

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Union Alert

Community emergencies are emergencies that involve a large portion of the community or the entire community. They can be high risk events that happen very quickly. These emergencies may include severe weather, hazardous materials, wildland fires, or a number of other significant incidents that can affect a community. One of the best ways to prepare for such emergencies is to stay informed. Union County Emergency Management is dedicated to keeping the community up-to-date on events and providing information on emergencies that may affect the community. The Union County Alert Emergency Notification System is one way that we keep everyone informed.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



The Union County Alert Emergency Notification System (Union Alert) is an alert system operated in cooperation with Union County Government, Union County Emergency Management and Union County 911 Communications Center. It is designed to instantly reach registered cell phones, landline numbers, emails, pagers, and desktops when an urgent alert needs to be communicated.

Situations such as the wildland fires in Gatlinburg; the tornadoes in South Georgia; the dam failure in California or even the boil water alert are all examples of how these alerts can better serve you and the community. The alerts can warn people in the area of hazardous or dangerous situations as well as provide some instructions such as boil water, shelter-in-place, take cover from severe weather, or evacuate to another area. In the event of an emergency or significant event, the 911 Center or Emergency Management may send an alert to the devices that are registered in the system.

Receiving Union Alert messages is voluntary. People who wish to receive these alerts must register with the system. There are several ways to register. You may call 706-439-6056 to speak to someone in the 911 mapping division who can register your device over the phone. You may also register on-line by visiting tinyurl.com/ucwens. Here you will be able to register the devices (cell phone, email, landline, etc.) and choose which alerts that you wish to receive. Entering your address (street address) is very important because alerts can be sent to specific locations or geographical areas

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Body of Christ

Flying on the wings of Delta somewhere over the Mississippi River last week, I marveled again at how clouds appear from above. I chuckled to myself as I realized how we tend to describe what we cannot touch with what we can. Clouds really do look like wispy, pulled-apart cotton from topside. Metaphor, similar, and the “ladder of abstraction” are language tools to communicate an idea from the concrete to the abstract.

Building the church is what Jesus said He would do. Our mistake is to never elevate our understanding of it beyond the visible building, meetings, and programs. C. S. Lewis used vivid imagery in describing the problem. In “Screwtape Letters,” he imagined a demon describing the church as “spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners. But fortunately it is quite invisible to these humans.”

Apostle Paul used the human body to explain that believers are the visible part of something larger than themselves. “All the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.” He continues, “God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.” The outcome of that union is that the members have various roles, we need each other, and we share joys and pains. To make it startlingly clear, and perhaps no longer a metaphor, he wrote, “Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12). As nice as civic and fraternal clubs and associations are, only the living church made up of individual members saved by grace through faith, is described as Christ’s body. Jesus ascended after the resurrection, but he left his followers behind as visual evidence of his remaining presence.

Now what are we to do with that? The body is much better served when believers find common ground with fellow followers of Jesus, rather than focusing on denomination differences. Jesus urged unity as vital to his mission, praying that “they may all be one, even as You Father, are in Me and I in You, that they

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



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Commissioner’s Questions

Q. We have had several people ask how they can access the maps that were on display at the GDOT Open House Meeting regarding the future widening of Highway 19/129 North. Below are specific directions that should help you in finding any of the maps on-line. Go On-Line to www.dot.ga.gov/PS/Public/PublicOutreach

1. Toward the middle of the screen it says Search Public Outreach. Under this there is a drop down menu By County. Select Union County and then click Go.

2. Then you are given the option to choose from the different GDOT projects in Union County. Click on Widening SR11/Murphy Hwy

3. Then you can click on the links below the Document Each of these links shows you the maps and diagrams that were presented at the Open House.

Q. Since the new area of the Transfer Station is so nice, what additional upgrades will the county be making in the future?

A. We will be working with our garbage contractor, Advanced Disposal, to come up with a final plan on how to improve the situation at the old part of the transfer station. It is not a simple solution because it involves our existing transfer building, which is in very bad repair, and it involves redoing the scale house.

Q. How can the Transfer Station continue to operate with the main building and scale house out of operation?

A-1 We are not sure that it can. One option is to close the old part of the facility for 45 - 60 days and send all commercial garbage to Advanced Disposal’s Blue Ridge station. It is located about 5 miles from the county line on Highway 515 West, just behind the convenience store on Highway 60.

A-2 The second option is to completely move the building location to a different part of the property and keep the current building in operation while constructing a new building. This also has its problems as EPD is required to approve any movement of the facility on site, as it must not be placed on or near part of the original land fill.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



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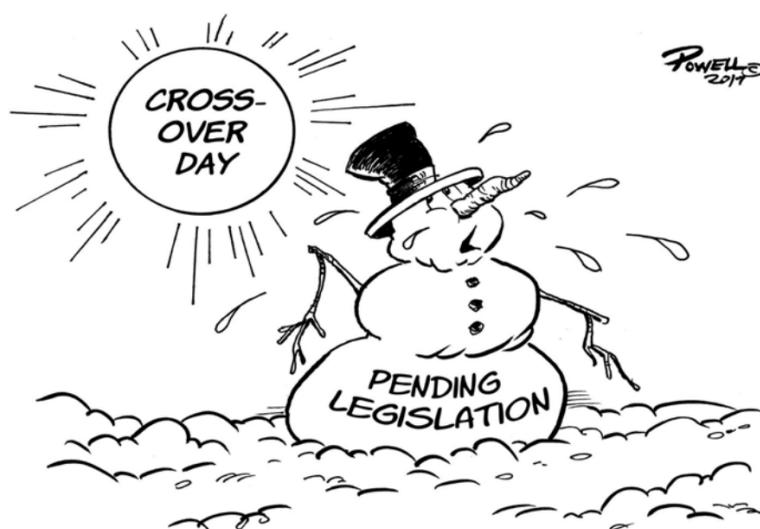
Fentanyl Overdose Deaths are on the Rise

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) stated that 33,091 people died from opioid overdoses in 2015, which accounts for 63 percent of all drug overdose deaths in the same year. A recent report from the CDC found that drug deaths from fentanyl and other synthetic opioids, other than methadone, rose 72 percent in just one year, from 2014 to 2015.

Last year, the death of music icon Prince was linked to fentanyl and the prescription drug has become a source of concern for government agencies and law enforcement officials alike, as death rates from fentanyl-related overdoses and

The mission of the Union County Anti-Drug Coalition is to support an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

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A Shivaree

A “Shivaree” was a big part of most marriage celebrations during my parents and grandparents younger years. I think today we are all too busy (checking our social media page) for this type of activity. Don’t get me wrong I enjoy participating in the social media we find on the internet. However, the social media we use via our computers cannot really forge long lasting friendships developed when we rub elbows with one another. To me the social networks are only tools I can use to keep up with friends.

A Shivaree was a custom during my grandfather’s time. The event was held after a marriage ceremony. Remember, there was no such thing as a trip to the beach or mountains for one’s honeymoon. After my grandparents married they were allowed to live in “the weaning off house” until they could afford to get a place of their own. After their marriage ceremony Papa and Granny knew that the “Shivaree” was coming to their place.

After dark Papa heard the “Shivaree” coming. About 15-20 of their friends and relatives walked down the lane to their house. The group of people was all singing a song. These friends of Papa and Granny built up a large fire in the front yard of “weaning off house”. Some of the group kept up the singing while the rest of the group roasted some chickens and made coffee. Then about every 15-20 minutes the group would parade around the house beating on the walls with pots and pans. Every now and then someone from the group would knock on the door to ask about borrowing some sugar or salt. Papa said, “And you had better answer if they knock or things might get rowdy”. The “Shivaree” would last the entire evening and the group would not go home until dawn the next morning. Papa said, “My friends were up all night in our front yard and no amount of pleading could convince them to leave”.

Papa also participated in some of these shivarees. He remembered one where the group of boys took things a little too far. He said, “We walked around the house beating on the walls with frying pans and singing. We even knocked on the door to ask for some salt. But, we heard many a peep from inside. So, one of the boys decided we should go in and steal the groom”. The group of boys walked into the house and down the hall to the bedroom. They flung open the bedroom door and grabbed up the protesting groom and carried him outside.

The group of boys walked around the house carrying the groom above their heads while they all sang “Oh Susanna”. When the group reached the west corner of the house the leader kept walking all the way to Little Bear Creek which was

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



Letters to the Editor...

Help Me Out Folks!

Dear Editor,

Well, well! Question: “So if you are a Governor or Governor’s Chief of Staff, you feel you have the clout to demand everyone to think as you do?”

Maybe some computer savvy can do a little digging to see just how bright Governor Deal and Mr. Chris Riley’s halos shine!

Help me out folks! It is scary! Right in our own front yards, we had better stand to attention and vote the way “the man” wants us to!

Sincerely,
Jean Holsapple

P.S. At age 83, I promise you my halo has tarnish and you don’t have to check it out - I’ll tell you!

It’s Just a Number

Dear Editor,

I happened to attend bingo last Wednesday the 15th at the Civic Center and something quite outstanding happened.

I was sitting towards the back of the room and noticed when the caller called “a number” and you would hear a soft “oooh.” However, one of those times some lady sitting at the table in front of me happened to yell “yeehaw.” Of course, the majority of the people laughed but this seemed to bring the worst of the caller’s attitude.

He proceeded to say in a very loud, emphatic tone of voice that he would not accept any more comments when “that number” was called. He then proceeded to say, “This is my house and there are children here...” That really caught my attention.

First of all, he is probably in charge of the bingo but that is not his house. It sounded narcissistic and dictatorial. This building

See Young, page 5A

Believe It Or Not

Dear Editor,

We are living in the last days folks believe it or not. It’s going to happen in a twinkling of an eye. How fast can you blink your eye. Jesus Christ is coming back as He promised He would and when He does He is going to catch a lot of folks unprepared for heaven and yes millions of people don’t believe there is a heaven or hell. Today hell is ridiculed, but that doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist. Our beliefs are sometimes only wishful thinking. Example. It was the popular notion that Hitler would not plunge Europe into war and turn Europe into a holocaust of flaming fire, but he did. Many folks didn’t believe that Japan would ever attack America. Well whether

See Combs, page 5A

Financial Responsibility

Dear Editor,

Dear Senator Steve and Congressman Matt:

It’s all about financial responsibility and thoughtful budgeting. The Superintendent of the Forsyth County schools is paid \$500k per year — plus benefits. Why? Because it’s a feather in the school board’s cap to be able to claim that they’ve “improved education”; that they’ve “afforded the best.”

I’ve never been able to understand why that rubric doesn’t apply to classroom teachers. A State-wide sales tax would require advanced, thoughtful budgeting against the inevitable day when lean times come ‘round again. ESPLIST funds, which are tenuous, and which are based on tourism, too often encourage spending for the

See Mitchell, page 5A

Sales Tax

Dear Editor,

The Georgia state sales tax rate is currently 4%. The combined sales tax rate for Union County and Blairsville, GA is 7%. This is the total of state, county and city sales tax rates.

If we (Union County) add a penny to the sales tax rate, it will be a “whopper” 8%. We don’t want to be a high tax rate zone.

Benny Matthews

More Questions to Ponder

Dear Editor,

Perhaps because I am a senior-citizen, I remember the way things used to work quite well. Most problems were solved within the family or extended family, or perhaps with neighbors; help from the church or charitable organizations was sometimes required, and in the case of serious need, the city or county resources were called into play. Actually, as a child of WWII, I didn’t know we were “poor,” because everyone seemed to be in the same situation, and help from any form of government was non-existent—and most people would not have asked for it anyway.

These days, many problems are solved the same way, and charitable organizations are the ones which step in to help. Some people volunteer to provide for their church’s outreach program (food, clothing, counseling, etc); others support the humane society; or Habitat for Humanity; they send funds to charities like the groups that fund research for heart disease, or cancer, or a myriad of other causes.

But I do not understand—if there are charities that help pregnant women and children—why aren’t there charities which support abortion to fund that? Why do you and I, as taxpayers, have our taxes used for this purpose? Most of my acquaintances who Respect Life go beyond simply donating money and time, they actually

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Chamber Events

The next Chamber Master’s Breakfast (Members Achieving Success Through Education & Related Services) will be held on March 2nd from 8 a.m. - 10 a.m. at the Union County Community Center.

We want to thank GnG Bakery and Café for sponsoring the breakfast. It is our goal to maximize our members’ success, the community’s competitiveness and the area’s economic prosperity. Come out and find out how to get the most of your Chamber membership. Space is limited, so be sure to register on the Chamber website at VisitBlairsvilleGa.com or by calling the Chamber office at 706-745-5789.

Be sure to also mark your calendar for Wednesday, March 8th from 11:30 a.m. - 12:30

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber
Regina Allison



Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Hemlocks are an integral part of our forest ecosystems. They provide shelter for animals in the winter, keep streams cool, and aid in maintaining unique plant communities. However, for almost 70 years, our native hemlocks have been under a heavy amount of stress from the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA). If you have seen small, white, fuzzy spots on your hemlock trees, they are undoubtedly infested with this little critter and, if the tree is left untreated, HWA will suck the life out of it.

HWA was first detected in the eastern part of the United States in 1951, though it had been on the West Coast since the 1920s. It is native to Asia, and it is thought it was introduced on an imported Asian hemlock tree. Since its detection, it has spread to 18 states, including Georgia, and has devastated hemlock stands throughout the Appalachians. In the native habitat, HWA populations rarely cause damage because Asian hemlocks have developed resistance to it, and it has many natural predators in this environment. However, our native hemlocks do not have the same defenses and it has no predators here, allowing populations to explode and drain the life out of trees.

This insect has a unique and complex life cycle with six stages: one egg, four nymphal (immature) phases, and one adult. Adult females that overwinter are oval-shaped, soft-bodied and black, but have a characteristic “woolly” appearance (hence their name). Newly hatched HWAs are reddish brown and readily crawl or disperse on the wind to find new places to feed. They will often spread to a new branch or tree and situate themselves at the base of the needles. They have specialized sucking mouthparts that are like needles which they inject into the twig to access the tree’s nutrients. Once they insert their mouthparts, they stay attached to the tree for the rest of their lives as they mature and produce eggs of their own.

HWA is found most often on the newest growth because this is where the tree directs the most nutrients. However, as they feed, the tree senses the attack and blocks off affected area. This not only disrupts nutrients from getting to the insects but also to the rest of the tree beyond where they are feeding. This leads to branch death and, depending on the infestation, death of the entire tree. The greater the population of HWA on a tree, the more dramatic the hemlock’s immune response, and the sooner it dies.

The best way to treat HWA problems is to prevent them. You can do this by treating your hemlocks with an insecticide (usually imidacloprid) that is injected into the soil. This allows the roots to take up the chemical and spread it

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UGA extension
From the Ground Up
Melissa Mattee



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