# Opinions

# **EMAG Conference**

Emergency management is something that most people assume is out there but they do not know much about it. They have heard of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and some have heard of GEMA, which is the agency for the State of Georgia. Each county has a local Emergency Management Agency (EMA) as well. All are responsible for prevent-

ing, preparing, mitigating, responding and recovering from disasters and major emergencies.

Most local EMAs belong to the Emergency Management Association of Georgia (EMAG), which is an organization that assists the local EMAs with performing their



2

roles. EMAG has two conferences each year that provide training and information to the local EMAs. The latest conference was held at Brasstown Valley Resort in Young Harris. Several members of Union County EMA attended this conference.

The first class that was attended was a Rescue Operations Training Workshop. The class presentation was a first viewing of the Basic Search and Rescue class that is being developed by the training division of GEMA. The workshop involved getting feedback from the persons attending the class to determine if there needed to be any additions or subtractions to the class. There was a great deal of feedback and discussion about how EMAs operate search and rescue in their area of the state.

Search and rescue is a regular operation in our EMA, mainly because of the hiking trails in the county, including the Appalachian Trail. Of the over 75 miles of Appalachian Trail in Georgia, 39 miles are within or border Union County. We respond to approximately 50 missions each year ranging from locating a person to extracting them from the trail. The search and rescue workshop was helpful and Union County was proud to make a contribution.

The other class attended was Testing Emergency Operations Plans in a Rural Emergency Operations Center. This class was a FEMA class that included processes to review and test our Emergency Operations Plan. It also include information on how to better utilize the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

# Everybody has one...

# **Olasky's Story**

Marvin Olasky is an academic, an author, and a Presbyterian. That's why it's an eyebrow-raiser when he tells about his solitary mystical experience.

In his book, "Lament for a Father," Olasky explains he was an atheist (and Marxist) pursuing a Ph.D. in American Culture in the 1970s. One afternoon he was reading Lenin. ("We must combat religion. It is

the opium for the people.") He became distracted and fell into a trancelike state. He was in a dark corridor with closed doors on both sides. He pushed one open, and experienced an explosion of light. He knew it was God. For the next eight



hours, he sat still while his mind raced with questions. Then he wandered the campus in the cold and darkness of night. The next morning, he was no longer an atheist.

One of his next steps was to read Matthew's gospel in Russian, focusing on each word. He read, "The Child who has been conceived in (Mary) is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:20-21). He did not want to be a Christian, but over the next three years he journeyed toward the truth about Jesus. He was a professor at San Diego State when he embraced faith in Jesus as his Savior.

Unlike Olasky, Richard Dawkins is still an atheist. But Dawkins likes Christmas traditions - singing carols, decorating a tree, giving gifts. He calls himself a "cultural Christian." That also describes church attendees who reject the virgin birth and other miracles. If no supernatural or spiritual reality exists, then Jesus was only an attractive (and deceptive) religionist who impressed his followers so much that they thought they saw him alive after he died.

To reject miracles is to reject the Jesus of the Bible. Accept them and "you have a Savior who came voluntarily into this world for our salvation, suffered for our sins upon the cross, rose again from the dead by the power of God...The difference between those two views is the difference between two totally diverse religions" (Gresham Machen, "Christianity & Liberalism").

See Fowler, page 5A

"WHEN I PUT THIS AWAY LAST YEAR, I THOUGHT FOR SURE IT

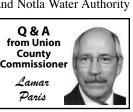
WOULD HAVE STRAIGHTENED ITSELF OUT BY NOW!"

### **Commissioner's Questions**

Our office has received various questions about public water in Union County and about Lake Nottley. Though I have spoken on this topic in the past, I was asked to address certain concerns for the sake of new residents.

Q. Does Union County operate a public water system? A. No. Coosa Water Authority and Notla Water Authority

are independent legislatively enacted entities that are not controlled by Union County or the City of Blairsville. They are governed by their board of directors who are voted into office by the water users in their area. To clarify, Union County does not operate a public water system.



Q. How are the Water Authority service boundaries separated?

A. Coosa Water Authority mostly covers West of Blairsville along the Blue Ridge Highway and parts of Owltown. They have approximately 1,750 water customers. Notla Water Authority mostly covers the Northeastern part of Union County and they have approximately 5,860 water customers. The City of Blairsville provides water to the city and their services extend slightly out of town in all directions and including the Airport Industrial Park and Walmart. They have approximately 1,400 customers. Many of those are commercial accounts.

Q. Why don't you leave the Nottley Lake at full pool throughout the entire year?

A. Wouldn't it be great if we could control the lake levels? This is a sore spot with some lake homeowners as well as those who enjoy lake recreation. However, Lake Nottely is owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and the county has absolutely no authority when it comes to determining the water levels. Lake Nottley water levels are strictly controlled by TVA. The TVA organization balances many priorities when it comes to water levels. Recreation is not their primary concern. Flood control and power generation are two of their priorities.

Q. Does TVA change the lake levels differently at certain times of the year?

A. Absolutely! You may have already noticed some changes very recently. During the summer they do a pretty good job

See Paris, page 5A

## **Chamber of Commerce**

What a great week! I hope you all had a chance to spend time with your family and friends and had plenty to eat. I would like to thank all those that participated in the BBQ Cook-Off earlier in the year. Thanks to you and the First Baptist Church Feed the Hungry

program they were able to provide 90 holiday meals to families in our community. It's also time for the Tour of



Trees at the Union County Community Center. There are over 50 trees and wreaths that have been decorated by our local businesses, and boy do we have some talented people. These trees get bigger and better each year, and this year is no exception. Come by the Community Center and vote for your favorite, and while you are there, check out the Gingerbread Village!

This Saturday is also Breakfast with Santa sponsored by UCBI, Chick-fil-A, the Chamber and the Post Office. Be sure to bring

#### See Chamber, page 5A

# Organic, Hybrid, Heirloom

A couple of weeks ago I wrote an article on GMOs. This week I'm going to talk about a few more groupings that we make. I want to talk about what these names really mean, or don't mean, so that you can make educated decisions when shopping, or selecting what you're going to grow in your **UGA** garden. This week I want to talk about Watching organic, hybrid, and Working and heirloom. In the U.S. to Jacob advertise a product

See Dyer, page 5A

### Habitat for Humanity

Thanks to everyone who came to the Courthouse on the Square on Saturday for our first "Christmas Present Wrapping Event." In case you missed it, shoppers could bring their purchases to the Courthouse on Saturday, 11/27, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Habitat vol-

unteers would wrap up their purchases in exchange for a donation. A great time was had by all, and we have plans to make this an annual event!

Dear Editor,



The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce encourages its members to decorate a tree at the Community Center (up by the golf course). Our Habitat Affiliate always participates in this, and this year is no different. Thanks to Donna Towery, one of our faithful volunteers, for helping create many of the ornaments on Habitat's tree, and taking the time to put it all together. It's so cute! The ornaments are in the shape of tools and houses, and it has a hard hat for a tree-topper! Be sure and stop

See Habitat, page 5A

# Letters to the Editor **Goodbye Blairsville**

#### **Thanksgiving Thoughts**

**Dear Editor,** What was your favorite part of Thanks giving last week? Being with family and friends is always precious. Helping to serve meals at your local church is always rewarding. Sitting down at a full-course meal loaded with turkey, mashed potatoes and stuffing with gravy of course is a joy indeed. Saying thanks in prayer to God for all the provisions He has given us to partake of is essential, for all things do come from Him. Don't ever think we can boast of anything we have done on our own. All things come from God's gracious hands of love. We sing a song in church that goes something like this: Thank you Lord for giving to me salvation so rich and so free. Salvation for humanity was paid at a heavy cost of Jesus Christ's life on an old rugged cross that Christians sing often to remind us that we have been blessed greatly of God for sending His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins, thus bringing us salvation so rich and so free. What we do afterwards depends on our allegiance to Christ and what He expects from us who have chosen Him as our Lord and Savior. Nothing comes free in this sinful life. There are always consequences to our actions, and how we serve the Lord depends on how much we adore and love Him. Thank you Jesus for giving to us the gift of eternal life and the blessed assurance that, when we close this final chapter of our life and die, we are immediately ushered into glory by an angel of God, and there we shall live in harmony and peace forevermore. Frank F. Combs

# Letters to the Editor

## What's in a Name?

Traipsing around these mountains leaves me with many questions about the places I visit. How did the name of a place come about? Why

How could anybody who lives here full time not notice what has happened to OUR town and county? We are no longer a rural city welcome to the new suburb of Atlanta. Stereos blasting everywhere, choking traffic from one end of 129 to the other. And just try getting to a restaurant at lunch hour or even through town with people pulling out in front of you everywhere. Everyone's in a big hurry, tailgating, speeding for no apparent reason except to get somewhere faster, never mind leaving a little early to get where you need to be on time. All our roads are being trashed with litter. "Me first" seems to rule the day.

We had a nice, small bible belt town, but I guess people moving here didn't want that. They come in and cut down all our beautiful trees, then they plant grass and spend every other day on a riding lawnmower. There is no place left for the poor deer and other animals to go. People driving around with no mufflers or catalytic converters polluting the air with their stink and noise pollution.

I feel sorry for our police having to deal

See Eckman, page 5A

#### Lake Nottely's Health

#### Dear Editor,

The quality of the water in Lake Nottely has been a concern for many residents of Union County for years. This issue reached a boiling point when black-colored leachate from a landfill, containing toxic PFAS, was being added to the City of Blairsville wastewater treatment plant (WTP). The WTP discharges into Butternut Creek and then into Nottely River just before it merges with Coosa Creek to form the mouth of the Lake.

In two emails, I asked the Commissioner how the County was addressing the Lake health issues. His answer was: "Other than our association with Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, we do not perform water quality testing," and, "I agree with you that there should be a regular 'lake health' report of some kind from someone, at least annually." He continued that the County has complete confidence in HRWC (now MountainTrue).

However, in MountainTrue's 2021 report, there appears to be contradictory and generalized statements that are not supported by their data (mountaintrue.org and aas.gaepd. org): "Lakes are largely unbothered by E. coli and other Pathogens"; "Twenty twenty-one has been kind to Hiwassee Lake, Lake Chatuge and Late Nottely. All three produced a total of 11 readings with zero E. coli or other patho-

See Tornabene, page 5A

#### Support Track & Field

#### Dear Editor,

I'm sure most people who live in Union County or subscribe to our paper know what a great school system we have. We have a high graduation rate as well as a high number of our graduates going on to higher education. We have so many fun sports to watch on our home turf, but one sport is impossible for parents and fans to watch unless we go out of town.

We have unbelievable talent in track and field events, yet we have nowhere for competition events. Our old asphalt track is from the '70s and cannot be used now. These kids work hard and compete at state level. I am so proud of every one of them and find it impossible to believe that Union County will not allocate funds to support them.

I believe we can do better. I believe our taxes can be used better. Our kids, Our future. Pamala Kelley

did a person think of naming a place in the way it was named? Some places are evident for the name they are called. However, some leave me wondering.

For example, looking to the northwest while walking off Bald Mountain on the Rocky Lead you can see a cove cut-

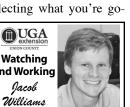
ting into the side of a high ridge. The creek cutting through the cove is called Cross Mountain Branch. The creek appears to be flowing up and across the ridge, hence the name, "Cross Mountain Branch.'

Another interesting place name is "Lord A Mercy Cove," which can be found on the left side of Highway 180 while traveling south toward Tesnatee Gap on the Richard Russell Road. At this point the present road parallels the old Logan Turnpike. I have been told by people that the first folks that came here in a wagon across the turnpike exclaimed "Lord A Mercy" when they first viewed the cove from Tesnatee Gap

Forest Service Road 100 travels along the spine of Stephens Ridge before turning northward. If you drive down this road you will pass through places like Jenkins Gap, named for an ancestor of the Jenkins family, Flint Gap, Sharp Gap and Chestnut Flats. I can guess that Sharp Gap was named due to the fact that it looks as if someone cut a slice out of the mountain. The incline from the ridge top into this gap is very sharp. I am sure Chestnut Flats was named for the many Chestnut trees which must have occupied the place at one time. Just south of this gap an ancient Indian trail can still be seen and followed. It disappears from time to time. But, if you are patient you can pick up the trail as it winds along the side of the ridge toward Trackrock Gap.

Down in Choestoe close to Pine Top Church is a place called the Mitchell Fields. Jerry Dyer took me to this old farmstead where you can still see the foundation of an old Spring House and other outbuildings. As I stood there looking across an area that was once fields of corn and collards, I wondered about the Mitchell Family that once called this place home. In this area you can also find Stink Creek and Smell Branch.

Traveling through Owl Town, if you have the gumption, you can walk up to a ridge line on Forest Service property where you will almost stumble upon the remnants of an old fort. See Cummings, page 5A



as organic or to put the USDA Organic label on a product, you must go through a lengthy certification process. You must be able to prove that your product was made without a long list of synthetic products. To call something 100% Organic that product must have 100% organic ingredients. To call it Organic, it must contain a minimum of 95% organic ingredients. To say that something is Made with Organic, it must have at least 70% of its ingredients organic. A product that says it contains Organic Ingredients does not require certification. The USDA has a lot of regulations about the word organic, and becoming certified organic is not an easy process. Even once you are certified, you must pass periodic inspections to remain certified. Because of this, many products will use the terminology naturally grown, sustainable, locally grown, or other phrases. Usually, these words have a lot less regulation and certification required to use them.

The term hybrid is used to describe seeds. Hybrid seeds are a cross between two parents with desirable traits to create an offspring that has the best of both sides. Those desirable traits could be flavor, disease or insect resistance, yield increase, color, or any number of other things. Hybrids have great uniformity, meaning that as they grow that hybrid looks the same, and will come ready to harvest at the same time. Hybrids can be organic. They can be GMO. Most hybrids are conventionally bred, meaning they are not genetically engineered. Hybrids are a great option for your garden, because they come with so many benefits. The drawback to hybrids is that if you save the seed from them, they won't grow into plants that look like the previous generation. If you want to have the same hybrid year after year, you have to buy the seed. Hybrids started to become more popular in the 1950s. Before hybrids, everyone planted heirlooms.

Heirlooms don't have a strict definition. Typically, people think heirlooms are plant varieties that have been around for a long time. However, this is not always the case. Heirlooms are open-pollinators. This means that you will See Williams, page 5A

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Around The Farm Mickey Cummings

# Paris... continued from Page 4A

of maintaining lake levels at or near full pool for boating and other recreation. However, if the rainfall levels are low, lake levels typically fluctuate accordingly. TVA does have a web site (TVA.com) and an app for your phone so you can keep up with lake levels and it shows their normal guide that they try to maintain assuming normal amounts of rainfall. For Lake Nottley daily water discharge information, residents can visit: https://www. tva.com/environment/lakelevels/nottely.

# Q. What are normal lake levels on Nottely Lake?

A.According to the TVA guide, the lake is at the lowest levels in the winter. For example, on February 11, 2021, the lake hit its lowest levels for the 2020/2021 Winter season at 1760.28 feet above sea level. Generally, it begins to rise in the later part of March and continues until full pool by the middle of May. In another example, the lake hit its highest level for 2021 on May 5, at 1777.84 feet above sea level. The difference between the Winter 2021 low and Summer 2021 high is just over 17 feet for Lake Nottely. It remains at that general level until August or September if there is adequate rainfall. For comparison, Lake Chatuge saw a Winter 2020/2021 low of 1917.19 feet above sea level and a Summer 2021 high of 1926.17 feet above sea level. The difference between the low and high in 2021 for Lake Chatuge is almost 9 feet. At the time of this writing, Lake Nottely stands at 1761.25 above sea level. This data is shown on the TVA Operating Guide for Lake Nottely. More specifically, the guide illustrates the lake level range goals set by TVA. The guide can be found here: https:// www.tva.com/environment/ lake-levels/Nottely/Operating-Guide.

# CummingS... continued from Page 4A

There are many Fort Mountains around north Georgia. On this particular mountain you can still see the foundations of a walled-in area that appears to have been a fort. I have heard many theories about why this fort was built. People have told me it was built by Spaniards to protect them from attacks by either the English or Cherokee. However, I like to think it was built by the Cherokee to protect their villages from the giant bird that once terrorized the local people. This bird swooped down from the high ridges and took away unsuspecting children. Legend has it that a string of forts were built along the Blue Ridge to watch for the terrible bird. One Indian man fell asleep while on duty and the bird attacked his village. As punishment, God struck the man with lightning, and that is how Standing Indian Mountain came to be named.

While on a hike with Harold Dyer we were walking up around Low Gap toward Chattahoochee Gap. The trail follows an old road bed for much of the trail. We came upon a place where stones were stacked upon each other by the CCC boys. These stones were used in the construction of the road bed we were following. Harold began telling me about his father, Little Ed Dyer. Ed and one of his uncles used to have some hogs up around Low Gap, which the two men kept fed. In the fall of each year they would gather the hogs and drive them to market in Gainesville. The men would drive the hogs across the road which Harold and I were walking to Tesnatee Gap and south down the Logan Turnpike to Cleveland and on to Gainesville. But, Harold said the Logan Turnpike was special to him for another reason.

During World War I, Little Ed Dyer went to fight along with many others in that ugly war. After the war, he came home and was stationed at Old Fort Gordon. Upon getting out of the Army, he rode a bus to Gainesville, where he caught a train to Cleveland. He spent the night with a Nix fellow in Cleveland, and the next morning he caught a logging train to Helen. He left the town of Helen on foot and began walking. Near the Tesnatee Gap on the Logan Turnpike, Little Ed hitched a ride with a man named Neel. The man was driving a nice car which was rarely seen in Union County during this time. Also in the car was the man's wife, his daughter and her Nanny. The man told Ed that he was about to build a new road into Union County and was trying to determine which gap to bring the road through. Later Ed took a job with a crew building the new road, and it was built through Walasi-yi Gap. Later in honor or Mr. Neel, the name of the Gap was changed to Neel's Gap.

# Habitat... continued from Page 4A

by and browse the many trees displayed by our local businesses, and get into the Holiday Spirit!

You have probably heard that we are in the process of collecting applications for our next Habitat House. Over the past month or so, we have held four orientation meetings, but if you missed them, it's still not too late! If you know of anyone who might want to apply for our next Habitat House, please encourage that person to call our office at 706-745-7101, and someone will fill them in on what it takes to become a Habitat Homeowner. The deadline for applications is Jan. 7, 2022, so there is still time to apply!

Habitat will have a float in the Blairsville Christmas Parade that starts at 6 p.m. on Dec. 4. Also, before the parade, there will be all sorts of activities on the square, such as pictures with Santa Claus, the Lighting of the Christmas Tree, Christmas Caroling, and several arts and crafts projects for kids. Habitat will have a table there, so bring your kiddos and they can make some Christmas ornaments to take home to hang on their Christmas trees.

Have you ever thought about volunteering with us? We can always use the help! Of course, when we are in the middle of building a house, we always need volunteers to help do things like paint, build

# Williams... continued from Page 4A

have a lot more variability in what the plant looks like. They also will usually have less insect or disease resistance than hybrids do, making them more difficult to grow. Heirlooms help to preserve genetic diversity and connect us to the past, because the seeds carry the same genetics that generations before have planted.

If you have questions about seeds or gardening contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob. williams@uga.edu.

## Fowler... continued from Page 4A

Well-meaning people of an atheist or cultural religion mindset can enjoy the giving and good will of Christmas for now. Just be aware that the truth behind the trappings

beckons you to consider who

Jesus is, and to believe in Him as the living God, the

God of miracles! Everything

decks, lay flooring, do construction cleanup, and install landscaping, just to name a few things. However, we need volunteers for other things too! Our ReStore is open six days a week, and we would love to have you stop by when you can and help our staff organize merchandise, price items, and help customers. We also have a project called "Helping Hands" where we do repairs for homeowners so they can stay in their houses - and we are always looking for volunteers for that.

There are also many small projects and events that we take on, not only to raise money, but also to raise awareness of our mission. We would love to have your help, whether it's an "ongoing" thing, a once-in-a-while thing, or a "one-time" thing... if you have the time, we have the project! Call us at 706-745-7101 or just stop by to see what we have going on, and how you can help.

beach also passed the EPAs 235 cfu/100mL safe standard with flying colors"; "Another one of our worst sites of 2021, Meeks Park II along the Nottely River produced an average E. coli count 324 cfu/100mL and failed to pass the EPA's safe standard 53% of the time"; and so forth.

Tornabene... continued from Page 4A

gens"; "Lake Nottely's Po- the gas bubbling up from the

teete Creek Park swimming lake sediment. An independent

The data listed by MountainTrue showed no evidence that they actually tested sites on Lake Nottely in 2021. Poteete Creek Beach was tested in 2020. Their test results also showed that Butternut Creek and Nottely River that discharge into the lake all had high E. coli counts. They established that Coosa Creek was dirty but they last sampled it in 2016.

The initial sector of Lake Nottely that receives dirty feeder streams is shallow and does not start to deepen until the Pat Colwell Bridge (a distance of approximately 2 miles). This 2 miles is highly populated with lake-front homes, a Club House (that is not contiguous with its three subdivisions), and a commercial boat rental facility. In the summer months the lake water in this sector looks dirty and like champagne with all

study conducted in 2021 provided evidence that this south end of the lake is usually at a high pollution level (28-page report sent October 20, 2021, to MountainTrue, Lake Nottely Improvement Association, Environmental Protection Division, Union County and North Georgia News, as FYI). This study also gave evidence that the water quality greatly improved further downstream. A two-page summary of this report is posted on www.lakenottely.org.

In one of the emails from the County: "It may be difficult to divide the lake up into sections up to Highway 515 from Pat Colwell Bridge. This entire area is almost completely dry other than the stream bed once Winter pool is reached." This statement explains why the health of the lake is an issue – while the pollution in the feeder streams remains relatively constant, the pollution level per unit of Lake water increases as the pool level decreases, and with the accelerated flow it travels further downstream. What is missing is a sanctioned 'regular 'lake health' report of some kind from someone, at least annually." **Thomas G. Tornabene** 

### Georgia Mountains Regional Commission invites public input

Georgia Mountains Regional Commission invites public input for updates of the Joint Comprehensive Plan for Union County and the City of Blairsville

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is assisting Union County and the City of Blairsville with the update of their Joint Comprehensive Plan, the State required document that helps shape and coordinate local work programs for the local governments.

As part of this process there is a brief online survey asking people to give their thoughts on select issues and priorities for the community. This survey will be accessible through December 31, 2021 and is open to anyone with a vested interest in the area. Anyone wishing to participate should visit https://www. surveymonkey.com/r/C22N8-VX. This link and a copy of the current plan will be found on the web site for each local government by November 23, 2021.

There will be multiple PUBLIC FORUMS open to all residents, beginning with a session at the Pat Haralson Memorial Civic Center (165 Wellborn St.) on Monday, November 29. This event will be from 4-7 PM and is a walkin/walk out style forum where people are free to come at any time, visit multiple stations to review materials, submit questions or comments, and then leave at their leisure. There is no fixed presentation.

Any questions about the public involvement process can contact Adam Hazell at the GMRC as listed above. may look different tomorrow morning, per Olasky.

The lyrics of the song "Jesus Saves" (Cottrell and Moffitt) include, "Day is breaking, night is quaking, God is making all things new. Jesus saves!" That is Olasky's darkness-to-light story. He writes, "It's forty-five years later, and my gratitude to God keeps growing. To God be the glory." That can be your story, too.

# Eckman...

continued from Page 4A with and arrest drug users, speeders, and more lawlessness every day. Maybe it was poor planning or only having one commissioner. Whatever the reason, I guess this is what people want. My heart breaks as I watch the new suburb of Atlanta taking shape. George Eckman

### **Dyer**... continued from Page 4A

The EOC is the coordination and information center for the county if there was a major incident or disaster. The class was useful and there were many ideas that were brought back to our EMA.

Union County EMA was happy to attend these classes. We are always trying to learn more and improve in order to better prepare and serve our community. Although EMA may not be on the forefront of everyone's mind, Union County can rest assured that the EMA is there and constantly improving. Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

### Chamber... continued from Page 4A

the kids and the kids-at-heart by to see Santa and play some Reindeer games. And checkout the Chamber website for other events going on around town this week. You don't want to miss them!

Happy Holiday and Merry Christmas!