

# Opinions

## Everybody has one Thanks for the memories

Rebecca Dyer probably never envisioned herself as the leader of one of the Union County community's most important infrastructure items.



**Charles Duncan**

**Straight Shooting**

She came on board the Union General Hospital ship as a college student in August 1970. She worked weekends as a receptionist and helped wherever she was needed.

As the clock began to click on her more than 40-year career at Union General Hospital, Becky began to climb a ladder that saw her stop at the top rung.

As her career advanced, Becky soon went from being weekend receptionist to become the daily posting clerk along with other responsibilities at Union General.

She rose to office manager, and then to Chief Financial Officer for the hospital.

Not bad for a young local girl, a graduate of Union County High School, Young Harris College, North Georgia College in Dahlonega and Brenau in Gainesville.

Her college education earned her a bachelor's degree in administration.

Another hat was added to her career in 1981 when she became administrator of the Union County Nursing Home, all the while maintaining her duties as the hospital's CFO.

In June 1993, Becky succeeded Leon Dav-entport as the hospital's administrator.

During Becky's tenure as hospital administrator, Union General was named Georgia Rural Hospital of the Year three times. In 1994, the hospital was named among the Top 10 rural hospitals in the country.

In 2000, Union General was named Georgia's Small Hospital of the Year, an award that would return in 2007.

In 2011, Union General was named a Top 100 hospital nationwide.

Our little hospital has received quite a chunk of state and national recognition under Becky's stewardship.

The not-for-profit hospital is in a new location from where it started in 1960, and in 2005, it was completely renovated to bring services up-to-date.

Today, the hospital has 45 beds (it started with 14 in 1960) and has extremely busy Out Patient and Emergency facilities.

Under Becky's guidance, dialysis and cancer treatment facilities have been added to the local scene, saving local families the extended journey across Blood Mountain to receive treatment in Gainesville or Atlanta.

The new medical tower is nothing short of state-of-the-art.

Becky Dyer has come a long way from the young local girl who started as a weekend receptionist at Union General Hospital.

Over the years, she has stood tall in a tough business world and our community has benefited greatly from her professionalism and business acumen.

Mike Gowder will be her successor as hospital administrator. He realizes that while Becky's feet may be small, her shoes will be a chore to fill.

Becky Dyer will soon be a fully retired executive, and much to her liking, a regular, everyday Union County resident again.

It's been a wonderful journey watching Union General Hospital grow under Becky's leadership.

It's been even more exciting knowing that Becky Dyer is Union County through and through.

Becky, your retirement years are well deserved. God bless you for what you mean to this community and its storied history.

## Important questions

**Q.** Did the number of building permits issued increase last year?

**A.** Yes, they definitely did. According to the year-end report from the Building Permit Department, we issued a total of 392 building permits in 2012. This included residential, residential spec, mobile homes, commercial and miscellaneous (barns, carpports, additions, etc.). Of those, 88 were housing permits which was 31 more than in 2011. This is definitely a hopeful sign that the housing market is improving. We are looking forward to seeing what 2013 brings.

**Q.** We have heard that the unemployment rate in Union County is continuing to come down. In a previous question, I think you said the rate was 7.8 percent. Do you have the latest numbers?

**A.** It is hard to believe but as of the November numbers, the following unemployment rates were distributed by the Labor Department. New numbers will be out for December on Jan. 18th which you can find by going to the following web site: [www.dol.state.us](http://www.dol.state.us).

Union	6.6
Towns	7.1
White	7.8
Lumpkin	8.3
Fannin	8.6
Statewide:	8.5

**Q.** Do you have any idea why our unemployment rate is so low compared to that of surrounding counties?

**A.** We really do not know for sure, but certainly feel a large part is because we have such a good quality of life in Union County. More people are coming here to visit and stay and spend their money because we have so many outstanding amenities often only found in larger metro areas. We have excellent restaurants and shopping. If you go to

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"Quick! Hide the piggy bank!  
Here comes the General Assembly!"

## Will This Be Your Year?

The holidays are over, the old year is in the record book and God has blessed us with a new year. For many the year 2013 will be no different. It will be a year of the "same old sins", the "same old habits," the "same old routine." A routine is a rut and the only difference between a rut and a grave is the rut has both ends knocked out. If this is a "new year", we need to experience the "new."

The Bible, in the "New Testament" tells us about the "new birth" that brings "new life." This "new life" causes us to be "new creatures" with a "new song" and even a "new name" written down in glory. It tells us that someday we will experience a "new heaven" and a "new earth" where God makes "all things new." As the "new year" begins why don't you make a "new commitment" to attend worship and learn about a "new kind of life" that comes through Christ? My prayer is that you will not be like the fellow who wrote his pastor the following letter.

Dear Pastor,  
You often stress attendance at church as being very important, but I think a fellow has a right to miss now and then. I think every person should be excused for the following reasons and the number of times indicated.

- Christmas (the Sunday before or after).....1
- New Year's (because of parties).....1
- Easter (get away for holidays).....1
- July (celebrate national holiday).....1
- Labor Day (last fling before winter).....1
- Memorial Day (visit hometown).....1
- School Closing (kids need a break).....1
- School Opens (relax before study).....1
- Family Reunions (mine plus my wife's).....2
- Sleep late (Saturday night activities).....5
- Deaths in family.....4
- School activities (prom, sports, etc).....3
- Anniversary (second honeymoon).....1
- Sickness (one for each family member).....5
- Business trips (a must).....2
- Vacation (3 weeks).....3
- Bad weather (ice, hurricane, snow, etc.).....6
- Ball games (tournaments).....4
- Unexpected company (just can't walk out)....2
- Time changes (spring forward, fall back).....2
- Special on TV (Super Bowl, etc).....3

Pastor, that leaves only two Sundays per year. So you can count on us to be in church on the fourth Sunday of February and the third Sunday of August unless providentially hindered.

Sincerely,  
A Faithful Member  
Will this be your year?

## Blairsville Jaycees Named Business of the Quarter

One of the many great aspects of my job is the opportunity to develop business relationships with a talented, caring, exceptional group of business owners and organization leaders.

During my tenure with the Chamber, I have grown to admire and respect the contributions of so many individuals within our membership. This is precisely the reason that, as a Chamber, we decided to implement our Business of the Quarter program.

The Business of the Quarter program was established to recognize outstanding businesses and organizations that go above and beyond to serve the local community.

The Blairsville Jaycees have been named our first 2013 Business of the Quarter.

In Union County, the Jaycees name is synonymous with the Sorghum Festival, which has had a tremendous economic and cultural impact on our community for over 40 years.

I would guess that many residents living here today first came to this area to visit the Sorghum Festival. Additionally, Blairsville is known by many around the state and beyond as the home place of delicious sorghum syrup.

Businesses in Union County have the Sorghum Festival (and Mother Nature) to thank for the boost in income during the month of October.

All of the members of the Blairsville Jaycees volunteer their time to coordinate the festival. This includes not only all the traditional aspects related to festivals, but also the planting, growing, cutting, stripping, grinding, and cooking of the most important component - the sorghum cane.

While the festival alone is enough to make the Jaycees worthy of recognition, like all great organizations, this one gives back in a big way.

The Jaycees coordinate an annual Christmas event for less fortunate kids in our community

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## Family History

Listening to my grandfather's stories about our ancestors always left me wishing I knew more about our family. With a name like Cummings I thought we were Scotts or English. So, in researching my family history I found some interesting information. For example, a couple of my second great grandfather's were moonshiners and I found the fathers of these two men fought on different sides during the Civil War. I also found was that my family was of German descent.

A man by the name of John Michael Cromer came to South Carolina in 1752 from Bladen, Germany. John Michael came with his family through the port of Charleston, SC and settled in a place called Newberry, South Carolina. The family did well for some time there in Newberry. However, one of John Michael's sons got the itch to move and eventually moved the family up to North Carolina where the family name was changed to Crommeans.

John Michael's grandson, Jacob, was a young man in the 1770's and I am sure he heard people talk about war with England. Eventually, he enlisted under the command of General George Washington. Jacob was sworn in as a 1st Lieutenant at Valley Forge. You may wonder how my family name changed from Cromer to Cummings.

The only explanations I have are misspellings or mispronunciations. In the 1850 census you can find Spencer Cummings living in Winston County Alabama. His father brought him there after the Creek Indian Wars. The census workers had a hard time understanding the spelling and pronunciation of their name. Since there was a family by the name of Cummings living close by our name was changed from Crommeans to Cummings.

Spencer and his son Wyatt are listed as purchasing a piece of property in Winston County in 1857. Wyatt had not been married for very long when South Carolina fired the first shots on Fort Sumter. During this time states across the South held Secessional Conventions to determine whether to stay in the Union or secede from the Union.

Alabama held their convention in Montgomery. Wyatt Cummings and the other people of Winston County elected a man by the name of Chris Sheets to represent them at the convention. The people of Winston County were settlers and homesteaders (not slave-owners) in Winston County. So, an overwhelming majority people in the county voted against secession. All the people of Winston County wanted was to remain neutral.

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## Weave, Stitch, Paint or Whittle

I was in my mid 20's when a friend hoodwinked me into an evening of "crafts". This wasn't something I was that familiar with, other than I knew my way around a paint palette. She was making dough ornaments (remember that craze?). So, I agreed to help.

Well, it was kind of fun. I took my creations to work the next day. I had designed a Strawberry Shortcake and a Smurf ornament. Now I'm really dating myself, for these beloved characters were from the early 80s. The ladies at work, more than 40 of them, asked if I was taking orders. That prospect hadn't occurred to me. I agreed, set a price on the spot and I also committed to personalize them. I took orders all afternoon. Fortunately, I had an understanding boss, or he was just happy to see his workforce enthused about something, for a change.

That night I called my friend and told her we had a business. In six months time, we both quit our jobs and we started working fulltime (usually more than 80 hours a week each) at our wholesale/retail craft business. We made everything ourselves. Everything was custom ordered and usually personalized.

I share this with you only to express my affinity for the craftsman. Rarely compensated for the number of hours one has in their crafted item, they aren't out to make a fortune or even a living on the sale of their crafts. Most are simply sharing their talents, and hoping to make enough money to replenish their stash.

Crafters have been part of our Farmers Market family since day one. Yes, it is a Farmers Market, so the number of craft participants is limited in order to accommodate the volume of produce and food related vendors that want to participate each year.

The crafters that have been with us consistently produce high quality, creative and

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# Letters To the Editor

Sharing in the 'Land of Dancing Rabbits'

Dear Editor,

About five years after I moved to Union County, I meet a man who was born and lived his life there. He grew up during the Great Depression. While I was talking with him, he told me this story about sharing.

One year after the winter had been particularly hard, people were craving something green to eat. Everyone went out into the fields and gathered poke salad. One man in the community had a piece of 'fat back' (salt cured pork fat like bacon but without any lean). He cooked his poke salad with the fat back and it sure was good.

His neighbor was plum out of fat back, so the man loaned him his fat back to cook the poke salad. After cooking his, the fat back was passed around from neighbor to neighbor. The entire community enjoyed a nourishing meal of poke salad with a little grease and cornbread to sop-up the 'pot liqueur.' When the strip of fat-back was returned to the owner, it was green through and through.

This story reminded me of the Russian folk tale 'Stone Soup.' The moral, what you give out always comes back even if it is green.

Just kidding.

Working together helped this community survive during one of the worst depressions this nation has ever seen.

Carol Owens

## Our biggest worries

Dear Editor,

While it has been referred to as a "do-nothing Congress," members did manage to pass a Resolution condemning Russia for its perceived "human rights violations." (How those abroad must have smiled. They know the score, even if Americans don't.) Congress had the chutzpah to take this action despite our own record of human rights violations; examples of which are the extra judicial assassinations by means of drones and the imprisonment for years of those at Guantanamo.

Those self-righteous members of Congress have, on the other hand, never dared to criticize Israel for its day in and day out violations of the human rights of the Palestinians; to do so, of course, would have been political suicide. Instead, Congress picked on a sure-fire pushover: Russia. Everyone hates Russia - right?

In passing this Resolution, members acted in cahoots with our government's hardly concealed long-range plan to destabilize those countries seen as threats to the establishment of a worldwide hegemony, i.e., empire. Forget those lofty promises to bring American-style democracy to the rest of the world (whether or not they want it.) Democracy does not automatically come about; certainly not after you have bombed a country to rubble, killed millions of its citizens, and intentionally set one faction against another.

Get enough civil unrest (note: Syria) going on in the world gives the United States reason enough to use its military to maintain world order; nevermind the cost to the American taxpayers, who can be faulted for not paying attention to what has been going on right under their noses. Responsibility for this world unrest can be attributed to agents from our CIA; thousands of which have been scattered throughout the world, doing their mischief. This game of chess has been going on for years; fine-tuned by pro-Israel neo-conservatives (both Jewish and non-Jewish), with the imprimatur of Israeli espionage experts who have never forgotten their Marxist forebears.

These devious world planners have wisely counted on the ignorance of the average American when it comes to world affairs. There are no brave American statesmen to stand up and speak out against this plan for an American world empire which will inevitably be filled with hatred, misery and unrest; the puppet strings being operated by Israeli intelligence agents.

This is the American future; with most Americans believing the national debt and how to pay for entitlement programs were our biggest worries.

Sincerely,  
Ruth Elizabeth Ramsey

## Dyer a humble servant

Dear Editor,

The headlines last week included the passing of many long time public servants, but there is one changing of the guard that was not noted that I feel deserves recognition.

The long time administrator of Union General Hospital, Mrs. Rebecca Dyer, retired and Dr. Mike Gowder has taken the reins as administrator.

Mrs. Dyer has been such an asset to the hospital and community. I have been honored to have her as colleague as well as count her among my friends.

She guided the build of a new nursing home, opened the dialysis center, and built a beautiful new hospital. During her administration, Union General was named small hospital of the year. She did all this and still ran the hospital "in the black", which is no small achievement in the past decade.

Mrs. Dyer grew up here and the community means so much to her. There are many times in many situations where her decisions were more based on what is best for the community or the people who live here than if a profit could be made. She was always concerned about treating people the way she would want to be treated and having the services and facilities here that she and her family would want for their own care.

In tough trying times, she stuck to these

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