

Opinions

Everybody has one...

The Patch

Being in public safety for over 27 years, I have worn many different patches in my career. The main patch that I have worn has been the Union County Fire Department patch. The patch had a white background with yellow borders; a blue State of Georgia on the left side; a red Maltese cross on the right side, and Union County Fire Dept. written on it. The patch has served us well but this year we decided that we needed an update.

The department began to look at other patches to come up with ideas for the update. We decided to design a patch that was more modern and had more symbolism of the job, the department, our community and our values. Union County Firefighter CJ Townsend went to work immediately and designed a wonderful patch for the department.

The background of the patch is the American flag; the symbol of our nation. We are very proud of being Americans and the values of America. The border is red and gold which symbolizes the fire department and the gold standard that we strive for. There are banners at the top and the bottom that state we are "Union County Fire Department".

In the center of the patch is a Maltese cross, the universal symbol of the fire department. The Maltese cross is white with black and gold borders. Inside each branch of the cross contains a symbol of what we do as a department. There is a Star of Life which represents our medical responses. There is a NFPA 704 fire diamond that represents hazardous materials responses. There is an extrication tool that represents rescue responses. In the last branch there is a "scramble" with a fire helmet, ladder, pike pole, and bugle that represents fire responses.

The center of the Maltese cross has a representation of our community. It has of trees, mountains, blue sky and the sun setting behind the mountains. Within the center is a shorter version of our motto, "Our Family Protecting Yours." We wanted the center to represent our community and what we stand for while serving that community.

The patch is more than something that says who you work for; it is a symbol of who we are, what we do and who we do it for. We are very proud of our new patch and would like to thank CJ Townsend for his design.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Resolution Motivation

Are you keeping your resolutions for this year so far? Even if you don't ride the resolution rollercoaster, from time to time most of us recognize the need for different behavior to benefit our health, relationships, or lifestyle. What moves us from recognizing our vices to acting more virtuously?

Plato posits one answer. In "Republic" he refers to the legend of the Ring of Gyges. The story is about a shepherd that discovered a cave in a mountainside after an earthquake. The cave was the tomb of a corpse still wearing a golden ring. He took the ring, and later discovered that it gave him the power to become invisible at will.

Plato believed that someone with such a ring would certainly use it to commit hidden acts of injustice. His point was that the fear of exposure is what animates virtue, you know, "It's only wrong if you get caught."

Believers know differently. We are motivated by the life of Christ Himself. As his disciple, you have laid aside the old self and the former manner of life, and are renewed in the spirit of your mind. You "put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4:24).

If only this truth meant instantaneous virtue. Hypocrisy lies in wait for your behavior to belie your beliefs. How does this happen? Maybe you hear the lie that your past defines your identity. Maybe it's your "secret" if no human is looking, which was Plato's point. For a believer, these lies facilitate slouching toward deception, disobedience, and disgrace, which is simply not who you are in Christ Jesus.

It helps to consider your actions as either of darkness or light, of death or life. "All things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you'" (Eph. 5:13-14). It also helps that your past mindset does not define you. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Can you explain what SPLOST Funds are and where they come from?

A. When anyone purchases anything in the county they are charged 7% sales tax on the items purchased. Of this 7% the State retains 4%, Union County Schools get 1% (ESPLOST), Union County gets 1% for SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) and the County gets an additional 1% for LOST (Local Option Sales Tax).

Q. How long does each SPLOST sales tax last?

A. Once a SPLOST is passed by the voters, it lasts for 6 years when we have an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City. The current SPLOST, which is SPLOST 4, started in April of 2015 and will last until March 31st of 2021.

Q. What is the difference between SPLOST and LOST?

A. SPLOST (one of the pennies the county receives) is the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, which has specific laws regarding how and what the money can be used for. All projects must be capital improvement projects. LOST (the other penny the county receives) is the Local Option Sales Tax which is money that is used specifically to offset property taxes. So, the money collected on this one penny comes directly off the amount of property taxes we are required to collect. Without this extra penny your property taxes would probably be an additional 20% or more.

Q. How do SPLOST Funds impact the County Budget?

A. The County is able to use SPLOST Funds for numerous projects. Each year we budget 1 million dollars from SPLOST funds for road maintenance. This is money that does not have to come out of the County Budget. We are also able to purchase vehicles and equipment for the Road Department, vehicles for the Sheriff's Office, and Fire Department vehicles and equipment. These are all things that are needed in the county that we would otherwise have to include in the County Budget. So, this means that it also saves on our property taxes needed to operate government.

Q. Are SPLOST Funds increasing every year?

See Paris, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Anti-Drug Coalition

Why Would My Teen Use Drugs?

While the drug use is difficult to predict, by studying the research gathered over the years, some underlying causes can be identified that may increase the likelihood of use. These factors can include genetics, abusive parents or lack of parental involvement, traumatic family events (divorce, death, etc.), choice of friends, mental or emotional disorders, gender, nationality, family income level and location.

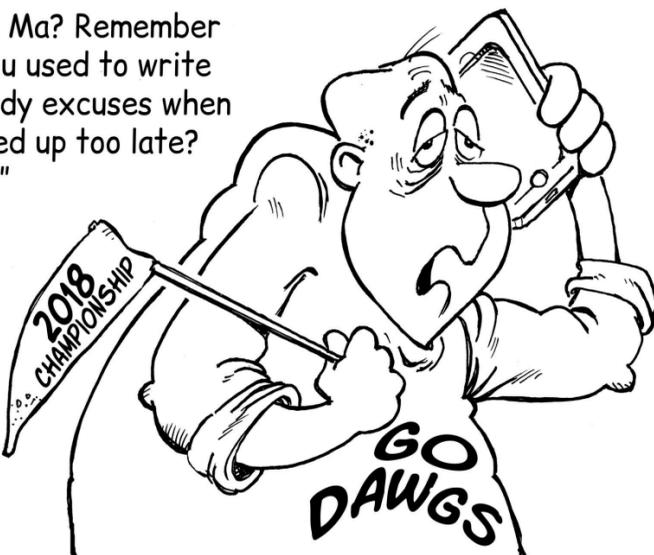
The mission of the Union County Anti-Drug Coalition is to support an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse. Visit and Like our Facebook page for additional articles and videos.

Males are more likely than females to be drug users, although not by a significant amount. Growing up in neighborhoods where more drugs are present — or in parts of the country (or world) with high rates of drug abuse — will increase a teen's exposure to drugs.

According to one study, teens in high school that are from wealthy families are more likely to abuse drugs than their less well-off peers. This could be due to disposable income.

See Coalition, page 5A

"Hello, Ma? Remember how you used to write me tardy excuses when I stayed up too late? Well...."



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Monthly Mingle

With a goal of providing Chamber members with beneficial tools and opportunities, the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce is excited to present a new event for 2018. Throughout the year, we are going to be offering a new lunch program for our members that we're calling Monthly Mingle.

Each event will feature a different speaker that brings a unique, educational business perspective. We are hoping that Monthly Mingle will not only be a monthly highlight for our members, but will also increase member attendance and participation through this fun, engaging format. The events will be held in the ballroom of the Union County Community Center and will run from 12 - 1 with an additional 30 minutes afterwards for networking opportunities.

The goal is to provide an inspiring mini-workshop on topics that will both encourage and assist business owners. Living in a community

See Harper, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Interim President Al Harper



Letters to the Editor

Happy Holiday or Merry Christmas?

Dear Editor,
Just comparing the two, I find there is no comparison! I just cannot comprehend the thought of Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior, coming back to earth and saying Happy Holiday world, or a child of God saying Happy Holiday if you know Jesus!

The world has come in, doing things that the world does! Disrespecting this day as just a day to put your feet up and relax. Jesus Christ was not celebrating a holiday on the cross, nor is he doing that today! Just how does a holiday mend a broken heart, give life or breath to breathe, heal the sick, and the sinful people, those how are "lost", renew the heart, transform it, forgive it into a heart that says "I Love You!" I gave my life for you!

See Porter, page 5A

Climate Change

Dear Editor,

Climate change, global warming, whatever, is killing me.

It only took "eleven days" to melt the 8" of snow that accumulated at my residence in the middle of December.

This has to have set a record and "Thank You's" are in order to the "Doom and Gloom" scientists who have provided the "hot air."

I haven't seen on the TV nor in the paper of the next meeting of the CCIC - Climit Change is Catastrophic.

Does anyone know? I might have to wait until July.

LA. Moore

MiLan Kim

Dear Editor,

I read the article in the paper last week about MiLan Kim who is currently on dialysis and waiting for a kidney. My heart was touched because I have been where she is and I know first hand how difficult her situation is. As she said in the article she just wants to live a normal life without going to dialysis at least 3 times a week which takes up to 3 or 4 hours each time. It is hard to live normally when you must do this week after week, year after year in order to live.

I just saw the Donate Life float in the Rose Parade and I hope this will remind people how important it is to sign up to be a donor. As stated in the article there are 100,000 people waiting on a kidney and only 7,000 people getting donated kidneys each year.

MiLan, I pray that your miracle will happen soon.

Peggy Deyton

Letters to the Editor

Climate Change

Dear Editor,

In November 2016, I said that Americans had grown weary of the road that they'd walked for eight years under hollow leadership. This November, we saw the difference between the struggle behind us and the hope before us when Republicans in the House of Representatives introduced the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

With the president's signature, conservative tax reform became the law of our land this December. America's unified Republican government has kept its promise to inject fairness, simplicity and common sense into a broken tax code, and the new system took effect on New Year's Day.

At its core, tax reform means that workers from Sky Valley to Big Canoe see the difference in their paychecks. In northeast Georgia, a family of four will see their annual income tax burden fall by \$2,080 under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

The fact that some lawmakers have fought furiously to deny working Americans such historic tax relief reveals how committed they are to centralizing power and money in Washington.

But I believe their confidence in big government comes at the expense of industrious Americans. The IRS has been the pit bull of federal bureaucrats for too long, but the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act puts Fido on a much shorter leash by lowering income tax brackets across the board.

Conservative tax reform means that my neighbors in Blairsville will see more money in their paychecks as their federal withholding decreases and as companies like AT&T and Boeing invest more in their employees in response to a smarter tax system.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act also means that Washington is more accountable to everyday citizens. Before now, taxpayers looking toward April 15 faced a cyclone of confusing itemization rules. To make the filing process simple and more transparent, we've doubled the standard deduction from \$12,700 to \$24,000 for families and \$6,350 to \$12,000 for individuals.

Roughly 30 percent of filers in Georgia's Ninth District itemize their taxes, and, moving forward, nearly nine out of 10 of them will have the option of coming out ahead by filling out their taxes on a postcard.

Already, we're seeing productivity encouraged and rewarded once again. Leadership at Yancey Bros. Co., a Georgia company with a presence in Jefferson, is giving each of their employees a \$500 bonus because of the benefits our tax reform package will bring to local business communities.

The bill that I helped send to President Trump's desk recognizes that a country with the planet's most innovative ideas and workforce shouldn't harbor a tax system that discourages job

See Collins, page 5A

I Never Considered Her Old

Dephia Adams was a person who loved life. She very much enjoyed taking us kids to Little Bear Creek to swim and play in the water at Baker Rock. She was an expert at catching catfish. She knew where to find the best and sweetest blackberries.

She was rock solid in her faith. But, she never let her age deter her having fun. She loved us grandkids and didn't mind spoiling us. When we stayed with her during the summer she made "Chocolate Gravy" for us each and every morning. Chocolate Gravy poured over 2-3 hot buttered biscuits is the same as having a 7 layer chocolate cake. You can imagine what that kind of breakfast did for a bunch of 12 year old country boys.

After all when you get up at the crack of dawn you need a pick-me-up. On one such morning after we had tended the 5 chicken houses she had all 5 of her grandsons picking blackberries in an abandoned field close to her house. She mentioned her father, Charlie Baker.

At the mention of his name we all became inquisitive about our great grandfather. We found out that he was a farmer and logger. And that he loved Fox Hunting better than any other past time.

Also, everyone in the community called him Dad because of the great respect he commanded.

Everyone loved him because he was kind and generous and never had a bad word to say about anyone. But, he attended Blue Springs Missionary Baptist Church and he could be quite stern.

One of the taboos of the church during this time was that dancing was of the devil. So, the Baker children were never allowed to attend any kind of social where dancing might occur.

When Delph was about 13 one of her cousins came for a visit. This same cousin had recently visited the big city of Birmingham and while there had learned to do a new dance called the Charleston. My grandmother loved life and trying new things. So, she begged her cousin to show her the new dance moves. So, Delph, Lucille and their cousins were out under Dad's apple trees learning this new dance when Dad walked around the barn and caught them. My grandmother was a quick thinker so, when she was asked "What are you'n doing?" she responded, "Daddy we are playing *Ring Around the Rosies*." Luckily, Dad Baker knew nothing of dancing or the girls would have received a spanking.

She was rock solid in her faith and made sure we were in church with her each Sunday

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Crape Myrtle Care

Crape Myrtles are a staple of Southern landscaping, but there are many myths out there about how you should care for them. The real keys to success with crape myrtles are providing adequate sunlight, maintaining the desired soil pH, good drainage, proper pruning, fertilization, mulching to control weeds, and insect control as needed.

Crape myrtles always require full sun for at least eight hours or more per day to be healthy and have beautiful blooms. If they do not receive adequate sunlight, they will not bloom or grow to their fullest potential. Always be familiar with the sun patterns in your yard before planting crape myrtles.

These trees love our Georgia clay because they thrive in slightly acidic soils with a pH of about 6 to 6.5. It is important to maintain this pH because if it is too high or too low, the plant will not use fertilizer properly and your crape myrtles will never reach their full potential. If you are thinking about planting crape myrtles, or have already done so and they seem to be struggling, test your soil to see what the pH is and what nutrients are currently available for the plant.

Late winter is the perfect time to prune crape myrtles. However, contrary to popular belief, they do not all need to be pruned every year. Though it is believed that they should be completely cut back to the main trunk, or "topped," every year, this is not best for the plant. It is so dramatic and stressful that many call this method "crape murder." It can lead to thick, unsightly joints between branches and diminish the natural beauty of the plant. Crape myrtle trees should be pruned so they maintain their natural shape by thinning out branches that cross or rub against each other. This keeps the canopy open to maximize the amount of sunlight that accesses the plant and allows for adequate air movement.

Early spring is the best time to fertilize crape myrtles to maximize their growth and blooms. Fertilizers such as 10-10-10, 12-4-8 or 16-4-8 are acceptable for crape myrtles, but soil testing is always recommended to make sure that the appropriate amounts of fertilizer are added. Over-fertilizing trees will cause excess growth and a reduced number of blooms on each tree.

Mulching crape myrtles after planting conserves moisture, reduces weeds and insulates roots against extreme temperatures. The mulch layer should be about three to five inches deep around the tree, and the mulch area should be much larger than the planting hole is to protect the roots as they grow.

Insect damage is a frequent problem

See Mattee, page 5A

UGA Extension

From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



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