

A Life Saver: Smoke Alarms

If you are one of the people who regularly read this column, you would notice that we talk about smoke alarms a great deal.

Union County Fire Department encourages everyone to install smoke alarms throughout the home.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief David Dyer



A myth about a home fire is that the fire is what kills the occupants. That is possible, but the main killer is the smoke.

Another issue is the reduced visibility from smoke. It can block out the lights and make escaping difficult.

Union County Fire Department offers free smoke alarms to residents of Union County.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

The Way Home

Elizabeth Cochrane left New York to prove a point. She was a 25-year-old journalist. It was 1889. It was not the only time she set out to change perceptions about what women could do.

She endured traveling alone by steam ships and trains. She spoke only English. She carried only one bag.

Christmas has that effect. It beckons you to look closer at your loyalties. It brings the yearnings of the soul to the surface.

Look closer at what that means. In his poem, "The House of Christmas," Chesterton describes our predicament.

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Does Union County Government operate a public water system?

A. No. Coosa Water Authority and Notla Water Authority are independent legislatively enacted entities that are not controlled by Union County or the City of Blairsville.

Q. How are the Water Authority service boundaries separated/divided?

A. Coosa Water Authority mostly covers West of Blairsville along the Blue Ridge Highway and parts of Owtown.

Q. Why don't you leave the Lake Nottely at full pool (full water level) throughout the entire year?

A. That would be so nice and easy and I could certainly be a local hero.

Q. Does TVA change the lake levels differently at certain times of the year?

A. Absolutely! During the summer they do a pretty good job of maintaining lake levels at or near full pool for boating and other recreation.

Q. What are normal lake levels on Lake Nottely?

A. According to their guide, the lake is at the lowest levels in the winter.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

Nitro

Dear Editor,

I wish to publicly acknowledge the thoughtfulness and the sensitivity of Jessie's Pooch Parlor at 1376 Hwy 515 East on the passing of my dog Nitro.

Thomas G Tornabene

Re: Petition for Commission

Dear Editor,

Where is the justice and grace from a resident who is meant to have our best interests at heart?

For years, the residents of Union County worked tirelessly to gather legal signatures from registered voters to request a referendum on the ballot.

See Mills, page 5A

Judge Dwain Brackett

Dear Editor,

Judge Dwain Brackett is retiring. I think this county should give him a parting gift to help him remember his time in office.

Re: Denial of Petition for a Board of Commissioners

Dear Editor,

After residing in Union County for over 17 years and seeing the unethical practices and vile treatment of citizens by the Commissioner and the Sheriff, it appears the Probate Office has moved in the same direction.

See Vandereedt, page 5A

Addressing Rumors

Dear Editor,

Since moving to Blairsville in 2006, I have been involved in one way or another with Humane Society's Mountain Shelter.

See Shannon, page 5A



Passion

Whether a person is in his or her twenties or sixties, he or she has a passion within, even if it is covered up. We all have at least one passion that can be a dynamic, driving force.

I believe that people begin to know at an early age, possibly in elementary school, what might possibly turn on their passionate switch or what might be their passionate gut feeling or passionate driving force.

See Ashurst, page 5A

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



Christmas Gifts

Christmas brings back many memories to each of us. Christmas brings memories of various gifts of which I received through the years.

Christmas has always been a special time for my family. My grandparents celebrated Christmas by decorating Cedar Trees and by answering the phone with a special greeting.

Some of John's sons never forgave him for the destruction of their family. He came back for a couple of visits, but, a couple of his sons would have nothing to do with him.

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm Mickey Cummings



Winter Tree ID

In the winter time, deciduous trees can become much trickier to identify because the trees don't have any leaves on them.

For starters I should clarify that I am talking about native trees in this column. These are trees that you might see while on a winter hike in the woods.

Bark comes in various patterns which can be helpful hints. Some trees have bark that forms ravines that travel up the tree.

Looking at the buds on the tree can help with ID. Oaks are the only trees that will have multiple terminal buds.

Overall tree shape helps with ID if you take a few steps back from the tree and look at it for a few seconds.

Watching and Working Jacob Williams



See Williams, page 5A

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## Paris...continued from Page 4A

and continues until full pool by the middle of May and remains at that general level until August or September, if there is adequate rainfall. This data is all shown on the TVA Operating Guide for Lake Nottely. This guide shows the range that TVA attempts to keep the lake levels between. In red, it shows the actual levels of the lake this year.

**Q. A couple of years ago, some Lake Nottely property owners approached Union County about leachate and PFAS levels in the lake. Can Union County control what goes in and out of Lake Nottely?**

A. While we understand concerns about the quality of the water in Lake

Nottely, the authority for water quality is the Georgia Environmental Protection Department (EPD). According to the EPD, PFAS are widely used, long lasting chemicals, components of which break down very slowly over time. TVA manages the reservoir, and they do some testing; however, the Georgia EPD has the authority to enforce the Federal Clean Water Act – controlling what goes into and out of Lake Nottely through “Permitted Discharges.”

Union County Government has no authority to control these discharges. Union County does issue permits for grading and construction to help prevent silt from entering our streams.

## Clyde...continued from Page 4A

fact, they’re so desperate to discredit Pete and tank this nomination process that they’re spreading false, anonymous smears about his conduct and character.

What is the Swamp so afraid of? Well, as Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth will: Restore strength to our military; Command respect at home and abroad; Ensure American military might is again feared on the world stage; End woke DEI programs that drain taxpayer dollars and impede readiness; Bring accountability, true leadership, and bold, fresh ideas to the DOD.

Sounds like the perfect man for the job to me.

Meanwhile, some Senate Republicans — who are charged with confirming the President’s Cabinet — aren’t so sure.

Keep in mind, Joe Biden’s Secretary of De-

fense, Lloyd Austin, received overwhelming bipartisan support. In total, 43 Republican Senators voted to confirm Lloyd Austin and his harmful policies. The majority of these Republicans still serve in the Senate, with many representing some of the most conservative states in the country.

Confirming Pete Hegseth should be a no-brainer.

I’m encouraged by President Trump’s unwavering support for Pete Hegseth, as well as Pete’s resolve amidst the Swamp’s malicious lies. Last week, I had the opportunity to meet Pete — and I told him the folks of the Ninth District want him to keep fighting! As a Navy combat veteran, I’m confident that Pete Hegseth is the Secretary of Defense that our servicemembers, the Pentagon, and America desperately need.

## Chamber ... continued from Page 4A

County unique is that many of our larger producers are locally owned. These industries are strategically placed and recognized growth from 5% to 15% last year in their respective industries. This is great for the economy, but to sustain this growth they must have employees. The Chamber works with our local businesses to address this issue as well as partnering with the Union County School System and our Post Secondary Institutions.

One of the greatest assets with which the County addresses this issue is the Union County College and Career Academy (CCA). The CCA offers pathways includ-

ing Agriculture, Computer Science, Entrepreneurship, Health Science, Transportation and Logistics just to name a few. The CCA continually updates pathways to align with our local business needs and requirements. The Chamber and School System work to assist the County to grow from within and to prepare our local students to enter the workforce in hopes they remain in Union County to keep our economy strong and thriving.

Thank you for supporting the Blairsville-Union County Chamber and the Union County School System as we work to make Life Better in Blairsville.

## Vandereedt... continued from Page 4A

should have.

Senator Gooch went on the record to give other options to achieve a board of commissioners other than a petition. Let’s hope that he will assist with those options since his job is to represent the people.

I am still perplexed as to why certain people are afraid to allow the citizens to vote on what form of government they want. Lamar Paris went on local radio to say that he felt vindicated that the petition was not allowed to move forward. I feel vindicated that he lost his race for commissioner after his reign of 24 years. His loss is due to voters learning more about who Lamar Paris is and how he has treated citizens. Many didn’t even know we had a sole commissioner and that he is a Democrat. I am glad his days of harassment of the

citizens is over. Elected officials should not treat the citizens of the county the way I have seen him treat those with which he disagrees.

Union County will have a board of commissioners eventually, and you will have Lamar Paris to thank for that. He has invited in a lot of new people coming from places who have boards.

Only seven counties are left in the entire United States that don’t have boards. We will continue to stand up for the people of this county to have a voice and a choice in the form of government they want.

I am confident that Commissioner-elect Harold Collins will eventually realize the county needs more than one person making decisions for the people of Union County.  
**Cindy Vandereedt**

## Rice... continued from Page 4A

a Board of five commissioners. The petition is asking that we have the people of Union County vote on whether or not to have a county government with a Sole Commissioner or to have a five-member Board of Commissioners. But Judge Dwain Brackett, before leaving office, dismissed the petition. He decided, in his betrayal of the Constitution, that he knew better – that only the legislature could change our local government. That is not true.

We, the citizens of Union County, can make the decision on how we want to be governed. Judge Brackett, with the stroke of his pen, is denying us that right. He struck down a legally obtained petition, one that meets all requirements and was duly filed.

The question lies with the people of our county, not with the legislature. Judge Brackett has no grounds to deny this petition. “We the People” demand to have a say in how we are governed. How is it that ONE person in our county, a retiring Judge Dwain Brackett, gets to solely decide how

we shall be governed? This should not be allowed. Please keep in mind, the petition is not requesting that we have a five-member Board of Commissioners.

The petition is asking that the people be allowed to vote on whether or not we would like to have a five-member Board of Commissioners or a Sole Commissioner.

**Lucy Rice**

## Fowler...

**continued from Page 4A**

called the Child, “God with us.” Look into His face.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He lived in Nazareth growing up. Capernaum in Galilee was home during his ministry years. But Jesus has another home in mind for you. “I go to prepare a place for you,” He said. “You know the way... I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:2-6).

That is the hope revealed to humanity by the Child in that stable. The Light shined in the darkness, showing you the way home.

## Cummings...continued from Page 4A

more feeble. He made things right with my Great Grandfather Lon, who was always close to his father even though he couldn’t understand why John had left his mother. So, one Christmas Lon invited his elderly father to come home and spend some time with his family.

Lon invited the whole family for Christmas dinner. Some came and some refused. There was still much bitterness among some of the boys. Lon’s oldest daughter, Mabel (Papa’s sister), had an idea. She bought her Papa a brand new pair of overalls and asked everyone to bring a

## Mills...

**continued from Page 4A**

our community.

In good faith, we submitted our petition to the Probate Court promptly, though we inadvertently omitted the count. We then waited patiently for over a month, anticipating a response regarding when our matter would be placed on the ballot. What transpired, however, was an egregious breach of trust. Judge Dwain Brackett, a fellow community member, reviewed our submission and denied it with no communication to the organizers – his fellow neighbors!

The most troubling aspect of this situation is that Judge Brackett, being part of our community, should have championed our cause, just as the more than 4,200 residents expressed through their signatures. Justice should not be withheld. Judge Brackett had the opportunity to clarify the omission by simply making a phone call to the organizers to confirm the count (or any other issue that would not let the petition move forward). Instead, he opted to deny the petition outright.

Is this how we define fairness in our county? By ignoring the voices of over 4,000 residents who desire a say in their government? This is not just an oversight; it is outrageous behavior that undermines justice in Union County.

We deserve better.

Sincerely,

**Jeanne Mills**

## Williams...

**continued from Page 4A**

The ability to identify trees can add some interest to a hike or give you an idea what use that tree have. If you have questions about winter tree ID contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

## Shannon...

**continued from Page 4A**

The Board is aware that lately there have been some unkind and untrue comments in social media circulated by a small group of individuals whom we believe are influenced by a disgruntled former employee. For those spreading these false rumors, perhaps our community would be better served if instead of making malicious attacks, you volunteered in our organization. Your derogatory comments do not benefit anyone.

The Mountain Shelter Board of Directors is a group of dedicated volunteers whose only concern – and I mean ONLY concern – is the well-being of the homeless dogs and cats of Towns and Union County. We do not receive any compensation for our service; on the contrary, we volunteer hundreds of hours of our time to help the animals of these two counties. In addition to the Shelter, we operate two Thrift Stores whose purpose is to raise money to support the Shelter and the animals in our care.

Next year, along with this community, we will celebrate our 40th year of serving Towns and Union Counties. As that anniversary approaches, the Board has been hard at work refining our vision for the future of animal rescue. We have started a major reorganization to ensure we are able to meet the needs of our community now and in the future. We look forward to an outstanding 2025, when we hope to expand the Shelter to better serve our community and the ever-expanding population of homeless animals.

We want to thank our generous community and those who support us. We survive on donations and could not do what we do without your support. Your donations benefit the homeless dogs and cats in our care. Thank you for supporting us and them!

**Ruth Shannon**

Secretary, Humane Society’s Mountain Shelter Board of Directors

gift for the old man. She gathered all the gifts and stuffed them into the overalls and then sewed the leg openings together so the gifts would not fall out. John was so old he had trouble seeing, but, he knew the overalls were new, so he tried to put them on, but, he could not get his leg into them.

So, he turned them upside down and reached his arm into the legs and began pulling out his gifts. The old man soon had about 10 gifts lying at his feet. Papa said he had tears running down his face and he was laughing at the same time. His grandfather got more than he bargained for that Christmas. He received the gifts and the forgiveness of his family. I think that is why Papa loved Christmas. He was able to experience, first-hand, the true meaning of Christmas.

## Ashurst...

**continued from Page 4A**

been passionate about. It can be quite an exciting journey of yesterdays.

“If you can’t figure out your life purpose, figure out your passion. For your passion will lead you right into your purpose.” (Bishop T.D. Jakes)