

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Holiday Fire Safety

The holiday season is when we enjoy time with our family and friends. We are busy going to parties, getting the perfect gift, and decorating everything. No doubt that the decorations are already up. Many of you know some people who set up the Christmas tree and decorated their entire home on Thanksgiving night! Union County Fire Department would like for everyone to have a great holiday season and a Merry Christmas. With that in mind, there are several holiday fire safety tips that you should keep in mind.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



The Christmas tree has been a long lasting tradition and symbol of Christmas. I remember searching in the woods around our house looking for the perfect tree. Most people either purchase a live tree or get a synthetic tree at a department store. In either case, both can be a fire danger. Live trees can dry out very quickly and must be watered regularly. Do not place a tree near any heat source. It should be at least three feet away. Christmas tree lights should always be turned off when you are away or at night. Christmas tree fires are not common but they can be very devastating to a home and the holidays.

Candles are also associated with Christmas and the holidays. December is the peak time of the year for candle fires. Great care should be used around any open flames. Candles should be placed away from any flammable material. Children should not be allowed to have candles in their bedrooms or be allowed to use them. One third of the candle fires happen in bedrooms.

The last issue that causes a high percentage of holiday fires is cooking. Thanksgiving has the highest percentage of cooking fires but Christmas ranks very close. The kitchen can be a hectic and busy place during the holidays. The cooking area should be made as safe as possible. Keep the area clear of any items that may cause a fire and be careful with clothing. Nobody wants their favorite Christmas sweater to catch fire. Have a fire extinguisher available. Pot lids are also a good idea to be used to smother possible grease fires. Keep children out of the cooking area and try not to get distracted. Distracted cooking and leaving food on the stove are major contributions to cooking fires.

These are just a few things to keep in mind during the holi-

See *Dyer*, page 5A

Understanding Herion

Out of everyone who tries heroin for the first time, nearly one in four become addicted.

Heroin is a potent opiate with an intense effect on the brain reward system. Heroin rigs this reward system by influencing the production of feel-good chemicals in the brain, such as dopamine and endorphins. The brain quickly links heroin to the activation of these chemicals in the brain reward system. Eventually the user becomes addicted and can't function without the drug. This, along with the withdrawal symptoms of heroin, makes it hard for users to quit on their own.

The mission of the Union County Anti-Drug Coalition is to support an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

Some signs that an addiction has formed include: Continuing use despite heroin-related problems; Trying and failing to quit or cut down use; Having persistent cravings; Building a tol-

See *Drugs*, page 5A

Letters to the Editor...

The Miracle Gift

Dear Editor,
Soon Christmas will be here and all of us who love to receive gifts from under the tree will be full of excitement and joy as we dive into those gifts that Santa and others have left for us to unwrap and enjoy or perhaps even return to the store for whatever reason.

There is one gift that needs no wrapping, no return policy or put under the tree. He has been around for over 3,000 years, yet it still brings joy to those who celebrate the reason for the season, the birth of baby Jesus Christ. This miracle gift if you receive it will change your life and your heart. It will change the way you look at life and give you joy and peace amid the storms in your life. It promises to always be with you, never to leave or forsake you. It will guide and direct your footsteps according to God's will. His desires will be your desires and His love for others will be your goal as well.

See *Combs*, page 5A

Christian Heritage

Dear Editor,
Christians decry the downfall of Christian culture, but we have unclean hands. We are destroying our own culture. For example, sacred Christmas carols express our Christian faith. However, in a current cultural rebellion to overthrow all tradition, churches throw out sacred Christmas carols sung reverently, and replace them with irreverent "Christian" Christmas rock 'n' roll songs. Christians ridicule reverent worship as old-fashioned and backward. And popular religious leaders are behind this movement to destroy our sacred Christmas culture.

But Christmas carols are an important part of our Christian heritage. For generations, Christians around the world united in heart and spirit by singing reverently "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "O Come, All Ye Faithful," "Joy to the World!" and other beloved Christmas car-

See *Lam*, page 5A

Property Tax

Dear Senator Steve:
Once again, I solicit your support for eliminating property taxes as the source of funding for Georgia's schools in favor of a uniform, universal, sales tax.

As you've said to me, the property tax is the "most hated" of all taxes — and the most unfair and the most easily subject to randomness and to abuse.

Repealing the property tax and replacing it with a uniform sales tax would be a feather in your cap.

Have a blessed Christmas.

George A. Mitchell

Evangelicals

Voting evangelicals are quite interesting to political scientists. One reason is that evangelicals comprise 25 to 35 percent of American adults. Just who are these evangelicals?

Christians are considered evangelical in three ways: how we self-identify, what church we attend, and what we believe. Anyone can claim the label, and no definitive list of evangelical churches exists, so the most precise way to determine an evangelical is by beliefs.

The National Association of Evangelicals and Lifeway Research developed a method to measure evangelical beliefs using four statements. If you strongly agree with these statements, they consider you an evangelical. Here they are:

1. The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe. A friend once challenged me, "Since men wrote it, how could it be the word of God?" Smart folks have written entire books on this. I'll just offer that the Bible has a consistent narrative that spans thousands of years, including prophecies fulfilled. It offers a worldview that makes sense of the world as we experience it. Risking a circular argument, I'll add that it claims to reveal what God wants us to know.

2. It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior. One of Jesus' last utterances in the flesh was, "Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Mat. 28:19). Followers do what the leader says.

3. Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin. The Hebrew prophet foretold a suffering servant who would be crushed for our iniquities (Is. 53:5). Peter confirmed that servant was Jesus. "Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18).

4. Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation. Defending his preaching about Jesus, Peter said, "there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). It is a free gift, received by faith (Eph. 2:8).

See *Fowler*, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. What is all the work that is going on beside and below the Union County Courthouse?

A. The county actually has nothing to do with the work that is going on below the Courthouse. Blue Ridge Mountain EMC is working on rebuilding the old substation that is located there. Some of this work is taking place on the edge of Butternut Creek Golf Course. Right now, they are working on installing the new foundation for the transmission poles. This involves a huge auger and crane and drilling machine to pour and set the foundation for a new large power pole that will be installed just to the Northeast of hole #5 on Butternut Creek Golf Course.

Q. Why is replacing/reworking the substation equipment necessary?

A. This substation is very old. It is being upgraded because of the increase in demand for power in this area. All the work the EMC is doing will also increase the reliability of power to this area.

Q. What area is serviced by this substation?

A. This substation services Union General Hospital and Nursing Home, the entire City of Blairsville, and some of the areas lying outside of the city limits. While all substations are important, this one is very important since it services the Hospital and the Nursing Home. In the event of a power outage it is imperative that the hospital be back up and running quickly. These upgrades will allow for overlapping power grids that will shorten or even eliminate power outages in this area.

Q. Are other substations in Union County in need of upgrades?

A. Blue Ridge Mountain EMC has been working on upgrading all the substations in Union County over the years. This is one of the final stations that needs an upgrade and it will be a substantial one. They will be completing all these upgrades to allow for future growth and the increasing need for electricity.

Q. When should this work be completed?

A. The EMC is hopeful that the work will be completed by

See *Paris*, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



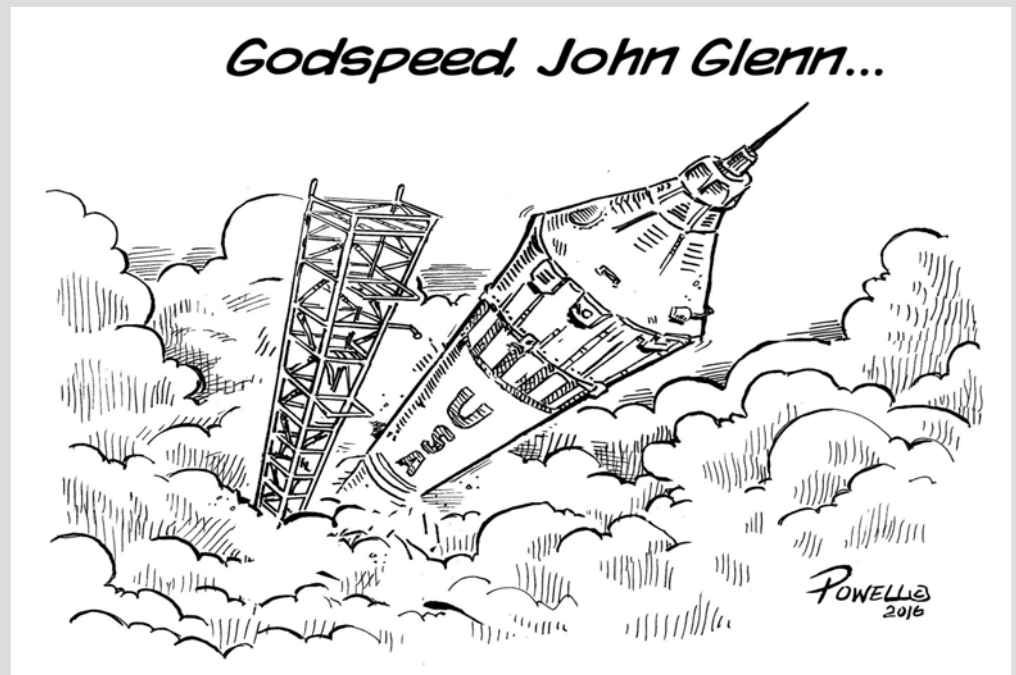
Blairsville Cruisers

For this week's article, I wanted to thank the Blairsville Cruisers for all that they do in our community. We have all seen them around the square and at the Farmer's Market with some amazing cars. Until I sat down and talked to the current President, Pete Barley, I did not realize the full scope of their community involvement.

As Pete told me, "The Blairsville Cruisers are all about community service." For the past 5 years, their biggest fundraiser has been the raffle to give away a car. In October, they raffled off a 2002 Ford Mustang GT Convertible. The proceeds from the fundraiser are sown back into the community. The Cruisers provide scholarships each year for Graduating Seniors at Union County High School and Woody Gap School. They also donate food and money to our local

See *Allison*, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber
Regina Allison



Letters to the Editor...

Keep the Sky Blue

Dear Editor,
My wife and I are both avid hikers and enjoy the outdoors. Frequently the skyline of downtown Atlanta is visible from the summit of Brasstown Bald. My concern is that President Elect Trump's appointment of a new EPA Administrator may severely harm these views and our environment in general. His proposed Administrator, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt is a serious mistake; he is a climate science denier and a fossil fuel ally. A person with this history has no business managing the agency charged with protecting our environment and controlling the fossil fuel industry. Please write your Congressman and Senators and encourage them to vote against this appointment. You may remember until 4 or 5 years ago the summer sky was frequently brown or gray, no longer, in the past few years they have been blue. Let's keep that way.

Lue Elder

Citizens Divided

Dear Editor,
The people of our country are now divided almost 50/50 over a two party system of government. One party tries to convince us that they are the way to truth, security and prosperity and proclaim the other party to be liars, scoundrels and thieves. We citizens are as divided now as we were before the civil war, Republicans against Democrats, family members against one another and neighbor against neighbor. No matter who wins the presidency this November almost 50% of us will feel disenfranchised, we will complain that we are not represented by the winning party. Then for the next four years the losing party will do everything in its power to bring down and discredit the winning party and nothing will be accomplished again. We will fight amongst ourselves over partisan politics while our media throws fuel on the fire. Meanwhile, our elected leaders will approve more pay raises and benefits for themselves, less freedoms for us and higher taxes on everyone.

We do not have a right to vote but we do have an obligation! Our founding fathers risked their lives and started a war in order to form a government whereby, we the people are in charge of that government, not the other way around, as many people in and out of government seem to believe. Sadly too many of us either don't care or did not study history and are ignorant of how it works. Of those that do care, did study and do vote, how many of us are so caught up in the politics of the two party system that we have become hypnotized by party rhetoric and follow without thinking. We put our trust in our parties' representatives to do what is best for us but history has shown us time and again that trust has been abused by both parties.

See *Adams*, page 5A

No Drinking Allowed

My family has always had a rule in the house, "No drinking allowed". This rule was emphasized through the last 3 generations because of varied incidents which occurred, some of which happened more than 100 years ago. The first incident occurred in a great great uncle's home. This great man was bad to drink. When he started he would drink for many days straight and during this time he was a mean drunk.

His wife became tired of the drinking and decided to put a stop to the situation. She told her husband the next time he came home intoxicated she was going to do "something". The man laughed and continued about his business as normal. About a week later he came home intoxicated after celebrating some unknown event. This man, normally a loving father, yelled and fussed at the kids for a while and eventually passed out on the bed. His wife loved him dearly and knew she had to do something to save the marriage. She went to the bedroom and sewed up her drunk husband in the bed sheet after which she took a broom handle and lovingly beat the desire for alcohol out of him. My great great uncle never consumed another drop of white lightning. The year my grandparents married my grandfather went camping with my grandmother's family. The family loved to camp and fish all night. They always had a big fish fry after the night of camping. My grandmother's brothers were always looking for a prank to play on someone and a potential brother-in-law was no exception. The whole Hyde Family knew about the great uncle in the bed sheet story. However, Papa did not know the story yet.

Uncle Dan prompted Papa to lie down and act as if he were passed out and Uncle Freeman ran to tell Granny that Papa had passed out from drinking apple brandy. Granny came up to the scene and found Papa lying on the ground by the fire. She picked up a big limb and whopped Papa across the belly. He rose up as he grabbed for his belly. He groaned and then began to laugh. Granny realized the joke was on her so she smacked him across the top of the head which nearly knocked him out. She looked at her soon to be husband and said, "I have 2 rules; no drinking and no telling lies".

A few years later after my daddy and Uncle Bud were born Papa's brother and Granny's brother came to visit the young family. However, they did not abide by the same rules as our family. My great uncles, Pogy and Dennis, came to my grandfather's house 3 sheets into the wind. Pogy and Dennis decided they wanted to milk the family cow. Uncle Dennis sat on Papa and Pogy tried to milk the cow. She stepped on his foot and Pogy began to scream. Dennis and

See *Cummings*, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Frost Protection

I'm sure many of us spent the past weekend bundled up inside by the fire with some hot cocoa to avoid these frigid arctic winds. We aren't the only ones who may need some protection from cold temperatures though. Our plants may spend their lives outside and be somewhat used to adverse weather, but younger, less hardy plants really need our help when it comes to avoiding damage from hard frosts and cold snaps.

Clear, cloudless nights are the worst for frost damage to plants. During cloudy nights and days, the cloud cover helps to keep in heat that the earth has absorbed. Clear nights, however, allow all the heat that has been absorbed throughout the day to rapidly escape, causing the temperature to drop dramatically and moisture left in the air to settle on plants and freeze. The freezing of these crystals damages plant tissues and causes cracks in stems and bark as well as dieback of tender young shoots, leaves, and buds.

Plants that are most susceptible to frost damage are those that are not native to our area, are actively growing, or are not yet cold hardened. Frost damage is a major concern in spring as warm temperatures early in the season cause plants to break their dormant state early, and buds are nipped during the last season frost. However, dramatic drops in temperature throughout the winter can cause significant damage to plants as well. In mature plants, this could mean dieback of branches or the death of buds, causing less new growth or flowering the following year. Young plants with no protection are often killed by prolonged below freezing temperatures.

The best way to protect your plants against frost damage is to prevent it by planning ahead and providing appropriate care as best as you can. When possible, always select cold-tolerant plants and plan your landscaping appropriately. Brick walls, rocks, and patios are excellent heat sources as they absorb sunlight throughout the day. These can serve as heat sources for sensitive plants. Always try to plant in areas with southern and western exposure as these get the most sunlight throughout the day and are the warmest areas at night. If a plant requires full to part sun, always plant in full sun if possible. Plant early-blooming frost tolerant plants in the coldest part of your property to make sure they do not break dormancy and risk losing their beautiful flowers. Plants still need hydration over the winter, so make sure they are adequately watered. Moist soil also changes temperature slowly, so this can help reduce cold damage to the roots. Use plenty of ground cover such as mulch to protect root systems as well.

Preserving heat is another way to protect plants. Draping a large blanket or cloth over young or sensitive plants can protect them from

From the Ground Up
Melissa Mattee



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