

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Be Safe with Electric Generators

Winter has started off unusual this year with dry conditions and higher than normal temperatures. The cold, snow and ice will be here soon enough. These winter weather events are just a few of many incidents that can result in the occasional power outage. Some people have purchased portable electric generators to provide power during these rare outages. Having a power generator can be very convenient but it can also be very dangerous to home owners, utility workers, and public safety if they are not used properly. Union County Fire Department would like to remind owners of portable electric generators of some safety tips to keep everyone safe.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Before using your portable electric generator, please read the owner's manual to understand the operations, safety features, and limitations of the power unit. Owners should also be familiar with how to properly maintain and refuel the unit. Shut the generator down before refueling to reduce the fire hazard. Fuel should be stored outside, away from the generator and other heat sources.

Portable generators powered by gasoline or other types of fuels produce harmful carbon monoxide gas when operating. These generators should NEVER be used inside the home, basement or garage. Portable generators should be operated outside in a dry area that is well ventilated and away from any air intakes to the home.

Electrical shock is also a danger. Make sure the generator is properly grounded. The owner's manual should be able to provide instructions on proper grounding. Operators should utilize appropriate extension cords and those cords should be plugged directly into the receptacle outlet of the generator. Use ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) as per the manufacturer's instructions. Never run extension cords under carpets or rugs. Owners should also know the limitations of the generator as to not overload it beyond capacity.

A major concern is home owners who attempt to connect a portable electric generator to the home's existing wiring. This is very dangerous. The reverse flow of electricity through the house to the power lines can electrocute utility or public safety workers. Home owners who have a generator that provides power to their home must have a properly installed transfer switch to prevent re-

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Welcome 2017!

Is there any way to know what 2017 will bring? Benjamin Franklin said that nothing is certain except death and taxes, so there's that. The most common New Year's resolution is to work on your bank balance and weight. Notice that the former grows and the latter shrinks. Don't mix those up.

The Bible says "you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow" (Jam. 4:14). Somebody should have told Thomas Watson that. In 1943, the chairman of IBM said, "I think there is a world market for maybe five computers." Oops. A Yale professor told Fred Smith that his great business idea was not feasible. His idea became FedEx. Another oops. Gary Cooper said, "I'm glad it'll be Clark Gable falling on his face and not me," after turning down the leading role in "Gone With the Wind." You get the idea.

So, avoiding speculative predictions and dubious resolutions, here are three realities that will certainly follow us into 2017, for our great benefit.

1. The love of God. "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, his loving kindness is everlasting." Be thankful for the ways God has shown his love to you, through creation, family, friends. His eternal act of love was that while we were sinners Christ died for us. (Ps. 136:1, Rom. 5:8)

2. The prize of the upward call. Paul said, "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead" he pressed toward the goal of this prize. He was saying that he had not "arrived" at spiritual perfection and had room to grow toward living life in Christ. I figure that's true for you, too. It is for me. (Phil. 3:14)

3. The presence of God. "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." God offers this as an antidote to discontentment. If contentment is the distance between what you want and what you have, to have God's presence is the only way to close that discontentment gap! Besides, as Jesus said, "Who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?" (Heb. 13:5, Mat. 6:27)

For the world to know and embrace these truths in 2017, the world needs a change that only God can give. To that end I offer as a prayer Kelly Clarkson's lyrics: "This is my grownup

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



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Commissioner's Questions

I hope that everyone had a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Q. Has this been an unusually difficult flu season?

A. It may be a little early to know for sure, but we do know that a lot of families have had what some doctors and nurses have been referring to as the "Blairsville Crud". We have had lots of sore throats, runny noses and congestion, and my family is no exception. We hope this "Blairsville Crud" will soon wear itself out.

Q. Does Union County have a high number of groups that donate gifts during the Christmas season?

A. We absolutely do! I think we live in one of the most caring counties, and while I do not want to list names of groups for fear of leaving someone out, I cannot imagine that there is a child in Union County that did not have a good Christmas this year because of lack of funds. This really makes me proud of our community and all the people that are willing to donate not only locally, but world wide as well.

Q. We saw in the North Georgia News last week that there were two vehicle accidents resulting in two forest fires in one day. Is this pretty unusual?

A1. It is absolutely unusual. I am not sure that we have ever had a similar situation. There were two separate single car automobile accidents on December 23rd, both causing large forest fires. The first was a single vehicle accident on Richard Russell Scenic Highway at 6:52 a.m. involving an individual traveling to work. The driver of the SUV lost control when a deer ran in front of them. The vehicle went off the road and hit a road sign causing the catalytic converter to start a fire in the ditch at the accident site, which immediately spread up the mountain. No one was injured.

A2. The second accident occurred later in the evening around dark on the south side of Highway 19/129 near mile marker 6 in Lumpkin County. The accident involved a Corvette traveling too fast, lost control, spun around in the road and then hit a boulder. They barely missed going over the dropoff. When the driver exited the vehicle it was on fire which soon spread to the woods.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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Letters to the Editor...

Connections

Dear Editor,

Thanks to "our newspaper" here and an article and picture recently printed here, we have discovered a new connection...

The article mentioned a lady we thought we knew from church... We didn't know she had learned to fly in her teens and was once a pilot. A Christmas card return told us so much more.

We are in our eighties and she in her nineties and the spark has made us friends.

Not long ago when attending our grandson's debate in Colorado, that spark ignited again. While waiting for Dan, we met the school receptionist. To make conversation, she asked if we had done much traveling... I mentioned having once lived in Chateauroux, France on an Air Base. Her reaction was electric... She had lived on that same base, had been married there and had a daughter born with dual citizenship.

Are these sparks nothing more than novel coincidence?

I'd like to think they are the connections we all have within us. Our likes, never mind our dislikes. The places we have been, the things we may once have been able to do, the reactions to music, books, weather, sounds, places... all that can be contentedly reacted to.

With a New Year on our horizon let's look for affirmations and just plain joy. Hope is waiting to be acknowledged along with recognition of "the good life" we have right here and now. May we embrace it?

If you are living here and your children are grown go follow children here. The high school Christmas program in our new Fine Arts Center was great!

The Sound and Light Show at the Fair Grounds in Hiwassee was beautiful.

There is a dog park, an extension of Meeks Park, presents a different view.

If our weather does get "dicey" the Methodist Church has an alternative, the indoor walkway above the gym, available to all. The windows all around allow us to keep an eye on the mountains as we "gear up".

The library has cozy niches for preview-

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The Russians

Dear Editor,

The Russians hacked into the DNC and WikiLeaks released many of the DNC and Clinton e-mails exposing their war on Christianity, the leaking of debate questions to Clinton and many other acts of sabotage to influence the election.

The liberal Hollywood elites and many famous actors and actresses, musicians and artist alike all tried their best to influence the election. President Obama and many of the Washington elites tried to influence the election. Our so called media, CNN, ABC, NBC, MSNBC, CBS, *The New York Times*, *The LA Times*, *The Washington Post* and many other so called news organizations did their level best to influence the election. Even after they were defeated, they are still doing everything in their power to bring down the president elect even before he is sworn in.

Yes, many factions tried their very best to influence the election but I believe the one and only influence that had a definite result on the election was our prayers. Over the past several years we have watched anti-Christian politicians try to remove God from our schools, our sports, our courts and government offices. We have seen Christians beheaded, drowned, and burned alive in the middle east. We have seen their churches destroyed and thousands of Christians murdered and forced to leave their homes and villages. All that while president Obama, who claims to be a Christian, did little or nothing about it except play golf.

Our brilliant founding fathers established the greatest nation in the history of the world as a republic of, for and by the people, based on Christian values. During the last eight years the atrocities mentioned above have worn on the

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"Sometimes I wish I had gone to college. Then I might have had a career in cybercrime!"

Letters to the Editor...

Health Insurance

Dear Editor,

My daughter has not had health insurance most of her adult life. Working in the service industry, she was never offered it and it was too expensive to pick up on her own. With her age and good health, other bills were her priority.

Now she works in a factory and she was given the opportunity to enroll in health insurance for the upcoming year. We were happy for her and helped her look over the different plans offered. We were shocked to find out for \$80 a month, she could get preventative care but no sick visits, labs or x-rays. For another \$80, she could get some minimal inpatient benefits... paid to her but not the hospital (indemnity benefits) if she became injured or ill. Neither policy covered her for any type of hospital visit.

So we looked into Obamacare for her and she is now signed up for the bronze plan with full benefits for less than \$1 a month. In small print, we saw that even though her company offers health insurance as per law, if the benefits are not comprehensive, she can receive subsidies for Obamacare. Unfortunately, many of her co-workers did not realize this and either did not sign up for the insurance (under penalty of an \$800+ fine) or found out the hard way through illness how poor their coverage was.

After reading about a woman's recent battle with cancer and Obamacare, we were fright-

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Hope For America

Dear Editor,

Soon we will have a new administration in place, one that will make a lot of changes that will benefit all of America. I believe with all of my heart that president elect Donald Trump has been set in this position for a time like this from God, Himself because He has heard the cries of His people, cries of the past 8 years that has brought our nation under the leadership of one who had a goal to destroy our beloved America and set his own agenda of dividing our nation for his own personal gain, but on January 20th our nation will once again have the hope of a better America as President Trump brings his agenda to get our nation back on track to make it strong and respected again.

Yes there will be great challenges and oppositions facing this new administration, but with good sound advice from his cabinet staff and religious leaders to mentor president Trump and God's wisdom and knowledge to lean upon great things can be accomplished for the good of "We The People". Those of us who pray daily, please pray for president elect Trump every day for he will need our prayers to succeed to turn our nation back under the leadership of "In God We Trust." With God all things are possible through prayer. Amen

Frank F. Combs

Tommy Trapp

Previously, you were introduced to a fellow named Tommy Trapp. Tucker is what Dad and his friends called him. Sometime during the 1890s the Trapp family moved to the area of what later would become known as Trapptown. The family was instrumental in the building of a new school called Trapp Plank School in the little

community. The old building burned in the late 1930s and a newer building was built of which my dad and uncle attended. The Trapp Family and the Cummings Family became inextricably intertwined as friends over the years. One of my grandfather's best friends was Skeeter Trapp and his brother Eb was owner of the local store and one of my dad's coaches. Their nephew, Tucker, would later become good friends with my dad.

Tucker was notoriously mischievous and he mostly got away with his antics. There was a logger, Mr. Newell, in the community that was a gruff individual and didn't like young boys. He was a regular attendee at the Union Hill Congregational Methodist Church and he always complained about the boys of the church being rowdy. One particular Sunday at Church all the boys sat down to services in their usual customary place, the middle row on the right side where everyone could keep an eye on them. Paul and his younger brother, Bud, had just reached the age where they were allowed to sit with the other boys of the church. All the boys were about 10-13 years of age. So, Paul, Bud, William, Jimmy and Hubert Brooks were all sitting together when Tucker came into the church house and sat down beside Paul.

Dad noticed that Tommy's pockets were bursting at the seams and so being curious, he asked, "Tuck, what's in those pockets of yours?" His answer, "I'll show you after church." An hour later the preacher finished his fiery sermon and the congregation was dismissed to a "Dinner on the Grounds". Instead of rushing to the picnic all the boys followed their leader, Tuck, outside to old man Newell's logging truck.

While Paul, Bud and William watched, Tucker emptied his pockets of roofing nails and scattered them in front of the logging truck. All the boys except Dad, Bud and William took off running. Dad said, "We felt it wasn't right in scattering those nails. So, we began to pick them up." Then the old man came around the corner and found the boys with the nails in front of his truck. The boys refused to snitch on Tommy because of their friendship. Naturally, the old man assumed these three boys were the culprits and told my papa. Dad, Bud and William received a whipping for something for which they were not guilty.

If something went awry in the community Tommy was usually involved and everyone

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Composting

If you have a garden that you spend a lot of time in, you may want to think twice about throwing away coffee grounds or banana peels. Soil amendments and fertilizers can be costly, but you can condition your own organic matter to boost the nutrients in your garden for little to no cost at all by composting. Composting is a great way to recycle used materials that would otherwise be thrown away into a valuable, nutrient rich resource to be added to your vegetable gardens or flowerbeds.

To compost efficiently, you need to follow four main steps:

1. Maintain good aeration. Composting relies on the activity of tiny organisms called microbes, and in order to do their job effectively, they need air. If there is no air penetrating to the inner portions of your pile, this leads to foul smelling anaerobic activity. This should only be allowed if you have your compost in a closed container. Otherwise, make sure to turn your pile once or twice a month to aerate it. If the pile is not mixed, it can take up to three or four times longer to decompose!

2. Make sure there is enough moisture. If your compost pile becomes too dry, it will take longer to decompose. A dry compost pile can also be a fire hazard. When you make your pile, dampen every layer, but make sure it is not too soggy. If heavy rainfall completely saturates your compost pile, turn it more frequently than you normally would to let it dry out.

3. Add small particles. The bigger the things you add, the longer the microbes will take to break it down. If you add leaves to your pile, go over them with a lawn mower or rent a chipper for your branches and woody plant scraps.

4. Appropriate temperature maintenance. Your compost pile should stay between 110 and 160 degrees Fahrenheit because microbes can break down organic matter much quicker at higher temperatures. This high temperature also kills most pathogens and weed seeds so it does not spread to other plants when you add it to the soil. Despite this, it is best to avoid adding weeds or diseased plants to your pile if possible.

When preparing your compost pile, it is always important to layer your material appropriately. Always make an initial layer with coarser material that cannot be manually broken down into smaller pieces. This helps introduce oxygen into the pile and makes the process more efficient. The next layer should be ten inches deep with organic wastes such as leaves, plant trimmings, and old grass cuttings. Next, add about an inch of soil to make sure your pile has enough microbes to break down what you add to the pile. Finally, add a nitrogen source. This can be fertilizer such as ammonium sulfate (1/3 cup per 25

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison



Celebrating the Next Business of the Quarter

Happy New Year! Even though 2017 has just started, we are in full swing at the Chamber and getting ready to celebrate the first Business After Hours/Business of the Quarter for this year. Be sure to join us on Thursday, January 12th 5:30 p.m.-7 p.m. at Enotah Valley Event Center (previously Goose Creek). We are excited to be recognizing Habitat for Humanity of Towns/Union County as Business of the Quarter.

We want to say a special thank you to Enotah Valley Event Center & Epic Catering for sponsoring the event.

As always, this is a free event open to all Chamber Members and is a great opportunity to network. We look forward to seeing you there!

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