

One of Our Own

As many of you know, there was an accident involving a fire apparatus a few days ago. The apparatus was responding to a smoke alarm activation from a residence. The accident involved only one firefighter and apparatus. There were no other vehicles or persons involved.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief David Dyer



Bystanders witnessed the accident and a firefighter who was less than a minute behind the apparatus, called in the accident. When bystanders and firefighters arrived, they found a major accident and the firefighter in cardiac arrest. Immediately, the bystanders and firefighters on the scene went to work to revive the firefighter with CPR and the use of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED).

Additional firefighters and the ambulance service arrived on the scene to provide advanced life support. The firefighter regained a pulse and was later flown to Northeast Georgia Medical Center via helicopter for post cardiac arrest care. We are very happy to report that the firefighter is doing very well. He is awake and talking.

An incident involving a public safety worker such as a firefighter or police officer can be very stressful and emotional to the responders. We do not see these people as coworkers or associates. We see these people as family. When an accident occurs that involves your family, the feelings are very hard to describe. We have responded to many accidents but when you respond to an accident that involved one of your own, the entire outlook changes.

I am very proud and I think that the citizens of Union County should be proud of the response and how the responders performed under this high stress, emotional event. They were focused, controlled and did all that could be done to provide the best possible care. Their actions resulted in the good outcome of reviving a fel-

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2016 In Review

Pondering the events of the past year means revisiting the good, bad, and ugly. Before I attempt to make sense of it, let's review the history.

Sports are a good place to start. The Chicago Cubs clinched their first World Series title in 108 years. The Atlanta Braves finished the season well, leaving us optimistic about the first season in SunTrust Park. The U.S. won the most Olympic medals.

All Things New



In politics, Donald Trump outpiled Hillary Clinton to become President-Elect. The Presidents of Brazil and South Korea were impeached, but the President of Turkey remained after an attempted coup. Teresa May became Prime Minister of the UK after the Brexit vote. Taiwan's first female president Tsai Ing-wen famously called Mr. Trump.

Now for the bad. Targeting police became a thing in 2016. At least 64 officers were killed, including four Dallas officers ambushed while protecting those protesting against them.

Hurricane Matthew killed hundreds and left thousands homeless in Haiti. Wildfires raged in Appalachia and California. Drought contributed to the damage and deaths as Gatlinburg burned. Louisiana and West Virginia flooded. Earthquakes hit Ecuador, New Zealand, and Italy, killing hundreds. The Zika virus reared its ugly head.

The "axis of evil" stirred the pot. North Korea became a nuclear power, and Iran rushed to join the club. Iran captured ten U.S. sailors and their boats, and is allied with Russia in Syria. The U.S. paid \$400M to Iran.

The U.S. revealed ISIS killed 19,000 civilians since its beginning. Terrorists struck an Orlando club, Manhattan's Chelsea district, a Minnesota mall, and the Ohio State campus. Brussels, Paris, Istanbul, Cairo, and Berlin were attacked. Over 4000 died attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea to escape terrorism in North Africa and the Middle East.

God has already accounted for the good and bad that happen. Theologians call this Providence, which is God's activity to direct a fallen creation to accomplish His divine purpose. In-

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Commissioner's Questions

Q. We saw in the NGN last week that you had one of your volunteer firefighters injured. I also heard that one of your 911 Operators has been sick. Can you give me any information on either?

A1 - As you read in last week's NGN, David Burnette, Volunteer 1st Lieutenant for Station 2, suffered a serious heart problem on the way to a fire scene. He continues to improve daily and we are very thankful for his near miraculous recovery. Hopefully, he will be back home very soon. The family and the County very much appreciate everyone's involvement and assistance.

A2 - We have had one of our long-time E-911 operators, Brenda Abercrombie, that has also had a serious medical issue. Brenda has had lung problems for several years and was placed on the transplant list. On November 30th, she received a dual lung transplant. She has had some difficulties and had to be placed on a trach tube from December 8th until Dec 18th when she was moved to a regular room. She has passed the swallow test and is steadily improving, but she still has a long road to recovery. We appreciate all the well wishes and prayers for both of these individuals and feel very blessed to have both of them still with us.

Q. My grandmother recently ran off the highway in the fog on Blood Mountain. What do I have to do to request a guardrail be added?

A. When we have a request on a state highway such as this, I forward the request to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). They have a process to go through that can take some time. In this particular case, I had already checked on having guardrail installed in this location since several accidents have occurred there in the past, and GDOT is already in the process of working on it. They have since contacted me and we have provided them detailed drawings of this area along with a couple of other areas that might also need guardrail installed.

If it is a local county maintained road, you can make your request to the county Road Department at 706-439-6062.

Q. Are there particular guidelines required for guardrail

Q & A from Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris



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Teen Drug Experimentation

Half of all new drug users are under the age of 18. Experimentation plays the biggest role in teenage drug use, but experimentation is a fact of life and just because a teen has tried drugs or alcohol doesn't mean they will become an addict. It's more important to understand why some teens are tempted to experiment.

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.

The majority of adults with an addiction first experimented with drugs before they turned 21. The good news is that the rates of teenage drug abuse have been declining. But if you think your teen is using drugs, there are intervention programs and teen addiction treatment options available.

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Letters to the Editor...

Rep. Matt Gurtler

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the article on page one of the December 21 paper regarding Mr. Gurtler's speech thanking voters and his ideas for his first term. I was impressed with the way he conducted his campaign and he seems to be genuinely interested in the well being of our area and protecting us in the state legislature.

During his talk he promised to keep us informed about what was going on concerning local matters. My suggestion is that it would enhance the quality of your paper if you gave him space for a column where he could keep us informed just like Lamar does with his weekly questions column. It would not have to be weekly maybe once a month, but it would be a great way for him to reach out and keep us up to date with his activities.

Sincerely, Stewart Haslam

Living Library

Dear Editor,

Most communities -- large or small -- have their own library. Contained within those buildings is more knowledge than can be absorbed in dozens of lifetimes.

But, as good -- if not better -- than reading is speaking with, and learning about, older people.

In the Blairsville community, there are many two-legged libraries who, if approached properly, will open a few pages of their books of life. There was the little, old, white-haired man who sat alone in front of the Murphy Walmart, half asleep in the sun, waiting for this wife. He was wearing a USS NEVADA cap. When I encouraged him just a bit, he allowed that he'd been aboard that battleship in Pearl Harbor on the morning of December 7, 1941. He said that later he'd been aboard when they'd shelled Iwo Jima and again off Okinawa when they took a Kamikaze hit on the Number Two gun platform. Of the 21 men working that gun, he was the only survivor. He was blown twenty feet up the deck, knocked unconscious and awoke -- he didn't know how much later -- wearing only his shoes.

The other day, I spoke with a man who was waiting in line at Zaxby's, wearing a VIETNAM VETERAN cap. Come to find out that he had three -- 3 -- helicopters shot out from under him in VietNam and that he still carried shards of steel in his body.

Then there was the white-haired Grandma sitting watch over her newborn grandbaby in another local restaurant. She was waiting for her son and the rest of his family to join her. I learned that he had served in Iraq and, like so many others who'd been there, had paid a dear

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How a retired Firefighter saved his home and life in the Gatlinburg wildfire

The following is a first-hand testimony from a retired firefighter who survived the Gatlinburg fire because he had "Fire-wised" the home in anticipation of the fire that he knew would come eventually, and it finally happened on November 28.

RC&D Executive Director Frank Riley



The fire blazed all about him with a bush an inch from a 1,000-gallon propane tank flaming like a torch. David Loveland had just a hoe and a leaf blower; but, because he had spent years preparing for this wildfire, he also had a chance.

On the evening of Nov. 28 his wildfire knowledge likely saved his life and that of his wife, Kathaleen. The couple lived on a steep hill near Pigeon Forge. The next morning, four houses were still standing and more than 20 were burned down. That Loveland's home was one of the four is not happenstance. Loveland knew that he should have been long gone when the fire hit, but the television news that evening had indicated "there was nothing burning in town. So, the couple stayed for a while longer until they went outside and noticed the ridge above their home in the direction of Gatlinburg was on fire. They also spotted flying embers streaking overhead.

The couple got in the car and headed out the winding, narrow road only to find the way blocked by a tree that had fallen across it so they went back home. There was already no way out and the fire was just getting started. Homes dotting the top of the ridge were already ablaze, and residences below them were also on fire. A tree limb fell over the power lines, knocking out electricity to their home. Kathaleen raced about the home trying to get important items and documents together. He had a backup generator, but had a problem with it that he didn't know about until then. He had only the water pressure that was left in the hose, and needed that to protect the propane tank. That left Loveland with a leaf blower with three batteries, a hoe, and a powerless water hose. But, he was prepared and for 10 years he had been working to clear the brush on his property pulling dead branches and bushes away. His goal was to clear all three acres, but he hadn't gotten to the ridge yet, the difference between the un-cleared ridge and the cleared area was significant after the fire.

He had been trying to reduce the fuel-loading in the woods, and was trying to keep open space clear around the house. Mr. Loveland said, "We are bound to get a fire at some point; and, when it happens, I wanted to do everything I could do to reduce the intensity." His simple labor-intensive strategy saved the couple's lives.

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Country Boys

Hubert Brooks, William Shellnut and Tommy Trapp were lifelong friends of Paul and Bud Cummings. I have been told by my father and urole that the boys were always together and had been since any of them could remember.

William's mother had died when he was very young and his father had a difficult time raising his sons afterward. Paw Henry was a kind and gentle man, but, he worked all the time and the Cummings family had to help raise young William. My grandmother, Glenna Mae, loved to have William over to their house. Glenna Mae could not stand a dirty body and William's body was dirty simply because he was a boy and hated taking baths.

Spending the night at the Cummings house meant taking a bath in a big old washtub using lye soap. Glenna Mae would grab the boy by the hair of his head and scrub his ears and neck with a scrub brush. The boy would holler out, "Mom you are killing me". He acted as though he hated bathing. But, he secretly loved the attention he received from my grandmother. She loved William and could see that all he needed was a bath, some positive discipline and good home cooking.

Hubert Brooks and Tommy Trapp also spent a lot of time with their neighbors, Paul and Bud Cummings. The boys loved to camp out under the bluffs next to Turkey Creek on the Cummings Farm. Hubert was always very nervous and constantly had to be doing something.

He loved to camp, but, he was also afraid of the dark. One night Hubert, Tommy, Paul, Bud and William decided to camp out next to the creek. Their camp was next to a bold spring head. They laid their blankets between the fire and the limestone face of the bluff. The rock face of the bluff would absorb the heat from the fire and help keep the boys warm during the cool evening. The boys had plans for Hubert that evening.

The boys met at the Cummings house and when everyone had arrived Tommy began complaining of a stomach ache. So, he finally told the group he would not be camping that evening. The other four left and walked east across the cotton field toward Turkey Creek.

Tommy began walking north toward Trapptown. He let the boys get across the 200 yard wide cotton field and began to follow the group of four boys. The boys settled into their usual camp site and caught a few fish for supper. After supper they cleaned up the camp and settled in for the evening. It was just beginning to get dark when the fun began.

Tommy was on top of the 65 foot tall bluff and knew where Hubert was sitting. As the camp darkened Hubert began to get nervous and so he pulled out his pocket knife to whittle.

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Around The Farm Mickey Cummings



Poinsettia Care

The most popular flowering plant sold in the United States every year is the poinsettia. Though we mostly see these beautiful red, white or pink flowers around the holidays, they can actually make great houseplants year round!

Poinsettias were first introduced in the United States in 1828. Native to Mexico, the original wild poinsettia was much different from the large bush-like decorations we see today. The brightly colored foliage that are often considered flowers are actually brightly colored leaves called bracts. These bracts have evolved their bright coloration to attract pollinators to the true flowers, which are the small yellow bulbs in the center of the stalk. Poinsettias do not have any true petals.

Plants are available in a wide range of colors such as pink, marbled, speckled, yellow and even peach. The most popular, of course, are the red varieties, such as Prestige. If you want to try to keep your poinsettia as a house plant after the holidays, it is important to select a healthy one. Look for plants with fully matured and brightly colored bracts and rich green foliage all the way down the stems. Make sure the plant is balanced with each stalk growing uniformly. Finally, choose poinsettias whose yellow flowers in the center have not quite opened. This will ensure the bright foliage to last through the holidays.

After the holidays, poinsettias can still add beauty to your home. Place your plant in an area that has about six to eight hours of indirect sunlight each day. These plants do not do well in the sun and too much direct sunlight can bleach out their beautiful foliage. Poinsettias are extremely temperature sensitive and should not be placed near drafts or doorways that open outside. Try to avoid placing them near heating vents as well. Poinsettias hate extreme heat just as much as they hate extreme cold. They should never be exposed to temperatures below fifty degrees or above seventy degrees. Make sure the soil is consistently moist. Never let the potting mixture completely dry out, but do not let it sit in standing water either. Never fertilize a poinsettia that is in bloom.

When the bracts fade in March or April, cut the plant back to about eight inches. Keep it near a window with plenty of sunlight and water regularly. Only take the plant outdoors once nighttime temperatures are consistently above fifty degrees. Fertilize the plant about every two or three weeks during spring, summer and fall. A well balanced 10-10-10 mix provides plenty of nutrition. In June, transplant the poinsettia into a pot about two to four inches larger than its original container, depending on how much it has grown. The more organic matter contained in your potting mix, the happier your poinsettia will be!

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber Regina Allison



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From the Ground Up Melissa Mattee



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