

Hazard Mitigation Planning

Disasters can happen anywhere and at any time. Dealing with disasters is a full-time job for the Union County Fire Department and Emergency Management Agency (UCEMA). The UCEMA follows the fundamental principles of emergency management when dealing with disasters. These principles include prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. Mitigation is a major aspect of emergency management and involves community participation and planning.

Mitigation is commonly defined as sustained actions taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from hazards and their effects. This is referred to as hazard mitigation. Hazard mitigation focuses attention and resources on community policies and actions that will produce benefits over time. In order to do this, UCEMA has developed a Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is updated and approved every five years.

The plan is a guide for UCEMA and the community. Included in the plan is a profile of Union County; the hazards that may affect our area; and mitigation strategies that may be used to reduce the impact of these hazards on our community. Union County uses the plan to obtain grants and other funding to carry out the hazard mitigation strategies.

The current plan was updated in late 2019 and was approved by Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). A Hazard Mitigation Plan update involves input from government organizations, public safety, private organizations and the general public.

It is now time to update the current plan, and UCEMA has received a grant to help with the cost of the update. UCEMA will host a kick-off meeting Thursday, January 30th, at 10 a.m. The meeting will be held at Headquarters Station located at 507 Shoe Factory Rd. The purpose of this meeting is to introduce participants to the planning process and to begin gathering information for the update.

There will be several meetings during the year which will evaluate the current plan; update vital information; and update the hazard mitigation strategies for the next five-year cycle. Once the plan has been completed, it must be evaluated and approved by GEMA and FEMA before it can go into effect.

See Dyer, page 5A

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Wise Blood

Flannery O'Connor published her first novel, "Wise Blood," in 1952. She lived near Milledgeville, Georgia, before disease took her life in 1964 (age 39). The abrasive characters she developed in southern gothic writing style gave voice to her commentary on the cultural flaws of her day.

She didn't appreciate "expressive individualism," the idea that your own truth forms your identity. In this novel, Hazel Motes is a disillusioned WWII veteran who invents his "Church Without Christ." He identifies as a preacher and proclaims his truth. "There was no Redemption because there was no Fall and no Judgment because there wasn't the first two. Nothing matters but that Jesus was a liar." He adds, "I preach there are all kinds of truth, your truth and somebody else's, but behind all of them, there's only one truth and that is that there's no truth." Enoch Emery pushes back. "You act like you think you got wiser blood than anybody else."

If truth is up to each of us, there really is no truth because we will contradict each other. A few decades prior to O'Connor's work, theologian Gresham Machen noted that if the only authority is your own experience, "truth can only be that which 'helps' the individual man. Once truth is regarded only as that which works at a particular time, it ceases to be truth... Dark and gloomy would be the world, if we were left to our own devices, and had no blessed Word of God."

Darkness and gloom stalk the world where truth is based on the shadowy emotions of those who imagine themselves original thinkers, but who in fact repeat the feel-good bromides of a culture untethered from the wisdom of God. Exhibit A: pop singer Taylor Swift. "Religion's in your lips. Even if it's a false god we'd still worship," she sings. "What if the way you hold me is actually what's holy?"

The Word of God offers wisdom and truth to all who seek. To popular culture it says, "Do not be wise in your own eyes" (Prov. 3:7). It reveals the only source. "The Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:6). God reveals truth to us through what He has made, and in Jesus Christ, "who has become for us wisdom from God—that is,

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



From Your Commissioner

The mission of the Union County Parks & Recreation Department is to enrich the lives of the citizens of Union County by providing safe, welcoming parks and recreation facilities with affordable, diverse recreational activities for people of all ages to play, learn, and develop healthy lifestyles. All this, while also being good stewards of our natural environment.

The Union County Recreation Department is very important to our community and will continue to be a vital part of our county government. As a matter of fact, 90% of U.S. adults say that parks and recreation is an important local government service. Through Parks & Recreation, we provide places for people to connect, play, and certainly enjoy the beauty of our surroundings. It is important for Union County to know that we have one of the most active recreation departments in the state of Georgia. Most everyone knows that through the Rec Department, Union County offers all kinds of programs for kids and adults ranging from ball-related activities to exercise programs and different types of activities in-between such as football, cheerleading, baseball, basketball, volleyball, golf, soccer, wrestling, Latin Dance Fusion, aerobics, Hitt, Tabata, Sit & Fit, pickleball, water aerobics, and swimming lessons.

As I write this column, the Union County Parks & Recreation Department is very active and very busy. They just completed the regular season for basketball, which was made challenging due to the weather event. Right now, we are entering basketball Allstars with their first tournament scheduled for January 31. If they do well, these tournament games can run through March. Registration for Spring and Summer activities are in full swing. The deadline for Volleyball registration is February 3, 2025; the deadline for baseball/softball registration is February 3, 2025; and the deadline for Spring Wrestling is February 21, 2025.

Even though we are experiencing challenging weather, we know that Spring will be here before we know it. Our ballparks will fill up and our gyms will overflow with kids. These are exciting times, and I will keep you informed as the new season approaches.

Union County Commissioner

Harold Collins



Absence of Joy

Perhaps a reason for our absence of joy and for our realization that our precious time has slipped through our fingers is that life's chaos has resulted in our losing the spirit of play. We gasp for air, and the next day we find ourselves running like crazy to accomplish a seemingly never-ending roller coaster of tasks. Some of the happenings were our making, while others just seem to come out of nowhere. Our gusto for life has been destroyed by circumstances that were subtle and unexpected. We ask ourselves over and over: "Where has the time gone?"

"Why aren't I as happy as I was in high school?" "What can I do about it?" As long as the grace of God allows us to draw breath of air, we can reinstate our spirits of fun and play. We were born with playful spirits – no person is born without the ability to laugh, giggle, and play. God has instilled a playful spirit as a permanent fixture in every single person. When stressors begin

See Ashurst, page 5A

Successful Mental Health
Dr. James Ray Ashurst
PH.D.



Chamber 2025

Well folks, it is looking like we are getting warmer weather this week, and we could not be more excited! We had a wonderful time at our Boots and Bling Annual Awards Banquet, and we want to thank everyone who sponsored, volunteered, and attended the event.

We are thrilled to announce that Gunnar Ingram and Turner West have been named the 2025 STAR Students, and they have chosen Mr. Howard McCombs and Mrs. Dixie Conger as the STAR Teachers. We cannot wait to honor them at the upcoming Evening with the STARs Banquet.

This special evening will celebrate the STAR Students and Teachers, and others for their outstanding academic achievements. For those interested in attending, please visit our website to register.

Stay warm and remember, the future is Bright in Union County.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

Grand Jury Comments

Dear Editor,
Our Grand Jury has a rich history dating back to the Magna Carta. The Grand Jury was founded as an advocate for the citizens. In our Constitution it provides the checks and balances between the legislative branch of the government and the people. We see that in the Georgia Constitution under Rights of Persons where the Constitution directs the juror to judge the facts and the law. If the jury found the law to be lacking, they found for the citizen. This is (was) how bad laws were nullified. Of interest is that precedent for jury nullification was set by Wm. Penn in 1670. Today if a juror attempts to judge the law they will be found in contempt of court. Ten hot's and a cot!
See Blanchard, page 5A

The Enemy of Success

Why Comparison Is the Enemy of Success
We are obsessed with the "if only" game.

If only I had started saving earlier for retirement. If only I had chosen a different career path. If only I had bought that house in the suburbs back in the '70s. It's amazing how much time we spend imagining alternate versions of ourselves, convinced that these hypothetical choices would somehow unlock the success we're chasing.

I see this mindset everywhere. At community gatherings, people humble-brag about their pension plans while others wish they had made similar choices. On Facebook, where grandchildren share their achievements, comments overflow with people lamenting their own life paths. It's as if we've collectively decided that decisions made decades ago predetermine success.

But here's what fascinates me: some of the most successful people I know didn't follow the traditional path. Take Betty, a friend who started a thriving antique restoration business at 55 despite having no formal training. Or Frank, who became a celebrated local restaurateur after taking a risk and leaving his accounting job of 30 years. They succeeded not because they had perfect cards, but because they learned to play their hands skillfully.

This phenomenon calls to mind the ancient wisdom found in the story from the seventh chapter of the Book of Numbers. When the Israelites built the holy Tabernacle in the desert – where G-d communicated directly with Aaron and his descendants, filled with Divine and extravagant artifacts – their tribal leaders donated exactly six wagons to transport everything – just six. No extras, no backup plans. Modern scholars have determined that these wagons were filled to absolute capacity, leaving no room for even a matchstick more.

At first glance, this seems like terrible planning. Wouldn't you want some wiggle room? A backup wagon in case something breaks down? But there's a profound lesson here: what looks like scarcity to us might actually be perfectly sufficient for our purpose.

In modern terms, we often assume we need every new gadget, another workshop, or a younger person's energy to succeed. We're constantly adding more wagons, convinced that we're somehow under-equipped for life's journey. But what if we already have exactly what we need?

Look at Harland Sanders, who started
See Hambourger, page 5A

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Jonathan Hambourger



Stubborn Relatives

A man by the name of John Michael Cromer came to South Carolina in 1752 from Bladen, Germany. His son, Jacob, began attending meetings in the 1760s and '70s to listen to people talk about war with England. Everyone told him he was too young to fight and tried to dissuade him from the war. So, he enlisted under the command of General George Washington and traveled all the way to Valley Forge to be sworn in and became a 1st Lieutenant.

Another ancestor fought for the Union during the Civil War even though he was from Alabama. All of his relatives and neighbors did as well. Winston County was a place comprised of settlers not rich planters. Mostly these were poor people trying to get by and there were very few slaves in the area. When the State seceded from the Union, Winston County seceded from Alabama, and he along with many friends fought on the side of the North. Southern sympathizers tried to force them to fight for the South which didn't go over too well. They bowed up to the Southern cause and sided with the Union.

After the war there were many characters in our family that were both proud and stubborn. The grandfather of my Dad was one large fellow called John Cummings. At the wedding of a friend he partook of the beverages before the ceremony. He became intoxicated and was told to sit down so the wedding could begin. When the preacher asked if anyone had anything to say, the big fellow stood up and disrobed in front of everyone. He then challenged every man there to a fight because he knew that no one could whip him. On another occasion he fought a man over a dispute about which one of them made the best corn liquor in the community. Both men were proud and cantankerous. They did not like being told what they had to do! Both men became the grandfathers of my Dad.

I guess I am writing this while thinking about him. His birthday is on January 30th, and many times I have wondered what made Dad the way he was. My father had a large dose of confidence. He once had a basketball coach that told him he wasn't very good. This did not deter Dad, it only challenged him. He not only made the team, he became the starting point guard.

When he met Mom, she was dating a fellow by the name of Rod. One day this boy told Dad there was no way he would ever secure a date with his girl. Later, the young Paul Cummings went to the Adams farm and found Bill Adams working in the chicken house. The young man pitched in and helped the father of Shirley
See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



Raised Beds

This week I would like to talk about raised beds. There are many different ways to make raised beds. So I'll go through different types of materials that you can use and some basic principles to use when building your raised beds. I'll also talk about situations where I like raised beds over growing in the soil and vice versa.

Raised beds are a great tool to use if you have don't have a lot of sunlight in your yard. Plants grown in raised beds will still need full sun, but if you only have a small area of your yard that has full sun, a raised bed is a good way to maximize that spot. If you have slopes that are too steep to plant, leveling out a small area and putting in a raised bed in that spot is another good idea. Oftentimes, the best soil in Towns and Union is found in river bottoms. If you don't the good fortune of putting your garden in one of those places, growing in raised bed will also be much easier than fighting with heavy clay soils. Raised beds are also going to have fewer weed issues, and less soil compaction. You can build elevated raised beds to that you don't need to do as much bending down.

Dimensions for a raised bed depend on the materials that you are using. Generally, I like raised beds that aren't more than 4 feet across. If you have really long arms you can make them wider. I also like beds that are about 8 feet long. If you make long beds, it's just more difficult to walk around them, especially if you've put a bunch of raised beds next to each other. 10 inches height will be enough depth for most vegetables. Root crops like potatoes and carrots will need more depth. The deeper you make the raised bed the more material you will need to fill it. Soil to fill raised beds costs money, so don't make them needlessly deep. If you have tall crops planted in your raised beds they can shade out other crops, so orient them in a north-south direction. You want the raised bed to be completely level. To do this you may need to dig out the place where you're putting it.

Let's move on to materials that you can use. There are several different types of lumber. Cedar is very good, because it does not rot quickly. However, it is very expensive. Cypress is often easier to get than cedar. Oak and other hardwoods can be difficult to find in sufficient quantities, and are only a little more rot resistant than pine. Pine is the most readily available and cheapest lumber. It will rot, but I've seen where you can get several years of use out of pine. An alternative to lumber is cement blocks, brick,
See Williams, page 5A

UGA extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Kenneth West Publisher/Owner
Shawn Jarrard General Manager/Editor
Derek Richards Advertising Director
Todd Forrest Sports Editor
Lowell Nicholson Photographer

Website: www.nganews.com • Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com • Mail: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

The North Georgia News is an independent and nonpartisan publication. As such, third-party views contained herein are not necessarily the opinions or positions of this newspaper, e.g. advertising, press releases, editorial content, perspectives expressed in articles covering local events, etc.

Publication No: 001505

Advertising: News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 (Union County) - One Year \$45 INCLUDING UNION COUNTY CUSTOMER REQUEST MAIL SERVICE. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$10. 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. 24, 1988, at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement.

Phone: 706-745-6343 Fax: 706-745-1830 • P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, Georgia 30514

Cummings...continued from Page 4A

until the work was complete. The elder man looked at the younger and asked him, "What are you doing and what do you want?"

The young man explained that he wanted to ask his daughter for a date, but, he wanted to ask him first. The elder man gave his consent, and as he was leaving Paul gave a little more information to Bill. "Sir, there is another fellow that wishes to date Shirley. But, he is of questionable character if you know what I mean. Last week he left a gal in Russellville because she wouldn't give him a kiss." Mr. Adams asked the boy's name and Dad told him. The elder man told Dad not to worry, he would fix that boy good if he came by their house. Mom and Dad spent the next 66 years together.

Dad loved to talk with anyone as long as a person would listen, and in his later years he longed for the opportunity to have an audience. One day he received a phone

call from a telemarketer. It warned him about talking to these phone sales people. But, my father wanted to talk with anyone that would listen, and as he answered, the man on the other end told him about a great deal for his cell phone. Dad listened a moment and then interrupted. He told the man that he had a problem, and the fellow was hooked. He asked Dad about what sort of problem he had.

My father told the man that he'd recently died and his family had buried him with his phone. He explained that he was running out of air, he was losing the charge on his phone and he was running out of minutes on his phone. So he asked the fellow if he could add some minutes on his phone to which the salesman replied, "Sir, can you hold on a minute? I want my supervisor to hear this conversation."

Daddy had a way of getting people to listen to him, and I sure miss talking with him. Happy Birthday, Daddy!

Blanchard... continued from Page 4A

Access to the Grand Jury by a citizen, although still found in the 2025 version of the Grand Jury Handbook, is all but gone in Georgia and definitely blocked in Union County based on personal experience. The Jury cannot not advocate for the citizens if the citizens cannot approach the Grand Jury.

Juror selection was changed in 2012 from a chosen pool of elites (Jim Crow writ large) to a jury of peers as the Founders intended. The comment on that change was: "It will make it harder for me to get convictions." Is the objective of the Grand Jury to get convictions? Apparently so, because there is never a "no bill" issued. Yet another mark of a deteriorated Found-

ing principle.

The power of a jury of the citizens is all but gone. Today's Grand Jury, especially in the Enotah District, is a rubber stamp for the District Attorney. There was lots of wonderful rhetoric in the NGN piece on January 22nd but in most part just hollow prose and subjugation of potential jurors. Sad, but yet more evidence of the decay of the jurisprudence system as a whole.

Read "The Lysander Spooner Reader" from eBay and "No Treason: The Constitution of No Authority" from Amazon, also "If It's Not a Runaway, It's Not a Real Grand Jury" by Roger Roots on the internet.

Zeb Blanchard

St. Lawrence... continued from Page 4A

may be from a computer gathering information about you or your bank account.

GHOST CALLS
These calls are often from phantom numbers and can be a sign of automated attacks or port scanning. They can be a common issue with Wi-Fi calling (using your phone on Wi-Fi instead of phone data, a.k.a., VoIP). You can contact your phone provider to help manage and prevent ghost calls.

CALLS WITH NO CALLER ID
The caller may have intentionally blocked their information. The call shows it's coming from "Unknown." The call may be from a legitimate organization or person who wants to keep their contact information private.

FRAUD TEXTS & EMAILS
Walmart, River City Bank and CVS have all acknowledged in recent weeks that scammers are sending out fake email and text alerts, of-

ten asking if you made a high-dollar purchase and prompting you to click a link or call a "help" number, saying your account requires attention, or some other alarming situation prompting you to take action.

If you get an email or text about some very unusual activity or situation, DO NOT click the links they provide and DO NOT call the phone numbers they provide. Call your bank directly, or the store or business the message is supposedly from.

The vast majority of scams succeed because the victim just assumed it was legitimate, or didn't think before they took action. The Blairsville Police Department and the Union County Sheriff's Office both provide help and information to protect you from scammers. The worst thing you can do about it is not know what to look for. When it comes to scammers, it pays to be a little paranoid.

Gary St. Lawrence

Hambourger.. continued from Page 4A

Kentucky Fried Chicken at age 65 with just his Social Security check and a chicken recipe. Or Laura Ingalls Wilder, who published her first "Little House" book at age 65. These aren't stories about people with abundant resources; they're stories about people who maximized what they had.

The key isn't wishing for different circumstances - it's mastering the ones you've got. Instead of lamenting what you lack, try this exercise: list everything you do have. Include the obvious stuff like your life experience or skills, but don't forget the less tangible assets. Maybe you're exceptionally patient because of raising children. Perhaps you have a unique perspective because of living through significant historical changes. These aren't consolation prizes; they're your competitive advantages.

I recently talked to a retiree who initially felt disadvantaged because she didn't have computer programming skills like younger entrepreneurs. However, she realized her 40 years of experience in customer service gave her insights into people's needs that her more tech-savvy competitors missed. She turned what felt like a limitation into the foundation of her successful senior care consulting business.

The truth is that we each possess a unique combination of traits, experiences, and capabilities that no one else possesses. The challenge isn't to become someone else - it's to become the fullest version of ourselves. Success doesn't come from having the best cards; it comes from playing your cards best.

So, stop the next time

you catch yourself playing the "if only" game. Instead of imagining what you could do with someone else's hand, ask yourself if you're making the most of your own. Are you fully utilizing your decades of experience and wisdom? Are you spending more time wishing for youth's energy or maximizing the patience and perspective that come with age?

Because here's the thing: your "limitations" might actually be pointing you toward your purpose. What looks like a disadvantage today could become your signature strength tomorrow. The only way to find out is to stop comparing your cards to everyone else's and start playing your hand like you mean to win.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer who supports communities throughout the regional South. You can contact them at y@tasteoftorah.org.

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

The Hazard Mitigation Plan is one of many plans that UCEMA must complete and update. These plans better prepare the community as well as increase the amount of federal funding awarded to Union County in the event of a declared disaster. It is one of the many "behind the scenes" responsibilities performed by UCEMA to better serve the community.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Ashurst... continued from Page 4A

to hit us from every side, it is our spirits of fun and play that enable us to cope with those stressors. However, some of us have betrayed God's grace along the journey by becoming pessimistic, mean-spirited, financially stingy, and turning our faith and trust inward rather than upward. In subtle ways, we find ourselves stabbing our spirits of fun and play inch-by-inch.

Charles Dickens wrote a marvelous story about a man named Scrooge. As a young man, he had the choice of loving to play, but circumstances changed Scrooge into a miser-

able individual. It was through mysterious dreams that Scrooge was offered another chance to activate his spirit of fun. Those of us who have neglected or sabotaged our spirits of joy may have future chances to reinstate them, but the time that we have wasted cannot be replaced.

"Only I can change my life. No one can do it for me." (Carol Burnett)

Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

our righteousness, holiness and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

About her novel O'Connor said, "That belief in Christ is to some a matter of life and death has been a stumbling block for some readers who would prefer to think it a matter of no great consequence." It is of great consequence to search for wisdom in matters of life and death, meaning and morality, time and eternity. What you need is revealed in a Person: Jesus Christ.

Williams...

continued from Page 4A

concrete, or stone. If you are going to build the wall high, you would need some mortar to keep the walls from falling.

The research that is available says that pressure treated wood is safe to use for food production. Arsenic is no longer used to pressure treat wood, and has not been used since 2005. Wood treated with creosote should not be used. Railroad ties and utility poles are treated with creosote.

If you have questions about building your own raised beds contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Vickers...

continued from Page 4A

involved in the decisions Jesus made before helping someone with their problems. The parable of the Good Samaritan is another example for us to consider.

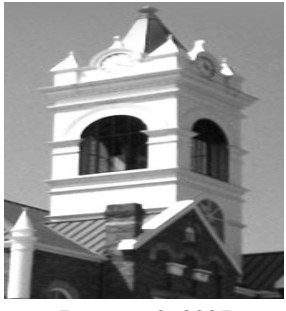
It's easy to love and help family and friends, but what about those who are difficult to love and get along with? What about those who do things we do not approve of or have political leanings different from ours? We don't have to like someone's ways or their positions on things we may not approve of.

But, we do have to love them in spite of those differences. Loving your neighbor as you love yourself is not always an easy thing to do. But, as Christians, it's not optional. In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your soul. This is the first and greatest commandment. And, the second is like it, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Using a phrase from today, loving our neighbors is a "gotta do," and according to the words of Jesus, it's not optional. Through prayer, all things are possible.

Gene Vickers

**Bell Ringing Union
County Old Courthouse**



January 2, 2025
In memory of
Virginia B. Meeks
on her birthday
By Ginger and Terry Meeks

January 4, 2025
In loving memory of
Neva Edna Wallace
"We miss you Mom"
On the anniversary
of her passing
By Cindi and Riccardo

January 21, 2025
In memory of
Dollie C. Meeks
On the anniversary
of her death
By Ginger and Terry Meeks

**Bell ringing information
at 706-745-5493**