

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## Passenger Vehicle Extrication Class

Motor vehicle accidents happen every day. There are times that some of these motor vehicle accidents involve significant vehicle damage and major injuries. Some could require the fire department to use extrication tools to free occupants. Union County Fire Department (UCFD) responds to approximately 200 motor vehicle accidents each year. These accidents require a coordinated effort by trained personnel and the proper equipment to resolve.

Over the last month, the career firefighters of UCFD completed the Passenger Vehicle Extrication Class. The class provides training on how to safely utilize basic hand tools, hydraulic equipment, and other associated rescue equipment to extricate victims who have been involved in a motor vehicle accident. The students completed all the lectures, skill practices, and testing. The testing involved a written test and skills check off provided by Georgia Firefighters Standards and Training.

The class involved classroom lectures on the various extrication tools and how to use them. These tools range from simple hand tools to the complex hydraulic power tools commonly known as the "Jaws of Life." The lectures continued with the anatomy of automobiles and the various new vehicle safety features. Firefighters must be familiar with the safety features before they begin to cut any part of the vehicle. If certain safety features, such as airbags, are cut in the wrong places, it can be very dangerous for firefighters and crash victims.

A major component of the class was how to perform extrication on vehicles in various positions and situations. Students were instructed on how to deal with and stabilize vehicles that were resting on their side or even on their top. They were also instructed on operating in various unusual situations such as vehicles in water and how to gain access to patients in severely damaged vehicles.

The class also reviewed the latest automobiles with alternate fuel sources and how to deal with them if they are involved in an accident. Firefighters must be familiar with each vehicle's different fuel systems and features. These features can be very different depending on the year, make, and model.

Motor vehicle accidents are one of the primary responses of

See Dyer, page 5A

**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**

David Dyer



## Chimney Bricks and Love Letters

If you had visited my man cave a few years ago, you would have seen a stack of bricks, a pile of sand, and sacks of mortar. If you visit me now, we could escape the winter cold by sitting near the wood stove. Assuming you notice the brickwork, at no point would you conclude the building materials arranged themselves in such an orderly, useful fashion. Our warm visit would benefit from my plan and purpose, a meeting with the fire chief about chimney design, and a mason skilled to lay the bricks just so.

I invite you into this scenario to consider how the world came to be. Did it begin with the raw materials which assembled themselves ("bottom-up"), or was there a designer and builder ("top-down")? If you insist on the former, perhaps you agree with philosopher Thomas Nagel who famously insisted, "I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that." Professor John Lennox points out, "If bottom-up is the only legitimate form of explanation, then there is, by definition, no ultimate top-down causation. Therefore, God is dead and science has buried him." Nagel feels the tension because he knows a bottom-up theory is too weak to bear the load of such a weighty conclusion about God's demise.

Another example. I met a pretty young co-ed in college. We became friends and more. I left for university. The mailman delighted me when he delivered her letters (no email in those days!). Eons of time would never be enough for the ink to appear on the paper on its own. What I held in my hand was far more than ink and paper. It was a message containing information communicated by a person. Information can only come from intelligence. This is what troubles Nagel even as he insists God cannot be allowed as an explanation for the information coded into the DNA of every living thing.

Nagle can see that it is impossible for living things to organize themselves in a "bottom-up" sequence. He wrote a book entitled, "Mind and Cosmos: Why the materialist neo-Darwinian conception of the world is almost certainly false" (2012). He is courageous to publish such a politically and scientifically incorrect book. But he remains determined to resist the most reason-

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**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



## From Your Commissioner

The Union County Fire Department (UCFD) and Emergency Management Agency (EMA) are very important facets of Union County Government's safety infrastructure. The UCFD provides round-the-clock emergency response services. The EMA serves as the coordinating agency for all emergency management activities in the County. They maintain the County Emergency Operations Plan and oversee disaster management that includes prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery phases. Working in tandem, these departments ensure a coordinated response to both everyday emergencies and large-scale disasters, protecting the lives and property of Union County residents.

In the month of January, the fire department and emergency management had several significant events and happenings. These are a few: Career firefighters began the Passenger Vehicle Extrication Class which is a class designed to teach the fundamentals of dealing with auto accidents, especially accidents that involve extricating a patient from an unstable and/or damaged vehicle. They will also be qualified to teach and evaluate the Passenger Vehicle Extrication class being held later in the year.

The fire department conducted a multi-company drill in January which featured classes from AirLife 14 crew member Holly Murray. The class was well attended with 38 members of the department. The EMA and Fire Department planned, informed, prepared, and responded to the snow and winter weather that affected the county during January. Weather briefings were conducted, and resources were assigned to deal with any emergencies or incidents during the snow, ice, and extremely cold temperatures.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan was updated, as it must be updated every five years and must be approved by both the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) for the county and its municipality to receive certain federal and state grants, as well as certain types of federal disaster assistance.

Calls – The UCFD responded to 164 calls for service. The breakdown of the calls in January included six fires, including two major structure fires, a chimney fire and a camper fire; 91

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**Union County Commissioner**

Harold Collins



## Letters to the Editor

### DOGE is on Fire

Dear Editor,  
Whether you like or dislike President Trump, one thing is clear – his time in office has pulled back the curtain on just how much corruption is buried in our government. Mike Benz, a former U.S. diplomat recently interviewed by Joe Rogan and Tucker Carlson, shared eye-opening details about how taxpayer money is being used by government insiders to meddle in global affairs, often for corporate interests.

USAID, for example, with an annual budget ranging from \$20 billion to \$40 billion over the past five years, has been involved in everything from COVID policies to then-Vice Presi-

See Murauskas, page 5A

### Chaos in Government

Dear Editor,  
The new administration in Washington is not adhering to the fundamental rights of the people as prescribed by the Constitution of the United States. The new administration has selected various individuals who do not have the background or experience to be in charge of their new responsibilities. The Republican Party does not exist. This new version does not align with the fundamentals of the actual Republican Party. The original party was all about small government and little interference in daily life.

This is becoming an autocracy, limit-  
See Fasanelli, page 5A

### Shameful

Dear Editor,  
I was shocked watching congressmen and women put on a disgraceful display at this federal building. To me, they acted like a mob trying to provoke a young man into a fight. This was shameful. They were pushing him to react, and I am very proud of him for not reacting. Just because they were elected to Congress doesn't give them the right to humiliate him for doing his job.

I believe those congressmen and women should be reprimanded and made to apologize publicly to him. If not, then the American people will know how the rest of Congress feels about this behavior.

They are supposed to be role models.  
Charlotte Thompson

### Making America Great

Dear Editor,  
If our beloved nation wants to be great again we have to stop and pray for God's grace to fall afresh, but certain things have to change in our government system. First, this new administration that has come into power over "We The People" needs to have better benefits for all of our veterans and get rid of judges that are not obeying the law of the land but doing what they think is right in their own eyes. They need to open pipelines instead of buying from other countries. They need to revamp the school system and get rid of all the filthy books that are brainwashing our young people.

See Combs, page 5A

### "DOGE" in Union County

Dear Editor,  
After DECADES of corruption in our Federal Government, the tide has changed, the wind is at our backs and we finally get to see just how evil those in the Congress, the Senate and "agencies or entities" here and around the world are. We all knew there was corruption, but if you have been following the news, it has been astounding to see at what level they have wasted our tax dollars. The Department of Government Efficiency, DOGE, has uncovered how our tax dollars have and are being wasted around the world to countries that hate us. It has been refreshing to see the billions – yes, bil-

See Vandereedt, page 5A



## Memory Lane

Individuals who are in their fifties and older enjoy reminiscing about yesterdays gone by. We can relive the time when microwaves, cell-phones, and calculators were nonexistent. Young people may look at us as aliens and do not have the foggiest idea of what life was like before modern technology.

Since we did not have today's technology, we had to be very creative. We had to discover ways to entertain ourselves. A lot of our ideas were centered on outdoor adventures. We just could not sit still, so as soon as we could, we made the outdoors our scenes of fun and play.

One thing that we never did was tell our parents that we were bored. If we slipped up and did, our parents always had some brilliant ideas regarding our boredom. As soon as they offered some chores to do, we turned down such offers and ran outdoors.

What exactly did our neighbors see when they looked through their windows and watched  
See Ashurst, page 5A

**Successful Mental Health**

Dr. James Ray Ashurst PH.D.



## Uncle Mack

My mother's two uncles, Mack and Rufus Baker, were two men that everyone loved and respected. I looked up to each one because they were tough and yet kind. They paid extra attention to young boys. Each man spent a great amount of time in the woods. Each of them enjoyed hunting. As young men they especially enjoyed coon hunting the hills and hollows of Newberg Mountain. Before my Dad ever dated my mother he was coon hunting with Mack and Rufus Baker.

When the two dogs were about 6 months old my father asked Mack and Rufus if he could go hunting with them. The two men pulled up in the yard and waited with my grandparents as my Daddy fetched his dogs. The duo of men and the young boy walked across the cotton and corn fields to the "James Place." The dogs struck a coon and began the trailing just after dark. The raccoon led the dogs up and down Turkey Creek and under bluffs for about an hour. Finally, the old coon went up a Black Gum Tree standing on the banks of Turkey Creek.

Uncle Rufus tied the old dogs and told my Dad to let Sam and Lou continue tree barking. Uncle Mack waded out into the middle of Turkey Creek and began to try and squall the coon out of the tree. Basically, Uncle Mack would make a sound that resembled a fighting coon. This squalling sound will entice a raccoon to walk down a tree and jump into the middle of a pack of dogs. He was able to get the critter's attention and the squalling sound worked, causing the old coon to make its way down the tree. The bandit got to within 10 feet of the ground where the dogs and Uncle Mack could see it. Being able to see their quarry caused the dogs to become very excited. They were barking and baying so loud you could barely hear anything else. Uncle Mack made one more of the squalling sounds and the old coon jumped from the tree into the creek.

But, before the coon hit the water Uncle Mack's false teeth flew from his mouth and hit the water. The sound of the splashing convinced the dogs that the coon was in the water. So, Sam dove into the water right where the false teeth had landed. Almost immediately, the coon landed on the dog's back. So, there was Uncle Mack bending over looking for his teeth and the dog was swimming in circles all while howling because the coon was biting his ear. Just when you thought matters couldn't get worse Lou, the other dog, joined the fight. Uncle Mack was hollering, "Get the dogs." Sam was howling because the coon was still biting his ear. Lou finally had a good hold on the coon, and she was trying to

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**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



## Mummy Berry

I have talked to several people that sound like they had mummy berry on their blueberry bushes last year. Mummy berry is a fairly common disease on blueberries. It can be a pretty devastating disease to your harvest. By the time that you see the affects of it, the opportunity to treat has passed. Let's talk about mummy berry, how it works, and what you can do to manage it.

Mummy berry is a fungal disease on blueberry bushes. It causes the blueberries to rot and fall off just as they are ripening to be ready to harvest. This can be very frustrating to you as it looks like you're going to have a lot of blueberries and then one by one they fall off the bush. Mummy berry is not too difficult to manage, but you have to follow a couple of steps to make sure that you get the best control of the disease possible.

Mummy berry infects the blueberry bush when it is in bloom. Those blooms will turn into fruit over the course of the season. Blooms that were infected carry the mummy berry pathogen with them, which causes them to rot and fall off. When they rot and hit the ground, the pathogen stays there over winter. In the early spring it forms apothecia, or tiny mushrooms. These release spores that infect the leaves of the plant. The infected leaves produce spores that are transmitted to the flowers by bees or wind, and thus the mummy berry life cycle continues on and on.

Because the infection of the fruit occurs at bloom it is most important to treat plants at that stage each year. Treatment at another time of year is not effective. Captan is a fungicide that is very effective at making sure that making sure that the blooms do not become infected. It's best to spray Captan every 7-10 days while plants are in bloom. There is an organic fungicide called Serenade that can be somewhat effective at controlling mummy berry if it is sprayed every 7 days. With Captan or Serenade it is important to get good coverage on the blooms of the plant. With any pesticide it is always important to read the label and follow it, as the label is the law.

A couple of other practices that can help to reduce the amount of mummy berry that you have are to remove dead berries after they fall. This will reduce the amount of pathogen that overwinters in the soil. To remove berries simply rake them out or use a leaf blower and then throw them into the trash or compost pile. Another practice is to mulch. Placing mulch 3-4 inches deep around the bush creates a physical barrier that is difficult for the mummy berry

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**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**

Steve Rowe



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## Cummings...continued from Page 4A

pull it off Sam's back while it was still biting his ear.

In the meantime Rufus and my Dad were laying on the creek bank laughing so hard they were crying. Uncle Mack finally found his teeth and made his way up the bank of the creek. He looked at my Daddy and said, "Your dogs are pretty good dogs, but, you ain't much help."

I guess you could say Uncle Mack was pretty surprised about losing and finding his teeth. He finally sat down and the men and their younger companion laughed a long

time. Rufus would try to explain to his brother the events as he perceived them and all three of the fellows would begin laughing again. Dad later told me that he laughed so hard it caused his belly to hurt. This area of Turkey Creek now lies under 15-20 feet of water, and Dad as well as my Great Uncles have gone to their reward. But, their memories are strong enough to allow me to listen to their dogs tree that old coon and I can still hear their laughter at the spectacle of Uncle Mack losing his teeth while squalling out that coon.

## Murauskas... continued from Page 4A

dent Joe Biden pushing for the firing of Ukraine's top prosecutor in 2016 – the same one investigating Burisma, where Hunter Biden sat on the board. It's hard to feel sorry for the 10,000 employees there who may now have to find real jobs.

Then there's the Department of Defense, where trillions of dollars have gone unaccounted for, and the Pentagon has never passed a full audit. Meanwhile, politicians who are supposed to be serving us somehow end up becoming multimillionaires on government salaries. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, both making \$174,000 a year, have managed to build a combined net worth of over \$14 million, with multiple homes in D.C. and their New England towns. Nancy Pelosi stands out the most, with a \$240 mil-

lion fortune and a vineyard in Napa Valley. And let's not forget establishment Republicans like Mitch McConnell, worth somewhere between \$13 million and \$55 million.

Speaking of the DOD, we don't even have to imagine what Republicans-turned-Kamala-supporters like Liz Cheney and her father have stacked up as we head into tax season, where we're all reminded that we work about three months for free to fund these activities.

Let's hope the volume stays at ten as the cockroaches who have buried us in debt and endless wars scurry for cover. Some think it's too late to turn things around, but the pressure we've seen in just one month of this new administration is a step in the right direction.

**Josh Murauskas**

## Fasanelli.. continued from Page 4A

ing the input from people and the states, and the people are slowly but surely being denied their rights.

We cannot immediately reverse what is happening, but we can ALL work together to limit the damage and preserve our democracy.

Yes, we need to instigate good, realistic changes that will bring our deficits down, streamline our government bureaucracy and be good for our citizens.

Alienating various countries by instigating higher tariffs, telling various countries we want to buy them or threaten them, and immediately eliminating various humanitarian projects does not foster good diplomacy.

May we all become active to achieve proper goals that will make us a better country so that we become a leaner, better and more inclusive country and people.

**Richard Fasanelli**

## Clyde... continued from Page 4A

Last week on National Girls and Women in Sports Day, the President signed an executive order effectively banning biological males from women's sports and spaces. With the stroke of a pen and surrounded by young athletes with their whole futures ahead of them, he swiftly dismantled the Left's abhorrent war on women that has unjustly endangered and demeaned female competitors across the country.

We're already seeing this commonsense ban take effect.

Just one day after President Trump announced and signed his executive order, the NCAA promptly changed its eligibility policies to prohibit biological males from competing in women's sports.

What a tremendous victory for female college athletes throughout the U.S.!

Yet we cannot stop there. In addition to ensuring all schools abide by President

Trump's executive order and compelling the International Olympic Committee to follow suit, Congress must also codify this commonsense into law.

As you know, my House Republican colleagues and I recently passed H.R. 28, the Protection of Women & Girls in Sports Act, which defunds schools that allow biological males to compete in women's sports. Additionally, as a conservative member of the House Appropriations Committee, I introduced amendments to both the Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bills to codify the intent of President Trump's executive order.

Until it becomes law, I'll continue working to ensure your hard-earned tax dollars no longer fund institutions that support this insanity. Rest assured, Republicans will keep leading and winning in the fight to save women's sports.

## Vandereedt... continued from Page 4A

lions of dollars, being cut that were to fund some of the most ridiculous, disgusting and dangerous things I have ever heard of. There is not enough space in this paper to list all of these items. If you don't know what they are, please educate yourself and find out. You will be just as angry.

Now, on the local level, we had a type of DOGE in Union County. A courageous citizen kept track of our tax dollars being spent in our County. She was vilified by our "elected officials," the ones wasting our money, and was also vilified by "citizens" who are part of that network – the good ole boy club, the nepotism, and the same people who benefited from the contracts and bids in the county to line their pockets.

I am calling on Harold Collins, our new Union County

Commissioner, to do a forensic audit on all our county departments and agencies. We need a DOGE department to root out the corruption and wasteful spending in our county. Don't even get me started on the disaster that is getting ready to unfold in our school system with the Superintendent and the School Board.

I don't understand why people on the national level are so upset when they have uncovered the abuse and fraud of our tax dollars. Why do people get so upset here in Union County when people step up and shine the light on abuse of our local tax dollars? Perhaps those jumping up and down are the ones benefiting.

The tide has changed. We are turning the corner. It's a new day. Now, let's do the RIGHT thing!

**Cindy Vandereedt**

## Ashurst... continued from Page 4A

us? They saw kids having fun and being happy – pure happiness. We had the spirit of fun, play, and joy. Our neighbors could see us jumping rope or playing marbles in the dirt, cowboys, kick the can, pick-up sticks, hopscotch, or red rover.

If we were confined to being inside due to the weather

conditions, we would be playing Monopoly, Scrabble, or Sorry – these board games kept us entertained.

As we journeyed through the years, we became aware of what individuals did for us as kids. They helped us make lasting memories. And the positive ones, over time, became enhanced by sharing such wonderful memories with others. We experienced a sense of joy, of play, and of fun.

## Collins...

**continued from Page 4A**

medical calls; 19 motor vehicle accidents; three Hazmat responses; 15 smoke investigations; 8 false alarms, and 16 cancelled in route; and 6 public assist calls.

Thank you to the Union County Fire Department for being there when we need them.

## Williams...

**continued from Page 4A**

spores to move through. You don't want to place the mulch all the way up to the trunk of the bush. Pine straw, pine bark, or wood chips all work well for mulch. The best control of mummy berry is to use a combination of spraying, removing, and mulching.

Mummy berry is simple to control if you get the timing right. If you have questions about mummy berry contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

## Fowler...

**continued from Page 4A**

able, satisfactory, and rational explanation that best fits the data. You see it when God asks, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" (Job 38:4). In fact, "All things came into being through Him" (John 1:3).

Neither my chimney nor my wife's letters to me could have emerged from their raw materials without purpose and intelligence. Neither did you. God made you. He wants you to know Him. He's quite alive!

## Chamber...

**continued from Page 4A**

Sawmill Place. And check out our new Lunch & Leads. We are looking forward to everyone who attends!

Thank you for making the future bright in Blairsville.

## Combs...

**continued from Page 4A**

Instead of being more concerned about saving little turtles and other endangered animals from extinction, which is a noble endeavor, what about all the millions of unborn babies that have been killed before they even had a chance to take their first breath? Shame of our government for allowing these atrocities to be a daily ritual. Can we put a price tag on an innocent baby in a mother's womb that doesn't have a fighting chance of survival? And yes, I understand at times aborting a child has its place in life-threatening situations to protect the mother or child.

Lastly, if our government leaders do not put God first in their agenda across the board, America will continue to go downhill. God has allowed America to be a great nation, but there is a payday coming when God says enough is enough – you have neglected my warnings and continue doing things your way, not my way, so destruction is coming your way. God will not be mocked. He will have the final say-so. God has always been the answer. Turn back to Him and He will bless our nation.

**Frank F. Combs**

## NGTC Board Meeting

North Georgia Technical College's Board of Directors will meet on Wednesday, February 19, 2025 at 3 p.m. on the Clarkesville campus. For more information, contact 706-754-7702.

### Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse



**February 13, 2025**

In memory of **John & Virginia B. Meeks** on their wedding anniversary By Ginger and Terry Meeks

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

## ARFS: Give Your Pain Purpose

If you have lost a dearly loved pet and your heart is grieving, why not "give your pain purpose" by making a donation to Animal Rescue Financial Support (ARFS) in honor of your cherished fur friend.

ARFS will use your donation to provide medical care for an animal that is suffering and has an owner who cannot afford veterinary expenses.

Memorials can be made

to ARFS, P.O. Box 972, Hiawassee, GA 30546 or on ARFS website ([www.arfs-inc.org](http://www.arfs-inc.org)) by clicking the DONATE button. Please indicate that your donation is a memorial and provide the name of your pet. Memorials will be posted on ARFS's website, unless you request otherwise.

Let's not forget that precious pet that gave you so much joy. Let's give your pain purpose! NTFeb19,22 JCA