

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Marijuana Use Doubles and So Does Addiction

According to the Journal of American Medical Association - Psychiatry, the percentage of people reporting dependence or abuse of marijuana has doubled, from 1.5 percent in 2001 to nearly 3 percent in 2013. Among users, the JAMA report found that three out of every ten people or nearly 7 million Americans have an abuse or addiction problem.

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.

It has been promoted that cannabis should be legalized or at least delisted as a schedule I drug. Nicotine and alcohol are regulated, taxed, and routinely enjoyed by adults. Marijuana promoters say this provides a blueprint for the deregulation of other drugs that are supposedly less noxious. However, these legal addictive drugs lead to serious social and medical consequences. For example, alcohol accounts for 5.1% of the global burden of disease and injury as measured by disability-adjusted life-years. The price tag of alcohol, tobacco, drug abuse and addiction in America is already over \$560 billion each year in costs related to lost work productivity, damage to company property, healthcare and crime.

Drug use rates are up, and so is abuse and addiction. Think of the number of employees at your place of work and estimate that for every ten employees, three of them may have problems. Training programs for employees on signs and symptoms of drug use and alcohol misuse is one big step in the right direction. Another important part of the education equation is to have the supervisors and managers trained to make a reasonable suspicion determination and understanding what to look for. Only when a problem is identified can someone get the help they need.

Education programs at work also serve to teach parents about the warning signs of drug use, because the fact is that growing up to be drug free starts at home. The same employees who learn about the current drug problems through a program at work can be more informed and aware parents.

2015 in Review

The year 2015 is in the books. As the preacher wrote, There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven (Ecc. 3). This year has certainly seen its share of memorable and regrettable events.

A time to give birth and a time to die. Princess Charlotte was born as the fourth in line to the British throne. The Center for Medical Progress recorded videos that highlight Planned Parenthood's profiting from baby parts.

A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to tear down and a time to build up. A magnitude 7.8 earthquake rocked Nepal leaving over 9000 dead. The Gates Foundation reports dramatic progress worldwide in reducing childhood mortality and eliminating certain infectious diseases.

A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance. A church in Charleston, a military center in Chattanooga, Umpqua College in Oregon, a county office in San Bernardino, and locations in Paris all suffered mass shootings. Much weeping and mourning.

A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones. It appears the next U.S. President will be either a woman with much political talent, a businessman amidst his first campaign, or a senator in his first term. The stone-throwing has begun.

A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing. The Supreme Court held that states must license same-sex marriages. Chief Justice Roberts dissented that this "orders the transformation of a social institution that has formed the basis of human society for millennia... Just who do we think we are?"

A time to search and a time to give up as lost. In "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," Leia sends her most daring pilot on a secret mission to Jakku in search of Luke Skywalker. That adventure is breaking box office records.

A time to tear apart and a time to sew together. PBS reports that the U.S. is at a low point in race relations. Recent claims of police abuse and the tactics of Black Lives Matter contribute to the poll results.

A time to love and a time to hate; A time for war and a time

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



GDOT Part II

Q. How do we get our ideas across to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)?

A. They have a Gainesville office that you can contact at 770-531-5726, or as many do, you can contact either my office or the Road Department and we will let the state know. Whether it is suggestions for a red light at Pat Colwell Road or Gumlog Road, or trying to lower the speed limit, or getting turn arrows at the K-Road and Wal-Mart intersections, or making other safety improvements, we are constantly working with GDOT to pass on our and your suggestions. However, they are only suggestions. Anything dealing with state roads is a slow process and like it or not, that's the way it is. They have to deal with issues all over the state and it is a large bureaucracy so it takes time.

Q. Why can GDOT not just put red lights at all these major county intersections?

A. Red lights are not always the answer, although many think they are. Accidents at red light intersections continue and often at a higher rate. Once a red light is installed, some people tend to totally rely on the light and not use their eyes and awareness anymore. So accidents are often more severe with higher speeds. Also, unfortunately, many drivers are more distracted than ever with cell phones, texting, using GPS units, and just a lack of concentration. That is why GDOT has traffic count guidelines because at some point, a red light is necessary to handle the high traffic volumes regardless of other risks.

Q. Can you address the issue of a red light at the Pat Colwell Road intersection?

A. A red light at the Pat Colwell Road intersection has continued to be a request made to GDOT by the county. According to the state, the traffic count is still inadequate to justify a light at the Pat Colwell intersection, and there is nothing I can do about that. Some think the new casino in Murphy will drastically increase traffic counts, although studies suggest otherwise, but with time I think this intersection will eventually justify a red light. In the meantime, as with any intersection, please use extreme caution. I still see people driving while on the cell phone at almost every intersection around town and it is an accident waiting to happen.

There are exceptions, but try to only use your cell phone when on the open road or when pulled over. There is NO WAY to go through an intersection, talking on the phone, and then be as alert

See Paris, page 5A

Celebrating Success in 2015

As we draw the curtain on 2015, I would like to take a moment to celebrate the many successes of the

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



Commerce. Year after year, I am overwhelmed with the milestones we reach and the progress we are able to make. Thanks to a great staff, Board, and membership, this past year was no exception. Here are a few of the highlights.

The lifeblood of our Chamber is our membership, and membership in the Chamber is strong. Currently at over 630 members, this is an 11% increase over the same time in 2014. In keeping with our mission to positively impact our community and members by facilitating tourism, economic and cultural development, the Chamber offered a variety of business education classes as well as networking events to broaden the knowledge of our members and promote communication and support among Union County business owners.

In 2015, we participated in one the most comprehensive community planning processes in Union County history. Based on the feedback, our Chamber lead the process of rebranding our community to focus on increased tourism dollars as well as a strategic approach to recruiting new business. Hence was born the Believe It campaign. See Williams, page 5A

Across the Miles. Across the Fields.

It's the holidays, and just moments away from a new year. I'm in town this year, not traveling to be with my family. I've been spending the celebration of the season with my unnatural family, those born within the soul of the heart, and not of the blood that flows through it. Many of us have nurtured relationships with others who have migrated away from their natural families, leaving us each other to share the revelry.

And there are others we share a bit of the holidays with. The neighbors drop by and we share some baked goodies. I refer to these folks as the "across the field" friends. We spend most of our friendship waving to each other as we pass each other working in the yard, on the tractor, walking the dogs or exercising the horses. We leave our field boots at the door and come in bearing best wishes and a reminder that we'll get together more often next year.

Actually, we all say that to one another, don't we? We meet folks we haven't seen in a coon's age in the grocery aisle, and it's old home week. We agree to be better stewards of our friendship and we'll meet for lunch soon. "Yes, let's get a girl's game of cards together next month". "Oh, my little ones would love to have a play day with your kids. Let's make sure we do that this winter". Here's one I hear often. "I can't believe I never got to the Farmer's Market this year. I can't seem to remember on Saturday mornings".

It's about right now, five days after Christmas, that we realize that we didn't do about half of what we intended to do this month. We didn't end up making a few of the special recipes we had intended. We didn't finish knitting something for someone who always makes a point to tell us how beautiful our work is. We just hadn't found enough time to make a call to great Aunt Nessie, nor did we visit our former minister who now resides at the nursing home. And we are disappointed in ourselves, once again.

See Leone, page 5A

Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



Letters to the Editor...

New Year's Resolutions

Dear Editor,

I'm not big on making New Year resolutions, because by the end of the month of January I have broken every one, so I take a more leisure approach by just praying to my God above that I will strive to be a better person this year. To see the needs of others, before my own. To reach out in God's love to the homeless, the shut-ins, the orphans and widows like the Bible tells us to do. To pray for those who don't know Jesus Christ as their Savior and friend. To pray as the Bible tells us to, for our enemies, for those who curse us; those who would harm us; those who are lost and dying and going to hell without a Savior. Yes the future of our nation doesn't look to bright right now and things will probably in time take a turn for the worse, but I know in my heart what God has said to me. Don't worry. Don't be afraid. Don't be fearful and don't lose faith, for Your God above is with you every breath you take.

Want to have peace that surpasses all understanding, then connect to the only source of eternal power that can and will give you the peace in this coming New Year. When we reach for the stars we find not only a shining light, but we get a little peek into what heaven might look like, for those who have made their final choice to believe not in this old sinful world, but One that is coming in all His glory to claim His own. I pray you will be among those who will worship Jesus in heaven forevermore... amen.

Frank F. Combs

Vogel Tree Lighting

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your coverage of the Vogel Christmas Program and Lighting of the Tree. It was a wonderful night of celebrating our Savior's birth with approximately 850 in attendance.

This has been one of the most attended events in our county. I thank all who helped put this event together. The many churches, businesses, Notla River Baptist Association who finances it, and the 75 volunteers who do the leg work. The consenses is let's keep this program going!

Next year's date is December 10th, so go ahead and put that on the calendar. Thank you again!

Janet Hill, Coordinator of the Event

Thank You

Dear Editor,

Just want to extend sincere appreciation to the men who fixed our washed out road from the recent storms over Christmas. Stephens Rd. in Blairsville suffered a creek overflow causing the road to wash out and the road to collapse.

It is our only way in and out of our neighborhood and also we were without water from a broken pipe. Thank you to the men working til 10 p.m. Christmas Eve and there again Christmas morning. We were grateful to have our water back on and the road available to travel.

Pamela Brix

Something Stupid

Dear Editor,

I remember growing up, whenever I did something stupid my dad would tell me: "Son, if your brain was in a bird it would fly backward." I would think to myself, but dad, you're the source of my gene pool.

If Obama, or Hillary read one of my letters would they think; but the voters elected me.

For years Ibrahim Al Qosi was housed at Gitmo, but Obama felt the best solution to the radical Islam threat to the US was to return him to the battlefield. Well "slap my head!" What a great strategy. Why not open the doors of all US prisons and return all convicted felons back to the streets again?

As the Obama administration claims it will keep potential terrorists out of the country, congressman Stephen Lynch, D-Mass., has revealed

See Huber, page 5A



Bandalong Litter Trap™ capturing & removing litter

Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council has administered many different types of projects and programs for the 13 counties in Northeast Georgia over the past years. One small program that Chest/Chatt has is the USDA Rural Development Revolving Loan program that helps small businesses that are in need of a small financial boost to get through tough times.

The theory is that we loan the funds out and as funds are paid back we can loan it out again to another worthy business and keep the funds revolving in the communities. One of our current customers is a small plastic manufacturing business in Cleveland that produces the Bandalong Litter Trap™ that is a contraption designed to float in waterways in order to capture litter before it flows further downstream. The litter trap uses the current to guide debris into the trap where it is captured and can be removed from the stream before it ends up in a lake or ocean. This floatable control technology continuously operates 365 days a year without any mechanical assistance to capture floating litter.

The Bandalong Litter Trap has been cleaning waterways in Australia and Asia for more than 15 years. It is pre-assembled offsite for efficient installation and manufactured in Cleveland, GA. There are no nets or fencing underneath, so fish and wildlife are unaffected by the traps. It uses anchors and cables to keep the Bandalong Litter Trap stationary in waterways. The litter trap requires 8" - 10" for flotation, and works effectively with a flow rate of eight to ten feet of water per second, but can be designed to withstand higher flow rates and is ideal for areas with current more than six feet wide. It is effective in rivers, streams, creeks, lakes, drainage culverts with tidal basins, ports, harbors, marinas, etc., and rises and falls with water levels and is ideal for tidal reaches. Litter that is caught in the trap will not be dislodged by wind, choppy currents or tides.

The Bandalong Litter Trap is now installed and operational on Gainesville's Flat Creek. According to an article in the *Gainesville Times*, "Flat Creek 'has long been a significant source of trash flowing into Lake Lanier and we are thrilled to see a trash trap being installed.'" Such a project will yield ecological and economic results.

Named on the 2015 Georgia Water Coalition's annual Dirty Dozen List, portions of the Chattahoochee River in Helen and White County are targeted areas of pollution caused by "tuber" litter. Gary Hopkins with Storm Water Systems, Inc. addressed the Helen City Com-

See Riley, page 5A

RC&D Executive Director

Frank Riley



The Raid

Aunt Mabel's son, Jimmy, went off to college after graduation. After his first semester at school in Birmingham he came home for Christmas. During the Christmas break he was able to visit with many of his old pals and cousins.

Two were his first cousins, Paul and Bud. The Holidays passed quickly and it would not be long before Jimmy would be back in Birmingham at school. But, the boys had yet to celebrate New Year's Day.

Each year New Year's Day was celebrated with many festive activities. One of which was the get together at the home of Tom May. Old Tom was a bootlegger who helped Duck McGuire by marketing his corn whiskey. Tom owned a house which had twin chimneys at either end of the structure. Each year a great big party was held where his customers from all around the community gathered to celebrate the coming of a new year. Duck's finest product, white lightning, was sampled by quite a few people from within the community.

Approximately 40-50 people were gathered at the May house for the festivities on New Year's Eve in 1957. The entire community knew about the event including Jimmy, Paul, Bud and their friends Tommy Trapp, William Shelnett and a few others. All the boys traveled to the party in two vehicles. One of which was a beat-up 1940 log truck and the other was Jimmy's new 1957 Chevy.

It was a dark and foggy night. So, the boys left their lights off and drove within 50 yards of the May house. They had tied a string of 250 cherry bombs together and Uncle Bud climbed to the top of the old chimney while William held the string of cherry bombs while he and the boys hid behind some holly bushes. Bud, placed a 10 foot length of string within the chimney and climbed back to the bottom of the house. When he got back to the bottom Jimmy screamed out, "Raid, this is the Police. Come out with your hands up".

William let go of the string of 250 cherry bombs. When they began to explode the clients of Tom May and Duck McGuire began to run out of the house. Some used the doors, however, Papa's brother, Pogy ran straight through the front window. The glass fell cutting him and then he fell from the porch into the holly bushes. After getting untangled from those stickers Uncle C. L. began to run through the yard where he came into contact with a 5 strand barbed wire fence. My great uncle must have been quite intoxicated because after bouncing off the fence he got up and ran into the fence again and again. After the fourth time he realized he needed to climb over the fence and then made his get away.

It was all the bunch of boys from Trapp-town could do to keep from laughing out loud.

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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