

Opinions

Everybody has one...

I'll recommend Ray

We all know that Gail Thaxton loves North Georgia Technical College. After more than 40 years in education, NGTC President Dr. Gail Thaxton announced her retirement, effective Aug. 1.

Dr. Thaxton has served at NGTC since 2012 when she moved to Habersham County from Waycross, after serving as president of Okefenokee Technical College since 2005.

We all know that she loves North Georgia Tech with a passion. "This decision has been very difficult as I love North Georgia Tech - the students, faculty and staff, campus, and the work," said Dr. Thaxton on Thursday, May 19, when her decision was announced to the campus. "I still enjoy coming to work every morning and doing what we do to support students. Serving as president of North Georgia Tech is the pinnacle of a long and rewarding career in education. The future of North Georgia Tech is full of potential."

Technical College System of Georgia Commissioner Gretchen Corbin announced that she will recommend Dr. Mark Ivester, current NGTC Vice President of Economic Development, be appointed as the next president of North Georgia Technical College at the next TCSG State Board meeting on June 2.

I'm going to step out on a limb here. I know someone that would make the perfect choice as NGTC's next president, Dr. Ray Perren.

Dr. Perren is the president of Lanier Technical College. He's also one of the most renowned technical college presidents in the nation. He has ties to our neck of the woods. His identical twin Roy Perren is the Facilities Management Director for Towns County Schools, and a Blue Ridge Mountain EMC board member.

Both men are class acts. With this in mind, I contacted Gov. Nathan Deal and made the recommendation of Dr. Ray Perren as the next NGTC president.

Dr. Ray Perren recently testified before Congress about the need to put more emphasis on the technical college system to help relieve the nation's shortage of skilled labor.

Dr. Thaxton's last day at NGTC is July 31, and a retirement reception will soon be announced. We all love Gail.

With that being said, I'm effectively lobbying for Dr. Ray Perren, as NGTC president, even though he didn't ask me to. Gov. Deal, we wouldn't mind seeing double in the mountains.

Straight Shooting



Charles Duncan

Perspective on the News

This is a word of encouragement to those who read and grieve the news of the day. Much of it troubles those of us who hold a Christian worldview, but we must avoid the slippery slopes of a hopeless response. Without naming particular issues, let's stipulate that the headlines that cause us to utter under our breath "God help us," are usually about morality, leadership, economics, and terrorism. The Bible speaks to all of these; after all, it is the user's manual for the human existence.

So many of an individual's and a nation's troubles are self-inflicted when they call "good" what God said is sin.

We pray for godly leadership, men and women that are humble enough to know their place and their limitations, and are willing to seek divine wisdom.

The Bible speaks plainly about economics, not the least of which is "the borrower is the lender's slave" (Pr. 22:7). The less national debt we have, the more free we are.

Torturing, maiming, and killing people including children to advance an ideology is evil, and should be confronted. Who will advance the cause of freedom for the oppressed and persecuted victims of terrorism, and keep it from washing up on our shores?

It is hopeless to give in to the "fight-or-flight" response. To become bitter and angry or to deny and ignore the issues of the day will distract you from the perspective that Jesus offers to his followers. He said the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that "grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches," and "like leaven which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened" (Lk. 13:19, 21). God's kingdom advances slowly and purposefully and someday His rule will cover the world.

We can trust God to accomplish his purposes despite the news of the day. The wickedness of our age creates cultural refugees looking for rest, provision, and peace. Our Father offers a safe place for the soul to anyone who seeks Him.

Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." As we utter those words, may the One who is mighty to save put today's news into His perspective for us.

All Things New



Wayne Fowler

Commissioner's Questions

Q. How did you get the scrap metal from an old billboard cleaned up along the side of the Murphy Hwy (Jack Lance Memorial Hwy)?

A. Working with our Building and Development office and the property owner, everyone reached an agreement to remove the debris which could have been a safety hazard, as well as an eyesore. We appreciate the property owner working with the county to get it cleaned up.

Q. When the Young Harris Hwy. (Hwy. 515 E) is widened, will there be a sewer line extended from Blairsville?

A. Union County does not have sewer, as that is controlled by the City of Blairsville. However, once work begins on the highway, and assuming GDOT will have funds to assist with utility work, the city is planning on extending the city sewer.

Q. When will work begin on the Young Harris Highway widening project?

A. The last word I heard on this was that GDOT would begin purchasing R/W the latter half of this year and next year, allowing through 2017 for that work. Then another year (2018) to hopefully clear all the environmental permitting as there is a stream along most of the highway route. To complete the final design, bidding, and construction could last an additional two to three years with possible completion in 2021 or 2022. This is a State of Georgia Highway project and the county has no input into the project or construction.

Q. When will the playground at Potete Creek be completed?

A. This is the playground that was originally at Meeks Park and was to be moved to Potete Creek in order to make way for the new playground at Meeks Park. A crew from Carlton Colwell Detention Center has been working on this for us between showers and other projects. We planned to have it ready by the start of camping season, which is right now upon us. The project should be completed within the next two weeks, if not sooner.

Q. Is Lake Nottely at full pool yet this year?

A. Yes and no. As of Friday, May 20th, the lake is at 1775.3
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Q & A from Union County Commissioner



Lamar Paris

Letters to the Editor...

Think before you vote!

Dear Editor,

A financial term that you've probably never heard is the concept of "The Velocity of Money". This is a term that refers to the speed at which money moves through the economy. The faster the speed, the more the economy thrives. The way this affects most of us in the lower and middle classes is when we get a raise we increase our spending. This stimulates the economy whereas if you give the very wealthy an increase, like through a tax cut, they invest the extra money since they already have most everything they want. This may put more money in the pocket of a Wall Street broker but then he falls in that very wealthy category too so nothing would be gained. This is why the Reaganomics failed policy of "trickle down" economics didn't work. So remember when you vote, that generally the progressive side of the political spectrum favors increasing wages and taxes especially on the wealthy, whereas the conservative side wants to cut taxes on the wealthy and cut social benefits for the average person to pay for this tax cuts for the wealthy. Think before you vote!

Lue Elder

In God We Trust

Dear Editor,

It seems some letter writers have a problem with the religious tone of some letters. Some have said they shouldn't be in the paper because they're not "news."

It's true they are not news. They are readers opinions, just like mine is. Let me be specific. As a Christian we are mandated by Christ to be His disciples. Matthew 28: 18-20 is very specific about that. Read it and maybe you'll understand. If you don't believe our country needs Christ more than ever before, be sure you clean the sand out of your ears when you pull your head out.

A while back one writer opined our country was not founded on religious principles. Please allow me to give him and everyone else some quotes from our Founding Fathers:

George Washington in his farewell address: "Of all dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality cannot be maintained without religion." John Adams: "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people." Benjamin Franklin: "I believe in one God, the Creator of the universe, That He governs it by His providence. That He ought to be worshipped." Thomas Jefferson: "...in which God has united us all."

Finally, it was no idle gesture when the Founding Fathers adopted the national motto, "In God We Trust."

Chris Crawford, Blairsville

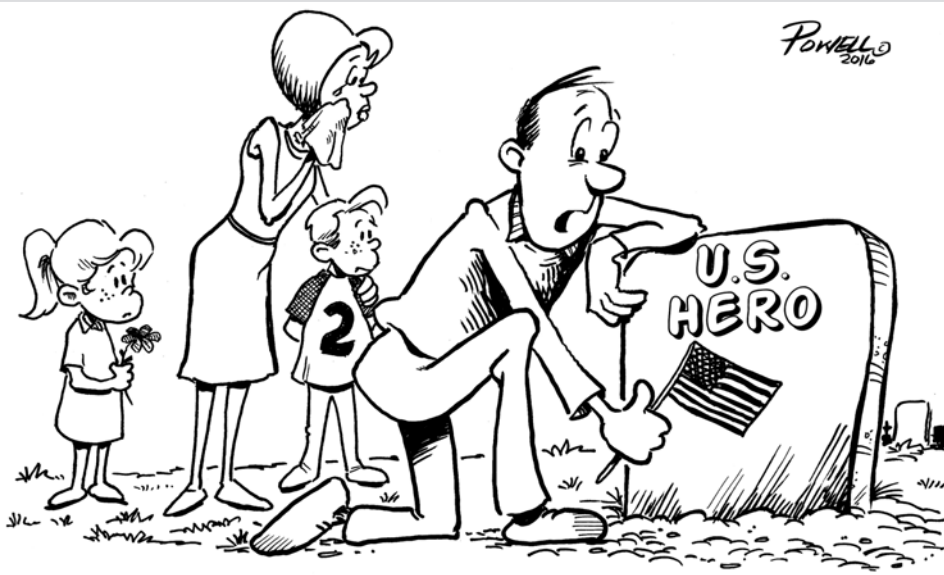
It's not about bathrooms

Dear Editor,

Bathrooms in America are not a problem. Bathrooms are needed so that people in public and private facilities have an appropriate way to relieve themselves and/or freshen up. Bathrooms are never intended to be party rooms or community gathering places. Men/Women facilities currently already fill the needed role for bathrooms.

The "problem" of transgender and other people "needing" to use whichever bathroom they wish is, quite simply, fiction. The ruckus over current bathroom standards is a mechanism to disrupt and confuse, and is the equivalent of releasing a bull in a china shop. This mechanism is not a new one by our current administration. Here are a few more examples: 1) "Benghazi was all about a hateful video"; 2) "The lack of free birth control for everybody is a war on women"; and 3) "The police acted stupidly." All of these fictions served only to disrupt and distract; and it's time for America to stop being so divisible. America can continue to exist only if we work with what is true, and reject all that is fiction.

Dr. Beverly B. Chaussy



"You didn't forget us. We can't forget you."

Crash Victim Extrication

In late April, firefighters of Union County Fire Department completed the Crash Victim Extrication class conducted by Georgia Emergency Management & Homeland Security Agency (GEMHSA). The class provides training on how to safely extricate victims who have been involved in a motor vehicle accident. The class description provided by GEMHSA states that the 16-hour course teaches the basics of crash victim extrication from a vehicle by use of basic hand tools, hydraulic equipment, and other associated rescue equipment. Emphasis is placed on the safety of the rescuer and the victim. The course is 75 percent hands-on and includes on-scene exercises.

The first part of the class involves classroom lectures on the GEMHSA required tools needed for crash victim extrication. These tools range from simple hand tools to the complex hydraulic power tools. The lectures continued to review the anatomy of automobiles and the various safety features of the vehicles. These safety features include body styles, reinforced areas of the vehicle and multiple air bags. Firefighters must be very familiar with the anatomy and safety features before they begin to cut any part of the vehicle with the tools. If certain safety features, such as airbags, are cut in the wrong places, it can be very dangerous for firefighters and crash victims.

The class also reviews the latest automobiles with alternate fuel sources. Vehicles can now operate on compressed natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, electricity, and there are various hybrid models, which run on a combination of alternate fuels. Firefighters must be familiar with each vehicle's different features. These features can be very different depending on the year, make and model.

The next part of the class is all hands-on. This is the best part of the class for the firefighters. The hands-on part of the class involves going to the junk yard and practicing cutting up vehicles with the tools. The firefighters are divided into teams and each team is given a vehicle to practice what they have learned. The training begins with techniques on how to stabilize a vehicle that has been involved in an accident. The vehicle involved in an accident may be unstable, on its side, or on its top. Firefighters must learn how to stabilize it before they can extricate the victims. Firefighters are then shown how to use the various extrications tools. They begin with hand tools then move to the hydraulic power tools. The hydraulic power tools are the most utilized tools because of their power and speed. Essentially, firefighters are taught how to remove the damaged or wrecked vehicle away from the patient in order to get them out.

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief



David Dyer

Hootie and Old John

Hootie was a likable fellow who loved to make people smile. He enjoyed telling stories and looking important. He always enjoyed being in the limelight. This man was a person, which would give the shirt off of his back to help another person. But, sometimes his stories would become exaggerated with age.

For example, a fish he caught as a boy grew nearly 5 inches during his lifetime. An old boar coon he and his daddy caught years earlier had increased by 10 pounds as Hootie aged. His favorite coonhound, which was just an average dog when living, had become a world-beater during Hootie's senior years.

According to Hootie he even walked to and from school in 10 inches of snow and it was uphill both ways.

But, there was another side to this storytelling old man. Once a family down the holler from Hootie had some trouble. Old man Mitchell broke his leg and couldn't plow his mules to break up the ground for spring planting. Hootie showed up at the Mitchell Farm to break the land for the family and wouldn't take any payment for his service. Later in his life our storyteller cut firewood for the young family of a fellow named Homer. Homer was laid up sick in the dead of winter and Hootie's efforts kept the family from freezing. Hootie was always the first person to show up and the last to leave when workdays were held at the church house.

But, later in life Hootie developed some problems of his own. He had trouble with one of his legs that necessitated his use of a crutch. This resulted in a real slowdown to his escapades in the woods. Hootie's wife became ill and passed away while one of his sons ran into some legal trouble resulting in his incarceration. However, the man's demeanor never changed. He still spent his time smiling, telling stories and trying to help others.

There was another man in the community called Old John. John, like Hootie, was an outdoorsman. He loved fishing and hunting. But, John was a person who always thought he had to be the best at everything.

Unlike Hootie, John's version of the story always revealed that he wanted to be better than everyone else. So, if your coonhound treed 45 coons last winter then John's would have treed 46. Or if you killed a 6-point buck, John would kill a 7-pointer. But, these weren't stories John always did better than anyone else. And he enjoyed letting you know that he was better than you.

Old John was especially hard on Hootie. All the old men would gather down at the little country store and begin telling stories. Hootie would get started telling a tale and Old John

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Around The Farm



Mickey Cummings

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison

Memorial Day weekend activities

Memorial Day weekend is packed with many fun activities in our community. Before I highlight the events, I want to take a minute to honor the men and women in uniform who have paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

We owe them a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. My prayer is that people in our country remember not to take our freedom for granted. It was not something handed to us but something, we as a nation, had to stand and fight for. It was paid for in the lives of many, and through the years, the significance of that has often times been overlooked. In today's world, people get caught up in their daily lives and they do not often stop and think about the sacrifices of the men and women in our military and their families. They have endured so much so that we can remain a nation that is free. If you see a member of the military, whether active or retired, please remember to stop and thank them for their service.

In honor of the men and women in uniform, the weekend's events kick off with the annual Memorial Day Parade which begins at 10 a.m. Remember to get your spot on the parade route early as the streets close 15-20 minutes prior to the parade. Following the parade, the annual Memorial Day Ceremony will be held at the War Memorial.

The Spring Arts, Crafts, and Music Festival will be held on the square in downtown Blairsville. There will be over 60 vendors on site.

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Azalea and Camellia Leaf Galls

The cool, moist weather we've been having has brought on a new problem that we need to be on the lookout for in our gardens: azalea and camellia leaf galls. Unlike some galls, these are not caused by insects, but instead are a symptom of a fungal infection with an Exobasidium fungus. Though these galls usually pop up in the spring to some extent, this is an exceptionally bad year for them. This means that even though you may have never experienced this before, you should still be on the lookout for it.

These galls are green or sometimes pink and look like marshmallows dangling from branches. The fungus responsible for these unsightly growths in azaleas is called Exobasidium vaccinii and it can also infect other closely related ornamentals such as rhododendrons. Though these growths look ugly and harmful, they typically will not kill the plant. In fact, a common name for them is "pinkster apples" because people used to eat them. However, I wouldn't recommend that, seeing as how rhododendrons are poisonous and I've heard the azalea galls don't taste very good at all! In camellias, infection with Exobasidium camelliae causes abnormal, pale green, fleshy leaves at the tips of branches.

You will typically see leaf galls form just after flowering and spring green up. Eventually, if the galls are not removed, they will turn white and look powdery as the fungus forms its spores and will finally turn brown as the plant tissue dies later in the summer. Once the spores are produced, they are spread by the wind and by water droplets bouncing on the affected branches. They can spread from branch to branch and plant to plant. Once the gall turns brown and hardens, it will drop off and if it remains close to the plant, it can be a source of fungal infection for next year's growth. The fungus can also remain dormant in leaf tissues that seem otherwise unaffected, as well as underneath bud scales on stems.

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UGA extension From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee