

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Heating Your Home

Fall is in full swing and we are starting to feel the colder weather. The cooler temperatures mean that folks will start using various types of heat in their home. Heating the home during fall and winter is one of the leading causes of house fires. So far, we have had two chimney fires and an apartment fire. It looks like a busy fire season. With this in mind, we would like to remind everyone of a few tips for safely heating your home.

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. The two chimney fires we have had were very close to becoming 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. It is also a good idea to keep any flammable objects away from the fireplace. Sparks and embers can fly out of the fireplace and ignite the objects that are too close. These fires can quickly spread. Utilizing a screen or glass cover will reduce the risk of flying embers.

Gas fireplaces are no exception. Homeowners should know how to operate and maintain their gas heaters. If a gas fireplace is not burning correctly, contact your gas company to have it inspected. Once again, do not forget to have working carbon monoxide detectors if you have any gas burning appliances, including heaters, in your home.

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. It is also 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

See Dyer, page 5A

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Hope and Truth

Kanye West just released his much-anticipated album, "Jesus is King." His conversion to Christianity has been met with both enthusiasm and skepticism. As a cultural influencer, is he a shrewd businessman or a transparent truth-seeker? Time will tell, as for all of us who "run with endurance the race set before us" (Heb. 12:1).

In the midst of cultural confusion, West is on a mission to bring hope to his fans. On the track, "God Is," he says, "Every man, every woman there is freedom from addiction." Lyrics in "On God" include, "His light shine the brightest in the dark. Single mothers know they got my heart. And all my brothers locked up on the yard you can still be anything you wanna be." Hope without truth is a false hope. West is speaking to a pop culture that finds hope elusive because it no longer believes in truth. I admire his determination to use his platform to change that.

Abdu Murray describes the cultural confusion this way: "We've so obsessed over the freedom to do what we want that we've neglected the freedom to do what we should. To wrap our minds around what it means to be human, we've focused narrowly on brain chemistry, thereby reducing ourselves to freedomless chemical machines. This in turn leads us to contradictorily conclude that with regard to sexual and gender identity we're 'born that way' but should be allowed to explore as many sexual or gender expressions as we want. We give lip service to respecting all religions only to turn against a particular religion if it doesn't line up with our irreligious autonomy." That is hopeless.

Atheist philosopher and former Italian Senator Marcello Pera opposes these cultural confusions of post-modernism and relativism. It's counterintuitive that he as an atheist would conclude that the antidote is Christianity. He writes, "If we live as Christians, we will be wiser and more aware of the dangers we face. We will not separate morality from truth. We will not confuse moral autonomy with any free choice. We will not treat individuals, whether the unborn or the dying, as things. We will not allow all desires to be transformed into rights. We will not confine reason within the boundaries of science."

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Did Union County SPOST sales tax dollars build the Fine Arts Center and the Agriscience Center?

A. NO! Both of these facilities were paid for by ESPLOST, which is the one penny from every dollar in sales tax that goes to the Union County School System. Decisions on what to spend this money on are made exclusively by the Union County Board of Education. Union County Government and myself have no input into this process.

Q. What is the difference between ESPLOST and just plain SPOST? Doesn't all this money just go in the same pot?

A. Absolutely not. SPOST and ESPLOST are totally separate and distributed to separate entities, with SPOST sales tax going to Union County Government, including funds for roads and bridges, public safety, courts, recreation and others. ESPLOST goes to the Union County School System for their projects.

Q. Can Union County Government tell the Union County School System how to spend their ESPLOST revenues?

A. NO! Just as the school system cannot tell Union County Government how to spend their SPOST revenue. Each of these entities puts forth a referendum that is voted on by the voters of Union County.

Q. How is the 7-cent sales tax we pay distributed?

A. For every dollar that is spent in Union County, 7-cents in sales tax is collected by the required business that is selling their goods or services. Business owners then remit this sales tax to the State of Georgia and the State keeps 4 of the 7 pennies. The State then sends one of the pennies to the Union County School System, and this is referred to as ESPLOST (Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax). Then one of the other pennies goes to Union County Government and is referred to as SPOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax). The final penny also comes to Union County Government and is referred to as LOST (Local Option Sales Tax).

Q. What exactly is LOST?

A. LOST stands for Local Option Sales Tax. This additional penny was voted on and approved years ago by voters here in

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

There's an App for That!

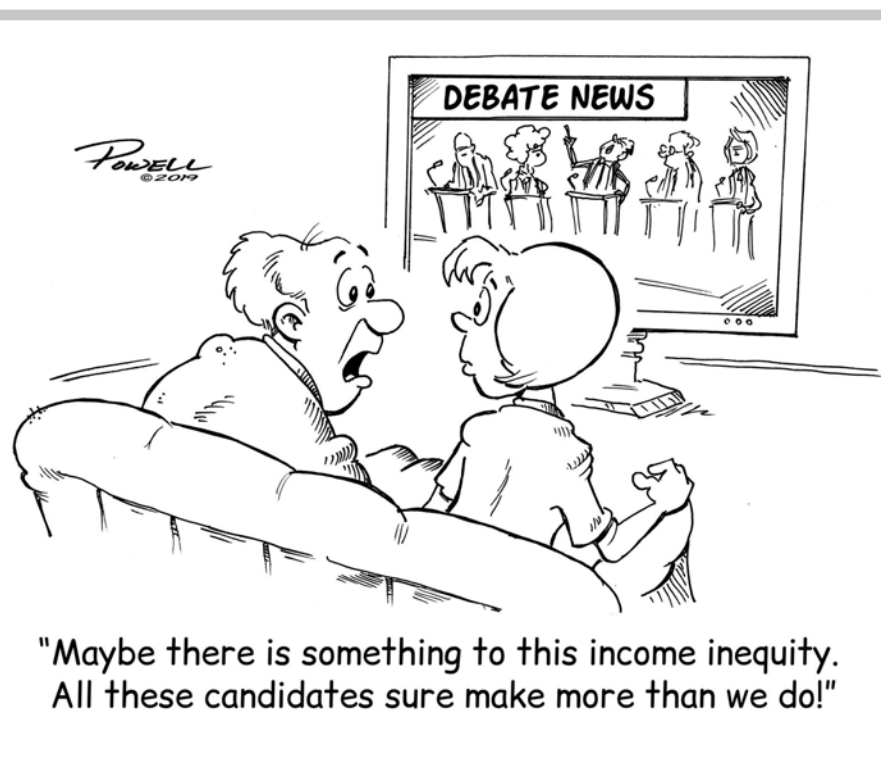
Communicating with our kids can be challenging at times. Have you ever tried to have a conversation with your child only to walk away feeling like they did not hear a word you said then tried again only to walk away feeling like you speak a different language entirely? Well... now there is an app for that.

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 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration recently released several FREE substance abuse prevention applications that can be downloaded onto your mobile device. The "Talk" App is an interactive tool that offers parents tips and pointers about how to talk to your child. It even allows parents to practice the conversation before having it with your child.

According to the SAMHSA.GOV website, the "Talk. They Hear You." is a free mobile app that helps you prepare for one of the

See Drug Free, page 5A



Chamber of Commerce

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our sponsors for our 1st annual "Shoot for the Stars" charity golf tournament. It turned out to be a beautiful day and we are grateful to everyone who came out and made it a big success. A portion of the proceeds will go to the Union County High School Scholarship Fund to be awarded the night of the Star Student Banquet. In addition to the Star Student, awards will be given for students and alumni that excel in other areas. It was a great day, and we can't wait to do it again.

Our Dress with Style fashion event takes place this Wednesday, from 12-1 p.m. We are happy to say we are currently at full capacity and are looking forward to seeing what our local merchants present during the show. We are sure it will inspire many holiday gift-giving ideas. If you want to guarantee your spot at events like Dress with Style, be sure to keep an eye on the Chamber Calendar of events so you don't miss

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



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Letters to the Editor

Hillary vs. the Astros

Dear Editor,
I see Hillary Clinton going around on her book tour continuing to claim that she actually won the 2016 election because she had more of the popular vote. On that basis, I think the Astros should claim they won the World Series because they had more hits and runs.

Carol McKechnie

Weaponizing Weather

Dear Editor,
I'm so proud of Claude Rains Jr. for exposing the author of the letters to the editor regarding the so called, "existential threat" of climate change. He had the guts to call him out on his "bipartisan" effort to address climate change, with only one Republican voting with Democrats.

The Climate Chronicles' Joe Bastardi said that climate change fanatics are "weaponizing weather," and that, furthermore, "the earth has never been greener."

Climate change has occurred numerous times just since the 1800s. Since 2009, 238 physicists, including Nobel Prize winner Ivar Giaever and professors at Harvard, MIT, Princeton and UCLA, have said the largest amount of CO2 gas comes from the oceans and is beneficial to all plant life.

The largest effort in the scientific community included 9,029 Ph.D.s, 7,152 M.S.s, 2,586 M.D.s and over 1,200 equivalencies signing a petition on the global warming hypothesis declaring it was "without scientific validity."

Lastly, another group of scientists said that the "eco-anxiety climate alarmists are scaring the hell out of our children."

Chris Crawford

Corruption, Anyone?

Dear Editor,
How many of you stalwart devotees of our president really believe that his decision to withhold the release of nearly \$400 million in military aid to the Ukraine was in deference to claims of corruption in their government or that this action will convince European countries to stop chipping in? Or... how many of you more perceptive members of our homeland suspect that maybe - just maybe - it was a decision to save the Russian army from our weapons being used against them, in their effort to wipe out Ukraine, helping to create a new Greater Russia? I vote for scenario No. 2.

Considering scenario No. 1, why review corruption in just Burisma? Is that the only focus

See Schilling, page 5A

A F.A.I.R. Perspective

Chris Mitchell is the consultant who wrote the Cost of Service study for Blue Ridge Mountain EMC. We, F.A.I.R. (Families Against Inequitable Rates), have asked for a copy on numerous occasions. This study is the basis for BRMEMC raising residential customer fees.

The General Manager, Jeremy Nelms, has refused to release the study even though BRMEMC is a co-op and we, the members, paid for the study.

Ironically, Mr. Mitchell did a presentation at the October Board Meeting. This presentation was not publicly advertised beforehand so that members would know. Shame on them. Fortunately, I attended the Oct. 22 meeting.

Mr. Mitchell described the variables used to support his calculations. His basis for recommending raising customer fees? It provides a fixed flow of money regardless of kWh usage variations. Historically, maintenance costs have been factored into the variable power side, which has higher kWh users paying according to their use. Makes sense. But not to Mr. Mitchell and his "new way of thinking."

Fixed costs for maintenance include physical poles, power lines, meters, substations, transformers and the like. We all use them, therefore we should all pay these costs - understanding that the greater electric users place greater demands on the system.

However, Mr. Mitchell recommends ONLY raising residential customer charges, and recommends continuing to raise customer fees annually for the foreseeable future.

Residential fees have already increased a whopping 27.5% over the past five years. Hold on to your hats, because they aren't done raising those customer fees yet!

BRMEMC will tell you that they have lowered the electric rate so all this is revenue neutral. What they don't tell you is that the increased monthly charges for low energy users pay for the decreases they're giving to higher energy users! Then, they will tell you that they have overcharged high energy users. No, they haven't. High energy users should pay for their greater demands on services.

There is absolutely no discussion of increasing business customer fees. Every customer class should be treated equally. Businesses and high energy users place a greater demand on the system than the average or below average residential customer. Their fees should go up also, but high-end electric users' bills are going down.

As a lower kWh user myself, my bill

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Guest Column

Lucille Heil



Wyatt and John

John Cummings was my great grandfather, and Wyatt was his father. Wyatt's father had moved the Cummings clan to North Alabama soon after the Creek Indians were defeated at Horseshoe Bend. The battle was a decisive one for Andrew Jackson and his band of Tennesseans. Wyatt had been married for 12 years when South Carolina fired the first shots on Fort Sumter. After this event, states across the South held Secessional Conventions to determine whether to stay in or secede from the Union.

Alabama held their convention in Montgomery. Wyatt Cummings and the other people of Winston County elected a man by the name of Chris Sheets to represent them at the convention. The people of Winston County were settlers and homesteaders in Winston County.

There were only a handful of plantations in the county, and most people did not own any slaves. So, in an overwhelming vote, the people of the county decided that Chris should vote against secession at the convention. All that the people of Winston County wanted was to remain neutral. They empathized with their brothers in the southern part of Alabama. But, the thought of fighting to maintain the right to own slaves was something the people of Winston County didn't understand.

During the first day of the secession convention, Chris Sheets was not allowed to speak. When he tried to speak, he was thrown into jail and beaten for his stance on the subject of secession. Chris was held in the jail in Montgomery during the entire convention and was only turned loose when the convention ended. He went home battered and bruised as well as feeling he had failed. As you know, Alabama did secede from the Union, and the War Between the States began. Many of the planters who had vigorously supported secession and war did not want to fight and began paying others to fight in their place during the war. Soon, the state created a Home Guard to help protect the interests of the citizens of Alabama.

One of the objectives of the Home Guard was to encourage the enlistment of young men into the fighting ranks of the Confederate Army. At first, the Home Guard was a decent group of people that protected local interests. But soon, most of the Home Guard became part of the main army. As a result, the Home Guard became infiltrated with rogues and less desirable men. In Winston County, the Home Guard began to terrorize the very people they were supposed to protect.

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Soil Testing

Soil testing is a very important part of growing a quality crop, having a good looking garden, having a quality lawn, or a good pasture. Soil testing gives you an insider look at what is going on in your soil. Let's take a look at what a soil test can do for you and why it's a good idea to have your soil tested.

If you have a garden at your house it's a good idea to have your soil tested every other year. A soil test will show you the pH, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, zinc, and manganese levels in your soil. These are essential elements for plant growth. Nitrogen is also a very important nutrient for plant growth. However, nitrogen is very mobile in the soil. Therefore, you could test your soil and by the time that you receive your soil results back from the lab the amount of nitrogen in the soil could be drastically different.

pH is often the most limiting factors when it comes to growing plants in the mountains. A soil test will tell you the pH and the recommended lime to bring that pH up to an acceptable level for the plants. Any lime that is added to soil will take 3-6 months to fully take effect. That means for spring plantings, now is a good time to take a soil test and begin adding lime.

When taking a sample for your lawn, a depth of 4 inches is appropriate. If you're taking a sample for gardens, ornamentals, mixed fruit trees, and wildlife plots sample to a depth of 6-8 inches. You can use a spade or a soil probe. When you take the sample it's best to take multiple samples from around the plot that you are interested in. This way you'll get an average of the area that you're sampling and a better representative sample. Using a trowel or small shovel, take 8-10 samples and mix them together in a bucket. From that bucket take the sample that you'll bring into the Extension office so that we can send it to the UGA labs. Make sure that you get enough soil so that the lab can test properly. About 2 cups of soil is needed.

If you're sampling from an area that has mulch or grass on top of it push that material away so that you penetrate down to the soil. Pull out any rock or roots that you get with the soil sample and throw them away. When you take the sample, spread the wet/damp soil on a newspaper and let the soil air out overnight before bringing it in to the office, so that it dries down some.

When deciding how many samples you need to take, look at the area and determine how many different types of conditions you have. For example, if you have a low lying spot, a steep slope, and a wooded area, each one of these

Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



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Editor

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Todd Forrest
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Mark Smith
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Website: www.nganews.com

Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com

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

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