

Opinions

Everybody has one...

A Structure Fire

Union County Fire Department has responded to several structure fires in the last couple of weeks. We have had a great response from both the career staff and volunteer firefighters. Structure fires require thousands of gallons of water, multiple fire apparatus and a great deal of firefighters. They also require a coordinated response and some hard work to extinguish.

A structure fire is defined as any building that is involved in fire. This can include a home, business, commercial building, or outbuilding. We respond to many other incidents, but a structure fire is what most firefighters live for. It is why we join the fire department and it is where we can make the greatest difference. Firefighters do not want any building to burn but if it does happen, they want to respond and fight the fire.

When responding to a structure fire, we prioritize our actions based on the principles of Life safety, Incident stabilization, and Property conservation or "LIP." When we first arrive, we establish the need to perform search and rescue to get victims out of the building. Second, we control the fire to prevent further damage to the structure as well as the surrounding structures. Third, we try to preserve the structure and contents.

A structure fire is unique because the fire can create extreme conditions inside the structure. The enclosed structure holds in the smoke, flames, and heat. This creates an environment that is not survivable to enter without firefighter personal protective equipment or PPE. The temperatures can reach up to 1000 degrees at the ceiling and 300 degrees at the floor. Firefighter turnout gear and self-contained breathing apparatus protects the firefighter in the severe conditions.

These conditions also reduce visibility. This can happen very quickly. Victims in the building may get disoriented even in a building that they are familiar with. Firefighters must enter the structure under these low visibility conditions; search for victims; locate and extinguish the fire. This takes a lot of knowledge, skill, and physical effort.

For every firefighter that may enter the structure to search or fight the fire, there are at least five to six firefighters needed outside the structure for support. These support firefighters are performing

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Courage

Nelson Mandela said, "Courage is not the absence of fear but the triumph over it." I like a mathematical comparison: The demand for courage is directly proportional to the potential for danger. In either case, everyday dangers of various degrees and their resulting fears means each of us needs courage. To that end, I offer you three thoughts.

1. Courage must be renewed each day. You may have conquered fear yesterday, but it was back again today. Peter thought Jesus was a ghost walking on the sea, yet he ignored fear and stepped out of the boat. Moments later he sank. At Jesus' trial, Peter denied Jesus for fear of the authorities. A few months later Peter bravely accused people of killing their Messiah. When arrested, he declared, "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29). Years later Paul called Peter out for capitulating to critics of his non-religious diet (Gal. 2). Point being, yesterday's courage is not enough for today.

2. Courage magnifies other virtues. C.S. Lewis said, "Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point, at the point of highest virtue. A chastity or honesty or mercy, which yields to danger will be chaste or honest or merciful only on conditions." So, for example, when you are determined to be truthful even when it costs you, courage magnifies your honesty. It takes courage to forgive when you feel defensive. It takes courage to be patient with a friend who posts outrage on social media. It takes courage to be kind when you are disrespected, to be self-controlled when you want to let loose.

3. It takes courage to embrace Truth that others reject. As a child, David Nasser escaped with his family from Iran's revolution. Just after graduating from high school in Texas, Nasser read about Jesus calling Peter to walk on water. He sensed Jesus calling him. He believed, and received baptism knowing it would be an affront to his father. But eventually his family also believed, including his father. Nasser is now on staff at Liberty University. "I am the Truth," Jesus said (John 14:6). Today, as then, that claim is culturally offensive.

You need courage to renew your hold on virtue each day, not only in ultimate things, but in everyday life. It takes courage

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Who actually owns Union General Hospital?

A. Union General Hospital Authority was established through the laws of the State of Georgia as owner of the Hospital many years ago. The Authority Board is appointed by members from the city and county. Over 20 years ago the Union General Hospital Authority leased the property and assets to Union General Hospital, Inc. which now runs and operates the hospital assets.

Q. Who operates Union General Hospital?

A. Union General Hospital was leased to a private corporation, Union General Hospital, Inc. nearly 20 years ago. The Corporation is run by a Board of Directors in collaboration with the executive team. The Union General Hospital Authority board members also serve on the Union General Hospital, Inc. Board.

Q. How is the county involved with Union General Hospital operation?

A. The County, other than appointing three of the Union General Hospital, Inc. Board Members, does not have any operational control of the hospital, and more importantly, no financial liability for any of the facilities.

Q. What qualification must a person have to be considered for appointment to the Board of Directors of Union General Hospital?

A. Any person can be considered. Each appointment is made by me, the Commissioner, the Mayor or the Hospital. When there is an opening on the board, we present three possible candidates, and then the UGH, Inc. Board makes the final decision on which one of the three applicants to accept for the new board member. There are no specific guidelines for service. Normally, board members are appointed based on many factors including medical knowledge, financial experience, business expertise, reputation, or a heart for the area and the hospital.

Q. Are the Board Members paid for their service?

A. There is no financial compensation except for a meal prior to their regularly scheduled meeting, which can last anywhere from three to four hours.

Part II Continued Next Week

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

How to Have an Open Conversation with Your Children About Drugs and Drug Use

Have you ever stopped to consider what your child knows about drugs or drug use? Have you ever wondered who is teaching your child about drugs and drug use? If you are not having the conversation with them, who is?

The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

As parents, we sometimes choose to believe that our children know right from wrong and they would never use illicit drugs or participate in underage drinking because they just know better. After all, you have raised them right and they respond by meeting most of your expectations most of the time. Your child makes good grades, has "nice" friends, participates in sports or is active in their youth group at church and seems reasonably happy most of the time. You monitor all their extracurricular activities and follow

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"I sure feel safer since they fixed the school bus law. Let's hope the legislature leaves it alone this time."

Chamber of Commerce

This Thursday, February 21st, the Blairsville Union County Chamber of Commerce has the distinguished honor of recognizing stellar students at our Evening with the STARS banquet. Historically, the event has only honored selected students for their performance on the SAT. However, this year, we are partnering with Union County High School to recognize students that have achieved not only academically, but in other areas as well.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



The annual banquet, sponsored by Joyce Swanson of Woodmen Life, will be held in the ballroom at the Union County Community Center and catered by The View Grill. Students and their parents will be joined by notable community officials, business owners, members of the Union County School Board, as well as Chamber Ambassadors and board members.

As a Chamber we are invested in the growth of our community be it through economic development, health care, or education. We

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Letters to the Editor

Hail, Finlandia

Dear Editor,
In 1966, I visited Finland with my Finnish girlfriend for a vacation and to feed my wanderlust.

I was struck by the culture, their emphasis on education and their remarkable health care system. I bring this up because of growing numbers of strikes by teachers here. And Congress and state legislatures, led by Republicans, believe health care belongs to those who can afford it and refuses to properly fund education.

School starts for Finnish children at age 7, with graduation at age 19. No kindergarten, no pre-K. At age 11, every student takes a country-wide exam to determine their education direction, either pre-college, technical, or other fields. The pre-college program requires eight years of four languages and four years of four other languages. Options include beyond what you might expect (French, German, Russian, and English, both British and American) but languages we might consider more esoteric (Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, etc.) I remember walking into a local Helsinki maitokaukka (milk shop) and encountering a sales clerk who spoke perfect American English. Today's Finnish students are typically in first or second place in international competition, excelling in not just languages, but science and math. In fact, their high school education in the pre-college program equates to an undergraduate

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What Border Security?

RE: Sens. Johnny Isakson and David Perdue

So, you've hired a security company to protect your home, but you agree only to protect the front half. Does that make sense to you, Senators?

What kind of "bipartisan Democrat/RINO compromise" is only \$1.3B, instead of \$5B, for Border Security?

I could not be more disgusted with this poor excuse for a Senate. Go ahead, RINOs. Roll over. Again. Yet. Still. As always. Forever. The last President who cared for and about We, the Peasants, was Ronald Reagan. Now, we have a President who, in just two years, has reversed the damage of eight years of Obama/RINO collusion — and, what is the response from you RINOs? Undercut, undermine, subvert — and call it "bipartisan." It is a sham, a pretense; it is contrived, a pretense; it is fake; it is a bald-faced lie.

I will never vote for a Democrat, but I most certainly will not vote again for either Sen. Isakson or Sen. Perdue. My vote is too precious to be wasted.

George A. Mitchell

RC&D

Heaters: One Mistake from Disaster

It's that time of the year when we constantly turn up our heaters to try to drive away the damp winter chill. Wood heaters and fire places make the room warm and toasty but are only one escaping spark away from disaster.

Wood heaters seem most dangerous but in fact seemingly safe space heaters are the deadliest of all. While only 32 percent of home heating fires involve space heaters, they are involved in 79 percent of home heating fire deaths, according to a report released by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Heating equipment continues to be the second leading cause of home fires behind cooking and the second leading cause of home fire deaths behind smoking. NFPA is urging caution and asking the public to practice safe heating behaviors as the peak time for home heating fires continues, and half of all home heating fires usually happen in December, January, and February.

The leading factor contributing to space heater fires in general was heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattress, or bedding. Other leading factors contributing to home heater fires were failure to clean, which is principally related to creosote build-up in chimneys, and leaving an operating space heater unattended.

Whether your chimney supports a wood or coal stove or just a fireplace, be sure to have it cleaned and inspected at least once a year to reduce your risk of having a fire. Always turn off a portable space heater when you go to sleep or leave the room.

In 2017, U.S. fire departments responded to 66,500 home structure fires that involved heating equipment. These fires killed 580 people, injured another 1,850, and were responsible for \$608 million in direct property damage. NFPA offers the following safety tips. Use a sturdy, metal screen to prevent contact burns, which are even more common than flame burns. Keep things that can burn, such as paper, bedding, or furniture, at least 3 feet away from heating equipment. Use heating equipment that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.

Never use your oven for heating. Have a qualified professional install the equipment. Make sure all fuel-burning vented equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure the venting for exhaust is kept clear and unobstructed. This includes re-

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RC&D Executive Director
Frank Riley



The Funeral

My father is and has been a Baptist Preacher for many years. About the time I moved to Athens to attend the University of Georgia he was called to a church in Buena Vista, GA. There was a family in the church which was faithful in their attendance and giving.

However, the father was never in attendance. Dad was told the father of the family had left them years earlier and moved to Florida with another woman. A number of years later this man died and his family wanted to bring him back home to bury him.

Dad was asked to preach this man's funeral. The day of the funeral my father went to the funeral home before visitation began to meet with the family and the funeral director. The door was locked so he rang the doorbell which was answered by a fancy looking man attired as and looking like a butler. The door was opened and this fellow asked my Dad what he needed. Dad explained that he was here to preach a funeral. The very professional, prim and proper butler invited him into the building and led him down the hall to a private office.

Dad and Mom were told to stay in the room until this man returned. As the funeral director left the room the doorbell rang once more. Quickly, the funeral director walked down the hall to answer the door. My father didn't know it, but, the other family (from Florida) of the dead man was at the door.

Dad said that he waited in the office for 20-30 minutes all the while he couldn't help to hear a heated discussion going on down the hall. After another 20 minutes Dad walked out of the office and down to the parlor where the dead man's visitation was supposed to take place. Dad looked into room and this man's other family was in the room and removing the man from his casket. He hurriedly walked back down the hall to find the funeral director going into his office. The funeral director proceeded to scold my father for leaving the office to which he was assigned. Dad said, "Never mind me you better get down the hall and check on those people who are taking a man out of his casket". At this point the funeral director let out a whimper and ran down the hall to check on this incident.

Dad and Mom followed to watch. The funeral director approached the family which had by this point removed the man from the coffin and were in the process of removing his clothing. The funeral director asked the family why they were removing the dead man's clothing. One of the man's sons said, "Daddy, never liked wearing

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



Erosion Control

Georgia, along with much of the southeastern US, don't have a positive past with erosion. Repetitive cropping of cotton in the Piedmont resulted in seven inches of topsoil being washed away into the ocean. Soil takes hundreds of years to create, meaning that the loss of a soil is something that will be felt for generations. By the 1950s, new policies and programs began to change Georgia from endless cotton fields to forestland and other uses that are less susceptible to erosion. In the mountains, there is always a threat of erosion if we aren't proactive with protecting our landscape. Let's talk about why we should care about erosion and some things that you can do to make sure that your land isn't eroded away.

With the high amount of rainfall that we receive in the mountains, erosion caused by water is the biggest concern that we have, so I'll focus on that. Erosion is also caused by wind and gravity. According to the US Department of Agriculture 2 billion tons of topsoil are lost each year in the US because of erosion. The topsoil is the most nutrient rich part of the soil, and so plants rely heavily on it for growth. Therefore, losing topsoil is going to reduce your plant growth. Erosion can also lead to water quality issues. Not only does the topsoil muddy up our lakes and rivers, but also the nutrients that the topsoil is carrying can create algal blooms leading to decreased aquatic life. That is bad news for our lakes and the fish that inhabit them. Erosion can also create a hard pan that will repel water and increases surface runoff.

So let's talk about what you can do to reduce erosion. Firstly, construction makes soil very susceptible to erosion. Removing all the vegetation from the top of the soil leaves it open to the rainfall. Whenever possible in construction, surround the project site with hay bales and silt fences, preserve the already existing vegetation, and keep any piles of loose vegetation on gravel covered.

Keep stream banks covered with vegetation and trees. Those plant roots will solidify that stream bank so that the natural erosion process will be slowed down. It will keep the stream from widening. In gardens and around the home use mulch or compost when possible to protect bare soil. This will improve water infiltration into the soil and reduce runoff.

Minimizing impermeable surfaces such as the driveway or walkway on your property will also reduce erosion. Obviously, you will need some impermeable surfaces at your property, such as a roof for your house. For cases like that,

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Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Kenneth West
Publisher/Owner

Shawn Jarrard
Editor

Derek Richards
Advertising Director

Todd Forrest
Sports Editor

Mark Smith
Staff Writer

Lowell Nicholson
Photographer

Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - One Year \$40. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. 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. 10, 1981, 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

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