

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### Harry Potter would be proud

Abracadabra, poof, be gone!  
I didn't realize that Blue Ridge Mountain EMC had such magical abilities, but, it certainly looks that way.  
A bill dated June 10, 2014, shows that Taylor and Taylor Construction owed the EMC \$107,998.43.  
This week, Blue Ridge Mountain EMC placed an advertisement with the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald* with information that details in our news story last week were inaccurate and misleading.

#### Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



They also took to Facebook with information trying to drum home that the newspaper is spreading inaccurate and misleading information. **They didn't say the other details in our story were inaccurate, or misleading.**

There is a copy of Taylor and Taylor's bill on Page 9A of this edition. Also, look for the EMC advertisement on Page 6B.

Is the copy of the bill that we have in our possession inaccurate and misleading? We wish for our readers to be the judge.

We ask these questions. Was the bill a mistake on Blue Ridge Mountain EMC's part? Was the debt magically wiped out? Or, did EMC misread a meter?

The documents used to produce last week's story talk about a loan from the EMC to Taylor and Taylor Construction. Now, magically, they disavow any knowledge of that loan.

Again, transparency is an issue.

Also at issue, is the up to \$30,000 "independent investigation" paid for by the EMC members on the matter of how the debt began in the first place.

Out of all those Board of Directors, the only name mentioned as having knowledge about the Taylor and Taylor debt is a man who can't defend himself.

Yes, Jack Lance Sr. had knowledge of the debt. A whistleblower approached him two weeks prior to his death and told him about the debt. He shared that information with another member of the Board of Directors. So, why not mention that board member's name?

Do you think that board member who learned from Jack Lance Sr. about the debt kept quiet? I wouldn't think so.

Jack Lance Sr. died in March 2013, so, the documents that

I mentioned last week that claimed the Board of Directors didn't find out about the debt until April 2014 also is inaccurate and misleading as well.

Did the EMC Board of Directors believe that Jack Lance Sr. took the news of that debt with him to the Pearly Gates?

Again, transparency is an issue.

Is it possible that a true independent investigation of the matter is needed? One that the Board of Directors didn't pay for? An investigation by say, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation? Well, that may already be happening. Word has it that the GBI has the same documents held by the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald*. GBI obtained the documents through the Governor's Office.

Why would the GBI be interested?

See Duncan, page 5A

## Letters to the Editor ...

### Be careful who you listen to Dear Editor,

In response to Pam Sullivan's letter to the Editor in the July 30th edition of the *North Georgia News*; it seems to me that she has hit the nail on the head.

Important examples of the point she made seem to get short shrift by the media. For example, politicians in the state of Kansas, one of the reddest states, wholeheartedly bought into the "supply-side economics" touted by neo-conservatives. The ultra-conservative governor of Kansas, Sam Brownback, slashed taxes on the affluent and so called "job-creators" in 2012 in the belief that this would spark a huge economic boom in the state. Their boom went bust but their deficit spending ballooned as revenues failed to keep up with expenditures. They will now be forced to either increase taxes or make even more drastic cuts than they have already made to the budgets for schools, libraries, the courts, law enforcement, infrastructure and just about every other concern to the average voter. Not a pretty picture, nor a place where business interests are likely to willingly migrate; and, more importantly, a testament to the economic folly of cutting government spending in times of a general economic downturn.

In contrast, we have California. In 2012 Democratic governor Jerry Brown pushed through a package of modestly higher taxes, spending increases and a rise in the minimum wage. California also fully implemented Obama

See Shofner, page 5A

### Opening Your Heart and Home Can Be Life Changing

Dear Editor,

On Jan. 9, 2008, our family began a life-changing journey with Ayusa International. We welcomed into our home a 15 year old high school student, Sarah Engel from Erlangen, Germany. My family remembers the excitement we felt waiting for Sarah's arrival at the airport. My husband and I were so nervous becoming host parents to an exchange student. We had never done anything like this before. We wondered how we would adapt to a total stranger living in our home, especially someone from a different country and culture. At first it was unusual, but as each day passed, my family grew to love Sarah and the end of her stay she was truly a member of our family. What an experience for all of us. Sarah was in our home for only five months. But the transformation we experienced with Sarah during such an impressionable time of her life was amazing. We watched her grow before our eyes, arriving as a nervous, bewildered, insecure girl, into a successful, confident, young woman when she boarded the plane to go back home. We enjoyed hosting so much we have opened our home 3 more times to date.

All of my students have special places in my heart, but Sarah influenced my life on a life-changing journey. Soon after her arrival she inspired me to become a community representative for Ayusa. My experience was so valuable

See Bell, page 5A

### America on the Go

A young preacher flying into Atlanta found himself seated next to a beautiful girl. He asked her what her profession was. She said, "I am a go-go girl." He said, "Shake." "I am a go-go boy." "I am a preacher and the last words Jesus said was to go into all the world and preach the gospel." Are you a go-go person for Christ?

In a world where so many things go wrong, we need to go to bat for multiplied millions who go astray. The devil and the world tell us to just go away or go fly a kite. However, God tells us to go about His business and not to be discouraged. While most of the world is willing to go along with almost anything, God says that His children are to go against the tide of evil that would sweep over mankind.

The face of America reveals a people about to go to pieces for fear of terrorists, Ebola, Christianity, lawsuits, global warming and a thousand other things. In this preacher's personal opinion, based on what I believe to be God's absolute truth, we had better fear Almighty God who is about to go over America with His fine-tooth comb of judgment. It is almost unbelievable that in just a short period of time citizens of America have become afraid to mention the name Jesus in schoolhouses, courthouses, statehouses, etc. Politicians, painters, physicians, professors, poets, photographers, psychiatrists, psychologists and even some preachers are afraid that if they mention the name of Jesus they will be tarred and feathered. It is true that any mention of God in the affairs of men goes over like a lead balloon and some people go bananas.

Well, I am tired of going along for the ride; I am going for broke and going against the grain. Scores of people feel that this world is ready to go up in a puff of smoke or go down the drain. At the same time there are a vast number of folks who just go to seed. They become useless. They go to pot. They really don't care. They are lazy, complacent, and lethargic and as far as they are concerned the whole world can go to the devil. They are not about to go out of their way to do anything to change so the world can go in a different direction. Our generation will

See Parris, page 5A

#### It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



### Questions and Answers

We would like to thank Tax Commissioner Lee Knight and the Tax Commissioner's Office for providing this information.

#### Q. What is the Tax Commissioner's Office responsible for?

A. The mission of the Tax Commissioner's Office is to bill, collect, and disburse all taxes as prescribed by the laws of the State of Georgia and to act as the Motor Vehicle tag and title agent for the State. Union County has one of the highest tax collection rates in the State of Georgia. Their staff is dedicated to collecting all taxes and ensuring the smooth and orderly operation of county government. Sharing the responsibility of improving our community depends on the taxes we all pay as they are disbursed back to you in many different ways.

#### Q. What is the billing process for property taxes?

A. The process for taxing real property begins with the purchase of property. Once a sale is finalized, a deed is recorded with the Clerk of Superior Court's Office at the Union County Courthouse in Blairsville, Georgia. The Tax Assessor's office then assigns a value to the property and an assessment notice is mailed to each individual property owner in May of the following year. The property owner then has a 45 day period to appeal the assigned value. Once the appeal process period has ended, a tax digest is compiled. The tax digest is an official listing of all property owners in the county, the assessed value of the property they own, and the taxes levied on the property. This is the central document of the Tax Commissioner's Office. It is a complete listing of property owners, their street addresses, legal addresses, property locations, exemptions, assessments and taxes due. Once completed, the digest is submitted to the State Department of Revenue for approval.

After approval is received, bills are prepared and mailed out. In accordance with Georgia State Law, tax bills are mailed to the owner of record as of January 1st of the tax year being billed. Therefore, a new owner who bought a given property during the year will not receive a bill. Please Note - Failure to receive a bill does not relieve responsibility of paying taxes due. The taxpayer then has a period equal to at least 60 days to pay this annual tax bill. If bills are not paid by due date, 1% interest incurs each month on the amount due. After becoming 90 days delinquent a 10% penalty will be added and then the Tax

See Paris, page 5A

### Take 5 With Yvette Estevez-Hanson

This week's Take 5 is with Yvette Estevez-Hanson who is the Office Administrator at the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce. Yvette joined the Chamber team in May of 2014. She oversees office operations and leads our communication efforts.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber  
Cindy Williams



1. Tell us your favorite aspect of your position.

I would say there are two things that stand out for me. The comradery between the office staff is excellent and the support they extend to me makes me feel like a part of their family! Also, working for the community gives me a sense of accomplishment of doing something that can help and benefit others.

2. Tell us a little bit about your background. Where did you work before the Chamber?

As some may know, I am a new transplant to Blairsville. I previously worked for the City of Sunrise, a local municipality in south Florida for almost nine years. There I was the Work Control Clerk for the Public Works department. I assisted with inquiries, requests, and afforded resolutions in various situations. I provided administrative support to the departmental Director as well as Division Directors. I also prepared requests for purchase orders, reconciled accounts, and assisted with the department's an-

See Williams, page 5A

### The Spices of Life

When Cleopatra wanted to seduce Caesar, she used a spice to send her message. She had huge quantities of saffron strewn all over the streets of Rome to celebrate the emperor's entrance. With saffron currently selling for \$72.95 an ounce, that would be just a little steep, even on Bill Gates wallet, to beguile a suitor in today's society. I have friends who invested far less in eHarmony with better results than the Queen of the Nile had romancing the head of the Roman Empire.

I love sweet red peppers, and they are currently plentiful at the Farmer Market this time of year. Here's a quick recipe, incorporating saffron. This dish will have your mouth watering, and maybe might make you a temptress in your own kitchen. Here's the ingredients list: 4 large sweet red bell peppers, 2 Tbsps extra-virgin olive oil, 1 onion (medium, halved and cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices), 2 garlic cloves (minced), 1/4 tsp red pepper flakes, 1/8 tsp saffron, 2 Tbsps sherry vinegar (or a balsamic vinegar will work, as well), 1/2 cup Niçoise or Kalamata olives (pitted), salt and ground black pepper, 2 Tbsps chopped fresh mint.

Prepare in two steps. STEP 1: Heat the broiler. Broil peppers 4 inches from the heat, turning them as their skins begin to blister and blacken, until peppers have blackened all over in a slightly mottled or freckled pattern, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a bowl; cover with a towel or plastic wrap. When cool enough to be handled, rub off their skins with your fingers. Cut each pepper in half lengthwise and remove seeds, stem, and membrane. Slice into 1-inch-wide strips. If not using immediately, refrigerate in a glass container or bowl until you are ready to use. STEP 2: Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring frequently until tender, about 10 minutes. Add garlic, red pepper flakes, and saffron, and cook 2 minutes. Add peppers, vinegar, and olives. Season with salt and pepper, reduce heat to low, and cook another 3 minutes. Stir in mint.

Serve as a topper for rice or risotto, or as an accompaniment to your grilled chicken. Better yet, take a hard roll, spritz it with water and put in a cold oven, right on the rack. Set the oven to 400 degrees. When you hear the bell that the oven is up to temp, remove the hard roll. It will be perfect; crispy on the outside and steamy soft on the inside. Slice in half, add a little olive oil, a slice of cheese

Farmer Market Moment  
JoAnne Leone



See Leone, page 5A



"Tomatoes are a lot like campaign promises... After so many, they get a little hard to swallow!"

### Criminal Act

Dear Editor,

Anyone who believes that only two people knew about a \$100,000 debt to the BRMEMC is very naive. What are Board Members for if they don't know what is going on? I also do not believe that the people in the bookkeeping department didn't know about the debt. If I miss my payment by a month they shut off my service. This whole mess is just criminal and should be investigated by a Federal Agency. I wonder if there are others with similar circumstances not paying their bills.

Doug Brassel

### How do you vote?

Dear Editor,

Charles, you did a great job in exposing the Terry Taylor fiasco... but you didn't hit on how 'Directors' are elected or appointed. We really are not given a choice as 'we' can't nominate or write-in candidates. It is my understanding that Julie Payne was 'appointed' to finish out Terry Taylor's term. How and what was the process?

This is to mention that 'members' never receive rebates or refunds of profits. Neighboring Habersham Electric Membership Corporation gives its members checks or credits every year.

And exactly what is the service charge that shows up on bills? I've asked and it seems no one knows; or at least they haven't been able to explain it to me.

Again, as always, thanks and keep up the good work.

Henry Chambers

### Mitchell hates Common Core

Dear Editor

Before I retired, I gave 36 years of my life to the education of other people's children.

Based on what I learned over those nearly four decades, Common Core is a colossal mistake, foisted on Georgia's children in the name of "improving education."

If only our elected officials could set aside their egos, admit that Common Core will do -- and is doing -- incalculable harm to Georgia's school children and withdraw Georgia from that Godzilla of a federal program.

If only. Let's not forget -- or try to hide -- the attendant costs imposed on taxpayers:

Accountability Works, a Maryland-based, nonprofit, education advocacy group, estimates that schools nationwide will need \$6.86 billion specifically earmarked for "technology," \$5.26 billion assigned to "professional development,"

Another cost, \$2.47 billion allocated for "approved" textbooks and \$1.24 billion directed for "assessment testing" over the first seven years that Common Core is in effect.

Question from the back row: Where, in

See Mitchell, page 5A

### The Swimming Hole

My grandfather, Columbus, was raised with a bunch of his cousins and friends just outside of Phil Campbell, AL in a little community called Traptown. The people of this little community were extremely close and they managed to enjoy life even though the country was in turmoil due to the depression. The boys of the family enjoyed playing baseball, fishing in the creek, coon hunting and in the summer time they swam at the mill pond on Cummings Creek.

During the 1930s parents were very conservative with their children. You never saw a girl wearing a pair of shorts. Young men and women didn't go on dates by themselves. Boys and girls didn't go swimming together. The young people around the little community of Traptown had different swimming times for the "Swimming Hole on Cummings Creek". Actually, the boys didn't even wear bathing suits. So, the boys swam from 1:30 until 3:30. After the boys left the girls would swim until 5:30. This arrangement allowed the boys and girls to swim for the same amount of time and it worked well for most of Coon's teenage years.

But, then Coon began to notice girls. There were three girls in the community who were sisters. Even though the girls had been a part of Papa's life since he could remember he'd never noticed them. But, one day all of a sudden Coon noticed the Lauderdale Girls and they were beautiful. That is when the trouble began.

One particularly hot day during the Dog Days of August the boys were having a great time at the swimming hole. When it came time for the boys to get out of the water so the girls could swim the boys refused. The girls hollered at them from the top of the bluff, "Your time is up. It's time for us girls to swim". Papa said, "We just laughed and kept swimming". Not only were the Lauderdale Girls pretty, but, they were also smart.

While the boys were still swimming the Lauderdale Girls slipped down to where the boys had left their clothes. The eldest girl knew Papa was the ring leader of the boys. So, Sarah placed her underwear in the bib pocket of Papa's overalls. After a while Coon and his brothers got out of the water, put on their clothes and made their way home. By the time they got home it was suppertime. When Papa and his brothers walked into the house their mother, Laura told them to take off their dirty clothes and place them on the back porch. Coon was bad about leaving items in his pocket. So, Laura went through his pockets after Coon had left them on the porch. She found the underwear in his pocket. She grabbed the first thing handy which was a broom and marched into her son's bedroom.

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#### Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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