

Highway Heroes

When frozen precipitation is the forecast for our beloved North Georgia Mountains, we have a team of All-Stars ready to make a frustrating situation very livable.

The Union County Road Department team has earned their keep once again. From Tuesday at 3 a.m. until the last patch of ice was cleared Friday morning, this outstanding group of workers kept Union County residents on the move.

If you recognize a name, just remember, these are the folks that keep our roads as clear as possible during a most frustrating time.

It is with great honor that I publish these names. They're a hardworking bunch, and they're proud of what they do.

James Beise; Timothy Bohannon; Lonnie Brown; Ricky Brown; William Brown; Carroll Burrell; James Edwards; Daniel Etheridge; Kenneth Etheridge; Nathaniel Etheridge; David Green; Chadwick Gregory; Tony Henderson; Harold Ingram; David Land; Steve Leard; Hubert Plott; Charles Shirley; Stacey Stephens; Ronald C. Sullivan; Ronald M. Sullivan; Dell Tanner; Eddie Tanner; and Tommy Tanner.

I guess you could consider that the Road Department is sort of like offensive linemen in football. For many, they're the no-names of public service. That's not to say that they are not important. Everyone knows that without a solid offensive line, the running backs and quarterbacks don't make the headlines.

I've known most of these folks over the years and they're of high character and integrity.

I'm working on a team photo of the Road Department, and hopefully, in the next week or so, you'll get to put a name to a face.

From 3 a.m. on Tuesday to Friday morning, our road department scraped roads, and spread 300 tons of salt and gravel throughout Union County.

It's not an easy job, and anyone can ask the Georgia Department of Transportation driver who overturned on Georgia 136 during the height of the storm in Dawson and Hall counties.

Not many folks would like to get behind the wheel of a vehicle that is equivalent to the size of a Sherman Tank and make their living on ice and snow.

I wouldn't, but, I highly admire the folks that do it. For their's is a dedication of great magnitude. They are public servants in the highest sense of the word.

They put their lives on the line during a very intense situation. Our Road Department makes sacrifices so that their fellow residents can get to the hospital, the drug store, the grocery store and any other place they need to be.

Now that you know their names, stop and give them a pat on the back for what they do during our time of need.

We're lucky to have such dedicated workers on our team. We're lucky to have folks who are willing to roll out of bed at all hours of the night to make things safe.

Yes, some will say these individuals get paid to do this job. I can say this, there isn't enough money in the world to keep putting your life on the line day in, day out. No sir, that takes dedication and the will to help others.

Yes, our Road Department once again did a magnificent job. We're proud to call them our own.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Preachers and Humor

I have always loved to laugh. Before I ever thought about preaching and the ministry I loved humor. Believe you me that after a half-century of preaching among Baptists I have been exposed to enough humor for a lifetime. After God called me to preach, my thoughts were that I should alter my personality to a more serious side. Some preachers that I had known possessed a pall-bearer pale personality. But the gospel is "Good News" and preaching shouldn't be a "Hee Haw" theology of "gloom, despair and agony on me, deep dark depression, excessive misery."

Charles Spurgeon was instructing some young ministers on facial expressions when they preached. He said, "When you preach on Heaven you should have a smile on your face!" One young upstart interrupted, "Dr. Spurgeon, when you preach on hell what kind of expression should you have?" Spurgeon said, "Just look normal young man, just look normal!" I believe in Heaven and in hell, but I also believe if we have been saved from hell and we are on our way to Heaven, we ought to be happy about it. If we are joyful and happy we just might influence others to want to go with us.

Over the years I have learned that humor is beneficial in communicating God's truth. Mind you not every message lends itself to humor, but assembled on Sundays are throngs of people who have been beaten up by the world and all of its negativity during the week and they need a little love and laughter that carries them beyond Sunday. I believe laughter can be sacred.

Charles Swindoll said, "It is often just as sacred to laugh as it is to pray." Numerous studies have been done that indicate that laughter boosts the blood flow to the brain (some folks must have only a trickle-you had better start laughing), it reduces stress, helps your respiration and has various physiological and psychological benefits. In other words laughter helps you to become a healthier and happier person.

Why do some people never laugh? Could it be that their mind and heart have "blockers" to laughter? If you harbor bad

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It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Questions and Answers

Q. Please tell the Road Department how much we appreciate the excellent job they did on our roads during this storm. We truly feel blessed to have such dedicated employees.

A. While this is not a question, it is something I heard over and over this past week during the storm. Either in person or on Facebook, literally hundreds of people asked me to let the Road Department crews know what a great job they did and how they appreciated their dedication to their job. Also included were the other public safety employees.

Q. How many hours did the Road Department work during the storm?

A. Since we had ample warning of the storm, our guys were sitting ready to go when the storm first hit about 3 a.m. Tuesday morning. From that point on, they never stopped scraping roads and spreading salt. Then on Wednesday morning we brought in our private contractors with motor graders who worked most of the day and into the night. They were a great help to our regular crews. As I am writing this, we are still scraping roads at 6 p.m. Thursday night.

Q. Did it snow as much as the weather service estimated?

A. No, it did not. The first night they estimated 2 inches to 4 inches, the second night they estimated 6 inches to 8 inches and the third night they estimated 6 inches to 9 inches. The news kept reporting we were having some of the biggest snow amounts in the state, yet we only ended up with 2 inches to 4 inches in most places. It probably snowed more but so much of it melted. Atlanta had more snow than we did.

Q. Did you anticipate the break in time between the two storms?

A. They estimated maybe a couple hours break, but we had several hours, which allowed our Road Department to catch up with road plowing. We were then very surprised on Wednesday night when it rained for such a long time. That also helped us to keep up with the snow plowing, as it helped turn most of the road cover into slush.

Q. We kept seeing the temperatures reported on TV to be lower than they actually were. Do you know why?

A. That was a puzzle to me as well. All the models gave Union County as being one of the coldest areas of the state. We think it might have been because the mountain range kept the colder temperatures from coming in from the northeast through South Carolina. Whatever the reason, we are really thankful as we stayed at or above freezing most of the storm event, which made a huge difference in our total impact.

Q. Were you pleased with the county's response

See Paris, page 5A

Annual Meeting Recap

The Chamber held our Annual Membership Meeting and STAR presentation this week. What a great event! Over 125 members were present to recognize this year's STAR students and Teachers. Major kudos to the recipients: Alice Francis, UCHS STAR Student; Amy Payne, UCHS STAR Teacher; Logan Wood, Woody Gap STAR Student; and Althea Cantrell, Woody Gap STAR Teacher.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber
Cindy Williams



As part of the program, I was able to share some of our wonderful Chamber accomplishments from the past year. Some examples include:

New Chamber Website - In October 2013, the Chamber unveiled a new look to our website with stunning photography and enhanced features.

Hotel/Motel Tax Improvements - Continuing to work with County and City leadership as well as local lodging partners, we were able to increase our Hotel/Motel Tax revenue by approximately 15% in 2013.

Established the FERST Foundation in Union County - The Chamber's Education Committee established the FERST Foundation for Childhood Literacy in Union County which provides free, monthly books by mail for children from birth to age five.

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The Musical Fruit, Part II

I don't mean to "toot" my own horn, but my recent column on the musical fruit seemed to resonate with many of you. I received some retorts, too. Or should I say, retorts. Being holed up in the home for a few unexpected days last week, I finally took the opportunity to peruse the 402 page Moosewood Restaurant cookbook

Farmers Market Moment
JoAnne Leone



my sister blessed me with at Christmas this year.

The kitchens of the Moosewood collective have been cooking up meatless recipes for over 40 years. In their restaurant, the menu changes not seasonally, but daily. Their newest collection of 250 recipes is laid out like a restaurant menu. The first recipes I came upon were the appetizers.

I have, over the past few years, acquired a taste for hummus. It is so readily available in the grocery stores these days, with many varieties to choose from. Hummus is also quite easy to make at home. In literally 5 minutes, you have a spread for toast, crackers or veggies (I love mine with raw cauliflower). Most everything you need is in your kitchen. Dig out the food processor. Plop in a drained can of chickpeas (don't even check the date. They have a two generation shelf life). Chickpeas are also referred to as garbanzo beans or chicki beans.

To the drained beans, add a clove of garlic, a 1/4 of a cup of water, 2 tablespoons of lemon juice and a quarter teaspoon of salt. The one ingredient you probably don't have in your cabinet to make hummus is tahini. This can be purchased in the international food aisle of any of our chain grocery stores. It is actually sesame seed paste. You'll need a fourth of a cup of that in there, too. Blend it. Voila! For variations, add 10 kalamata pitted olives, or 3 roasted peppers out of the jar. Sundried tomatoes are another great addition. Taking a hint from the Moosewood folks, my next batch is going to include caramelized onions and a bit of fresh cilantro.

While you were fishing around in the deep recesses of your pantry, you probably found a treasure trove of canned kidney beans. Every time you plan on chili, you buy a few more cans, and before you know it, they become an arsenal ready to load by case in your fallout shelter for Y3K. Here's a recipe for a red bean and walnut spread that sounds like a great topper for pita chips, stuffed in celery

See Leone, page 5A

Letters to the Editor ...

Many thanks

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank the GADOT and the Union County Road Department for the excellent job they have done clearing our roadways during this last weather event. Your quick action and continual scraping made a huge difference for the citizens of Union County. Thank you for your dedication and service.

Doug Hughes
Blairsville

Put the bad news on the inside

Dear Editor,

We really enjoyed this weeks paper, February 5th with all the encouraging and positive news. You do a good job in keeping the community informed. I do not know if anyone has mentioned this before, although when the front page has all the negative press with the criminals it looks bad on our town, to me. I wish there was another location like the sheriff's section that this kind of coverage could be, instead of giving them front page news; just a suggestion.

Thank you,
Steve Everman

A pattern emerges

Dear Editor,

According to Lucy Williams in her letter to the editor in the Feb 5th edition, the war on poverty began under Lyndon Johnson's presidency (1964), 50 years ago. The war has not yet been won, and in fact the number of people in poverty is growing. If the Republicans would allow it, the Democrats could expand it and win the war on poverty.

In other words, even though we have spent hundreds of billions of dollars, and tens of millions more people are receiving benefits, and poverty is still increasing, the answer is to expand the program even more. The "safety net" is wider and deeper than ever. More and more people are falling into it. So we should make the net even wider and deeper. Surely, the thinking is, if we expand that net enough and make it deep enough, the poor will climb out of the net and there will be no more poverty. That logic escapes me.

There is no question that some people need help. There is no doubt that some people take advantage of those who are willing to help. The number of people receiving help is growing rapidly. They overwhelmingly vote for Democrats.

Am I seeing a pattern here?
The farm subsidy program, of which Ms. Williams writes, was started in 1933 by President FDR, 80+ years ago and counting. Government benefit programs once started never end. They only grow.

Clyde Woolsey

Ask why

Dear Editor,

On January 31, the US Postal Service Supplies and Services Purchasing Office posted a notice on the Federal Business Opportunities Web site asking contractors to register with USPS as potential ammunition suppliers for "assorted small arms ammunition." The notice mentioned a Feb. 10 deadline.

Since 2001, the U.S. Department of Education has been building an arsenal through purchases orchestrated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The DoE has spent over \$80,000 so far on Glock pistols and over \$17,000 on Remington "assault" shotguns. The DoE has its own "enforcement division" under the aegis of the Inspector General.

Back in July, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration also purchased 72,000 rounds .40 S&W ammunition, following a 2012 purchase for 46,000 rounds of .40 S&W Jacketed Hollow Point by the National Weather Service.

Including mass purchases by the Dept. of Homeland Security, non-military federal agencies combined have purchased an estimated amount of over two billion (2,000,000,000) rounds of ammunition in the past two years.

Additionally, the U.S. Army bought almost 600,000 Soviet AK-47 magazines last fall: enough to hold nearly 18,000,000 rounds of 7.62x39mm ammunition -- which is not standard-issue for either the U.S. Military or even NATO.

Earlier this month, Homeland Security spent over \$58 million on hiring security details for just two Social Security offices in Maryland. DHS also spent \$80 million on armed guards to protect government buildings in New York and sought even more guards for federal facilities in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

I have to ask: WHY?

George Mitchell

Get it done

Dear Editor,

Buying a home is the biggest purchase for most families. You hire a home inspector to inspect the condition of the home. Think you are protected? Think again.

Home inspectors, in the state of Georgia, are not required to be licensed, educated nor insured with errors and omission insurance.

Therefore, if your inspector misses major issues - you will be stuck with major expense and have to take legal action against the home inspector.

In 2008, the State Senate and House overwhelmingly passed HB 1217. This bill would have required State Licensing of Home Inspectors, as well as require them to have continuing education and carry errors and omissions insurance. This would have greatly protect you, the consumer. However, then Gov. Sonny Perdue vetoed this

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