

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Other Happenings

News about COVID-19 is on TV, social media and just about everywhere else. Most people are tired of it. They want to hear about something, anything other than COVID-19. With that in mind, here are a few things that happened in the fire department over the last couple of months that were not related to the COVID-19 event.

At the beginning of the year, we started a firefighter recruit class. The class is for new members or firefighters who want to be certified to the level of a National Professional Qualifications Firefighter 1 or NPQ Firefighter 1. There are eight members of the class who are firefighters from Union, Towns, and Fannin County Fire Departments. The class has gone well, and we were able to complete the firefighting objectives prior to COVID-19. The students will be tested on the firefighter section at the end of this month. The next part of the class involves Hazardous Material training and we hope to begin that class soon. Each firefighter must complete testing on firefighting and hazardous materials to become an NPQ Firefighter 1.

In March and April, we completed fire hose testing. Every fire hose in the department is tested each year. This involves taking the hose off the fire apparatus, marking each hose, attaching it to a testing machine, pressurizing the hoses to 250 psi, and holding that pressure for 10 minutes. Once the time is up, the hoses are drained, inspected, and reloaded back on each fire apparatus. There were 860 fire hoses tested which is over 43,000 feet of hose.

Also, in the month of March, Firefighter Ernie Pruitt was hired and was assigned to the Suches area. He began in the last weeks of March. Firefighter Pruitt has spent the last month inspecting and maintaining the apparatus, equipment, and stations as well as responding to calls in the area.

Starting this month, we have begun fire hydrant inspections. We inspect hydrants to ensure that they are operational and that there is water at each hydrant. The inspections involve locating each hydrant, inspecting it for damage, taking off each cap, greasing the cap threads if necessary, ensuring that the hydrant works, and making sure that we can get water from it. Every hydrant in Union County is inspected by the fire department annually. There are over 1,200 hydrants.

See *Fire*, page 5A

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Eternal Memorial

Americans set aside Memorial Day to remember and honor soldiers who died while defending our country and freedom. It is a worthy cause.

From what I read, several streams of practice and thought contributed to the formalizing of this national holiday in 1971. One of those streams originated with Elizabeth Rutherford Ellis (d.1873) of Columbus, Georgia. She famously made her appeal for a widespread remembrance of the dead by publishing an anonymous letter in various newspapers. In it she declares her purpose. "We cannot raise monumental shafts, and inscribe thereon their many deeds of heroism, but we can keep alive the memory of the debt we owe them, but at least dedicating one day in each year to embellishing their humble graves with flowers." The memorial was not for the dead, but for the living to acknowledge a great debt for what someone did for them.

Such a purpose for a memorial is not foreign to the Bible. After the people wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, the time came for them to cross the Jordan River. Even though the river was at flood stage, "the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away...and those which were flowing down toward the Salt Sea were completely cut off." To memorialize the event, God told them to carry 12 river stones to their new lodging place saying, "Let this be a sign among you." When the children ask "What do these stones mean?" their parents could explain what happened (Josh. 4). In this way the people would remember their great debt to God for the Jordan River crossing.

But God's greatest act in human history was yet to come. When Jesus was preparing His disciples for his imminent, sacrificial death, He gathered them in the upper room for the Passover meal. As He broke the bread and shared the cup, He told them to remember His broken body and the new covenant. To repeat this memorial is to "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:23-26). Jesus' death is worth proclaiming because it can "cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant" (Heb.

See *Fowler*, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Has the county been able to work on any projects with all the COVID-19 planning going on?

A. Admittedly, it has been a very trying time for not only me, but for all of us. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and just say to myself, is this all really happening and how can it be happening in America and the world we live in, but it is.

So, we must all go on with life and so it is with the county. Our Road Department still has rainwater filling up our ditches and culverts stopped up. We still have roads to resurface and new roads to build. We still have to cut fallen trees and replace stolen and damaged road signs. We still have roadsides to mow. So, we really cannot stop. We are thankful that our Road Department crew has remained healthy.

Q. Do you have a list of our current projects other than road work?

A. Most of our existing projects have been able to continue as planned. The short list is the new pavilion at Meeks Park, the Double Gym near the Health Department, the Eight Court Pickleball Complex adjacent to the new gymnasium, the new covered run out shoot at the Horse Arena and the Off-Leash Dog Park.

Q. Where is the new pavilion at Meeks Park?

A. It is an awesome facility located just past the swimming pool and splash pad in Meeks Park. It is one of the nicest pavilions you will see anywhere. It includes a large fireplace, stone column bases around all the support post, a beautiful ceiling, an enclosed sound system and lighting system, a large deck overlooking the Nottely River, a large concrete floor, handicap access from the parking lot, plenty of parking spaces and two landscaped islands in the middle of the parking lot. There is a fee, but to make reservations and to check on cost, please contact the Recreation Department at 706-439-6074. The facility only lacks about 30-days work to be completed including striping the parking lot. This is the largest pavilion in Meeks Park.

Q. We have seen the large building along the Glenn Gooch By-Pass just below the UCHS Football Field. Is this the new double gymnasium being constructed by the Union County Recreation Department?

See *Paris*, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

Know the Warning Signs

Many youths may show behaviors in adolescence that are indicative of substance abuse, but can also be considered normal behaviors while growing up. It is important to take notice if there are several signs happening at the same time, if they occur suddenly, and if the behaviors are extreme. The following behaviors in a youth might indicate drug or alcohol abuse:

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.

Mood changes (temper flare-ups, irritability, defensiveness)

Academic problems (poor attendance, low grades, disciplinary action)

Changing friends and a reluctance to have parents/family get to know the new friends

A "nothing matters" attitude (lack of involvement in former interests, general low energy)

Finding substances (drug or alcohol) in

See *Drug Free*, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Necessity

To the Editor,

Of the crises that beset us — COVID-19, abortion, gun control, unemployment, public education, Russia, China, North Korea, Obamacare, the national debt, Obamacare, substance abuse, illegal immigration, unemployment, small business failures — each and every one of them is being manipulated for the sake of NECESSITY.

Their cry for NECESSITY is the fulcrum

See *Mitchell*, page 5A

Second Chances

To the Editor,

In this life there are many second chances offered to us. It could be a job opportunity or a purchase of a second home. Could be a second chance at romance or walking down the aisle for the second time. We never know when second chances are coming our way, so we need to be prepared, for they could be our last. A lot of folks have a second chance at life when they beat the odds of cancer or a heart attack, even a second chance from this virus that has spread across our

See *Combs*, page 5A

Power & Money

To the Editor,

According to YaleClimateConnections.org/2008/02/com: Water vapor (H₂O), a green house gas like carbon dioxide, represents around 80 percent of total greenhouse gas mass in the atmosphere and 90 percent of greenhouse gas volume. Water vapor and clouds (which absorb heat from the sun) account for 66-85 percent of the greenhouse effect, compared to a range of 9-26 percent for CO₂.

According to a 2016 Forbes article, "The American Chemical Society's ACS Climate Science Toolkit cuts right to the chase in an excellent

See *Luca*, page 5A

Wear a Face Mask

To the Editor,

I cannot fully understand the mentality of some of the local people on wearing face masks. It is a fact that wearing face masks helps prevent the transmission and spread of virus. The COVID-19 virus has claimed more than 80,000 lives in the U.S., with more than 1.5 million cases and growing daily. Yet I see people in public without masks. I hesitate in calling names, but "stupid" comes to mind. Since I'm on a rant, another subject has come to my attention. Why

See *Sowers*, page 5A



IN OUR HEARTS...
MEMORIAL DAY - MONDAY, MAY 25

Virtual Meeting

The Georgia Prescribed Fire Council, a statewide coalition of land managers, landowners, forestry consultants, conservation organizations, universities, and state and federal agencies, promotes the safe use of prescribed fire as an essential natural resource management tool to ensure ecosystem health and reduce wildfire risk. The first North Georgia Prescribed Fire Council meeting in 2019 at North Georgia Technical College in Jasper, with 200-plus in attendance.

The Council has plans to hold the 2020 North Georgia Prescribed Fire meeting on Thursday, June 4, 2020, but due to the COVID 19 restrictions on large groups, the 2020 meeting will be a virtual meeting using Zoom video communication technology. There will be a normal full agenda of speakers with live interaction from the audience available for questions and comments. Zoom is very easy to use and there will be technical help for any issues.

The five-hour meeting, with breaks, will address critical issues for prescribed fire practitioners and advocates, with a special emphasis on north Georgia and its unique terrain, population and forest types. Meeting attendees will hear from prescribed fire experts on 8 different topics as you will see on the meeting agenda. North Georgia's public and privately-owned forestland is a significant economic, biological, recreational, and aesthetic resource. Carefully planned prescribed fires prevent the build-up of flammable, naturally occurring fuels that set the stage for destructive wildfires. Prescribed fire also helps ensure healthy habitat for plants and animals, including rare and endangered species in Georgia. Continuing Forestry Education and Master Timber Harvester credits will be available for those participating in the full conference.

Join us on June 4 at 10 a.m. on your computer or other device with Zoom to learn about the state of prescribed fire in North Georgia. Joining is easy just one click to get on Zoom and into the program. Here is the agenda: 1) The State of Fire in Georgia; 2) Changes in the Vegetative Structure in the first decade in an Old Growth Mountain Longleaf Forest; 3) Burning in Stands other than Longleaf: Opportunities Overlooked; 4) Basics of a Burn Plan; 5) Online Tools for Managing Smoke; 6) Prescribed Fire - A Look at Landowner's Legal Liability in Georgia; 7) The Role of Prescribed Fire for Deer Management; and 8) Patterns of Delayed Overstory Mortality following Severe Wildfire in the Southern Appalachians.

See *Riley*, page 5A

RC&D Executive Director

Frank Riley



Politics and Voting

The word "politics" has become a word with negative meanings during our lifetime. However, it should not be especially in the United States. Voting is a privilege that we should cherish and protect. We should remember that politics and elections can have profound impacts upon the lives of people for generations. An example of this can be found in my family.

My ancestors were staunch "Jacksonian Democrats." Andrew Jackson was from Tennessee, and some of my ancestors fought with him during the Creek Indian Wars. During his election to the Presidency of the United States he received a tremendous amount of support from the common everyday person because he was viewed as a representative of the common man. Then an election came to Alabama that changed the course of history.

My ancestors lived in Winston County, Alabama. They were pioneers and had no slaves. They believed in the preservation of the Union and therefore voted Republican for Abe Lincoln. The people of Winston County sent a representative to the secessionist convention of Alabama. He gave a speech about the importance of the Union at the convention and was thrown in jail. As you know, Alabama did secede, and the Civil War came to the South.

But, because of all this, my ancestors voted Republican in every election for the next 70 years. Then, another great tragedy changed the way my ancestors voted. The Great Depression came to Alabama. A man by the name of Roosevelt ran for office, and some of my ancestors voted Democrat for the first time in 70 years. Pickens Cummings, my grandfather's brother, admired FDR and was appreciative of his efforts during the Depression and World War II. Uncle Pick also loved politics and decided to run for the school board, and because of his admiration for FDR, Uncle Pick ran as a Democrat.

This caused a lot of concern in my tight-knit family. My great-grandfather Lon Cummings told Uncle Pick that he was proud of him and to do what he believed was right. However, my great-grandfather Clifford Hyde was not so pleased. Uncle Pick asked my Dad to go with him to visit Clifford. They drove up into the yard and walked up to the old man. Dad greeted his grandfather. Clifford held up his hand to silence Dad, and he began speaking to Pick. "Pick, you know this boy is my favorite. You also know that I am a Republican. I know you are a good man. However, I will not vote for you because you are not a Republican, and I don't like you getting

See *Cummings*, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Late Freezes

A late freeze like the one that we've had here are damaging to agriculture in more ways than you'd expect. Some of the effects won't be seen for several months. I think as humans we always want to know what's coming next. We can't know anything for certain. That is something we've all learned over the last couple of months. However, the weather conditions that we've had can give us some clues on what might happen.

The main part of the plant that is impacted is the flower. If the flower on a plant dies prematurely, then that plant won't produce any fruit or seed. Locally, many of the apple growers have been hit by the late frosts. The vineyards have also had a hard time dealing with the late frost. In some orchards and vineyards, growers will place fires around to try to keep plants just above freezing temperatures. It takes a lot of work to keep those fires going through the coldest part of the night. Some vineyards have giant wind machines that mix the air from high and low lying areas to try to raise the temperature.

Annual plants can also be bit by freezes. Perennials are more hardy and able to withstand a freeze. Scientists believe a plant's ability to withstand a freeze has to do with the fats that make up the cell membrane. Usually it takes a week or so before you see freeze damage. Covering annuals with a bucket or sheet traps the heat that is radiated from the earth at night, creating a miniature greenhouse.

Seed germination rates will also decline with a freeze. Cold temperatures allow seedling diseases to get in and attack a seed. Low soil temperatures also slow down germination. Generally speaking, seeds need soil to be at least 65 degrees to be able to germinate.

Acorn production is also negatively impacted by a late freeze. Oak trees will have male and female flowers on the same tree. The technical term for this is monoecious. Oak flowers are very small, and are wind pollinated. Generally speaking oaks can be broken down into white oaks and red oaks. A red oak's acorns take 15 months to mature. Therefore, in years with a late freeze, red oaks will still produce a crop. White oaks can be froze out by a late freeze.

Why does acorn production matter? Many species of wildlife rely heavily on acorns for food. Pigeons, ducks, woodpeckers, bears, deer, and hogs all eat acorns. Throughout the summer, there is enough forage for wildlife to eat, but as fall and winter arrive, they need acorns for their diet. If there aren't enough acorns to go around, they will come looking for food. With smaller

See *Williams*, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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Kenneth West
Publisher/Owner

Shawn Jarrard
Editor

Website: www.nganews.com

Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com

Mailing: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, Georgia 30514

Derek Richards
Advertising Director

Todd Forrest
Sports Editor

Lowell Nicholson
Photographer

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