

Distracted Driving

Driving can be dangerous. You probably see potential car accidents every day. There are many causes of car accidents, but one major cause is distracted driving.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief David Dyer



Anything that diverts the driver's attention from the operation of the vehicle is considered a distraction. Distracted driving is broken down into four main categories: auditory, cognitive, manual, and visual.

The main distracted driver activity that comes to mind is using the cellphone to call, text, email, or even browse the internet while driving.

How dangerous of a distraction is texting and driving? An article by Jacob Masters of the Brain Injury Society compares texting and driving to drinking and driving.

Please keep this in mind the next time you get behind the wheel.

See Dyer, page 5A

Ayaan Ali Part Two

After Ayaan Hirsi Ali wrote, "Why I Am Now a Christian," she met her friend Richard Dawkins in a public forum. Here are two intellectuals, one current and one former atheist, having "The God Debate."

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Her rejoinder was insightful and instructive. "You're coming at this from a place of: there is nothing," she said. "I have accepted there is something. God turned me around."

I can think of other fallacies here, like confirmation bias - looking only at evidence that supports a prior conclusion; and the bandwagon effect - looking for the approval of your tribe.

Jesus concluded a story about such intransigence with this line: "They will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

See Fowler, page 5A

Commissioner's Questions

Short-Term Rentals Part 2.

Q. In an earlier Q & A when you spoke of short-term rentals, you mentioned a hotel/motel tax paid by rental owners. Where does the revenue from this tax go?

A. The Blairsville/Union County Chamber receives 70% of this tax, and the Union County Government receives 30%.

Q. What does the chamber do with these funds?

A. The chamber's mission is to positively impact our community and its members by facilitating tourism, economic, and cultural development.

Q. We read some comments in the newspaper, and we see comments online from some people who do not want any growth in our county. It seems that after they moved here, they want to "lock the gate." What is this about?

A. All Union County residents are important, and all have a right to their opinions. To answer this question, it would seem there are some people who are strongly anti-growth.

Q. County growth seems like such a big, multi-faceted topic. Can you help us better understand some of the things...

Q & A from Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris



See Paris, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

DEI Training

Dear Editor, DEI almost caused Donald J. Trump to DIE. What we train for is important.

As with all Government agencies and almost all other groups, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) training has priority over all other training.

On July 13, 2024, the Secret Service covered former president Trump after he was shot. The reaction time was good, coverage great, and removal time fast enough.

In training agents, did they not cover the See Burch, page 5A

Another Bridge Needed

Dear Editor, I am writing concerning a very serious situation in the subdivision OLD BIRCH BEND, 10 miles from the city limits of Blairsville; this also includes the houses surrounding the area.

To enter or exit the neighborhood, it is necessary to cross a one-lane bridge over Young Cane Creek. And when heavy rains cause the creek to flood, entry and exit are halted.

I am aware that Old Birch Bend residents include medical personnel, teachers and students, and elderly people. Without an alternate See Richardson, page 5A

Petition for Five-Member Board of Commissioners

Dear Editor, Just about everyone in Union County knows there is a petition circulating for a referendum that would go on a ballot to let the citizens of Union County have a VOICE and a CHOICE whether THEY want to stay with a Sole Commissioner form of government or move to a Board of Commissioners.

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See Vandereedt page 5A

Re: "Project 2025"

Dear Editor, Regarding last week's letter titled "Project 2025," the letter writer correctly informed us of the importance of this document.

Regarding last week's letter titled "Project 2025," the letter writer correctly informed us of the importance of this document. It is a "bold plan," she writes. And indeed it is.

See Meier, page 5A

Accolades to Union County Cannery

Dear Editor, A big thank you to everyone at the Union County Cannery for sharing your knowledge and expertise with my husband and me this past Thursday.

A big thank you to everyone at the Union County Cannery for sharing your knowledge and expertise with my husband and me this past Thursday. Your cheerfulness and "we can get this done" attitude are contagious.

See Anne Allen



Truly Indivisible

Last week, Jewish communities read a dramatic Torah portion from the Book of Numbers in synagogues around the world.

We read how Balak, the king of Moab, became alarmed by the growing presence and success of the Israelites as they journeyed back home towards the Land of Israel.

Echos from Sinai "Torah for Everyone" Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



Undeterred, Balak sent a more distinguished delegation with promises of greater rewards. Balaam again consulted with G-d and was granted permission to go but was warned he would only be able to say exactly what G-d put in his mouth.

See Hambourger, page 5A

Prayers for President Trump

President Trump isn't just a fighter - he's a survivor.

On July 13 during a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, a deranged individual attempted to assassinate President Donald J. Trump - marking the first time in 43 years that a president or presidential candidate has been shot.

United States Congressman Representative Andrew Clyde



On a rooftop less than 150 meters from the crowd, a 20-year-old man fired multiple shots toward the stage before being neutralized by counter snipers. Remarkably, one of the bullets grazed President Trump's ear - missing his head by roughly half an inch.

See Clyde, page 5A

The Chase

I don't know about you, but, I always dreaded the day of our polio vaccinations at school. The process didn't hurt. But, I was always scared of those needles.

When Dad was really young he had a bad toothache, so, Papa took my Dad to a friend who could pull teeth. This man was not a dentist. He never went to any dentistry schools.

Around The Farm Mickey Cummings



After WWII the Health Departments in Alabama began vaccinating school-age children for varied maladies. Some kids went to school and some did not.

So, upon the arrival of her grandchildren on the vaccination day, Laura ushered them into her home and had them convinced their blood would leak out of their bodies if they were given a shot.

See Cummings, page 5A

Sweet Corn

It's hard to beat the taste of fresh sweet corn. Sweet corn in the summer that was just picked is hard to beat. Even though it gets stuck in my teeth I won't complain because each kernel is bursting with flavor.

One of the biggest challenges to growing sweet corn is the corn earworm. This is a caterpillar that will eat the kernels at the end of the cob. They are laid as eggs on the silks of the ear and make their way inside the husk while they are still very small.

There are three main classes of sweet corn: standard sugary, sugar enhanced, and supersweet. Standard sugary contains many of the classic varieties that people are familiar with like Silver Queen.

Corn needs to be grown in isolation to maintain kernel color and sweetness. Either varieties should be isolated by 250 feet or the planting timing should be done so that they tassle 14 days apart.

Watching and Working Jacob Williams



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Paris... continued from Page 4A

that we should consider?

A. The negative aspects of growth are fairly evident. It's the positive aspects of growth that are often overlooked. Please understand that by discussing these positive aspects, I'm not saying that we shouldn't be cautious; I'm only saying we should try to keep things in balance.

#1. Most understand that a large portion of our population base is older/retired. This means that a smaller portion are young or school aged. At first glance, this difference doesn't carry a great deal of significance, but when you step back to get a cross-section perspective of our county, you realize that we need these young people. These are our idea people. These are our technology people. The young working population provides the services we older people often demand. For this reason, the school system needs to continue to grow. As the older population grows, we need a proportionate amount of growth in our school system.

#2. Our hospital needs to grow in order to medically support the entire population. If the hospital does not grow, how are we going to provide medical care to our aging population? Do we want to drive back and forth to Gainesville or Atlanta for basic medical care because there are not enough workers to care for us?

#3. A similar point can be made for public safety. Right now, we have job openings with the Fire Department and the Sheriff's Office. These jobs require healthy young people who can meet the rigorous job demands such as pulling families out of burning houses and securing our property. For this reason, our public safety departments need to grow. We can't do this without a healthy pool of qualified job applicants. If we aren't "grow-

ing our own," then people have to move here to meet the job demands.

#4. Some of our residents seem to feel differently about this topic, but I occasionally hear people complain about the traffic and growth in our county and then say, "I wish we had a Publix or Kroger, etc., store in the county." The only way these stores come to a community is if they have a certain amount of population growth and wealth. We also have to provide a labor market (potential employees). I think many of us sometimes want it both ways.

Q. How do we stop growth?

A. You cannot stop growth, and if you do, it cannot be done without negatively impacting those of us who already live here. Since I have been in office, my goal has always been to increase our quality of life by improving roads, public safety, public facilities, library, farmers market, horse arena, and parks, etc. The only problem is that as we make the county better for those of us already here, it is also an attraction to those looking for a great community to move to. Take into consideration the requirement of minimum lot sizes for septic, strict building codes, few multi-family dwellings, protection of farmlands and forestry land etc. So much of our current population moved here within the last 30 years. Who has the right to draw a line in the sand to tell others they can't move here too? While we want to keep our growth rate at a reasonable level, some growth is inevitable. We cannot legally put up a gate on Hwy 515; We cannot prevent people from other places from buying a second home in Union County. Government wants to do what is best for everyone, but it can certainly be a challenge.

Burch... continued from Page 4A

fact that you never give up higher ground? Was it not covered in the DEI videos? Were they not trained on the history of the Secret Service? President Lincoln founded the agency April 14, 1865, before he was assassinated. Much time has elapsed to study events and actions. Was the mandated training for the last three years of DEI manuals only?

One must wonder why, as part of their death threat assessment, was the need to protect higher ground omitted. If their training included watching the movie "Shooter" instead of DEI videos on how to make everyone feel better, they could do their jobs better.

Simple things give in-

dications as to what training is done at what level. After former president Trump was secured, one of the Secret Service agents could not holster their gun, which if trained would be automatic. I guess it is more important to get DEI training on welcoming and supporting individuals not like you into the organization, than to be trained to do the simple task of the job efficiently.

Maybe it's time to change the training priority to do the job. Advance individuals based on performance and demonstrated achievement so the best do the training.

We don't need a next time.

George Burch

Clyde... continued from Page 5A

urday's terrifying assassination attempt. Please join me in praying for his swift recovery as well as for continued protection for him, his family, his staff, and all attendees at this week's 2024 Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

My heart and prayers go out to the family and friends of Corey Comperatore. As you may know, Corey was tragically killed from the sniper's bullets intended for President Trump. The volunteer firefighter died a hero - shielded his wife and daughter from the senseless violence. May Corey rest in peace, and may God comfort his loved ones during this unimaginably difficult time.

Please also join me in praying for the full recovery of those who were injured during the rally, as well as in thanking the law enforcement officers and first responders who responded at the scene.

Folks, there is no denying there were catastrophic security failures. Like you, I'm deeply saddened and disturbed that these lethal shortfalls occurred. As we await more information from local, state and federal authorities, one thing is

certain: U.S. Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle must resign.

In addition to the multiple ongoing investigations into the assassination attempt on President Trump, we need rapid congressional oversight. I'm pleased that committees of jurisdiction in both the House and Senate have announced probes and hearings into this matter, and I trust these swift, thorough investigations will uncover the truth.

After all, Americans deserve answers and accountability - not cover-ups and obfuscation.

Congress must leave no stone unturned in our pursuit of truth, transparency and justice. It's imperative that we move quickly in order to inform the public before the election and to ensure this evil never happens again.

I certainly have more thoughts to share with you, including the impact of the Left's dangerous rhetoric. But for now, I encourage you to join me in praying for President Trump and the future of our country.

Now more than ever, we must stand united in getting America back on track.

Vandereedt... continued from Page 4A

running for Sole Commissioner - Harold Collins, a Republican, and Lamar Paris, a Democrat - are against a Board of Commissioners. Since the petition is only about getting it on a ballot to let the citizens decide, I would have to assume they are against our First Amendment right to free speech.

FACTS about Union County:

School Board - 5 members over approximately 3,100 children

City Council - 5 members over approximately 1,000 people

Election Board - 5 members over approximately 22,000 registered voters

County Commissioner - "1" person over approximately 26,000 to 27,000 people =

?????????

Let your voice be heard. We should not allow our "elected officials" to tell us what type of government "WE THE PEOPLE" will have. Let's not give away our freedom.

Cindy Vandereedt

Williams...

continued from Page 4A

be isolated from yellow varieties. Yellow pollen will change the color of white varieties, but white pollen will not affect the color of bicolor or yellow corn varieties.

If you have questions about sweet corn contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

ing down his face, the 8-year-old looked up at the nurse and said, "Lady, I'll have to kill you if you stick me with that needle." Papa said, "My little boy looked plum pitiful, and all I could do was to hug him during the vaccination." After the vaccination Bud looked surprised when he realized his blood wasn't leaking out of his body. The vaccinations for the other kids took a while because their Dads all had to chase and catch their children. But, eventually all the kids received their vaccinations, and everything calmed down in the little community.

Here in Blairsville, many old timers will remember Doc Edge. His place was on the south side of town at the top of the hill close to where the bypass is now located. During the 1940s and '50s there was a County Agent here by the name of Spud Wellborn. Spud had a son that was a very good friend of mine named Mike. The family lived close to

where Faith Church is now located. Mike came down with something and was taken to Doc Edge. He and his father were told he needed a shot of something, probably sulfa or penicillin.

The little boy watched the doctor pull out a syringe and stick it into a vial to pull in the medicine. He said, "Mickey, that thing looked like it was a foot long." So he bolted out the back door as his Daddy yelled, "Boy, get back in here." The little boy ran for the woods, and then he heard the Doc tell his dog to round up the boy. The Boxer dog followed the boy and herded him just like a sheep. Mike told me, "The dog followed right on my heels, and we made a large loop right back into the office of Doc Edge." Mike took the shot and afterwards told me, "That dog laid his head in my lap as if he felt sorry for me."

I reckon kids have been running from dentists and doctors for years!

Hambourger... continued from Page 5A

ed to question Balaam. Then G-d opened Balaam's eyes to see the angel, who warned him again to speak only what G-d commands.

In Moab, Balak took Balaam to various high places overlooking the Israelite camp, hoping to aid in the cursing of the Children of Israel. However, each time Balaam attempted to curse the Israelites, G-d inspired him to bless them instead. Three times Balaam blessed the Israelites, extolling their virtues and foretelling their future greatness. Frustrated, Balak chastised Balaam for blessing his enemies. Balaam replied he can only speak the words G-d puts in his mouth. Before leaving, Balaam prophesied the future downfall of Moab and other nations opposed to Israel.

It is a story of how G-d provides for the people who cleave to Him, and how He can literally turn curses into blessings. But the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, the most influential rabbi in modern history, noted a deeper message.

There are two leading figures in the Torah that are mentioned as coming from the territory of Aram, present-day northwest Iraq. The first is the Patriarch Abraham, while the other is our antagonist Balaam. And without suggesting any comparison in holiness or morality between them, the Rebbe noted some parallels between the pair.

In Genesis, when G-d tested Abraham by seeing how he would respond to being asked to sacrifice his only son Isaac, we are told that Abraham "rose early" and "saddled his donkey" himself, showing his eagerness and passion to obey G-d's will, even though he didn't understand it. By contrast, in our story of Balaam, we are again told that he "saddled his donkey." But here, we learn, it wasn't because he was inspired by positive feelings to go on his mission. Rather, it was because he was overwhelmed by hate, to the point he had no regard for his own dignity in his rush to express that hatred.

Two people, from the same place, doing the same action, for very different reasons.

We also learn in Genesis how Abraham begged G-d to rescue the condemned cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Despite knowing of their evil and depravity, Abraham saw the good in other people and believed we are all capable of good and redemption. On the other hand, Balaam fought with G-d to al-

Fowler...

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gence is a dramatic, important idea," he said. "If it were true, we'd be living in a totally different universe."

When Ali understood it is true, the story of Jesus looked plausible. "It doesn't seem nonsensical to me and I don't mock it... It's in fact clever, and it's wise... I choose to accept Jesus Christ, the teachings of Jesus Christ, the story of Jesus Christ," she said. If these words express a persevering, authentic faith, then Jesus gained a soul and Dawkins lost a good right arm. www.mountainchristian.net

Richardson...

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way in and out or a restructured bridge, I am concerned that people could not get to work, school or the hospital.

I sincerely hope it doesn't take a catastrophe before this situation changes! To date nothing has changed. The need for an alternative way in or out is imperative!

Julia Richardson

Meier... continued from Page 4A

of Justice, the FBI and other federal agencies. After such renovations, these bloated, arrogant and lawless organizations would return to the respected and efficient agencies they once were. Project 2025 also addresses "climate change mitigation," she wrote. Mitigation means to make a problem less harsh or severe. That is exactly what this plan proposes. It stops the war on oil and natural gas by increasing energy production and energy security, resulting in less harsh and severe gas prices and inflation.

Last week's writer highlighted only a few of the many positive proposals of Project 2025. Not only would the federal bureaucracy be overhauled but so too would the U.S. tax code be restructured and simplified, thus enabling millions upon millions of U.S. citizens to have more money in their pockets, thus enjoying a more comfortable lifestyle. Of course, illegal immigration, being the number one problem in the nation, is addressed by Project 2025. It advocates a mass deportation of millions of undocumented immigrants, eliminating the drain of billions

of dollars these people are costing U.S. citizens. On the foreign relations front, this plan calls for the U.S. to get serious about confronting China, "a totalitarian enemy of the United States."

Project 2025 was developed by the Heritage Foundation. This group is quick to emphasize their document doesn't speak for any candidate but has been presented to our country to offer recommendations for the next president. It is a bright ray of sunshine beaming down on the rather depressing landscape of current-day America.

Surely, if our Founding Fathers could read this document, they would be leaping with joy at the potential of bringing America back to its foundations of democracy, freedom, liberty and justice.

Gary W. Meier

Dyer...

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The best practice is to remember that driving can be dangerous and that we need to pay attention when operating a vehicle.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

low him to curse and see the bad in other people.

The lessons we can learn from these two men in our current political climate are obvious. We are all from the same "territory," the United States of America, which was founded on the belief that we are all free to practice our own faith and express our beliefs in peace and unity. But in recent times, that promise has been eroded by bitter partisanship and political divisiveness.

Both political parties indulge in overblown rhetoric and the manipulative misstatement of facts. Just such hyperbolic speech, echoed in the media, led to a crazy person getting very close to inciting a civil war just last week. Mercifully and miraculously, this radicalized man failed in his mission.

If the former president is humble enough to recognize the Divine hand, we all saw last Saturday, then we can as well.

If the assailant represents the hateful Balaam of our society, then we must step up and be Abraham. We must not continue to fall prey to the way politicians and the media manipulate us to hate each other. It's imperative that we recognize each other's goodness, with a sincere desire for a peaceful and prosperous future for one another. We must recognize we live in this great land together and must remain indivisible. When each and every one embraces his and her inner Abraham, a kinder, saner, and more United States of America is guaranteed.

Yonatan Hambourger is a Rabbi and writer serving spiritual seekers of all persuasions on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a Rabbi and writer serving communities throughout the regional South.

Chamber...

continued from Page 5A

munity Bank's Main Branch, this is a reminder that you can help "Stuff the Bus." The First Methodist Church, United Community Bank, and many other organizations have been collecting supplies for nine years, and as you can imagine the need is even greater this year. The drive comes to an end on Saturday, Aug. 3, at the Church, but you will be able to help contribute for students to get their supplies from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please stop by the bank or come out Saturday and let's help our kids Succeed!

With your help, Life will be Better in Blairsville.