

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Talking To Kids About Drugs Does Help

No matter how much warning parents give, some children will smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol when they are still very young. By the time they graduate from high school, nearly 40% of all teens will have tried marijuana. Some later move on to more addictive substances.

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.

We cannot assume that all children who smoke marijuana today will become heroin or methamphetamine addicts tomorrow. But the danger does exist. And long-term studies of high school students show that most young people first tried marijuana before going on to other stronger drugs. Regular drug testing during the teen years can help identify a problem before it requires professional medical or legal intervention.

While some people think that marijuana is a "mild" drug, it actually interferes with the ability to learn and retain information. A study of college students found that heavy users of marijuana had impaired attention, memory and learning skills for up to 24 hours after use. A long term study found that regular marijuana users who started using in their teens had permanent IQ loss of an average of 8 points.

Another study showed that for up to a week after smoking, users had an impaired ability to recall words from a list. Memory returned to normal within four weeks. Studies have shown that, as a group, marijuana users do poorer in school and are less likely to graduate high school than non-users.

It's a fact - children are less likely to use marijuana if their parents have talked to them about the dangers. Children who are regularly talked with and warned about the dangers of drugs are less likely to be pressured into trying them.

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Christmas Tree Fires

As we approach the holidays many people are focused on decorating for the season and don't think about the risks that they are exposing their homes and businesses to with the decorations. Modern decorations are safer than they used to be but still the risk of a structure fire is definitely increased.



**RC&D
Executive Director**
Frank Riley

The winter holiday season should be a joyous time of year, however, certain types of fires and injuries associated with holiday decorating are much more common during this season. Here are some statistics from the NFPA that should make you think about the old Christmas tree. NFPA estimates that Christmas trees, both natural and artificial, were the item first ignited in an estimated average of 230 reported home structure fires per year during 2007-2011. These fires caused an estimated average of six civilian deaths, 22 civilian injuries, and \$18.3 million in direct property damage per year. These estimates are based on data from the U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA's) National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) and the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA's) annual fire department experience survey.

During the same period, holiday lights and other decorative lighting with line voltage were involved in an estimated average of 150 home structure fires per year. These fires caused an average of nine civilian deaths, 16 civilian injuries, and \$8.4 million in direct property damage per year although these fires are not common, when they do occur, they are unusually likely to be serious. On average, one of every 40 reported home structure Christmas tree fires resulted in a death compared to an average of one death per 142 total reported home structure fires.

Similar shares of home Christmas tree structure fires were in December (43%) and January (39%). Christmas tree fires are more likely after Christmas than before. For example, none of the ten dates with the largest shares of home Christmas tree structure fires were before Christmas. Electrical failures or malfunctions were involved in one-third (32%) of the home Christmas tree structure fires. One in six (17%) occurred because some type of heat source was too close to the tree. Decorative lights on line voltage were involved in 12% of these incidents. Seven percent of home Christmas tree fires were started by candles.

Twenty percent of home Christmas tree structure fires were intentionally set. Half of the intentional Christmas tree fires occurred in the 20 days after Christmas. The risk of fire is higher with natural trees than artificial ones. Researchers found that dry natural trees burned easily but trees that had been kept moist are unlikely to catch fire unintentionally.

Holiday lights and other decorative lighting with line voltage were involved in an estimated average of 150 home structure fires per year in this same period. Fifteen percent of these fires began with Christmas trees. Electrical failures or malfunctions were factors in nearly two-thirds (64%) of the fires involving holiday or decorative lights. In a study of fall-related injuries during the holiday season, it was estimated that an annual average of roughly 5,800 fall injuries related to holiday decorating were treated at hospital emergency rooms between November 1 and January 31 in 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003. Sixty-two percent of those injured were between 20 and 49 years of age, compared to 43% of the population in this age group. With 43% of the injuries resulting from falls from ladders and 13% caused by falls from the roof, it appears that the majority of these falls occurred during outdoor decorating. Falls from furniture, typically inside the structure, accounted for 11% of the injuries. Some falls occurred when people tripped over or slipped on tree skirts or other decorations.

I know that a lot of us leave our trees up for a while after Christmas; some just don't want to let the season go, or family members

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John's Christmas Story

I thought a pastor friend of mine had stepped out of his usual humble character, at least during his introductory statement. Anyone without a working knowledge of the Gospels probably fell for it.

He began his comments, "Tonight I will recite from memory the entire Christmas story." "What is he doing?" I wondered privately. He continued, "from the Gospel according to John." I suddenly realized the prank, but stifled a laugh. He stepped back from the podium, clasped his hands behind his back and glanced heavenward in a grandiose pose, caught a chest full of air as to recite paragraphs without inhaling, and pausing for comedic timing, said, "The Word became flesh!" Which is John's entire Christmas story in four words.

It's true that John left the details to Dr. Luke and Tax Collector Matthew. But what a profound albeit brief account of the events long ago in the little town of Bethlehem! John starts his Gospel by agreeing with the ancient Greeks that the unity, coherence, and meaning of the universe is by a divine power called Logos, i.e. Word. He adds that the Word has no origin, is the agency of creation, and is the life and Light of humanity. Then his startling Nativity narrative that the Word came to Earth as a human! He is describing Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The lack of angelic visitations, no-vacancy inns, and mysterious Magi from afar make that simple Christmas account in John easy to miss. That's no tragedy, if you don't miss the meaning of it. Max Lucado imagined that even eyewitnesses may have missed the blessed event's meaning. "The merchants are unaware that God has visited their planet. The innkeeper would never believe that he had just sent God into the cold. And the people would scoff at anyone who told them the Messiah lay in the arms of a teenager on the outskirts of their village. They were all too busy to consider the possibility. Those who missed His Majesty's arrival that night missed it not because of evil acts or malice; no, they missed it because they simply weren't looking." Lucado expounds John's phrase, "The world did not know him." Is the

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Manufacturing Part III

Q. What types of manufacturers are best suited for our county?

A. Union County is very competitive for small- and medium-sized manufacturers in certain industry sectors. Some of our targeted industries are machining, metal fabrication and assembly manufacturers. We have several of these that have already located here such as Corrugated Replacements, Panel Built, and Advanced Digital Cable. With several automotive assembly plants in the Southeast, we also believe that we can be competitive for Tier 3 automotive parts manufacturers. Because we have the North Georgia Network, data centers and call centers would also do great here because we can offer world class broadband service.

Q. Does Union County have a large enough workforce to accommodate multiple manufacturers?

A. An adequately trained workforce is always an issue for any community and workforce is increasingly becoming a driver for companies' new locations. We definitely have the workforce to accommodate the small to medium companies that are more suited to our area, in part because we draw on a labor shed that includes not only Union County but the surrounding counties as well. North Georgia Technical College is a valuable partner in helping us develop our workforce, as they provide programs tailored to our community needs and also provide targeted, short term employee training called "Quick Start" to assist a new or expanding company.

Q. How do large companies decide where to locate?

A. Each company has their own criteria for a site location, but most large projects usually have a site selection consultant that uses a specific process. A multi-point data questionnaire called an RFI, or request for information, is prepared by the company or a consulting firm they hire. This helps them narrow their field of potential sites and communities in which to locate from among hundreds or even thousands of potential sites. The questionnaires are designed to eliminate communities nationally and internationally so the company can concentrate its search on a manageable field based on their needs.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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Take Five with Misty Moss

This week's Take Five is with Misty Moss, a licensed esthetician and owner of Sage Wax Boutique. Since joining the Chamber in June of 2015, Misty has been actively growing her business and establishing quite a name for herself in the Blairsville area. Let's take a moment to learn more about Misty.

1. Tell us about you and your business.

I am the owner at Sage Wax Boutique. As a licensed esthetician, I offer skin care treatments concerning acne, aging, hyperpigmentation and rosacea. Waxing is another specialty, and I offer it from head to toe.

2. What is your favorite thing about your job?

I enjoy sharing my knowledge. This includes things like how to properly care for one's skin and explaining the importance of cleansing, exfoliating, moisturizing, and of course sunscreen. Always wear your SPF. I am highly skilled in the art of waxing, and brows and Brazilian are my specialty. I like to make the experience as comfortable as possible for the client.

3. What would people reading this be surprised to know about you?

There are several things. First, I was in a sound healing band. Sound healing is a form of meditation through sound vibrations. The vibrations allow one to become entranced allowing your mind to calm. Jennifer Proctor orchestrated Twilight Reveille playing crystal singing bowls.

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Unexpected Gifts

'Tis the season, and many of us are sitting at the kitchen table with lists. One list is who we need to buy for and what we think they might like, will use, won't regret and most probably appreciate. You hate to write a check to the grandkids, but they never seem to be happy with your choice of color or style of anything. A gift card gets lost, and their Mom has already told you they have too much of everything already.

Uncle Jack has every fishing gadget known to man, and he seems to have lost interest in snagging the big one ever since Aunt Lill has been dealing with sight issues. He was diagnosed with diabetes in October, so those sugary spiced nuts that he always counted on from your kitchen are out this year, too.

You have started three pairs of socks that you are knitting for your niece's children. All are partially complete. You are pretty certain that one sock each isn't going to impress anyone, unless, of course, you turn it into a Christmas stocking and put a \$100 bill in each one. You make a mental note. "Last year to give to the third tier of family". Then you remember that you made that same decision last year, and probably the year before.

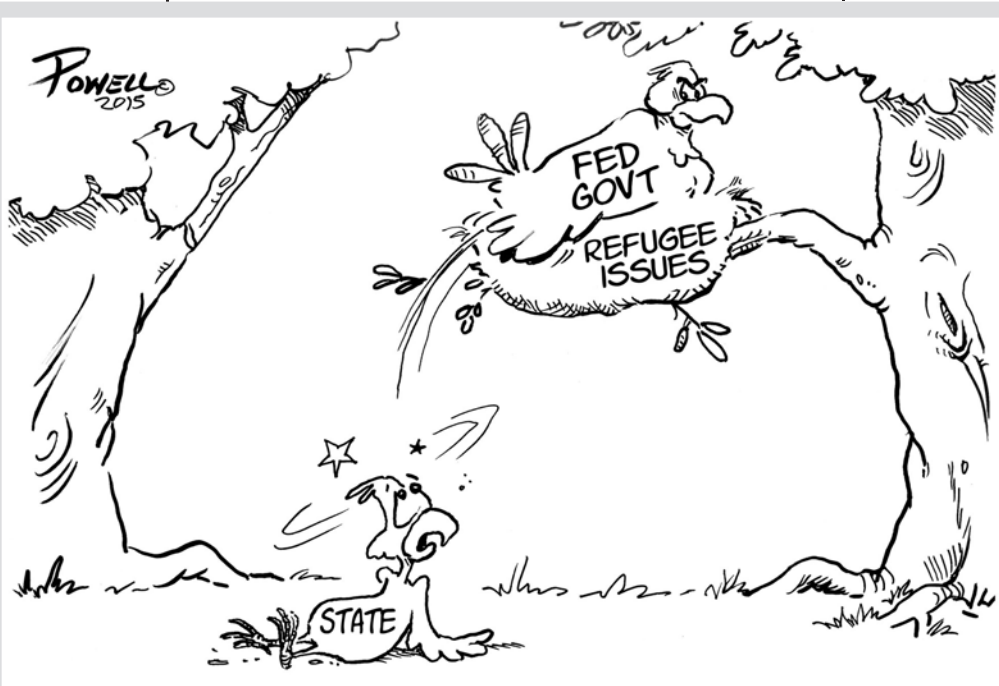
Time to be distracted by another list. Here's the "To-Do" list. You are on the second side of the third sheet of the legal pad, and you are still writing. Then you make a second mental note. "I'm simplifying the holidays next year". Your husband walks into the kitchen to eat the last three Mexican wedding cookies that you had made to take to card club tomorrow. He peers over your shoulder, looks at your list, and as he is returning to his recliner, he mumbles, "I thought you decided last December to simplify the holidays this year". Did you really say it out loud last year?

So many of us get caught up in trying to make this season between Thanksgiving and New Years extra special for all those we hold dear, that we don't have time to enjoy the holidays for ourselves. I know you've heard this lament

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Farmers Market Moment

JoyAnne Leone



Letters to the Editor...

Believe

Dear Editor,

Soon we will be celebrating the most wonderful birth ever recorded in history, the birth of God's only begotten son, Jesus Christ. And some may ask why so wonderful and the answer lies in each one of our hearts that know the love of God and what He did for mankind. God placed a little miracle inside of a virgin named Mary and in a little town called Bethlehem she gave birth to a son who would become the Savior of the world. Though thousands of years have come and gone this miracle child still stirs the hearts of men, women, boys and girls in this Christmas season of rejoicing for God made a way for all to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, if only they will believe. In this Christmas season harden hearts can be melted. Marriages can be restored as

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Surprised

Dear Editor,

I was surprised this weekend to see the main stream media all claiming that Donald Trump lied when he said he saw people celebrating when the twin towers were brought down by Radical Muslim Terrorist. First let me say that I am not a supporter of Donald Trump. I am also not a Republican or a Democrat. I am an independent. I hate hearing lies from either side about the other and call out those that do. But what can you say when the media lies? I too remember seeing stories on TV about people celebrating when the towers fell. I remember being disgusted that anyone could celebrate such a horrible event. Now I am disgusted that the very same media that covered the stories of people celebrating in

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Climate change, Global warming

Dear Editor,

Climate Change, Global Warming... those phrases elicit different reactions depending on your point of view. Those who deny that man is the cause often say that it doesn't matter because our economy can't afford to address it anyway. A new report from NextGen Climate America, an environmental advocacy organization, refutes that claim. The researchers used a 2014 report, "Pathways to Deep Decarbonization in the US by Energy and Environmental Economics," and concluded that transitioning from fossil fuels to a clean energy economy would increase employment, reduce costs to consumers and benefit investors. The report shows that investing in efficient, renewable sources of electricity would add a million jobs by 2030 and increase the GDP by almost \$300 billion. The construction industry

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The Mystery of the Rebel Soldier

Clifford was a distant relative that was many years older than me. Clifford and I had many of the same interests. We loved anything to do with the woods.

By the time I was 7 I knew I wanted to be like Clifford. He was a master woodsman by the time he was 15 years old. Clifford was a great turkey hunter and could call any old Tom away from a group of hens. Clifford could catch more fish than anyone I knew. When Clifford was in the mountains he was confident about his skills. However, if you took Clifford out of the woods he was a different person.

As a young boy Clifford was shy and found it extraordinarily difficult to talk with girls. Around girls he lost his self-assurance and confidence. So, naturally Clifford had a hard time when it came time for him to start courting girls. One night in particular caused Clifford great pain and agony. There was one girl in the Shoal Creek settlement around Dawsonville that caught Clifford's eye. A Fourth of July celebration was soon to be held at the courthouse in Dawsonville and a dance was to be part of the celebration. The same day the town was going to dedicate a statue of a rebel soldier on the courthouse lawn. Clifford planned to ask the girl to dance with him that evening.

So, Clifford got himself all gussied up for the evening. He even bought himself some tonic water to fix his hair. He went into Dawsonville to the dance and began looking for Martha. Finally, he saw Martha standing by the punch bowl and he walked toward her. But, he never got the chance to talk with her. A large group of boys that lived in town stepped in front of Clifford and began to make fun of the way he looked. The town boys were dressed like dandies and Clifford was a country boy. All he could afford was a pair of overalls. After the boys made fun of him, Clifford lost the little bit of self-confidence he had left. All Clifford could do was to go outside and sit on the courthouse lawn.

Somebody offered him a little white lightning and it wasn't long until Clifford became angry. The more he drank the angrier he became. After a while the dedication of the new statue was held on the lawn. Clifford watched as everyone clapped and applauded. Clifford recognized that everyone in town was very proud of the statue, even the town boys. Clifford left the Fourth of July Celebration with a plan. He went back to Shoal Creek and waited until late at night. Clifford went to his Uncle Daniel's house and borrowed his truck. Clifford soon found himself sitting at the controls of a knuckle boom loading the statue of the Rebel Soldier onto the log truck.

The next morning the good people of

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Around The Farm

Wickey Cummings



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