

Opinions

Everybody has one...

A time to reflect

On Thursday and Saturday, we had a chance to witness community in action. First, the Blairsville Cruisers took 30 Union County special needs children on an adventure called Shop With a Cruiser. These children otherwise would not have the Christmas most children expect.

They shopped to their hearts content, not just for themselves, these children used much of the funds provided by the Shop With a Cruiser to buy Christmas gifts for their families.

They're encouraged to use the money to buy gifts for themselves, but, it's not a requirement. That's what makes this event such a heartwarming occasion.

These children are learning the art of giving. They won't always be special needs children, one day, they will become productive members of society, whether it's here, or wherever they call home in the future.

They'll always remember the day they went shopping with the Blairsville Cruisers, and, believe or not, it will have a lasting impact on their personal makeup.

On the flip side, the Cruisers had another huge impact. This time on Saturday, as they and Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll and his troops took a record number of youths ages 11-17 on an adventure known as Shop With A Cop.

Shop With A Cop gets a huge portion of its shopping budget from the Blairsville Cruisers. They also get donations from individuals, businesses, churches and civic organizations.

They take as many children as they can on the adventure of their lifetimes, shopping for Christmas, and, once again, shopping for their families.

One officer tells us that a young man loaded up on socks, huge bulk packs. He asked him "why so many socks?" The answer broke the officer's heart. "I've never owned a new pair of socks before," the young man replied.

Well, he's got plenty of socks now, and I'm sure the young man feels like he bought a lifetime supply. But, ultimately, the young man's purchase of socks tells us that what the Cruisers, the Blairsville Police Department and Union County Sheriff's Office are doing is making a difference. The Cruisers also make a significant impact on the Sheriff's Give A Gift program.

It also tells us that our community is making a difference. The Cruisers, Chief Carroll and Sheriff Mack Mason will tell you, they couldn't do what they do to help these young people without community support.

If you've read my column very much, you'll know that I write often about the community in which we live.

It's a very giving community, it loves its children and young people. It wants those young individuals to have the tools to make it in this ever-changing world.

We salute our community. We salute the Cruisers, BPD and the Union County Sheriff's Office. Together, they have made Christmas very bright and provided smiles on many young faces throughout the county.

I take this time to reflect on the many blessings we enjoy in this amazing community that we call home.

Letters to the Editor ...

Means the same

Dear Editor,

The abbreviation of Xmas for "Christmas" is neither modern nor disrespectful. The notion that the abbreviation was deliberately concocted "to take the Christ out of Christmas" is inaccurate.

Actually, this usage is nearly as old as Christianity itself and its origins lie in the fact that the first letter in the Greek word for "Christ" is chi and the Greek letter, chi, is represented by a symbol similar to the letter "X" in the modern Roman alphabet. Hence "Xmas" is indeed perfectly legitimate abbreviation for the word, "Christmas" -- just as "Xian" is also sometimes used as an abbreviation of the word, "Christian."

None of this means that Christians -- and others -- aren't justified in feeling slighted when people write "Xmas" rather than "Christmas" but the point is the abbreviation was not created specifically for the purpose of demeaning Christ, Christians, Christianity or Christmas.

It's a very old artifact of a very different language.

The labarum, often called the CHI-RHO, is a Christian symbol representing Christ.

The word, Christ, and its compounds, including "Christmas," have been abbreviated in English for at least the past 1,000 years -- long before the modern "Xmas" was commonly used. Christ was often written as X̄ or Xt; there are references in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as far back as 1021. This X and P arose as the upper case forms of the Greek letters x (ch) and q (R) used in ancient abbreviations for Χριστος (Greek for Christ) and are still widely seen in many Eastern Orthodox icons depicting Jesus Christ.

In ancient Christian art, χ and χ̄ are abbreviations for Christ's name. In many manuscripts of the New Testament, X is an abbreviation for Χριστος, in Greek.

Whether we say, "Merry Christmas" or write "Merry Xmas," the meaning is the same. So should the intent be. - (Wikipedia and snopes)

George Mitchell

Old-time biker

Dear Editor,

I don't usually get irritated by the ignorance of others that will write in to the "Letters to the Editor," as normally it is an opinion that usually shows how uninformed they can be.

A good example was in the Dec. 11 issue where a Mr. William Dailey wrote about how he laughs when he hears the word "Biker."

Well Mr. Dailey, I am a Biker, and have been since the early 60's or as you said, "the old days."

I got my first Motorcycle in 1964 (a BSA) which I traded in 1966 for a Triumph. Then in 1968, I bought a '54 Panhead Harley Chopper, which I traded in for a new '70 Harley Electraglide, which I traded in for a new '80 Electraglide, which I traded in for a '99 Elec-

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Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Take a Break

I know this is a Holy Season for most of us, but sometimes this very spiritual time of the year can become very stressful and frustrating. So let me ask you to take a break and read the following email someone sent me. I am not trying to be flippant, but most of us need to slow down, take a deep breath and renew our perspective. Maybe the following will help you produce a smile or two.

1. My first job was working in an orange juice factory, but I got canned. Couldn't concentrate.
2. Then I worked in the woods as a lumberjack, but just couldn't hack it, so they gave me the axe.
3. After that, I tried being a tailor, but wasn't suited for it -- mainly because it was a sew-sew job.
4. Next, I tried working in a muffler factory, but that was too exhausting.
5. Then, I tried being a chef -- figured it would add a little spice to my life but just didn't have the thyme.
6. Next, I attempted being a deli worker. But any way I sliced it; I couldn't cut the mustard.
7. My best job was a musician but eventually found I wasn't noteworthy.
8. I studied a long time to become a doctor, but didn't have patience.
9. Next, was a job in a shoe factory; tried hard but just didn't fit in.
10. I became a professional fisherman but discovered I couldn't live on my net income.
11. I managed to get a good job working for a pool maintenance company, but the work was just too draining.
12. So then I got a job in a workout center but they said I wasn't fit for the job.
13. After many years of trying to find steady work, I finally got a job as a historian -- until I realized there was no future in it.
14. My last job was working at Starbucks, but I had to quit because it was the same old grind.

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



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Questions and Answers

Q. You stated at a county meeting that the county had purchased some more property adjacent to Meeks Park. What will be the stated purpose of this property and how will it be utilized?

A. Yes, we are very excited about this purchase of 7.75 acres off the Blue Ridge Highway adjacent to Meeks Park. We have been trying to buy this property for several years and want to thank the Sid Chandler estate for being willing to work with us. The primary purpose for the property will be to give access from the Blue Ridge Highway to the rear of the park near Ft. Sorghum. This will allow construction vehicles a way to get into the back side of the park and will also allow for overflow parking during festivals and events. It can also be utilized for a sorghum cane field that could serve as a demonstration area or hands on area for the public to understand the growing and harvest side of making sorghum syrup.

Q. Are there other purposes that the new property might be utilized for?

A. The access off the old Blue Ridge Highway will be huge. One of our long time projects that has been on our drawing board is the reconstruction of the old Tate Mill. This was a gristmill that is well over 100 years old. It now belongs to the Mike Thompson family. This mill was located near the North Carolina state line, and had long since fallen into gross disrepair. The waterwheel had long ago rotted out, and the building was beginning to fall in on the equipment. With the help of Rickey Davenport, Junior Bridges, Brian Ledford and several others, they successfully removed the old mill equipment from the building and it has been in storage for a few years awaiting the right location to be reconstructed.

Q. Where will the new mill be reconstructed in Meeks Park?

A. If you walk in the park, you may have noticed the old rock wall on the south side of Butternut Creek near where it runs into the Nottely River below the Dobson Bridge. This wall is the remains of the old Harshaw Mill once located along the banks of Butternut Creek. We hope to rebuild the Tate Mill just across the creek and slightly above this site, within about 200 feet of the original location.

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Are You Extraordinary?

A friend of mine recently shared an article with me from Inc.com entitled "10 Things Extraordinary People Say Every Day." While amazingly simplistic in content, the message served as a nice reminder to me, and I feel compelled to share a few of those items with you this week.

"Here's what I'm thinking." -- This is so much better than, "No. You're wrong." No matter what level of authority you have in your organization or in a given situation, never force your ideas or thoughts on someone else. Be willing to gently and tactfully share your thoughts, but allow others the opportunity to do so as well.

"That was awesome." -- Give freely of your praise. Everyone likes to feel appreciated. A nice pat on the back can go a long way with your employees or your acquaintances. Complimenting someone's effort helps motivate them and build rapport between the two of you.

"I was wrong." -- Most times when you are wrong, everyone else already knows it. Trying to hide it or make excuses only sheds a negative light on you. Admit your mistakes and be willing to learn from them. Others will respect your willingness to acknowledge your

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The Toe of the Stocking

When I reflect on the Christmases of my childhood, my most vivid memories are of my little sister and I, waking up very early on Christmas morning, and finding our stuffed stockings leaning against our bedsides. Oh, what a glorious happening, that Santa found our house and stuffed our stockings.

The legend of the significance of the Christmas stocking goes something like this. Once upon a time, very long ago, there lived a poor man. Though he had no monetary wealth, he was blessed with three very beautiful daughters. Because of their beauty, there would be many suitable prospective husbands. But the father had no money to get his daughters married, for at that time, a dowry was the engagement agreement. This weighed heavy on his mind, for he worried so about what would happen to them after his death. He was convinced that they would need to turn to prostitution for financial support.

Saint Nicholas was passing through the village of this family and he overheard the villagers talking about the girls. St. Nicholas wanted to help, but sure that the proud man wouldn't accept charity, he decided to help in secret. One evening, after dark, St. Nicholas quietly approached the open window near the hearth where the girls' stockings were hung to dry. He tossed a bag of gold into each stocking. When the girls and their father woke up the next morning, they found the bags of gold. They were elated. The poor man's daughters were able to get married and, of course, live happily ever after.

OK, there was never a bag of gold in my sister's or my stocking. Yet, there was no doubt, once we reached inside, that Santa knew what child he was gifting. In my stocking would be a toothbrush, hairbrush and comb, always in my favorite color. The little bracelet would have a dangle of something that was precious to me at that time of my life. And the candy would also be specifically for me, for I always

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



"My dad says you're just another part of the entitlement system."

A thankful blessing

Dear Editor,

The third annual Thanksgiving Dinner on Thanksgiving Day is over and all who participated, the servers and the served, were blessed abundantly! Approximately 346 free Thanksgiving meals were either delivered from or eaten at UCBI's Brackett Room, an increase of 86 meals over those served in 2012.

Approximately 125 volunteers participated; individuals, couples, families and groups; sharing their blessings and serving others. An abundance of food was purchased, cooked and prepared for distribution to the hundreds who called to make reservations for meals.

Neighbor's Hand expresses heartfelt thanks to every volunteer and the following businesses, agencies and churches who worked together to feed so many: Blairsville and Union County officials, Child Enrichment Center, Cook's Country Kitchen, First United Methodist Church of Union County, Flower Garden, Harmony Grove Baptist Church, Head Westgate, Ingles, Logan Turnpike Mill, New Hope Baptist Church, North Georgia News, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, UCBI Junior Board of Directors, Union County Board of Education, Union County H.S. Beta Club, Union County Schools, United Community Bank; the many who purchased and prepared turkeys and other food; all our set-up, kitchen, serving line, delivery team, and clean-up volunteers.

Neighbor's Hand is blessed to be part of a compassionate community filled with servant-hearts eager to invest in people's lives. They thank you for your generosity and wish you all a happy and holy Christmas season!

Neighbor's Hand

A life of burden

Dear Editor,

The North Georgia News has, over the years, carried occasional articles on the local poet, Byron Herbert Reece, the contents having been oddly circumspect when it came to Reece's personal life; choosing, instead, to focus on his poetry. No less so than Editor Duncan's article (Dec. 4) on the Reece Farm and Heritage Center.

While others may honor this sad and tragic young man by reading his poetry and/or visiting the Reece Farm, I will remember his life of "quiet desperation," as Thoreau put it. I will remember his years of debilitating illness, exacerbated by family responsibilities that should not have been his. Life was terribly unfair to this talented young man and it would seem that there was no one there to help him or to share the burden.

Byron Reece was/is not alone when it comes to the unfair sharing of family burdens; look around, they are everywhere. Who said life was fair!

Ruth Elizabeth Ramsey

John Cummings

My Papa described his grandfather as a pretty rough character. John was born during the "War Between the States" and I guess the events which occurred during and after the war hardened the character of the man. As a very young boy John was exposed to the atrocities of "Winston County Home Guard".

The boy must have known about the Home Guard hanging (twice) the man known as Uncle Billy. John must have known about Aunt Jenny Johnson's husband being murdered in front of their young son. Then after the war the young man, John, probably witnessed the brutal revenge enacted upon the former Home Guard members.

Sometime during these terrible years John's father Wyatt moved his family to Savannah, Tennessee to remove his family from the violence of Alabama. John was able to learn about blacksmithing during these years and upon reaching adulthood he opened up a Blacksmith Shop in Corinth, Mississippi. Soon he ventured into sawmilling and purchasing timber lands. While in Mississippi John married Martha Pace and began his family. John moved his young family back to North Alabama in the 1870s. He acquired a taste for alcohol sometime along the way and decided he could make a lot of money by selling moonshine. So, the middle aged John Cummings owned a large farm, blacksmith shop, sawmill and moonshine still in the hills of North Alabama. He was doing well, making money and enjoying life. However, things were about to change.

Martha Pace was a head strong woman. She did not like John's consumption of moonshine. Nor did she like its manufacture. So, she did what any person would do under these circumstances. She let John know of her feelings over and over again. The nagging became so intense that John began drinking more than usual. People around John began to notice a change. He was no longer jovial and fun loving. The only time he displayed happiness was when he drank. But, soon the drinking lost its appeal. John attended a wedding and enjoyed too much of the punch and brandy and his mood turned sour. John walked to the front of the church and took off all his clothing and then challenged every man present to a fight. Soon everyone in attendance left and John remained naked and lonely. John had not realized what was happening, but, the events of the "War" and the heavy drinking had changed him forever.

Soon the inevitable happened. My grandfather's uncle, Howard, was 16 years old when his father, John, ran off with another woman. John left his wife and family and moved to Missouri with a woman named Dolly. One year later Uncle Howard and his friend found

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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