

Opinions

Everybody has one...

UGH Walkthroughs

Dealing with fires and emergencies can be difficult due to the many factors and unknowns. Critical actions must take place quickly to control the chaos. Being prepared is key to knowing what to do and how to do it. Being prepared requires knowledge, plans, and practice.

Last week Union County Fire Department conducted its annual walkthrough of Union General Hospital (UGH) and facilities. The purpose of this walkthrough was to familiarize each shift with the buildings, the emergency systems, and the emergency procedures of UGH staff. Knowing this information helps firefighters respond and work with UGH staff if there was an emergency.

The firefighters were escorted through the hospital by Brian Ensley, the Emergency Manager of UGH. We began with a view of the outside of the hospital to determine the best areas for apparatus placement and entrances for firefighters to enter the building. Inside the building, firefighters were shown the locations for the alarm panels, sprinkler systems, electricity shut off, the water shut off, and the various gas shut off locations.

The power control plant was reviewed to familiarize firefighters with the systems used to control the things such as electrical power, backup power, heating, cooling, ventilation, and water for the hospital. Tom Miller of UGH Engineering was able to explain the details of each system. These systems are complicated and can be extremely dangerous. Firefighters must be familiar with the various dangers and the procedures to shut these systems down in the event of a fire or emergency.

The most important was the alarm panels and fire sprinkler systems. The alarm panels were located and the procedure for operating each was reviewed. These panels can tell firefighters the area where the fire is located; how large the fire may be; and if the sprinklers are activated. Having this information quickly will determine the procedures for the hospital personnel as well as firefighters responding.

Firefighters also reviewed the fire sprinkler systems and how to operate each system. Firefighters must know how to determine if a sprinkler head has been activated and how to support that sprin-

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Invest in Happiness

Researchers have collected data since 1938 for the Harvard Study of Adult Development. The study is quite rare due to its longevity. It has been looking for answers to the simple question, "What makes a happy and meaningful life?"

The study follows the lives of 724 men from different socioeconomic backgrounds. In a Ted Talk the current director of the project, Robert Waldinger, summarizes the results by answering a practical question: "If you were to invest now in your best future self, where would you put your time and energy?" People live as though the answer is found in wealth accumulation or career ambition. The study data shows otherwise. "The good life is built," Waldinger says, "with good relationships."

The absence of relationships means pervasive loneliness, a toxic feeling. Poor quality relationships do not help because conflict is also pathological to the human body. But a trustworthy friendship is therapeutic. Applied to senior adults, good relationships over time make the pains of physical decline less depressing. Waldinger's takeaway is, "If you want to make one decision to ensure your health and happiness, it should be to cultivate warm relationships of all kinds."

To be intentional about relationships is to invest in health and happiness. Think more face time, less social media. Work at reconciliation. Set aside feuds and grudges. Say yes to gatherings. Even introverts benefit from having friends, even though it's more work for them.

The research affirms ancient wisdom in the Bible: relationships matter. But contrary to Waldinger's emphasis, that's not just a self-help formula. Your investment in relationships helps others find meaning in life, too. The most meaningful relationships are found in mutual faith. "What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also," John wrote, "so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His son Jesus Christ" (1 Jn. 1:3). When you meet a stranger who is a fellow believer, you have an instant connection as family.

C.S. Lewis connected relationship building with the Gold-

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. What do I need to do if my green address marker is missing or damaged?

A. The green address markers are especially important for aiding public safety personnel in finding your home or business quickly and efficiently in cases of emergency. Delivery vehicles are especially proud of Union County's system because it saves them time in locating the correct address. If your address marker is damaged or missing, please call the Union County 911 Mapping Office at 706-439-6056. They will place it back in the correct spot, and if it is damaged, they will bring a new one and replace the damaged one.

Q. Is it true that our green address number signs tell us how far our driveway entrance is along a particular road?

A. Yes, it is. Every numbering of 1000 equals 1 mile. If your address marker is 1000, it means that your address is 1 mile from the street entrance. If your address is 4725 Blue Ridge Highway, it means that you are located 4.725 miles (4 & 3/4 miles) from where the Blue Ridge Highway starts. So, if your address is 246, that means that you are located 0.246 miles (1/4 mile) from the street entrance. Another way your address is helpful is that even numbered residences are on the right side of the road and odd numbered residences are on the left side of the road. This makes it easy for public safety personnel to find your home. Once they arrive at your road or street, they instantly know when to start looking for your address marker, and they know on which side of the road you are located.

Q. Do all counties use the same 911 addressing system that Union County uses?

A. No, we are one of the few rural counties in the State of Georgia to have this. It was something I saw in one of my Commissioner classes many years ago as a suggestion. While it is seemingly a small thing that not many people notice, it is something that is particularly important for the safety of the public as well as for vehicles attempting home deliveries. Public safety is always number one for our citizens and this is a large, silent contributor to that. Additionally, Union County is often praised for our 911 Mapping System during 911 Mapping and GIS Conferences.

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

Open Letter to Lamar Paris

Dear Commissioner,

I was the lady that politely asked to speak with you in your office on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023, and you referenced me during the county meeting on Feb. 16. My name is Diana Barton, I am a tax-paying citizen of Union County. I am also a very involved citizen in local government, being on the county's volunteer Short-Term Rental Committee. I have loyally served in that capacity and have been a good asset to the committee, helping write the STR ordinance. I have given positive suggestions to things the county has done and have given feedback to the assistant county attorney. All my contact with the county has been in a positive, friendly manner.

When a citizen asked you a question in the county meeting on Feb. 16 on why we would give the Chamber of Commerce 90% of the collected revenue from Hotel-Motel Tax, you started to tell her that a lady came in and gave you information you were not aware of on the tax. That was me, again, my name is Diana Barton. Then you started to tell her "she was probably part of your group." You did stop yourself very quickly at the end of that sentence. I am here to assure you I am not part of any group as you put it! I may know some of the people in what you call "the group," but I can assure you I am a free thinker and a person that says what is on her mind and no one else's mind. I do my research and know my facts. You may not be aware, but I have actually corrected some mistaken facts about the county government in the county's favor. Know my name, Diana Barton. Do not lump me into a group. I am a tax-paying citizen of Union County.

You as a leader of our community need to show all the citizens of Union County respect. Each citizen that speaks at the end of our county meetings pays your salary, and that is something you seem to forget. We elected you to run the county, but we also elected you to listen to what we have to say and spend our money wisely. When you do not agree with a citizen's question, you give them a lecture, and when they speak up after your lecture, you tell them they are disrespecting you, yet you seem to feel it is OK to talk about your constituents in a demeaning manner. Every one of the citizens in Union County deserves the right to speak up and ask questions, and you as the elected commissioner of the citizens of Union County have a duty to be civil and answer the questions without becoming disrespectful, even if that citizen disagrees with you.

Your speech on the virtues of the Cham-

See Barton, page 5A

No Big Deal

Dear Editor,

It's funny how our society can talk about how the government is being run. Talk about all kinds of religions. We talk about all the sport teams from football, baseball, soccer, basketball and hockey, and movie stars, whom millions of people treat like gods. We talk about the economy and the stock market and talk about all the national disasters that plague our nation.

We talk about babies being aborted like it's no big deal. We talk daily of all kinds of shootings that destroys innocent lives. We talk about sin like it is no big deal either, and we wonder why our nation is declining morally and corruption and dishonesty run free without any way to stop it. The rampant increase of more and more earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and famines across the world.

All of these things and many more are spoken of in the bible regarding the latter days before the Lord Jesus returns. Why is He coming back? Because when He ascended into heaven from earth after His resurrection from the dead, He promised to come back someday and take His people to heaven.

When God makes a promise, He never breaks it, but will in His timing fulfill it to the

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Letters to the Editor

Out of Control Commissioner

Dear Editor,

At a recent Union County commissioner's meeting, the Sole Commissioner announced he is building a new third gym at a cost of nearly \$2 million. Add to this amount ongoing costs to county taxpayers (and future taxpayers) for maintenance, insurance, utilities, salaries, and other expenses. He mentioned the facility will also be used for the election board and is considering it for precinct voting.

The present courthouse has been sufficient for voting and certainly there are other seldom used buildings/rooms that could be used for the election board meetings. The commissioner's suggestion that the proposed new building could be used for precinct voting is outrageous. Why would voters want to travel outside of their precinct to vote?

This is irresponsible spending by the Sole Commissioner using the SPLOST tax as his "Hail Mary" building slush fund. It is time for Union County to have district representatives who know the specific needs of the people living in their districts.

The next time the County SPLOST tax comes on the ballot, taxpayers should vote NO on its renewal if only one commissioner is going to ultimately decide how the millions of

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On Christian Letters

Dear Editor,

Recent letters to the editor have complained about too many letters written about God/religion. My first reaction was to wonder why these letter writers don't just ignore those letters that they dislike. I myself am pretty ignorant of sports, so I don't read the sports pages, but it never occurred to me to ask the editor in a public forum to stop printing sports stories.

Why don't those who are offended by someone else's religion just ignore him/them? I think it is because of Wokism, that current philosophy that has ruined our country. Wokism proposes that man, not God, is the center of the universe. Man alone can decide what gender they should be. Man alone can control the weather. Man can punish other men who don't think the right way. It is not enough for the letter writers to stop reading about God. They don't want anyone else hearing about Him either. He threatens their worldview.

So, I urge the editor to keep on publishing letters from Christians who are not ashamed of the Lord. Such writers have the right to free speech, just as the complainers have the right to not listen to that speech.

Catherine Harper

Dan and Dennis

My Granny's brothers were the best fisherman I've ever known. They could catch a fish out of a mud hole. They also loved bird hunting and had some of the best bird dogs in North Alabama. During Sunday afternoon family gatherings they would sit on the front porch and regale the family with tales of hunting, fishing and natural wonders they had visited through the years.

Uncle Freeman was the quiet one that never got bent out of shape about anything. Dalton was the more traveled and easy going brother. Dan was one that loved to laugh and was the prankster of the group. Granny used to tell him, "Dan, I can see the devil dancing in your eyes." And then there was Uncle Dennis. He was a combination of all his brothers, and he had keen sense of smell and maybe even ESP. He was also bigger than his brothers because he loved to eat, especially cake.

Dennis would show up at the door of my grandparents' home very unexpectedly and for no apparent reason other than the fact that my grandmother had made a coconut cake. We could never figure out how he knew that she'd made the cake. But, each time a cake was baked and cooling Dennis would show up and ask for a piece. Granny even went as far as hiding the cakes she'd baked in a closet on a shelf. And yet Dennis would search the house until the cake was found.

All of the Hyde brothers were what we'd call Bee Charmers. Their Daddy, Clifford, would place a cap off a Coke bottle filled with sugar water on the ground and watch for honey bees coming to it. Then he would watch the direction in which the bee traveled after leaving the sugar water. The boys and their Daddy would walk for a distance in that direction and place another Coke cap on the ground. The process would be repeated until the Bee Tree was found. After finding the tree the boys and their Dad would rob the bees of their honey. Also, the Queen and hive would be captured and after a few days the whole hive would be transported back to the Hyde Farm at Liberty Hill. The men never used any protective equipment and were rarely stung during this process.

During one of these Bee Tree Honey robberies my Papa asked to go along. He was fascinated about his in-laws not getting stung by the honey bees. But, he wanted to only watch from a distance because was very fearful of being stung. He watched as the Hyde Family tracked the honeybees and stood a safe distance away as Dan cut the Bee Tree. He watched Dennis and

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Pollinator Gardening

Even though we've had some warmer temperatures lately, real spring is still a little way off. That means it's still a good time to dream and plan for your garden. Let's talk about pollinator gardening, and some of the things to include in a good pollinator garden.

Pollinators play a very important role in our food production and ecology. When we think about pollinators we often think of honeybees and butterflies. They are very important for pollination, but the truth is that there are also tons of other critters that are important pollinators. Bats, hummingbirds, native bees, wasps, moths, and more all play an important role in pollination. Since we have such a diverse group of pollinators, it's important that we have a diverse habitat in our pollinator garden for them.

Most pollinator plants like full sun. Full sun is at least eight hours of sun each day during the summer. If you don't have full sun in your spot then the plants that you choose will need to reflect that. Many pollinators like to spend some time basking in the sun with some protection from the wind. A soil test is also a good idea before starting a pollinator garden to see if you need to add any lime or fertilizer to the soil. A well-drained soil is also ideal.

Native plants are the best choice for your pollinator garden. They tend to be better adapted to our soils and our native pollinators. It's important to have a diversity of plants in your pollinator garden. Different flower shapes, flower colors, plant size, and plant shape are all important. It's important to have a diversity of plants so that you have blooms for Spring, Summer, and Fall.

There are a ton of different plants that you could put in a pollinator garden, so I can't mention them all here. It is important to make sure that the plants you choose are well suited to your site for sunlight, water drainage, and USDA zone. Here are some plants that I would recommend.

Some good spring blooming plants are wild indigo, Bee balm, lyre leaf sage, bearded tongue, tulip poplar, serviceberry, sweetshrub, eastern redbud, fringe tree, Carolina silverbell and bottlebrush buckeye. Many of these plants are more trees and shrubs. As I mentioned earlier you want a diversity of plant size too.

Summer blooming plants are easier to find that spring blooming. Cosmos, blackeyed Susan, coneflowers, coreopsis, St. John's wort, sweet pepperbush, milkweed, yarrow, passionflower, mountain mint, and sourwood. This list has a mixture of perennial and annual. Many pollinator

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Chamber of Commerce

I would like to thank Jay Markwalter, Executive Director of the Georgia Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (GACVB) for speaking last week to our Chamber members and community and giving an update on travel and tourism in Georgia. We appreciate his working at the Capital as an advocate for the state's (DMO's) destination marketing organizations and tourism industry professionals.

There are several bills being looked at in Atlanta that can influence the tourism industry not only in the state as a whole, but also that will affect our region. It was interesting to hear that it appears the areas in the mountains and along the coast are holding their own while other areas of the state are being severely impacted by the current economy.

It was also interesting to hear where our visitors are coming from. There were several foreign countries on the list, but I found the most interesting destination were those travelers from

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Q. Who do I notify if my road sign is missing?

A. First, it is against the law to steal or damage road markers or address signs. Also, road signs are just as important as the green address markers for public safety personnel. If your road sign is missing, immediately report it to the Union County 911 Mapping Office at 706-439-6056. Once it is re-

ported, a new sign will be made and installed. However, while there is no sign, 911 Dispatch can notify emergency personnel of the missing road sign in the event of an emergency on your road.

These markers serve as one example of the small things that we do for our citizens and residents that can make life a little more pleasant and safe.

Cummings...continued from Page 4A

Freeman retrieved the honey comb from the tree and then watched Dalton as he captured the queen bee. What he did not know was that while the queen was being captured Uncle Dennis caught a drone. Remember a drone is a male honey bee which cannot sting.

Finally, the boys and their father with their bucket of honey, walked back to my Papa. While they were admiring the honey comb the brothers grabbed Papa and Dennis released the drone bee inside his shirt. Papa later told me that he just knew he was about to be stung. "That ole bee was a buzzing around next to my bare skin and I was having a conniption." He ran toward home while taking off his clothes at the same time. After 100 yards he had nothing on but his drawers and brogan boots. As you can see Uncle Dennis was a prankster and loved a good laugh as long as it was on someone else.

After I came along we would go to visit my relatives in Alabama each summer. That trip was our vacation. Really, I can only remember going on one or two trips where we would go to the beach or, let's say, to Gatlinburgh. Most of our trips always led to the family farm. Each summer while visiting we would take a trip to Smith Lake near Haleyville where we would swim and fish until late in the evening. The whole family including Freeman, Dennis, Dan and Dalton were fishing in Smith Lake during the summer of 1969 when the tables were turned on Dennis Hyde.

A couple of days prior to our trip Dan and Dennis had gone to the local bait store up close to Liberty Hill to purchase some white-bellied spring lizards to use on the trip to the WeHunt pond. They requested two dozen of the lizards and headed out for an afternoon of fishing. Each man

rigged up his rod and reel with some bait and cast out into the pond. Then Dennis noticed that they had been slighted by the bait store. Instead of having 24 spring lizards there were only 15, and these were very small. Uncle Dennis went on a rant and threatened to go give the man at the bait store a whipping. Uncle Dan spent the next three hours trying to calm down his older brother. He promised to go by the store to get the fellow to make things right.

Two days later found us at Smith Lake, and I just knew we were going to catch a lot of fish. All of my Granny's brothers were there except Uncle Dennis. Finally, he showed up and walked down toward us. Uncle Dan looked at me and winked all while smiling like he was up to something. He told us all how he and Dennis had been cheated at the bait store. Then he told us how he had gone back to complain. Much to everyone's surprise the man had provided an extra dozen spring lizards to him to make up for the mistake before. Uncle Dennis mumbled out loud that he just couldn't believe it. So, Dan said, "Here look for yourself!"

As Dennis approached, his brother gingerly shook the large styrofoam minnow bucket which contained the spring lizards. Just as he began to lift off the lid his younger brother struck the bottom of the bucket and the largest black snake I have ever seen unraveled out of the bucket and landed on the older brother's arm. That was my first experience with colorful language. Dan turned and began to run through the woods along the lakeshore while his older brother gave chase. I laugh each time I remember the scene of a 250 pound man giving chase to his tall and wiry younger brother all while spitting out words I had never heard before.

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

Birmingham, AL. I guess it really shouldn't be surprising as I'm sure they just want to regain that sensation of being in a state that has won back-to-back National Championships! (Go Dawgs)

A very special moment at last week's meeting was when Jay recognized Candace Lee. Candace is the retired President of the Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce that was actually my mentor when I began with our Chamber back in 2018. Candace was very active in both the GACVB and the GACCE as well as numerous other tourism-related

organizations. She not only represented Towns County but served the entire North Georgia Region. She was honored with a Lifetime Membership into the GACVB. Congratulations Candace and we wish you all the best!

There are lots of fun events and happenings on the Chamber calendar so be sure to go to our Chamber website at visitblairsvillega.com and update your calendar, so you don't miss out!

Remember, a kind word and a simple smile helps make Life Better in Blairsville!

Barton...continued from Page 4A

ber of Commerce in the Feb. 16 meeting, listing all the good the chamber does for the citizens, seemed to be a defensive move, based on the fact that prior to this meeting, I asked Steve Rowe from the chamber if they filled out the state-required PCIS forms that list all the projects on which the chamber spends the 5% Hotel-Motel Tax. He refused to give a direct answer. Then, I came to your office and asked you if you were aware of that form. You seemed unaware, and if you received it from the chamber each year you would be aware of the form. The citizens of Union County should know where \$600,000-plus is spent.

I personally will be expecting to see an open records report from the chamber for 2022 with a completed list of all the tourism promotions the 5% tax was used on promoting

tourism in Union County as required by the state. These funds are not to be used for salaries or other chamber activities, only to directly support tourism.

Also in your speech you mentioned the need to support the chamber. As citizens, we have absolutely no duty to, as you say, support the chamber with our tax dollars. The chamber is supposed to support themselves as a nonprofit organization. We already give the chamber a huge break on their rent, and we give them a free county vehicle to drive around; how much more of our tax dollars are we supposed to give them for support?

Do not disrespect me or call me one of the group! Call me by my name. I expect nothing less from you. I have been respectful to you and expect nothing less from you in return.

Diana Barton

Williams... continued from Page 4A

plants are able to reseed themselves. For some, if you give them a little help dispersing the seed, they do even better.

Fall blooming plants are very important as pollinators try to store up that last bit of energy before the frost comes. Goldenrod, asters, joe-pye weed, and ironweed are all some important fall bloomers. Goldenrod, joe-pye weed, and ironweed have beautiful blooms and are often seen along the roadside.

These have the misfortune that they are thought of as weeds by some people, but really, they are great pollinator plants.

One challenge with native pollinator plants can be finding seed to plant. Work with other plant lover neighbors to see if they have plants that you like and if they would be willing to share seed with you. If you have questions about a pollinator garden contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

en Rule ("do unto others...") then writes, "but I cannot really carry it out til I love my neighbor as myself; and I cannot learn to love my neighbor as myself til I learn to love God; and I cannot learn to love God except by learning to obey Him." And what command do you obey? "This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His son Jesus Christ, and love one another" (1 Jn. 3:23). Faith, love, relationships, and meaning are all connected.

Once again, modern science confirms the Bible. God designed humans to live and flourish in community with Him and with our fellow travelers. When you make relationships a priority investment, you and your friends are happier and healthier.

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

kler with the fire engine. We must also know how to cut the water off to that sprinkler head after the fire is out to minimize water damage.

Union County Fire Department would like to thank the Union General Hospital, the staff, and the administration for allowing us to perform the walkthrough and for all the assistance that they provide to the department.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Harper...

continued from Page 4A

dollars will be spent with no input from the taxpayers. Perhaps taxpayers should demand SPLOST dollars only fund necessities such as public safety and security, not the purchase of real estate and construction of unnecessary buildings. In this time of economic hardships, we should be spending on needs, not wants. I can just see the Sole Commissioner licking his lips every time he sees more money to spend.

There's a reason why there are five district school board members and five Blairsville City Council members. One ideology and one voice is not a democracy.

Robert Harper

Combs...

continued from Page 4A

letter. Am I surprised at what is going on in our world? No, because I have read God's word that all these things must take place before His return.

So buckle your seat belts, folks, because more and more disasters will come quicker and faster as the day approaches.

You can't stop God's perfect plan from happening, because it was decreed when sin came into the world and only Almighty God holds the future of everything that He has created.

Yes, you can reject His salvation plan, but when you do, you sign your own destiny in eternity.

For God so loved the world... that means everyone ever born, God truly cares and loves them, but the choice has to be yours to make.

When people say they are offended by what I put in my articles about God's love for me, it doesn't hurt me as much as it hurts the heart of God, and that is a Big Deal to Him.

Frank F. Combs

Club 66 Veterans and Associates

Club 66 Veterans and Associates is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization located at 2641 State Hwy. 66, Young Harris, GA is a Veterans Thrift Store and a Club (Bar) downstairs.

The Thrift Store hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 10 AM - 4 PM. Club hours are Tuesday through Saturday opening at 2 PM. For more information call 706-379-3774.

The Thrift Store accepts gently used items and is looking for volunteers. We are not affiliated with any other organization.

Union County Lions Club Trash To Treasure



March 25, 2023 - 8 AM-1 PM
Union County Civic Center
165 Welborn Street
Blairsville, GA 30512

It's time for our next fundraiser. We raise funds to help those in our local community. We have people who sell yard sale items, candles, jewelry, crafts, tools, etc. The cost for a 4x6 space is \$15 each. Setup will be Friday, March 24th from 4 PM-6 PM. You can also set up Saturday from 7 AM-8 AM. If you would like to be a vendor at our next event or have additional questions, please contact Chasity Miller at 706-897-5467 or chasrcs@gmail.com. We hope to see you there.