

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Live Fire Training

A structure fire is one of the most difficult and dangerous incidents that firefighters face. There are multiple factors that influence the fire and the way it is fought. These factors are constantly changing requiring firefighters to evaluate, react, and reevaluate. Firefighters must know how a fire will react in a building; how ventilation and fire streams change the fire; and how to safely apply these techniques to extinguish the fire. It takes knowledge, experience and practice.

On Saturday, January 19th, Union County Fire Department conducted a live-burn training at the new training facility burn building. The training was the first live-fire training conducted at the building. Firefighters, both career and volunteer, sacrificed their Saturday and their comfort to be part of this event. The temperatures were in the 40s with strong winds and rain making this training a challenge.

Prior to the training, firefighters and instructors prepared the building and completed a training plan for the day. The plan is essential for operations and safety. The training started at 09:00 with a burn plan review and safety briefing. Firefighters then set up the needed equipment and conducted a walk-thru of the burn building to familiarize everyone with the rooms, exits, etc.

Support firefighters set up fire engines, hoses, and water supply to support the interior firefighting operations. Training began with a demonstration of fire behavior and thermal layering of heat and smoke reinforcing the need to stay low. Firefighters were shown how a fire grows and reacts inside a building. Firefighters were then placed in groups to make interior attacks. This is where they practiced the skills of extinguishment.

This training is very valuable for firefighters to understand the way in which a fire behaves. They also get to practice firefighting skills and techniques with actual burning material in a closed environment. Firefighters were given an opportunity to experience the results of hose streams and ventilation. They were able to utilize various firefighting equipment, such as SCBA, hose lines, and thermal imaging camera, in these realistic environments.

All firefighters did an amazing job and we are proud of all who participated. Union County Fire Department has responded to

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Re-ordered Life

Growing up in the South in the 70s, it was hard not to notice the catchy tune, "Sweet Home Alabama." I just turned the radio on, without knowing what the lyrics meant.

Some of those lyrics included, "Now Muscle Shoals has got the Swampers, and they've been known to pick a song or two." This reference to a town in northwest Alabama is about a recording studio and its house band. And that story is really about Rick Hall.

Hall's success began in the late 1950s when George Jones recorded one of his songs. Hall went on to establish the FAME recording studio in Muscle Shoals, which was instrumental in the success of many artists. Hall's studio recorded the work of Aretha Franklin, Duane Allman, the Osmonds, Mac Davis, the Gatlin Brothers, and Tim McGraw to name a few.

Hall tells his story in "The Man from Muscle Shoals." He was born into a poor Mississippi sharecropper family, abandoned by his mother when he was age 4, and began playing in bars as a teenager. In 1957, his hard life became unbearable when both his young wife and his father died within weeks of each other. Depression and heavy drinking set in, and continued despite his later success.

A few years ago, his second wife Linda said, "Rick had every kind of award. But it was not enough. He still needed the peace that only God could give. So I just prayed." At age 82, Rick Hall received Christ and was baptized. "God was working in my life while I was running from Him. I have total peace of mind now. My relationship with God is more important to me now than having a #1 record. Now I want to introduce other people to that." He died in 2018 at age 85.

The gospel will re-order your life. Another example is, "I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it... being extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions." Then comes Paul's Damascus Road experience, when he encounters Jesus personally. He writes, "God was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles," a change quite remarkable given that the man was, in today's parlance, a religious bigot at best and a terrorist at worst (Gal. 1:13-16).

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. What type of trash is accepted at the Convenience Center right off of Highway 325?

A. This facility accepts household bagged garbage and recyclables only. They do not accept loose trash as they do not have a scale to weigh loose trash as the main Transfer Station on Deep South Farm Road does. All the trash must be in bags. They accept all the same recyclables as the Transfer Station, which includes #1 and #2 plastic, aluminum, paper, and corrugated cardboard. They also accept glass which the main Transfer Station does not.

Q. Do you feel this was a good addition to Union County?

A. Absolutely! We have a very large county with residents spread out over many miles. If you live out in that direction driving all the way into town to haul off your trash could be a round trip of 25 miles or more. This location makes it much more convenient (the reason for calling it the Convenience Center) to take your trash and recyclables and stays busy from all the residents in the area. Hopefully in the future we will be able to have a couple more of these Convenience Centers located within Union County as long as we can find suitable locations.

Q. Have there been any problems with this location?

A. Other than initial issues that you have with the opening of any new facility and minor concerns from the public there have not been any major issues that I am aware of. Everything seems to run smoothly, and I am very thankful for that. Initially people were concerned this would be an eyesore and not utilized enough to warrant its placement. It has proven to be very useful to the public and the facility is kept very clean and tidy. It is also not extremely visible from Highway 515 since its location is below the road level.

Q. Can anyone take their trash to the Convenience Center on Highway 325 or is it specifically for residents who live in that area?

A. This facility can be utilized by anyone who wishes to do so. Since you have to pay the same to dispose of your bagged trash as you would at the main Transfer Station you can utilize this facility no matter what part of the county you live in if you wish.

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

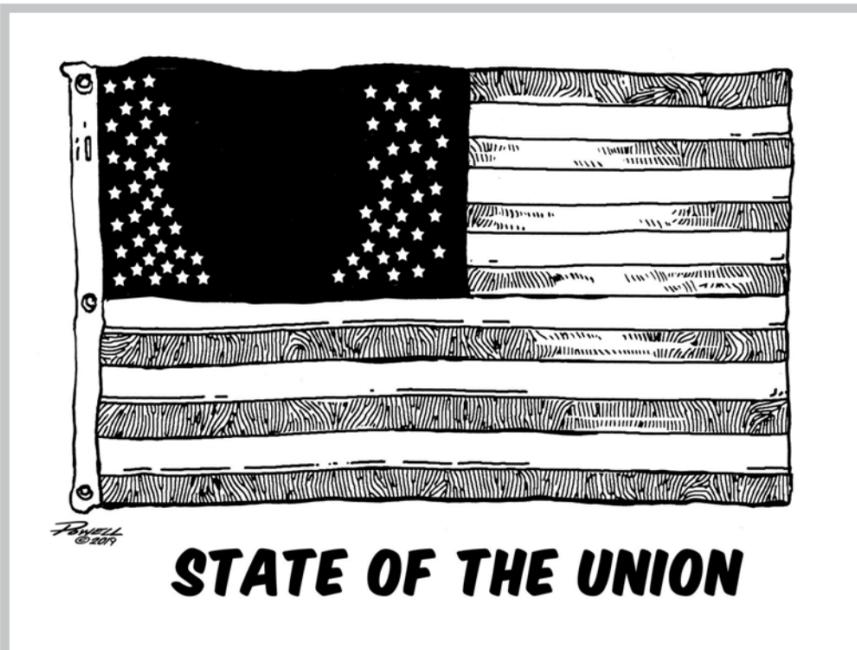
What Pot Advocates Don't Want You to Know

According to the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) annual report from Colorado, marijuana-related traffic deaths increased 62% after recreational marijuana was legalized in 2013.

The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

While Colorado legislators happily count the millions in marijuana tax revenue, they also seem oblivious to the dire impact the legalization of pot is having on youth. After the state legalized recreational use of pot, youth marijuana use increased 20% in the 2013-2014 period as compared to the two prior years. The rest of the country's youth-use decreased by 4%.

The wave toward legalization ignores the serious health risks of marijuana, according to a recent New York Times piece by Alex Berenson, author of the forthcoming "Tell Your Children: See Drug Free, page 5A



Chamber of Commerce

February is here and the weather feels like winter, but here at the Chamber we are just heating up. As you read in last week's column, we had an outstanding response to bring back the Annual Awards Banquet as a unique, stand-alone event. And we aren't stopping there! As you are reading this column, we are just wrapping up our first Members Benefit Breakfast of the year sponsored by Southern Bank & Trust.

In response to your request, this free breakfast allowed our members to network while learning ways to best maximize their listings on the Chamber website. Tips for improving SEO, event promotion, and monitoring of analytics were just a few of the topics covered at this well attended breakfast. If you missed this event and want to learn more about making the most of your Chamber benefits, give us a call at the Chamber and we'll be more than happy to meet with you individually.

Another tremendously beneficial event just

See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

All Things New

Dear Editor,

We all love brand new things, especially that new car smell, or maybe a new relationship, which gets us all excited. Maybe it's a new job or a new baby on the way. A new house with all of the bells and whistles included, or maybe a brand new start in another part of the country. A lot of folks get involved in building a new church from the ground up. Whatever your brand new thing is, it can be a reality if one works hard at it. It's the same thing when a person or a couple accepts Jesus Christ into their heart. At that special moment like none other, you have made a commitment for life to serve God in all you do and say. There is an excitement and a joy that one will never forget when they put the Lord God first in their life, and then other people's needs become more important than our own.

God never promised us who believe in Him an easy path to follow. Jesus Christ had many enemies who hated him because of the claims that He made that He was the Son of God in whom we just celebrated this past Christmas season. Being scorned, rejected, cast out, betrayed and so much more is the life of a born again believer in Christ, but the eternal rewards are out of this world. In this life here on earth, Christ is making and molding us into His likeness, a

See Combs, page 5A

Erosion of Our Principles

Dear Editor,

As I witness the various levels of indifference, destruction and erosion of our principles as a nation, I often think, "What could possibly be next?"

Well, it arrived over the last week in two separate states: New York and Virginia. In each, there were legislative proposals to allow abortions legally up and through the third trimester! That means that, as the mother's water broke and the child was being delivered, it could be legally killed with the consent of the mother and the doctor! So the viability of the child became an obsolete concept and the selfish reasons perhaps of the mother in concert with a physician became paramount. What happened to the doctor's Hippocratic Oath? One where life is the preeminent concern of life over death?

New York has already passed this new law at the suggestion and support of Gov. Cuomo! The Virginia state legislative subcommittee just voted it down by a 5 to 3 vote. Perhaps some common sense prevailed, but how in the world did such a concept even get that far given all the other issues our country faces?

Over the past several years, we have heard

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Letters to the Editor

Please Reconsider

Dear Editor,

Your article regarding Blue Ridge Mountain EYC in the Jan. 23 edition of your paper that addressed the annual meeting and the intention of raising the customer service charge compelled me to share these thoughts with all that read this paper.

Regarding the annual meeting, it is nice to see that the current board sees the need to reduce the costs associated with the one-day event. To those members of the co-op that are not directly involved, the \$100,000 figure for a one-day meeting seems ridiculous. Thank you to those that are working to reduce that expense. Reducing the cost to about \$80,000 this year is a step in the right direction, but honestly, \$80,000 would still appear to be excessive to a lot of the membership.

More importantly, your discussion regarding raising the monthly customer charge by approximately 85 percent to \$38 to \$40 per month over time while possibly giving back a small amount in rate decreases needs to be reconsidered.

A little history first: since 2012, the customer monthly charge has risen from \$14.69 to \$21.37. That's approximately 45 percent in seven years, which is more than double the 3-plus percent national inflation rate. Why?

Now to consider almost doubling the \$\$ amount of the customer charge (yes, over time) would be excessively unfair to those that use the least amount of electricity. Why do they use the least? Because they can't afford it! Giving back a fraction of the price per kWh used would

See Rashid, page 5A

First comes the earthquake, then the aftershocks

Dear Editor,

The federal Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program was created in 2010 as part of Obama's Affordable Care Act.

MIECHV's mission is to provide and fund "voluntary," "evidence-based" home visits to at-risk pregnant women and new mothers. The program targets families who are evaluated to meet certain criteria for risk, with the goals of preventing abuse and neglect, improving mental and physical health of both parents and child, and promoting a positive relationship, among others. In financial year 2017, the program visited 156,000 families, with 942,000 total visits in 22 counties across the U.S.

A Red Flag law is a designated "violence-prevention" law that permits police or family

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My Favorite Things

These may be hobbies, foods, people, places or any other item of which you are fond. And there are specific reasons which make you fond of something. Let me tell you about mine.

Many people ask me about all these stories which I tell you about. I come from a family of story tellers. When I was little my Dad would load up the car and we'd drive to our home place in Alabama. It might be 10 or 11 at night upon our arrival, but it did not matter. The family would gather around my grandparents heating stove and Papa would regale us with his stories into the night. As I aged I began to hear many of the same stories again and my Granny would scold Papa by saying, "We've already heard that one!". But, I didn't care I loved every one of them.

My all time favorite story involved a wildflower whose name is lost to time. In 1940 Granny had just given birth to my Uncle Bud and it must have been a difficult delivery. Complications caused her to develop "Milk Fever". She was sick and could not get better. The Doctor was called and after her examination my Papa was told that his 22 year old wife would not make it through the night. The young man was devastated. Great Grandfather, Lon, asked if it would hurt to administer a certain herb to his daughter-in-law. The doctor said, "It won't hurt". He came back the next day and was relieved that Granny was still among the living. He told the Cummings family to keep giving her the herb. It took 6 months for her to recover and she went on to live another 62 years due to an herb and an old Cherokee man's tale heard by Big Papa Cummings. Now each spring beginning in March I scour the woods for an herb and wildflower which saved the life of my Granny 79 years ago.

This next one also pointed me down the road toward my career as a County Agent. As a little boy there were no electronic games to keep me occupied. The things we did to entertain ourselves were usually found outside. We would catch insects and play with them! Some of you may think that strange and repulsive. However, I learned to catch June Bugs and tie a string around their back leg. Then you could turn them loose and hold to the end of the string causing them to fly in circles around your head. Another summer time favorite was catching Lightning Bugs and putting them in a jar. In my dreams I see myself running barefooted through the damp grass chasing the glowing insects in the evenings and hearing my folks laugh and tell stories. During my sophomore year at Dalton College I enrolled in

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Cold and Plants

First off in this column I'd like to say that my column last week about the government shutdown was not the best timing, because it was reopened the day after I wrote my article. So, I wrote an article about it and the shutdown ended. I'm not saying I caused the government to reopen, but I'm not saying that I'm not the reason either. Hopefully the effects of the shutdown won't be felt for too long. However, you may want to hang on to that article because it could become relevant again on February 15th if the government shuts down again.

The topic for this week's column is the cold and plants. The cold weather can feel very dreary and that there is no life with plants not growing, trees without leaves, and wildlife hibernating for the winter. However, winter is a very important and necessary time of the year for plants. Without it there's a number of important fruits and flowers that would not bloom every year. Let's talk about the effect that cold weather can have on plants and why it's so important.

For some plants they are not just responding to the cold, but they are also responding to the change in day length as the days grow shorter in winter and then longer into the spring. These kinds of plants are called photosensitive, because they are responding to the changes in light. Apple and cherry trees fall into this category. After a satisfactory number of chilling hours have been reached for the plant they will break into bloom. This chilling process is called vernalization. Without vernalization we wouldn't be able to enjoy apples, peaches, tulips, foxgloves and many other plants. Different varieties of plants require different numbers of chilling hours, so it's always best to pick varieties that are well adapted to our climate so that you have the most success with your fruits and flowers.

In these plants there is a repressor gene that is keeping the plants from blooming. The cold causes that repressor gene to be altered so that it's no longer controlling the blooming of the flower. That way when warmer temperatures arrive the flowers can bloom out.

The timing of when cold happens is also critical. Last year we had a late freeze after many of the apple trees had already bloomed. Freezing temperatures after bloom can result in flowers dying and falling off. If the blooms fall off of a fruit tree, that tree won't be able to bear any fruit that year. Early freezes can be damaging to plants as well. They are forced into freezing temperatures before being able to harden off properly, and can be severely damaged.

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Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



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