

# Opinions

## Everybody has one

### Our law enforcement presence

Some folks were upset by our running the story of the murdered and tortured goat *Mercy* on the front page two weeks in a row.

The first week, we reported that *Mercy* had been stolen, later shot and killed and later maimed after her death.

We also mentioned that the Union County Sheriff's Office had secured warrants against a Hiwassee man for doing the dastardly deed.

The second week, we reported the capture of that person in Wilson County, Tenn. Also, we reported the arrests of two individuals deemed to be a party to the crime.

Some folks didn't approve of the story being run two weeks in a row on the front page. Some didn't approve of the facts being included in the story. Some thought we should have buried it on the inside of the paper.

I hear what you're saying, you don't want to make people side-step our county thinking that it is a bad community filled with bad people.

Folks, I do my best to put the community's best foot forward with our newspaper. But, sometimes there are stories that you have to run. If you don't run them, then the television stations from Atlanta come and report on those stories for you, giving you much more exposure than our 12,000-plus circulation.

Another example is last week, Blairsville Police Department Assistant Chief Michael Baxter gave chase after a vehicle ran past a stopped school bus letting school children off to meet their parents.

In the aftermath of that traffic stop, it turns out the driver was wanted in two states, one for manufacturing methamphetamine. The passenger was wanted in Gilmer and Fannin counties. Neither had a driver's license.

It also was learned that the two men were operating a rolling methamphetamine laboratory.

The good news is, Baxter stopped the two men, put them behind bars and protected our school children.

The bad news is, there's a story to tell about that, and it might put the community in a bad light. Well, you don't bury that story inside the newspaper, not after the job our officers did to put those individuals behind bars.

You see, we're fortunate enough to have Baxter patrolling his hometown. It's the second rolling meth lab he has busted since 2009. And this is a department without a drug dog.

Suffice it to say, news is news. The good news that should be reflected is that we have a top-notch law enforcement presence in Union County.

Those who murdered and tortured *Mercy* were brought to justice. It was our obligation to report the crime and report the solid police work done by our Sheriff's Office.

As for the rolling meth lab, Baxter was doing his job, making sure that drivers observe the stopped school buses, and allow our school children to exit them safely.

The aftermath of that traffic stop took two wanted men off the streets, and also took some serious and dangerous drugs off the streets and away from our children.

Some may not like what we report, but, we'd rather be the ones reporting it than the Atlanta television stations.

Bottom line, it should be just as positive a sign to newcomers that the law enforcement presence in Union County and Blairsville is a strong one. They fight crime with a passion.

And Assistant Chief Baxter should be commended for his solid police work. Be proud of the work our men and women in uniform do day in, day out. We are.

### STAR Students, STAR Teachers

It is with great pleasure that I announce the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting & STAR Presentation.

The event will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 19th at 11:45 a.m. at the Union County Community Center. Seating is limited and tickets are selling fast!

This year's event will feature a special performance by the Union County High School Chorus Ensemble and lunch will be provided by Cook's Restaurant. Attendees can look forward to our annual Chamber programs and statistics update which will highlight the top accomplishments of 2012 as well as exciting opportunities for 2013.

Each attendee will be the first to receive a complimentary copy of our brand new 2013 Community Magazine and Business Directory which features a variety of stories and resources for residents, newcomers, and visitors.

The Chamber is also proud to be the local sponsor of the STAR Student/Teacher program.

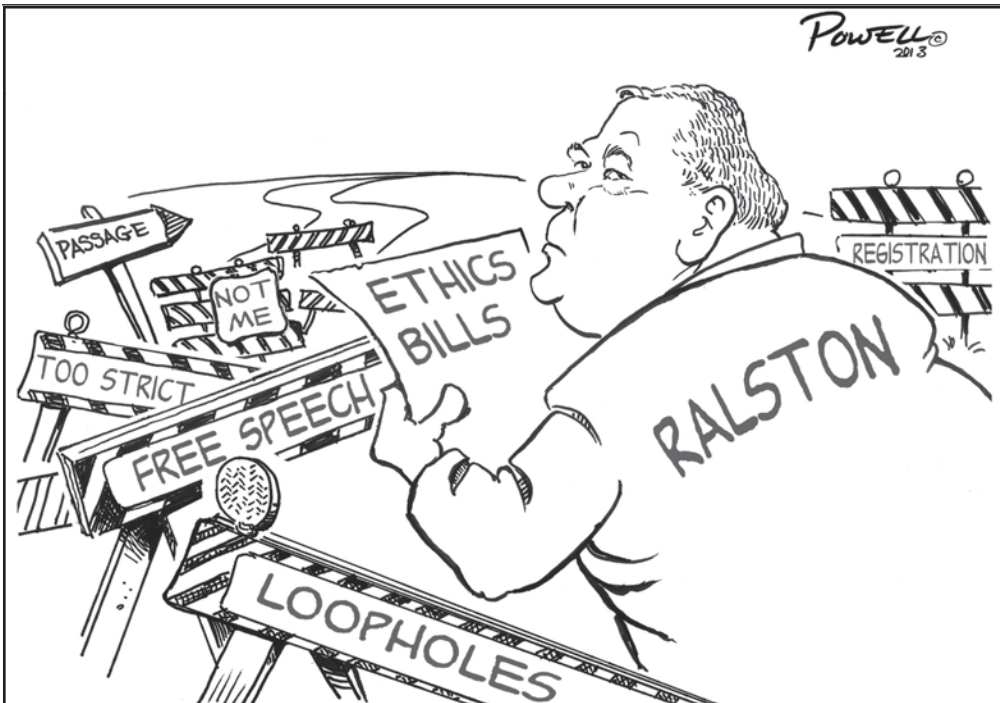
At this year's event we will recognize UCHS STAR Student, Nic Romano; UCHS STAR Teacher, Brett Chatham; Woody Gap STAR Student, Haley Aponte; and Woody Gap STAR Teacher, Gary Butler.

For those who are not familiar, the PAGE STAR program honors Georgia's outstanding high school seniors and the teachers who have been most instrumental in their academic development. To obtain the STAR nomination, high school students must have the highest score on a single test date on the three-part SAT and be in the top 10 percent of their class based on grade point average. Each high school STAR student is asked to name his/her STAR teacher.

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Charles Duncan  
Straight Shooting



### Life Is A Hit Parade

Do you have a game plan for your life? Do you know where your life came from? Do you know why you are here? Do you know where you are going when you leave here?

I am convinced that masses of people live and die without ever asking these questions.

They are clueless about life. They have no plan, no program and no purpose. They get through today without any plans for tomorrow.

Life for many is a hit or miss affair. It is unplanned, uncontrolled and aimless. Life has no meaning to "hit or miss" people. There is no rhyme or reason to their existence. Then there is a whole passel of people who believe that life is hitting it off.

For these individuals life is nothing more than finding a mate (mates) in life that you feel comfortable with and you reproduce yourself through offspring. For many marriage is the ultimate goal in life (or used to be). Of course, marriage is obsolete to much of the world.

They just find someone and "hit it off." They move in together or cohabitate. There is far more to life than matching up with a mate.

Although, God ordained marriage and mates - that is not the ultimate of life. I have also observed a large category of persons who believe you just hit the high spots of life. They don't show much interest in the day-to-day simple things of life. They are always jumping from one big event to another.

They look at life as a book. These folks would never dream of reading page after page. They scan books and life - interested only in "hitting the high spots." They totally miss the blessings of small things like birds, butterflies and babies.

I would classify another group of people as hit the jackpot folks. They live life waiting to get lucky or successful. "Today is the day that they are going to win the lottery and suddenly they will find the meaning of life." For those who wait on "hitting the jackpot" life will go to pot.

Over the course of my life I have encountered numerous people who didn't hit the ground running and seemed to get hit right between the eyes with poverty and poor circumstances.

As a result, many of these people feel sorry for themselves and really do not know where to turn and they just hit the road. They become

See Parris, page 5A

### The Spice of Life

A few years ago, just before my involvement (OK, obsession) with our Union County Farmers Market, I was introduced to the Farmers Market in Dallas, Texas. My sister and I were preparing for our Easter feast and we started our food acquisitions at this sprawling outdoor Market. Spring in Dallas can be hot, and this day was one of those burn, baby, burn days, right from the get-go. So, at 9 a.m., when I came upon a vendor selling sorbet, I stopped dead in my sweltering tracks.

Linn Madsen, of the Savoy Sorbet, had a couple of large portable coolers filled with homemade sorbet that were flavored with herbs. Blueberry Sage, Elderberry Wine, Chamomile Orange, Hibiscus Flower, Cinnamon Apple Brandy, Lemon Thyme Balm, Clove and Rosemary Rosé Wine were just some of the offerings. She encouraged us to sample any that we thought would positively provoke the taste buds. After getting a little more daring we settled on a small dish of Lavender and one of Rose Geranium. Scrumptious.

At the Farmers Market in Rutgers, N.J., you can buy one egg for \$30. An Ostrich Egg to be more specific. Expecting a crowd at your place for Sunday Brunch? One egg is the equivalent of two dozen chicken eggs, and it has a similar flavor and texture. Roaming Acres Farm even offers a recipe for Scotch Eggs, that delightful fare where the hard boiled egg is encrusted with sausage and then deep fried. This recipe calls for boiling the egg for an hour and a half and then deep frying it in a turkey fryer.

Looking for something more refreshing to indulge in? At the Sarasota Farmers Market, you can find the likes of worm tea. It's a natural tea brewed from worm castings like a sun tea. Ok, it's not as gross as you think. For one thing, you don't drink it. You spray it on your plants. The microbes in this concoction not only eat the bugs, they eat the bug eggs.

Somerville, N.J. was settled by the Dutch in 1754. Hard to tell what their outdoor markets sold 260 years ago, but this past season,

See Leone, page 5A



JoAnne Leone  
Farmers Market Moment

### Part 4: Stream Buffers

**Q. What types of streams do we have in Georgia?**

A. Whether you call flowing water a spring, creek, stream, or river, they are all classified as "state waters" and are sub-classified as trout streams or warm water streams. The many years I was involved with streams and stream buffers, we referred to the two types as "trout waters" and "state waters" which is the terminology I will use in these questions.

**Q. What is considered "trout water?"**

A. Generally, this means that if the water temperature of a stream or other streams and springs in the watershed, has a low enough temperature to support trout, it is considered trout waters by state law, whether or not it is large enough for trout to actually live in. The logic behind this in the law is that if the water eventually flows into a trout stream, it also needs protecting the same as the actual stream that supports trout.

**Q. What water temperature is necessary for trout to live in?**

A. Brook trout, our only native trout, and rainbow trout (native in the West), require water temperature below 68 degrees. Brown trout, native to Europe, require water between 60 degrees and 65 degrees.

**Q. Are there different laws that pertain to trout waters vs. state waters?**

A. Yes. Trout waters have a 50-foot wide vegetated state buffer on each side of all streams. State waters only have a 25-foot buffer.

**Q. What can be done within a stream buffer?**

A. You should do little, if any, land disturbance within this area. State law specifically prevents you from cutting all the trees that form a canopy over a stream. The shade of a tree helps prevent the water temperature from rising because of heat from the sun. Trees and other vegetation also provide protection of the smaller plant and insect life, which is necessary for the fish to feed on. These micro organisms also help maintain good water quality. State law does allow you, as a homeowner, to underbrush the area along a stream after all other land disturbing activity involved with construction is completed. Developers can not disturb the buffer at all. Heavy equipment is NOT allowed in a buffer.

**Q. How do you measure the stream buffer boundary?**

See Paris, page 5A

### The Swimming Hole

My grandfather, Columbus, was raised with a bunch of his cousins and friends just outside of Phil Campbell, Ala. in a little community called Trapptown.

The people of this little community were extremely close and they managed to enjoy life even though the country was in turmoil due to the Depression.

The boys of the family enjoyed playing baseball, fishing in the creek, coon hunting and in the summer time they swam at the mill pond on Cummings Creek.

Papa's younger brother, C.L., was affectionately called Poggy by everyone in the family. When Poggy was younger he stuttered and sometimes had a difficult time pronouncing words.

One evening while the family was sitting around the table for supper, Poggy began trying to get his brother's attention. Poggy wanted to tell Columbus something. Every time Poggy would try to say the name Columbus, all that would come out of his mouth was, "Co...Co...Co...Co..." Eventually, Poggy gave up. He looked at Columbus and said, "Aw shucks, Coon." The name and statement stuck and has become a part of our family's folklore. Everyone that was close to my grandfather called him Coon because of Poggy. The only time he was ever called Columbus was when his mother Laura was mad at him.

So, when Papa heard "Columbus" he automatically ducked.

During the 1930s parents were very conservative with their children. You never saw a girl wearing a pair of shorts. Young men and women didn't go on dates by themselves. Boys and girls didn't go swimming together.

The young people around the little community of Trapptown had different swimming times for the "Swimming Hole on Cummings Creek."

Actually, the boys didn't even wear bathing suits. So, the boys swam from 1:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.

After the boys left the girls would swim

See Cummings, page 5A

# Letters To the Editor

## Questions to answer

Dear Editor,

The Sandy Hook massacre of innocent children and the Colorado theater shooting were horrors beyond comprehension and almost everyone in America is asking why, and what can be done to prevent things like this from happening again.

I wish I had an answer but I don't. I also wish there was no evil in the world but there is.

Our president and some members of Congress and the Senate see the problem as guns and only guns. Sadly they are supported by a biased liberal media that thrives on sensation rather than logic and who are so enamored by this popular rock star of a president they will not ask any hard questions of him.

For these radical people I have very simple questions that, so far, no one has been able to answer with any logic. This whole new attack on the rights of gun owners by the liberals in Washington, DC was immediately implemented by those who believe that "no crises should go to waste" and they plan to use this crisis to the hilt to push their agenda.

My questions are as follows:

**Q.** If every single one of the new proposed gun violence laws had been in effect before the Sandy Hook massacre, would these laws have prevented it from happening?

A. NO.

**Q.** The same question for the Colorado theater shooting.

A. NO.

**Q.** Why do the locations with the strictest gun control laws have the highest gun violence cases while the locations with the fewest gun restrictions have the least?

A. The very strict laws don't work. Criminals don't obey the law.

**Q.** And finally, are the new laws being proposed really for the safety and protection of the U.S. citizen or is it just one more attempt to completely disarm the American people by chipping away at the Second Amendment one little piece at a time until it is null and void?

A. Only they can answer that question.

John Q. Adams III

## Such a tragedy

Dear Editor,

How terribly sad and pathetic that an individual has nothing better to do than to torment and kill a trusting, domesticated pet. My deepest sympathy goes out to Mr. and Mrs. Allen and I urge everyone, if you see abuse happening, whether it involves children, the elderly, or animals, speak up, intervene, ACT!

Judy Supinie  
Blairsville

## Some just like to complain

Dear Editor,

It seems some people just like to complain or perhaps they want ethics legislation to apply to everyone but themselves. Speaker Ralston has introduced real ethics reform as opposed to sham rules established by the Senate. In my opinion if you show up at the capitol once or twice during the legislative session, you are a citizen advocate. Show up more often and you are lobbying whether or not you are paid. Register and pay the fee.

Additionally both our State Representative and Senator are very accessible in the District in person or by phone or by email so it is not necessary to show up at the capitol to make your case. I regularly share my views on pending legislation with both Rep. Stephen Allison and Sen. Steve Gooch without spending the day under the Gold Dome.

I support Speaker Ralston's serious approach to ethics reform but apparently some just like to complain.

Patrick Malone  
Blairsville

## My dog was shot

Dear Editor,

On Feb. 2, a cold snowy day in Union County, my friend and I went hiking with our new 1-year-old dog, a Great Pyrenees. While we were hiking, the dog ran ahead, as he always has. Except this time, when he ran ahead, he didn't return or answer to any of our calls. We searched up and down the woods near the Nottely River, in full winter storm flow, but saw no sign of him.

My friend went back to the car while I continued searching the river bank. I came out downstream onto a farm on John Smith Road and spoke to a man there who told us he had not seen our dog, so I went on my way. I had only gone a short distance when I found my dog, shot, and thrown under some bushes. The dog's collar had been removed.

On February 4, I returned to the farm with the Union County Animal Control officer and we were able to retrieve the dog and bury him.

In my heart, I can see the eyes of this beautiful Great Pyrenees dog, the prettiest dog I have ever seen. He was the most loving animal I ever encountered. Our hearts are broken.

It's too late for our beautiful dog, but this senseless cruelty and murder should be stopped. Please, before you shoot an animal, stop and take time to think. The animal may be someone's treasured and much loved companion.

Daniel Kees

## The price is rising

Dear Editor,

Just as with other collectibles, the value of certain firearms has doubled - even tripled, or more - since Obama was first elected in 2008

See Mitchell, page 5A

## North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m.

Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - 1 Year \$35.00. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 10, 1987 at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. Advertising and subscriptions can be paid by cash, check or credit card. Phone: (706) 745-6343 Fax: (706) 745-1830; Location: 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, GA