

# Opinions

Everybody has one

## Possum Talk

People for Ethical Treatment of Animals may rethink their protest of Clay County, NC's annual Possum Drop after they read this column.



Charles Duncan  
**Straight Shooting**

It seems they think of the possum as this poor pitiful animal that is scared of its own shadow. Actually, they need to do a little book-learning about the possum, which is, a fierce creature that kills and eats venomous snakes.

That's right, one of the primary food sources for the possum, or, as the PETA folks declare, *opossum*, just to be politically correct, is copperheads and rattlesnakes and other members of the pit viper family.

That fact alone is enough to make you want to go out and get your own 'pet' possum.

Why are we talking possum? Well, two reasons, a judge in North Carolina has sided with PETA that the annual Possum Drop in Hayesville, NC is cruel and unusual treatment of possums.

The second reason, well, Diane Keske of Blairsville sent me a card and a clipping from Smithsonian Magazine talking about the importance of the possum.

Yes, it appears the possum is a lean, mean, snake-killing machine.

For that reason alone, Diane asks that locals pay a bit more attention to the roadways during the hours that possums travel - late evenings and late at night.

She believes more possums mean less venomous snakes. She's probably right.

However, like the PETA folks that think the possum is a traumatized critter because of the possum drop in Hayesville, watching the roads for possums so you can make sure you don't run over them is a lost cause.

I confess, I've run over a many a possum in my driving days. The trouble is, I never intentionally ran over one of them.

Those darn possums get excited when a vehicle approaches, they can't make up their minds whether to run and eat later, or whether to stand their ground. Most side with the latter.

According to Smithsonian Magazine, the possum is immune to the venom of the pit viper, making it a main predator of the creature.

It gives them a food source that otherwise goes unchecked except when Diane Keske gets out in her yard. She's a lean, mean, snake-killing machine herself, having taken out eight copperheads during the now expired summer months.

The only other predator copperheads and rattlesnakes fear more than Diane and the possum is the little Jack Russell that roams through my yard.

Yes, Lucy, the mild-mannered and timid Jack Russell, is a lean, mean, snake-killing machine herself. I lost count this summer at the number of copperheads she slew. She was bitten twice during the summer, but she is fully recovered from the ordeal.

Do we have to worry about PETA getting after possums, Diane and that friendly little dog Lucy for killing venomous snakes?

It wouldn't surprise me. They do enjoy the spotlight and they might just get Lucy locked up by the Pet Police to snare a headline.

PETA means well, but unfortunately their professional approach leaves little to be desired in the way of popular opinion.

Here's the Gospel, the possum is a fierce and genuine marsupial. It packs a jaw-bite of 60 pounds of pressure. It's immune to rabies and the venom supplied by pit vipers.

It's a valuable resource in our mountains. And most of all, it's not afraid of New Year's Eve in Hayesville, NC.

## Neighborhood Recycling

**Q.** Has the Neighborhood Recycling Program been successful in terms of an increase in recycling?



Lamar Paris  
**Q & A**

**A.** Yes, definitely but it could always improve more. In 2004, before the program started we were recycling around 219,000

lbs. per year. Since the program began, we have recycled a total of 2,575,435 lbs. which equals 429,239 lbs. per year. So you can see that our recycling has doubled.

**Q.** What happens to the recycled materials? Where are they taken when they leave the transfer station?

**A.** Leslie George, our recycling coordinator through our association with NGRMA, seeks out the best market prices and the material is delivered to the recycling center that gives the best price.

**Q.** Does the County get the money we receive from the recycling program?

**A.** Yes we do.

**Q.** What is done with the money we collect from recycling?

**A.** It goes into the recycling program through dues to (NGRMA) which then promotes recycling in our county, organizes the scrap tire program, electronics recycling program and handles all aspects of the recycling in the schools program and training done there. It also supplies all materials and supplies needed for the school children.

**Q.** Does recycling pay for itself?

**A.** No, it does not. The revenue we receive goes toward our dues with NGRMA, which supports their recycling programs.

**Q.** What is NGRMA?

**A.** It stands for North Georgia Resource Management Authority. It is a consortium of four counties that go together to fund our recycling education effort and programs. There is one full time employee and one part time

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## Christmas is Hope

It has been said that man can live about 40 days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air, but only one second without hope.

Dr. Fred Craddock said, "Hope is the very stuff of life; it keeps the farmer on the tractor, the prisoner alive, the student at the books, and the patient watching for the morning."

Hope is confident expectation. When God took on flesh and blood and moved into our world in the person of Jesus, He came to a world of darkness, blackness, and hopelessness. The voice of the prophet had been silent for about 400 years and men had turned to mystery religions and gods that did not see, hear, nor answer prayers.

At just the right time - in the fullness of time, God came to replace man's hope with the fulfillment of the Messianic Hope of ancient promise.

What seems more hopeless than to live in a world where a tyrant rules and murders babies? What appears to be any more hopeless than a congregation of shepherds? Even worse, what could seem more hopeless than a young man with a pregnant teenager for a wife, away from home, no shelter for giving birth, except for a stable?

Into this atmosphere of hopelessness, hope broke forth. You see hope is not just believing that things are finally going to come out in the wash. Christmas (Christian) hope brings the assurance of God's presence NOW.

In the midst of our circumstances that bring despair and a sense of hopelessness, God steps in to say that you don't have to "go it alone." When the enemy of death has removed that precious loved one; your spouse has just walked out saying, "I don't love you anymore" or that son or daughter has made a decision to live an ungodly and rebellious lifestyle; when your boss has just dropped the bombshell that you no longer have a job, or a thousand other scenarios, God gives blessed hope.

Man extends false hope. He has clichés and empty slogans that last about as long as the morning dew. However, God gives hope not only in this world that is overwhelmingly negative (listen to the evening news and current events) but Christmas hope that says the future is more glorious and brighter. Christmas hope declares the best is yet to be.

If we have hope just for living this life now, without any hope of a future life, Paul says we would be most miserable. Christmas is not just a secular holiday; it is a holy day that offers hope.

Christmas is not just being home for the

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## Customer Loyalty

Is it possible to create a customer who loves you?

As a small business owner, customer loyalty can be the difference between business success and a business explosion.

You might ask, "How can that be?" In a like manner, is it possible to have a customer for life?

Repeat customers are a dream for small businesses owners.

Today, let's create the demand of customer loyalty by thinking about the details that make customers fall in love with your small business.

It starts at the heart of change because change will be needed by you and your staff. You must create an environment of being able to always over deliver. The needs of the customer should be met and try to get a notch higher.

Whether providing a service or product, think about ways to be ahead of schedule or have some type of surprise or bonus that can get the buzz going.

Next, give ridiculously good customer service that comes consistently served with a smile. While giving that smile, treat your customers the way you want to be treated. Empower your employees to be genuine and offer intuitive problem solving.

The philosophy of genuine transparency starts with just being yourself and being real. Get your employees to remove any "robot" or canned routines of their service or product delivery. While giving your customer that awesome service, give them a genuine "Thank You" during the delivery.

Thanking customers never hurts and enables the customer to feel appreciated. Some of your repeat customers will become your core supporters. The core clients should be treated

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## We need a miracle

Let me preface this article by telling you it is not meant to be religious in nature. I am simply relating the facts to you as told by my mother.

The reason for my telling the story is our time frame. We have entered the Christmas season and yet the world seems to be spinning out of control.

A major hurricane has recently decimated the Northeast. Our own economy is in a tank. The situation in the Middle East seems to be pulling the world toward more war. The world needs a miracle.

So, my gift to Union County is this story of a miracle that was witnessed by the staff at a nursing home where my mother worked.

For the past 40 years my Father has been a minister and he has served churches in Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama. After my siblings and I moved out of the house my mother went to work. One place in which she worked was a nursing home in Dunlap, Tenn.

Mother enjoys serving the elderly. She has a kind heart and is a good listener. So, she was well received by the residents in the nursing home.

The story has 3 characters. Miss Cora was a little old lady who loved everyone.; Mr. Brown was man who couldn't talk and was confined to a wheel chair; and Mrs. Jones was confined to bed and was blind.

Miss Cora was a kind and gentle lady that had been a resident at this nursing home since her husband had died. Miss Cora was short and always had a smile on her face even when she was in extreme pain. Cora kept a Bible on her night stand and was constantly reading it. When she wasn't reading her Bible, Cora would visit the other residents to find out about their prayer concerns. Then she would quietly go back to her room and pray for the other residents. It was easy to see Cora's faith in her eyes, you could hear faith in her testimony and you could feel her faith through her prayers.

But, Cora did not try to push her faith over anyone. She was quiet and unassuming. She would listen to your beliefs and smile. All she wanted you to know was that God loved you so much he sent his son to die for you. She believed this was God's gift to mankind. And she lived this belief every day. She never worried about wars, economics or climate change. Each day before mother left work, Cora would smile at her and say, "I'll be going home soon and I'll get to see Jesus. If I am not here when you come back to work you'll know where I have gone."

Most of the time Mom worked the evening shift, but, her schedule was changed so

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## Temporary Christmas Help

This Thanksgiving, I had the good fortune to share time with my family. After a 19-hour car excursion that resembled Mr. Toad's Wild Ride, I finally landed in Dallas, Texas to be with my Mom, Sis and the rest of the wonderful "brood", as my Dad referred to us.

This is the time of year where we celebrate with those we hold most dear to our heart-our families. But, what constitutes a family? We live in a day and age where many of us have blended families. Yet, often I have conversations with folks who refer to "his children" and "her grandkids." That doesn't sound very "blended" to me.

One couple I know have been married for over 30 years; a second marriage for both.

The children that came to the relationship were just becoming teenagers at the time. Now they are grown with teenagers of their own.

When the kids left home, the couple transferred their nurturing nature to canine kids. They admirably have adopted adult dogs, fallen in love with them, put cute bows in their furry ears and talk to them in the same precious voice that we usually reserve for babies.

This couple, who treat their "mutts" like they were "blood relatives," also refer to each others grandchildren as "his" and "hers."

How can you own a dog someone else raised and call it your own and label the children (and their children) you helped raise for over two decades, as belonging to someone else?

In a recent chance encounter, ordering a cup of coffee at Grinds & Glazes, I met someone who I hit a harmonious cord. Perfect strangers, we ended up sharing so much in a mere 90 minutes. She spoke affectionately of her adult children, and later said she had been married for just 20 years. I acknowledged how refreshing

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# Letters

To the Editor

## Davenport Trail

Dear Editor,

As a hiker, I have been wondering about the fate of the ATV Davenport Trail. Logging continues and a once beautiful trail looks raped.

Is this a money making project for the National Forest? What is the time frame?

We are well over a year into clear cutting. What about erosion?

The laurels have been flattened and all the large trees are gone above a certain point.

Can we have a National Forest returned to the people?

Debbie Avery, Blairsville

## A Job Well Done

Dear Editor,

The following is a letter to Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris from homeowner John Drake: Mr. Paris,

We would like to take this opportunity to share with you our experience with a number of incredible county employees.

During my career, I have dealt with many Building departments, in many cities, around the country. My experience in Union County, when building our new home, was a new one for me. My first contact with a county department was our purchase of property in Blairsville. Every county employee that we had contact with went out of their way to help us with a professional and friendly attitude. If all of the county employees that we had contact with are representative of the rest of the employees of Union County, you should be very proud to work with such quality people.

Regarding the building department, my first contact with Nora Lawn, what an exceptional person, friendly, professional, and helped guide us through the building process. She was a joy to deal with and always made us feel welcome. Randy and Gavin made our building process a pleasant experience. Either Gavin or Randy were there when we needed their advise, guidance, or help. I will say I am 'high maintenance,' but they were always patient with me. They made it clear what they expected and we followed their lead. Truly exceptional people, firm in what they wanted, but friendly in their demeanor. We feel gifted to have had an opportunity to have interacted with both of these fine men.

Who would have thought that a government office would be helpful with the public, not in most cities, however, in Blairsville, it seems to be the norm. Congratulations Mr. Paris, you should outsource your business model to other government agencies around the country. They need your example of leadership.

John Drake, Blairsville

## Flag Etiquette

Dear Editor,

Isn't it against the law to fly the flag upside down?

I thought that was a distress signal. It is a call for help, if someone drives by and sees it, they will call 911 bringing in the police and Fire and Rescue.

I think it would be a good idea for someone who knows the proper handling and meanings of the different flyings of the flag to write an article.

Carol Owens, Suches

## Declaration of Dependence

Dear Editor,

So what happened on Election Day? How did Barry Soetoro aka Barak Obama get re-elected?

He did not accomplish anything that he promised in his first election...well, he did come through on one promise - Obama Care.

This might help bankrupt America. But the victory came from black and Hispanic voters. Why? Unemployment for black people remains at an all time high of 14.3 percent. Hispanics are coming here in droves for the free entitlements. People were afraid the Republicans would take away their free entitlements so they voted for the incumbent who wants to

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## The Big Picture

Dear Editor,

What a shame that Ruth Elizabeth Ramsey sees "all Americans as losers" in the last presidential election.

The majority of us who voted to keep President Obama in the White House see it quite differently.

We applaud the fact that young adults will continue to stay on their parent's health insurance until age 26, that those with pre-existing conditions will no longer be denied health insurance, that insurance companies will have to spend the majority of their funds on health care not profits, that Medicare will not be reduced to a voucher system, that women will be able to continue to make their own health care decisions, that Don't Ask Don't Tell will be allowed to stand, that children of undocumented immigrants will be able to stay in this country

See Miles, page 5A

## Subliminal Defamation

Dear Editor,

Another Catholic priest (out of tens of thousands) has recently been involved in a sex scandal. So this incident should be of special interest to our local community since this individual served in Blairsville some 30 years ago.

Really! The transgression occurred in another

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## North Georgia News

Published since 1909 4 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