

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Welcome Chief Dyer

In October 1990, David Dyer had wasn't sure what he wanted to be. Earlier that year, he had graduated from Union County High School.

Now, he was trying to figure out his future. Being a firefighter wasn't in his long range plans. Still, that year, David Dyer began the first leg of a 24-year journey.

David Dyer became a part-time fire-fighter, a decision that changed his life forever.

You see, David Dyer discovered he was a lifetime public servant.

On Thursday, David Dyer, Interim Fire Chief for Union County becomes the county's next fire chief, stepping in for Chief Charles Worden, who because of health issues, has decided to step back from fire chief, and remain as director of 911 and Union County's Emergency Management Agency director.

Chief Worden played an integral role in the selection of Chief Dyer. Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris also weighed Chief Dyer's selection.

When the dust settled, Chief Dyer was selected for the job of picking up where Chief Worden left off.

Chief Dyer has always called Union County home. He has learned from the best, Charles Worden. Chief Dyer says he's still learning from Charles Worden.

A five-minute conversation with Chief Dyer and you'll learn that he is humble, dedicated and professional. We feel Chief Dyer was an excellent choice to lead the already very professional department.

He's dedicated to Union County and serving the people of Union County. He will continue to work with Charles Worden on the Emergency Management side of the coin. He's deputy EMA director.

He refers to Charles Worden as his boss. Chief Dyer has a mountain of admiration for one of the legendary figures in Emergency Management.

"Charles Worden has overseen emergency operations over every fire, storm and disaster that has occurred here over the last 24 years," Chief Dyer said. "He knows the business inside out, and you can't ask for more than that."

Chief Dyer, we wish you and your department nothing but continued success in the years ahead.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



"It's On My Mind..."

Till Then...

For the past 16 years I have had the joy and privilege of writing a weekly column for the *North Georgia News*. I certainly do not consider myself a professional writer but the articles that I have written were chosen somewhat like my sermons.

Early in my ministry I was taught that every good sermon ought to accomplish three things: warm the heart, stretch the mind and tan the hide. I hope that my articles have had a little success in all three areas. My prayer is that I have helped some of you to laugh, encouraged some of you to pray, inspired some of you to embrace God's abundant life, convinced some of you to give up addictions, bad habits, etc. But mostly I have endeavored to stir in the readers slumbering chords of laughter to make them vibrate once again. Nothing that I have written was ever intended to unsettle any person's faith or to corrupt anyone's principles. Hopefully, most of my articles have fed your faith, not your doubts, lightened your load, not added to it, brought a smile, not a frown, and perhaps helped you to appreciate Blairsville, Union County, these majestic mountains and these mountain people and their friendly ways.

You have inspired and encouraged me with your notes, phone calls and complimentary comments over the years. I have considered it a blessing to share with the readers of the *North Georgia News* articles that I thought would help struggling individuals and would help to build and in some cases rebuild relationships.

Most of the time the hardest task was not knowing what to write but the difficulty was condensing the articles. As my wife has said, "What I need is not an introduction, but a conclusion!" So, after 16 years I need a little rest and I am sure you do! Therefore, since this is the last week of this year, this will be my last article for a while. I have asked the *North Georgia News* for a sabbatical and they have graciously consented. God willing, I will resume my column, "It's On My Mind" sometime in the future. I conclude this article with the words of the angel,

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It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Questions and Answers

We hope you had a very Merry Christmas and have a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Q. What do you hope to accomplish in 2015?

A. Our focus will be to continue to provide excellent county services, with the emphasis on "excellent," and at the lowest possible cost to the taxpayers. We continue to be proud of our accomplishment of having one of the lowest property tax rates (mil rate) in the State of Georgia, consistently in the 3 to 5 lowest out of 159 counties.

While all property taxes are still a burden to pay, they are so much less than most other counties and we work hard to maintain that level.

Q. Do you have any big projects planned for 2015?

A. We have been able to redo, repair, clean up and improve just about every aspect of Union County government and facilities during my tenure as commissioner except our transfer station, affectionately called by many, "the dump." We have been working on plans there for a couple of years. We are now awaiting approval of those final plans that have been presented to EPD (Environmental Protection Division) several times this year and feel we are very close to having them approved. It really complicates things when you are attempting to build new structures in the middle of an old landfill site.

Q. You mentioned recently at a county meeting that the county had purchased property next to the Union County Arena and that this might help the trash situation. Could you explain this?

A. We did recently purchase two acres bordering the Arena property on the North and Highway 325 on the South side. This parcel will have two very important uses. First, it will allow for additional parking for the Arena events, which will help alleviate a lot of the crowding especially during rodeos. But most importantly is a portion of that parcel will be utilized as a Convenience Center for a trash and recycling collection site for a large portion of the county, and will prevent many of you from having to take a trip to the transfer station.

Q. Won't this new convenience be expensive for the

See Paris, page 5A

Thank You!

Thank You!

As we bring another great year at the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce to a close, I want to express my very best wishes and sincere thanks to all who have been part of the success of our great organization including our

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



Board of Directors, staff, members, and community supporters. The past 12 months have been marked by noteworthy achievement and exciting change. As I reflect on the past year, I believe that we have many reasons to have enormous pride in our accomplishments and look forward with enthusiasm to next year.

One of our most outstanding achievements in 2014 was the addition of a fifth full time employee in our Chamber. Tobie Chandler was promoted to the newly created Tourism Director position and has only begun to open the lines of communication with our local tourism partners and various media outlets. Even so, we have already seen an approximate 15 percent increase in our lodging tax receipts from 2013. This is an incredible start to growing tourism related revenue for our local businesses.

Membership remains strong. Our Membership Coordinator, Erin Huffman, is to be commended for bringing in over 100 new members to the Chamber in 2014. Our total membership is on the rise and now stands at 575. This is

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It's a New Dawn. It's a New Day. It's a New Life.

Nina Simone sang those words when she recorded the song "Feelin' Good," 50 years ago. It became a standard, with its theme very appropriate to the dawning of a New Year. We are already 15 years into the 21st century. And though our world has had such significant changes in the way we communicate to one another in the past decade and a half, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, text messages and e-mails will never convey the real message behind the opportunity to "reach out and touch someone".

My parents lived exceptionally busy lives. They not only had their own businesses (multiple), they also were involved in PTA, civic groups, church groups and they carted us to every effort my sister and I made to be involved in community groups, as well. I was five years old the first time I was volunteered by my parents to entertain at the County Nursing Home. My dad was 93 years old the last time he volunteered to perform at our Union County Nursing Home.

Civic organizations in this community need a huge burst of energy right now. I hear this from members all the time. They all want to do more, but their memberships are dwindling, as volunteers have grown older and unable to be as involved. This past week there was a group of young parents who spent weeks, maybe months putting together an "Adopt-A-Grandparent" program, delivering Christmas gifts to the elderly and infirmed. Kudos to all of you. You set the example for the rest of us. This week I reached out to some local organizations who not only need your help, but are offering you an opportunity to meet new friends, network, do something special for a good cause, set an example for your children or as one recruiter so beautifully phrased it, "Spending time helping others will bless them, but not nearly as much as the blessing you will receive for having given a little of yourself."

Here are the "Help Wanted" ads that these organizations have put together. Which one are you going to answer?

The Union County Historical Society is always looking for volunteers at the courthouse.

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Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



Letters to the Editor ...

A New Beginning

Dear Editor,

Well soon 2014 will be put to rest and new challenges and trials will be forthcoming for 2015.

What unknowns lie ahead of us no mortal human knows, only our Creator and Redeemer of life, Christ, Jesus.

We, who just celebrated Christmas Day and the birth of the baby Jesus can enter into this New Year with great confidence, with great excitement, with blessed assurance, with a blessed hope and with a promise of an eternal life in Heaven with Christ when we pass from this life into the next glorious and final chapter of eternity.

God has big plans for you and me this New Year, perhaps a family or friend will come to know Christ as their Savior and Lord, maybe the Lord, Jesus will give you an opportunity to witness to many folks of how God has changed your life for the better.

We all have choices to make in this life to either reject or receive Jesus Christ. If I could make that decision for you I would be honored too, but it doesn't work that way.

Each of us are responsible for seeking out our own salvation through Christ and I might add that this one decision will reflect where you live after death comes to take you away; please don't be fooled by the devil's lies that there is no God. God's word says from His holy book, the Bible, that every person ever born into creation will one day bow down on their knees and confess that Christ is King over all.

This is not a joke folks. I don't write letters to this newspaper so I can get any glory.

I write them to plead with you to ponder

See Combs, page 5A

In case you missed it

Dear Editor,

A recent survey conducted by Fairley Dickinson University's PublicMind survey found that viewers who watched only FOXNews knew less about current events than viewers who watched any other news source, even those who answered that they watched no news at all.

So for those FOXNews viewers let me outline a few stories you may have missed. President Obama has ended the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that George Bush started.

Osama Bin laden has been killed.

The Bush recession is over, unemployment is back down in the 5 percent range. GDP is way up, deficit spending has been cut in half and the stock market is at an all time high and all of this can be blamed on President Obama!

Some things that aren't his fault are Congress's refusal to raise the minimum wage, to guarantee women equal treatment in the workforce and to reduce the outrageous interest students must pay on student loans.

We can thank the Republicans in Congress for those things.

Lue Elder

Thank You

Dear Editor,

Thank you to the *North Georgia News* for your support of NAMI Blairsville. We appreciate your printing the monthly notices that keep the public informed of our family support group meetings.

NAMI Blairsville, a new member of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, is a motivated group of people working together to create positive change.

We appreciate the *North Georgia News* being part of our effort to improve the lives of families and individuals affected by mental illness.

Sincerely,
Linda Beaver



"Good luck, kid..."

To those who served in Vietnam

Dear Editor,

This letter is brought to you by the *Vietnam Veterans of America Georgia Chapter 1101*:

Dear Hero, I was in my 20s during the Vietnam era. I was a single mother and, I'm sad to say, I was probably one of the most self-centered people on the planet. To be perfectly honest, I didn't care one way or the other about the war. All I cared about was me, how I looked, what I wore, and where I was going.

I worked and I played. I was never politically involved in anything, but I allowed my opinions to be formed by the media. It happened without my ever being aware.

I listened to the protest songs and I watched the six o'clock news and I listened to all the people who were talking.

After awhile, I began to repeat their words and, if you were to ask me, I'd have told you I was against the war. It was very popular. Everyone was doing it, and we never saw what it was doing to our men. All we were shown was what they were doing to the people of Vietnam.

My brother joined the Navy and then he was sent to Vietnam. When he came home, I repeated the words to him. It surprised me at how angry he became. I hurt him very deeply and there were years of separation not only of miles, but also of character. I didn't understand. In fact, I didn't understand anything until one day I opened my newspaper and saw the anguished face of a Vietnam veteran.

The picture was taken at the opening of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

His countenance revealed the terrible burden of his soul.

As I looked at his picture and his tears, I finally understood a tiny portion of what you had given for us and what we had done to you.

I understood that I had been manipulated, but I also knew that I had failed to think for myself.

It was like waking up out of a nightmare, except that the nightmare was real. I didn't know what to do.

One day about three years ago, I went to a member of the church I attended at that time, because he had served in Vietnam.

I asked him if he had been in Vietnam, and he got a look on his face and said, "Yes." Then, I took his hand, looked him square in the face, and said, "Thank you for going."

His jaw dropped, he got an amazed look on his face, and then he said, "No one has ever said that to me."

He hugged me and I could see that he was about to get tears in his eyes.

It gave me an idea, because there is much more that needs to be said.

How do we put into words all the regret of so many years?

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Sad, Funny and Happy Days

After graduation from High School my Dad was offered a scholarship to play baseball at Arkansas. Papa and Granny were extremely proud of their son and wished him well as he left to go to college.

Papa said, "Paul was the first in the family that ever had the chance to go to college." Dad went away to school and immediately began practicing for spring baseball. Dad said, "They brought their best pitchers on the team out to the first practice and I had no problem with any of their pitches. However, there was one fellow there that had graduated and was getting ready to go into the professional ranks with St. Louis. This guy was at the Arkansas practice to loosen up his arm before the winter leagues began playing." This guy threw Dad 25 pitches and he never made contact with the ball.

Dad stayed in college for a while longer. He said his grades held up and he was doing okay with baseball practice. But, he became very homesick and was afraid someone was going to steal away his girlfriend. He always worried Rod Craig would woo Shirley away from him and Dad was not around to stop that from happening. So, one day in October, Daddy loaded up his things and caught a bus to Phil Campbell, AL. Granny said, "The day Paul came home from school was hard on your Papa. When Paul walked in the front door Papa knew he had quit college. Papa went outside and cried like a baby."

Dad got himself a job at the textile mill in Hackleburgh and also began playing baseball on the mill's traveling team. He also began seeing the Adams girl on a regular basis. After Mom (Shirley) had graduated High School Dad asked her to be his wife. Then Dad had to ask Shirley's dad (Bill) for her hand in marriage.

Dad, Paw Paw Bill and Mom's brother (Uncle Ray) were on their way into town to pick up some truck parts. Dad was riding in the back while Uncle Ray and Paw Paw were in the front. Uncle Ray looked at Dad and grinned. Then he directed his gaze and words at his father. He said, "Daddy, I think Paul has something to ask you?" Paw Paw looked at Daddy and said, "What is on your mind?" Dad stammered a little and said, "I wonder if we are going to get enough rain to make a good crop this year?" Uncle Ray interrupted, "That's not what you want to ask." Next, Dad asked about Paw Paw's new truck driving job. Ray laughed and told Dad he was a chicken. Finally, Dad blurted out, "Can me and Shirley get married?" Dad's face was buried into the back of the front seat because Bill slammed on his brakes. Dad was trying to unlock the door so he could run away from the car when Paw Paw

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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