

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## Remembering 2018

As we welcome in a new year, we want to reflect on the accomplishments of 2018. Union County Emergency Management/Fire Department is consistently evaluating progress and updating our strategic plan to better provide emergency services to Union County.

Our strategic plan defines major goals for each year. These goals are broken down into projects and programs which further break the goals down into achievable objectives. We continue these from year to year and add new programs or projects as needed.

The Smoke Alarms program was started in 2015. The goal of this program is to have a working smoke alarm in every home within Union County. To date, Union County Fire Department has installed over 750 smoke alarms. We offer smoke alarms free to any resident of Union County. Please contact Station 1 at 706-439-6091 if you are in need of smoke alarms.

Pre-Incident Planning is another important program. The goal of this program is to pre-plan every business or commercial building in Union County. Pre-planning these buildings provides information that better prepares the responding firefighters when there is a fire or other emergency in the building.

The Public Education program began a couple of years ago. This program's goal is to educate the public on fire safety and emergency preparedness. In our school system we have implemented an educational series for Kindergarten and the 2nd grade. There are plans to expand this program into other grades with age appropriate education. We were also able to start a program for the incoming 9th grade students this summer. We taught over 180 students Hands-Only CPR and Stop-the-Bleeding.

Two major projects that we started in 2018 were to obtain a ladder apparatus and to began construction on our training facility. The ladder apparatus, called "Ladder 1" is a refurbished 1995 HME custom cab quint. This apparatus carries the necessary ladders and tools required of a ladder apparatus and can be used as a fire engine to pump water. We will spend a great deal of time training on the ladder apparatus in 2019.

The training facility was started in late summer of 2018. The first phase of construction was to clear and prepare the land

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**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**  
David Dyer



## Hope

I don't like goodbyes. Well I'm not sorry to see some things go, but you know what I mean. Looking back on 2018, we said goodbye to some notable people. Sometimes when people pass it feels like a season coming to a close.

Let's remember some who died in 2018. Barbara Bush died in April, followed by her husband George H.W. Bush in November. They were married 73 years, the longest married couple in presidential history. He was the last World War II hero to serve as President.

Roy Clark, the country music star, died at age 85. One of his hits was a lament about wasted youth. "So many songs in me that won't be sung. The time has come for me to pay for yesterday, when I was young." If you don't like modern country music or if you share his lament, you felt it when Clark left the stage.

Billy Graham lived to be 99. He emerged as an evangelist in 1949, and in his lifetime would share the good news of Jesus Christ to more people than anyone in history. He began with trains and tents and ended with electronic media and satellite communications. May God in his Providence raise up another, but we know there will be only one Billy Graham.

There are others whose passing marks the end of an era: Aretha Franklin (singer), Stephen Hawking (scientist), Willie McCovey (athlete), Tom Wolfe (author). But none of these affect you as much as your own personal losses this year. It marks the passing of time when you lose someone who lived a long life. It's a tragedy when someone dies too young.

The Bible says that believers do not grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thes. 4:13). By faith in Jesus Christ, and because of his Resurrection from the dead, we have the hope of eternity. The passing of a legend or loss of a loved one, the end of an era or the changing of a season only remind us of that hope.

Hope to the Christian carries no uncertainty. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). The Spanish verb "esperar" helps us here. It means to hope, wait, or expect. We have considered the evidence, and are simply waiting, expecting for our hope to be realized.

Christ Jesus is your hope that there's more to life that

**All Things New**  
Wayne Fowler



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## Commissioner's Questions

Happy New Year to you all. We are excited that 2019 will be another great year in Union County. Thanks for your support of our county through your volunteerism, donations to churches, to the community, and just caring about your neighbors. We are a very blessed to be able to live in such a beautiful area.

**Q. Have you had any major frustrations this year with Union County government?**

A. I am always concerned about our budget and the amount of money that it takes to operate Union County. As you know, we had to raise property taxes a relatively small amount this past year and that was very frustrating for me and many of the employees. However it has also allowed us to adopt a new budget for 2019 that should let us continue to provide good services, facilities, and roads for our county residents.

**Q. What is the new county budget and how much did it increase this year?**

A. Our new 2019 operations budget was adopted on December 27th, 2018, at an advertised meeting at the courthouse. The 2018 budget was \$16,614,592. The 2019 budget will be \$17,099,955, which is only a 2.92 percent increase. In this case, it is excellent with all the expense increases we have faced and will continue to face.

**Q. Since this is the first North Georgia News printing of the New Year, what does the county have planned for 2019?**

A. First, we are always looking for ways to save money and lower expenses. At the same time, we believe that it is necessary to continually improve our quality of life with facility improvements and additions, so that the people living in Union County have a great place to live, work and play. We will address some of these projects in future Q & A columns.

**Q. Is there anything in county government in 2019 that you want to change?**

A. No, but there are some certain items that we want to continue to improve on, and we have a few facility improvements planned. But mostly, we will be concentrating on roadwork and more improvements throughout the county.

**Q. What is the phone number I can call to ask anything?**

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**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**  
Lamar Paris



## Drug Free Mountain Life

### Is Kratom Addictive?

Kratom, an herbal product that originated in Southeast Asia, is being used in the US to ease anxiety, treat chronic pain and to reverse opioid withdrawal symptoms; often purchased over the Internet. Recreational use may be on the rise, too.

The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

The primary psychoactive component, mitragynine, is many times more potent than morphine. DEA lists kratom as a drug and chemical of concern and is in the process of evaluating kratom for placement into controlled substances scheduling. Currently, kratom is not included in standard drug screens in the US.

Kratom is well-known to be addictive, as found with traditional use by natives over many years in Southeast Asian countries. Withdrawal effects similar to narcotic withdrawal and drug-seeking behaviors have been described in users in Southeast Asia. Many Southeast Asian coun-

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## Letters to the Editor

### Why do you carry?

Dear Editor,  
Is it possible that carrying a concealed firearm could be not an act of fear-based, self-preserving paranoia, but, in fact, an act of sacrificial love for a neighbor? I believe it can and should be. If we are to be effective in how we carry guns, and if we wish to increase public support for carrying, then love must be our motivation -- not fear, entitlement, resentment or aggression.

When people have asked, often skeptically, about my decision to carry a gun, I assure them that absolutely the last thing I want to do is to shoot anybody. It's true. I loathe the thought.

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### Meeting the Deadline

Dear Editor,  
The writer Shawn Jarrard gave news readers an exceptional Christmas front page of deep coverage in the edition you date Dec. 26, but that I purchased at a north county convenience store on Dec. 24. I now put Jarrard's four days together as best I can from the ledes:

Jarrard had notes from the apparent Dec. 11 BRMEMC board meeting in Young Harris when unusual talk of easing term limits occurred; worked the Morganton apparent murder case and Lake Nottely evidence search Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 17-18; was at the Gainesville

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### A Time for Hope

Dear Editor,  
Christmas is indeed a time of hope. A bright light has appeared in the sky, and that light is the possibility that our Congress is now looking seriously about taking action on climate change. The Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Bill was just introduced in the House of Representatives three weeks ago with three Republican and seven Democratic co-sponsors. An almost identical bill was introduced in the Senate this week, again with bipartisan support. These bills would not only decrease greenhouse gases some 90 percent by 2050, but economic studies show it would put more money back into most Americans' pocketbooks and add 2.8 million new jobs over 20 years. This would be a WIN/WIN for both the environment and the economy. We are not a Red America or a Blue America. We are the United States of America, and, working together, I believe there is literally nothing we can't solve. Climate change affects us all, and now is the time for us all to come together to solve it. Though we have our differences, we all want a better world for our children.

Vernon Dixon, MD

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## RC&D

### Smoke Alarms: The Wake-up Call We Need to Hear

Most of us use alarm clocks to wake up in the morning and if we miss it, we are just late for work, but a more important wake-up call we need to hear can save our lives and is a Smoke Alarm.

When a smoke alarm detects smoke, it emits a shrill sound that as my granddaddy said, "could wake the dead", which in the case of a house fire is critical so we don't become one of those. Most deaths in house fires are caused by smoke inhalation as it overtakes its victims who never wake up. A smoke alarm can give us a head start so we can survive a house fire. Smoke alarms are installed on ceilings where smoke will gather first, and the alarm will sound to alert us before the lethal smoke moves down to claim lives. We should have smoke alarms in each bed room in the house so when a fire starts, and smoke begins to flow along the ceilings we can be alerted to the danger and escape. Smoke alarms provide a critical early warning of fire, allowing additional time to escape. National estimates of reported fires show that in 2011-2015, fires in homes with no smoke alarms caused an average of 940 deaths per year. An additional 510 people per year were fatally injured in fires in which smoke alarms were present but failed to operate. Power source problems were the leading cause of smoke alarm failures.

Hardwired smoke alarms were more likely to operate than those powered solely by batteries. In reported home fires in which the smoke alarms were present but did not operate, almost half of the smoke alarms had missing or disconnected batteries. Nuisance alarms were the leading reason for disconnected smoke alarms. The risk of dying in reported home structure fires is cut in half in homes with working smoke alarms. Installing smoke alarms is the first step, but it is most important to be sure they are working.

Half of the home fire deaths resulted from fires reported between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. when we are usually asleep and not aware of what is going on around us. Statistics show that the percentages of home structure fires and civilian fire deaths reported between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. were higher for properties with smoke alarms that did not operate or with no smoke alarms than in fires in which smoke alarms operated.

Smoke alarms give us a sense of security, so we can sleep, but if they aren't maintained, that sense of security will be false and can lead to death by smoke. Most home smoke alarms use

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**RC&D Executive Director**  
Frank Riley



## Around The Farm

### Siblings

My mother's older brother was named Ray Adams. Uncle Ray was quite fond of fishing and boats. His favorite book was "Huckleberry Finn," and like Huck, Uncle Ray shunned society and longed for wet, wild places like rivers and swamps. When mom and Ray were little, they lived at a place called "Gray Rock". Gray Rock was located next to the Little Bear Creek and Uncle Ray had already noticed the great fishing in that creek. Ray always wanted to build a raft and float the creek down toward Hamilton and Hackleburg. One day while helping his mother wash clothes Uncle Ray noticed the usefulness of the number 10 washtubs she was using to rinse the clothes.

After lunch Uncle Ray and mom slipped down to Bear Creek with the number 10 wash tub. He told mom that they were going to play in the washtub. The tub was placed on the side of the swimming hole at the creek bank. Uncle Ray sat down on the creek bank and pulled out his copy of Huckleberry Finn and began to read to his younger sister. She must have been enthralled by the magical words penned from the hand of Sam Clemens.

Uncle Ray told mother he would allow her to make the first voyage in the tub. Mother was told that she would get to see catfish, deer, turkey and all kinds of critters from her vantage point in the tub. Ray helped his younger sister climb into the tub and shoved her off into the current of Bear Creek. Mom said she must have floated 20 feet before she shifted her weight. That was a mistake and the tub flipped and over she went.

Uncle Ray was the oldest and he was not about to let his little sister drown. So, into the water he went and after a couple of strokes he grabbed mother by the hair of the head and pulled his little sister from the depths of Bear Creek. Mother came up all excited and told Uncle Ray she had seen a catfish. But, that was the end of the rafting on Bear Creek at least for mother and her generation. Mother never has learned to swim and she is afraid of water to this day.

Mom's two sisters were Carolyn and Debra. As young teenagers the girls wanted to get themselves a tan. One morning they laid out in the sun for a few hours with mixed results. They became somewhat darker in their appearance, but, not what they wanted. You see the community teenagers of those days (early 1960's) hung out down at Kayo's sand pits. This area had been quarried for sand and what was left was aqua blue water with sandy beaches. All

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**Around The Farm**  
Mickey Cummings



## Farm Bill

We have a new farm bill coming down the pipe that is going to be impactful for our farmers. I am going to do my best to explain the history of the farm bill, what things are in the new farm bill, and how it's going to affect people. I'll just give forewarning that I am not a lawyer or politician, so some of the deeper inner-workings are beyond me. And like most government documents, it's very long, therefore, this is going to be a very brief overview of the farm bill and its purpose.

The first farm bill came into being back in 1933 as a result of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl in the Midwest. At the time there was a great need from many hungry Americans for food. The first farm bill addressed this need by buying food from farmers to be used as food aid. Ever since then, nutrition has been a significant portion of the farm bill. In the 2014 farm bill, nutrition was 80 percent of the farm bill budget. The remaining 20 percent includes crop insurance, conservation and commodities, among other things. A new farm bill is created approximately every five years.

Commodities works to make sure that farmers growing major crops such as grains, soybeans, and peanuts receive support so that they can stay afloat. These payments take place as revenue insurance to support farm income. Price Loss Coverage is an example of commodity program that makes payments to farmers when revenue or crop prices are low.

Conservation serves to protect vulnerable lands and take them out of production as a way to protect soil, rivers, and enhance biodiversity. The Conservation Reserve Program pays farmers to put sensitive and highly erodible land in 10 to 15-year contracts. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program splits costs with farmer for practices that protect the environment.

Crop Insurance is also provided to farmers through the farm bill. Usually the government will require farmers to purchase crop insurance if they are taking subsidies for commodities. Whole Farm Revenue Protection provides insurance to farmers who grow a variety of crops and have diverse farms because diverse farmers have lower risk.

There are a number of other programs that are included in the farm bill. The topics that I have covered are ones that are generally in every farm bill in some shape or form. These topics have received an update in pricing and the amount of support that farmers will receive.

The biggest change that will be coming through with the new farm bill is the legaliza-

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**Watching and Working**  
Jacob Williams

