

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Local gas prices need adjustment

I had to go to Atlanta on Saturday, so I got a good look at the gas prices in neighboring counties.

I did an almost 360 in terms of driving. I headed down to the ATL on Georgia 515. I bought gasoline in Blue Ridge. The reason: the price was right at \$3.41 a gallon.

That price was mirrored in Jasper and Canton. Ellijay comes in at \$3.38 a gallon.

The price in the ATL was \$3.69 a gallon. Of course, that's because they have to sell the blend that's environmentally friendly.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



On my return, I missed my exit onto I-75, meaning, I'd be coming back on Georgia 400. Yes, I went through Forsyth County, where gas is \$3.46 a gallon, Dawson County came in at \$3.45 a gallon, and Dahlonega is \$3.49 a gallon.

What's wrong with this picture? Well, the good folks in Union County are paying between \$3.55 a gallon and \$3.59 a gallon.

Now the old story goes that the reason gas is so much higher in Blairsville is that they have to truck the fuel so far up here. Well, Hiawassee isn't any closer, and the routes to Towns County are even more tricky than Union County. Then explain why gas is \$3.49 a gallon in Hiawassee.

To be honest, the only explanation is that gas distributors in Blairsville aren't paying attention to gas prices in neighboring counties.

I can tell you that gas prices in Rabun County are \$3.44 a gallon, and last time I checked, it's not an easy ride up to Clayton, Rabun Gap, Mountain City or Dillard.

No, I'm not sure what's up with gas prices in Blairsville. One thing I do know is that the local gas stations keep up with the price of gasoline in Union County and adjust accordingly.

Well, it's time they kept up with the price of gasoline in neighboring counties. The reasoning: Everyone that lives here doesn't just stay in Union County.

We have trips that we have to make outside the county and we aren't blind to the fact that gas prices are cheaper just across the county line.

I know the popular theme of the day is buy local. Well, now that I know the gas prices in neighboring counties, I know I can drive to Blue Ridge and still save money.

I might also stop at Taco Bell in Blue Ridge, Burger King in Blue Ridge, CVS in Blue Ridge, and Ingles in Blue Ridge.

That's because the usual places where I buy gas in Union County aren't complying with the common courtesy of keeping prices in check with neighboring counties.

Times are tough enough without taking it out on our locals by keeping gas prices inflated. I say they're inflated because, judging by the prices in neighboring counties, yes, they are inflated.

Oh, and, what are gas prices in Cleveland, in neighboring White County? Well, they're \$3.49 a gallon.

So, there you have it. The circle around our fair community is complete. Gas prices at the local level should at the very least stay in competition with gas prices in our two closest counties, Towns and Fannin.

Yes, I believe in buy local, but I also believe in making sure that locals get a fair shake on what they're having to pay out of pocket.

I would love an explanation about the difference in local gas prices and those in Ellijay, Blue Ridge and Hiawassee.

I'd love to see local gas prices be fair.

The Path of Life

Being born in rural Fannin County, super highways, interstates, or even paved roads were uncommon to me in my early childhood. I was more accustomed and acquainted with "paths" than I was with roads or highways. To get from one place to another, even though there were graveled roads, usually, there would be a "path" or a "trail" that was a short cut to where you were going. Most of these paths were well worn and well traveled by persons and animals. They were narrow and not accessible for wagons and cars. They were for walking.

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Now-a-days we have well defined paved, concrete, or dirt-smooth walking trails. These paths are beneficial to the well being of our fast paced whirling world. As a bare footed little ole boy, I was a frequent traveler on the path to "Luther White's Country Store." I was a big spender, purchasing "bubble gum", "dopes", penny candy and ice cream. I kept that path beaten down. The paths to my grandparents, aunts and uncles and to my friend's houses were kept "hot" with my brothers and sisters and cousins. Then there were paths to our favorite fishing and swimming holes: paths to the springhouse and to the one room school house and church house. Anyone who grew up in the country will never forget that most important path to the outhouse. I can still visualize walking, running, and skipping along those paths and trails of my boy hood.

These paths were not noisy, nor crowded. They were inviting and interesting. You could stop along the way and eat a hand full of blackberries, or fox grapes. You could see some of the most beautiful sites observing butterflies, watching squirrels, rabbits, and animals of all kinds. You could observe first hand the blossoms of a cherry tree, pear tree or apple tree. Even climb one and sit-a-spell if you felt so inclined. You could examine the changes of God's creation from blossoms and blooms to full grown flowers and leaves, the turning of those to brilliant autumn colors and falling back to earth. Those trees that were once fully clothed in glorious beauty now looked like naked ghosts until a winter snow clothed them in purity

See Parris, page 5A

Keeping Union Beautiful

Q. We haven't heard anything about the litter situation in a while. Can you tell us about efforts in the county to curb littering?

A. I am happy to report that we are receiving fewer complaints about litter than at any time in the 12 years I have been in office. We are continuing to do everything we can to control the litter situation. We have public displays at the courthouse. Education in the schools continues and hopefully more of our citizens are realizing the need to keep our county looking beautiful.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Q. Can littering impact jobs in our county?
A. It certainly can. The general appearance of our county is very important. Those people driving through our county or being shown property by real estate agents or a business looking for a place to relocate certainly consider our beauty in making their decisions. The house you get to build is because another person has realized how wonderful our county is to live in and keeping it looking beautiful is a responsibility we all share. The job lost because of littering may be your own if you are guilty of littering.

Often littering is not simply throwing your trash out the window. Much of it blows out of pickup beds. While we may be well intentioned in just throwing trash in the back of a pickup that is uncovered, it normally blows out on the highway.

Q. Do you still have an Adopt-a-Road program?
A. We certainly do. There are currently 35 miles of roads in the county that are picked up by these volunteers. They do a great job, but we need more folks.

Q. What is required to be an Adopt-a-Road volunteer?
A. Any civic-minded organization, such as civic clubs, youth organizations, school groups, businesses, or individuals, etc., can adopt a stretch of county road (one-mile minimum) in their community. Among other requirements, the adopting organization or individual must adopt a minimum of one mile, must pick up litter at least once per quarter and must complete Adopt a Road status reports after each pickup. If you are interested in becoming an Adopt-a-Road volunteer you can contact the Commissioner's Office for more information. Besides good exercise, it just "makes you feel good"!

Q. Do you receive reports from these Adopt-a-Road groups regarding our litter?
See Paris, page 5A

8 Simple Tips To Get Your Business Noticed

One of the primary goals of our Chamber of Commerce is business education which leads to business growth. Over the years, I have been fortunate to hear numerous speakers share a wealth of information on business marketing. This week I want to share a few key points that stand out to me in regard to getting your business noticed.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



1. **Use Social Media** - Although these are sometimes dreaded words, social media offers unique opportunities to reach broad audiences. Build business connections on LinkedIn or try posting your next event on facebook. Do not let it overwhelm you, but be aware of the key offerings of social media.

2. **Be A Source Of Information** - That's right. Do not be stingy with what you know. Teach others about your area of expertise. One of the best ways to win their confidence and their future business is to teach them something beneficial.

3. **Connect With Other Business Owners** - Call it networking or call it therapy, either way, you will need mentors and partners along the way. Make an effort to connect with others who share a passion for business.

4. **Develop Relationships With Your Customers** - Treat your customers like friends rather than a source of money. Greet them warmly, ask about their interests, and make special recommendations just for them.
See Williams, page 5A

Planting the Seeds for this Market Season

Late last week, a committee of eight met at the Canning factory to begin plans for the 2013 season of the Union County Farmers Market. The anticipation that most of you feel about the first tomatoes of the season, or getting back to meeting and greeting everyone in town on Saturday mornings is greatly tempered for those of us who take all the logistics of the Market under advisement.

Our Market continues to grow, and with growth comes challenges. We discussed parking and traffic issues, where to hang your purse and your purchases while visiting the restrooms, bumping up the Tuesday night attendance, and where to put all the vendors.

We confer about abiding to the regulations of the Agriculture Department, imposing our own strict policy that all produce be locally grown by the farmer selling it, distinguishing between a yard sale vendor and a flea market vendor at Trash and Treasures and enforcing the "no pet" rule. (We've concurred that people continue to bring their pets to the Market because they don't consider them pets; they think of them as their children. None the less, they can't be at the Market, even if they are small enough to fit in your purse.)

Events at the Market are scheduled including pre-season favorites like the Native Plant Sale, Ramp Festival, Garden Plant Sale and Strawberry Jubilee. There's dialog regarding collaboration with other organizations to bring you the Green Bean Festival, a bigger and better Tractor Parade and Tai Chi exercises in front of the Canning Plant every week.

We need a painted pedestrian walkway, picnic tables at more convenient locations to
See Leone, page 5A



Trash and Treasures opens at the Farmers Market April 11th

Trash and Treasures is the Friday morning opportunity to find someone who will pay us 10 cents on a dollar for our "trash". And then it becomes their treasure. It's time to get ready to sell your stuff and there is no better place to do it than the Farmers Market on Friday mornings.

This will be the third season for Trash and Treasures at the Union County Farmers Market. Because of how it has evolved, there will be some changes to policies and how they'll be administered, allowing those shopping, as well as those selling, a more defined experience. This season we will be designating areas for those "occasional sellers" who truly have their own yard sale stuff to divest of. Then another area will be assigned for those who have made a hobby (and maybe even eek out a living) by reselling items they've purchased, either in bulk or at other yard or estate sales, including antique dealers.

A third area will be designated for crafters and artisans. Last year, there were a few crafters who found that they had much good fortune selling their items at the Market. Because the Saturday Market has more produce related vendors each year, fewer crafters have an opportunity to sell there. This Friday venue still gives them excellent exposure to the public to sell their works. We think the public will also enjoy the fact that there is a mini craft show every Friday morning from April through October, as well.

What won't change is the rental for the booth space. It is still a deal at only \$10 for a 10x18 covered stall. The Market promotes it for you, supplies the bathrooms and gives you ample parking. Last year, we averaged over 1100 shoppers each Friday from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. That's a lot more exposure to your "trash" than you can get directed to your home on your cul-de-sac, 8 miles outside of town. All stalls will still be at a first come-first serve basis, though you will have to choose a stall in your designated area in order to comply with the new policies. And as always, there are no pets allowed on the Market property.

As Spring rolls in, and you start to clean out the basement, the attic, the garage and your cabinets, start to box it up, borrow a couple folding tables and bring it on over to Trash and Treasures starting Friday, April 12th.
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Uncle Bud and Retus

When Uncle Bud was a senior in high school he turned down a football scholarship to play college ball at Auburn for Shug Jordan. Bud told everyone, "If I can't play for the Bear, I just won't play."

So, upon graduation Uncle Bud landed a job with the Tennessee River Paper Company.

Bud worked all over North Alabama, northern Mississippi and western Tennessee planting pine trees and managing pine forests. Uncle Bud knew a lot about the woods and he soon learned a great deal about the economics of growing trees. He was also a steady and hard worker. It was only a short time before the management of the Tennessee River Paper Company took notice of Bud Cummings.

Just a few years after he was hired Bud was promoted to Wood Yard Manager at the Delmar Woodyard. This woodyard was a buying point for the purchasing of pine logs. Logging companies would drive their logging trucks laden with logs to the Delmar Woodyard and sell the logs to the Tennessee River Paper Company.

Uncle Bud's job was to inspect and grade the logs. Through this job, Bud, was able to meet all kinds of loggers from across the area. One day he met Retus Brooks. Retus was a friendly enough fellow. He was quiet and reserved. But, he was all business and worked 10-12 hours per day. Long days are typical for loggers. They work when they can because you never know when a rainy period will set you back for a number of days. So, Retus was hard working at least until Friday afternoons.

The first Friday after Retus and Uncle Bud had met was strange. Bud noticed a change in the behavior of Retus from earlier in the week. Retus came into the woodyard and he was more talkative and outgoing than he had been all week. Bud said that he figured out why when he got close enough to Retus to smell the alcohol on his breath.

Bud soon learned that every Friday Retus brought a pint of moonshine to work and sipped on it all day. By the time he got to the woodyard around 3 p.m. with his logs Retus was feeling fine.

Bud said, "At first the drinking of Retus didn't bother me. But, over the years I noticed a change in Retus. The sipping of a little moonshine soon turned to drinking a lot of moonshine.

Retus got so friendly that he would even run his hands into your coat pockets and pilfer the contents. If he found a candy bar he would

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Letters to the Editor ...

Proof in the pudding

Dear Editor,

Regarding today's letters:
If my letter encouraged regarding ESPLOST conversation and debate, so much the better.

Let's see if property taxes continue to rise in spite of ESPLOST and all the erstwhile commentary to the contrary. As my Dad used to say, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating."
George Mitchell, Blairsville

Come join us

Dear Editor,

The Union County Board of Education and Administration would like to thank all of the voters who turned out for the ESPLOST election.

We would also like to thank Jason Karnes, Jim Williams, Mickey Cummings, Misti Dockery and the members of the Citizens for Excellence in Education for their organized support and proactive communication during the last few months.

Based on the proposed projects, the students of Union County have the potential to benefit in academics, arts and athletics.

The Union County Board of Education will host an Open Forum to receive input regarding the ESPLOST priorities on Thursday, April 11 at 6 p.m. in the high school cafeteria. All citizens are encouraged to attend and provide feedback.

Union County Board of Education

A blessed community

Dear Editor,

The task of helping our school board keep taxes in check is complete.

Congratulations to the Union County citizens, our schools, our teachers, support personnel and above all, our children. When I was growing up in Union County, the school system had few resources for the children.

But I remember citizens like D.L. Martin, Ray Rogers, and others, many now deceased, that donated money, hard work and supported all of us kids and the school system when there was no sales tax.

This community has a history of help-

See Paris Letter, page 5A

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