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who are littering. Remember that littering costs you, the taxpayer, because the money to combat this problem is basically coming out of your pocket. Not only do we have to use tax dollars to clean it up, but littering could also cost the county jobs. Who wants to move to a county or locate a business in a county with litter all over the place? The house you get to build is because another person has realized how wonderful our county is to live in and keeping it looking beautiful is a responsibility we all share. The job lost because of littering may be your own if you are guilty of littering.

Q. Do you have any litter survey facts?

A. • Three out of four Georgia motorists say they have seen trash thrown out of a vehicle, yet only one in 10 admit to littering from their vehicle.

• Eight out of 10 motorists believe people litter because it is easier than saving trash to discard later.

• Each Georgia resident disposes of approximately 6.3 pounds of trash each day.

• Litter in neighborhoods can result in property values being lowered by as much as 15 percent.

• Eighteen percent of all littered items end up in our streams and waterways as pollution.

• Cigarette litter represents more than 20 percent of the litter collected in many community clean-up initiatives.

• The most commonly found items during roadside litter clean-ups are cigarette butts, fast food wrappers, cups and aluminum cans.

Q. So what is the answer to the litter problem?

A. I believe education is the key. And it starts with the children. If we can start early enough to educate that littering is a bad idea then maybe eventually littering will end. We currently have an education program in place through the North Georgia Resource Management Authority of which Union County is a part. Leslie George, Executive Assistant and Ashley Rubio, Community Outreach Coordinator, do an excellent job of going into the schools and educating children about litter and other environmental issues. Not just children, but everyone needs to become more aware and responsible. Keep a bag in your car to put your trash in and at the end of the day throw it away responsibly.

Q. What can each citizen do to combat the litter problem?

A. There are many ways each individual can help such as making a point to pick up one piece of litter every day.

If you are in a park or other public place and see litter, pick it up and throw it in the trashcan. You never know when your example will make an impression on someone else.

If you haul materials in the back of a truck, be sure to cover your load. Remember, it is against the law not to cover your load. Much of the litter on our roadways is accidentally blown out of the back of trucks. Carry a litterbag in your car. Try reusing your plastic grocery bags. They make great car litterbags.

If you are a smoker, use a proper ashtray or trash receptacle to dispose of your cigarettes. Cigarette butts are litter too.

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dogs, but, you ain't much help in finding teeth."

The next June Dad and Mom married after she graduated high school. Not long after the marriage Dad received an invite from Uncle Mack to go hunting. Dad didn't want to leave Mom at home by herself, so, he took her to Uncle Mack's house to visit with Tudler and the kids while Mack and Dad hunted.

The men spent the night hunting all across the area. Their dogs treed six coons that evening. The hunt was so enjoyable the men lost all track of time. They finally made their way back to the home of Uncle Mack at about 5:30 a.m.

Uncle Mack asked Daddy to put up his dog while he slipped into his house. As Dad was starting the car he thought Uncle Mack would wake up Mom. But, Uncle Mack didn't wake her up. Dad didn't know it but, Mack was up to something. So, after sitting in the car for 15-20 minutes Dad went inside to wake up his young wife. He thought Uncle Mack had gone to bed and was asleep.

As Dad and Mom were leaving Uncle Mack hollered from his bedroom, "Paul, where did you

get off to last night. You left us so early we were worried about you going down to the bootlegger's house and getting into trouble. Shirley, we tried to stop him." Mom looked up at Dad and gave him that "Boy, you are in trouble look." Dad tried to explain and the words wouldn't come out right. So, Dad ran into Mack's room and pulled back his bed covers. There lay Uncle Mack still wearing his muddy boots. He let out a laugh and said, "Haw, haw, haw. We got ya boy." Dad looked around and everyone in the room was laughing including my mother. Dad knew at that time he had been accepted into the family.

A couple of dates of which you may be interested include our annual Ramp Day at the Farmers Market on May 3 and our annual Strawberry Day on May 24. All the details are set in stone yet. But, the Ramp Day will be a time where you can buy native plants, produce and some crafts at the Farmers Market. Also, we will have ramps cooked in various ways and you will be able to sample the different flavors and recipes.

Strawberry Day will of course specialize in strawberries

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That's the last thing I remember, as I drifted off into a heavy slumber, exhausted by our labor.

My Mom created the most beautiful Easter baskets for us every year. The reed baskets were huge, and they were filled with delightful sweets in a circle around a huge chocolate bunny. This bunny was not a Whitman or Russell Stover bunny. He was carefully selected from the amazing creations of our local chocolatier, a lady so ancient and cantankerous, even the thick sugar drenched walls of her dark little shop didn't seem to sweeten her disposition. Despite her personality disorder, she made chocolate "art" for the eye and the taste buds. There were chocolate dipped soft marshmallows, that melted in one's mouth upon impact, eggs filled with candied fruit or fluffy maple cream and chocolate lollipops, solid and shaped like a myriad of farm animals.

I always knew my basket from my sister's because my big bunny was white chocolate. I'm not sure where I acquired my obsession for the vanilla laced derivative of this cocoa delicacy, but it has always been my choice, even into adulthood. White chocolate actually isn't chocolate at all, in the sense that it contains no cocoa, but only cocoa butter, milk, sugar and vanilla. All year I waited for my favorite candy treat to be hidden in the pastel plastic straw that filled the bottom of my basket—a heavy gauged, but tiny foil pleated cup, filled with almond flavored white chocolate. Each tiny piece had an itchy-bitsy sugar flower on top, pressed into the faux chocolate. When I confessed my sins the Saturday after Easter, I usually had to include "coveting my neighbors goods," for if my sister somehow inadvertently found this treat in her basket, too, I would have a hard time containing my disdain for her existence.

Easter was a happy reunion of relatives that were thrilled to be together once again. Though only 18 miles separated us, the Lake Erie snowfalls kept us at bay from one another for the six months of winter. Mom and Dad fixed a traditional dinner of baked ham, sweet potato casserole with the relish dish, the pane di Pasqua (Easter bread) and buttered carrots. The Sicilian side dish that was usually only served on this day was a combination of chopped onion

Ramsey...

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ing its glory days has been instrumental in the resurgence of the Russian Orthodox Church, once a vital part of the lives of Russian ethnics, having had a stabilizing effect on family life. The very vocal anti-homosexual demonstrations to be seen throughout Russian (for better or worse, as one may view them) can be directly traced to the growing influence of Russian Christianity.

Russian Jews, on the other hand, a powerful part of life in the Soviet Union and still in Russia itself from the revolution onward and who hold high and influential positions within the Communist Party, see this resurgence of Christianity as a threat to their power and security. No wonder the American left feels let down by its once great ideal.

In its ignorance and bigotry, the West cannot and will not try to understand Vladimir Putin (a Renaissance Man if there ever was one) and his dreams for a new Russia. Finally, after a long line of sometimes cruel, sometimes ineffective and sometimes drunken buffoons, comes a man who longs for a Russia he and the Russian people can be proud of; a Russia of its once great musicians, artists, writers, museums and architecture. Americans sneer and ridicule him; our ideal being the likes of George W. Bush. 'Twas ever thus.

Ruth Elizabeth Ramsey

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man, pushing a wheelbarrow, ran off the edge of the plank continued to grip the barrow handles and fell to his death.

Someday I hope to cross some of these bridges just because I want to, but some I will never cross. However, I have crossed the longest, widest and greatest bridge ever known by man. It's called the Calvary Grace Bridge. It was completed when God's Son died for sinful mankind on a hill outside the city walls of Jerusalem. Jesus, Himself became the bridge. He connected two opposite points: Sinful man and a holy God were

brought together by grace.

Men and women are able to get to God over the bridge of the grace of Jesus Christ. You are not charged a toll. You don't have to travel anywhere to cross it, not even to church. You can cross that bridge right in your living room. You can cross over from your darkness to light; from death to life; from time to eternity over Calvary's Grace Bridge. As the songwriter said, "Oh the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary." Thank God for the life, crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He Lives! He Lives!

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ited Georgia High School that offers students a second chance to earn a regular high school diploma, not a GED. It helps students make up failed classes and return to day school or it receives full-time students who become graduates of MECHS.

MECHS has increased the number of diplomas awarded by MECHS from three in 1994, the first year of operation to 207 in 2012 with a total of 1,848 in the almost 20 years of operation.

In all, MECHS has helped over 6,000 students earn

a high school diploma in Northeast Georgia. Please join me in congratulating MECHS for the great work they are doing in our community.

Do you know a business that is worthy of consideration for future recognition? If so, I encourage you to nominate them today. Forms can be obtained at www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com. Click on Chamber Programs, fill out the application, and submit to the Chamber. You may also contact the Chamber at (706) 745-5789.

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in being a child all warm and comfy, smelling like fresh laundry, having your Dad read his way through a story book.

There's something mysterious, magical, transcendent, in feeling the rough cover of a book, of scenting the fustiness of an ancient tome long set aside and forgotten, of listening to the sound of pages turning, allowing the story to carry you to lands

you'll never visit -- at least, not in person.

Books made of cloth and paper have something atavistic about them. They excite the mind and, with time, satisfy the soul. Time devoted to reading to a child pays dividends that will never be gleaned from a bank account -- or from Kindle.

George Mitchell

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Then, the devastating terrorist attack occurred on September 11, 2001. The impact of that event caused me to question where I needed to be; teaching, no doubt, but teaching who? The answer was to return to those young people I loved. I applied again for a middle school position and was rehired. These students were the ones I was called to teach. So, in 2002, I was once again at Union County Middle School.

As the years went by, there was never any doubt that teaching young people was what I was supposed to do. However, each year became less about teaching these children and more about the data that surrounded them. We were ever increasingly looking at numbers -- test scores,

academic failure rates, graduation rates, trends, etc., and somehow the time to relate with the person behind that number seemed to flee.

Last week's letter about teacher, Susan Sluyter sadly hit home with me. I retired last year before I planned or wanted to because of the very reasons she so eloquently stated. Our children are so much more than the data that is generated by their performance on a test or in a classroom. A person's value should not be measured by mere performance-based quantities. How does one quantify loss, pain, or hunger? Equally important, how does one quantify love, compassion, integrity, courage?

Karen McGuire

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pers or single shoes.

The shoes you donate will go to provide footwear to others who have none. Let's do all we can for others while at the same time celebrating Earth Day.

Keep Union County

Beautiful is a part of Keep Our Mountains Beautiful, a Keep America Beautiful Affiliate.

Leslie George
Executive Director
North Georgia Resource
Management Authority

and we will have a recipe contest featuring strawberries at the Farmers Market.

Also, don't forget our Trash to Treasures Yard Sale each Thurs-

day and Friday at the Farmers Market. Finally, the Garden Club will hold its annual Plant Sale at the Farmers Market on April 26. See you at the Farmers Market.