

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Hustle and bustle

If you went through Union County on Saturday, hopefully, you would believe your eyes.

This county was clicking on all eight cylinders.

From the grand opening of the Union County Farmers Market early Saturday, to the Kids Fishing Rodeo at Vogel State Park, to the open houses at Fire Stations 3 and 4 and whew, yes, the Scottish Festival and Highlands Games at Meeks Park, the county was smoking hot in terms of tourists and buying local.

At the Farmers Market, it was like a throwback to the days when farmers used to come to town on the weekends with a truckload of produce for sale.

People used to line up, especially if a truckload of produce included watermelons and cantaloupes. Some folks fixed up small baskets of apples, peaches or tomatoes.

You could take your pick at the Farmers Market on Saturday on Old Smokey Road. Early potatoes were a hot item. I believe they sold several bushels. Everybody likes potatoes.

On Saturday, I don't think I've ever seen so many local farmers beaming with as much pride as they did at the Union County Farmers Market. Constructed with Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax dollars, the Farmers Market provides a place for local farmers to sell their produce and for once, make a profit.

Up at Vogel State Park, there were a bushel of young children just a smiling like they had found a bucket of money. They did, with a long stringer of rainbow trout and they learned a valuable lesson in conservation.

At the fire station open houses at stations 3 and 4, the county opened its doors, showed what our firefighters are capable of and, yes, dished out a few hamburgers and hot dogs with the fixings.

At the Scottish Festival, Union County Fire Chief Charles Worden compared the foot traffic at the event to ants swarming out of an anthill.

At the Union County Arena, a Barrel Racing championship was taking place, and low and behold, it didn't even get covered. Sorry folks, if you want coverage of the event, just drop me a line at editor@nganews.com and we'll get somebody out there.

All this going on and we've got a hiker in duress at the top of Slaughter Gap in Suches. Unfortunately, Lance Beckman of Macon was out of reach of rescuers. He died at the top of Slaughter Gap in the arms of his 16-year-old son.

I guess what I'm trying to say is, Union County was a very busy community this weekend. We pulled out all the stops. From events to law enforcement to handling emergencies, we did ourselves proud. It's not our first rodeo, and it won't be our last.

The economy is pointing in our favorite direction, and that's up. We're coming together, we're buying local and we're winning the race called life.

If we continue to stick together, if we continue to trust one another, if we keep putting our heads together, we'll always come out on top.

Union County, you keep proving to everyone that you're one of the top communities around anywhere. I'm proud to call you my hometown.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Lock Your Car Doors

This is squash season and it brings back memories of my seminary days. I love squash and I keep my car doors unlocked. Several years ago I had a deacon who would announce to church folks that they had better lock their car doors or someone would put squash in their car. For the most part, squash has gotten a raw deal. There are several kinds, varieties and species of squash and I like it all. Even when I was a young kid, squash was one of my favorite vegetables. No one (especially my wife) would consider me to be a connoisseur of fine food, but I like squash no matter how you prepare it: fried, stewed, boiled or made into bread or prepared as a casserole. My taste for squash almost left me several years ago when I was in seminary pastoring a small rural church between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, La.

We were invited to eat with a family that was not one of the most blest families in the church, but we graciously accepted. Their livestock was confined in a small pasture and one end of the fence was connected to the corner of the house where the kitchen and dining area was located. Of course, they had no air-conditioning and all the windows were opened which allowed the gentle summer breeze that swept over the pasture to flow right across the dinner table. You can imagine the aroma that mixed with the cooked food. I made it fairly well until dessert was served. Lo and behold, the dessert was of all things - squash pudding. My family had never heard of it. With difficulty, I forced my food down, but now I was not sure about squash pudding. Never-the-less, I did not refuse. But the real test came when the host served my squash pudding. It came decorated with a long blond female human hair. Sitting there breathing cow-pasture air, looking at squash pudding garnished with a hair, my teeth welded together, my stomach on the verge of heaving. I thought my seminary days had come to an end. With deep, sincere prayer I did not upchuck but it was a miracle. Here I am now forty plus years later eagerly awaiting my squash harvest. My wife is still a little squeamish about squash and fusses because I plant more seeds than she likes for me too. I look forward to an abundant squash harvest and if you leave your car

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



See Parris, page 5A

On the Roads again

Q. When will all the repair work on culverts and roads be completed following all the rain storms?

A. Our Road Department is working very hard at making all repairs. In addition to storm damage repairs, we are also trying to work on adjacent driveways that have been dumping gravel and mud out into our county roads, creating a safety hazard. Because of the storm damage, we will be assisting in these repairs, but the public needs to understand that it is the individual owner who is responsible for keeping their mud, dirt and gravel from their driveways, off of our county roads.

Q. The Road Department recently cleaned out the ditches on my road. Are you going to do that on all the roads in the county?

A. Yes. We have a special crew this summer that will be doing nothing but cleaning out ditches and scraping the grass and debris off the edge of the pavement. This generally makes a visual mess, but is necessary to allow the water to drain off the highways to prevent hydroplaning and water damage to roads during the winter. Where needed, we will hydro seed certain areas, but most will grow back given a little time.

Q. How many times will our county roads be mowed this year? The grass is really long.

A. We generally mow them four times a year, with some of the main roads more often. This year, because of all the rain, it will probably require at least one extra mowing. The mowers have covered all major county roads once and the roads are already overgrown again. They have started on the second pass, which will take about five weeks to complete county wide. In addition, we have mowed part of Hwy 515 from Blairsville to the K Road to help dress up the area when we have festival visitors to town. We have over 600 miles of roads to mow on each side and it is a big job.

Q. The trees are overgrown and are hanging down over the road and need to be trimmed. When can this be done?

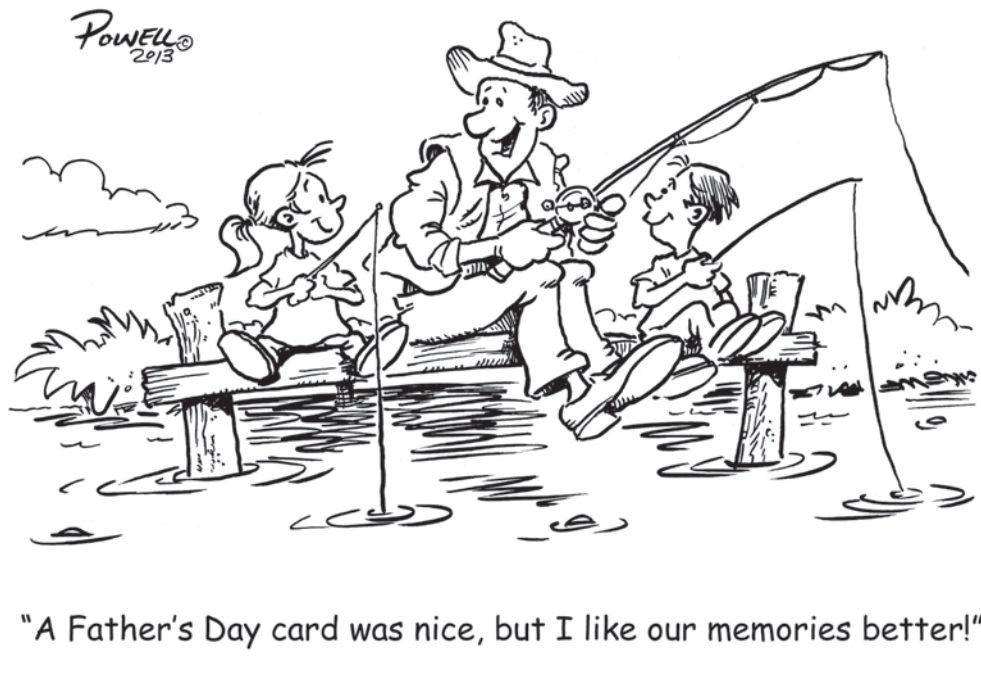
A. This will be an issue this year that is going to be very difficult to handle completely. We have one full-time "long arm" mower that makes a route throughout the county about once every two years. However, this year, because of all the rain, not only is the grass growing profusely, but so are the trees and limbs. If there are areas that create danger due to sight problems at road intersections, please let

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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"I Didn't Know You Had That!"

One of the first things visitors to our Chamber's Welcome Center often say is, "Wow, this is a lot of information." It is true. Our Welcome Center is fully stocked with a variety of brochures, magazines, flyers, and maps. You never know what you might find or learn when visiting with us. With that in mind, I wanted to share with you some of the most requested pieces in case you might have a need for them in the future and never even knew they existed.

Visitor's Guide - One of our most requested brochures is our visitor's guide. This tri-fold brochure gives a quick glance at attractions and festivals offered in Union County. This piece serves as a great addition to wedding guest bags and event attendee bags.

Community Guide - This full color magazine offers an in depth look at a variety of aspects of Blairsville-Union County including tourism, recreation, healthcare, education, housing, and religion. It also serves as a handy guide for important phone numbers and our Chamber business directory. This publication

Blairsville-Union County Chamber
Cindy Williams



See Williams, page 5A

Letters to the Editor ...

King's 5&10 will be missed

Dear Editor,

Did I miss this in the editorials? Blairsville had a historical landmark that has closed down.

Yes, Kings 5 and 10 store. What a incredible store it was! I have enjoyed many afternoons browsing the amazing shelves or chatting with the sweet ladies.

I will say on behalf of Union County. You will be missed!

Barb Goergen

Love Libby Shook

Dear Editor,

I love to read Libby Shook's articles in the paper. It seems she takes pride in our little towns. I get the Towns and Union county papers every week at Treetop Gas Station! It is a highlight of my week to know what is happening in our little place on this beautiful EARTH thank you!

Christine Stephens Haines

Hats off to Lerman

Dear Editor,

I would like to take my hat off to Sgt. Mike Lerman with the Animal Control Division of Union County Sheriff's Office. I recently adopted a dog from Animal Control. I was so moved by Sgt. Lerman's compassion for our community's lost and, unfortunately, discarded animals. He has a tremendously difficult job, but conducts himself with such kindness and love. Thank you, Sgt. Lerman and all those that commit their professional lives to the welfare of animals.

Jill Robinson

Expectations

Dear Editor,

From time to time, I receive e-mails from former students -- who were in my classes from 1964 forward. I must say that at first I was surprised that they wanted to stay in touch because I was really hard on those kids.

I required them to write a formal term paper each semester. They had to read an assigned novel every week, submit a formal essay on Friday and endure my mid-week "expectations."

On the front chalk board, I'd write an essay problem dealing with the assigned book and I'd hide the topic behind a pull-down screen.

When they came into class, they saw the screen and the groans started at the door. After they were situated in their desks, I'd roll up the screen. If they hadn't read the assigned book, there was no working around the essay question. They had only 45 minutes to finish. And each class had a different essay question.

When I graded their essays, the red ink flowed. From time to time, there were some Fs sprinkled in. (They were allowed one re-write which counted two-thirds as much as the original.)

It's a sign of advancing years but many of them now have grown children of their own; many of them have retired. I've received a bushel basket full of wedding announcements, birth announcements, high school and college graduation announcements, about their children.

My former students (Is it permissible to partially claim their successes?) went on to become surgeons, Registered Nurses and Physicians.

See Mitchell, page 5A

Trapptown Baseball

My father and uncle played on a baseball team from the community of Trapptown, Ala. Most of the people on the team were young men of high school age. These boys played all over northern Alabama, southern Tennessee and northern Mississippi. One day they played a group of older men from Lawrenceburg, Tenn. As the teams took the field the boys from Trapptown heard derisive comments coming from the other side. One of the men from Tennessee said, "I wonder if these little boys are wearing their diapers."

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



The Trapptown team was offended by the comments and used their anger to focus their efforts. Dad's team immediately gained a large lead and the older men became upset because they were being beat by a group of boys. Later in the bottom of the 8th inning during a force play at second (well after the play was over) one of the older men slid into Tommy Trapp spiking and severely cutting his leg. The play was evidently flagrant because the game was well out of reach of the older men of Tennessee because the score was 18 to 2 in favor of Trapptown.

During the early part of the game my Dad played shortstop and my Uncle played first base. However, Uncle Bud was always brought into the game during the top of the 9th inning to close the game. Uncle Bud knew only three pitches. These were the high fastball, the mid-level fastball, and the low fastball. He threw it so hard you could hear the ball whistling as it came toward home plate. My Dad was the only one on the team that could catch these fastball pitches from Uncle Bud. So, he was brought from shortstop to play catcher during the 9th inning. Did I mention that everyone on Trapptown's team was related?

The young man who was spiked grew up with and was like a brother to my Dad and Uncle Bud. The man who did the spiking of Tommy happened to be the first batter of the inning.

Dad went to the mound and said, "Bud, the game is over in three outs. You can strike all these guys out and we can leave. Let's just get them out and go home." Bud looked at the batter and said, "If you want to catch the ball just hold the mitt behind the batter's head."

Dad walked back to home plate and told the batter that he was going to be hit by a pitch. The man only grinned and said, "If that boy hits me I'll give him a whipping." Remember, in those days there was no such thing as a batting helmet. The first pitch went right under the man's nose. The older man looked at my Dad and told him he'd better warn the little boy on the mound not to mess around with a real man.

Dad grinned and said, "That is my 230-pound brother and if he hits you with that ball I don't think you will be able to do anything." The next pitch hit the man above the ear and the

See Cummings, page 5A

The Open Markets of Italia

The year was 1869. A Baptist Minister invented the rickshaw in Japan (seriously), Wagner's Opera opened in Munich and the Cincinnati Red Stockings (sounds like a great name for a bordello) opened the season as the first professional baseball team in this country.

That was also the year that Vatican I opened in Rome. On my recent trip to Italy, I spent four days in Rome and, yes, the Vatican was impressive. In 1869, the open market at Campio de Fiori in the heart of Rome also opened. One hundred and forty-four years later, this market is still thriving.

Farmers Market Moment
JoAnne Leone



It was the first Farmers Market I visited on my recent journey. The Campio de Fiori is actually one of Rome's ancient Squares, developed around the 15th Century. The streets off the Square are named after modern trades like crossbow making, hat making and tailors. This area hasn't been used exclusively for commerce, either. It was Rome's Square where you could see a good hanging or, as in the case of philosopher Giordano Bruno, view heretics being burned alive.

When visiting the market I couldn't help but ponder how much history and what historical figures had walked the cobblestones beneath my feet. The shops that surround the Market include some of the most famous European bakeries, pasta shops and butcher blocks. I looked in the pizza room of one such bakery and was able to capture a video of the men making 6 foot long pizzas, using their fingers like mallets to kneed the dough into place, before topping it and placing it in the wood burning ovens.

The pulse of the Market wasn't as frenetic as I was expecting. The Italians move at a modest pace, accomplishing what needs to be done, but never at the expense of sharing time with someone. You see much chatter amongst the vendors as well as with the shoppers. They don't push as much as they explain. It was early morning and I was taste testing fruit liqueurs, like lemoncello and meloncello. I watched as nimble hands took a basket of fresh picked thyme and in minutes had cleaned, chopped and presented it for sale. I saw fava beans shucked, lettuce washed and trimmed, ready for a salad, and root vegetables meant to be eaten raw, slashed with no apparent action, only to see how they transformed into a work of art after

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