

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Generator Safety

Winter is here and that means the possibility of snow, ice and various other weather events. These winter weather events can result in the occasional power outage. Some people have purchased portable electric generators to provide power during these rare outages. Having a power generator can be convenient but it can also be dangerous to homeowners, utility workers, and public safety if they are not used properly. Union County Fire Department would like to remind owners of portable electric generators of some safety tips to keep everyone safe.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief David Dyer



When you first purchase a portable generator, read the owner's manual to understand the operations, safety features, and limitations. People may rarely use their portable generator so it would be a good idea to review the safety tips and operating procedures before you need it.

Owners should also be familiar with how to properly maintain and refuel the unit. It is a good idea to shut the generator down before refueling to reduce the fire hazard. Fuel should be stored outside, away from the generator and other heat sources.

Portable generators powered by gasoline or other types of fuel produce harmful carbon monoxide gas when operating. These generators should NEVER be used inside the home, basement or garage. Portable generators should be operated outside in a dry area that is well ventilated and away from any air intakes to the home.

Electrical shock is also a danger. Make sure the generator is properly grounded. The owner's manual should be able to provide instructions on proper grounding. Operators should utilize appropriate extension cords and those cords should be plugged directly into the receptacle outlet of the generator. Use ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) as per the manufacturer's instructions. Never run extension cords under carpets or rugs. Owners should also know the limitations of the generator in order not to overload it beyond capacity.

A major concern is homeowners who attempt to connect a portable electric generator to the home's existing wiring. This is very dangerous. The reverse flow of electricity through the house to the power lines can electrocute utility or public safety workers who may be working on or around those lines. Homeowners who have

See Dyer, page 5A

Extremists

Martin Luther King, Jr. was an Atlanta pastor who spent time in an Alabama jail. When his fellow clergymen described his cause "extreme" and called for an end to it, he responded with his now-famous Letter from Birmingham City Jail.

King wrote, "You speak of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. As I continued to think about the matter, I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you.' Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.' Was not Martin Luther an extremist: 'Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God.' And John Bunyan: 'I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience.' And Thomas Jefferson: 'We hold these truths to be self-evidence, that all men are created equal.' So, the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love?"

All Things New Wayne Fowler



I can think of a few other extreme things Jesus said to whoever might be listening. "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant" (Matt. 20:26). "Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:35). "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it" (Luke 18:17). "Whoever believes in (God's only Son) shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Is it extreme to believe the virgin birth of Jesus actually happened? Philosopher Vince Vitale recently spoke about this. He mentioned Stephen Hawking's atheistic explanation for our universe: "... the universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist." Vitale wonders, "Is that any less miraculous of a birth than the account from Luke Chapter 1? We live in a miraculous world. Regardless of whether you are a theist, an atheist, or an agnostic, there's no getting around that fact. It's not a matter of whether we believe in a virgin birth, it's just a matter of which virgin birth we choose

See Fowler, page 5A

Commissioner's Questions

Q. In 2019, was the county able to do their normal amount of highway construction and resurfacing?

A. Yes, we were. Thanks to the Georgia Department of Transportation and the assistance of our State Senator, Steve Gooch, we have been blessed with the necessary funding. It is all matching funding, so it is important that we have our SPLOST funds to make that match.

Q. Has our county been able to maintain our pay scales to prevent losing our county employees to other areas?

A. Yes, but it has been difficult. We have worked closely with the Sheriff for the past four years to try to get our pay increased for deputies and jailers. It is very tough to remain competitive. Once a metro county goes up on their wages, the outlying areas lose some of their deputies to the metro area. Then a chain reaction is created involving other counties having to pay more to keep their deputies. Eventually, it hits Towns, Union, and Fannin counties, and we have to increase our pay to keep up with those adjacent area pay increases.

Q. We have heard that the county will be building a new access road from Highway 515 to Panther Circle. When will that be done?

A. This issue is somewhat confusing and complicated. As GDOT completes the engineering on the 4-lane extension of Highway 515 to Young Harris, things are constantly changing. We will be meeting GDOT officials in the next couple of weeks to try to get all access issues settled. There is a reported problem with line of sight visibility. We will be discussing this issue and we hope to know more soon. In the meantime, it is very important that we complete this access point between Highway 515 and Panther Circle near the Sears Store and the Aviator Café.

Q. Why is this access point important to Panther Circle?

A. At this time, GDOT is considering a new curb to be built between the new 4 lanes of traffic. This curb/divider will prevent crossing to Highway 515 from this area. The county also has property across the highway that will need access. For this reason, it is vital that the access point remain part of the highway expansion plans.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris



See Paris, page 5A

Drug Free Mountain Life

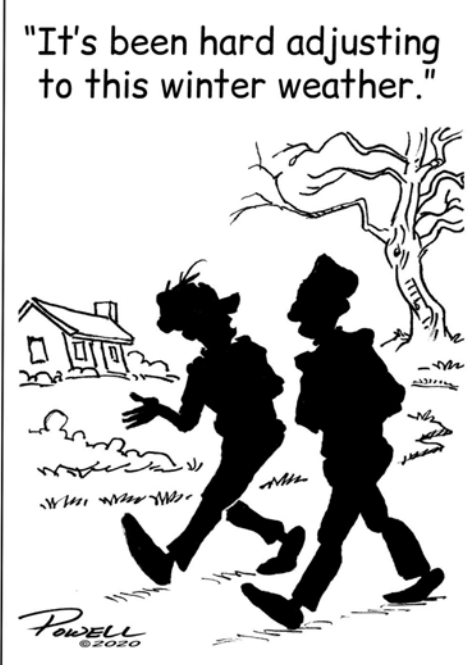
Help for Mental Illnesses

If you or someone you know has a mental illness, is struggling emotionally, or has concerns about their mental health, there are ways to get help. Use these resources to find help for you, a friend, or a family member.

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.

Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL): For immediate access to routine or crisis services, please call the Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL) at 1-800-715-4225. GCAL is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year to help you or someone you care for in a crisis. GCAL professionals will provide telephonic crisis intervention services, dispatch mobile crisis teams, assist individuals in finding an open crisis or detox bed across the State, link individuals with urgent appointment services. GCAL will also assist in gaining access to a state funded provider in your area if you have a

See Drug Free, page 5A



Letters to the Editor

A Letter to Rep. Matt Gurtler

Dear Rep. Gurtler,
Thank you for addressing the community in the North Georgia News newspaper, but I'm frustrated because you use boilerplate wording that does not communicate anything of substance or lend itself to better understanding: "big government = bad," "free-market = magically solves all problems," "the establishment = bad," "Washington = corrupt," "Christian conservative ideals = under attack."

Did anti-regulation usher in the subprime loan financial crisis of 2008? Is it unjust to cry "individual responsibility" when people who are making the biggest financial decision of their life cannot trust the banking experts to not give them a predatory loan?

See Pate, page 5A

The Emperor Is Dead

Dear Editor,
After 20 years of killing and maiming our brave servicemen, our great President has killed the Killer. General Soleimani was the second in command of Iran's government and a brutal madman! Thank you, President Trump, who with all the evil you have battling your presidency you have the courage to protect America! So what is the anti American Congress and Main Stream Media saying about your great accomplishment? Since I don't listen to the Communist News Network, aka CNN, or any of its sibling media, I can only imagine. Comparing how Obama/Biden handled Iran and the rest of our enemies might be a good place to start. Obama/Biden policy was understood by a third-grade mentality media and voter, so I'll try to explain at the same level.

What if a town in America was being plagued by a Bank Robber! Every day another bank is robbed, and the government can't catch the robber. We know who he is, but for whatever reason, we just can't seem to catch him. What

See Huber, page 5A

NFL Comes to Union County

Dear Editor,
I read with astonishment the Union County Board of Education's approval of expenditures, \$610,673, in the recent North Georgia News, specifically, the decision to "cover" the Union County football field with the quote, "same material used at the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta" aka Atlanta Falcons. Excuse me, but I thought, as I played, high school football ought to be played on green grass turf, maintained with bags of Pennington Green grass seed, a chalking machine, and a lawn mower. Works for me.

Jim Steed

Letters to the Editor

A Christmas Story

Dear Editor,
I want to share a special story that happened here in Blairsville a few days before Christmas.

I am a winter seasonal resident and have owned a home here for 18 years. My 91-year-old neighbor was wanting to make a fruitcake for the holidays, but she could not find the correct ingredients.

Since I was going shopping the next morning, I offered to see what I could do to help her out. One grocery didn't have the products she needed but advised me to go to Foodland, as that's where his grandmother found the candied fruits.

When I arrived at Foodland, alas, they also had sold all the candied fruits. I mentioned that I was trying to help my neighbor. The young man thought for a few moments and asked me to follow him.

He then presented me with their very last fruitcake to give to my neighbor so they would not be without a fruitcake for Christmas, compliments of Foodland.

I was overwhelmed. The caring, thoughtful
See Cutler, page 5A

Opinion on 2020 budget

Dear Editor,
An article in the Jan. 1 paper has Lamar talking about how much the budget has gone up. Yes, I can understand the cost of benefits going up along with salary increases to try and keep personnel on the jobs and insurance on property.

What he is not talking about is all the extra money it is going to take to keep the maintenance upkeep on all the new buildings he is building, along with all the extra insurance that has to be paid for all the buildings, all the utilities for such buildings. I see he and the sheriff got their gun range when there is one 5 to 8 miles down the road. Now, we taxpayers will have to pay to maintain that building, power, water, insurance. He is getting his name on a lot of buildings and parks like the pickleball courts, now upkeep on that along with power/water restrooms.

I saw in another recent article he is getting some soccer fields that we will have to provide for. Yes, he states this is SPLOST money, but all the repairs and upkeep, paid personnel to maintain these properties and more to come will be footed by us taxpayers when he is out of office. Enough is enough.

I had to get this off my chest, as I love being in Union County, and I bet others feel the same, as most are older and on fixed income.
Joel Keith

Evidence of Those Before Us

We, meaning the citizens of the United States, are not the first to call the Blue Ridge States. The evidence is all around us. Examples can be found in arrowheads, pottery shards, even on existing roads. Stories told to us by our ancestors can also give us evidence that we are not the first to walk these hills.

My grandmother used to tell me stories about an ancient Cherokee that knocked on her door one stormy evening asking for a little food on his journey. The old man told the family he'd walked all the way from Oklahoma and his purpose was to walk back home to die in his homeland. She was told that he'd traveled with his parents from Alabama to Oklahoma over the Trail of Tears. Both parents and his siblings had perished on that journey, and he alone survived and was raised by an uncle. The old man was close to 100 years old and just wanted to die in his homeland.

Before retiring, I worked as a County Agent and sometimes found myself walking through cultivated fields of collards scouting for insect damage. One time, while scouting a field on the Nottely River, I began noticing some rocks which had makings on them. I picked one up to examine the markings and found them to actually be pottery shards. The markings were actually decorative art imbedded in the pottery. On other occasions I have found arrowheads in those fields, and once I found a nice arrowhead laying on a logging road.

Desota came through here nearly 500 years ago looking for gold. He left evidence which can be seen today. Or at least we speculate that this was his evidence. The ruins of an old fort on top of Fort Mountain are thought to be evidence of the Spaniard's trip through the Blue Ridge. There is a mountain over in Towns County called Spaniard's Mountain because some Spanish armor was found there years ago.

Some time ago a fellow told me about an old Indian Trail which came across Ivy Log Mountain. I asked about it a few times, and finally, Sheldon Henderson led me to a really old-looking trail. The trail was not dug out with modern-day equipment and was only a few feet wide. Fortunately, it is located on Forest Service property, and portions of it are evident and can still be followed. Many of the major Indian Trails are now covered in asphalt and are now modern highways. An example is the road from Hiawassee to Helen, which travels through Unicoi Gap.

More evidence of those people which came before us are the markings in Trackrock Gap. These markings were made by very early
See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm Mickey Cummings



Feral Hogs

Feral hogs go by a couple of different names, but any way you spell it they are trouble. They are a prevalent problem throughout Georgia and without proper management will only get worse here in the mountains. They do a lot of damage to farmers' crops and to homeowners' lawn and gardens. Let's talk about the damage that they cause, and what can be done to control them.

Feral hogs can be found in 45 of the 50 United States. It's estimated that the current hog population is about 6 million in the U.S., with 200,000 to 600,000 residing in Georgia. It's estimated that hogs do 150 million dollars in damage each year in Georgia. About a third of that is done to homeowners. Nationwide it's estimated that the annual damage done by wild pigs is \$1.5 billion. From these numbers it's clear that we don't want their populations rising here in the mountains any more than they already have.

Feral hogs are highly adaptable to a wide variety of environments. The females are capable of having 6 piglets in a litter twice a year. They will consume just about anything that they come across. There are not many natural predators to pigs, and their familial groups keep predators from having access to the young. All of these are reasons for why feral hogs can become a huge problem.

So how can you control wild hogs? There is no silver bullet when it comes to wild hog control. Using fencing to exclude wild hogs from an area is possible but this is really only practical for small areas. Usually wire mesh and electric strands are used.

Due to their adaptability, and destructive nature, lethal control is often the only viable option when it comes to controlling wild hogs. In Georgia you are allowed to shoot wild hogs year round, there is not a wild hog season. Hunting wild hogs with dogs is a popular option, but not a very effective one. You may remove a couple of wild hogs, but the bulk of the family will remain unscathed. Baiting and shooting is also popular. This is more effective than hunting with dogs. The bait will draw in the wild hogs and then you can remove them from a tree stand or on the ground at a distance. The problem with all of these methods is that hogs are very smart. So, if you don't take out the whole family they will learn to avoid your method.

Trapping is the most effective means of removing wild hogs. Corral traps with drop doors are the most popular. A corral trap allows you to trap a high percentage of the family at the same time and eliminate them all at once.
See Williams, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President Steve Rowe



What a great week! I spent the last week working with a group of kids at Union County High School, and I can tell you, the future looks bright for Union County. We are fortunate to have such a good group of kids, teachers, and administrators in our school system. We are looking forward to recognizing a few of these individuals on February 11, 2020 at "An Evening with the Stars!" You can check for details on the Chamber website.

The wreaths and trees are all boxed up and put away, but I would again like to thank our winners of the Tour of Trees: People's Choice winners were; The Wine Shoppe - Wreath, Crossing Creek RV Resort & Spa - Small Tree, Homestead Heritage - Large Tree. Alexander's Store won Most Traditional, and Kinetic by Windstream won Most Creative. Abigail and Kaitlin Willingham and Kim Williams tied for first place with their wonderful gingerbread creations.

See Chamber, page 5A