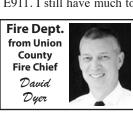
Opinions

The 911 Dispatcher

I am a firefighter/paramedic. I know fire, EMS, rescue, and emergency management. When I was given command of the E911 Communications Center, the only thing that I knew was that they dispatched calls and that I could talk to them on the radio. It was entirely new to me. Over a short period of time, I was given an extensive education on the workings of E911. I still have much to

After learning the highly technical equipment and complicated phone, radio, and addressing issues, I discovered the main and most important reason that we have an absolutely top-performing E911 center was due to the E911 dispatchers. Without these



dedicated, talented, and highly trained professionals, public safety would not be able to operate.

A dispatcher's life is similar to other public safety personnel; it is unusual. Dispatchers have a crazy work schedule and work hours. There are day shifts, night shifts, and shifts in between, each shift being 12 hours. It's 24/7/365 including all holidays and weekends

The dispatch center is considered the central hub for all communications and information for public safety. That includes local public works, emergency management, ambulance, fire, sheriff, and police. They also deal with state and federal agencies as well as the private sector and, of course, the public.

When a person first walks into the dispatch center, one of the first things that they notice are the six monitors at each dispatch station. Each monitor provides different information that the dispatcher uses to locate callers, dispatch calls, search for information and track the responding units. A misconception about the dispatcher is that they are just waiting on a call. However, there is very little down time. For the most part, they are constantly talking on the radio; dispatching calls; providing or collecting information; making phone calls... the list goes on.

One motor vehicle accident, for example, can result in multiple 911 calls at the same time. The dispatcher must collect the information and dispatch the appropriate units which may include law enforcement, fire and rescue, ambulance, GSP, and wrecker services. This all happens within a few minutes, and the dispatcher

See Dyer, page 5A

Habitat for Humanity

Times of difficulty spawn ideas, creativity, and goals. Although it can be pressing, it also gives insights into solutions.

Habitat is here to help with affordable housing, and in this climate of inflation, that has proven to be a challenge. With material costs high, and

skilled labor sparse, performing work for a charity is of low precedence in the industry. building Even if you can get at-cost material and



the family selected can qualify is a completely different obstacle. Within our income limits (USDA), a family's income cannot exceed \$54k in Union and \$49 in Towns. Calculating that into a mortgage, the margins are slim.

Habitat would like to thank Phil Freitag from Modern Mountain LLC. Phil stepped up and became a partner as a Habitat builder, and his dedication to the community and Habitat's mission is evident

"We as builders in our community have a re-See Habitat, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Re: "Immigration"

Dear Editor,

I take exception to the points and suggestions in a Jan. 4 letter regarding immigration issues. 1. We have no more authority to order

Mexico how to handle their immigration policies

Dan Reeves

In the grand scheme of things, it was a small act of defiance. A "first world problem" as some would say. But it speaks volumes about Dan Reeves.

Reeves was a native Georgian, raised in Americus. He spent 38 years in the National Football League as player and coach, including a stint with the Atlanta Falcons. His participa-

tion in nine Super Bowls speaks to his success. But football was not his highest priority in life. Reeves professed faith in

Christ at an early age. He found a way to express that faith through the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). "În 1965, when I was a



Everybody has one...

rookie for the Dallas Cowboys," he said, "Coach (Tom) Landry was one that helped start FCA. Since he was involved with it, I started doing some things with the FCA." FCA President Shane Williamson acknowledged Reeves' participation over the years, calling him "a man of integrity, an amazing coach, committed husband and father and a great partner and friend to FCA. Generations of players are better men, husbands, fathers and leaders due to the influence Coach Reeves has had on their lives.'

Now let's go behind the scenes to the night before Super Bowl XXII between Denver and Washington. Head coaches Reeves and Joe Gibbs planned to lead a Christian devotional for both teams' players interested in attending. NFL commissioner Tagliabue found out about it. "You can't do that," he said. "It just doesn't look right, with two teams that are going to play in the Super Bowl having a devotional the night before the game.' Reeves defied Tagliabue. "We were Christians before the Super Bowl," he explained later, "so we went ahead and did it. You still compete and go out and play as hard as you can the next day."

Reeves lived by and spoke about his priorities in life. "Jesus Christ is first, others are second, I am third." You can trace this to Jesus' words, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). This is a call to prioritize faith in Christ as the only way to enjoy a right standing with God. Another Reeves saying was, "You can tell the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him." That Christian ethic is rooted in this: "With humility of mind regard one another as more im-

See Fowler, page 5A

Commissioner's Questions

Union County Government has recently expanded garbage and recycling options for county residents with the addition of a new convenience center. This week's Q & A will address questions our offices have received concerning the state of garbage collection and recycling in Union County.

Q. Where are the garbage and recycling centers in the county?

A. Union County currently has three (3) recycling and bagged trash locations. They are: 348 Transfer Station Lane (transfer station) off Deep South Farm Rd; Hwy 325 at the corner of Hwy 515 (Convenience Center); and Convenience Way off Moc-



casin Road behind volunteer fire station 4 (Convenience Center). These locations provide east, west, and north Union County residents with nearby garbage disposal facilities.

Q. How much does it cost to drop off bagged trash?

A. Individual household trash up to 30 gallon bags is \$1.50 per bag when you drop off at one of the three locations. Individual household trash in bags larger than 30 gallons is \$1.75 per bag. It is very important to note that the bagged trash locations do not accept yard waste such as leaves, branches, and twigs

Q. How much does it cost to drop off recyclables?

A. Certain types of recyclables are accepted at Union County's recycle centers. There is no charge for these recyclables. More detailed recycling information will be made available in next week's Q & A.

Q. Can commercial garbage hauling trucks use the transfer station?

A. Yes, the Union County Transfer Station does have a commercial side for haulers. The price is \$57/ton, and minimum charge to cross the scales is \$20 for up to 700 pounds.

Q. Does Union County have a landfill?

A. No, Union County does not have a landfill. The bagged trash that is taken to the Union County transfer station and convenience centers is currently hauled off to Redbone Ridges' 610.19 acre landfill located in Gordon County, Georgia.

Q. What are the normal open hours of the transfer station and convenience centers?

See Paris, page 5A

Chamber of Commerce

The New Year is in full swing and we are looking forward to the bringing back all of the favorite events from last year and some new events that we think you will want to join us on!

New to 2023 is our quarterly Tourism Roundtable meetings that will provide a platform for our travel and

hospitality professionals to connect and network in order to contribute to the betterment of all our visitors' stays in



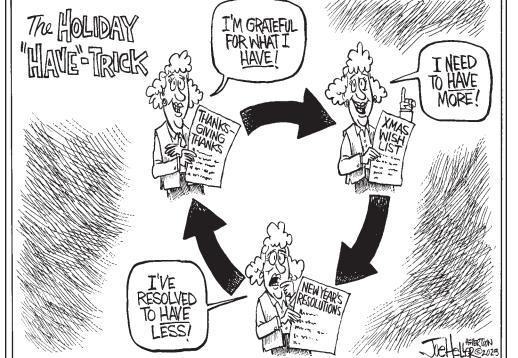
Blairsville-Union County. This should be a great opportunity for lodging, dining, wineries, attractions, history, art, entertainment, retail/outdoor, sports, and recreation members to gather and discuss what's up in Blairsville-Union County.

We would like to invite all non-profit Chamber members to attend a roundtable meeting to discuss our community calendars, fundraising opportunities, volunteer, and board needs as well as other topics relating to today's nonprofit organizations. We hope that this will open up new opportunities to work together, do more,

See Chamber, page 5A

It was Cold

It was cold. December 23-27 were some very cold days. One of the things that was unique about that cold was how early in winter it got cold, how low the temperature got, and how long the temperature stayed cold. Let's talk about the cold and the impact that it could have on plants. All plants have some level **UGA** extension of cold tolerance. Watching Some plants have more than others. and Working In perennial plants Jacob the amount of cold Williams tolerance that plant has depends on its level of dormancy. Plants that are 100% dormant can experience some very cold temperatures and not sustain any damage when they start to regrow. There are some things that can affect the level of dormancy that a plant has. Fluctuations in temperature affect dormancy. Plants do better in winter if it gets cold and stays cold. When the temperature goes up and down plants can get confused and think that spring is on its way. This is a common issue that we have compared to places further north. Plants that are stressed don't go into dormancy as easily either. Not enough water, disease, insect pests, not enough sunlight, and age are some of the things that can cause stress on plants. If you have plants that are experiencing stress their dormancy won't be as deep, leaving them more susceptible to freeze damage. Plants that are not in their correct USDA zone will not handle the cold as well. Freeze damage occurs when the temperature inside of plants is cold enough for ice crystals to form. This will break plant membranes causing that portion of the plant to dehydrate and die. Because the damage occurs inside the plant it can be difficult to know if your plants have freeze damage. In perennial plants with large trunk and branches you can start to look for splits in the coming weeks, as evidence of freeze damage. Some plants may look fine, but then as we get into summer have large brown patches in them. These are plants that had some damage to their xylem, and were able to grow until summer when their xylem had to move more water because the plant was transpiring more. So, what can you do if you have freeze damage? The best thing right now is to be observant. Watch to see if your plants start to exhibit symptoms. Depending on the where it occurred the plant might be able to self-prune and remove the damaged tissue. In some situations, it may be necessary to prune some dead wood out of the plant. In either case it is best to wait and let the plant fully show the symptoms before deciding to cut.



Letters to the Editor

Indoctrinating Children Dear Editor.

Recently the CDC released an LGBTQ publication entitled "LGBTQ Inclusivity in Schools: A Self-Assessment Tool." This document is designed for elementary, middle and high school teachers. The stated purpose of this document is to identify potential strategies to increase LGBTQ inclusivity in schools. What is so illogical about this policy is that studies have shown that less than 1% of the U.S. population identifies as transgender or non-binary. The CDC is a federal agency of the U.S. government whose mission is to prevent diseases and manage public health. So one has to wonder why is this agency promoting sexual and gender-identity policies aimed at school-age children? This attempt to influence school-age children is less a matter of public health and more an attempt to indoctrinate a carefully stated ideological point of view, designed to make children question their identity, their view of a family, and even their faith. Clearly the CDC is deviating from its mission. And we all recall that both the CDC and the NIH were incapable of providing accurate and timely information with respect to COVID and subsequent vaccines. After their failures with the COVID pandemic and now moving towards our children's sexuality, why should we trust them? The answer is, we shouldn't. Thus far, the phrase "follow the science" has been the most deceptive precept of the 21st century. And nowhere does that phrase completely miss the target more than in today's nonscientific promotions of sex, gender and "trans" matters. The radicalization of our educational system is taking place right before our very eyes. We should cringe with disgust against any government agency that distributes this kind of material, knowing full well that most parents clearly object to such indoctrination of their children.

Aunt Jenny Johnson

Louisa Elizabeth Jane Bates Johnson was born in 1826 in what is now Walker County, Alabama. It is said she moved to Lawrence County, Alabama, as a young girl. A few years later she met and married a boot maker and saddler by the name of Willis Brooks. He was 35 and she vas 14. He called his wife Jenny. The Around two of them raised The Farm eight kids and ran a roadhouse on the Mickey old Byler Road. Most of the

Happenings





labor, whether or not

than we had to order Mexico to pay for a wall. And as for them needing us more than we need them - please show us the enormous line of Americans applying to pick fruit and vegetables for a third of minimum wage. If you want fewer illegals, prosecute the farmers and produce corporations that are hiring them.

2. Infiltrating drug cartels is a bit more difficult than is seen on the average hour-long TV show. Enough said about that.

3. Please read the "Naturalization" section of U.S. Immigration policy. Should we deny someone who served voluntarily in our military the right to vote?

4. A 1,951-mile wall is an unsustainable myth. More than \$23 BILLION was raised "for the wall." That's not counting the \$2.5 billion Trump

See St. Lawrence, page 5A

Republicans Don't Be Democrats Dear Editor,

For the last six years the Democrats have investigated something or have been trying to impeach Trump. For the first four of the last six, all appointments were challenged and individuals investigated. Lies were told and the media outlets shouted "this is the truth." Hearing after hearing, media "talking heads" were telling what should happen to individuals and who should be held responsible. For the last two years Democrats have controlled the U.S. House, the U.S. Senate and the White House, which has resulted in policies that have left the country in its present state. Hearings continue and tax dollars keep being spent, and yet no one has lost a job. Only referrals can be made to the Department of Justice (DOJ) to see if action can be taken.

The midterm election is over. The people spoke. Democrats control the U.S. Senate. Republicans control the U.S. House of Representative. What will change? "Nothing" unless the Republicans decided not to "tax, spend and investigate" like the Democrats have done? Republicans are talking about opening investigations into this issue or that issue, for good reasons. They talk about getting to the bottom of each issue. Don't the Republicans know that there is no bottom to a quicksand swamp? Everything only gets covered over by the media so that the truth cannot get out? Washington D. C. is one big quicksand swamp that will only protect itself, no matter what. The media will not report any truth that does not agree

See **Burch**, page 5A

Tim Groza

Eye on the Ball

Dear Editor,

One has to ask why the mainstream news media has blown all out of proportion the events surrounding an NFL player of color, who suffered heart failure after colliding with another player in the televised game.

Is the non-stop news coverage, day-in and day-out, an attempt to whitewash America's health care system by shining a glaring light on one highpaid athlete's emergency response? Is the non-stop coverage meant to divert attention away from the declining health care system across America, where medical care is rated 48th in the world behind Slovenia? Is the media trying to cover up the declin-

See Jobson, page 5A

North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Derek Richards Todd Forrest Lowell Nicholson Kenneth West Shawn Jarrard Publisher/Owner General Manager/Editor Advertising Director Sports Editor Photographer Website: www.nganews.com • Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com • Mail: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

The North Georgia News is an independent and nonpartisan publication. As such, third-party views contained herein are not necessarily the opinions or positions of this newspaper, e.g. advertising, press releases, editorial content, perspectives expressed in articles covering local events, etc.



people from this section of northern Alabama were not keen on secession prior to the War that divided our country. When Alabama did secede from the Union, many of the people in this region decided to not take sides and just sit out the war. Their thinking was that this war would be a rich man's war and a poor man's fight. And they were correct in that thought. However, they were not correct in thinking they could just sit out the war.

The Confederacy enacted a draft law and the state of Alabama enacted a "tax-in-kind" law. The first law required young Southerners to serve in the military, and the second law stated that if a man could not pay his taxes in cash then his crops could be taken in lieu of money. Another law exempted young men from serving if they owned at least 20 slaves. These laws and regulations made sure that the War would come to the mountains of North Alabama and the Tennessee Valley.

The people of Winston, Franklin, and Lawrence Counties in northwestern Alabama naturally resisted these infringements upon their freedoms. These were poor people and they could barely feed their families during the winters much less an army of soldiers. And very few of these people owned slaves. So, the state had much trouble in the collection of tax money and getting young men from this area to serve in the military. There were many men which hid out in the woods around the roadhouse of the Brooks Family. And Willis and Jenny helped these men as much as possible.

The War finally found the Brooks family in 1863. The Home Guard came to the family home to question Willis Brooks, and they were also going to take young John and force him to join the fight for the Southern cause. The group of eight men bound Willis and placed a noose around his neck while the family watched in terror. The eight children helplessly watched as their Daddy was beaten and hung from a tree. The 17-year-old John could hide no more and burst from the house with a shotgun. He was shot dead, and his father was shot as he was left hanging from a tree as the eight men rode off



If you have fescue in pasture or for lawn, See Williams, page 5A

See Cummings, page 5A

Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - One Year \$45. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$5. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 24, 1988, at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. Phone: 706-745-6343 Fax: 706-745-1830 • P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, Georgia 30514

Habitat... continued from Page 4A

sponsibility to ensure deserving people have affordable shelter. It's a passion for me, and all worthy builders should use their resources, even if once, to achieve the goal of putting a deserving family in a home of their own."

When asked about his perspective on becoming a Habitat partner builder, Freitag states, "It has given me a deeper drive to use my resources to provide homes for the working class in our community."

As we wrap up our 25th Habitat home and give the keys to a well-deserved family in the next few months, let's go forward and look into serving our

community in better ways. It's the people of our community that make it what it is, and if we cannot show compassion, kindness, and dedication to helping the citizens of it, we are not doing it justice.

If every builder in the county was to commit to one Habitat build every few years, a difference could be made. A difference that would change our community for the better. Our community is only as good as we serve it. Making a positive contribution to our local community will open up the doors to better serve others within our community.

Burch... continued from Page 4A

with their Democrat ideology.

What are Republicans to do? Don't be Democrats. Stop paying congressional staffers to investigate an issue just so lawyers for that branch of government can say facts are not facts. No one is going to lose a job, and DOJ will not take a federal employee to court, so what's the point? Only we the taxpayers, (paying both sides) are the ones getting screwed. Republicans don't need to be Democrats by continuing the cycle of the last six years. I suggest Republicans stop the cycle of wasting time and taxpayers dollars and lead the nation to a better future.

I have a few suggestions as to what would be better.

The House of Representatives has the power of the purse. If the Republican majority wants to change things, they can use this power. With the Omnibus budget passing with the 7,000 pet projects funded in the \$1.7 trillion tax-and-spend budget, the Republicans have until October 2023 to use this power to lead the nation away from a Democrat tax, spend, and investigate agenda.

If you don't want Critical Race Theory pushed by the Department of Education don't include it in the department's budget. The same goes for biological males competing in fe-

male sports and other issues as well.

Since the Department of Energy permit issuing division can charge for permits, change the way they are funded from taxpayer funds to income generated by permitting fees.

Climate change has been the topic of studies for 50 years and only the ones that agree with the concept of climate change get the Governments grants. Why keep funding these biased studies? Save the tax dollars by defunding them.

The Bureau of Land Management has many income streams such as mineral leases and pastureland fees. Why are the taxpayers paying for the services? Make them self-funded. The same goes for the U.S. Forest Service.

If you don't like what is happening at the Southern border, defund the Border Agents for that section and block grant the funds to the state and local law enforcement to do the job.

Republicans, don't be Democrats. Stop wasting time and money investigating the swamp. Start leading by changing the funding sources of some agencies and defunding the programs of the swamp that do not lead to a more productive America.

George Burch

St. Lawrence... continued from Page 4A

diverted from military funds to wall funding. Only 27 miles of structure were ever actually built, and 210 miles of existing fence were reinforced (about half of which fell over in heavy winds). \$4.9 billion was embezzled by the likes of Paul Manafort and others. And \$9.6 billion remains "unaccounted for." Let's investigate that.

5. There are these things called "states' rights," state constitutions and municipality laws. We don't get to cherry pick when they're applicable.

6. I agree with the letter writer's one-parent citizenship idea. But along with his citizen-parent amendment, let's serious. Gary St. Lawrence also amend the U.S. Constitu-

tion to force all candidates for and members of Congress and officials at all levels of government to pass the exact same citizenship and U.S. Civics test that immigrants are required to pass, under the exact same conditions, with a mandatory 100% grade requirement. Failure to pass bars you from holding elected or appointed federal office.

And while we're at it, let's make insider trading, ignoring subpoenas, perjury, and lying to the public automatic felonies with mandatory, non-negotiable prison sentences.

If we're talking about getting better government, let's get

Cummings...continued from Page 4A with the rest of her sons all met

time in that old skull and died

Jenny Johnson is buried in an

old cemetery next to the old

Byler Road on the edge of

the Sipsey Wilderness. An old

story relates that if you walk

by there at midnight she will

come out of the ground and

talk with you. When my Uncle

was young, he and his friends

would prank their friends by

laying down in the sunken

down grave and then spreading

leaves over themselves. When

an unsuspecting person was led

up to the grave late at night and

told the story of Aunt Jenny

Johnson, the person laying in

the grave would reach out and

grab the leg of the person clos-

est to the grave. This was great

fun for kids back before we had

and his friends had plans to

scare some of their friends.

So, he went to the grave and

reached down to pull back the

leaves from the grave. As his

hand met the dry leaves, an-

other hand grabbed it and let

all later on that he thinks his

heart almost failed him, and he

never pulled that prank on any-

My young Uncle told us

out a war hoop.

one else ever again.

One night Uncle Bud

social media or video games.

You can see where Aunt

at the age of 98.

toward town.

Jenny and her children let down their lifeless father and tried to comfort young John Brooks which died a few minutes later. With vengeance on her mind, she made each of her sons place their hands into the blood of their father and brother. And each one swore that they would not rest until those eight men would meet the same fate as their Daddy.

Later in life, Jenny bragged that she'd wasted many a keg of powder on teaching her sons to shoot. Just a short time later in early 1864, Jenny and Mack, her eldest, ambushed the leader of these eight men of the Home Guard as he came out of his house. They dragged him into the woods and she removed his head and took it home. Throughout the rest of her life this skull was used as her wash basin. For the next 40 years her sons were in an all-out feud with the rest of the eight Home Guard which had killed her husband and son. Her boys followed the men all the way to Texas to enact their vengeance, and each one of the eight men died except one. He simply disappeared.

One of Jenny's daughters married a distant cousin of my Grandmother, a man by the name of Sam Baker. He along

Paris... continued from Page 4A

A. The commercial side of the transfer station is open Monday through Friday, 7 am – 3:00 pm and Saturday, 7:00 am – 12 noon. The other functions are also open Monday through Friday, 7:00 am – 3:00 pm; and Saturday, 7:00 am - 12:00 noon. The centers are closed on Sundays and certain holidays. The centers will not be open New Years Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

portant than yourselves. Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4).

Reeves enjoyed pointing out that his greatest achievement in high school was getting a freshman cheerleader, Pam White, to go on a date with him. In 2022 after 57 years of marriage, she watched him slip away from the land of the dying into the land of the living. He was 77.

Dyer... continued from Page 4A

must remain calm during all these stressful moments

Chamber...continued from Page 4A

and find ways to improve our organizations. We encourage an early death due to their vioyou to bring flyers for your lence. She outlived all of them. Later in life she became revered upcoming events, fundraisers, any other marketing materidue to her midwife skills. It is said that she brought close to als, or any info that you'd like 300 people into the world. But to share with the group. Bring she also took many out. As she as many of your board memwas laying on her deathbed, bers, volunteers, or key people she asked for her wash basin, that you'd like... Also, please, bring your ideas! which was brought to her, and she washed her hands one last

Success in 60 is back with Doug Smith from People Matter Counseling helping us learn who to hire to make your team the best team, how to get the right people in the right seats, and how to let the wrong ones off at the next bus stop. Join us as we continue to offer 60 minutes of business help from local experts to make your business more successful.

The young professional is poised to become an integral part of the modern workforce. bringing with them unique perspectives, and talent. Be sure to join us in a future column to learn what this looks like and the impact this will have on our community.

Remember to thank our local law enforcement that help us keep Life better in Blairsville!

Jobson...continued from Page 4A

ing state of health in America, and Wall Street investors? which has dropped by at least two years in life expectancy and even worse for Black and other minorities, especially for Native Americans?

Maybe, the media and the billionaire NFL owners are colluding to take peoples' eyes off the fact that last year over 70,000 Americans died from overdosing on fentanyl, and whereby mental heath care is a dismal failure right alongside the whole field of health care where over 80 million Americans lack adequate health insurance, but the insurance companies and the for-profit private hospital industry are racking up record profits for executives

Is that what bothers you, Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Public? Lance Jobson

Williams... continued from Page 4A

it likely did not sustain much damage. Tall fescue has a waxy layer that protects if from colder temperatures. In fescue after a freeze sugar content increases. This makes it ideal for a stockpiling and winter grazing.

If you have questions about freeze damage contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

of the hardest parts for some dispatchers is that they never see the end result of their work. They only hear the radio traffic and, when it is over, they move to the next call. E911 dispatchers are a critical part of public safety. They are the calm voice on the

phone when someone calls 911 on the worst day of their lives. They dispatch the appropriate units and provide the best information they can to help the people in the field. They are not as visible as other public safety but you can rest assured that they will always be there. If you see or know a dispatcher, please thank them for their service.

Union County Fire Department ~ Our Family Protecting Your Family ~

Fentanyl Holds America in its Grip as Overdose Deaths Soar

Synthetic opioids like fentanyl claim more than 150 lives every day in the United States, according to the CDC. And the DEA reports that a recent study of fake prescription drugs revealed that 6 out of 10 pills analyzed contained potentially lethal amounts of fentanyl.

Dr. Paul Christo, Associate Professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, has been on the frontlines battling the opioid crisis.

"Fentanyl is about 80 to 100 times more potent than morphine, so you can put that into perspective in terms of its danger," Dr. Christo explained in a recent interview.

Opioids began as an effective treatment for chronic pain, but its use quickly spiraled out of control.

"In the mid-1990s, more and more practitioners were using opioids as a firstline agent to reduce pain," Dr. Christo explained. "And that, unfortunately, led to an increase in the use of opioids

for chronic pain and probably increased the use for those who really didn't need them." There's

no question that the pandemic caused

a troubling upward trend in addiction disorders, and a recent study predicts an additional 1.2 million drug overdose deaths in the next decade, with people in the Black community bearing the brunt of the opioid epidemic.

Dr. Christo wants to remind those battling chronic pain or addiction that there is hope - and help - if they just know where to look for it.

"Don't give up if you have chronic pain," he said. "Because there is hope. We have nonopioid treatments that can be effective. Also don't give up if you have a substance use disorder. Talk to your primary care doc-

tor, talk to emergency room physicians ... SAMHSA is a good resource, too ... Take

the opportunity to use the resources that are available."

The opioid epidemic today progressed in three phases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The first involves deaths caused by prescription opioids, the second, an increase in heroin use, and the third, a surge in the use of synthetic opioids or fentanyl. Experts say the U.S. is right in the middle of the third phase of the epidemic, due to the increasing availability of fentanyl and increasing rates of overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids.