

## Paris - A ... continued from Page 4A

Other type of minor offense, but it still all involves "choice." So, I do not feel badly if prisoners have to sleep on a mattress on the floor, if it is a little more crowded than they would like or maybe they cannot watch the channel on TV they want. As long as the prisoners are safe and the employees are safe, the concerns lessen. Remember, we average about 60-65 prisoners and often into the 50s, so while we are overcrowded, it is not severe overcrowding and if it increases occasionally, we will have to send more to other jails, which up to a reasonable point, is much less expensive than building a new jail.

Prisoners should be glad that they were not in the jail of the famous Maricopa County, Arizona Sheriff, Joe Orpaio. He made his prison an example to prisoners, forcing them to sleep in metal frame tents out in the desert heat for years now since 1993, with no air conditioning. It could be a lot worse.

**Q. What is the State of Georgia doing about prison overcrowding?**

## Cummings... continued from Page 4A

ran out to find Euler and Delph (Carolynn's mother).

The girls found their mothers under the shade tree. The mother's backs were to the girls so the girls were approaching them from behind. Just as the girls reached their mothers Little Bit called to her mother, "Mommy, Carolynn made me look like a movie star". Aunt Euler turned to find the curly locks gone from her daughter's

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and the lack of responsibility of the Sheriff's Office and Blairsville Police Department to do anything about it.

I am 75 years old and have lived in Blairsville for 17 years. As an older person I drive much slower than I once did. I try to pull over when I can to allow people to pass. I drive in the slow lane on Hwy 515. I signal to let people pull out in front of me when I can. In all my slow driving years here, I have only received a couple of horn honks, never a bird flip and usually a wave as people pass me.

I think Sheriff Mason and the Blairsville Police do an excellent job keeping our county safe. The people of Blairsville, for the most part, are kind courteous and polite. I know some people are in a bigger hurry than I am and

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es and save money.

The event offers residents and visitors an opportunity to explore various local businesses and save on featured items in the store!

Residents and guests who are interested in receiving the coupons via email can sign up for the e-newsletter on the Chamber website or give us a call at (706) 745-5789.

Coupons will be available two weeks prior to the event at participating local businesses, the Chamber office located at 129 Union

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a 10-year "conservation use covenant." It has absolutely nothing to do with the commercial fair market value of the property.

Therefore, in order to determine a reasonable value to begin negotiations with, I had a real property commercial appraisal performed on the subject tract. A new graded site almost directly across Hwy 515 from the subject property is 4.4 acres, sold through a distressed sale back in 2015 for \$42,000/acre. Which was the main comparable in the appraisal. The county will pay around \$52,000 per acre (15 percent over the appraised price based on our negotiations).

Commercial sites (the very few available) on Hwy 515 run from \$450,000 per acre site to \$700,000. I think most real estate agents would agree with me that the county received a heck of a deal and we are very thankful to the property owners for helping make this happen.

With reference to John Ripma's statement suggesting that the *North Georgia News* is the "mouthpiece" for Lamar Paris, the NGN writer was at the county meeting where I discussed the real estate transaction in detail. Then after the meeting he further interviewed me about the details. While I appreciate the NGN being kind to me in articles, it is because in nearly 17 years being Union County Commissioner, unlike the writer who suggested this as being a "stinky deal" to "gullible" taxpayers, I keep the press up to date with ac-

A. They are not building new prisons but are trying to come up with different ways to keep only the hardest criminals in jail. They are using programs similar to our local drug court program to try and allow minor offenders to stay out of prison but to be monitored and receive drug and mental health treatment. This way the offender can still work and maintain a job (a requirement), stay at home with family, and pay their fines, and hopefully get the treatment they need to get their lives back on track. In most cases this IS working. It is very possible that our current jail, with adequate maintenance, could remain useful for many years to come and we can instead invest our tax dollars into recreation, roads, schools, public safety and facilities to improve the quality of life for those of us who do not get in trouble with the law.

**Q. Is the county going to provide funds to properly maintain our existing jail?**

A. Yes, as we always have.

head. Not only were the locks gone, but, what little hair was left was gapped and of different lengths. Basically, Little Bit's hair was a mess and it took 6 months to grow back to normal. Aunt Euler was not very impressed with Carolynn's ability as a beautician. This never fazed Aunt Carolynn. Today, she owns her own hair stylist shop in the little community in North Alabama.

maybe they have good reason to be, or maybe they just like to speed, but I find that to be true no matter where I travel. I wonder if the two writers who complained about drivers in Blairsville were a coordinated effort to make it seem as if we have an epidemic of reckless drivers in Blairsville, and also saying they would never "move here" got their idea from the main stream media who complain about everything President Trump does including the way he ties his shoes. If Trump could walk on water, the *New York Times* headline would read "Trump can't swim."

We have enough grumpy old people in Blairsville, so perhaps those two writers would be happier somewhere else like Atlanta where people never exceed the speed limit.

**John Q. Adams III**

County Recreation Road and online at [www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com](http://www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com).

Be sure to look for them also in the *North Georgia News* just prior to the event!

For great deals running during Buy Local Week and throughout the year, check out the hot deals link on our Chamber website at [www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com](http://www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com).

*Regina Allison is the president of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce. To contact Regina, call (706) 745-5789.*

curate information and I think we both appreciate that honest relationship.

I have one goal - to make Union County the best it can possibly be at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers. I am very proud that we have the second lowest property tax rate in the entire state of Georgia out of 159 counties. We are in excellent financial condition and I will continue to look for improvements to our county that will further increase our quality of life and economic development goals. We did not get in this enviable financial position by wasting taxpayers funds. We have done it with hard work, dedication, our heart in what we are doing, planning for the future and success appreciated by the vast majority of our citizens.

In the future, if anyone has any questions about anything related to county government, please contact us before you listen to someone who may not have accurate information or may not understand the information they have.

I will continue to address this property and other similar issues in my Q & A column in the *North Georgia News* over the next few weeks. If you have any questions, email me at [commissioner@uniongov.com](mailto:commissioner@uniongov.com), call at (706) 439-6000 or mail to Union County Commissioner, Courthouse Street, Blairsville, GA 30512. You are also welcome to call my office at (706) 439-6000. Thank you.

**Lamar Paris  
Union County Commissioner**

## Duncan ... continued from Page 4A

It's also beside one of my favorite local restaurants, *Sicily's*. It's also beside a restaurant that I want to try ASAP - *Bread & Bleu*.

I've also received a ton of telephone calls welcoming me back to Blairsville.

One young lady asked me what brought me to Blairsville. It was her way of asking me if I was a native or a move-in.

I told her my Mama got pregnant here many moons ago and I've been here ever since.

In fact, all of my immediate family were born and raised here in Union County.

And Mama would roll over in her grave if I didn't clarify that I was the youngest child of Lavona and Robert Duncan. No, Mama didn't have any children out of wedlock.

## Mattee ... continued from Page 4A

bottle and fill it again until no bubbles are present. Once both bottles are filled, seal them inside the provided plastic bag and return them to the Extension Office. These tests need to be overnighted so we can only accept them Monday through Wednesday, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Union and Towns County Extension will be holding a Master Naturalist Class Wednesdays starting July 26th and ending September 20th at the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. This is an eight week course that meets once a week and covers wildlife management, tree and insect ID, invasive species, Georgia natural history, and many other topics. Registration fee is \$250 for the entire eight week course. We are already half full, so please call ASAP to register!

Effective June 1, 2017, the Towns County Extension office will change its hours to 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. We will still close from 12 p.m. - 1 p.m. for lunch.

## Sims ... continued from Page 4A

more than 30,000.

The present Jail was sufficient for the needs of the county at the time. No one expected the population growth. Our commissioner will have served 20 years in 2020. What many folks want to hear is "what is our commissioner going to do to fix the Jail problem?" Rehashing old grievances with the prior commissioner serves no purpose.

**Mike Sims**

## Driskell ... continued from Page 4A

"pass" on Blairsville because of the same concerns that Mrs. Harper has? I know even in my small circle of contacts I hear people talking about leaving Blairsville for somewhere more friendly. Not sure where that is anymore. Ray Thomas's letter expresses the same concerns and maybe his suggestion of traffic cameras should be explored.

Personally, I was hoping Sheriff Mason was serious about cracking down on speeders, but I've seen no evidence of that happening. I rarely see a patrol car running radar and I've yet to see anyone pulled over. I do see the GSP giving a citation almost every time they come through town.

Is there a message here?

**Jerry Driskell**

## Dyer ... continued from Page 4A

of mountains that are only shells of their former selves and in some cases, only the foundations remain.

The damage is a perfect example of how devastating a wildfire can be to homes that are close to the wilderness. As we were surveying the damage, I could not help but wonder how it must have been to experience that night. This fire was an extreme case but this can happen anywhere; we faced the same conditions last fall. It reminds me of the importance of being prepared and understanding the concepts of Firewise. Firewise is a national program that provides education to homeowners on how to prevent damage or loss due to wildfires. Visit [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org) for more information.

On the bright side, Gatlinburg is still beautiful and in the process of rebuilding. Trees with scorched trunks have a full set of green leaves. Construction can be seen everywhere. Homes are being rebuilt and businesses are using the opportunity to improve. Gatlinburg is alive and well. It is still a thriving tourist town and a great place to visit.

*Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~*

So, all-in-all, I did tell that young lady the truth about my roots and ties to Blairsville.

I'll also say that it was good to reconnect with Commissioner Lamar Paris, Sheriff Mack Mason, Fire Chief David Dyer and several other folks that I have had contact with related to work.

Honestly, those folks have kept check on me over the 614 days I was not in the office. It meant a lot.

And I can say it was interesting to email Sheriff Mason a photograph of a real, live panther here in Union County.

I didn't know who else to tell about it first. Sheriff Mason was proud that I let him know first.

Bottom line, I'm proud to say that I'm back at work. I don't know if I could have sat through another re-run of the Andy Griffith Show.

## Fowler ... continued from Page 4A

family takes faith and courage. The good news is that we are not left to our own strength, and the reward is great. "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word" (2 Thes. 2:16-17).

## Combs ... continued from Page 4A

move out by faith. God encourages him again to be strong and courageous. The Word of God was to be his authority. It was not to depart from his mouth, but he was to meditate on it day and night.

Dear friends, like Joshua, we as believers need to not be afraid or discouraged of what is going on in the world, but to go out in faith knowing that our God is with us as well. Brother Joshua took charge and he didn't waver or fret, but had great confidence in who His God was.

We too can do what God calls us to do, with the same assurance that God gave to Joshua. My friend, if you are going to walk with God and live for Him, you will need a daily filling of the Holy Spirit of God. May we never half heartily serve God, but whole heartily with all of the strength God gives to us, for the battle is the Lord's.

If we sing "Victory In Jesus" let us believe it as well.

**Frank F. Combs**

## Steverson ... continued from Page 5A

ing what options, if any, Ledford may have provided his victim, related to a "last meal" request. What I do know is that he entered the execution chamber with a big grin on his face, reciting quotes from the movie "Cool Hand Luke" and telling everyone in attendance to "kiss his white trash a.."

Gregory Paul Lawler was executed in Georgia last October for killing 28-year-old police officer John Sowa.

Lawler was charged with shooting Sowa and his partner Pat Cocciolone, both in the head as they responded to a domestic dispute. Sowa's wounds were mortal, and Cocciolone, although severely injured, survived the attempt on her life. In court, Lawler expressed no remorse and angrily insisted he was justified in shooting the officers.

Before his execution, Lawler requested and was given a rib eye steak, a baked potato with sour cream, asparagus, dinner rolls with butter, French onion soup, strawberries, pistachio ice cream, milk and apple juice.

In 2011, white-supremacist Lawrence Russell Brewer was sentenced to death for the racially motivated murder of James Byrd Jr. in Texas. Brewer, along with two accomplices, took Byrd to a country road, beat him severely, urinated on him and chained him by his ankles to a pickup truck before dragging him for more than a mile.

Forensic evidence suggested that Byrd tried to keep his head up while being dragged. An autopsy suggest-

## Speaker appoints Balli, Hyde to JQC

ATLANTA — House Speaker David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge) has appointed attorney James Balli to the Georgia Judicial Qualifications Commission (JQC). Speaker Ralston also re-appointed Richard Hyde to the JQC. Both appointments are effective July 1.

The JQC conducts investigations and hearings with respect to complaints of ethical misconduct by Georgia judges and also is authorized to issue advisory opinions regarding appropriate judicial conduct.

Balli, who is the Speaker's attorney-appointee to the JQC, is a partner with the law firm of Sams, Larkin, Huff & Balli LLP of Marietta. In ac-

ed that Byrd was alive during much of the dragging. Byrd died after his right arm and head were severed when his body hit a culvert. The day before his execution, Brewer stated to an interviewer, "As far as any regrets, no, I have no regrets. No, I'd do it all over again, to tell you the truth."

For his "last meal" Brewer was given his requested feast of two chicken-fried steaks with gravy and sliced onions, a triple bacon cheeseburger, a cheese omelet with ground beef, tomatoes, onions, bell peppers, jalapenos, a bowl of fried okra with ketchup, a pound of barbecue with half a loaf of white bread, a portion of three fajitas, a meat lover's pizza (topped with pepperoni, ham, beef, bacon, and sausage), a pint of Blue Bell ice cream, a slab of peanut-butter fudge with crushed peanuts, and three root beers. However, Brewer didn't eat any of it. He said he wasn't really hungry.

Texas Sen. John Whitmire, upon hearing of Brewer's mockery of the long-standing last-meal practice, said, "Enough is enough. It is extremely inappropriate to give a person sentenced to death such a privilege, one which the perpetrator did not provide to their victim."

Thanks to Whitmire and others like him, Texas no longer offers such elaborate last meals. They eat what other prisoners are served.

I hope that our state leaders here in Georgia and elsewhere will soon follow suit.

**Sheriff Chris Steverson,**

Telfair County

cordance with state law, Balli's appointment to the JQC will expire on July 1, 2020.

Hyde, who is the Speaker's citizen-appointee to the JQC, is an investigator with the law firm of Balch & Bingham LLP in Atlanta. In accordance with state law, Hyde's appointment to the JQC will expire on July 1, 2019.

In November 2016, Georgia voters approved a constitutional amendment reforming the JQC to ensure fair and impartial consideration of complaints. The amendment and enabling legislation also removed undue influence of special interest groups on this important public body.