

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### The Why

Leadership is a favorite topic of mine, and I have read many books on the subject. One of the best is "Start with Why" by Simon Sinek. In the book, he explains that a leader must know what their organization does, how they do it, but most important why they do it. Organizations who know their "why" are more successful. We at UCDF strive to provide the "why" to our firefighters every day. We also want the public to know and understand the fire department's "why."

I believe that most people understand what the fire department does. Most would simply say that we fight fire, however there is much more. We respond to all fires, medical calls, motor vehicle accidents, searches, rescues, hazardous materials, and just about any other emergency you can think of.

I also think that most people have an idea of how we do things. We have explained the various certifications and training needed to perform our "jack-of-all-trades" job. We try to employ the latest techniques and use the most up-to-date equipment. But I doubt that many people understand why we do what we do. Why would a person take all those hours of training? Why would they get up in the middle of the night to help strangers? Why?

To explain why firefighters do the job is difficult to put into words. We can give the yearbook answer of we "want to help people," but if you think about it, most people want to help. So what makes a firefighter different? Firefighters go beyond just wanting to help; they are moved to action - they do help. They put an effort into responding to an emergency, knowing what to do, and actually helping people in their time of need.

Firefighters sacrifice time and sweat to go to classes. They sacrifice time away from their families. Why do they do this? Some firefighters may enjoy the excitement of a call. Some may like the opportunity to see or do things that others do not. However, most firefighters can agree that the main reason, their why, is to make a difference.

Firefighters make a difference every day. They get a fulfillment from knowing that their response made a difference in someone's life. That is the reason why. Firefighters do not join the department for what the department does or even for how the de-

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



### Life-Changing Power

It was the 1950's, but to this family it might as well have been the 1850's. They lived in a log house near the swamps of Louisiana. No electricity. No running water. Their food came from subsistence farming, hunting, and fishing.

It was common in that time and place to marry young. So when one of the sons, Phil, was 18, he took a 16-year-old bride with him to college. He had a football scholarship at Louisiana Tech. He only played for two years because football interfered too much with hunting season. But that wasn't the worst decision he made. He had embraced the alcohol and drug culture of the 1960's.

Phil and his wife had three sons, but they were not happy. Phil had become a mean man and an unfaithful husband. He owned a "beer joint" as he calls it. It was there one day that a bold Christian man came to talk to Phil about Jesus. Phil threw the man out. Life spiraled downward for Phil. After a bar room brawl, he fled to the woods for months to escape the law. His struggle with alcohol and lawlessness intensified. He found himself alone and miserable.

He returned to his wife looking for help. "You know that guy that came to the beer joint that time to talk with you?" she asked. "Why don't you just see what he has to say?" Phil agreed. The man spoke about the gospel, explaining how God loves you and sent Jesus to die as a sacrifice for your sins. Jesus was raised to life again and now offers you the gift of a new and eternal life, received by faith.

Phil's response? "I was blown away. How in the world did I ever miss that? I had never heard it." He left a note for his wife to meet him at the church. As she and the boys arrived, the two men were waiting. Phil said, "I want to make Jesus the Lord of my life and follow Him from this day forward." His wife and young sons wept with joy as they witnessed his baptism. That day, their daddy was reconciled to God and to his family.

Phil went on to become a dedicated and outspoken follower of Christ. He founded the multimillion-dollar Duck Commander company, which makes duck calls for hunters. His name is Phil Robertson. Now you know the rest of the story.

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**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



### From Your Commissioner

As you may have noticed, the Union County Public Pool opened this past weekend. For those who are not familiar with the pool, it is located at Meeks Park behind the upper baseball fields. The pool will be open to the public Monday - Friday 12:00 PM - 5:30 PM except on Wednesdays when it will close at 5:00 PM.

The pricing for Union County residents is \$6 per day per person; \$70 for a single membership pass; or \$130 for a family membership pass.

Non-Union County residents will pay \$125 for a single membership pass and \$200 for a family membership pass.

One special characteristic about the Union County Pool is that the pool was converted to saltwater. Saltwater pools offer several advantages over traditional chlorine pools, including softer water, less irritation to skin and eyes, and a reduced need for harsh chemicals. Saltwater pools also have lower maintenance costs and a milder chlorine smell. We are hoping this will ultimately cost the County less in the long run while providing a better swimming experience.

Summer Water Aerobics begin June 2, with a low-medium impact workout. Water makes working out easier on the joints, and the classes may use pool noodles, water weights or other helpful equipment.

The pool will also host swimming lessons in 1/2 hour increments at different times on different days. The pool can be reserved for pool parties as well, and these have proven to be in high demand in previous years.

Pool parties are held from 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM. The cost for a pool party is \$200, and that fee covers the use of the facility and lifeguards. If a party goes over 50 people in attendance, an additional lifeguard is required.

We are looking forward to a great Summer and a safe and fun season at the Union County Pool.

For additional information about the pool or to reserve the facility for a pool party, please contact the Union County Parks & Recreation Department at (706) 439-6074.

**Union County Commissioner**

Harold Collins



### Airline, Weather and...

*Airline, Weather and Water Problems*

Air traffic controllers have been using outdated equipment for decades. Some Federal Aviation Administration facilities are over 50 years old. The Government Accountability Office reported 51 of 138 air traffic control systems are unsustainable due to age and outdated functionality.

**Guest Column**

By Dr. Glenn Mollette

Equipment upgrades have been delayed for at least a decade.

Modernization plans are finally underway. The current radar system is a 1960s design which was upgraded in the 1990s. The communication systems date back to the 1970s and 1980s. The upgrades include ERAM, Enroute Automation Modernization, cloud-based radar tracking. Datacom, digital pilot controller communications and ADS-B, Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast, which is precise GPS tracking. The anticipated completion of these updates will not likely be until 2030 with an

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### Letters to the Editor

#### Big Beautiful Bill?

Dear Editor,

The "One Big Beautiful Bill" delivers headline wins - tax relief, border security and defense funding - but the trade-offs are hard to ignore.

It adds trillions to our already unsustainable national debt while expanding state and local tax (SALT) deductions that primarily benefit high-tax blue states. Now red states are effectively bailing out those that spent beyond their means. And let's not forget: billions more are headed to the Pentagon - an agency that's never passed an audit and can't account for trillions already spent.

For something marketed as a return to responsible government, it feels more like a polished rerun of the same old game.

Sincerely,  
Josh Murauskas

#### Importance of PSC Election

Dear Editor,

Since the November 2024 General Election has passed, many are not aware of the upcoming election for two seats with the Georgia Public Service Commission. When you understand what this commission does and has done in the last several years, most residents should realize the Special Primary Election voting in May and June (early voting) and the Election on June 17th are important to your pocketbook.

The Georgia Public Service Commission is a board of five members who are responsible for regulating electricity, natural gas and telecommunications. The commission approved Georgia Power to build one of the most expensive Nuclear Power Plants in the world (Plant

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#### Memorial Memories

Dear Editor,

Our hearts once again reach out to all of the families that have lost loved ones in wartime. It is fitting to recognize these brave men and women who sacrificed their lives on the battlefield for our beloved America, the land of the brave and the free. Freedom comes with a heavy price tag that should remind us to be grateful and show respect for our fallen heroes who died so that we could live to honor them with a thankful, humble heart and to never forget their service to our nation.

I love to add some quotes that speak volumes of our armed forces. Forever in our hearts. Always loved, never forgotten. Your memory is a treasure. The best and most beautiful things

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### Heaven's Economics:

*Heaven's Economics: The Manna Principle in Modern Times*

In these times of unprecedented wealth and opportunity, it's worth reflecting on an ancient story that resonates powerfully with modern life. The Biblical account of manna - heavenly bread that sustained the Israelites during their desert journey - offers surprising insights for today's world of abundance and excess.

Picture this: A vast crowd of former slaves, being led through an inhospitable desert, receives its daily bread literally from heaven. This mysterious substance appears with the dew each morning, providing exactly what each person needs - no more, no less. The miracle of manna worked in fascinating ways: those who greedily gathered more than their share would find their excess spoiled and crawling with worms by the next day. Yet those who collected less than needed would discover they had exactly enough to feed their entire family. And since no work was permitted on the Sabbath, G-d commanded that each family gather a double portion on Friday - and miraculously, this extra amount never spoiled overnight.

While the manna was an obvious miracle, its lesson extends far beyond ancient times. Whether sustenance falls directly from heaven or comes through the more familiar channels of commerce and industry, the underlying truth remains the same: all prosperity flows from G-d's blessing. The difference is merely in how visible the miracle appears to our eyes. Today, we're called to activate these divine blessings through honest work and ethical business practices - but we must never forget that success ultimately flows from a higher source, just as it did for our ancestors in the desert.

Consider David Green, founder of Hobby Lobby, who built his business from a \$600 loan into a multibillion-dollar enterprise. Despite his success, Green has maintained his commitment to biblical principles, closing his stores on Sundays and paying well above minimum wage. He's pledged to give away the majority of his company's ownership to charitable and religious causes, guided by the principle that we are merely stewards of G-d's blessings. "G-d owns it," Green often says about his business success, exemplifying someone who recognizes that abundance comes with obligation.

Contrast this with the countless stories of lottery winners who lose everything within a few years. Take the West Virginia man, who

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**Echoes from Sinai**  
"Torah for Everyone"  
Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger



### School Bus Drivers

The first machine I ever drove was a tractor. As I recall it was an old tri-cycle wheeled Farmall, a super-H I think. Then when I was 14, a farmer down the road asked me to help him haul hay. He had an old 1 ton flatbed, 63 Chevy truck. He asked if I could drive it and I responded that I could. I soon found myself driving down Center Post Road toward a barn in an old truck with "three-on-the-tree" loaded with a bunch of square bales of hay.

Two years later I found myself at the Georgia State Patrol in LaFayette, Georgia, trying to pass a driving test. My neighbor was administering the test, and I was nervous. Sargent Dunn then asked, "You've been driving some already haven't you?" I knew better than to lie so I nodded my head. He grinned and told me he had watched me driving that hay truck. Then he told me not to worry about the driving test, he had seen all he needed about my driving.

I began working for Georgia Cooperative Extension in June of 1982. The first week of my employment I was introduced to the Wilkes County Schools Transportation Director. I obtained a learner's permit for buses and was soon driving students to 4-H Events the first of which was State 4-H Congress in downtown Atlanta. It wasn't much different than driving that big hay truck except the cargo on a school bus was much more precious.

After moving to Union County our 4-H Members attended camp one summer at Camp Fulton in Atlanta. We were all headed to the Fernbank Science Center one day and were driving down on a narrow street. There was a telephone pole that leaned in toward the street. The mirror on the bus collided with telephone pole causing a loud bang which made me think a shooting had occurred. My reaction was to get the kids down in the floor and to speed away. As I looked into the rear view mirror Luke Hedden was the only student I could see. He looked at me with a grin and told me the loud noise was caused by the outside mirror hitting the telephone pole. Those kids gave me a good ribbing and I soon acquired a great respect for bus drivers.

I had always admired them because my grandfathers were bus drivers. When I was in the second grade my Papa Cummings was my bus driver. In those days he would stop at the local store every Friday afternoon. Each student would go into the store and purchase a cold drink and a pack of peanuts.

Another memory of a school bus was go-

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**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



### Nutrients for Plants

By now people have gardens in the ground and are hopefully thinking about the nutrients that the plants will need to survive. Let's talk about some of the different sources of nutrients that can be used for plants in the garden.

First off, I want to clear up that fertilizers and plant nutrients are not plant food. Plants make their own food by photosynthesis, which is converting light into chemical energy that plants, and the animals that eat them, can use. Nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, iron, magnesium, would be more like vitamins in our diet. They are essential for specific processes that plants do.

Organic fertilizers include products like bonemeal, bloodmeal, or milorganite. These are fertilizers made from natural sources. A lot of people like to use these because they are made from natural sources and recycle nutrients. One thing to keep in mind about organic fertilizers is that some of them have an odor. This can be beneficial as they can be used to keep wildlife away from plants temporarily. The nutrients that are in organic fertilizers are not immediately available to plants. The fertilizer must break down for the nutrients to become available. Organic fertilizers also tend to have a lower concentration of nutrients compared to synthetic fertilizers.

Compost is a great soil amendment. However, as with any amendment we should make sure that what we are growing also has native soil too. If there is no soil, the nutrients will leach out of the compost over the winter. The nutrient concentration in compost is very low compared to fertilizers. The compost also has to break down for the nutrients to become available. Therefore, it is advisable to use compost with native soil and other fertilizers for best results.

Worm castings carry concentrations of nutrients much higher than compost. Worm castings are made by using worms to consume organic material and then collecting the leftovers. Worm castings are very beneficial to plants and tend to help grow very healthy plants. You do have to watch out for volunteer seeds in worm castings. There is no heat involved in making worm castings so any seeds that are put into the worm bin will come out the other side too.

Synthetic fertilizers are the most common form of nutrients for plants, and have been around for a long time. If you go to the garden center and buy a bag of 10-10-10 or 34-0-0, most likely that is a synthetic fertilizer. In these products the nutrients are immediately available to the plant when they are watered in. They also

**UGA extension**

Watching and Working  
Jacob Williams



## North Georgia News

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Publication No: 001505

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## Cummings...continued from Page 4A

ing all the way to Memphis with Papa to pick up a new school bus which he was slated to drive the next fall. I was the first kid to ever ride in that new bus. That fall we kids started to school and I was in the second grade class of Mrs. Cummings. She was Papa's first cousin. She had also been my daddy's second grade teacher.

The first day of class was drawing to a close and I was ready to go home. But, there were still 5 minutes of class time left in the day. Honest, I do not know how that grasshopper got down Edith Anne's shirt. She let out a scream that almost woke the dead. It woke up Mrs. Cummings. She looked at me and said, "Mickey Paul Cummings if you don't start behaving I am going to talk to your Papa." He was right outside and heard my teacher call my name. That is all the encouragement I needed.

My fondest story concerning a bus driver came from my mother. Her father was also a bus driver. The route of the bus went right in front

of Momma's house on Adams Road. Momma's family had an old Billy Goat that her brothers had taught to lower its head and ram a pair of overalls with a red handkerchief sticking out of the back pocket.

On this particular day the bus had a flat right in front of the old house. Paw Paw got out of the bus to change the flat tire. He always carried a red handkerchief in his back pocket. As he bent over to begin changing the flat tire the goat spied the red handkerchief, lowered his head and rammed him right on the pocket of those overalls. Every kid on that bus began to laugh, but, when he got up the laughing stopped. Momma said this incident was the talk of the students that whole year.

I told you these stories because they are some of the fondest memories I have concerning bus drivers. The public should be thankful for our School Bus Drivers in Union County. Our Transportation Department and bus drivers do a great job, and we should all appreciate their efforts.

## Mollette... continued from Page 4A

anticipated budget of \$7.2 billion and growing.

In the meantime, American travelers are suffering long layovers and abrupt flight cancellations. Worse, flying has become more dangerous. While it is still touted as the safest form of transportation by the airlines, it doesn't feel quite as safe to some of us.

On top of aging, outdated equipment, we have a big shortage of air traffic controllers. The FAA is 3,500 air traffic controllers short of targeted staffing. The shortage causes flight delays and forces many controllers to work mandatory overtime and six-day weeks. The reasons behind these shortages are several. The rapid return to air travel after Covid -19. Pre-pandemic hiring freezes and layoffs. Retirement of experienced controllers. Challenges in training new controllers.

To address this the U.S. Transportation Department is offering incentives to recruit and retain controllers. Air traffic controllers can make \$140,000 to over \$200,000 a year.

Another problem. Our National Weather Service is understaffed especially ahead of hurricane season starting June 1st. Specifically, 30 out of 122 weather forecast offices lack chief meteorologists. This shortage is concerning given the increasing frequency of billion-dollar disasters – 27 occurred just last year. Offi-

cial have warned this could compromise disaster response. The shortages are due to massive retirement numbers. At least 25% have retired from the workforce in the last five years. The starting pay is in the low \$40,000 range. The hiring process takes about 300 days. High education requirements for the job. There is a high burnout rate. The job is very stressful with long hours especially during severe weather events.

Another problem across America is our water. Many American communities have outdated water systems. These aging systems pose serious health and environmental risks especially in rural areas where populations are declining and funds are scarce.

The American Society of Civil Engineers has given the U.S. drinking water infrastructure a grade of D-minus for over a decade due to its deteriorating condition.

In the last five years America has spent around \$370 billion on foreign aid. A big chunk of this went to Ukraine.

America has worked hard. We deserve to have current, up-to-date aviation systems, accurate up-to-date weather reporting and a clean drink of water. Let's please use some of this \$370 billion to fix things at home.

Sources: USAFACTS, US Bureau of Labor and Statistics, ASCE American Society of Civil Engineers

## Hambourger...continued from Page 4A

won \$315 million some years back. Despite initial pledges to use the money for good, his story became a cautionary tale of how prosperity without perspective can lead to devastating consequences. Within a few years, his life spiraled into tragedy, marked by personal losses and squandered wealth.

The manna story's wisdom becomes particularly relevant when we look at today's consumer culture. Just as some people tried to gather more manna than they needed, only to watch it spoil, many people today compulsively accumulate possessions far beyond their needs. We see this in overflowing closets, rented storage units, and maxed-out credit cards. Social media amplifies this tendency, with influencers constantly showcasing new purchases and luxuries, creating an endless cycle of want. Like the spoiled manna, these excess possessions often bring no joy – instead, they burden us with debt, clutter our homes, and leave us feeling perpetually unsatisfied.

Think of prosperity like a flowing river rather than a stagnant pond. A river remains

fresh and life-giving because it both receives and gives. Similarly, when we maintain a healthy relationship with our material blessings – receiving them gratefully and sharing them generously – we participate in a divine cycle of abundance. This ancient wisdom offers practical guidance for modern life: Do we view our success as solely self-made, or do we recognize a higher source? Are we using our resources in ways that benefit others, or merely accumulating for accumulation's sake?

In an era marked by growing wealth disparity and rampant materialism, this timeless perspective offers a compass. It points us toward gratitude instead of greed, sharing instead of hoarding, and trust instead of anxiety, transforming our understanding of prosperity from mere possession to true blessing.

*Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer who supports communities throughout the regional South. You can contact them at y@tasteof Torah.org.*

## Fowler... continued from Page 4A

That day in the bar, the man who tried to talk to Phil could not see the impact he had. Imagine his delight when Phil changed his mind and wanted to talk! This explains what hap-

pened better than I could: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16).

## Williams... continued from Page 4A

tend to have the highest concentration of nutrients, which makes them common in large scale production. They also require a lot of energy to create.

In America all fertilizers are required to have a guaranteed analysis. This guaranteed analysis indicates by percent weight the concentration of Nitrogen-Phosphorus-Potassium. The numbers are always

## Dyer...

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partment does it; they join for the "why" the department exists, to make a difference.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

## Shirkey...

continued from Page 4A

Vogtle), with no consumer protections for cost overruns which ran over \$35 billion. The cost of the plant, which is now operational, resulted in higher electricity costs than the cost of alternatives.

The PSC is also responsible for regulating costs for your Telecommunications services (Internet, Cable, Phones and Satellites), but does not set prices. Instead, the PSC manages the transition to competitive markets.

Our utility companies under the current Public Service Commission have made substantial profits, while Georgians have had to foot the bill for inconsistent or poor service.

Vote for change, better protections and lower rates on the services you use every day!

**Kristie Shirkey**

## Combs...

continued from Page 4A

in the world cannot be seen or even touched – they must be felt with the heart. Death ends a life, not a relationship. What we once have enjoyed we can never lose.

Memories of our loved ones are forever etched in our hearts and deep down in our very souls, and our prayers are always ongoing to comfort all of the families that have lost loved ones since the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). The U.S. has been involved in numerous wars and conflicts since 1775. While there are 11 formally declared wars, the U.S. has participated in many more military engagements.

One day when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back to make everything right, wars will be no more on His watch for eternity. Yes, peace and tranquility will reign forevermore and all who have joined God's heavenly realm will sing a new song of the Redeemed, and great and new memories will be made for eternity. Amen  
**Frank. F. Combs**

## Your Patriot Reflection



### A Republic

One of the guiding principles of our founding fathers was that the "United States of America shall be a Republic." Webster's Dictionary defines Republic as: A government in which supreme power resides in a body of citizens entitled to vote and is exercised by elected officers and representatives responsible to them and governing according to law. There are many reasons why the Founders wanted a Republican form of government rather than a democracy, monarchy or some other system. They were attempting to come out from under a monarchy, not go into another form of the same. Democracy only works if EVERYONE participates in the decision making process. They wanted a system whereby the people had an active voice and representation in how the government would operate. Our Republican form of government was the result

There are those who want to steer us away from the Republic, and control government without the consent of the governed. It is critical that we elect those to public office who will follow the Constitution and Bill of Rights and uphold our Republican form of government.

A Patriot Reflection is presented weekly by www.joshuaswarriors.org.

reported in this order. So, if you have a 100-pound bag of 10-10-10 it would have 10 pounds of nitrogen, 10 pounds of phosphorus, and 10 pounds of potassium in it.

Hopefully, now you know a bit more about the fertilizer options that are out there and what fits best for your situation.

If you have a question about fertilizer, contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

## Chamber...

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this will be your first time, we would love to have you involved. Please contact Abby Briley at Abby@Blairsville-Chamber.com to learn more and receive a list of task force opportunities you can possibly join.