

Opinions

Everybody has one...

The Fire Department Family

Every day we get bombarded with negative messages and negative media; at times it seems there isn't anything good to talk about or say. In this day of such negativity, it is nice to have some good news every once and a while. In this column, I try to write something constructive, informative and helpful to people of Union County. I want people to understand who the firefighters are, what we do and what services we provide to the community. If you notice at the end of each column, we provide our Motto: Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~. That is the way that we view the department; as a family.



David Dyer
Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

What is a family? There are many definitions. According to dictionary.com a family is "a basic social unit consisting of parents and their children, considered as a group, whether dwelling together or not". A family is a group of people who may or may not be related but are connected by an emotional bond that instills loyalty, trust, love, and concern for each other. The fire department is a family.

We are like most families. We are dedicated to each other. We joke around and give each other a hard time. We have crazy people, we have smart people, and we have talented people. We have leaders and we have followers. We fight, we argue, we have differences, and at times we may want to kill each other. But, if we need something, we are always there as a family would be. We help each other; night or day.

A family is a group of people who share something. For the most part, we all share a common goal of wanting to do the job. We get a satisfaction of being a firefighter and helping people. We know how each and every firefighter feels. We know how it feels to go through the training. We know how it feels to get up in the middle of the night, leave our family at home, and go to a fire or motor vehicle accident. We know how it is to respond to people who are hurt or killed and to question whether we did all that we could do. We know what we have all seen and heard. We share this. It creates a special bond between people who have the training and the experiences of being a firefighter. It is a special bond that cannot be explained; you have to live it.

When we say, "Our Family Protecting Your Family", we are saying that, as a family of firefighters, we have a common goal and purpose to do everything that we possibly can to help people in need; sometimes on the worse day of their lives. We want people to know that our family bond makes us strong enough to respond to your emergency.

So in a world that hits you at every turn with negative messages, remember our positive message that we are there for you. And don't forget... Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Xanax: Dangers and Risks with Misuse

The fact is that Xanax, a benzodiazepine, has become one of the most abused prescription drugs, resulting in addiction for a growing number of users. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) says that every year doctors write more than 50 million prescriptions for benzodiazepines and that 11 to 15 percent of American adults have a bottle of benzos in their medicine cabinet. That statistic alone should be enough to be alarming, especially since that's a huge population potentially risking addiction to the drug.

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.

But long before a person becomes addicted, Xanax use carries a number of risks and dangers. Although Xanax itself rarely kills, the most alarming of the risks of Xanax misuse and abuse is the risk of death when Xanax is combined with alcohol consumption. Death from overdose is sometimes the tragic result of playing with this deadly combination.

There are, of course, legitimate reasons for physicians to prescribe Xanax to patients. Those suffering from anxiety and panic attacks may benefit from taking the medication. Where people get into trouble with Xanax is when they start becoming addicted to the kind of euphoric feeling that the drug brings about, or to its depressive properties. This can happen even when they are taking the medication as prescribed by their doctor.

But Xanax addiction can also occur, and this is increasing in frequency, when individuals obtain the drug either from friends or a drug dealer and begin using it on a recreational, non-medical basis. In other words, they're taking it purely as a party drug to get to the desired state of euphoria or to "take the edge" off what may otherwise be a stressful situation.

Just as with other addictive drugs, once an individual becomes addicted to Xanax, he or she will find themselves having to use more of the drug and more often, just to achieve the desired effect. The fact is that this desired effect becomes increasingly elusive. The more Xanax the person takes, the deeper they sink into addiction and perpetuate the addictive cycle.

What does Xanax addiction look like? What are some of the signs and symptoms? Experts say that there are a number of distinct physical and psychological symptoms that are associated with addiction to Xanax. These include strong cravings for the drug, irregular or depressed heartbeat, sleeping constantly and having withdrawal symptoms when not on Xanax.

It's not easy going through withdrawal from Xanax, similar to withdrawal symptoms from other types of highly-addictive drugs. Withdrawal generally occurs as soon as the drug supply dries up or the individual deliberately stops taking Xanax. It also occurs when the individual goes into drug treatment and begins the detoxification process to wean themselves off Xanax under medical supervision.

While every person experiences Xanax withdrawal a little differently, some of the most common symptoms of withdrawal include inability to sleep, depression, irritability, nausea, dizziness, headache or trembling.

It should be mentioned that while none of the withdrawal symptoms mentioned here are

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Neighbors

People like stories. Our lives are stories. We don't live in the abstract, so it makes sense that Jesus taught in stories. We call them parables, and Jesus intended them mostly for the responsive, not the resistant. He liked to say, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Dr. Bernard Ramm taught seminary students that the golden rule of interpreting a parable is to determine the one central truth the parable is attempting to teach. We do not have the luxury of trying to pick apart a parable and make it an allegory since the single point is usually quite evident. An exception is when Jesus unpacks the parable for us, such as the story about planting seeds in different soils.

The central truth of the "Good Samaritan" story is about being a loving neighbor, which might be a better name for it. Jesus spun this tale after agreeing that love of God has implications for how you treat your neighbor. "Who is my neighbor?" the questioner responded, prompting the story telling.

Jesus told it better, but I would summarize the story (Lk 10:25-37) like this. Once upon a time robbers jumped a man, took everything he had, and beat him almost to death. Religious people passed by without helping. A man who came from a generally disrespected class of people went to great personal cost to help the victim. It was an unexpected plot twist in the little story. The religious people (like the ones he was chatting with) were not loving, but the despised man was. Jesus challenged his hearers to note who treated the victim like a neighbor.

So let's apply the central truth principal. If you want to demonstrate your love of God, then love your neighbor. Your neighbor is someone who has a need that you can meet, and it may be costly. It may be an opportunity to explain to your neighbor that your love of God compels you to be of service.

Jesus wasn't trying to get to an "A-ha!" moment of intellectual enlightenment. He meant for his hearers to be affected. "Go and do the same," he challenged. Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself are the Great Commandments according to Jesus (Mat. 22:36-40).

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Is it possible that a gazebo could be built in downtown Blairsville similar to what they have in Hiawassee. It would allow for a central focus area and a place to have a Christmas Tree lighting, music playing and other community events?

A. Many people still do not realize that there are three independent taxing authorities in Union County. That is Union County Government, Union County School System and the City of Blairsville. Each has their own property tax base, each has their own facilities and each has total independence from the other. Therefore, I have no control or influence in the City of Blairsville. However, I did contact the Downtown Development Director to see if he could give me an answer and he said the following, "There is green space behind City Hall, and we are currently in the process of creating a plan to develop this area. A community pavilion is part of this plan."

Q. When are you going to install a red light or 4-way stop at the new intersection of Bob Head Street and Young Harris Street across from Foodland?

A. Please see the answer above. The county has no jurisdiction in what is done with the intersection which is inside the City Limits of Blairsville. Anything dealing with the City of Blairsville should be addressed directly to City Hall. This would include anything to do with the City Water or Sewer, the City Police, City garbage service, City street repair, City Alcohol Licenses or the City Airport.

Q. I thought you said the county had no say within the City Limits of Blairsville. So who controls the airport?

A. Actually that is a pretty good question, because with anything there is an exception to the rule. Actually, there are two exceptions. While the Blairsville Municipal Airport is located in the county, it is totally owned by the City and therefore has the same guidelines as if it were in the City Limits. Then there is Butternut Creek Golf Course that is within the City Limits of Blairsville, but it is owned by the County Government and controlled by the county as if it were not located within the city.

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Spa and Deck Creations, Inc Business of the Quarter

Before I share information about the Business of the Quarter, I wanted to be sure to recognize and thank Chief Dyer and the Union County Fire Department for all of their help with the Fireworks show.

This past Thursday, July 14th, I had the honor of presenting the Business of the Quarter Award to Spa and Deck Creations, Inc. On behalf of the Chamber Staff, the Board of Directors and the Chamber Ambassadors, I want to thank everyone who came out to congratulate Rick and Jill Goode and their staff. We know this award means a great deal to them.

Rick and Jill started their business in 1985 here in North Georgia, building customized decks around pools and spas as well as doing renovations. At the time, they owned a spa and experienced first-hand how much fun it was; not to mention the physical and mental benefits. They saw a need in this area for a spa, sauna, and hot tub business and decided to expand! They opened Spa and Deck Creations in Blairsville in 1992. With the continued growth of their business, they added a second location in Blue Ridge.

Spa and Deck Creations, Inc. specializes in sales and service of spas, hot tubs, saunas, and specialty baths. It is a family owned business with Rick and Jill at the helm with over 25 years of experience in the industry. They have

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Ticks

Though finding insects on your ornamental plants and vegetables is certainly frustrating, there are few things more unsettling than finding a tick feeding on your body! Because they feed on animals multiple times throughout their lives, they are also dangerous vectors of disease as they transfer parasites from one animal to another. In these hot and humid summer months, it is important to protect yourself and your animals against tick bites and prevent the spread of disease.

Each stage during a tick's development needs to have a blood meal in order to mature. Adult males mate with female ticks while the females engorge on a blood meal. Shortly after, females drop off the host, and then they will lay a clutch of about 6000 eggs a week later. Depending on the weather, the eggs will hatch within several weeks, releasing six legged larvae known as "seed ticks." Seed ticks will climb up a blade of grass and wait for their first host to walk through the area. They can sense the presence of animals they feed on by smelling the carbon dioxide the animals exhale. Once a host passes through, the tick will latch on and begin gorging itself on the animal's blood. When its stomach is fully extended, the tick will drop off, digest its meal, and shed its skin to become an eight legged nymph that more closely resembles the adults. Seed ticks typically prefer to feed on small hosts such as rodents, but adult ticks will feed on larger animals such as deer and humans.

The three main ticks in Georgia have distinctive appearances that can help distinguish them from each other. The Lone Star tick got its name from the white spot found on the back of the females. Their mouthparts are also much longer than those of other ticks. Lone Stars feed on a wide variety of animals such as humans, horses, deer, dogs, birds and rodents. The American dog tick has short mouthparts that are barely visible. Both males and females have a white mottled pattern on their backs. Though they prefer to feed on dogs, dog ticks will feed on larger animals.

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USDA farming forecasts are being realized across the U.S.

The following is an article on the current state of farmers and our food supply. We're already halfway through 2016 now, and unfortunately the predictions for a tough farm income year are being realized.

In the first quarter of 2016, the Kansas City Fed surveyed bankers and found that 86% of the bankers reported lower farm income than a year ago. In addition, farmers with carryover debt increased from 18% of loans to 29% of loans in the first quarter of 2016. "Even though agriculture and energy commodity prices have increased recently, they remain well below last year's prices and from their peak levels in 2011. Over the past 12 months, farm prices are down by 9.5%, grain prices are off by 4% and livestock are down by 15% percent".

Also while the farmland and ranchland-price index for June climbed to 32.3 from April's 28.4, it is still below "growth neutral" range and has been for the last 31 months.

Predictions about a decline surfaced late last year, with USDA warning farmers in the Corn Belt to "brace for a rough 2016" as farm incomes were forecast to drop for the third straight year. The agency also predicted a "prolonged downturn in corn and soybean prices" which has been realized and has deeply affected farm income in the Midwest. In Kansas, for example, KSNW news reported that, "the average income dropped from a 5-year average of \$120,000 to just over \$4,500—levels that haven't been seen since the 1980s." Countrywide, when the figures are finally tallied for 2016, net cash farm income is expected to fall by 2.5 percent in 2016, while net farm income is forecast to decline by 3 percent. Translated into dollars and cents, USDA projected the average household farm income this year to be \$17,769—up slightly from \$17,279 last year—but still down sharply from \$28,687 just two years ago.

KSN Ag experts say that, "If this situation were to continue for many years, it would remove more and more farmers from the business who would not be able to stay in the business and we would see food prices increase because that food would have to be imported to other countries."

One bright piece of news—for 2016, USDA forecasted a decline in the cost of expenses and anticipated that the decrease will outweigh expected increases in spending on hired labor, interest, and property taxes/fees.

USDA believes that will help "alleviate, but not completely offset, the drop in cash receipts, and ultimately lead to tighter margins."

Michael Hein, vice president of Liberty

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Uncle Mack

My mother's two uncles, Mack and Rufus Baker, were two men that everyone loved and respected. I looked up to each one because they were tough and yet kind. They paid extra attention to young boys. Each man spent a great amount of time in the woods. Each of them enjoyed hunting. As young men they especially enjoyed coon hunting the hills and hollows of Newberg Mountain. Before my dad ever dated my mother he was coon hunting with Mack and Rufus. Papa purchased a couple of Black and Tan Coon Hounds for Dad called Lou and Sam. These dog's were out of an old Dog called Troup owned by the Underwood family.

When the two dogs were about 6 months old my father asked Mack and Rufus if he could go hunting with them. The two men pulled up in the yard and waited with my grandparents as my daddy fetched his dogs. The trio of men and the young boy walked across the cotton and corn fields to the "James place". The dogs struck a coon and began the trailing just after dark. The raccoon led the dogs up and down Turkey Creek and under bluffs for about an hour. Finally, the old coon went up a Black Gum Tree standing on the banks of Turkey Creek.

Uncle Rufus tied the old dogs and told my dad to let Sam and Lou continue tree barking. Uncle Mack waded into the middle of Turkey Creek and began to try and squall the coon out of the tree. Basically, Uncle Mack would make a sound that resembled a fighting coon. This squalling sound will entice a raccoon to walk down a tree and jump into the middle of a pack of dogs. This was no exception; the sound worked and the old coon began to make its way down the tree. The coon got to within 10 feet of the ground where the dogs and Uncle Mack could see the coon. Uncle Mack made one more of the squalling sounds and the old coon jumped from the tree into the creek.

But, before the coon hit the water Uncle Mack's false teeth flew from his mouth and hit the water. The sound of the splashing convinced the dogs that the coon was in the water. So, Sam dove into the water right where the false teeth had landed. Almost immediately, the coon leaped on the dog's back. So, there was Uncle Mack bending over looking for his teeth and the dog was swimming in circles all while howling because the coon was biting his ear. Just when you thought matters couldn't get worse Lou, the other dog, joined the fight. Uncle Mack was howling, "get the dogs". Sam was howling because the coon was still biting his ear. Lou finally had a good hold on the coon and she was trying to pull it off Sam's back while it was still biting his ear. Meanwhile Uncle Mack was trying to keep

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Frank Riley

Executive Director of RC&D



Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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Phone: (706) 745-6343 Fax: (706) 745-1830 * P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

Website: www.nganews.com

E-mail: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com

Mailing: POBox 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514