

A Structure Fire

A structure fire is defined as any building that is involved in fire. This can include a home, business, commercial building, or outbuilding.

We respond to many other incidents, but a structure fire is our main responsibility. It is why most people join the fire department.

When working a structure fire, we prioritize our actions based on the principles of Life safety, Incident stabilization, and Property conservation, or "LIP."

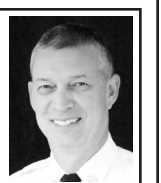
A structure fire is unique because the fire can create extreme conditions inside the structure. The enclosed structure holds in the smoke, flames, and heat.

The smoke and hot gases produced by the fire also quickly reduce visibility. Occupants of the building may get disorientated, even in a building that they are familiar with.

Structure fires are one of our most challenging incidents that we face. It takes a group effort and a lot of work to control these

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief David Dyer



Platforming Faith

Will Howard and Riley Leonard are quarterbacks on the college football teams that competed in the national championship game this year.

"Before I say anything, I've just got to give my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ all the glory and praise, amen!"

Howard said on the field after the game. In the media room Leonard said, "Before I answer your question, I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

They brought their faith to the workplace, and you can too. No, that doesn't mean being preachy or quoting Scripture.

John the Baptist called people to "bear fruits in keeping with repentance." People asked him what that looks like.

That leads me to a question for a faithful Christian to ponder. It's not, "Would you have the courage of these young quarterbacks to speak out, given the opportunity?"

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

All Things New



From Your Commissioner

The Union County Senior Center is located at 95 Senior Center Drive, Blairsville, GA. It can be found off 515, adjacent to North Georgia Technical College.

The Union County Senior Center serves adults 60 years and older who reside in Union County. The Center offers a number of wellness and socialization opportunities for senior citizens in our community.

During fiscal year 2024, Union County Senior Center served 10,330 meals to congregate members and delivered 31,422 meals to homebound older adults.

However, efforts are underway to raise funds for these essential programs. Currently, a Heart Tree is displayed in the lobby of the Center, where community members can purchase a heart for \$5.

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Union County Commissioner Harold Collins



Growing Up

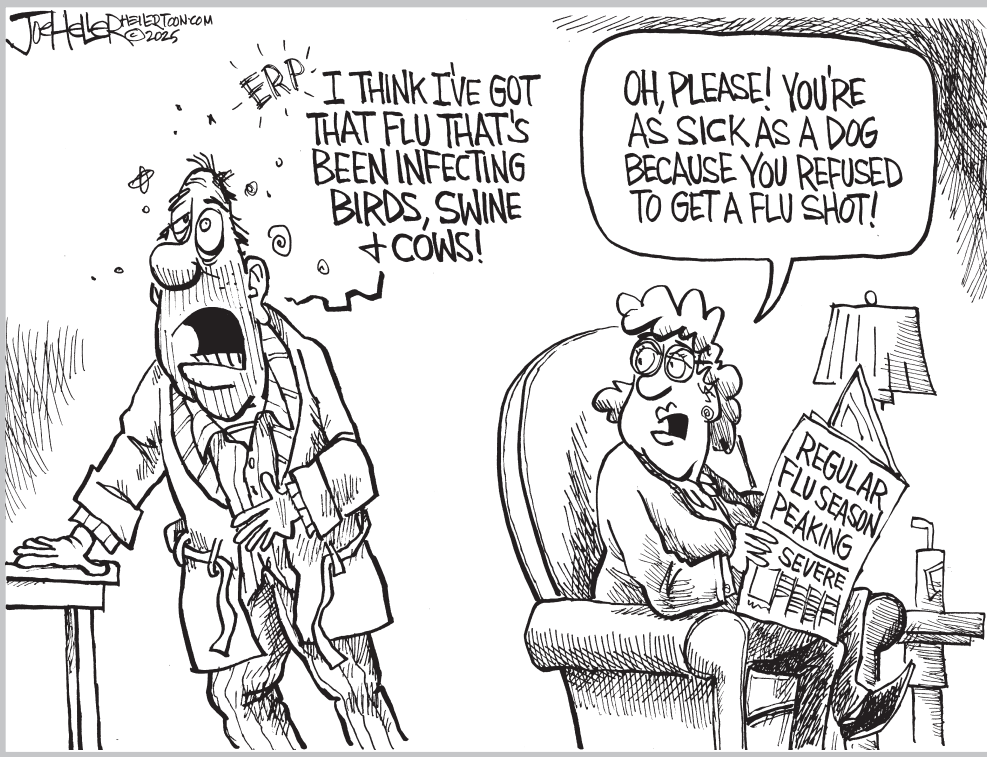
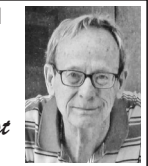
Growing up does not just happen when we reach the adult age. It happens when a person is very young. Growth is an adventure during which our life journey adds to our long-lasting memory banks.

There are days when we are not on top of the mountain, but rather the mountain is on top of us. When this happens, I suggest that you spend some time alone and reminisce - travel down memory lane; if it brings forth positive memories, they will temporarily soothe your stress.

Traveling down memory lane can be a great deal of fun, with lots of thrills. Growing older around someone of humor is a stress reliever.

See Ashurst, page 5A

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



Chamber 2025

I know I have said it before, but we are truly blessed to live in the community we do. If you look in any direction you can see the beautiful mountains, waterfalls, or just the views we are blessed to experience each day.

A strong, thriving community cannot be possible without good leadership. We would like to take a moment to recognize Mayor Jim Conley for his years of dedication to the City of Blairsville and for his work in making Blairsville a better place.

See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

Am I the Only One?

Dear Editor, Am I the only one who doesn't fall into some neat, tidy political category?

Am I the only one who believes that we can be both liberal (socially) and conservative (fiscally) at the same time?

Am I the only one who believes it is wrong to demonize entire groups of people based on what they believe or don't believe, what they look like, where they live, or who they love?

Am I the only one who believes that there is a lot of fraud and waste in our government but has

See Caskey, page 5A

Constitutional Obligation

Dear Editor, Last week, another Union Countian wrote in and tried to convince us all that our Federal Government is in chaos and that The Republican Party is no longer The Republican Party.

Here's a passage. "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." Once again, Wow! Let's see if that's true, shall we?

See Rains, page 5A

Baby to Adulthood

Dear Editor, We have all heard the saying: Baby needs a new pair of shoes. And it is true as well that baby needs a bottle of milk at various times of the day and night, but imagine this same baby now is 12 years old and still asking to be fed by a bottle and a pacifier on the side.

We all know this would be unimaginable to even comprehend. I give this example to bring up people who have attended Bible studies and are long-time members of a local church, and when they started out as a born-again be-

See Combs, page 5A

Not Stupid

Dear Editor, The Feb. 19, 2025, edition of the North Georgia News has a letter to the editor titled "Chaos In Government."

The author stated, "The new administration in Washington is not adhering to the fundamental rights as prescribed by the Constitution of the United States."

See Burch, page 5A

Modern Life

The Hidden Weight of Modern Life By Evonary Hambourger and Tzali Reichler

Every morning, Sarah stands in front of her closet, overwhelmed by choices yet feeling she has "nothing to wear." Down the street, Mike checks his phone dozens of times an hour, each notification bringing a brief dopamine rush followed by an empty feeling.

These aren't extraordinary people with extraordinary problems. They're our neighbors, our colleagues, our friends - regular folks struggling with the subtle yet powerful forces that turn everyday life into a source of constant stress.

We see it in the parent who works overtime to buy their children the latest sneakers, not because the old ones are worn out, but because peer pressure has turned basic items into status symbols. We see it in the retiree who sits alone in their apartment, scrolling endlessly through social media instead of joining the community center activities down the street - not because they can't afford it (it's free), but because they've become more comfortable with virtual connections than real ones.

Even the simplest activities have become complicated by modern pressures. A family dinner becomes a photo opportunity before anyone can take a bite. A walk in the park is interrupted by constant checks for work emails. A child's school performance becomes a referendum on their entire future.

The ancient wisdom of the Torah speaks directly to this modern condition. In one particularly relevant teaching derived from the Book of Numbers (Chapter 33:52), Moses instructs the people about entering their Promised Land, warning them to destroy all remnants of idol worship, even the most subtle forms left by previous inhabitants. The Hebrew word for idolatry translates to "foreign servitude" - a concept that takes on new meaning in our current age. Today, this servitude shows up not as idols of clay but in our obsessive relationships with social media, our endless pursuit of approval, and our attachment to artificial standards of success.

Life's choices generally fall into three categories: things that uplift us, things that harm us, and the vast middle ground of neutral

See Hambourger, page 5A

Echos from Sinai Torah for Everyone Rabbi Jonathan Hambourger



Clifford and the Deputy

My great grandfather on my Daddy's side of the family was originally from Dawson County. Their farm was located in the Shoal Creek District. Clifford's father, Daniel, and Clifford's grandfather, Daniel, fought for the South during the "War Between the States." As a young man Clifford migrated down to the Alpharetta area. Unlike today Alpharetta was a small place. However, there was more for a young man in Alpharetta than in Dawsonville.

Clifford's vice was drinking, and this vice soon landed him in trouble. We don't know the whole story, but, I know it involved drinking and a woman. Clifford and another man had an altercation over a woman after consuming too much store-bought liquor. Clifford was never a big man. But, everyone knew you didn't want to cross him. Anyway, he beat the other man rather severely and thought he had killed him. So, Clifford left Georgia sometime around 1900 and migrated to Phil Campbell, Alabama. There, in Alabama he met his wife and raised his family. You would think Clifford would have learned his lesson about too much drinking. But, he had a few problems later in life as well.

Let's move forward in time 50 years. By this time Clifford was in his late 70s and he loved being around his grandsons. Each Saturday my Dad would go to his Grandfather's house and take him to the Barber Shop. After a haircut and catching up on the latest news, he and his grandson would go to the diner for an early lunch and they would end their trip to town by playing a few rounds of pool at the Phil Campbell Pool Hall. The grandfather and grandson would usually meet the Chief of Police on their Saturday excursion. Chief Looney and the elder man were great friends, and each Saturday the Chief would bring him a flask of his latest moonshine bust.

One Saturday the Grandfather and his grandson (my Dad) were in town for their usual Saturday entertainment. While at the Barber Shop the pair learned there was a new Deputy in town. The Grandfather was told the Deputy was young and trying to make a name for himself. At the diner the word was the Deputy was writing lots of tickets. Chief Looney met the elderly man and his grandson while they were walking down the street to the Pool Room. As usual the Chief gave him a new flask of his latest bust of moonshine.

The pair walked into the Pool Room for a couple of games, and while they were playing pool the new Deputy walked in and bought himself a Coca Cola. After a round of pool Clifford

Around The Farm Mickey Cummings



Plant It?

When to plant? That is a big question. We are still a ways off from warmer weather. However, that doesn't mean that we can't start thinking about the garden. Winter is a great time to go ahead and start planning your garden and picking up seeds. Let's talk a bit about planting calendars and when to get started on that garden.

Soil temperature should be our guide for when we plant. Ideally, for warm season vegetables we want the soil temperature to be at least 65 degrees. Some examples of warm season vegetables are tomatoes, peppers, squash, and okra. Cool season vegetables can be planted when soil temperatures have reached 50 degrees. Some examples of those are radishes, cabbage, collards, and kale.

Some crops like carrots, parsnips, beets, radish, turnips, and mustard do better from seed. However, for most other vegetables using transplants is a great way for your garden to get a head start. There are a few benefits to using transplants. One is spacing. Not every seed that you plant is going to come up. For most plants if we have good quality seed we hope to get at least 85% germination. If you space out the seeds in your garden and some of them don't germinate you'll have wasted space. Using transplants, you know that you'll have a live plant in every spot. Another reason is for weed control. A transplant that is already up and growing with a developed root system will be able to compete against weeds for sunlight, water, and nutrients better than a plant growing from seed. You'll also put yourself a little ahead of the game

There are two ways to get transplants. The first is the easiest. Go to one of the garden centers or nurseries around here and buy them. The second option is to grow them yourself. This is not too difficult to do, and it gives you a fun project to do inside while it's still cold outside. The things that you'll need are seeds, growing media, and a grow container or tray. Fill the container with the grow media (a mixture of peat moss, sand, and loamy soil). Place one or two seeds in each cell of the tray, and then cover it very lightly with a little bit of soil. The timing of seeding is important. Tomatoes take 5 to 7 weeks before they're ready. Squash only takes 2 to 3. Peppers take 7 to 9 weeks. So pick your target planting date and back up from there to determine when you need to start transplants. I usually recommend planting outside in mid-May for warm season vegetables. Most seeds will need to be at least 70 degrees to germinate. You can purchase a heating pad to put your seed trays on

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UGA extension Watching and Working Jacob Williams



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pulled his flask from his pocket and took a swig of the moonshine. The new Deputy noticed and walked over to the elderly man and snatched the flask from the old man's hands. The deputy smelled the flask and told Clifford he was being arrested for illegal possession of alcohol. The 78-year-old Clifford told the young deputy that he was a self-appointed know-it-all and struck him across the top of his head with a walking cane.

My 16-year-old father jumped in between the Deputy and his Grandfather just as the Deputy was pulling out his Billy Stick. The Deputy told the grandson that he was going to teach that old man a lesson. Just in time, the supplier of Clifford's alcohol and the boss of the young deputy came walking into the Pool Room. Chief Looney demanded to know what these two were fighting about. Just as the Deputy was about to tell his side of the story Clifford landed another lucky but feeble blow to the head of the Deputy. The

Chief walked the young deputy outside and explained that Clifford Hyde was one of the Grand Old Men of Phil Campbell and that his liquor was supplied by the Chief himself. He also explained that the old man had five able-bodied sons that would protect their Dad at all costs. After the two simmered down each one came to his senses. The Deputy realized the old man really wasn't doing any harm, and the Old Man realized that his temper nearly got him into trouble again.

The following week found the Deputy and Clifford sitting in the Pool Room together laughing and enjoying one another's company while his Grandson played a round of pool. A few years later Clifford learned he had not killed the man in Georgia. He walked around as if a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders. Clifford quit the bottle and began going to church. He even got saved and baptized. Clifford died at the ripe old age of 91 and was still known as the Grand Old Man of Phil Campbell.

Rains... continued from Page 4A

When the writer refers to "various individuals who do not have the background or experience to be in charge of their new responsibilities," I believe they're referring to DOGE. Much has also been said about The DOGE Team made up of individuals anywhere from 19-21 year olds. Quick sidebar: That's the funny thing about Democrats. They think 16-year-olds should vote but don't think 19-21 year olds are old enough to participate in an audit of waste, fraud, theft, corruption and abuse in the Federal Government. WEIRD? Huh? Here's exactly what DOGE is. First off, Trump did NOT create a new agency. That's the lie the media is pushing because they know most people are too lazy to actually read the executive order.

What Trump did was repurpose an existing agency – the United States Digital Service (USDS) – which was originally created under Obama to "modernize government software." He renamed it the United States DOGE Service and kept the same acronym. Why does that matter? Because repurposing an existing department that already has funding means Congress has no say in it. No approval needed. No funding battles. Perfectly legal.

Now, let's talk about how Trump and Musk are executing this legally. First, DOGE's mission is covered under 44 USC Chapter 36, which governs federal IT modernization. That's what the original USDS was already supposed to be doing – Trump just made sure it was being done correctly instead of as another bloated bureau-

cratic disaster. Second, Trump invoked 5 USC 3161, which allows for the creation of a temporary organization within the federal government. That's right – temporary. DOGE's core audit team (led by Musk, originally including Vivek Ramaswamy) is legally structured to exist for 18 months. That means it's not a new administrative agency – it's a temporary oversight body. That's not some shady loophole – it's literally federal law. Now, here's where it gets even better.

The executive branch has full authority over executive agencies. That's just how the Constitution works. Under the Take Care Clause (Article II, Section 3), the President is required to ensure that laws are faithfully executed. That means if agencies like USAID or OPM are mismanaging funds, Trump has every right – no, the constitutional obligation – to intervene and restructure them. And that's exactly what DOGE teams are doing by embedding within each agency, conducting audits, and identifying waste.

So I believe I've shown that the Letter Writer last week was mistaken when they made the assertion that there's chaos in our government. Oh and by the way, a side effect of exposing and getting rid of all that government waste, fraud, abuse, theft, corruption and agencies in our government has the effect of decreasing the size of it. That was another point the writer attempted to make.

The "New" Republicans don't like small government. Sure they don't, writer. Sure they don't.

Claude Rains Jr.

Hambourger...continued from Page 4A

activities that could go either way. It's this middle ground where most of us live our daily lives, and where we have the greatest opportunity for transformation.

A load of laundry becomes meaningful when done with gratitude for having clothes and the means to clean them. A bus ride to work becomes an opportunity for a kind word with a stranger. Even standing in line at the grocery store can become a moment of patience and human connection rather than frustration.

This isn't about adding more to already full plates or spending money people don't have. It's about changing how we approach what we already do. The parent rushing through bedtime stories can turn off their phone and make it a moment of real connection. An elderly person watching TV alone can invite a neighbor to share their favorite shows. The office worker eating lunch at their desk can step outside and share their break time with colleagues.

Something remarkable

happens when we learn to shift our focus from constant acquisition and comparison to appreciation and connection. The internal conflicts that drain so many people – physically, mentally, and emotionally – begin to fade. What emerges is a kind of peace that doesn't depend on what we own or achieve but on how we choose to live each moment.

This isn't about dramatic lifestyle changes or grand gestures. It's about small shifts in how we approach our daily lives. It's about recognizing that true satisfaction doesn't come from serving the modern idols of status, appearance, or social media metrics but from living with purpose and connection, no matter how humble our circumstances might be.

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@tasteof Torah.org.

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liever everything was new to them – they were fed the Gospel message weekly just like an infant being fed milk. But somewhere down the line they never grew in their knowledge and faith through all the years they attended church. They still craved just the milk of the word, not the meat of God's Holy Word.

Pastors, elders, deacons and Sunday church teachers have an awesome task of feeding God's people that will bring out the best in them, but the folks who sit under these church leaders and teachers have the responsibility of growing in their faith and trust in God's glorious grace. It's like the old story about a

horse. You can lead a horse to water, but they must partake of it themselves to quench their thirst, just like a believer in Christ must partake of God's word and apply it to their daily routine. You can only receive God's Word into your heart when you truly thirst for it. What you take in will come out to be a blessing from God.

When we stop learning about who God is, then we can be like a dry thirsty desert longing for the living water that flows from the grace of God. Some folks have their fire insurance, and they are content to learn no more, which I am sure displeases God, but He still loves them the same.

Frank F. Combs

Ashurst... continued from Page 4A

ducer. One of my friends has the ability to turn negatives into positives. With her nearby, laughter will erupt at any moment. She can have a whole room laughing until tears flow. Her laughter is contagious; one cannot stay sober-minded when she is on a roll. She laughs just as much in her seventies as she did in her twenties. Her friends reap the reward. We end up laughing and having a good time just as much as she does. Do you have the same impact on your friends?

Our friends offer us the greatest joys in life. They share our victories and soothe our failures. People who surround themselves with empathetic friends throughout their life growth will face life situations with sidekicks who have their backs. Usually our stable and mature friends will develop when we are adults because by adulthood, we are more likely to have the required maturity and purpose in life. Because we change personalities as the wind changes when we are young, those relationships are at times held together not by cement but by bubble gum.

Collins...

continued from Page 4A

10:30 AM to benefit the senior meal programs. Pancake Breakfast tickets are available at the Senior Center for \$5, and walk-ins are welcome.

Other recent fundraising efforts include a book sale, fabric sale, music event, and various raffles to benefit the meal programs.

I encourage members of the community to support the Senior Center as they continue to provide these valuable services to our aging population.

Williams...

continued from Page 4A

to reach this temperature. Once the plant has germinated, you will need a way to provide light for it. A south facing window won't provide enough light, and will need to be supplemented. Supplement with a fluorescent or LEDs. Leave the bulbs on for 16 hours a day. You can plug the light into a timer to help keep track.

If you have questions about when to plant or starting your own plants you can contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

incidents. We are very proud of the response that we have had, and we want to thank everyone for the support that they provide to the department.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

ville-Union County a community to be proud of. Mayor Conley will be stepping down at the end of this month to take a much-deserved rest. He will be missed by all those who get to work with him each day. We look forward to working with Buddy Moore, who will fill the position of Mayor throughout the rest of the year.

Thank you, Mayor Conley, for working each day to make Life Better in Blairsville!

Caskey...

continued from Page 4A

serious concerns on the way that cuts are being made right now?

Am I the only one who believes that the terms "patriot" and "hero" are being thrown around so much that they no longer describe the ones who really deserve those titles?

Am I the only one hoping that our new leadership can succeed in helping all Americans without destroying what makes us who we are?

I hope that I am not "the only one"...

Teemi Caskey

Burch...

continued from Page 4A

Before the author and liked-minded individuals accuse the President of the United States of violating his oath of office to defend the Constitution, they should at least provide some details. The author did not state what Article and Section that the President is not adhering to. Nor did the author give an example of any violation.

Yes, the author has the First Amendment right to say that the President is not adhering to the fundamental rights. I have the right to tell the author that American citizens are not stupid. If you can't make the case, don't make the charge.

George Burch

Our closest adult friends have reached a mature attachment with us in which we share a common level of dedication and commitment to one another. We have the opportunities to share our spirits of fun, play, and joy with one another, causing the relationship to become superglued.

"Growth crawls one moment, and gallops the next." (Lillian Rubin)