

Opinions

Everybody has one...

A Christmas Wish fulfilled

Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll wasn't sure how many cops turned out to help with the annual Shop With A Cop on Saturday. He was certain that there were enough to help 84 young people fill their Christmas Wish Lists.

Saturday marked the most children ever served by the program, a total of 98, including 14 special needs children who went shopping with a cop last week.

It was heartwarming to see these young people smiling and knowing that Christmas morning will arrive with gifts under the Christmas tree.

Without Shop With A Cop, most would never know that special feeling.

The event featured Blairsville police officers, Union County Sheriff's deputies, Georgia State Patrol, and deputies from Towns and Forsyth counties. It also featured volunteers from the Blairsville Cruisers, Harmony Grove Baptist Church, New Hope Church, and Xtreme Christian Outdoor Sports.

Forgive me if I left someone out. I know this, there was a community effort involved in this glorious day.

Wal-Mart Manager Dean Justus greeted the young people with open arms. He made sure there were refreshments in the gathering area for the young people and their shopping cops and volunteers.

The most exciting part of the event, seeing BPD officers and Union County Sheriff's deputies teamed up to make this special day happen.

Chief Carroll and Union County Sheriff Mack Mason work well as a team. It showed on this day and depending on the day you might see them, many of those BPD officers also work as deputies for the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Union County Sheriff's Sgt. Adam Deyton put the day into perspective for the law enforcement officers. He called the experience a humbling one.

"One of the most heartwarming experiences anyone can enjoy in life is seeing the look on a child's face at Christmas time," Sgt. Deyton said. "It's humbling to be a part of this event, truly humbling."

The dedication of local law enforcement is a truly humbling experience for an entire community. God bless them all.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Christmas Nuts to Crack

Well folks, you have heard about the nuts and bolts (the basics) of various subjects, but I want to explore the nuts of Christmas. As far back as I can recall I have been nuts about Christmas. In fact, before you are finished with this column, you likely will say that this writer is as nutty as a fruitcake.

If my memory serves me right, I don't remember a Christmas without a variety of nuts. My dad always made sure that we had oranges, apples and different kinds of nuts. In grade school and at church programs, teachers would hand out brown paper bags that always included nuts. Over the years I have attended Christmas parties where someone goes nuts about finding out how dumb I am by requiring tests to be taken. One such test was Christmas nuts to crack. I was glad that Regina was sitting next to me or else I never would have cracked some of those nuts.

Here are some of the questions: What nut is in a box? I peeped on Regina's paper and she had Chestnut. All I recall about chestnuts was something about roasting over an open fire. What nut is a hot drink? Coconut. Personally, I prefer it cold. I churned my brain to come up with the answer to "a nut made from cream?" Butternut never dawned on me. As I looked over other nutty questions such as "What nut is a canned vegetable?" I thought I am going to fail this test. Why, I never would have thought of a Pecan being the answer. By now I am thinking I will have to turn in my ordination papers. My goose was really cooked when I came to the question "what nut is uncooked bread?" Answer-a Donut. I thought that was silly. But the next question really threw me, "What is a seashore nut?" I have never found a nut on the seashore except maybe a two-legged one. Coconut had already been used. But for some reason these smart preachers' wives knew the answer was "Beechnut." I always thought that was chewing tobacco. Next came the biggie, "what nut is the side of a room?" Man, I have seen some big nuts in my time but never one the side of a room. I tried to picture just how big the tree would be and just how many nuts it could produce. What if you were standing under the tree when the nut fell? Just then an-

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



See Parris, page 5A

Questions and Answers

Q. Why don't you publish the entire County budget in the newspaper instead of just a brief summation?

A. We publish in the newspaper what is required by state law and what is adopted at the county meeting. It would be foolish to pay over \$1,000 for a more detailed budget to be printed in the newspaper when it would be impossible to even put the entire breakdown on a single newspaper page.

Q. How detailed is the entire county budget?

A. The detailed county budget is very extensive and consists of over 100 pages and probably closer to 200. If anyone wants to look at the entire budget, all you need to do is come by the office and we will be glad for you to look through it or you can file an open records request for the entire document at the cost of 10 cents per page plus staff time. There is absolutely nothing in the budget that is private, but it can be very difficult to understand since it is so extensive. The staff, elected officials and I spend weeks going through the budget during our annual preparation. It is also part of the county audit process.

Q. What is all the grading that is going on across from United Community Bank on Hwy 515 next to FATZ?

A. When Chick-fil-A purchased the property in Blairsville for a new restaurant, part of the process was to acquire an entrance permit from GDOT. The permit expires soon so they are going ahead and installing the turn lane and entrance. Chick-fil-A has not given a press release on the construction schedule of a new restaurant at this time, but indications are that we could be on the 2015 schedule. However, we caution everyone to not assume too much until a public announcement by the restaurant is made.

The following questions related to your property taxes were provided by Tax Commissioner Lee Knight.

Q. When are Union County property taxes due?

A. Taxes for real estate and business personal property are due in Union County by Dec. 20, 2014. Mobile home taxes are due May 15th each year. The taxes should be paid at the Tax Commissioner's Office located in the Union County Courthouse. You can now pay your property taxes online at www.uniongatax.com or check to see if your mortgage escrow account has paid them.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



See Paris, page 5A

Letters to the Editor ...

Kudos to Band

Dear Editor,

Congratulations to the Union County High School Band and Chorus for a fantastic Christmas performance Dec. 9 at Young Harris College.

The residents of Union County should be proud to be a part of the new fine arts center for these dedicated young adults. Band Director Will Stafford and Chorus Director Alicia Covington have done an amazing job and it shows in these young adults. I look forward to the next concert in the new fine arts center.

Kathy Saunders

"Frozen" or Warm Hearted?

Dear Editor,

(sing) Let it go, let it go... and that's exactly what the folks here and from the surrounding communities did over the weekend here in Blairsville.

Between the awesome Friday night "Dessert & Theatre" at the Union County Library, and the great time we had shopping at the Union County Farmers Market both Friday early eve, and also Saturday, it was again the wonderful folks pulling out all the stops!

Then to top it off, the children singing the theme song from Disney's *Frozen*, *Let it Go*, outside the downtown Old Courthouse, on Saturday, and the great Holiday Parade, why that was just icing on the cake!

See Ziegenbein, page 5A

Jesus is the reason for the season

Dear Editor,

Well, aside from the fact that I wasn't feeling very well, and the bitter cold, wind and drizzle, the Winter Fantasy Parade was quite nice. Quite nice indeed. The kids loved it and all, but still, and I call it Winter Fantasy Parade because, unfortunately, I saw not one thing related to Jesus Christ, or the spirit of Christmas in or on any thing at all, which was sad. Correct me if I am wrong but I just did not see one thing representing this. Not even the churches. For shame!! I did not even see Santa! Of course we left as soon as we saw the horses coming signaling the end. I was quite disappointed as well it was so short too.

Maybe it was just me, going along with what every one always seems to complain about this time of the year that Christ is being taken out of every thing any more and Christmas is going just way too commercial. I know I have driven around at night even and seen a few yards decorated up for Christmas which have Frogs, Swimming Pools, Palm Trees. What has that to do with Christmas? A plain and simple old

See Barnes, page 5A

Off the top of my head

Dear Editor,

In response to Mr. Tom Bennett's Letter to the Editor, Dec. 3rd:

Dear Mr. Bennett,
No one is holding your feet to the fire! When you get tired of reading... just stop!

Dr. Mr. Thibodeaux,
Thank you for your (quote) long-windedly, exhaustively performed and for exercising "overarching" whatever that is... in your letter to Governor Deal. Please keep reminding our public servants of their duty. No one else seems to be doing that. You get an "Ata-Boy" from me! When this country goes down the tube, I'm sure we will all look around and say, "How did that happen?"

Sincerely,
Jean Holsapple

P.S. I'm sorry I didn't have to prevaricate or proliferate after much contemplation to write this letter... it just came off the top of my head!



The Gift of Music

Dear Editor,

My husband and I recently had the privilege of attending two free holiday concerts at the Young Harris College's Clegg Auditorium. Seeing the dedicated, talented leaders and performers who made them possible has both humbled me and put me in the holiday spirit.

The first concert was the Community Band, whose members are of all ages, from middle school students to senior citizens. What a great show! The musicians do it for the love of music, they practice on their own time and they are paid in applause. They put on two performances, the one I saw on Thursday evening was full and the Sunday matinee was even fuller from what I understand. What a great gift to our community.

The second show was the high school band and chorus together, and the auditorium was packed. Another fantastic show! Congratulations to Mr. Stafford, the band director and Mrs. Covington, the chorus director. What you have accomplished with these kids is remarkable. It's obvious you both love what you do, and the positive impact you have made on the young people you teach is remarkable. Thank you for all of your

See Schramke, page 5A

A Christmas Choice

Dear Editor,

Where did the year go? Wow it just seems like yesterday we were trying to figure out what to buy for our spouses, our grown kids, grandkids and yes even our great grandkids. I have a theory of why time is moving faster as we come into the remaining days before Christmas. Santa Claus with his magical finger to his nose trick, speeds up time in December, so when Christmas Eve comes he can slow down time so he can deliver all his gifts in one night. That's my theory and I'm sticking to it - Ho, Ho, Ho.

We who are young in heart love Christmas and we love to spread good cheer wherever we gather, because the real meaning of Christmas is the birth of the Lord, Jesus Christ in a stable where Mary and Joseph witnessed the best gift to all of mankind in the form of a baby lying in a manger, the One who God sent to save mankind from sin.

Giving is the theme of Christmas as
See Combs, page 5A

Careful who you call hero

Dear Editor,

The recent Letter to the Editor on the subject of using the term "Heroic" to sports figures reminded me of how far we have fallen into a culture that assumes all words are of equal value. It used to be that a man was famous because he was great; now he is great because he is famous. In an earlier time,

See Gray, page 5A

Christmas Cake

My mother is the wife of a Baptist minister and a tee-totaler. In my vernacular that means she has never taken a drink of anything stronger than coffee. Before my father retired to Blairsville he pastored a small church in North Western Alabama. He loves to garden so a few years ago he began growing thornless blackberries. He enjoyed the few plants so much he enlarged his production to about 500 plants. He enjoys growing and selling the berries. One of my dad's friends came for a visit and purchased 10 gallons of berries. He promptly took them home and made blackberry wine.

Later this friend brought a quart of the wine and presented it to my dad. Dad doesn't drink, but he did not want to offend his friend. So, he took the gift and stored it in his basement. Last year during the holidays my mom found a recipe for Blackberry Cake. The recipe called for a half pint of blackberry wine to be included in the cake mixing process. Mother cooked the cake and was very pleased with the taste of the cake. It was sweet and had a distinctive blackberry flavor.

One of mother's good friends came for a visit with mom shortly after the cake had been cooked. Betty Sue was not only a good friend of mother, she was also the wife of the pastor at the local Church of Christ. Mother and Betty Sue sat down for some cake and coffee. Betty Sue liked the cake so much she asked for the recipe. Mother gave it to her and Betty Sue proudly took the recipe home with her. At this point it should be understood the recipe called for adding blackberry wine to the cake mix and then cooking the mixture. Remember, the cooking process burns the alcohol and leaves just the taste of the blackberries in the cake.

The very next week Betty Sue was having a meeting of some of the church ladies at her home. She used this recipe to make the Blackberry Cake. However, instead of adding the wine to the mix, Betty Sue poured the wine over the cooked cake. She was so proud of her cake. All the ladies commented about the distinctive taste. After the Ladies Chairman went back for her fourth piece of cake it occurred to Betty Sue that she had made a mistake in the preparation of the cake. She realized the wine was added at the wrong time and she began to worry about her friends driving home from the meeting. It would be a bad thing for a bunch of ladies to receive DUIs after attending a ladies function at the Pastor's home.

Suddenly, one of the ladies stated that Betty Sue should prepare this cake and place it in the bake sale that would be held soon after Christmas. All the ladies agreed. Mrs. Baker added, "Make sure you do not deviate at all from

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Take 5 with Dustin Rogers

This week's Take 5 is with Dustin Rogers, Research Technician 3 at the Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center (GMREC). In his role at the station, Dustin is responsible for the oversight of test crops including apples and wine grapes. He also works with row crops and cattle and is responsible for ground maintenance. The grandson of Neal Moon, former Union County Extension Agent, Dustin has a long history of working around agriculture and farming and has early memories of spending time with his grandfather on the grounds of the Experiment Station as it was formerly known.

1. What do you like best about working at the GMREC?

The first thing that comes to mind is the awesome views that I enjoy every day and the great crew that I get to work with on a daily basis. I also love the variety of jobs that I am able to do such as spraying pesticides, pruning apple trees, mowing, weedeating, and baling hay.

2. What is your favorite type of music?

I honestly like all kinds of music. My mom loved southern rock like Skynyrd and ZZ Top and my dad was more a fan of Alabama and Charlie Daniels. I had a lot of southern influence growing up, but Hank Jr. has always been my favorite.

3. What is your favorite quote?

See Williams, page 5A

Cookies and Christmas Part 2

On Facebook today, I saw the pictures of the cutest birthday party for a four year old great granddaughter of dear friends of mine. Aria's Mom had made aprons for all the guests.

Each apron was adorned with a big gingerbread person (gender friendly). The pint size bakers were now each given a plate with a miniature undecorated gingerbread house placed on it. The multiple posted photos showed how creative kids can be at this age. They had candies and frostings to entice them. No pictures or instructions. Just go for it, kids. Perusing these photos brought me back to my family holiday cookie making times as a youngster, when we anxiously awaited the opportunity to decorate the "cucidati".

This Sicilian cookie looks similar to a Fig Newton, but it exceeds anything Nabisco could dream up. It's the inside of the cookie that's magical. Dates, figs, raisins and walnuts are finely chopped, spices added, a splash of liqueur and then simmered till the pasty filling is just perfect. The outside cookie is a balance of moistness, frosted with a light dollop of butter frosting and then sparkles or jimmies are added with the enthusiasm of a child. If there is a gold standard in Christmas cookies, then in any Italian household, this would be the recipe.

My grandmother Rose passed down the recipe for the Sicilian chocolate cookie that is always the first to be scarfed off the massive trays of sweets at Christmas. When I realized that the unique combination of cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg in this recipe, coupled with maraschino cherries, walnuts and raisons was such a hit with my friends that weren't Italian, I started adding these same ingredients to brownies. They are just as sinfully delicious, any time of year. Just take your tried and true brownie recipe or boxed brownie mix and follow per your directions, and then add 1/4 cup of chopped walnuts, 1/4 cup of chopped maraschino cherries, 1/4 cup of softened raisins, 1 teaspoon of cinnamon, 1/2 teaspoon of cloves and 1/2 teaspoon of nutmeg. Bake as per your directions. After they cool, frost them with a butter cream frosting that has been laced with

See Leone, page 5A

North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m.

Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - 1 Year \$35.00. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 10, 1987 at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. Advertising and subscriptions can be paid by cash, check or credit card.

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