

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Enough is enough

The pleas and arguments for the Georgia Department of Transportation to fix the sight distance problems at the turnoff to Walmart on Georgia 515 have fallen on deaf ears. Saturday's tragic fatality at that intersection only increases the pleas and arguments. Before Saturday, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris had repeatedly told GDOT that someone was going to get killed at that intersection if the sight distance problem was not corrected. Commissioner Paris was only predicting the inevitable, and he was right.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



The number of accidents at the intersection have risen steadily over the past two years. It's obvious that the sight distance problems related to that intersection only continue to escalate. Commissioner Paris wasn't asking for a traffic light at that intersection, only a correction of the sight distance problem.

Red tape, bureaucracy and a stalemate with GDOT prevented any action from happening. GDOT must have concrete figures, numbers like how many accidents, how many people were injured, how many people died.

Well, the numbers continue to go up in each category, and now, the one category that means so much - fatalities - just went up. Even one fatality is too many.

It's too late to correct the problem after one person has lost their life. It should have been corrected long before Saturday's tragedy.

Commissioner Paris couldn't correct the problem without GDOT's final say. It's a state route of which Commissioner Paris has no control.

We shouldn't have to beg the state to fix road hazards. That should be their top priority - not finding new roads to build. Maintenance of existing roadways should be top priority.

In this event, it's too little, too late. Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said the first thing that needs to be done is lower the speed limit to 55 mph on the approach to the intersection.

All GDOT would have to do is replace some signage. The signs they take down could be used at other locations.

It makes sense because of the lay of the land. By the time motorists pulling out from that intersection start to pull out, a fast-moving vehicle is

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Honor Your Father

What is something that you particularly appreciate about your dad? That is the question I posed to several people recently. Listen to their answers:

"He always took me to Braves games even though that was probably not his favorite sport. But he did it to spend time with me."

"My dad was not a musician, but he drove me to music lessons and attended every show and concert. It was something he wanted to share with me."

"He is very selfless, always doing something to make life better for us. He worked a regular job during the day, then came home and worked on the farm sometimes until late. He expected us to work hard too."

"He had extremely good character. He lived it, rather than just telling me. He showed me how to live life. He was very loyal in his faith. He was consistent. In order to have integrity, you must have consistency. He was consistent with discipline, but in a calm, direct way."

"When I was leaving for Air Force training, Dad said, 'They can't kill you.' After training he said, 'Now they can kill you.' I was shipping out to Vietnam. He was a man of few words, but he seemed to always say something potent."

"Dad was raised poor. He always worked hard to make sure we had something. He showed us we needed to work hard, and instilled that value in us. He enjoyed spending time with us trout fishing and ginseng hunting."

"Dad's been gone five years now. Every time I smell pipe smoke I think of him. He was a well respected, small town agriculture teacher for 30+ years. He was deeply liked by students, family and others because he was an old fashioned gentleman. When he passed, his students from way back came to pay respects."

I see some common themes here. A dad impresses when he has a good work ethic, spends time with his children and takes interest in their lives, is a respectable man of integrity, shares his wisdom, and models Godly living. You can't go wrong there.

Our culture says gender no longer matters, that men and

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Questions and Answers

Q. Can I put in an aluminum boat at the boat ramp?

A. Yes, but it cannot have a motor and it must be hand carried to the water as there are no vehicles allowed on the ramp.

Q. What is Union County's population growth as compared to surrounding counties?

A. According to the US Census Bureau, the Percent Population Change for Union County from April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014 is an increase of 2.9 percent. Percent Population Change is the difference between the population of an area at the beginning and end of a time period. Our estimated population as of 2014 is 21,984.

Towns County is growing, showing a 6 percent increase in population, with 11,098 residents. Lumpkin and White counties show 4 percent growth and 3 percent growth respectively.

Q. How can I get a copy of an ordinance?

A. You can visit the county's website at www.unioncountytga.gov and click on the Government tab at the top of the page. That takes you to the Commissioner's Office section of the website and on the left hand side click on Codes and Ordinances. This link takes you to the Municode website where you can search for specific Codes and Ordinances. Also, you can come by the office and a member of my staff can help you find what you are looking for in the Code Book.

Q. I want to build a garage. Do I need a licensed contractor for that?

A. As a homeowner you may complete any and all aspects of the construction yourself (with a building permit), but if you hire someone to build the garage for you, they must be a Georgia Licensed Building Contractor. Also, remember that when adding to an existing structure you must have a Building Permit.

Q. If I build a structure myself and therefore do not require a licensed building contractor, am I still required to have inspections done by the Building and Development office?

A. Absolutely yes! This is done not only to insure that

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Buy Local Weekend

This weekend is Buy Local Weekend in Blairsville-Union County! On the heels of our recent overwhelmingly successful Buy Local Extravaganza, the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce presents our next big opportunity to support local businesses and save money. The Buy Local Weekend is a three day event starting Thursday, June 18 and ending Saturday, June 20 during regular store hours. It is coordinated by the Chamber and sponsored by Alexander's Store. The event offers residents and visitors an opportunity to explore various local businesses and save 50% on hot selling, featured items. Local shoppers can expect great deals at restaurants, gift shops, attractions, apparel boutiques, service companies, and more.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber
Candy Williams



Residents and guests who are interested in receiving the list of participating businesses and the half priced featured items should notify the Chamber and ask to be added to our distribution list. This can be done by calling 706-745-5789 or emailing admin@blairvillechamber.com. This year's coupons are also currently available online at www.VisitBlairvilleGA.com, at the Chamber of Commerce office located at 129 Union County Recreation Road, and at participating local businesses. There is no excuse for ever missing another great deal in Union County!

This year's sponsor, Alexander's Store, is offering a variety of great deals including: se-

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Counting Peppers

My generation is always lamenting how different, in a wonderful way, life was for us growing up in the 50s and 60s. I won't argue with them, for my childhood was idyllic. It started with a core of commitment. My parents were committed to each other, their children, their parents and siblings, as well as to their community, which was our extended family. My sister and I had quite a foundation to stand upon. Family was everything.

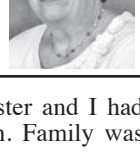
From the time we were toddlers, my parents had "showtime" nearly every evening. Dad sat us on the piano and we sang "la, la, la" till we could sing the lyrics. It wasn't long before we were playing the instrument and dancing the routines my mom would share with us. When we weren't involved in music, we were being entertained with flash cards. We experienced the sounds all the animals made in the jungle, to the many different phonetic sounds of the alphabet. Learning together was fun, it was family time and it formed fibers that wove strongly around the core to form who we are today.

Every summer, we had a family garden. It was actually a two-family garden. My uncle Fred (my mom's oldest brother who she affectionately always called Freddy) owned the last house on the block, next to a large, vacant lot owned by the electric company. They leased him that lot for a dollar a year and that's where each of our families had our garden. Though it was right next door for my uncle, our family had to drive about two miles down the road from our home to garden there.

At the beginning of the planting season, our sister dinner ritual was Mom, Dad and the two others would pile in the car with just a wheelbarrow, a hoe and a rake. My folks would start to till the land, with my sister and I being somewhat responsible for picking up the stones that were raked and throwing them in the wheelbarrow. Of course, running around with our cousins, asking our Aunt Betty for a glass of Kool-aid and twenty trips to the bathroom were all part of the adventure.

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Farmers Market Moment
JoAnne Leone



Letters to the Editor ...

Normandy cemetery visit

Dear Editor,
In 1999, my wife and I were blessed in, by and through our visit to the American Cemetery at Colleville sur Mer, Normandy.

We walked the paved path that skirts the edge of the bluffs above Omaha Beach.

We looked down at the water and I remember thinking, "I've killed deer farther away than that!"

We studied the wall exhibiting the Overlord plan, read the Wall of Remembrance which contains the names of the young men whose bodies were never found.

We walked among some of the 9,387 alabaster Crosses and Stars of David, all neatly arranged equidistant from each other, all facing Southeast toward Jerusalem.

The silence is palpable. There is weight to it. It is hallowed ground.

Tears came unbidden. Standing there among the monuments, I whispered our Christ's words — with one small modification: "Greater love than this hath no man that he lay down his life for... strangers."

Young men — boys, for the most part — did just that. They died for the sake of people they didn't know, would never meet.

If I were Warren Buffett, each year, I would dip into my billions and pay for each and every graduating high school Senior to visit that Cemetery.

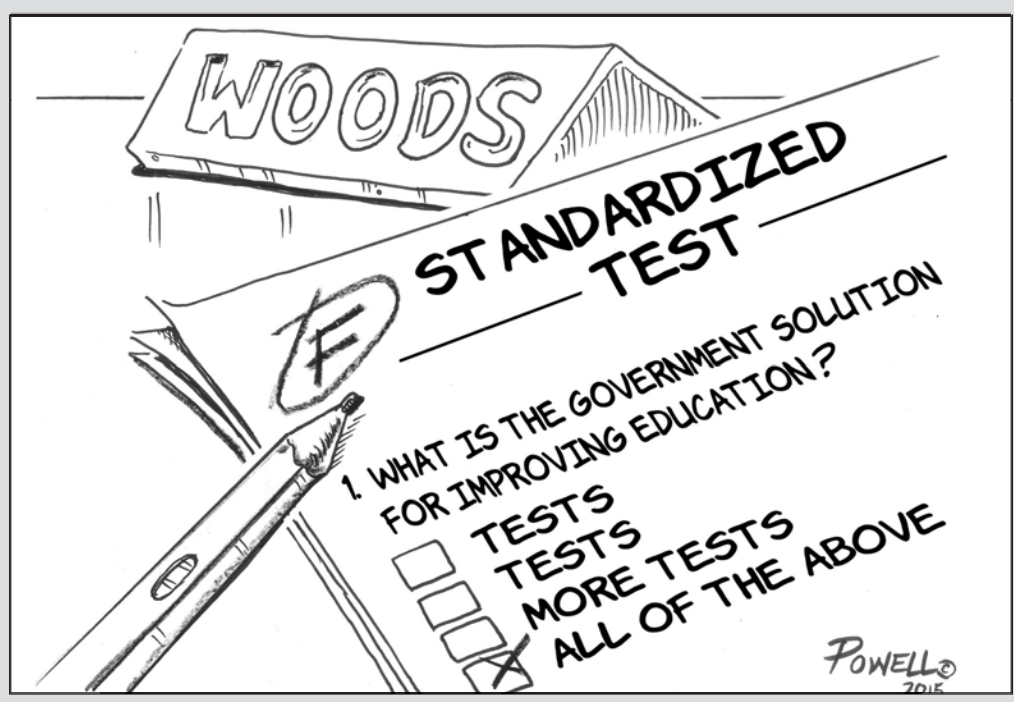
It is well that the young should be humbled by what was done for them before they were born.
George Mitchell

Canoe/Kayak launch

Dear Editor,

I call Meeks Park a gift. So beautiful and bright in our own backyard. How excited we were last weekend, to grab some friends and head to the new canoe/kayak launch and introduce them to a sport we love. Our pleasure paddle quickly turned into a river clean-up. Right there within the launch area itself was enough trash floating along the banks to fill 2 kayaks. So full were our boats that we left trash behind. Plastic bottles, foam cups and fishing bait containers galore. Please help out the Meeks Park staff and pack out what you pack in. Keep our taxes low by avoiding the placement of trash cans that require constant monitoring. Union County has created a stunning playground for all of us. Let's pitch in and keep her clean for the enjoyment of everyone.

Amber Jensen
Morganton



Fire is Nature's Housekeeper

"The Great Barbecue" - The earliest European settlers to North America recorded indigenous peoples' use of fire for clearing land, hunting and gathering activities, and in warfare. However, post-Columbus settlers did not understand fire as a natural process, and sought to suppress fire wherever it occurred because wildfires destroyed their crops, homes, and trees they needed for homes. In addition, the huge increase in human traffic brought on by late 19th Century immigration brought new human activity to these areas, meaning more human ignition sources were introduced to previously sparsely populated areas. This created one of the most devastating wildfire periods in American history — the great fires of the 1880s. The number and intensity of wildfires in this decade were so vast, scientist Stephen Pyne referred to it as, "The Great Barbecue."

The Great Peshtigo fire occurred on October 8, 1871 (same night as the Chicago Fire) and raged through Northeastern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. This fire destroyed the town of Peshtigo and killed between 1200 and 2500 people and burned more than 1.2 million acres. Many other huge wildfires occurred, both lightning caused and human caused. Because people wanted their lives and property to be protected, putting out wildfires of any cause became the norm.

As early as the 1930s and even before, land managers in the southeastern United States began arguing for the return of more natural fire regimes. Other fire-dependent areas were equally in need of fire, but had few advocates. While few could argue, then or now, that the suppression and prevention of extreme fire was not appropriate, few were arguing that the focus should be on maintenance of natural fire occurrences.

The Yellowstone fires of 1988 and the fire season of 2000 began to shift public perspective and have opened a revised chapter in wildland fire history. Its Legacy - Ecosystems that were dependent on fire to thin the forest canopy and cultivate the forest floor have been transformed, and sunlight-dependent native plant species have been overtaken by those that like shade.

The net effect is that fire suppressed ecosystems become less diverse, denser with overgrowth, and littered with dead plant material. A solution - by reintroducing fire into fire dependent ecosystems in a controlled setting, we can recreate the effects of natural fire, give balance back to fire-dependent communities, and prevent the catastrophic losses of uncontrolled, unwanted wildfire. Fire teams can use controlled burns/prescribed fires when and where doing so

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RC&D Executive Director

Frank Riley



The Game

My parents are two of the kindest and most likeable persons you would ever wish to meet. As many of you know my dad is a retired Pastor and Mom has been a Sunday School Teacher, choir member, WMU Director and served in many other leadership capacities within the church. So, let's just say their first visit to a UGA Football Game was quite the memorable experience for each of them.

The year must have been 1986 and the DAWGS were playing Alabama "Between the Hedges" in Athens, GA on Labor Day. We parked next to the Coliseum and walked up D. W. Brooks Drive toward the bookstore. After shopping for some t-shirts we walked across the road and toward our designated gate of entry. Lauren had packed a snack bag for us and as we displayed our faculty identifications we were motioned through the gate. When Mom and Dad displayed their tickets they were pulled aside and the security agents began searching my kind and pious mother's purse. My mother had a look of shock on her face and the security guard explained that she was looking for illegal alcohol. My dad explained, "Oh, you do not have to search us I am a Baptist Minister and never touch any alcohol". The guard smirked and said "Yes, I have heard that one before".

After the search we walked around to the southeast side of the stadium and found our seats. The seats were good seats. We were sitting on the first row of the upper level which afforded a good view of the field. There were two empty seats between where Lauren and I sat and the seats of my parents. A few minutes before kick-off two young men (UGA Students) came to those seats and sat down between where Lauren and I sat and my parents. Upon sitting down one of the young men said, "Boy those steps get steeper each time I climb them". He began to unscrew one of the lenses on the camera and asked my mother, "Would you like a drink"? And he offered the binoculars to Mom. Mom shook her head and watched as the young man took a swig from the empty lens of the binocular.

Finally, the ball game began and it was a typical Georgia vs. Alabama Football Game. Remember, those were the days of Vince Dooley meaning UGA rarely threw the ball. Most plays were 3 yards and a cloud of dust. UGA found themselves trailing Alabama by three points in the 4th quarter. UGA held Alabama on a 3rd down play and forced a punt from deep in Alabama territory. The squad from Georgia blocked the punt and fell on the ball in the end zone scoring six points and going ahead of Alabama. The crowd went crazy. People were jumping around in celebration and watching the field at the same time.

You should understand that the young
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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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