

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Weather Event

I love cold weather, but, don't get me wrong, I could care less about single-digit temperatures.

On Thursday, just moments after I left the Blairsville City Council meeting, I noticed it felt much different than when I first arrived at the first meeting of the New Year.

The wind had kicked up considerably, and, yes, the temperature had dipped from 43 degrees when I arrived, to 31 degrees.

I figured Karen Minton (*Channel 2* meteorologist) was right, and, the snow was really headed our way. As if I didn't already know the weather was changing, *Channel 2's* Storm Tracker van was sitting on the Downtown Square.

I went to the grocery store and I was only in there a few minutes. I had grabbed the traditional bread and milk (what was left) and a couple of other items. I pushed the buggy to my SUV, and lo and behold, my vehicle's doors were frozen shut.

Yes, this was a Weather Event, and, the weather folks had hit the nail on the head. We didn't get much snow, but what fell to the ground, stuck to the ground.

At the writing of this column (2:39 a.m., Monday morning), I was writing and waiting for another Weather Event. I took a brief break, went outside to see what was happening. There was ice on my SUV. It was 38 degrees, but, with the brisk winds, it felt like 30 degrees. Checking the National Weather Service web page confirmed my suspicions about the ice.

I'm usually skeptical about weather reports, but, the last two cautions of what the weather service called "Flash Freeze" conditions, and I became a believer. It felt like 14 degrees at 5:35 a.m. Monday.

According to the weather service, these type of conditions - a dramatic drop in temperatures over a short period of time - haven't been witnessed in decades.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and Union County Emergency Management Director Charles Worden have been working around the clock getting prepared for this event.

It's the first time since 1977 that I've heard of predictions for sub-zero temperatures in Union County. I was here in 1977, a junior in high school, and I can tell you, there were sub-zero temperatures in 1977 in Union County.

I'm not sure what's going on with the weather, but, I do know that an Arctic Blast blanketed much of the U.S., our North Georgia Mountains included. The weather service said it began in Minnesota and rapidly covered much of the country.

If you don't like Georgia's weather, wait until tomorrow, it'll be different. That's what I tell all my friends not from this area because, one day it's 5 degrees, the next day, it's 55 degrees.

I'll say this, the past couple of years we've caught a break on the cold weather. Blue Ridge Mountain EMC raised its energy rates because of the unseasonably warm winters the past couple of years.

If the first few days of January are any indication, they're about to collect on a windfall.

Winter is really here, and BRMEMC knows it. Cringe as you await your next power bill, that's the next big Weather Event.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



The Divider of Time

The New Year is a gift from God. It contains 365 days, 8,760 hours, 525,600 minutes, and 31,536,000 seconds. Time is so very precious. However, time means many things to many people who are in different circumstances. Henry Van Dyke illustrated this in his little poem Time Is: "Too slow for those who wait - too swift for those who fear - too long for those who grieve - too short for those who rejoice. But for those who love - time is not."

We spend time as we do money. It would be interesting to take the checkbook and itemize month by month how you have spent your money. You can see very quickly where your income has been used. Likewise, it would be interesting to look back over the past 12 months and see where we have invested our time. Has it been working? Watching television? Pursuing your favorite hobby? Worshipping? Seeking amusements? Sleeping? Being entertained? If you knew that sometime during 2014 your life on earth would end, would you alter your living from day to day? I am sure that most of us would. Life is a gift from God that should not be squandered.

An unknown war correspondent observed how people squander their lives when he wrote: "Some men die of shrapnel - some go down in flames - but most men perish inch by inch - who play at little games."

An Arabian proverb says, "Four things come not back - A sped arrow, a spoken word, a past life, and a neglected opportunity." Time is a gift from God, but it is also opportunity. Don't squander life. Keep your focus in life. Don't get sidetracked like the bloodhound that started a hunt by chasing a stag. A fox crossed the path, so the hound chased the fox. After a while a rabbit crossed the path, so the hound chased it. Later a mouse crossed the path and the hound chased it into a hole. The hound had begun his hunt on the trail of a magnificent stag and ended by watching a mouse hole.

Sad, sad, sad that many of us start out the new year with great ambitions and end dilly-dallying by chasing fleas. Don't come to the end of life looking into an empty, dark grave without any hope.

See Parris, page 5A

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Questions and Answers

Q. We heard that the economy in Georgia is continuing to make progress and that the state jobless rate has continued to decline. Do you have any statistics?

A. I have recently been to meetings where we heard from two economists, one from Georgia Tech and one from the Eastern Region of the U.S. and both are very positive on the economic future of Georgia. They point to the continuing reduction in unemployment, the large growth in the stock market (with one predicting that it would reach the 17,000 mark by the end of 2014) and the liquidity in the marketplace. Durable goods sales are increasing, the negative balance of trade is decreasing, auto exports are increasing, fuel prices are stabilizing and without a war or oil crisis, they both were encouraged for the next three to four years about our economy.

Q. What are the unemployment numbers for Georgia?

A. I know that some people question the unemployment numbers, but these come from the state and not the federal government. How they are arrived at and whether they are accurate or not, I have no idea. But, here the numbers from the state of Georgia unemployment statistics. Two large milestones have been reached and they may be seasonal, but the state unemployment rate is now shown to be 7.7 percent as of November, which is down from 8.1 percent in October. According to an article I read in the Dec. 26th issue of the Pickens County Progress, the Labor Department reports that the unemployment rate is at its lowest point since November 2008 when it was 7.6 percent.

Q. Why has the unemployment rate continued to go down?

A. Georgia Labor Commissioner Mark Butler said the unemployment rate is down because of strong job growth and a very good drop in new claims for unemployment insurance benefits. He also said, "The number of new jobs is the best October to November growth since 2007 and the number of new claims is the lowest for any month since September 2007. Both of these numbers pre-date the recession."

Q. How does the Union County unemployment rate compare with other counties in our region and the state?

See Paris, page 5A

A Look Back at 2013

As we draw the curtain on 2013, I would like to take a moment to celebrate the many successes of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce.

Year after year, I am overwhelmed with the milestones we reach and the progress we are able to make. Thanks to a great staff, Board, and membership, this past year was no exception.

The lifeblood of our Chamber is our membership, and membership in the Chamber is strong. Currently we serve 568 members. This is very close to an all-time high and is quite impressive for a rural community. In keeping with our mission to positively impact our community and members by facilitating tourism, economic and cultural development, the Chamber offered a variety of business education classes as well as networking events to broaden the knowledge of our members and promote communication and support among Union County business owners. These included our Business Roundtables, Maximum Money series through UGA's Small Business Development Center, Buy Local Extravaganza, and Buy Local and Jingle Bell Buys Weekends. We successfully hosted the July 4th fireworks.

See Williams, page 5A

Cafeteria Lunch Circa:1965

(This was one of my past columns that seemed to evoke the most fun response from my readers. I'll be back next week with a story about my holiday vacation.)

The walls of the cafeteria, (aka: gymnasium) were painted the same shade of mint green as the plastic segmented plate before me. Looking down on this lunch travesty, I wonder how they have the gall to charge 33 cents. There was a half of hamburger roll, with a dab of tomato sauce and four shreds of mozzarella cheese in the entrée section of the plate. In the vegetable portion there were green beans straight out of a can. Above the "pizza" was my 4 oz. of whole milk. To the left of that was the cook's favorite dessert, "heavenly hash". It consisted of rice drenched in creamy, glue like substance, mixed with some canned fruit and a hint of cinnamon.

There's a fifth section of the plate, but today I don't even see what's there because I'm so disgusted that the recipe for the heavenly hash hasn't been rectified yet. Last month I finally had the chutzpah (For a 10 year old girl in Catholic school, it takes a lot to muster up chutzpah. Not a genetic trait.) to talk to one of the cooks.

I chose to speak to Mrs. Fote, the nicest of the cafeteria ladies. I also thought she showed signs of a flashing light behind her eyelids, and maybe she would see some validity to my frustration. I threw caution to the wind.

"I realize I'm a child, but I think that the rice in the Heavenly Hash should be cooked instead of raw."

I watch Mrs. Fote, in her support hose, white nylon dress that fits her middle age torso like the glaze poured on a Krispy Kreme donut, walk away from me, one finger in the air, as to direct me to stay there for a moment. She goes to the folder that houses the recipes, pulls out a single sheet, and closes the folder, as if to keep the remaining contents top secret.

She returns to show me the culinary in- See Leone, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



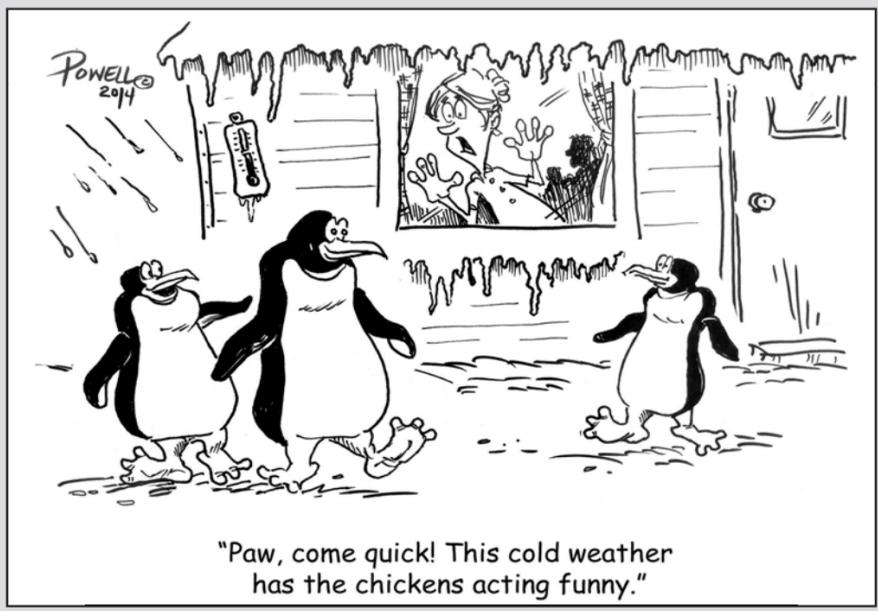
Blairsville-Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



Farmers Market Moment

JoyAnne Leone



Letters to the Editor ...

Freedom of Speech a Right

Dear Editor ... and Ms. Shofner
Regarding Free Speech, Freedom of the Press and the Tea Party in the NGN Dec. 25th issue:

First, Ms. Shofner, the Tea Party Movie Night piece is not meant to be a "news article"; rather, it is an announcement of an event. Second, my statements regarding comprehensive immigration reform in that announcement are based on independently documented facts; facts that are either repressed or ignored by the MSM. If you think that is "blatant promotion of (Tea Party) propaganda" and "ridiculous", then I challenge you to go and visit the southern Arizona/Texas border with Mexico, then come back, if you can make it back, and tell me my statements are "propaganda" and "ridiculous," or you could have come to the Tea Party Movie Night and seen the documentary for yourself, rather than try to discredit the Tea Party in the newspaper with your undocumented and unproven rant (MO of the radical left). And fourth, Ms. Shofner, I would like to extend to you an invitation to attend a Tea Party meeting; to come and see for yourself that the Tea Party is about restoring limited government (as opposed to a 'nanny' state), fiscal responsibility in government (as opposed to the Keynesian idea of spending our way to wealth) and individual responsibility to maintain social order

See Smith, page 5A

Brothers forever

Dear Editor,
In response to Chuck Chaussey's letter of Jan. 1, 2014, I would first like to say that I am also a Marine, Vietnam Combat Veteran and a lone survivor of my recon team. I also have experienced being labeled "baby killer" and other ridicule; so believe me, I understand fully where you are mentally and emotionally. However, I must defend the Veterans Healthcare Clinic in Blairsville. If anything good came of our returning treatment, I believe everyone has learned: and treat Vets with more respect now. I can't explain why someone would say what they did to Chuck other than she may have detected what my wife likes to call, "The Marine Attitude" in his frustration. I do believe though, that the Blairsville clinic is sincere in their caring and although overworked and understaffed with all the Vets returning now, they do the very best they can. I too have been frustrated with the wait times for appointments, but with their triage program, a nurse will see you immediately and get you in to see a doctor if needed. As opposed to the regular medical system, I have never been treated so well and with more respect than I have at the Blairsville Clinic.

I would hope that Chuck would give them another chance. I would also like to say to him that I'll remember him in my prayers because we are brothers forever.

Roger Boyle

A Holiday Blessing

Dear Editor,
A few weeks ago I did the unthinkable, I left my purse in the buggy at the Wal Mart parking lot in Blairsville. I didn't miss it until I got home. Needless to say, I was terrified. I rushed back to Wal Mart, asked if anyone had found a purse. The lady at the service desk said the young man that brought buggies back in the store had found it. She told me where to pick it up. Nothing had been taken from the purse, including a credit card, driver's license, and money. When I got home I had a message from Wal Mart advising me someone had found my purse.

A special thank you to this employee at Wal Mart.
Coulter Burnett

Use your head

Dear Editor,
Gadget makers such as Samsung have introduced tablets specifically designed for kids and many manufacturers of adult tablets now include parental controls. Those products are in addition to the slew of kiddie tablets produced by electronic toy makers such as LeapFrog, Vtech and Toys R Us.

But some experts note there's no evidence that screen time -- whether from a TV or tablet -- provides any educational or developmental benefits for babies and toddlers. Yet it takes away from activities that do promote brain development, such as non-electronic toys and adult interaction.

They also say that too much screen time has been linked to behavior problems and delayed social development in older children.

Dr. Dimitri Christakis, a pediatrician at Seattle Children's Hospital says that educational games and apps have some value if they engage children and prompt them to interact with the device but cautioned that if all children do is watch videos on their tablets, then it's just like watching TV, which has a limited ability to engage a child.

He also notes that parents need be mindful of whether tablet time is replacing more important activities such as sleeping, reading or interacting with adults. He says that while the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than one to two hours of screen time a day for kids over the age of two, he thinks one hour is plenty.

"The single most important thing for children is time with parents and caregivers," he says. "Nothing is more important in terms of social development. If time with the tablet comes at the expense of that, that's not good."

Jill Buban, Dean of the School of Education at Post University in Waterbury Connecticut, says that even the best educational apps must be monitored by parents and limited. She recommends no more than 30 minutes of tablet usage at a time in light of the short attention
See Mitchell, page 5A

Bingo

As you may know one of my favorite friends is Patrick. Together, we have worked on many agricultural projects for close to 20 years. A few years ago we began working together in the Union County Canning Plant. And yes, we have hunted, fished and camped together a few times. In all the time we have spent together I must say there has never been a dull moment. If you come by the Canning Plant on any given day after we have slowed down for the day, you can find us laughing at one of Patrick's stories, one of which left us in tears after we had processed our last jars of the year at the Canning Plant.

One day about a year ago while working in his garden, Patrick watched helplessly as a dog walked in front of a passing vehicle on Skenah Gap Road. Patrick rushed to find the dog badly injured and yet alive. He gathered the dog in his arms and placed him in the back of his truck. The dog was transported to the local vet's office where he was treated and released to the caring hands of my friend. Patrick didn't even own Bingo; however, he had a sizeable investment in the dog. Slowly, Bingo recovered and became his old self which was to cause some major problems for Patrick.

Patrick and I met that morning as was our custom at 5:50 a.m. to turn everything on in preparation of opening the Canning Plant. As usual a little after daylight I went outside to check the propane level in the tank. After checking the propane level I walked back to the entrance of the plant. Before walking in the door I noticed some wires hanging from the back of Patrick's truck. He crawled under the truck and found that Bingo had chewed up the wiring. The investment in Bingo just went up again.

A short time later Patrick's mother was walking to the mailbox when she was tripped by Bingo causing her to fall to the ground. After a trip to the doctor's office Patrick's mother was found to be okay other than a few bumps and bruises. The investment of Bingo went up again. Bingo has left the playful puppy stage. He is an adolescent now and prone to wander. I suppose he is looking for girlfriends. Over the past couple of months Patrick has made numerous visits to the pound to bail Bingo out of jail. I guess we could call each of these bail outs investments.

About 10 days before Christmas, Bingo came up missing yet again. Patrick was told Bingo was over in Fannin County, so, he called the number provided to him. A lady answered the phone and was on her way to the pound with Bingo. She agreed to meet him at a local grocery store to return the dog to my friend. The two met and while they were talking in the parking lot a car backed up and hit Bingo and his owner. He said,
See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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