of remaining drug free.

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.

Distracted Driving

Driving can be dangerous. It is even more dangerous when the driver is distracted. We can all remember something that has distracted us at one time or another. It could be the radio, other occupants, eating, and the worst thing...your cell phone. Distracted driving is one of the leading causes of motor vehicle accidents. According to the CDC, "each day in the United States, over 8 people are killed and 1,161 injured in crashes that are reported to involve a distracted driver." Union County Fire Department responds to motor vehicle accidents. We would like to make people aware of the risks and ask to please stop distracted driver activities for your safety and safety of other people.

Distracted driving can involve visual distractions, which can be anything that takes your eyes off the road; manual distractions which can be anything that takes your hands off the wheel or feet off the peddles; and cognitive distractions which can be anything that takes your mind off your driving or prevents you from maintaining situational awareness.

The first distracted driver activity that comes to mind is using the cell phone to call, text, email, or even browse the internet while driving. Cell phone use involves all three distractions of visual, manual, and cognitive. This distraction takes your eyes off the road and/or prevents you from concentrating on the driving. Even if you are just talking on the phone, your mind is distracted because you are concentrating on the conversation.

How dangerous of a distraction is texting and driving? An article by Jacob Masters, of the Brain Injury Society compares texting and driving to drinking and driving. The article states that, "Drivers who are texting while behind the wheel have a 23% higher chance of causing a crash. That is equivalent to downing four beers and then getting behind the wheel." We have campaigned for many years to stop drunk driving due to the accidents that it causes now we need to do the same for texting and driving.

Not only is texting and driving dangerous but it is against the law. It is unlawful for a person to use a wireless telecommunication device to write, send or read a text based communication. Another distracted driving activity which is against the law includes wearing anything that impairs your hearing such as a head set or headphones. People using headphones to listen to their favorite music are unable to hear anything around them such as other vehicles or more importantly, a fire apparatus.

These are just a few activities that can distract a driver and increase the risk of an accident. Please keep them in mind the next time you get behind the wheel. The best practice is to remember that driving can be dangerous and that we need to pay attention when operating a vehicle. Union County Fire Department ~ Our Family Protecting Your Family ~



Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer

Politics and Voting

The word "politics" has become a word with negative meanings during our life time.

However, it should not be, especially in the United States. Voting is a privilege that we should cherish and protect. We should remember that politics and elections can have profound impacts upon the lives of people for generations. An example of this can be found in my family.

My ancestors were staunch "Jacksonian Democrats". Andrew Jackson was from Tennessee and some of my ancestors fought with him during the Creek Indian Wars. During his election to the Presidency of the United States he received a tremendous amount of support from the common every day person because he was viewed as a representative of the common man. Then an election came to Alabama that changed the course of history.

My ancestors lived in Winston County, AL. They were pioneers and had no slaves. They believed in the preservation of the Union and therefore voted republican for Abe Lincoln. The people of Winston County sent a representative to the secessionist convention of Alabama. He gave a speech about the importance of the Union at the convention and was thrown in jail. As you know Alabama did secede and the Civil War came to the South.

But, because of all this my ancestors voted republican in every election for the next 70 years. Then another great tragedy changed the way my ancestors voted. The Great Depression came to Alabama. A man by the name of Roosevelt ran for office and some of my ancestors voted democrat for the first time in 70 years. Pickens Cummings, my grandfather's brother, admired FDR and was appreciative of his efforts during the depression and World War II. Uncle Pick also loved politics and decided to run for the School Board and because of his admiration for FDR Uncle Pick ran as a democrat. This caused a lot of concern in my tight knit family. My great grandfather Lon Cummings told Uncle Pick that he was proud of him and to do what he believed was right.

However, my great grand father Clifford Hyde was not so pleased. Uncle Pick asked my dad to go with him to visit Clifford. They drove up into the yard and walked up to the old man. Dad greeted his grandfather. Clifford held up his hand to silence Dad and he began speaking to Pick. "Pick, you know this boy is my favorite. You also know that I am a republican. I know you are a good man. However, I will not vote for you because you are not a republican and I don't like you getting my grandson involved in these politics".

That day Uncle Pick and Clifford came to a mutual understanding. They decided they would just disagree on the matter of politics. In the matter of politics my family has been split



Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings

See Cummings, page 5B

Buy Local Extravaganza

With warm weather and sunshine around the corner, it's time for you and yours to take some time and enjoy the community. There are two big events coming your way, and we hope that everyone will take the opportunity to be a part of them. The first one is a very special dedication paying tribute to an amazing group of people. On Wednesday, May 11 at 11 a.m., there will be a bridge dedication in honor of the Vietnam Veterans.

Mike Priven with Veteran's Group Organizations has organized the dedication and has invited Commissioner Lamar Paris and State Senator Steve Gooch as keynote speakers. Whether a member of the armed forces and or a dedicated member of our community, I encourage everyone to come and be a part of this patriotic event. On behalf of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, we would like to thank those who have done so much in the name of freedom.

One of our premier events will be held on Tuesday, May 17; the "Buy Local Extravaganza." This year's Extravaganza will be held at North Georgia Technical College from 4 p.m. until 7 p.m. We would like to thank this year's presenting sponsor, United Community Bank as well as our Corporate Sponsors: Budget Blinds, Epic Party Planning & Rental, and Sunflower Antiques and Interiors.

Our membership coordinator, Linda Lawrence, with the support of the Chamber staff has done a great job bringing in a wide variety of vendors to this annual event. With nearly 70 par-



Blairsville - Union County Chamber
Regina Allison

See Allison, page 5B

Pruning ornamentals

Azaleas and other flowering ornamentals are an integral part of the Georgia landscape from the flats of the coastal plain all the way to our mountains. Currently, we can see bright patches of orange and purple dotting the mountainsides as our native azaleas and rhododendrons bloom. Depending on the varieties of cultivated ornamentals in your own yard, your own plants may be starting to bloom as well. By tending to your flowering plants at the appropriate time, you can ensure a successful and colorful bloom year after year.

Because azaleas are spring blooming plants for the most part, they set their buds for the following year in mid-late summer. This means that in order to maintain the parts of the plant that will flower next year, we have to prune ornamentals that bloom in spring right after they lose their flowers. If they are pruned in the fall or winter, the bloom-forming buds may be accidentally removed and the normally colorful and vibrant azaleas will have fewer blooms.

This rule of thumb is good for most other spring blooming plants as well. Early bloomers such as bigleaf hydrangeas, redbuds, forsythia, clematis, beautybush and numerous others should be pruned after they have finished flowering to prevent them from becoming too sprawling. Pruning these plants before late summer ensures proper maintenance without harming newly formed buds. However, because many ornamentals have late blooming varieties, one pruning time is not necessarily appropriate for all plants of the same type. Generally, if a plant blooms before May, it is safe to prune just after flowering. If it flowers after May, then it should be pruned just before the start of its spring growth.

Two exceptions to this rule are late blooming azaleas and oakleaf hydrangeas because even though they bloom in the summer, they still form buds in the previous year so pruning in the spring before bloom will remove viable buds.

When pruning flowering or shade trees, al-



From the Ground Up
Melissa Mattee

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Kenneth West
Owner/Publisher
Charles Duncan
Editor

Joe Collins
Advertising Director
Todd Forrest
Staff Writer

Lowell Nicholson
Photographer

Website: www.nganews.com
E-mail: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com
Mailing: POBox 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514



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Phone: (706) 745-6343 **Fax:** (706) 745-1830 * P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514