

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Never forget 9/11

With all that our nation is currently experiencing, it sometimes slips our minds about a tragedy we faced 16 years ago.

Our first responders were put to the test. They saved countless lives as they did what they are trained to do.

Of the 2,977 victims killed in the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, 412 were emergency workers in New York City who responded to the Twin Tower tragedy.

This included 343 firefighters, including a chaplain and two paramedics of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY); 37 police officers of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police Department; 23 police officers of the New York City Police Department (NYPD); and 8 emergency medical technicians and paramedics from private emergency medical services; 1 patrolman from the New York Fire Patrol.

I remember that day clear as a bell. I was working in Dawsonville and someone called the office. I answered the phone, I was on deadline trying to get a newspaper out.

The caller assumed that I knew what was going on in New York. I didn't because, as I said, I was trying to get a newspaper out. I didn't need any distractions.

Having been told what was going on in the Big Apple, I went to the Dawsonville Pool Room, which was just around the corner from the office. Gordon Pirkle, the proprietor then, and now, had the television on.

We didn't know what was happening, but, in that brief instance that I came into the restaurant, the second plane hit the towers.

When the second plane impacted the Twin Towers, it didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that this was an act of terrorism.

I quickly went back to the newsroom and began calling my law enforcement sources. I soon learned that the skies above had become no fly zones. If you saw a plane, it quickly found an escort from the U.S. Air Force.

Interstates became guarded by Georgia State Patrol and local law enforcement. I talked with then Dawson County Sheriff

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Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Paired Purposes

In case you missed it, within the span of a week in August, nature had something to say. From the ecstasy of the eclipse and the horrors of the hurricane, creation repeated an ancient truth.

For those fortunate enough to witness the eclipse, it was a moving moment, a spiritual experience. For that day, our thoughts were not on angry mobs, sparring politicians, or nuclear-armed despots. Our eyes were heavenward as though to see God Himself as the moon made the sun blink. We experienced it together.

The flooding in Texas would not be a disaster if it happened on a deserted island. It happened to people. Uniformed public servants doing their jobs and volunteers with their boats and trucks became neighbors with those who might differ by race, politics, culture, language or income. We are attracted to such heart-warming stories because we know what is good. Our eyes are drawn to people as we try to imagine if we lost our house, possessions, job, or family. We respond together.

Being created in God's image means we yearn for the sublime and the compassionate. We want to be moved and to care. Don't the eclipse and the hurricane reveal that? We are humbled and awestruck by the power of that message. God said, "Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth? Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that an abundance of water will cover you?" (Job 38:33-34). In the aftermath of these natural events, our hearts soar upward at the majesty of God and our hands reach outward to the victims in Texas. Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mat. 22:36-38). God and fellow man are our priorities.

A pastor friend says, "On this earth only two things are eternal, the Word of God and the souls of people." Well said. What matters on this fallen, dangerous, and strife-filled earth is God and what He has said, and people whom He loves. Our fellow human beings matter to us because they matter to God, and

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. What are the main contributing factors to our operating costs increasing each year?

A. There are many. With the increase in drug problems and the resultant arrests, our jail and Sheriff's Office have increased operating costs. This also causes the cost of our court system to steadily increase, including defense for indigent individuals. We are also working hard to increase our deputy pay so that we are not losing them to other counties in the metro area. We also try very hard to continue to have annual raises for all our county employees. Health Insurance and Liability Insurance rates also continue to rise.

Q. Are there things the county does to offset these increased operating expenses?

A. The first thing we always do is try to cut cost in our operating budget in areas where it is feasible. However, this is difficult to do and then still be able to maintain our standard and quality of living. The other solution is that we try to increase our revenues wherever possible.

Q. How does the county increase revenue?

A. It is part skill and part luck. Pursuing grants for every possible area of government operation is something we are constantly doing. Any time we can reduce our cost through a grant, we are helping our financial situation. We also consider fees that are charged for different services. Many of those are set by the State, but there are some that we can adjust which also helps. Finally, pursuing the revenue that is out there and due the county helps a lot. Some revenue is due the County through the court system and through the prudent collection of our property taxes, which our Tax Commissioner's Office does so well.

Q. What is the goal of Union County since we seem to have better facilities than other similar counties?

A. It is simple. Our goal is to offer the best possible services and facilities at the lowest possible cost. This does not mean at the cheapest cost because we feel that the public wants and deserves a certain level of quality. We feel obligated to provide quality services and facilities, and we hope you agree with us in how we

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Anti-Drug Coalition

Parental Views Toward Drugs Make A Difference

If you could do one thing that would help your child succeed in school, live a healthier life, and develop to his or her fullest potential, would you do it? If you answered "yes," then talk with your child about alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

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. Visit and Like our Facebook page for additional articles and videos.

Find out what he knows. Explain to him that using these substances can interfere with studying and can cause grades to suffer by affecting memory and learning skills. Describe the harmful health effects of substances. Let him know how these substances can cause problems in relationships and among friends and can tear families apart. Study after study has found that parents make a difference in the choices their children make.

By the time they enter preschool, most children have seen adults smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol either in real life or in the media, or both. Children today are exposed to

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"Hey, I'd be failing my constituents if I changed positions."



Letters to the Editor

Being God's servant

Dear Editor,

A lot of folks who go into the ministry work of God have great ambitions of being a good preacher or teacher and may even set high goals to achieve their desires.

Some people enter the ministry of God to perhaps make a name for themselves, to get high praises from their congregation and even put themselves on a pedestal, as to say: Hey, look what I have done for God, but in reality they want all the glory, instead of God.

God hates prideful people. There is no room in His ministry for self-ego. It is a dangerous game a lot of folks love to play and we see it more and more in our society today, than ever before, but a verse in II. Corinthians 5:10 says: For we must all (mankind) appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in the body; according to that which they have done, whether it

See *Combs*, page 5A

Harvey Hope

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the spot in the newspaper. Sadly the bias shown on the front page will have an adverse effect on donations (the other Texas Relief cause that is community wide also).

Operation Harvey Hope has been working directly with fire fighters, devastated EMS personnel, and a community devastated in south Texas. All donations will be handed directly into these peoples hands. Not a donation site, not to mention it takes away from all the hard work and care, put in by many local businesses/members/students in this town: Heritage Propane, Foodland, Busy Bee, Peace River, Home Depot just to name a few.

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Rural Development funding

Dear Editor,

Over the years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development's funding has served as a lifeline for rural communities, providing critical funding for water and wastewater infrastructure, public and community buildings, and essential community service facilities.

Without these grants and loans, many small communities would have to put off infrastructure or facility projects. When necessary projects are delayed, the quality of life in a small town is impacted, along with its economic prospects.

Rural Development seeks out communities that most need assistance, helping officials

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Take Time to Prepare

We have busy lives. It seems that we get up in the morning and it's nothing but go go go. Kids, school, work, and we are walking out the door with things under each arm, coffee in one hand and cell phone in the other.

With a pace like that, it is difficult to find time to think about disasters or what we would do if it happened to us.

As we have seen over the last couple of weeks, disasters can strike anytime and anywhere.

September is National Preparedness Month which makes this the perfect time to think about preparing. Union County EMA challenges you to plan and get ready for disasters.

The biggest step is to get started. Sit down as a family on a Saturday afternoon and ask, "What would we do during a disaster? How would we get in contact with my family if communications are down? What will we eat, drink? What would we do without power or heat for a long period of time? What would I need if we had to evacuate? Where would I go? What would we take?"

All of these are good questions that you should ask and answer. Involving the entire family keeps everyone informed.

For some great information on what you need to do and how to get started, the Department of Homeland Security's Ready.gov provides information to help people get prepared for disasters. The site provides information on how to be aware, stay informed, build a plan, create an emergency kit, and how to get involved in your community before, during and after a disaster.

Having an emergency kit is important. An emergency kit includes food, water, flashlight, batteries, weather radio, first aid kit and many other things essential for survival.

Other items that you may want to consider are medications, pet food, cash money, and games for the kids. An emergency kit should be able to sustain you and your family at home for at least three days. It is recommended having supplies for up to five days.

Emergency and disaster preparedness is everyone's responsibility. People should make a plan, stock essential supplies, and be self-sufficient for at least three days during a major emergency.

For more information on National Preparedness Month and how to be prepared, visit www.ready.gov.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Yankee Cousins

Papa's younger sister, Inez, lost her husband in a car accident when their son, Harold, was a baby. Inez decided to begin a new life, so she went to Chicago to live with her brother Clay. She soon found a job and met a fellow that would soon become her husband.

John Porcurro was one of the kindest persons you would ever want to know. Inez and John were happy and soon another young man was born to the family. His name was also John. Everyone called him Little John.

Those two boys loved visiting their family in Alabama and they greatly admired their two cousins, Paul and Bud. Harold and Little John were easy targets for their older cousins.

My father and uncle easily hatched the schemes they fell into. The first one of note happened one morning at the crack of daylight. The first chore of the day for Dad and Uncle Bud was to milk the family's two milk cows. Harold and Little John were so excited about milking these cows that sleep evaded them on the night prior to the event. The next morning the four boys walked to the barn while Little John and Harold shot question after question toward their cousins. Imagine a Chicago accent with these words. "Paul, how does the cow make milk? Bud, where does the milk come out of the cow? Will the cow kick you?" When asked where they got their milk in Chicago Harold replied, "From the store." Dad asked his cousins if they would like to milk a cow and of course they did. Dad explained, "Go into that lot and catch that little cow. One of you should hold onto the neck and the other should place the milk bucket under the cow. Afterwards, you should pump the tail up and down and the milk will come out into the bucket."

Papa was working on his tractor when he began to hear laughter coming from the barnyard. Papa looked across the yard toward the barn and watched as his nephews were drug, kicked and stomped by the 400-pound calf.

About a week later the boys decided they would go squirrel hunting. At the bottom of a bluff, the boys noticed a big hornet's nest up a white oak tree. Harold and Little John decided to shoot the thing down and take it home. Dad and Uncle Bud grinned while presenting Harold with the gun. Uncle Bud said, "Wait 'til we get to the top of the bluff so we can watch from that vantage point." Dad and his brother watched their two younger cousins get stung about 20 times each by a bunch of angry hornets. Papa whipped his two sons over this incident. Dad tried to explain, "When Harold and Johnny made up their

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Fruit Trees

With fall quickly approaching, many of us are ready and raring to go harvest some ripening fruit from our trees. Whether you want something fun for the grandkids to pick, or you want something for your own enjoyment, there are a variety of fruit trees that do well in our area. The major steps to having a productive fruit harvest are the three p's: picking, pollination, and pruning. If you know the basics of these three important characteristics, you will have plenty of fruit for yourself, your family and even your neighbors!

The most common fruit trees I see up here are, of course, apples. A wide variety of apple trees do well in the North Georgia mountains, but red cultivars are the most resistant to diseases such as cedar apple rust. Apples ripen throughout late summer and early fall, and are perfect to pick when their color has peaked and they are easily plucked off the stems. Though it may be tempting to prune your apple trees after the fruit and leaves have dropped, the ideal pruning time is in early February. Remove any diseased or dead wood and any branches that are rubbing against each other. You always want to take back about one third of the tree's volume to allow for air flow and to maintain structural integrity. Finally, always make sure you have multiple apple trees that flower at the same time. If you only have one tree, you will not have any fruit because it will not be pollinated.

Pears are also a common tree grown here. Unlike apples, they need to be picked before they are ripe. A good rule of thumb is to pick them when you can see little brown dots (lenticels) appearing on the skin. Early February is also the best time to prune these trees, and you will definitely need to prune them because their branches grow almost straight up and form narrow crotches. Just like with all trees, you want good air flow through the canopy to prevent disease. Even if a pear may be advertised as "self-fertile", it is good to have at least two that flower at the same time to increase your fruit yield. More pollination always means more tasty fruit!

Despite the fact that North Georgia is not traditionally considered a suitable site for fig trees, I have seen several varieties such as Hardy Chicago, Celeste and some Brown Turkey do well in the area. Figs ripen throughout the warm summer months into fall, depending on environmental conditions. Again, late winter is the ideal time to prune as figs typically yield better when they are kept a little short instead

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From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



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