

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Heating Your Home

It's that time of the year again. We are starting to see leaves turn and feeling the cooler temperatures. Some people have waited all year to say, "Its fall, y'all."

The cooler temperatures mean that it is time to start thinking about heating our homes.

Heating the home during fall and winter is one of the leading causes of home fires. Homeowners should keep this in mind and follow a few preparation and safety tips for heating systems.

The heating systems of your home, regardless of the type, need maintenance and attention before use. For people who have a fireplace or a wood burning heater, there are several things to help maintain safety and prevent a fire.

First, the chimney should be inspected and maintained. Homeowners should have the chimney inspected each year by a certified inspector. They may also be able to clean and repair any damage found to the chimney. Chimney fires can quickly turn into house fires.

Fireplaces can be dangerous if not properly maintained. They should be cleaned and inspected before starting the first fire. If you notice any cracks or damage to the fireplace, have it inspected before starting a fire.

Gas fireplaces are no exception. If a gas fireplace is not burning correctly, contact your gas company to have it inspected. Once again, do not forget the carbon monoxide detectors.

If you have a central heating system, it should be cleaned, inspected and serviced by a certified HVAC contractor every year before using it to heat the home.

If you have a gas heater, make sure that you have a functioning carbon monoxide detector installed. It also probably a good idea to change your air filters.

These are just a few fire safety tips for heating your home. Before you start that first fire of the season or turn that thermostat to heat, make sure that you have your systems inspected and cleaned.

It is also a good time to purchase smoke alarms and a carbon monoxide detector.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Jesus Follower

The early church referred to itself as "the Way" before it adopted the label "Christian." If we were to select a new name unafraid by modern mischaracterizations, we could call ourselves "Jesus Followers." But what does that mean? Glad you asked. Here are four ways you follow Jesus, found in His talk with Nicodemus (John 3).

1. You are born again. If you're old enough, you recall that Jimmy Carter popularized this term. Chuck Colson wrote a book with that title. It comes from Jesus' comment, "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (v.3-8). Look, this doesn't indicate a special category of Christian; rather, it is how Jesus explained a necessary spiritual transformation. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," He said. Paul explained this new life, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20).

2. You speak what you know. Jesus said, "We speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen" (v.9-12). You know that Jesus lived, died, and lived again. You know that in Christ, your life is transformed into what it never could be otherwise. You know His power to live on this earth and His promise of a home in heaven. You are an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20), joining God's mission to reconcile the world to Himself.

3. You believe in Him. You demonstrate your faith in bridge engineers and airline pilots when traveling. You trust the grocery store and the restaurant when you eat their food. Belief is not a subjective conclusion about a fact. It is acting on that fact and accepting the consequences. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (v.13-18). Following Jesus means accepting who He said He is.

4. You practice the truth. "He who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" (v.19-21). Human nature is selfish, prideful, and secretive. When you act sacrificially, humble yourself before God and people, and confess your sins, you are practicing the truth of God. When you love God and your neighbor, you practice truth.

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. When will we be able to vote for the upcoming SPLOST?

A. The early voting began October 15, 2018, and Election Day is November 6, 2018. The county is unable to ask you to vote for the SPLOST, but we hope if you have been pleased with all the SPLOST projects and progress we have made in this county, that you will strongly consider which vote would be the most advantageous for our county.

Q. If we want to vote on the SPLOST referendum, how do we do it during this election?

A. There will still be a few days of early voting left, and you can vote on it in the early voting or vote on it on Election Day, which is November 6, 2018. It is a little difficult to find the SPLOST election, as it is the very last item on the ballot. So, when you go to the polls or to early voting, you will first be asked to vote on several election candidates, then after you cycle through all of them, then there will be five amendments to the Georgia Constitution. After that there will be two state wide referendums, and finally, at the end of your electronic ballot, there will be the final question on SPLOST.

Q. How should we vote on the five constitutional amendments or the two referendum questions?

A. I cannot tell or suggest to you who and what you should vote for on any of these questions. There are websites and Facebook pages where many of these are being discussed. I personally am just in the process of trying to find out more information on some of these issues. Typically, I vote against anything that I do not know or understand, but that is just me. You must make your own decision on how to vote on these different issues.

Q. What is the SPLOST referendum?

A. SPLOST stands for Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax. It is a continuation of the 1 penny sales tax we have always had, to provide capital improvements, roads and bridges, infrastructure, and quality of life projects to make this a better county in which to live. It is on the election ballot currently being voted on. If you want to vote on this issue, you must continue with your electronic ballot to the very end, where the SPLOST referendum

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



See Fowler, page 5A

See Paris, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Talented Students

Dear Editor,

Once again, I have to write to tell Union County how proud I am to live here and have a Fine Arts Center that provides a beautiful setting for our talented students. On Oct. 11, the UCHS Chorus presented a spectacular program of songs in very difficult arrangements, performed perfectly. It was a wonderful show!

Carolyn Argay

Votes Matter

Dear Editor,

We as Christians are in a battle in our nation over our religious freedoms to worship the living God of our choice. A choice we all have to make is whether to agree with God or reject God altogether. This is the free will that the Almighty God of creation gave to each individual to decide which god they will serve. I want to quote a statement from the Billy Graham magazine called Decision: "The past 22 months have brought significant progress in restoring

See Combs, page 5A

"I came prepared!
I read the news,
watched debates, and
studied voter guides
on all the candidates!"



"Who knew there were
amendments on the ballots?"



Chamber of Commerce

As we look out over the mountains and watch the leaves change, we are reminded why we love living in the North Georgia Mountains. During this past weekend, we closed out another successful Sorghum Festival. The 49th! The crowds continue to grow. Thank you to all the workers and volunteers for making this event a success.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



Julie Judkins of the AT Conservancy spoke at our Monthly Mingle and updated the crowd on everything going on with the Trail. With the weather changing, is there a better time of year to get out and do some hiking?

Come donate to the Everything Christmas Sale, sponsored by 'Friends of Union County Library.' They will be accepting donations at the library every Thursday and Saturday, from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. beginning this Thursday the 25th. The sale takes place Nov. 2 and 3. Suggested donations - all Christmas-themed: ornaments, new holidays cards, decor, wrapping paper, gift

See Chamber, page 5A

Drug Free Mountain Life

How Drugs Alter Brain Development and Affect Teens

Most kids grow dramatically during the adolescent and teen years. Their young brains, particularly the prefrontal cortex that is used to make decisions, are growing and developing until their mid-20s.

Long-term drug use causes brain changes that can set people up for addiction and other problems. Once a young person is addicted, his or her brain changes so that drugs are now the top priority. He or she will compulsively seek and use drugs even though doing so brings devastating consequences to his or her life, and for those who care about him.

It appears that regularly using marijuana as a teen slows down brain development. A recent study links regular marijuana use during the teen years to the disruption of how the brain develops. The study also found that chronic use can lead to problems with attention span, short-term memory, behavior and impulse control in adulthood.

Researchers at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science in Chicago used rats to look at how the constant exposure to cannabinoids - a natural chemical found in marijuana - affected their brains during certain age windows. Here's what they found: when brain receptors are repeatedly hit with cannabinoids during early adolescence, development of the prefrontal cortex is slowed. The prefrontal cortex regulates decision-making, how one expresses their personality, social behavior and more.

Alcohol can also interfere with developmental processes occurring in the brain. For weeks or months after a teen stops drinking heavily, parts of the brain still struggle to work correctly. Drinking at a young age is also associated with the development of alcohol dependence later in life.

What is Addiction? No one plans to become addicted to a drug. Instead, it begins with a single use, which can lead to abuse, which can lead to addiction.

The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) defines addiction as a chronic, relapsing brain disease that is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences. Addiction is a brain disease because drugs change the brain's structure and how it works. These brain changes can be long lasting and lead to harmful behaviors seen in people who abuse drugs.

See Drug Free, page 5A

RC&D

November - Fall Wildfire Preparedness Month

November is one of the most hazardous wildfire months here in north Georgia because of the leaf fall and normal low humidity, and these conditions create a dangerous mix that only needs a spark to change the look of our communities into something that nobody wants to come to. Most houses are covered with leaves, which make great wildfire fuel, and many of our residents have retreated to the warmer climates by now, so there is no one home to keep the leaves off the houses.

The combination of weather and leaves for fuel makes a volatile combination that only needs one more thing to create a raging fire in our backyard, and that is a spark from an unattended burning leaf pile and a little wind. We all need to pay close attention to what's going on around us here in the mountains these days.

If you smell smoke, any smoke, check it out, call it in, and get away from it. These are the dangerous wildfire conditions that we have been warning you about for years that can quickly create the perfect wildfire storm, fueled by the extremely dry weather combined with heavy leaf fall and low humidity with constant winds. This is a recipe for disaster, and all it takes to start the chain of events is one small spark. Many wildfires are started by such simple things as the safety chains on a trailer dragging on the road, a mower hitting a rock, a power tool creating sparks, or many other seemingly harmless events that in normal weather would not be an issue.

Now more than ever, we need to follow the Ready-Set-Go evacuation guidelines that our Firewise team promotes: Ready - prepare your home and property to resist fire, be Firewise; Set - be aware of changing conditions and be prepared to leave your home; Go - as soon as you suspect something is not right, Go, do not hesitate, get out of harm's (and firetrucks) way and let the emergency folks get in and do their job to protect your life and property. The last thing you want to do is get caught in a traffic jam with flames and smoke blowing over your car, which prevents the emergency trucks getting in and you can't get out... not a good situation to be caught in. Water has for most of recorded history been the method of putting out fires, and in many of the areas that we live in, getting enough water to fight a fire is difficult.

See Riley, page 5A

Scared!

Papa had been to a Singing at Saint Paul Church that night. He'd walked three miles to the church and another three miles beyond the church to Lucinda Cagle's house. Papa had walked across the Mon Dye Bottoms and up through the bluffs where his Grandfather John Cummings and Grandfather William West had made liquor. Back in those days, people walked or rode horses everywhere they went. And young men walked for miles to court a young lady.

However, the only courting allowed was courting at church events. Papa really liked Lucinda, so it was nothing for him to walk the six miles to her home and three miles back to Saint Paul Church. The route which Papa had taken was beautiful, especially in the fall of the year. The smell of autumn leaves and a cool gentle wind against his face made Papa's day wonderful. At the Singing, Papa was able to buy Lucinda's cake in the Cake Sale. Everything was grand, until Papa delivered Lucinda to her home and began the long nine mile walk back to his house. After all, it was Halloween, and my 16-year-old Papa was a little nervous and very superstitious.

He had to walk down the bluff where Uncle Billy Baker was hung by the home guard during the "War Between the States" for refusing to side with the South. By the time Papa got to this particular bluff, the wind had picked up, and the sound of rustling leaves caused Papa to be a little on the edgy side. Just the previous week, a "painter" (panther) had been spotted just a mile or so down the creek in the Dime community. Papa made it down the bluff and crossed the creek without incident. However, halfway up the other side, Papa spied what he thought was a man in a black suit without a head standing beside the trail.

Papa called out to the man to identify himself. The man refused to answer. A little shiver ran down the spine of my grandfather as he contemplated what should be done. Papa called out again. "Is that you, Hollis?" There was still no answer. At this point, Papa became angry. He called out to the man, "Mister, I don't know what you want, but if it's trouble you're after, then trouble is what you'll get." Then Papa bent over and picked up a nice sized stick. He approached the man and warned him, "If you don't get out of my way, I'm gonna whop you with this stick." The man did not answer. So, with a mighty blow, Papa struck the man where his head should have been. A hollow thud was all he heard. Papa started to swing again but looked

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



RC&D Executive Director

Frank Riley



Composting

Composting is a popular and effective method to improve the quality of your soil. It can also help you get rid of lawn debris such as grass clippings or leaves as they are beginning to fall. Composting is not difficult to do, but here are some tips so that you can start your own compost pile.

Firstly, what is compost? It's rich, dark humus (not humus that you eat) that is the end product of the natural decomposition of plants or plant products. Using a compost pile will speed up the natural decomposition of plant material. Once the compost pile has finished decomposing, you can use it on your garden as a nutrient rich source of organic matter.

You can use just about any organic material for composting. Leaves, grass clippings, twigs, old annual or perennial flowers, old vegetable plants, straw, and sawdust can all be thrown into the compost pile. Try to avoid using insect or disease infested plants to reduce the spread of those plants the following season. You can put things like kitchen peelings and coffee grounds into the compost pile, too. However, be careful, because adding too many of those things will attract animals. Avoid using highly processed foods, because these will take longer to break down.

When making a compost pile, it's helpful to have something to contain it. A lot of different materials can be used, from wire, fencing, wood pallets or concrete blocks. Leave some open spaces on the sides for ventilation. Good air circulation is important for successful compost. The bottom of the pile needs to be open to the soil to allow good drainage. Construct your pile in an out of the way place in your yard, in full sun. You can make the compost pile as big as you need. Just remember that bigger piles will be more difficult to manage even though they'll decompose faster.

Once you've constructed your container for the compost pile, start adding organic matter. Smaller pieces will decompose more quickly than large pieces of organic matter, so try and break down big chunks into smaller chunks before adding them. Once you have a layer of organic matter in there, add in some garden soil or animal manure. These will add fungi, bacteria, insects, and worms to the pile. They're the critters responsible for breaking down the plant material into the humus that you add to your garden. You'll want to keep the pile moist, but not soggy.

Sometimes a concern with compost piles is that there might be an odor. If you turn the

See Williams, page 5A

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