Opinions

Everybody has one...

Downtown Traffic

It goes without saying that all of us at some point in time have found ourselves in a hurry to get somewhere. Like you, I've often found myself driving faster than I should, simply to save a few minutes of time. At the end of the day, however, those few minutes saved aren't worth the associated risks.

As a life-long resident of Blairsville, I have witnessed tremendous growth in our community.

And while I am proud of the economic vitality that our Downtown has enjoyed over the years, it goes without saying that our city streets have become congested when compared to just a few years ago.



The "heart" of our community is, and will always be, our Town Square. Since its inception, the Square has been a crossroads to connect residents and visitors alike. In the early days, the old courthouse was the epicenter of all things legal; today, the courthouse serves as a vital link to our past and hosts numerous cultural and musical events throughout the year. I am genuinely grateful that our Town Square continues to thrive and bring so many people together.

As many of you are probably aware, those who planned the layout of our streets so many years ago could never have imagined the growth we're seeing today. With the expansion of Highway 515 through Blairsville in the '80s, it laid the groundwork for what we're currently experiencing. Even as recently as the '90s, our city streets weren't nearly as busy as they are today. While there are a number of factors contributing to the rapid growth of our area, the fact remains that traffic will continue to increase in the coming years, leaving the City of Blairsville with no choice but to implement traffic-calming measures to reduce the risk of loss of life and

Of particular concern is our Town Square and the surrounding areas. We recognize the enormous economic benefit derived from this destination, as it is both a place of commerce and a source of entertainment for our locals and visitors. Our downtown merchants and restaurateurs have invested a great deal of time, resources and energy into our community by offering unique shopping and dining experiences that have become a regional draw. It is our responsibility as stewards of the city to ensure that the gains we have made over

See Conley, page 5A

The Way Back

From Columbine (1999) to Sandy Hook (2012) and now Uvalde, our nation's schoolchildren are under attack by young men. Can we find our way back from this insanity? Not every problem has a political solution. To be sure, gun

control vs. school hardening is a political debate that will continue. But it's a debate about political band aids when a tourniquet is needed. It's an illusion to think poli-

tics can address the cultural trauma. All Things An election won't fix this be-New cause politics is not the reason young Wayne

shooters are psychotic, murderous and suicidal. Chuck Colson often observed that politics is downstream from culture. So, if the problem of mass shootings is not because of political failure, perhaps it is because the culture has lost something.

Psychiatrist and cultural critic Iain McGilchrist says we are losing a sense of belonging and personal security. In "The Matter with Things," he lists six ways the culture contributes to that loss. "If you had set out to destroy the happiness and stability of a people," he writes, "it would have been hard to improve on our current formula: (1) remove yourself as far as possible from the natural world; (2) repudiate the continuity of your culture; (3) believe you are wise enough to do whatever you happen to want and not only get away with it, but have a right to it — and a right to silence those who disagree; (4) minimize the role played by a common body of belief; (5) actively attack and dismantle every social structure as a potential source of oppression; and (6) reject the idea of a transcendent set of values.

To help you unpack this, think addictive social media and identity confusion. Replace common values with individual preferences, and natural family with transient relationships. Define oppressors by race and sex. Call dissent "hate." Undermine our institutions. And ultimately, exchange that great cornerstone of Western Civilization, Christian faith and morality, for tolerance

Yet you are not without hope for finding meaning and happiness in this cultural moment. For anyone looking, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). He offers to connect you to the Father. In that relationship you find wisdom

See **Fowler**, page 5A

Commissioner's Questions

Short-Term Rentals – Part 2

Q. I have a short-term rental near me. Occasionally, there are some issues with noise or with too many vehicles in a given area. Can the county help? A. First, I want Union County residents to know that we

are not ignoring these issues. We really have not received many complaints about short-term rentals, but we are paying attention to any information shared by Union Coun-County ty residents. Our current ordinance Commissioner was ahead of its time back in 2013, but it needs to be updated to address Lamar the concerns that are currently being

Paris

ever, we can't provide a perfect solution by making a snap judgement decision about individuals' personal property.

faced by our full-time citizens. How-

Very recently, I was contacted by other counties who are experiencing the same issues. In partial response, I hosted Commissioners, County Managers, and Administrators from eight north Georgia counties at a meeting specifically to discuss this topic. It became evident that this is not just a Union County concern – it's a tourist location concern. Nonetheless, we are now looking at ordinance options to better protect our full-timers. We hear you, and we are doing the work to identify the best solutions for the

Q. Is the Union County Government against having

A. We are not against having short-term rentals in Union County as it is legal for individuals to have them. It also provides a reasonable alternative for many people to visit the county and enjoy what we have to offer. What we ask of these visitors is that 1) rental property be treated with respect and that 2) neighborhoods and property neighbors be treated with the same respect with regards to such things as noise, parking, and land use.

address the Short-Term Rental situation in Union County?

A. Yes, my office has formed a committee consisting of people who are impacted in some way by short-term rentals. The purpose for this committee is to open dialogue about variables associated with this topic and more specifically to help create a

See Paris, page 5A

Q. Can you be more specific about what you are doing to

Habitat for Humanity

We're in the heat of summer and are eagerly watching the Habitat Home build for Brandy Snow begin to come together. We are also taking new applications for any homeowners in need of home repairs through our Helping Hands projects. We are always raising funds in the ReStore to fund all of these

projects. We appreciate any donations that you'd like to give that are gently used. As these donations get brought in, we price them based



on usefulness and condition. We are thankful for donations and receive them Monday through Saturday anytime between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

Summer is a busy time for us, as we have plans to be involved in local events and events of our own. Habitat for Humanity is always looking to partner with community events and outreach, and in the process we gain more exposure, more volunteers, and are given more opportunities to help homeowners in need and people in need of

See Habitat, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Re: "Gun Control"

I'll keep this one short, friends and neighbors. I love it when people write in thinking they have a vast knowledge of history. More often than not they are sorely lacking in their information of historical events.

One premise a letter writer forwarded last week was that "when the Second Amendment was written, the States did not have a military organization for their defense and their advanced weapons were principally cannons, muskets, flintlock pistols and swords/knives." Really? Well, let me inform you of several such histori-

1. In our own state, the Georgia Militia existed from 1733-1879, so to say there were no "military organizations" for defense is wrong.

2. The Girandoni Air Rifle. The letter writer implies that one reason the Second Amendment is outdated is because the primary firearms of that time were single-shot muzzle-loading black powder muskets and rifles. Wrong! The Girandoni Air Rifle was a .46 or .51 caliber repeating air rifle with an internal magazine that held 20-22 rounds depending on the caliber in which it was chambered. Now here's the hook. The Second Amendment was ratified in 1791. The Girandoni Air Rifle was invented in, wait for it, 1779! That was a full 12 years before the Second Amendment. So it's not plausible and is wrong to say our forefathers had no idea more advanced weapons were coming in the future. They knew, which is why we have the Second Amendment. Lewis & Clark even had one or two Girandoni Air Rifles with them as they explored the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. An armed public are citizens. A disarmed public are subjects!

As far as the "mass" killings go, thanks to the liberal indoctrination of our public education system by the NEA and Marxist teachers unions, several generations of American children have been raised with no regard for human life. After all, the Ten Commandments are banned from public schools and aren't there to suggest common sense guidelines such as "Thou Shall Not Kill" and "Thou Shall Not Steal." Why should anyone have any regard for any human life when abortions (murder of inconvenient or unwanted babies) are readily available everywhere at most anytime. Margaret Sanger — Hillary Clinton's hero, by the way - was an avowed racist and created Planned Parenthood to destroy the Black Race. Don't believe me? Look it up! You will never stop mass killings from happening unless you address what's wrong with the human heart and mind. There is true evil in this world, though liberals only think the evil ones are Republicans. Funny how no card-carrying member of the

See Rains, page 5A



Feral or wild hogs are not something most of us usually think about until one morning we look out at our manicured yard or hay field and see that and it looks like a bulldozer had moved across it during the night.

Nature's Bulldozers

Wild boar, feral swine, and Eurasian

are members of the same biological species - Sus scrofa. Pigs, or swine, were first introduced to North America by Spanish explorers in the



early 16th century. Some escaped; some were released intentionally. The actions of these explorers led to the number of wild pigs now present in America. Pigs were initially favored by early North American settlers because of their lack of required care. Settlers raised pigs with free-range practices for centuries.

In the early 1900s, the introduction of the Eurasian species of boar for sport hunting resulted in this group's interbreeding with freeranging domestic pigs already present. Due to the cross breeding that occurred and unique features of pig biology, the pig population expanded considerably. This caused immeasurable economic and ecologic damage across the United States. Due to the extent of interbreeding between these two subspecies, the Eurasian boar and free-ranging domestic pig are now considered by most experts to be the same animal - the wild or feral pig.

Unclaimed free ranging populations of wild pigs quickly increased and spread throughout the United States. Major contributing factors for the success of wild pigs are short reproductive cycles and large litter sizes. Since these animals descended from domestic stock, they were selected for their high reproductive potential. Wild pigs are the most fertile large mammal in existence. They have a gestation period of 112- 115 days, or about 16 weeks. Females can begin reproducing at six months of age. A typical sow will give birth to two litters per year consisting of 4 to 6 piglets per litter. Under the right conditions, a sow may produce up to 13 piglets in one litter. Do the math, one sow can contribute to over 50 pigs per year when her offspring start multiplying, because she can produce 4 to 13 piglets every

115 days! While large litters were an ideal trait in a domestic hog, this characteristic has persisted in feral strains and is a major cofactor in the explosion of the wild pig population. Wild pigs travel in groups called sounders consisting of two or three related adult females and their offspring. Males, especially larger boars,

See Riley, page 5A

A Blacksmith Shop

As you may have heard, the Union County Farmers Market is in the process of developing a replica of what a farmstead might have looked like in the 1890s. We began with the reconstruction of the old Hunter/England House. Since then, we have added a tobacco drying barn, a chicken

coop, and last year we constructed what will soon become a Blacksmith Shop. Michael Thompson from up in the north end of the county



WERE

HOME.

donated his ancestor's old tools from an old Blacksmith Shop. The ancestor was Ocean Tate. I have heard that this man had enough strength to pick up an old cast iron stove and walk around a room with it. Supposedly, a friendly wager was made, wherein two younger men could barely lift it off the floor. After setting the stove down, Ocean walked up to the stove, picked it up and walked across the

Tate's tools are now in our new Blacksmith Shop along with some other items. These include a working forge and vent donated by Rick Davenport along with various hammers and wagon parts. He also gave us some ideas about how to arrange the interior of the shop. We also have a large bellows donated by Judith Rich. This bellows is mounted on a wall and is operated by pulling a rope connected to the handle. Paul Reeves gave us many old wagon hubs and parts to display within the shop.

My Dad worked for his grandfather, Lon Cummings, and we have a number of his old tools, including a harness, hay hook and sharpening wheel. Dad told me that he was paid 25 cents per day to turn the blower handle on the forge. That was big money in 1944, but, not big enough to cause my Dad to pursue a career in blacksmithing.

Years ago, when my Papa was a young man, he spent some time with his own grandfather, which was my great-great-grandfather. He too was a blacksmith. Papa was watching him make a weld. This procedure is accomplished by heating the ends of two pieces of metal to just the right temperature. At the correct time and temperature, the two pieces of metal are stuck together, and each end of the metal is struck with a hammer. If successful, the two pieces become one. Papa has told me that his grandfather could complete the above procedure without leaving a noticeable seam at the weld.

During this procedure, two of Papa's cousins walked into the blacksmith shop and began to watch their grandfather. The old man looked up and asked one of his grandsons to fetch him his little hammer. The boy told him to get it himself and took off running. The old man picked up

See Cummings, page 5A

Chamber of Commerce After an extended absence, the Blairsville

Scottish Festival & Highland Games is back in a big way. What a great crowd and a wonderful venue for the return of this Festival. Thanks to the Committee and all the workers and volunteers that help make the return of the Festival such a success. Blairsville

We are now away from the annual July 4th Fireworks display, and we are excited about this year's event. One issue that has been





circulating is about parking. THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE PARKING THIS YEAR! As a matter of fact, there is probably more FREE parking this year due to the lifting of COVID restrictions. There will be more churches and organizations present with fun activities for the entire family. A lot of vendors will be available on both the Meeks Park side and on the North Georgia Tech Campus with your favorite food, ice cream or other snacks. First Methodist Church will also have food, fun and parking as in previous years.

See Chamber, page 5A

Common Vegetable Diseases

It is prime time for the early vegetable harvest for gardeners and farmers alike in North Georgia. However, if you venture out to the garden one cool dewy morning and notice that your plants have not fared as well as you expected. here are a few common ailments that may be

causing trouble. In tomatoes, two of the most common reported ailments are blossom end rot and late tomato blight. Blossom end rot is



not actually a disease, rather it is a nutrient defi-

ciency common in tomatoes. It occurs when the tomato fruit does not get enough calcium to aid its growth. The fruit becomes soft at the blossom end, and is then susceptible to a secondary infection, causing loss of the fruit. The best way to fix this problem is to add calcium to the soil, using products like lime or gypsum prior to planting, or by calcium nitrate fertilizer after the problem is noticed. If you have blossom end rot, a soil test before applying fertilizer is a good idea to see how much calcium should be added to the soil.

Late blight will also begin to affect tomatoes this time of year as the growing season is at its warmest. It is caused by the Phytophthora fungus. Signs of late blight are yellowing to brown dead spots on the leaves, stems and fruit of tomatoes. Plants that are treated earlier in the progression of this disease are likely to survive it, although they may not produce as well. The best treatment for late blight is to remove plants that have excessive damage (and be sure to burn them or tie them in a trash bag and throw them away) and spray the rest of them with a fungicide listed for late blight on tomatoes, such as Daconil or Bravo (chlorothalonil is the active ingredient).

On vegetables like squash, cucumbers, gourds, zucchini, beans and peas, mildew is a common disease that slows production and makes the plant less healthy. There are two common types in North Georgia: Powdery and Downy mildew. Powdery mildew is identified by large gray-white patches on the upper side of the leaves, whereas downy mildew causes many smaller light green to yellow patches on the leaves. The treatment for both diseases is the same: Remove heavily damaged plants to the burn pile or garbage, and spray with Daconil or

Bravo (chlorothalonil is the active ingredient). Before using, any pesticide always read the label and follow its instructions fully. The

Another problem during extended wet periods of the growing season is root rot. This disease can affect most plants, but there are differ-

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short-term rental ordinance that will protect the rights of all property owners: Those who wish to own short-term rental properties and those who are impacted by short-term rental properties. The committee is made of short-term rental owners, neighbors of rentals, land developers, champions of tourism, and residents who are simply concerned about preserving Union County's rural

Q. This topic is very important to me. I moved here to enjoy all the wonderful assets found in Union County. I'm concerned about the future of our community. Will you keep us updated?

A. Absolutely! More information will be provided as a short-term rental ordinance is developed. This topic is certainly one that we will revisit.

Habitat... continued from Page 4A

Thanks to all of your generous donations to the Re-Store throughout the year, we have accumulated an incredible supply of Christmas items. We have decided to host our first Christmas in July Sale! The news gets better, as we have decided to run the sale for a week! From July 11th – July 15th Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., we will be outdoors enjoying the summer sun while shopping Christmas items.

We are so excited for this event and hope to see a huge turn out from our community as we put our entire Christmas inventory on sale. Grab all your Christmas décor wants and needs before the crazy Christmas season. We will have tents outside of the ReStore filled with all things Christmas. If you are a regular shopper at the ReStore, you may remember seeing stacks of totes across the

back wall of our store; those are all Christmas items! We are going to pull those down, and we hope to sell all of it! You are in for a treat shopping yard décor, ornaments, gifts, mementos, lights and decorations of all kinds.

Save the date, because it is going to be an event you won't want to miss. As always, all proceeds go toward Helping Hands projects, Habitat operations, and the Habitat home builds that we have.

Be sure to follow us on "Facebook at Habitat for Humanity of Towns & Union Counties" for updates on the daily ReStore sales, new arrivals and events! Check every morning for the daily sales on our page and stay up to date on events like this one, the "Christmas in July Sale," when you add us on Facebook. You never know what you'll find at the Habitat ReStore.

Conley... continued from Page 4A

the years aren't squandered by ignoring the reality that our streets are at times too crowded and downright unfriendly to pedestrians.

There are currently five crosswalks serving the Town Square, and we've recently installed two more to encourage walkability of our downtown. One of the crosswalks is located along Haralson Street and connects our newly paved parking lot to not only the Town Square, but to local favorites such as Cook's Country Kitchen. Another of the crosswalks connects the parking lot at Blairsville's City Hall on Blue Ridge Street to the shops and restaurants at Merchants

These crosswalks are just one part of our effort to slow down motorists in our downtown. By providing a safe location for pedestrians to cross our streets and thus explore our downtown, our businesses benefit from the increased foot traffic

In addition to the cross-walks, we're also adding and replacing sidewalks as the city's finances allow. Providing our community members and tourists with safe, well-lit places to walk helps reduce the number of vehicles on our roads. We will continue to seek ways to help alleviate the congestion in-and-around the Town

Square, as it is paramount to a healthy and thriving downtown community.

Another "traffic calming" measure we've implemented this year can be found along Cleveland Street and Blue Ridge Street. You may have noticed them... they are great reminders in that they clock your speed and flash "Slow Down" if you're going too fast! These solar-powered signs are strategically placed to give you a chance to slow down before you approach the heart of the Town Square. They also serve as a reminder that you're entering an area of heavy traffic and to be aware of your surroundings.

While the above may not address every issue related to traffic, it is an earnest start to what is obviously a complex problem facing many communities of our size. We are asking of you, the reader, to do your part when visiting the heart of the downtown by being patient and kind to those using our city streets. The elderly may need more time to cross the street, so don't honk. Visitors who've never used a roundabout may test your patience, choose to be kind. And most importantly, remind yourself to slow down and enjoy what makes our downtown such a warm and

Riley... continued from Page 4A

are often solitary. It is common for members of a sounder to exhibit cooperative nursing, during which piglets from all the females will suckle from one sow while the others stand watch for predators. This group behavior can be a considered a contributing factor to low mortality rates of the wild pig. Another trait that has made wild pigs so successful is the ability to utilize a variety of habitats.

These animals are highly adaptable and inhabit a variety of habitats, including mountainous areas, forests, salt and brackish swamps and marshes, old growth pinelands, semiarid brush habitats, as well as many other habitat types. Since their introduction to North America, wild pigs have colonized more than forty of the fifty states. Wild pig populations are large and growing; their populations are present at uncontrollable densities in some areas, especially in the

southeastern states. In addition to other factors, the wide-ranging diet of wild pigs has helped make this species incredibly adaptable. Wild pigs are opportunistic omnivores. They will consume almost anything from agriculture crops and mast crops, such as acorns and fruit, to grub worms and dead animals, also known as carrion. Though not considered active predators, they will consume fawns, livestock, and the eggs of ground nesting birds in addition to vegetation, agricultural crops, and other food items. The roots of a vegetative food source will often be consumed when the leafy portion or fruits/nuts of the plant are no longer available. During mast years, acorns, beach nuts,

pecans, and soft fruit are con-

sumed throughout the fall and

winter. Earthworms make up

approximately fifty to ninety

percent of the carnivorous portion of a wild pig's diet, depending on availability and the region inhabited. With their tough snouts and over-developed neck muscles, wild pigs can be considered "nature's bulldozers."

The most common form of damage caused by pigs is ground disruption because of hunting for food. Destruction of crops, yards of homeowners, and natural habitat is of concern and damage of a great magnitude can be created overnight. Wild hogs live all around us on higher elevations

as well as in the valleys.

A couple of years ago on my farm, wild hogs destroyed the last acre of corn that the bears had left for later and while they were at it, they destroyed the church cemetery all in one weekend. Wild hogs are not just wreaking havoc in farmer's fields, but also in home-owner's yards in some of the communities right here in the mountains, so nothing is safe from these ravaging gangs

of nature's bulldozers.

ChestChatt RC&D and the Blue Ridge Soil & Water Conservation District now have feral hog traps for landowners to have set up on their property. For more information contact Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D at info.ccrcd@gmail.com or on Facebook, Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D.

DAV Van transport to VAMC Atlanta

The DAV Van, sponsored by DAV Chapter 28, Blue Ridge, started one day a week transportation to the VAMC Atlanta every Tuesday. If you need a ride call John at 706-851-5204 to make a reservation. The van meets each Tuesday at the Veterans Conference Center in Blue Ridge.

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

the boy. It missed and struck a pole the boy had been leaning against. When the boy turned to look back at his grandfather, everybody noticed that he had lost all the color in his face. He was visibly shaken. John Cummings looked at his grandson and said, "My sons never sassed me, and I will not stand by and let my grandsons sass me either." The old man then turned and went back to working as if nothing had ever happened. Papa never knew whether his grandfather missed his cousin on purpose. But, none of them ever talked back to their grandfather again.

One day back in March, I called on Bobby Jackson to ask him about his grandfather's old shop in town. I found that Marion Jackson operated his Blacksmith Shop across the street from where the Circle K is located on US Highway 129 South and behind the veterinarian's office. I also found that there is an old mine shaft that was located close to this shop where some people used to hide from Yankee Soldiers during the War of Northern Aggression. I have been told the old mine shaft went very close to the Old Courthouse and that another shaft crossed under 129 close to the previously mentioned Circle K. Over the years it caved in under a couple of roads and repairs were made

Fowler... continued from Page 4A

and purpose. Christ is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). You "are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:10). You are valued, and not here by accident. He has determined your time and location, "that they would seek God...and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us." (Acts 17:27).

The killing of children shouts a culture's failures. Reject the noise and insanity. Believe in and walk with your Savior who loves you. Join your fellow travelers who know the Way.

Williams...

continued from Page 4A

ent groups of fungi that cause it depending on the plant. Common symptoms include an unhealthy-looking plant, combined with gummy, black roots, and a stem that is easily broken from the ground at the

The reason the infection begins is usually due to excess moisture in the soil, or inadequate drainage of the soil. For the vegetable garden, the most effective way to control it is to prevent it.

If you planted something there last year that got it, plant that thing in a drier area of the garden next year. If you use mulch, while it has many benefits, it may be holding too much moisture in the soil

much moisture in the soil.

When you water plants, remember to water deeply and less frequently, and let the soil surface become dry for a day

or two before watering again.

If you suspect any of these ailments to be troubling your garden, or have any other questions or concerns related to agriculture, landscape or natural resources, please feel free to contact your County Extension office or email Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Rains...

continued from Page 4A

NRA has ever been accused of a mass killing. Weird, huh? But according to liberals, the NRA

is the problem!

In conclusion, I only have this to say. Dear Op/Ed writers: if you are going to write about current events that have anything to do with history, you had better do your homework and know your history, because I read the paper every week.

God Bless Claude Rains Jr.

American Red Cross Volunteers

Make a difference in your community! As a volunteer with the American Red Cross, you can help families recover after a home fire, train individuals in first aid and CPR, support America's military families, or take on any number of other roles that make our communities safer, stronger and more resilient.

Get started at https://

www.redcross.org/local/georgia/volunteer.html or call your NWGA chapter office to ask about volunteer opportunities 844-536-6226.

another hammer and threw it at to the roads by filling in the

sunken areas with concrete.

Bobby has the old ledger of his grandfather, Marion Jackson, and I found the following:

1) April 14, 1894, he sharpened three plow points, charging 15 cents; (2) June 28, 1896, he repaired a wagon for \$9; (3) In June of 1901, he charged Peter Burnett \$10 to work on a wagon; (4) In 1907, Dave Nichols paid him \$15 for some work. By 1915, he had increased his pricing to a dime per foot to shoe horses, and he shod four feet on one horse for an Elbert or Gilbert Akins. Then one Tom Rodgers' account showed that Marion Jackson had charged him about \$8.60 to do blacksmithing work for him over a six-month period of time.

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

Purchase your raffle ticket today. With over \$4,500 worth of prizes, \$10 is a small price to pay for an opportunity to take home the entire package. Contact the Chamber office or a Chamber Ambassador to purchase your ticket. Check our website for a list of prizes and sponsors that help make the Fireworks possible. Drop by today before the tickets are gone!

Life is Better in Blairs-ville!