Opinions

Everybody has one...

Fire Prevention Week

Fire Prevention Week is October 8th through the 14th. During Fire Prevention Week, people should take the time to be aware of fire prevention and to review ways to prevent a fire before it may happen. This year's theme: "Cooking safety starts with YOU. Pay attention to fire prevention."

The Union County Fire Department is teaming up with the

National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®) — the official sponsor of Fire Prevention Week TM (FPW) for more than 100 years — to promote this year's FPW campaign, "Cooking safety starts with YOU. Pay attention to fire prevention ™." The campaign works to educate everyone about sim-



ple but important actions they can take when cooking to keep themselves and those around them safe.

According to NFPA, cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries in the United States. Unattended cooking is the leading cause of cooking fires and deaths.
"Year after year, cooking remains the leading cause of home

fires by far, accounting for half (49%) of all U.S. home fires," said Lorraine Carli, vice president of outreach and advocacy at NFPA. "These numbers tell us that there is still much work to do when it comes to better educating the public about ways to stay safe when Union County Fire Department encourages all residents to

embrace the 2023 Fire Prevention Week theme, "Cooking safety starts with YOU." Cooking is something that we do every day, and there is always the potential for a cooking fire. These fires can grow quickly. We have seen many homes damaged and people injured by fires that could easily have been prevented.

Union County Fire Department offers these key safety tips to help reduce the risk of a cooking fire. 1. Watch what you heat. Always keep a close eye on what you are cooking. Set a timer to remind you that you are cooking. 2. Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove. Always keep a lid nearby when cooking. If a small grease fire starts, slide the lid over the pan and turn off the burner. 3. Have a "kid- and pet-free zone" of at least 3 feet around the stove or grill and anywhere else hot food or drink is prepared or carried.

For more general information about Fire Prevention Week

See **Dyer**, page 5A

AI Is Here

I asked ChatGPT to compose an article about artificial intelligence, or "AI." This isn't it. I prefer to do my own thinking (if that's what AI is supposed to do).

One user started a firestorm by posting, "I asked Chat-GPT to create a fake biblical passage. I know it's not real, but it gave me some comfort." AI can put a new, technological sheen on something as old as idolizing your own heart's desires. All Things

The prospect of pervasive AI raises fears. Surveillance systems with facial recognition are already being used in a social credit system in China. AI can generate images and audio to misrepresent truth.

Mike McMeekin of Engineering Change Lab said, times technologies like AI are released to the public without a thorough examination of the potential unintended consequences and the potential negative impacts...If there is fear, I think AI is making a big splash now, even though mankind has

been pursuing machine learning and superintelligence for a long time. In its basic form, AI uses information from the past to make predictions or create output when given new data. It can be abused, but it also holds promise for many fields of human endeavor, including medicine, engineering, and the arts. I can say with confidence AI will always have its limitations. It cannot answer the ultimate questions of human life.

It will not change what it means to be human. Professor John Lennox identifies another limitation. "The big question is this," he writes. "How can an ethical dimension be built into an algorithm that is itself devoid of heart, soul, and mind?" Will AI ever have qualms about rewriting Biblical texts, creating autonomous weapons, or limiting human freedoms? Peter Sloterdijk based his book "Spheres" on the ongo-

ing, human quest for immunity from danger. When you cannot hear God saying, "Fear not," you turn to something else. "Modernity is characterized by the increasing removal of its safety structures from the traditional theological and cosmological narratives," he writes. "Humanity seeks to create a new immune constitution in electronic media skin." Humans are

See Fowler, page 5A

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER WEEK

Commissioner's Questions

Q. When is the next Electronics Recycling and Document Destruction Event here in Union County?

A. This event is scheduled for Saturday, October 28, 2023, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Union County Sports Center. Watch for volunteers and for signs as you approach the parking lot. You will just drive up and unload your electronics to be recycled and your documents that need to be shredded, and the people there will handle the rest. More informa-

tion on the event, including a list of

what items will be accepted, can be

found on the Union County website

at www.unioncountyga.gov.

from Union County Commissioner Paris

Q. Will the Electronics Recycling and Document Destruction Event be cancelled if it is

A. Unfortunately, the electronics that are being recycled cannot be exposed to moisture or they are unable to recycle them. Also, the big shredder that is used to destroy personal documents cannot shred if there is moisture in the air. The shredded material just gets clogged up and will not shred properly and the equipment can be damaged. If it is going to be cancelled, posts will be made on the Union County Facebook page, and it will also be on the Union County website listed in the previous question.

Q. Why should I recycle my electronics?

A. First, it keeps recyclable materials out of landfills. If we fill up a truck with recyclable electronics, that is one truck load of materials that is not going into a landfill. Many electronic devices can be reused, or they contain a variety of materials that can be recycled. Atlanta Recycling Solutions, the company that will be at the event accepting electronics, will securely destroy any sensitive information that may be contained on electronic devices. They will adhere to a zero-landfill policy. Most people don't realize it, but all electronic devices contain aluminum. Aluminum is a non-renewable resource, which means that once all the aluminum on earth is used there is no more. So, it helps to be able to get the aluminum out of these electronic devices.

Q. What does Document Destruction do with my sensitive documents that they shred?

A. They shred your documents on site in a large shred-

See Paris, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Summer in the Mountains

In 2017, a local contractor and his wife handed us keys to a place we call "Two Waters." We are so grateful to them, have enjoyed every summer since, without a doubt.

This summer we experienced the other side of living in the mountains for the first time. Towns and Union County health care. On July 3rd, Towns County EMS arrived at our home. With a huge question mark, I said, "Will you send my brother to Gainesville or Northside hospital?" All fiveplus men reassured us Union General Hospital is where he should go. So the "unknown" began, as EMS transferred my brother to UGH ER.

I kept asking myself, are we doing the right thing? We consulted with the surgeon and anesthesiologist, expressed my concerns for my brother's condition, and they reassured me he'll be fine. And yes, they are both highly skilled men in their professions. Staff at UGH were amazing: the nurses, clinical care, gals at the nurse's station and physical therapists. The discharge personnel, medical records and transportation staff were spot on.

With the guidance of a Towns County Pharmacist, we moved onto Chatuge Regional Skilled

See Gardner, page 5A

Re: "Restaurant Compromise"

A recent letter writer to The North Georgia News was bemoaning "another fast food place" coming to Blairsville. With the plethora of burger and chicken joints in this area, I've often thought some local investors would be wise to launch a Captain D's or Dairy Queen franchise in Blairsville, as anything comparable is lacking.

The letter writer also wants elected officials to initiate the process of attracting a "locally sourced soup-and-salad-only restaurant." The free market determines what dining options come to Union County, and which ones succeed

See White, page 5A

Blowing Off Steam

Dear Editor,

I attended the Sept. 19 Union County Board of Education meeting. There were only about five citizen attendees who were not school employees. I spoke during the public comments section of the meeting about the treatment the Board gave to members of the public during the Public Hearing on Aug. 31, 2023, on the school property tax mill-

At the Public Hearing, the room was full of non-school employee citizens. I had hoped some of these people would attend the Board of Educa-

See Peterson, page 5A

On Rep. Clyde Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to the weekly article from Andrew Clyde. Representative Clyde, do you write these articles or do you have someone write them for you? You must be very busy defending Trump. You do know that being an elected congressman is to serve the people, to represent us. Defending Trump is not your job. Trump made his bed, now he has to lie in it.

If you need something to write about,

See Elias, page 5A

Stronger Together

Dear Editor,

Americans have been through a lot in the past several years. COVID-19, an insurrection and the war in Ukraine. These events have caused much stress in America, but will it make America a stronger Democracy?

History has shown us that America does best when we work together. Currently, our president's goals have been to Build a Better America that includes rebuilding our crumbling

infrastructure, reducing health care and prescrip-See Shirkey, page 5A

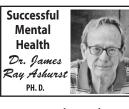


"A CITY WITHOUT A "NEWSPAPER IS A

CITY WITHOUT A SOUL."

All of us at times become caught up in disagreements involving our friends or family members. By choice or invitation, we become engaged in conflicts that can involve a few folks to many individuals. The conflicts can seemingly take our breath away due to the uproar and emo-

tional punches. At a certain point we may wonder how in the world did we even become involved? And mercy, how do we escape on reasonable



terms? At times we are not sure what to do. We can usually see the writing on the wall. In plain script, we can see if the problem belongs on our plate or not. If not, we need to bow out of becoming involved. There are times when skirmishes are not at all concerning us. For example, two of your neighbors are in a verbal battle over a fallen tree lying on both properties, and it needs to be removed. There is no clear indication to which property the tree belongs, so who should pay? And on a beautiful, sunny day, while you are watering your gorgeous red roses, both neighbors spot you—and suddenly you become the innocent target. And here they come. What do you do? You know that you are about to get caught up in the middle of a situation that isn't yours. Whose problem is it? Not yours, for sure.

If you allow yourself to become involved in deciding which neighbor should be responsible, you have stepped directly into a bad, stinky situation. The irony of it is that sometimes the two neighbors end of being best of friends, and you are the odd person-out with both neighbors.

Almost all situations in our lives boil down to a simple question: "Is this problem mine or someone else's?" We are not responsible for solving conflicts that clearly belong to the other person. Solving problems for other folks can end up as a disaster just waiting to happen. In order to solve the problems of someone else, we would need to become all-knowing. We would have to know the absolute, total truth, beyond any doubts involving the situation.

One would think that we would know better than to become involved in a situation that lies on the doorstep of someone else. Whose problem is it? For whatever reason, we may enjoy the power and attention of the involvement, and indeed we get plenty of both. We ride high in the saddle when directing others into what we think is a bright, sunny solution. It may not occur to us that we are possibly getting in God's way of teaching life lessons to that person with the

the life of another human without being asked. See Ashurst, page 5A

Problems emerge from our interfering in

Well, that I did not know!

There is not much one can do in the evening hours during the winter. So, on one such occasion, I was doing some genealogy research on my family. I found some interesting things about my ancestors.

We always thought the name Cummings

meant that we were from England. Wrong! I found that John Michael Cromer came to America from Germany in the year



1752. He settled in Newberry, South Carolina. Later, his son Jacob became a 1st Lieutenant in George Washington's Army at Valley Forge. All of my paperwork and research indicated that Jacob was a distant ancestor. However, I could not make the connection. He had 9-10 children in South Carolina and then he disappeared from that area. Then I found he had more children in North Carolina.

After the Revolution our name had changed from Cromer to Crommeans. This has puzzled me for years until I had found that during the Revolution John Michael had fought with a Loyalist group called the South Carolina Dragoons. I wondered if the Father and Son had ever actually gone into battle against one another. I am not sure, but I also wondered if the name change was a result of the fact that Jacob's father had remained loyal to the King. About 1820 the family moved to Alabama.

Jacob had a grandson named Spencer and again his name changed to Comment. Spencer's sons, Wyatt and Absolem, joined the Union Army and fought for the North during the War for Southern Independence. These young men were from Winston County, Alabama. Today this county is called the "Free State of Winston" because legend has it that the county seceded from Alabama because of its secession from the Union. Many people from this area fought for the Union during the War. Only one of these young men came home from the War. Absolem died somewhere

in Tennessee from dysentery. Wyatt came home from the War and stopped at a neighbor's house. He asked a boy at the house to go to the Cummings home and fetch his wife, Gincy. The boy told the woman that a man was over at his house offering to buy her milk cow for \$25. He also told her that the man didn't come because it was not proper for him to be alone with another man's wife. I have been told that Gincy broke down in tears upon seeing her husband whom she had not seen for more than three years. During this time our name was evolved to Cummings. But that is not the end of the story. The next ancestor in the line was John. Many of the stories I have writ-

See Cummings, page 5A

Chamber of Commerce

The numbers are in! The Georgia Department of Economic Development's annual report shows that Union County's tourism industry generated \$98.3 million in direct tourism spending in 2022. Blairsville-Union County has a diverse economic base including manufacturing, retail, real

estate, health care, education, and financial services. However, our hospitality and tourism industry plays an important role in our county's

- Union County Steve Rowe

Blairsville

economic well-being. Additionally, the tourism industry supported 837 jobs and saved each house-

hold \$723 in state and local taxes. It was recently said that Union County was trying to be like other near-by communities. We appreciate what our neighbors in Towns, Fannin, Gilmer, and our other surrounding counties are doing for North Georgia, but I think I want Blairsville-Union County to be like a county that has a good stable economy. That perfect county should have a diverse economy that

includes industry and tourism so if there was a See Chamber, page 5A

Ginseng

Ginseng is a plant that has long had an important place in Appalachia. It is important economically and culturally. Unfortunately, there is less and less ginseng growing in the wild. Let's talk about ginseng, some of its history, and how to start your own ginseng patch.

Native Americans have used ginseng for health remedies for centuries, but in the 1700's settlers found that they could sell it to Asian markets. That



led to a steep increase in the amount of ginseng being dug. In Asia ginseng has been used for thousands of years. It's been used as a dietary supplement and in herbal teas. There are many traditional medicine uses of ginseng. Many of the health claims about ginseng are not supported by clinical studies. In spite of this ginseng is still incredibly valuable because of its use in Asia. The root of the plant is what is sold, which means that harvesting kills the plant. Wild ginseng roots can sell for hundreds of dollars per pound, depending on the quality of the root. Wild ginseng roots have more character to them. They will have more lines across them and usually have splits in them that make them look like legs. Cultivated ginseng, tends to have a slick roots which is not seen to be as valuable as wild ginseng, but it can still be sold.

The native range of ginseng is eastern north America from Canada down to North Georgia. Ginseng's status in Georgia is rated as vulnerable. Ginseng is very rare to find in the wild. This is due to habitat loss, wildlife eating it, its slow reproduction, and overharvest of the plant in the wild. There are stories from the early 1800s of bundles of ginseng the size of hay bales being floated down the river to be sold at market.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources regulates the harvest and sale of ginseng in Georgia. Growers and dealers must be registered. Ginseng can only be harvested from September 1 through December 31. This is to give plants an opportunity to put on seeds before they are harvested. Only plants with 3 or more prongs can be harvested. As plants age in years they gain more prongs, or leaves. By only harvesting plants with 3 prongs or more, you don't harvest plants that are too young to reproduce. When you harvest ginseng, you are required to plant any berries that are on the plant. This is to encourage new plants of ginseng to start growing. No ginseng may be harvested on state owned land or national forest at this time.

Ginseng can be grown on private property. You want to look for a place that has at least 1000 feet in elevation, slope of > 30%.

See Williams, page 5A

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Paris... continued from Page 4A

der. Then when they go back to their main office, they shred everything again. So, your sensitive documents are shredded twice and then they are baled into large bales. These bales of shredded paper are then re-

Q. Why can't we have an Electronics Recycling and **Document Destruction event** quarterly or even twice a year?

A. The two companies

that come and provide this service do so for free. They are unable to do this more than once a year as a general rule.

Q. Is the county still accepting items for recycling at the Transfer Station?

A. Absolutely. We hope as many of you as possible are able to recycle your newspapers and most any kind of paper, corrugated cardboard, and your #1 and #2 plastic bottles and glass jars.

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

slowdown, they would be able to maintain and/or grow their businesses. That county would be able to provide plenty of jobs for anyone that wanted to work. Its health care system should be highly rated with a 4 - 5 star rating and could expand to meet the needs of a changing population. There would be a school system that had one of the highest graduation rates in the state and is able to provide their students with what they need to be successful and to thrive. We should emulate a county that has leaders that communicate and collaborate well together and is forwardthinking while keeping the tax rate at one of the lowest in the state. The perfect county would be safe and have a low crime rate, and the first responders would genuinely care about the residents they are protecting. The local churches would freely meet to discuss ways to spread the Word. And while we are searching for that perfect county, it would be fabulous if it had outdoor activities where families could hike trails, chase waterfalls, and swim in crystal clear lakes. It would also be important for this county to preserve its heritage and work to pass it down to future gen-

Wait a minute. As I look for this perfect community, I only have to look out my back window. As I sit and watch the leaves start to change, or drive through historic downtown to one of our favorite restaurants, or visit Vogel State Park, it's very easy to see that Blairsville-Union County is very unique and the perfect county. I'm very blessed to call it home, and you should be, too.

Life is Better in Blairs-

Peterson...continued from Page 4A

tion meeting and would hear my comments about the actions of the Board at the Public Hearing. I was disappointed in the citizen turnout and hope more citizens will attend BOE meetings in the

For more people to know about the actions of the School Board, the following is the text of my public comment presented at the BOE meeting:

I am speaking tonight about the board actions at the August 31, 2023, Public Hearing on the increase in millage rate for the school property tax.

It is necessary to understand what a public hearing is and why they are held. I searched the web and found a definition of public hearings at the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) website. It states "Public hearings allow citizens to express opinions on matters of public concern."

It points out one reason for public hearings is for setting property tax millage and this is mandated by law.

The definition continues with "Hearings, whether required or voluntary, are called by the governing authority in order to gather facts related to proposed actions, gauge public opinion, or permit citizens to 'blow off steam.'" The action of blowing off steam is like a pressure cooker; you open the vent to allow the steam to escape. The board opens the vent, but then immediately closes it, allowing the steam to build back up.

The definition then continues, "Merely giving citizens an opportunity to express their opinions demonstrates their

concern for citizens views." Does the board do this? No, you showed the opposite, a complete disdain for the citizens' views. There were four or five other citizens who had signed up to speak and were not allowed to speak. At three minutes each, this would have added 12 or 15 minutes to the meeting. You the board, apparently, could not spend 15 additional minutes to allow the citizens to "blow off steam." Instead, you angered the citizens by not allowing them to speak.

Superintendent Hill in an article in the North Georgia News attributed the actions of the board in limiting the number of speakers to legal advice. This bad legal advice resulted in effectively censoring the citizens instead of "demonstrating concern for citizens views." If Mr. Hill and the Board understood the purpose of a public hearing, they would have disregarded this bad legal advice.

The bad advice was followed and the steam built back up. If the Board understood human psychology, the Board would have spent an additional 15 minutes in the meeting, allowed some steam to bleed off by allowing the additional speakers their turns, and then proceeded to vote to increase the millage rate.

I believe the Board owes an apology to the citizens of Union County for their actions at the August 31 Public Hearing. The Board is aware the elections are coming and their actions will have impact in the

Thank you. **Vincent Peterson**

Shirkey... continued from Page 4A

tion costs, and building up our manufacturing capabilities. Are these the goals to make America strong again? YES.

What is counterproductive to these goals is name-calling and misinformation. These actions divide Americans and are unproductive in making our economy, health care and government strong.

What's important in making positive steps towards these goals is to be sure your elected representatives understand what your priorities are. Unfortunately, Pharmaceutical, Health Care and Oil Companies spent almost \$500 million in the past year on lobbying efforts to influence our government representatives. This must stop!

We all have concerns as to whether President Biden and Congress are doing all they can to strengthen the country. Success will only come with being reasonable, listening to each other and compromise. The theatrics of calling people names or distorting facts will only take us down a path of weakness.

Let your voice be heard by your government representatives to enable them to make productive decisions about the

future we want. Kristie Shirkey

Gardner... continued from Page 4A

Nursing Facility. Once again, the unknown, will my brother be in good hands? The answer, most definitely YES. Chatuge SNF is a family of many families. From Admissions, RNs, CNAs, PT, even the lead Administrator was involved in his care. Each and every one of you made us feel like part of the family. He is now home with aid from another fantastic Home Health Care facility out of Union County.

My husband and I live in a small beach town in South Florida – yes, a small town, with a rapid increase of growth within the County. Changing times are everywhere! We have been coming to Towns County for over 30 years; it feels like home away from home. I must say, with the experience we encountered this summer, we have a new extended family and a great appreciation for the medical

care in Towns and Union Coun-

ty. If I may say, please keep moving forward with the smalltown feel of family comes first. Bless you all, YOU know who you are, and thank you ALL for what you do for our community. **Polly Gardner**

White... continued from Page 4A

or fail. As a fan of small, family-owned businesses, I wholeheartedly support the writer's suggestion. We really need the federal government to stop penalizing investors and entrepreneurs with burdensome taxes and regulations that only hinder and prohibit growth.

The federal government should also terminate the pandemic-induced freebies and get people back to work to staff our local retail establishments!

Greg C. White

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

ten over the years concerned John. There are people in my family that revere him for being larger than life. Yet, others reviled him.

The reason for the disdain concerned an event that happened around 1917. John was married to Martha Pace and raised 8 kids in Alabama. When his youngest child became a teenager John left his wife and family to move to Missouri with another woman. These were hard times. My 2X Great Grandmother Martha lost her husband. Then her youngest son was accidentally killed and another son left for WWI and she never fully recovered from these events. I think most of the family never forgave John for abandoning them, although he did try to make things right with them. However, he was only close to one son afterward. That son happened to be my great grandfather Lon.

About 1935, close to his birthday, John came back for one last visit. I understand things were pretty tense. The family was still hurting. But, Lon loved his Dad. So, everyone pitched in and bought him some gifts. My Aunt Mable sewed each and every gift into the legs of a brand-new pair of overalls. John was so pleased with the overalls he decided to try them on. But he could not get his legs into them due to the gifts. He reached into the

legs of the overalls six times to Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

tempted to treat technology like AI as though it is godlike. That's how someone finds comfort in the made-up words of ChatGPT.

Good news! You can still find comfort in God's design for being human: "In Him we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28). You can tap superintelligence when you "have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Col. 3:10).

AI will change our lives for better and for worse probably sooner than later. But you can take comfort in knowing that you are made in the image of God. You are renewed by faith in the Lord Jesus, the Shepherd of your soul. AI can't change that.

Williams... continued from Page 4A

and has a north, east, northeast, or northwest facing aspect. Ginseng must be grown in the shade. About 75% shade is what is needed. Hardwoods are better than pine. Some in dicator plants to look for are mayapple, bloodroot, trilliums, foam flower, ferns, and cohosh. When planting seeds keep in mind that they may take two or more years to germinate. Once plants are growing it can take 8+ years before they reach harvest age. Ginseng can be a valuable crop, but it's best to temper expectations because there is a lot that can go wrong in 8+ years. Wildlife damage, washout, theft, diseases, and

insects can all take their toll. If you have questions about ginseng contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@

Ashurst... continued from Page 4A

Or we may assume that we have fantastic answers to their problems. We enter into another person's territory that solely belongs to God and to the person with the problem. God has a specific plan for that person, and He is perfectly capable of assisting the person without

our interference. Secondly, there is the danger of the situation backfiring. What happens when our advice backfires in our friend's life? "Hello, Houston, we have a problem." In our hands we now have an outraged friend, in addition to the actual backfiring of the problem. All of this can escalate beyond our craziest imagination—all because we ceased asking ourselves,

"Whose problem is it?" It's wonderful when we allow our friend to vent out the problem with us, but beware of actually attempting to solve the problem.

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A and cooking safety, visit www.

For fire safety fun for kids, visit www.sparky.org. Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your

pull out the gifts. Papa said that each time a gift came out Big Papa would let out a big laugh. Each laugh reminded him that his son still loved him.

Elias... continued from Page 4A

here are some suggestions. How about term limits? The president can serve for only two terms, yet senators and representatives can serve for life. it's been said that older people are wiser, but that's not always true. Younger people can bring new ideas to the table. How about writing

about other Republicans? Some are very good and positive and they focus on the American people. You could start by writing about them. They are not hard to find. Just please do not begin with Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. He is in the same camp as Trump with his "all about me" attitude.

When Trump is convicted, he will once again make a lot of money. He will have time to write his book that should be called "Witch Hunt." It will probably make the top-seller list and he could pay his lawyers.

Mr. Clyde, until next time, you can do it right.