Opinions

Union County E911 - 2023

Union County E911 Communications Center (UCE911) is a vital component of public safety and emergency operations in Union County. Our E911 Center is what is known as a PSAP, or "public safety answering point." Essentially, it is the 24-hour answering point for the 911 calls for emergency services (such as police, fire department, or emergency medical services/ambulance). These 911 calls

can be from any landline, mobile phone line, or VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) line. UCE911 has the essential job of taking these E911 calls, dispatching the appropriate units, and ensuring that all communication and information is coordinated and recorded.



Fire Dept.

The Union County E911 Center

answered 12,944 emergency 911 calls in 2023. That is an average of approximately 36 emergency 911 calls per day. These 911 calls can include the reporting of criminal activity, motor vehicle accidents, medical emergencies, fires, and many more.

Not only do the dispatchers answer 911 calls but they also take and make numerous other phone calls in the performance of their duties. We classify these calls as administrative calls. They include receiving and disseminating information to public safety organizations, other governmental organizations, local businesses and utilities, as well as the general public. UCE911 answered and made 38,679 administrative calls in 2023. That is an average of 106 administrative calls per day. Together with the E911 calls, the UCE911 Center averages 142 phone calls per day.

Phone calls are just one part of the job at the UCE911 Center. The dispatchers must also talk on the radio. It is estimated that for each phone call taken by the UCE911 Center, there are at least 8 radio transmissions. In 2023, there was a total of 51,623 calls which it is estimated that over 400,000 radio transmissions were performed by the dispatchers. That is over 1,100 radio transmissions per day.

The last major duty of the UCE911 Center is to record information. The information is recorded in the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD). Each call for service is recorded in the CAD. In 2023, there were 37,939 CADs created by the dispatchers. This information is not only for UCE911 records but is also provided to the various public safety organizations for their reports and records. The UCE911 Center had another busy year in 2023. This is

See Dyer, page 5A

Connection

Part of loneliness is being unconnected, feeling aloneness. People have a psychological need for physical attachments. The connection may come from parents, close friends, family members, and romantic partners. When such connections are disrupted, for whatever reason,

the individual can feel miserable, sad and anxiety-stricken. People who are lonely crave human contact, but their state of mind makes it difficult to form

Successful Mental Health Dr. James Ray Ashurst PH. D.

connections with others. When we experience loneliness, we might question who we are that has resulted in an unconnected behavior towards others. We can be cut off from another person or a group of friends. A lonely person can feel unfocused or even empty inside because he or she has been disconnected from loved ones.

> Loneliness is proof that your innate search for connection is intact. -Martha Beck

> > See Ashurst, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Potholes Repaired

Dear Editor.

The potholes that were particularly egregious at the intersection of the Murphy Highway and 515 have been filled. Thank you to our county or DOT for the quick response, although I suspect the quick action was the result of our county commissioner getting involved! Thanks, Lamar.

Everybody has one...

Pursue Love

It was a cold and foggy night last December. I was on the train to London. At one stop a young woman boarded and sat just across from me. She wore an elegant, burgundy dress and delicate jewelry. In her arms were a dozen red roses. Her wistful smile suggested a tender memory.

Her adorned presence announced that love was in the air.

It made the trip a bit more pleasant, which brings me to this thought. Love makes your trip through life more pleasant, doesn't it? The challenge, though, is knowing what true love is, and how to recognize and express it.



It's an easy challenge if you can define love any way you please. But you can't. As country

singer Johnny Lee croons, "I was lookin' for love in all the wrong places." To make matters worse, love and hate are weaponized these days. Contradict someone's choices and you risk being called a hater. "The so-called new morality has increased the confusion," George Sweeting wrote, "by stating that there are no absolutes in our world except love and that whatever is done in love must be right."

It's true that we need an absolute standard for love. "Anything goes" is a confusing, harmful idea. The right standard is what the Bible says: "God is love." He defines and demonstrates love. "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the (payment) for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 Jn. 4). God expresses love for you by addressing the truth about your soul's need for a Savior.

God's standard for love includes embracing truth and taking action. To ignore, endure, or propagate a lie is not loving. Francis Schaeffer wrote, "The Christian has to practice both God's holiness and God's love ... Not love without holiness - that is only compromise." True love brooks no compromise with what God has revealed to be right and good. True love is sacrificial, which Jesus knew when He said to love one another "just as I have loved you" (John 15:12). True love is patient, humble, and

See Fowler, page 5A

I HEARD THEY

GAVEHIM

SUPER BOWL

TICKETS FOR

HIS EFFORTS.

Commissioner's Questions

This week, I will be providing some basic data/facts about Union County. Some of these may be linked, but some will seem random. Most of these items are not known by Blairsville residents, but the information can be very handy to have under certain circumstances. If nothing else, they make for great conversation when talking with others in the community.

Some Union **County**, Georgia **General Facts as** of January, 2024



- There are: 11 Voting Precincts
- There are: 6 Emergency Response Precincts
- There are: 116 Documented Cemeteries
- There are: 84 Churches
- There are: 1035 Fire Hydrants
- There are: 13 Fire Stations
- There are: 10 Helicopter Landing Zones
- There are: 44 Officially Permitted Billboards
- There are: 13 Cell Towers
- There are: 20,087 Addresses
- There are: 5 School Districts
- There are: 90 Locations Reported To Have Aeds (Automated External Defibrillators)
- There are: 52 Knox Box locations
- There are: 10 RV Parks
- There are: 551 Properties Holding Active **Short-Term Rental Business Licenses**

Chamber of Commerce

I would like to thank all those that attended An Evening with the STARs last week. It was very inspirational to hear each student speak of their educational experiences and their plans for the future. Based on what we heard, the future is bright.

I have had an opportunity to spend time around our College and Career Academy, and the work they are doing is cutting edge. They



are aligning the pathways to meet the needs of our local businesses, but they are also creating pathways that will give students the best opportunities to find jobs and find careers once they graduate. They are working to combine classroom requirements with real life applications. At a recent conference the facilitator stated that UCHS should be leading the program based on their innovative thinking. And let's not forget the skills and financial literacy education our youth receive.

See Chamber, page 5A

Raised Bed Soils

Last week I talked about the different materials that can be used to construct a raised bed. This week I want to talk about what we put in the raised beds. There are many different options out there, some are better than others are, and some are cheaper than others are. So let's talk through some options for soil **UGA** extension in your raised garden bed. Watching Before filling and Working up your raised garden bed figure out Jacob how many cubic feet Williams





Letters to the Editor **Making A Difference**

Dear Editor,

Late in the cold evening of Sunday, February 4th, I was scrambling to offer comfort and humane assistance to a lost blind miniature terrier dog that suddenly showed up on my front porch. I called my neighbors to find out if anyone was missing this cute creature that appeared to be in great stress, dirty and trembling from such cold weather walking in the dark, thirsty and hungry after a long scary journey. I was able to wrap her in a large towel and build temporary accommodations for her to rest and regain some security Early the next morning, I contacted Animal Control, where Deputy Vickie Stewart was quick to help me with her kind words; minutes later Deputy Stewart was knocking at my front door and promptly assessing the situation. With her dedication, knowledge and lovecaring attitude, Deputy Vickie Stewart not only took control of the situation - in a matter of minutes, she found the owners of this little blind dog and returned her home safe and sound. Public officials like Deputy Vickie Stewart must be recognized and praised for their incredible everyday work, many times overlooked, supporting our community and our values. Deputy Stewart is Making A Difference. Gratefully,

Servicing

OH, PLEASE/ HE HAD THE SWIFT/KELCE

ACCOUNT! HOW

HARD WAS THAT ?!

Words can have a profound affect upon our everyday lives. If you say a word with few specifics attatched I may not fully understand what you are trying to communicate. And I may completely miss what you are saying. If you tell a person from the North to crack that window, that person may think you Around want the window The Farm to be physically broken. However, Mickey those of us from the southern Appa-Cummings lachians know we

Larry Madison

Workforce Housing

Dear Editor,

"Workforce Housing." Hmmm... Sounds good; but what is a small-town (I use the term lovingly referring to Blairsville) American government agency(?) doing funding a housing development? Sounds like something that a developmental contractor would do... not the government. So this is just subsidized housing for the not-working people. "Workforce Housing" indeed!

People who are working like hospital workers, school teachers, make salaries and buy homes like the rest of us! They obtain mortgages, and there are plenty of homes out there for these people. Hospital workers and school teachers would not even qualify for this housing as it is for "low income" people.

What this is, is simply subsidized hous-ing for people who basically do not work. The LORD calls on his people to care for the needy, and we respond here in Blairsville with food

See Wells, page 5A

Funding Ukraine

Dear Editor,

Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, recently spoke on the Senate floor about our failure to agree on further aid for Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression. Sen. King said, "Whenever people write to my office asking why we are supporting Ukraine, I answer, Google Sudetenland, 1938. We could have stopped a murderous dictator who was bent on geographic expansion ... at a relatively low cost. The result of not doing so was 55 million deaths."

Sen. King is speaking of the German annexation of the area in Czechoslovakia known as The Sudetenland and the appeasement of Hitler by Great Britain and France in advance of World War II.

In current times, the threat is Putin and Russia invading Ukraine while our Congress is wasting time arguing about funding Ukraine in this fight. Many believe Putin will not stop with Ukraine but will push to expand further just as See Connell, page 5A

AnaLuisa Salvatti

Political Baseline

Dear Editor,

Back when I was a youngster and dirt was new, neighbors could vote this way or that and still swap hunting stories over hamburgers on Saturdays

My Grandpap, a lifelong union railroad foreman and former boxer, could vote Democrat while sporting an anti-abortion sticker on his Plymouth. That was when folks in both parties could celebrate life, family and Country without being hypocrites.

Currently, even the most "moderate" of democrats in the U.S. Legislature are 100% proabort, and I don't mean any of that '70s "first trimester" hockum; I mean "till birth" and even after (!) Even France isn't that over-the-top.

Five of my nieces and nephews were born at least four weeks early, and politicians in DC are supporting death for these "clumps of cells" way past some of my family's actual birth dates.

What's their problem? Well, if you notice the cities that regularly go amuck over this, that or the other, they have one thing in common - they are poor and they are Democrat run, perennially.

Tip O'Neil, one of the last agreeable Dem-See Tarter, page 5A

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want you to roll down the window. So, keep this in mind as you read the following story.

As two young boys, my Dad and his brother Bud experienced a word that confused them, or so they said. The word at the source of the confusion was "service." The two young boys had heard the word many times. But, it took time for them to fully comprehend that the word could have many different meanings.

Immediately after World War II, Papa was able to purchase a new truck to be used on their farm. A tractor was also purchased in quick succession. A few months after the purchase Papa took the vehicles back to the dealer to have them "serviced." Dad and Bud watched the mechanic work on changing fan belts, changing the oil and greasing the joints of the vehicles. The two boys were fascinated by the way the grease gun worked and wished to try out this contraption. However, the mechanic was wise in the ways of young boys and realized the mess which would be created by two boys with a grease gun.

Another way they had heard the word used was associated with the local Church. They had been to church "services." They had watched old Mattie sit on the right side of the church using a deep baritone voice to laugh out loud and holler "Amen" when the preacher said something that blessed his soul. They also watched as the big man chawed "Blood Hound" tobacco and spat the juice out the window on hot summer days.

It was at a service such as this one where their friend, Tucker, slipped outside during the preaching and placed nails in front of old man Newell's logging truck in hopes of him getting a flat tire. The two Cummings boys slipped out during the ending prayer and tried to retrieve these nails. The boys knew that Tucker was wrong for placing the nails in front of the truck, and they also knew they would get the blame. Their pockets were nearly full and they were retrieving the last nail when the old man found the two. He grabbed them by the arm and drug them to their Daddy. Papa asked See Cummings, page 5A

of soil you will need.

This is a simple calculation of multiplying length by width by height. Let's use the dimensions 8 feet X 4 feet X 10 inches. In this case, we would multiply 8x4x0.833 because 10 inches is 0.833 feet. The answer is 26.66 cubic feet. If we wanted to convert cubic feet to a cubic yard, we would divide our cubic feet by 27. This means that we have close to one cubic yard of volume.

Now that we have the math out of the way and know how much material we need let's talk about what materials can be used. Obviously, you can use top soil to fill the raised bed. If you have extra top soil nearby this might make sense for you. Otherwise, I don't think that it's a great option. Top soil is not regulated in terms of what is in it. So you might have many chunks of bark that haven't started decomposing. If you don't know the source of top soil, it will also contain weed seeds that will grow and compete with your plants.

Another option would be to go to the store and buy bags of soil that are made for raised beds. This would give you quality soil in the beds. The flip side is that you're going to spend a lot of money doing it. You could easily spend \$\$\$ for soil using the dimensions I talked about earlier. If the money is not a problem, this is a quick and easy solution.

Compost is a great way to fill your raised beds. However, beds shouldn't be 100% compost, they need some soil in their too. Compost that has completely composted will provide many nutrients to the soil. If you have your own compost you can use that, or you can buy compost in bulk. Some companies will deliver or if you have a pickup truck, you can use that. You can also buy compost in bags. A product like Black Kow is an example. Buying bags will be more expensive. One drawback to using compost is that the pH will most likely be high. This can lead to some nutrient shortages. Another thing to keep in mind with compost is that it will continue to decompose. This means that the amount you have will decrease and more will need to be added periodically.

The lasagna method is a popular way to fill raised beds. You alternate layers of brown and See Williams, page 5A

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Williams... continued from Page 4A Remembering Melva Lynn Drake

"... early superstar on UCHS girls' basketball team."

By Jack V. Colwell

I was saddened to learn of the recent death of Melva Lynn McAfee Drake, 86, and I found her obituary online. She was one of my classmates in the Union County High School graduation class of 1954, and I had kept in contact with her some through the years by mail and phone. Comments with the obituary described her as a sweet and kind person, which she definitely was.

I have not lived in Blairsville since high school. I have only a few distant relatives there, and I know very few present Union County people. I have not subscribed to the North Georgia News in recent years. I do not know whether anything has been published about Melva Lynn's basketball stardom. She was an early superstar on the UCHS girls' basketball team.

I was privileged to be a basketball starter my senior year when Jack Lance Sr., then a junior, was the first superstar on the boys' basketball team. When Jack died a few years ago, a lot was published about his basketball record as well as his other outstanding accomplishments. I do not know whether Melva Lynn has been remembered anywhere as the great player she was but am writing this to recall a few facts about her record.

The game of high school basketball has changed a lot since 1954, especially girls' basketball. Then, the girls played half court with three guards and three forwards, none of whom could cross the center line because full court play was considered too strenuous for them. The boys' team got a lot of attention, and girls' basketball was subjugated.

1954 must have been one of the best, if not the best, overall season for combined winning percentage of boys and girls for UCHS basketball. The girls' regular season record was 18-2 and they lost a close game to Clayton in the tournament. Their overall winning percentage was 86. The boys had a 19-1 record against high school teams and won the home games among the four played against the Young Harris College Junior Varsity, and the North Georgia College Freshmen. They lost by 1 point to Clayton in the tournament and finished with a 24-4 won-lost record for a percentage of 84.



Melva Lynn Drake (1937-2024)

I have records that Jack and Melva Lynn had almost identical averages in points scored. Both averaged 22 points per game. Her average, in fact, was a fraction of a point higher than his. In her last game, a 48-44 loss to Clayton in the tournament, she scored 40 of her team's 44 points. Their averages could have been higher, but Coach Butterworth did not believe in running up the score against weak teams. He often took the starters out as early as in the second quarter and let the bench players finish the game.

I was very interested in statistics after my senior season, and very complete records had been kept for the boys' team. Girls' basketball got far less attention than it deserved. All kinds of statistics, including such as rebounds and interceptions, were kept for the boys, but only points scored for the girls.

I prepared a loose leaf notebook of about 75 pages about the early years of basketball at UČHS and gave a copy to the museum in the old Blairsville courthouse. It indicates that the gymnasium was completed in the spring of 1950, and by 1954, we had two of the best teams in North Georgia. Every score beginning with four games, all losses, against B teams that were played during school hours in the spring of 1950 was preserved. From 1951 through 1954, every schedule with regular season and tournament scores and box scores is included in the notebook. On the cover of the notebook are pictures of four people who helped UCHS rise from the bottom to the top in high school basketball in less than five years. They are Principal C.R. Collins, Coach J.B. Butterworth, Jack Lance, and Melva Lynn McAfee. Early stardom in UCHS basketball is something well worth remembering about Melva Lynn.

green material. Brown material is dry leaves, shredded newspaper, peat, and pine needles. Green materials are vegetable scraps, garden trimmings, and grass clippings. The green materials contain nitrogen and the brown materials contain carbon. Make the brown layers twice as thick as the green layers and it will compost down into a good material into which you can plant.

If you have beds that are

Tarter... continued from Page 4A

ocrat (or any) Speakers of the House, famously said that "all politics is local.'

Meaning that you need to keep tabs on who's running below the radar in your local elections. Because THEY have more effect on our lives than do the Congressdoobies in the U.S. Capitol North of Richmond.

Which brings me to my point (sigh of relief).

Local candidates for office often have an irritating and potentially misleading habit of not identifying the political

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

just a glimpse of the many vital actions and duties performed by the UCE911 Center and the dedicated dispatchers who work there.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~ and included in that family are the E911 dispatchers.

Ashurst... continued from Page 4A

All of us desire intimate friendships. But how do we connect with them? It just does not take place automatically. Such a relationship happens over time because it requires effort and work. One has to prove to the other that the element of care and support is certainly involved and needed. Each person, through positive action, must demonstrate a caring outreach. It can't be just in words. It must also include action! Without actions, the word "intimate" will be absent from the wonderful formula of a relationship.

The loneliness you feel is actually an opportunity to reconnect with others and yourself. -Lagrace

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

The future is bright for

our students, and we should give a big Thank You to our Union County School System for facilitating "Success for All."

Education will help keep

very deep another option is the put branches in the bottom to fill up space. The branches will break down over time, giving you good material in which to grow. My preference is to use a third native soil, third bagged soil, and a third compost to fill up the raised bed.

If you have questions about filling your raised bed contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob. Williams@uga.edu.

party that they are affiliated with. In 1965, that wasn't as suspect as is it nowadays with COMPLETELY different ideas on ethics, criminality and constitutional rights between the two parties.

After the Herr Fauci and CDC/FDA nonsense of the past three years, do YOU think party affiliation isn't a long-term indicator of what could happen here again, and possibly worse right here in River City?

There is zero, zed, nada chance of me voting for soda pop commissioner if they aren't up-front with me about their party affiliation and WHY.

That's the baseline for determining their other qualities.

J. Murray Tarter

friend Tucker. As a result, the two boys received a severe whipping.

two boys didn't utter a word.

They would not give up their

CummingS... continued from Page 4A

them about the nails, and the that variation of the word ser-

Stein girl.

Other ways in which the word, "service" was used included funerals. When my Papa was about 7, a young girl in the community named Imogene died from Scarlet Fever. She was the only child in her family and was adored by her Daddy. So, naturally there was much grief in the family. My great-grandfather Lon was a master of many trades, including sawyer, miller and blacksmith. He was very good at woodworking, and it was his tradition to make caskets for people in the community. I've been told that he made more than 300 coffins for his neighbors during his lifetime. I digress, so let me get back to the story. After the girl's death, my great-grandparents traveled to Haleyville, Alabama, on a cold and icy day to purchase the lining for the coffin of this little girl while Lon built the coffin of hand-planed whiteoak boards.

Papa went with his Dad to the Stein home and retrieved the little girl. They placed her inside the coffin, then loaded the coffin in the back of the wagon and hauled her 1.5 miles to Union Hill Church. After the service, he watched as the coffin was placed in the ground and covered with soil. Needless to say the young boy was not fond of

Connell... continued from Page 4A

Hitler did in his day.

Sen. King said "People say Putin will stop with Ukraine, but the Finns don't think so. The Swedes don't think so. The Baltic countries don't think so, and the Finns and the Swedes know Russia."

Mr. King is right. The U.S. must provide funding for Ukraine in its efforts to stop this modern-day dictator and his invasion of a democratic neighbor. Penny Connell

Another way the word service was used was when Dad's older cousin joined the "service" during the Korean war. He sacrificed his life while saving a wounded soldier from capture during this war.

vice after this event with the

As you can see, the word "service" was used many different ways during the young life of Paul Cummings. So, it came as no surprise when one morning at breakfast the boys heard their father say, "Today, I am going to take the old sow over to the Pinkard's to be serviced." The two boys really wanted to see this event. But, their mother refused to let them go. They were told they had to split stove wood. After Papa left, the boys were working at making a big pile of split wood. Granny brought each of them a biscuit for a late morning snack when Paul decided to ask a question. He had been thinking all morning about that word "service" and needed clarification.

So, as they each sat down for their break, he asked, "Mom, is Papa taking the old

sow to church?" Granny was puzzled at the question and told him no. He continued and said that is the only service he could think of when Bud chimed in, "No, Papa is taking the old sow to Russellville to get serviced at the place where they worked on our tractor, ain't he Mom." Their questions continuued in quick succession. "Well, is he going to place her in a coffin like they did with Imogene? Is the Old Sow going to the Army? How are they going to get the grease from that grease gun into her legs? You know there ain't no fittins on her hocks."

Their mother was nearly beside herself with all these questions. She had a look of puzzlement on her face and yet she looked as if she would laugh at any time. About this time their Papa came back in the driveway and she said, "Boys, you need to ask your Daddy." They never got their questions answered, and that word "service" still puzzled the young boys for many years.

life better in Blairsville!

Fowler... continued from Page 4A

selfless. It bears burdens, forgives wrongs, and is not easily offended (1 Cor. 13). To pursue these is to adorn yourself with the Father's love.

"Someone must love you," I said to the young woman on the train. She smiled. "Actually, these are for my dad. He has been abroad for a long time, so I decided to dress up to meet him at the airport!" She adorned herself to express love. But her father loved her first.

Wells... continued from Page 4A

pantries, church donations, and a loving community that works together. It is not the job of government! These subsidies are everywhere in Atlanta; we do not need a repeat of that here. It brings crime, drugs, gangs and all the things we do not want in our hometown. Now, where do the people of Blairsville get a vote on this? Valerie Wells

Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse



February 13, 2024 In memory of John & Virginia B. Meeks on their wedding anniversary by Ginger and Terry Meeks

February 18, 2024 In honor of **Ruby Jones** on her 90th birthday by Pat and Larry Clay **Bell ringing information** at 706-745-5493