Opinions

Everybody has one...

Outdoor Burning for Fall

Each spring and fall we provide tips and information on outdoor burning. Fall is usually the time when property owners dispose of leaves and other yard debris in this manner. These fires are usually small and may be in a person's yard or on their private property. These fires do produce smoke and may be concerning to neighbors or persons passing by. Most of these fires are well contained, controlled burns and should

not be a concern; however, some do get out and become wildfires.

Property owners are allowed to burn hand-piled leaves and/or yard debris as long as they follow the outdoor burning safety standards as explained by the Georgia Forestry Commission



(GFC). It is important that everyone understands the elements and dangers of outdoor burning as well as the outdoor burning safety

The outdoor burning safety standards are actions and precautions that property owners must take to provide safety and to prevent out of control wildfires. A GFC awareness campaign was launched a few years ago introducing the theme "Take Five" before the burn and to remember the acronym "S-S-T-A-R" representing the five points of the outdoor burning safety standard. The first "S" represents Space. There must be 25 feet or more

between the fire and woodlands. The second "S" also represents

Space stating that there must be 50 feet or more between the fire

and any structures. The "T" represents Time. Burning can only be conducted from sunrise to sunset. The "A" represents Attendance. A person responsible for the fire must stay onsite with the fire until it is completely extinguished. The "R" represents Reasonable Precautions. The concept of reasonable precautions is to have tools and measures in place to prevent the fire from escaping. These include things such as a

continuous pressurized water source onsite; man-made or natural barrier to contain the fire; hand tools or fire-containing equipment onsite; weather awareness such as red flag warnings, High Fire Danger designation, and other hazardous conditions such as low relative humidity, high winds, etc.

Just as a reminder, property owners are only allowed to burn certain materials. Only hand-piled leaves or naturally occur-

See **Dyer**, page 5A

The Real Disaster

A wind-fueled fire destroyed the historic village of Lahaina in Maui. Libya experienced flooding. Morocco suffered an earthquake. Forces of nature contribute to these disasters, as do human activity and negligence. All of these disasters caused a

If no one had died in the fire, flood, or earthquake, we may never have heard of them. Nor would we call them a disaster. Only when human life is subject to the forces of nature do we call it a disaster. That says something about the intrinsic value of human life. Our Creator has hard-wired us with the knowledge that human life has value. Only humans are made in God's image.



But the loss of life opens God up to a complaint. Why does He allow a world with suffering? Philosopher Vince Vitale answers the question with a story. On his parents' first date, his mom wore a ring given by a previous boyfriend. Vitale's dad threw the ring off the Brooklyn Bridge. With that audacious act he began to win her heart. They married. Vitale was born. His mother's loss became part of the story of Vitale's existence. His point: "We think we wish God had allowed a different sort of world to exist, but in doing so we unwittingly wish ourselves out of existence." This suffering world produces people loved by God, and people who seek and find Him. As you walk through your own disaster or suffering, you

must know that God has not left you alone. One of Jesus' names is Emmanual, meaning "God with us." He experienced pain and death, but He is not overwhelmed by them. So when you are, you can rely on this: "He abides with you and will be in you" (John God stepped into our suffering world in order to set it

right. "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried...He was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities" (Isa. 53:4-5). He suffered so He could prepare and offer you a home where suffering is no more. When you grieve, you are yearning for that home.

God continues to intervene in this suffering world, and He is not finished with it. God moves His people to champion

See Fowler, page 5A

Commissioner's Questions

Before I start this series of questions, I want the public to know that while I do not have a pet because I have no time to have one, I have had many dogs in the past. I love dogs and I appreciate the value they offer to those who own them. While some of the comments of this Q & A may seem counter to this statement, I am trying to deal with an issue that potentially has lots of sides based on information gathered from different sources, including the public. Q. What is a "service dog?"

A. A "service dog" is an Amer-

icans with Disability Act (ADA) fed-

County Commissioner Paris

eral regulation designation. In order to have a true "service dog", an owner must have a disability requiring the use of a trained service dog. To prevent problems with access, it is strongly suggested that you have a "service dog certification card"

in addition to the vest. Many service dog vests actually have an area to display your certification on the vest. Q. What are the most common disabilities a "service dog" assists an owner with?

A. PTSD, Vision Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Hypoglycemia/Diabetes, and Depression.

Q. Is an "emotional support" dog the same as a "service

A. NO! Actually, there is no difference in an "emotional support" dog and a pet. Neither requires certification and most pets provide some type of emotional support to their owners.

While not often an issue, some people place vests on their dogs to allow access for the owner and their pets to areas they should not be allowed access, knowing that they are violating the spirit Q. Does every dog that has a "service dog" vest mean that it is a real service dog? A. No it does not, but fortunately most people abide by the ADA regulations. You can usually tell when a person has a real

"service dog" from the behavior of the dog. They usually are ex-

ceptionally well behaved, stick with their owner and will usually

be laying at the feet of their owner when in a restaurant or food

service establishment. Q. Are there any Health Department "rules" that ap-

See Paris, page 5A

Chamber of Commerce

I would like to thank all those that stepped up to help make the Sorghum Parade happen again this year. When the call went out, the community responded and continues to respond. I know I've said it a thousand times, but the majority of our visitors are coming to us for our beau-

tiful mountains, outdoor adventures, but what keeps our visitors returning to us is our small-town charm and friendly residents and business owners.

Blairsville County Steve Rowe



We have seen the power of social media come full circle over the past couple of weeks. It has brought our community together to continue a long-standing tradition, but then it has also severely divided us. Social media gives us a platform to reach customers, visitors, and people we otherwise may not have a way to reach, and we oftentimes forget about the power it gives us. Social media gives us the power to bring visitors to our community, but with the slip of the tongue or stroke of a key it can turn someone away, which

See Chamber, page 5A

Problems II

Problems emerge in our lives from our interfering in the life of another person without being asked. We go into another person's personal arena where the holy angels fear to wander. We have assumed the job of God, without even knowing His plan for that person. We may end up botching the

entire thing because we failed to ask, "Is this my problem or not? have wandered into God's plan for that

Successful Mental Health Dr. James Ray Ashurst

dangerous. Wow! We were never meant to be "small gods" in our neighborhood, family, and

We set ourselves up to fail. When we take on problems that are not ours, our friend can be left depressed, discouraged, disappointed, and angry because we have steered the person in the wrong direction. A horrendous happening can occur: our friend can end up in worst circumstances. We fail by not realizing that our solution to the problem does not mean it will work

See Ashurst, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Thank You Aldi

I volunteer at a local food pantry and am working towards eliminating the use of plastic bags. Last week, I stopped at Aldi and explained 50 reusable groo to give away. They're only 69 cents each. The wonderful folks at Aldi wanted to support my effort and offered a Buy One, Get One program. I was able to get 100 bags for the food pantry. Thank you Aldi for being a strong supporter of our community.

Robert Hume

Senior Service Suggestion

Dear Editor,

Union County offers wonderful activities and services for its senior citizens. I would like to suggest one more.

Many communities offer a free computerized phone-in system that allows seniors to call a number, at a time of day they select, to "check in." If their call is not received by that specified time, the system is able to notify a selected Emergency Contact or send a wellness check to ensure the individual's safety.

This would not only give that senior peace of mind but their family as well.

Jane O'Brien A Senior!

Re: "Stronger Together"

Dear Editor,

In response to the op-ed on "Stronger Together"

Have you seen any of the funds directed at our "crumbling infrastructure?" Remember

Obama had a similar mega-billion expenditure program. What happened to those funds? The famous bridge collapse in Pittsburgh is in a county that has been supervised and taxed heavily by Democrats for the entirety of my lifetime and back past my great-great-grandpaps'. The American debt is now over \$87,000

for every man, woman and child in our Country. And now we are paying the pension system for Ukrainians (that will self-correct soon since over 500,000 have died there so far).

Our "infrastructure" would likely not be "crumbling" if the Federal and State taxes we pay on each gallon of auto fuel were correctly and efficiently used for their intended purpose maintaining infrastructure like bridges, roads, airports, rail and harbors.

The writer goes on to demand that we "stop" lobbyists in Washington. As if that wasn't against the First Amendment.

See Tarter, page 5A

Kenneth West

Shawn Jarrard

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North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Website: www.nganews.com • Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com • Mail: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

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are not necessarily the opinions or positions of this newspaper, e.g. advertising, press releases, editorial content, perspectives expressed in articles covering local events, etc.

Lithium-ion Batteries

Lithium-ion batteries are increasingly found in devices and systems that the public and first responders use or interact with daily. While these batteries provide an effective and efficient source of power, the likelihood of them overheating, catching on fire, and even

leading to exploincreases when they are damaged or improperly used, charged, or stored. Lithiumion batteries supply power to many



kinds of devices including smart phones, laptops, e-scooters and e-bikes, e-cigarettes, smoke alarms, toys, and even cars. If not used correctly, or if damaged, these batteries can catch on fire or explode.

These batteries store a large amount of energy in a small amount of space. Sometimes batteries are not used the right way; batteries not designed for a specific use can be dangerous. Like any product, a small number of these batteries are defective. They can overheat, catch fire, or explode. Purchase and use devices that are listed by a qualified testing laboratory. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Only use the battery that is designed for the device. Put batteries in the device the right way. Only use the charging cord that came with the device. Do not charge a device under your pillow, on your bed, or on a couch. Do not keep charging the device or device battery after it is fully charged. Keep batteries at room temperature when possible. Do not charge them at temperatures below 32°F (0°C) or above 105°F (40°C). Store batteries away from anything that can catch fire.

Stop using the battery if you notice these problems: odor, change in color, too much heat, change in shape, leaking, or odd noises. If it is safe to do so, move the device away from anything that can catch fire. Do not put lithium-ion batteries in the trash. Take them to a battery recycling location or contact your community for disposal instructions. Charge your e-Bike battery in a flat, dry area away from children, direct sunlight, liquids, tripping hazards, and in a location where the e-bike is not at risk of falling. The popularity of electric bikes and electric scooters has taken off over the past few years.

Lithium-ion batteries are usually the source of power for both, and if not used correctly, or if damaged, those batteries can catch on fire or explode. Whether you use e-bikes or e-scooters as your main way of getting around, or just for fun, there are important safety tips to keep in mind when charging or storing

See Riley, page 5A

Derek Richards Todd Forrest Lowell Nicholson

Boogers in the Night

Growing up in the country, kids like me learned all types of things about scary boogers or events that happened to other people. I have heard old folks talk about fluorescent green, glowing lights that followed people as they walked down lonely stretches of roads in dark

woods during the night. Granny used to tell me about panthers that would try to sneak up on people to stalk and catch them un-



awares. I have even heard that my great-great-grandmother Baker haints a hill close to her homeplace in Northwestern Alabama. I guess it is a thousand wonders I didn't have nightmares every night when I

Many of these stories were told to me before the TV became the far-reaching influence it is today. Back in those days children and adults used their imagination more than we use our imaginations today. Back in the early 1940s, Papa bought his first piece of property (80 acres) for \$100/acre. Papa and Granny cleared, farmed and live on that original 80 acres to this day. They built a small, framed house and carried water from a quarter of a mile away. A few years after the house was built, Papa dug a well right next to the house. The well was brand new and didn't even have a well house over it yet when a mishap happened. The only covering over the well was an old 2x12 with a tarp over it. Late one night the family milk cow fell a straddle of that 2x12.

The cow's full weight was resting on the board and she was having trouble getting free of the well and board. She would bellow a deep, mournful, guttural sound resembling a growl from an old she-bear. The cow could not take in enough air to moo like a regular sounding cow. Also, the well was located right next to the house, and each time the cow would swing her head her horns would rake across the siding of the house. Papa got up to go check on this awful sound, and each time he would reach the door the cow would bellow out this sound and rake her horns on the house. My Granny would let out a scream of terror, and Papa would run back to check on her and his sons. Eventually, Papa gathered enough nerve to go outside and confront the demon. He laughs about it today. But, back in those days he was plenty scared of that

A month or so later a mad dog came to Papa's house. Granny said their house was not even finished yet, and since it was still summer, the walls of the house weren't boarded up yet. Papa said, "We didn't even have some of the outside doors up yet." For those of you that don't know,

See Cummings, page 5A

Leave the Leaves

Leaves are beginning to fall from the trees. Soon they will be littered all over the ground. However, we shouldn't think of leaves as litter. They are a natural product that is beneficial in a lot of ways. Let's talk about some of the benefits that leaves provide, and why leaving them is good for the envi-

ronment. In the fall most, people will get out their rakes and leaf blowers to remove the leaves from their yards.

UGA Watching and Working Jacob Williams

The end result is a yard that looks very tidy and neat, but also a yard that has removed a crucial element of the nutrient cycle and disrupted the life cycle of many beneficial insects. I would argue that there are some places where you should remove the leaves. Like your driveway or walkways because they can create a hazard. I have also raked a small portion of my yard because my daughter loves a good leaf pile, and I'm not going to keep that happiness from her. But in the rest of the yard and the surrounding woods it's beneficial to leave those leaves in place. Fallen leaves create organic matter for the

soil. As the leaves break down they return the nutrients that they are holding back to the soil. This is an important part of the nutrient cycle. In the spring trees will withdraw nutrients from the ground and start to make those leaves. In the fall when the leaves drop, the leaves are still holding the nutrients. Each individual leaf may not have a lot of nutrients, but collectively their nutrient load is important. Allowing those leaves to return their nutrients to the soil completes the nutrient cycle. Leaving the leaves in plant beds around your house is a good thing for the plants. It will also help reduce weeds, since it serves as a mulch layer. A light layer of leaves over grass will benefit the grass too. On grass, if the leaves are too thick, it can damage the grass.

Another great benefit of leaving the leaves is that it helps beneficial insects. Lots of insects will lay their eggs in the leaves. Butterflies and moths will lay eggs in the leaves to emerge next year. Bumblebees, Luna moths, and swallowtail butterflies will over winter just under the soil line. A layer of leaf mulch protects these impor-

Lots of animals rely on the leaves too. Turtles, toads, birds, salamanders, and small mammals use the leaves for food, shelter, and nesting material. All of these critters need a place to spend the winter.

If you have more leaves than you can handle consider putting the extra around trees, ornamental plants, and in garden beds as a natural mulch. It's better to not shred the leaves as this

See Williams, page 5A

Publication No: 001505

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Paris... continued from Page 4A

ply to non-service dogs/pets in places that serve/sell food?

A. Yes. In the State of Georgia, you CANNOT have any type of pet, service dog or emotional support dog in any public or permitted venue area where food is being prepared. It is strictly against the law and prohibited. You can call the Union County Health Dept. or any other law enforcement agency to report this abuse, because it could negatively impact the public health. Remember this is only the food preparation area, not the seating area. It is up to the restaurant whether to allow pets in the dining area, except for "service dogs" that are allowed in all areas except the food preparation

Q. I have seen little and big fluffy dogs in Home Depot and other stores including grocery stores and Wal Mart in the shopping carts. In my mind this is a public health issue. Several of my friends find it alarming that pets are allowed in grocery stores and restaurants that are obviously not "service dogs." What are the regulations?

A. Most of this has been covered in the above answers. However, in researching for this column, we found it is up to the food service store or grocery store to decide if they will or will not allow pets in their

Q. What can we do if we do not feel the way a store is handling its pet issue is

A. It is a personal decision for you as a shopper. The obvious answer is to contact the store operator if you see what you think is abuse. In the case of large corporate types of stores, you would need to contact their corporate offices since the decisions related to pets in the stores usually come from above.

Q. Are there any regulations for non-food stores regarding pet access to their

A. No, it is strictly up to the store owner or operator.

${f Ashurst}$... continued from Page 4A

in the life of the other person. Misery and disappointment are twin emotions that can hit our friend head-on. As a result, our friend remains confused, and the problem still exists.

"Deciding whose problem is it" will absolutely free you. You no longer have to assume that you must straighten out your entire world of relationships. Your conscience remains clear and secure because you have not steered someone in the wrong direction.

There will be times when you do have to get involved in situations not belonging to you, such as abuse, death and dying, grief, and addiction. But be very cautious? We need to tiptoe through these issues.

For whatever reasons, we humans can trap ourselves in conflicts that are not even remotely close to our affairs. We wake up one morning to find ourselves slap-dab in the midst of problems that wholeheartedly belong on the back stairs of others. We may choose to get tangled in the web of their problems because we are searching for excitement in our lives, for superiority over our relationships, or for our personal loneliness.

there are Moreover, folks who end up in the middle of two opposing forces without the foggiest idea of how they became involved. No hint, no clue, no desire. Yet, they

are in the O.K. Corral, verbal guns blasting, with Wyatt Earp Complainer #1 against Frank McLaury, Complainer #2. And as an innocent bystander, we just happen to drive up in our 20-year-old Fiat that we've named Trigger.

If we had been watching and thinking clearly, we would have seen the "verbal gunfight" enactment and establish a 10mile berth with Trigger leading us away in our trusty Fiat. But perhaps we permitted our curiosity or nosiness to valiantly steer us into that O.K. Corral. Here comes the bloodshed!

I am by no means making light of such a situation, but maybe you can laugh or smile because probably you have placed yourself in such an intense, excruciating predicament at lease once during your lifetime.

Because we may have gotten caught up at that moment in the "verbal gunfight" in the O.K. Corral, we perhaps neglected or just plain forgot to ask ourselves the questions: "Whose problem is it? Mine or theirs?" If the obvious answer is theirs, "how come I'm getting in the middle?"

If we decide to continually become involved in problems that are not ours, we need to wear our "six shooters," because we most likely will always find ourselves in a neverending battle.

Riley...continued from Page 4A

Lithium-ion battery fires give off toxic gases and they burn extremely hot. Do not store batteries in direct sunlight or inside hot vehicles and keep them away from children and liquids. Store e-bikes, escooters, and batteries away from exit doors and anything that can get hot or catch fire. Stop using the e-bike or escooter if you notice any of these problems with the battery: unusual odor, change in color, too much heat, change in shape, leaking, smoking, or not keeping a charge.

Experts predict the number of electric vehicles (EVs) in the United States will grow by more than eight times over the next 10 years. Currently, many EVs are powered by lithium-ion batteries. For firefighters, EV fires involving lithium-ion batteries are some of the most challenging incidents to respond to. EV fires have been known to burn longer than fires involving traditional, gasoline-powered vehicles, with instances of EV fires reigniting hours, or even days, after the initial fire is controlled. Typically, these blazes take more water to extinguish, too, and it can be difficult for responders to apply water to areas it is needed.

The impact of AFV crashes involves serious, potentially fatal, on-scene injuries to both emergency responders and vehicle occupants, as well as the possibility of property damage and post-incident injury or death. to investigators and tow and salvage personnel. Potential dangers may involve strand-

these devices. Damaged or ed energy, unexpected silent defective batteries can over- movement, toxic, and flamheat, catch fire, or explode. mable gases emanating from a damaged high voltage battery, thermal runaway, battery fires, and the possibility of electric shock through exposed high voltage wires and components, as well as charging station events. To date, the vast majority of firefighters and emergency responders haven't received training or had experience with AFV incidents, putting both themselves and the operators of these vehicles at risk.

Hybrid electric and plug-in electric vehicles will account for a large percentage of total U.S. vehicle sales in near future, followed by exponential growth as the technology continues to become more affordable. The U.S. Department of Transportation has determined that new hybrid and EV technology is not inherently more dangerous to emergency responders and the public than conventional gasoline internal combustion engine vehicles. However, emergency responders simply haven't had the training and experience with AFV incidents, as opposed to 100 years of education and familiarity with conventional combustion engine vehicles. Meanwhile, NFPA's statistics show that a car fire occurs every two minutes in the U.S., making the need for adequate incident training all the more imperative. Wood Mizer now has developed a batter powered sawmill like my gas-powered mill. A long way from the 00 Fracks of the past! What will they think of next?

For more information go to www.nfpa.org.

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

today we would say a mad dog was rabid. Granny said this dog was slobbering at the mouth and attacked their dog. Next the dog came for the family. Granny sent the dogs up into the loft while Papa fetched the gun. She said, "Papa would run from one side of the house to the other searching for the dog." Papa was running around while Granny directed him to a spot where she thought the dog could be safely shot. She said, "The story is funny now. But, back then if a man got bitten by a rabid dog it was a death sentence." Finally, Papa was able to shoot the dog. He later said, "Your Granny told me to

Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

humanitarian aid and relief efforts. Just as Jesus modeled courage and sacrifice by dying on the cross for our sins, we live out those virtues on behalf of our fellow image-bearers. Our high calling to love our neighbors invites them to know the God who loves.

By repentance and faith in Jesus, you secure a home where there will no longer be any death, mourning, crying, or pain (Rev. 21:4). So, please don't use suffering to question God's existence – that would be the real disaster.

Williams...

continued from Page 4A

will destroy any insects or eggs that are in the leaves.

Grass for lawns is the largest irrigated 'crop' in the US at over 40 million acres. That's more than irrigated corn or soybean. If everyone made sure that their lawn was a welcome habitat for pollinators and other critters it would make a huge difference. If you have questions about your leaves, contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Thursday, October 12 at 4 PM the Towns-Union Master Gardener Association will have their monthly meeting at the Hiawassee City Hall upstairs training room. Ray Covington, Superintendent of the Blairsville Experiment Station, will be presenting on the work that they do. This event is open to the public.

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

can cost our small businesses in the long run.

We hope you come out and join us this weekend and show your support for all those that quickly came together to make sure this year's parade is the best one ev

Dust off your boots and get ready to boogie again, as the Square Dance will be at 8 PM on both October 14 and 21st. Thanks to the Union County Recreation Department for bringing the tradition of the Square Dance back again. It's been greatly missed.

This is what makes life better in Blairsville!

Dyer... continued from Page 4A

ring yard debris can be burned. Household garbage or other man-made materials cannot be

Anyone who burns hand-piled leaves or yard debris should research the law and outdoor burning safety requirements. For more information about outdoor burning and the five safety precautions, please visit www.gatrees.org.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Tarter...

continued from Page 4A

Lobbyists serve a purpose for their various industries and causes. The Senators and Congressdoobies can't possibly keep informed of what's going on in industry particularly with the collapse of real journalism in print and other media. Lobbyists are like lawyers and insurance agents, you don't like it but they are a necessary... thing.

Biden is not up to the job he has, and whomever is pulling the strings is running up national debt and robbing our bank accounts with rising fuel costs and inflation.

We're "saving the planet" by shutting down drilling and mining in our own country and buying fuel from distant countries and shipping at great cost and waste of fuel our nation needs back to us.

It's absurd when you think about it but, hey, that's the operative word. J. Murray Tarter

and I did."

get doors hung on that house,

Your imagination can cause you some severe problems. In the first story Papa was scared of a sound. Little did he realize the sound was nothing but his old milk cow. In the second story Granny was so stricken with fear for Papa's safety she couldn't give him proper directions. It is fun to let our imaginations run wild about sounds in the night and things we don't understand. Many times we think that our ancestors were foolish for letting their imaginations get the best of them. But, before we make fun of people in Papa's time, let us be reminded there are people today that let their imaginations run wild. Just look at social media and the newspapers to be reminded about people's imaginations.