

Opinions

Everybody has one...

More on the Wildland Fires

The wildland fires in the area have become an interesting topic. They have affected everyone in the region with either fire danger or smoke. We are in constant contact with other local fire departments from surrounding counties; Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC); and the US Forest Service to stay up-to-date on the latest information. We are attempting to keep everyone informed on the situation. Here are a few topics that people have asked about.

The smoke that we see is mostly from the large wildland fires that are in Fannin County and North Carolina. They are growing each day and there are a lot of resources on the scenes trying to contain and control these fires. Each of these fires started small and we would like for everyone to keep that in mind. The dry conditions and drought have made dealing with any fire very difficult and time consuming.

Union County and the City of Blairsville are under a burn ban which started November 4th. There has also been an emergency ordinance placed into effect which covers the burn ban. This ordinance went into effect on November 9th. Violation of the burn ban can lead to a ticket with a fine and even jail time. We understand that the burn ban can be an inconvenience but we are asking everyone to please adhere to the ban. The burn ban includes any open flame outside burning.

Some people have asked if there would be any evacuations and if there were how they would be notified. The Union Alert system is a great system to get information on your cell phone about emergencies. You can call 706-439-6091 or 706-439-6056 and ask about Union Alert. You can also email ucfdclerk@uniongov.com for more information. We are also providing information on social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We will notify anyone if they are in need of evacuation if that occurs.

Other people want to know how they can help. We believe in prevention, so the best way to help is no outside burning and report others who are burning. Second, prepare your home with Firewise™ practices. Third, people want to provide donations. Locally, we have no needs at this time. The latest information we have received from US Forestry in our area is that they currently have

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Names

An off-duty policeman in the city was enjoying his day off. He walked down to the corner coffee shop for a wakeup brew. He glanced around as he was about to enter, and suddenly sprinted to the curb to grab a blind man about to step into traffic. "Thief!" the blind man screamed as he swatted the policeman with his cane. Nursing his bruised pride, the hero said he would do it again.

I recently heard Os Guinness observe that culture has "re-branders." The term describes an effort to redefine something as other (thief) than intended (hero). Professor Michael Rectenwald at NYU knows about this. His anonymous blog criticized the safe spaces and trigger warnings that coddle students and their social justice ideas. Now, he no longer teaches because what he called academic freedom, they called incivility. I call it political correctness.

It's anachronistic to label what happened in ancient Babylon as P.C., but it fits. Four young Hebrew men with names that reminded them of their God, were exiled to a foreign land and renamed to obscure their past allegiances. They were re-branded. Yet Daniel and his fellow believers continued to live out their faith in the one true God even when facing the lion's den and the fiery furnace. They went along until their consciences stopped them. Forced uniformity has its limits. Remember Orwell's "1984"?

Lurking about is a movement to re-brand religious freedom as bigotry, making the First Amendment a sword instead of a shield. Martin Castro reported for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights that efforts to protect religious freedom is really a cover for discrimination, and must be curbed. Is it far-fetched to consider this a proto-threat like the prohibition Peter faced, "Do not speak in name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18)?

The passive Christian response is to syncretize our faith with whatever the culture embraces. Responding to the recent Hatmaker controversy, Rosaria Butterfield wrote, "Sin and Christ cannot abide together, for the cross never makes itself an ally with the sin it must crush, because Christ took our sin upon himself and paid the ransom for its dreadful cost!" Will

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. When did Union County start the burn ban?

A. We started it Friday, November 4, 2016 at 8 a.m.

Q. What type burning is banned in Union County?

A. Any outside burning with the exception of a covered propane grill. No charcoal, no burn barrels, no campfires or fire pits. In other words, nothing outside. This is not for only others protection, this is for YOUR protection. The life you save may be your own.

Q. What is the penalty for burning outside?

A. The penalty is a fine of up to \$1,000, court costs, and there is a possibility of incarceration for up to two months.

Q. Are these reasonable penalties for outside burning?

A. We have not yet fined anyone. The purpose of this is not to fine people, but to let people know that this is an extremely dangerous situation we are in. We expect everyone to follow the law on the burn ban. Issuing a burn ban was not done without a lot of consultation from professionals. My job is to protect the public and there is not a better way to do it right now than to get people to understand how serious the fire danger is.

Q. How many illegal fires have been started since the Burn Ban?

A. As of today (Friday) evening, 7 days after the ban, 30 brush fires or reports have been investigated in Union County! We gave a little latitude to folks for the first 3 or 4 days, but we now expect strict compliance. We do not have the staff nor the resources to combat serious fires in the county and all the area counties are now stretched with their resources because they are having the exact same problems.

Q. What are you doing to let people know about the Burn Ban?

A. We are using Facebook, email, automatic phone messages, and we have put banners on the Highway 515 bridge next to the courthouse. We have asked those with lighted signs to post the burn ban on them. We received one electronic roadside sign from GDOT and installed it today. We hope to have at least two more by the time you read this. We are also placing signs (real estate type)

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



The Differences Between CBD and THC in Marijuana

Half of the United States now has some form of legal cannabis, whether it is for recreational or "medicinal" purposes. Some places, like L.A. and Seattle, have as many, or more, marijuana dispensaries as Starbucks. One thing you will notice when you go into these dispensaries is a menu that tells you how much THC is in the product and how much CBD there is.

The mission of the Union County Anti-Drug Coalition is to support an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

THC is the ingredient that makes you intoxicated and CBD is the ingredient that contains the analgesic, anti-seizure and purported anticancer effects. Most cannabis sold has a ratio of 10 to 1 of THC vs. CBD. So, most of the marijuana

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Put your money where your heart is...shop local.

Hometown Holiday Shopping

Need a reason to shop local for Christmas? How about 31 of them? The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce invites you to take part in our Hometown Holiday weekend event. Thirty-one local merchants are offering discounts on hot Christmas gift items during normal business hours on Thursday, November 17th through Saturday, November 19th. For three days only, savvy shoppers can take advantage of a variety of deals. Whether you are a newcomer to the area ready to discover all that Union County has to offer, or a long time resident who believes in supporting the businesses who make our local economy strong, this event is for you. Thank you to the

Blairsville-Union County Chamber
Regina Allison



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Letters to the Editor...

God's Will

Dear Editor,
Praise the Lord that this election is over and many prayers for our nation have been heard by God and millions of voters, who perhaps have not voted for a long time saw an opportunity to have a better life under a new leadership, one that doesn't owe anyone anything, so Mr. Trump stepped up to the plate and hit a home run for America and put his own money where his mouth is, to work for the good of "We The People."

Now it's time to focus on getting our nation united once again for the betterment of mankind. God has blessed America time and time again with prosperity and freedoms that not many nations possess, so I am excited to see what our new government is going to do in the next four years starting January 20th when Mr. Trump with guidance from some of our greatest spiritual leaders and his V.P. Mike Pence also a Christian of faith takes an oath to serve, not himself, but "We The People" under the leadership of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Remember with God all things are possible. He alone can set kings, princes and even presidents in authority to accomplish His good will. Amen.

Frank F. Combs

Union's Support and Donation Demonstrates a Stand Against Child Abuse

Dear Editor,
Recently Enotah CASA hosted our Dancing With North Georgia Stars fundraiser and received resounding support from Union and Towns counties both in attendance and financially through sponsorships, advertisers and donations. All of us on the Enotah CASA Board of Directors and the staff extend our heartfelt gratitude. While our community contributed about \$36,000 in net income, it was the generously donated time and in-kind giving that permitted us to produce a successful show and Gala after party.

A special thanks goes to the dancers who accepted the challenge to do hours of rehearsal, perform for the show and also help raise funds to support CASA's mission through the sale of sponsorships and advertising. We also greatly appreciate our sponsors. Their financial support will afford CASA volunteers to continue to advocate for the best interest of every abused/neglected child in the Enotah Judicial Circuit. We are also grateful to over fifty advertisers. You too have shown your care about the children of our community and have helped give the abused/neglected children a voice. And we are extremely thankful to the many volunteers that worked to produce the shows and all that came out to attend

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Fire and Smoke in North Georgia

North Georgia is experiencing the worst drought that most can remember with many areas not having seen rain for up to 52 days. The extremely dry conditions, low humidity, constant winds coupled with the normal leaf fall creates a tinder box with only one spark needed to set off a wildfire that will consume everything in its path. We had a small brush fire today caused by a squirrel on a power line.

Fires have been started by trailer safety chains dragging on the road and farm machinery hitting rocks which cause sparks. Many of the nation's largest active wildfires Thursday were burning in the southern Appalachian Mountains, where a relentless drought has turned pine trees into torches and forced evacuations in dozens of communities. More than 5,000 firefighters and support staff from around the nation have poured into the Southeast to try to suppress these fires. The effort includes about 40 aircraft, including three large air tankers flying out of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Tens of thousands of acres of forest have burned, and about a dozen of the largest fires were uncontained. High winds and temperatures and weeks without rain have combined to spark blaze after blaze in the unusually dry landscape. Numerous teams reported wind-driven fires racing up slopes and down ravines as they struggled to protect hundreds of threatened structures.

For weeks, up here we've been having smoke, but it is getting more intense as conditions worsen. Typically, the winds in the mountains stretch for miles, but now, in some areas you can hardly see to the next ridge. Thursday's national drought report shows 41.6 million people in parts of 15 Southern states living in drought conditions. The worst is in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee, but extreme drought also is spreading into the western Carolinas. Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina all have fierce fires. Right now, they're kind of holding their own and could get control over some of the smaller fires, but with humidity so low in the normally lush Appalachians and Great Smoky Mountains, authorities are bracing for more.

North Carolina's Gov. Pat McCrory declared a state of emergency for a fourth of his state's 100 counties, to help with evacuations and provide more firefighting assets. More than 560 firefighters and staff from at least 40 states were battling 18 blazes in the Nantahala National Forest in western North Carolina, and the state climatologist said some counties are having one of their driest years in 105 years of record-keeping. Additional crews, engines, helicopters and air tankers continue to arrive from across the country to help with the firefighting effort.

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Frank Riley
Executive Director of RC&D



Harold

Aunt Inez lost her first husband in a car accident. So, she moved up to Chicago to find work. There she met and married the largest man I have ever seen. John Porcurro was 6 feet five inches tall and must have weighed close to 300 pounds. Harold was just a young lad when his daddy died and Uncle John raised him as his own son. Soon after moving up north Harold lost his southern accent. So, when he came home to visit, all the cousins would just sit around to listen to Harold talk.

During Harold's 13th year he came home for his usual summer time visit with the family. My dad was 2-3 years older than Harold. Dad (Paul) and his brother, Bud, loved to pull pranks on their younger cousin. Even though Harold knew he was the focus of their jokes he admired and loved being around his older cousins. One night during his vacation Harold spent the night with Paul and Bud. The boys were up early getting their chores done so they could go fishing down on Turkey Creek. Their job was to milk the family cow. Harold was very excited because he was going to learn how to milk a cow. My grandmother said, "That young'un was so excited about milking that cow I thought he would burst". Soon the boys were at the barn and Harold watched as Dad led Old Flossie into the stable. Next to the barn was a fenced in area where the family kept a steer they were feeding so it could be butchered. As Bud grinned Dad explained to Harold, "First, you have to go into the lot with a bucket. Then you have to catch the cow and pump its tail while it stands over the bucket".

As Harold grabbed the tail of the steer it ran off. Dad encouraged Harold by saying, "You've got to hold on to the tail and keep pumping just like a pump on a well". Dad and Bud kept their composure while Harold chased the steer around the lot. He finally caught the steer and held to the tail. He was dragged through mud and manure. He was kicked and stomped, but he held onto the steer. Soon Papa heard all the laughter and walked up to the barn. Harold looked up at his Uncle and said, "Uncle Coon, I can't get any milk from this cow". Papa sat his nephews down and explained where milk was obtained. He showed the difference between a cow and a steer. Harold looked up at his uncle and said he didn't believe him. He continued by saying, "We go to a store to get our milk".

Soon the boys were over at their grandparents' house. They were to meet their cousins Jimmy, Billy, Rayford and Wallace to go fishing. Harold was still dirty from his "learning to milk a cow". His grandmother Laura told him to come to the house to get cleaned up. I guess Harold was trying to impress his cousins by sassing his grandmother. With a laugh Harold said, "No, I am going fishing". Laura started toward

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



Boxelder Bugs

This warm autumn has brought another home invader to look out for right now! Boxelder bugs are medium-sized black bugs with thin red markings and are better than stink bugs at finding ways into your home. These bugs usually start looking for places to overwinter in early autumn. Because this fall has been so warm, plenty of them have had a chance to find their ideal shelters, which in many cases are our houses. They are typically found near the south side of the house, as these walls will get warmed by sunlight throughout the day.

Boxelder bugs emerge late in the summer and early fall and begin to congregate on boxelder trees, though they are known to feed on a variety of hosts. They then hunt for warm, safe places to spend the winter in groups, where they will stay until the temperatures begin to warm again in early spring. Sometimes, you may see these bugs come out of nowhere in the middle of winter. This is most likely because we may have had a winter day that was just barely warm enough for the bugs to wake up and think that winter has passed. Once the cold winds return in a day or two though, they return to their hiding places. These shelters can be doorframes, windows, rock piles, tree holes and housing foundations.

In March or April, the adults wake up and feed on boxelder trees for about two weeks before mating. Females will lay eggs in clusters in crevices near host plants so the nymphs will have easy access to food once they hatch. As their name suggests, these bugs are known for feeding on boxelder trees, but they are also found on apple, ash, buckeye, maple, plum, cherry, peach and grapes as well as a few ornamental woody plants. In the middle of summer, adults lay a second batch of eggs, which will hatch and eventually overwinter as large nymphs and adults.

Boxelder bugs prefer feeding on maple seeds, but they also suck sap from leaves and twigs. They do very little damage to the plants that they are found on, but if they are on your outdoor siding or windows for an extended period of time, their feces can stain it. Typically this is not an issue because by the time they wander to houses, they are ready to take shelter in crevices. However, with the warm autumn, they have been more active than normal and will naturally be producing more feces. Though they are more invasive and in larger numbers than the brown marmorated stink bug I wrote about in a previous column, they do not stink when they are agitated.

The best way to control these critters is exclusion: make sure your window screens do not have any holes in them, put weather-strip

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From the Ground Up
Melissa Mattee



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