

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Well, It Snowed

The past winter event was our first of the season. We had reports of 3-6 inches of snow throughout the county and extremely cold temperatures. From a fire department and emergency management perspective, it went very well. We were trying to determine the exact reasons as to why there were so few incidents during this event. We believe it was a combination of things such as the time of day and it being the weekend. A major contribution was the preparedness and the actions of the citizens of the county.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief



David Dyer

We believe that the public was informed of the incident and prepared well. Providing public information on major weather events is a priority for Union County Emergency Management Agency (UCEMA). The more information that we can provide to the public, the better prepared the public can be for the event. We believe that the public was well informed of the snow event which gave them time to prepare and get settled in.

Preparedness is only a part of the equation. Citizens staying at home and staying off the roads helped tremendously to reduce the amount of accidents. We would like to say "Thank You" to everyone who didn't travel unless they had to and for staying home during these few interesting days.

The county was prepared also. Many departments were attending weather briefings, gathering information and preparing resources to respond to the winter event. The Emergency Operations Center was opened and staffed to coordinate response and keep everyone informed. The 911 Dispatch Center prepared staff to handle any additional call volume. The Sheriff's Office and the Fire Department were preparing vehicles, equipment and personnel to respond to snow incidents as well as the normal call volume. Volunteer firefighters were staffing the main fire stations in order to respond quicker to any emergency. The road department was working 24-hours a day to clear the roads in the difficult and very cold conditions. These are just a few departments who were operating to maintain the safety of the citizens of this county.

Other counties may wonder how Union County can deal

See Dyer, page 5A

Social Construct

Inaugurating a new President is an American moment, but we are more "pluribus" than "unum." Even the joint session of Congress to ratify the Electoral College results was contentious, with V.P. Biden gaveling the session closed with, "It's over." But sharp differences remain. How often have you thought, "How do those people even think like that?" The answer is what's behind those thoughts, even if the thinker is unaware.

The Declaration of Independence uses "created equal," "endowed," "unalienable rights," and "laws of nature," coinciding with a worldview that "all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16-17). The founders understood the created order, self-evident truths, and natural law. They and we can hold these truths and demand freedom without establishing a theocracy.

Since the tower of Babel, another worldview has seen man as building a new humanity of his own liking, with no need of the transcendent. This has become the modern philosophy of social constructionism. This means that "we all take part in constructing the reality we share in our own society. In other words, reality is not given us by nature. There is no such thing as a creation order," as explained by Os Guinness in "Impossible People." We make our own rules, and devise our own identity. We are alone in the universe, so we can choose what matters. What was once moral or true is just a social construct, and meaningless for today.

World view filters answers to: Does gender trump biology? Can an unborn human have no value while the unborn of endangered species are protected? Should unborn human parts be extracted, sold, and used for medical research and the survival of the fittest? Will the responsibilities of family, church, and neighbors be shifted to government as provider and healer? Are nations and marriage social constructs - no boundaries? Is the environment god as per Nietzsche, "To sin against the earth, that is now the most monstrous crime of all"? Should climate science remain open to sincere inquiry? Should the Supreme Court shape our laws to the cultural mood?

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



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Commissioner's Questions

Q. Do you know how much snow Union County received last week?

A. There were different reports throughout the county which ranged from 4.5 to 6 inches. We were very lucky that while we received a large amount of snow for our area, it was a weekend, and the ice was not as bad as it has been in some past winters, although it was bad enough. It is much easier for the Road Department to manage the roads when it is more snow than ice.

Q. Would you classify this as a major snow event for our County?

A. Yes. It certainly was as far as man power, time and supplies utilized to try to keep the roads as clear as possible. The county utilized approximately 600 tons of salt and gravel for this one snow event.

Q. What did the County do to prepare for the snow this year?

A. Every year the Road Department starts preparing for winter weather in the early fall. They make sure all the snow removal equipment is in excellent working condition and they have a large stockpile of salt and gravel. This early preparation by the Road Department gives us a head start anytime snow and ice is in the forecast. Also, in preparation for this snow storm, Fire Chief, David Dyer, stationed firefighters throughout the county so someone was available in all areas of the County in the event of an emergency. The E-911 Center was also on high alert and prepared in case of power outages and an abnormal abundance of emergency calls.

Q. Does Union County use a pretreating mixture to help prevent the roads from icing over?

A. No, we do not as of right now. We have looked at the possibility and are trying to evaluate the expense and manpower required to pretreat the roads. Beginning last year, GDOT started doing it on their roads and they did it for this snow as well. However, we have been unable to see any difference in the road conditions because of the pretreating.

Q. If pretreating highways with a liquid salt mixture

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



See Paris, page 5A

Is your teen in trouble?

Today's teenager does not come with a handbook - and even if they did, it would need to be updated almost daily. The speed at which dangerous trends develop and social media promotes acceptance by teens presents a real challenge to parents and their ability to identify trouble in their child.

Substance abuse and addiction is often camouflaged for teens. It initially starts off as an experiment and then the frequency begins to increase. They go from once every couple months, to once a month, to only on weekends. Then something changes and they find themselves using daily. It slowly begins to break them down with their mood, motivation, and academic performance and alters the priorities in their life.

Often, the teen and their parents do not notice they have a problem until it is too late. How many times have you heard highly involved and educated parents proclaim "we had no idea" or "we had no reason to suspect" that their son or daughter had been abusing substances. Studies show that parents, on average, are unaware of a substance problem for the first two years.

With your very busy life, subtle changes in your teen are not always all that noticeable. Teens are smart and they share techniques with each other of how to mislead their parents and not get caught using.

To make sense of adolescent attraction to substance abuse, realize that many teens have discussions online and even in class amongst their classmates on Thursday and Friday are about "how wasted they are going to get" and then the discussions on Monday and Tuesday are about how wasted they got. Whether your teen parties or not, these are the discussions they can hear all around them and unfortunately, many of the party kids are still the "cool" kids.

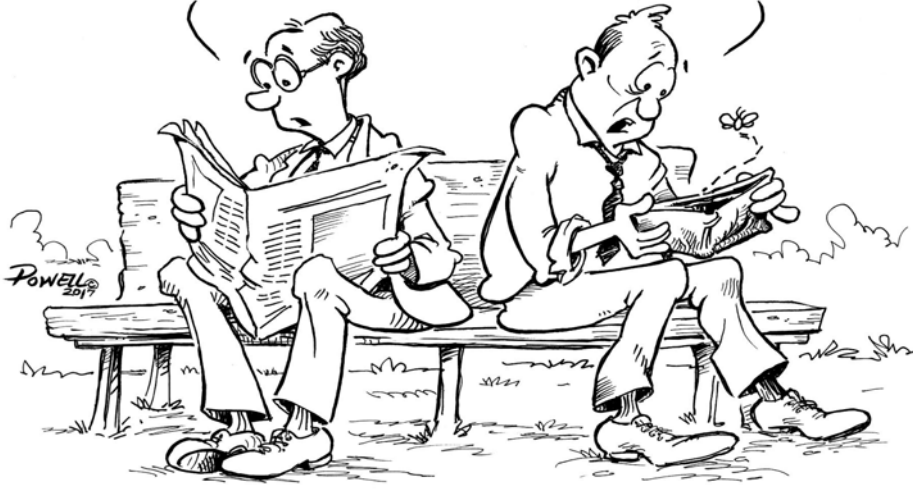
There are things that you should be looking

See Drugs, page 5A

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.

Did you see where Georgia is third in credit card debt?

No, but my wallet has!



Letters to the Editor...

Salvation Army

Dear Editor,

As I look back on Christmas season with The Salvation Army of Northeast Georgia, I am amazed at the generosity of our community. Each of you who provided for your neighbors blessed the recipients of your gifts more than you will ever know. Because of your financial support and the hours you gave volunteering in 2016, more than 2600 people received assistance with rent, utilities, food, and Christmas gifts.

I want to thank especially the volunteers who rang bells at our red kettle locations this year. We are so thankful for your commitment and the selfless gift of your time. Many days were cold, but you were always there, sharing a smile and Christmas greeting to passersby. Your spirit and love made a difference in the lives of so many and will continue to do so this year as we help those who have no alternative but to turn to The Salvation Army for their basic needs.

Our fundraising goal for the kettles was \$105,000. This money will go far in our work to keep families intact with rent, utilities, and food year-round. Thank you for this gift. We pledge to be good stewards of your generosity.

This year 566 children woke up to a joyful Christmas morning because of your help with the Angel Tree program. Thank you for adopting Angels from Angel Trees, for placing Angel Trees in your churches and businesses, and for hosting toy drives.

Surely this proves that we are able to provide hope and joy to those in need in our community as we work together.

I am privileged to work alongside you as a neighbor, and I look forward to what we can accomplish in the upcoming year.

Lieutenants Shaning and Melody Moran
The Salvation Army of Northeast Georgia

Affordable Care Act

Dear Editor,

On December 13, 2016 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released an extensive compilation of state-level data illustrating the substantial improvements in health care for all Americans over the last six years. The data show that the uninsured rate in Georgia has fallen by 29% since the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was enacted in 2010, translating into 581,000 Georgians gaining coverage. And, in addition to residents who would otherwise be uninsured, millions more Georgians with employer, Medicaid, individual market or Medicare coverage have also benefited from new protections as a result of the law. Those additional protections include: 1) no discrimination based on pre-existing conditions; 2) tax credits to help pay for coverage; 3) women pay the same as men - no gender discrimination; 4) children can stay on their parent's plan until age 26; 5) no annual and lifetime limits on

See Cordier, page 5A

Bob

I began high school with much apprehension in 1973. I had heard my grandfather talk about going off to high school in the town of Phil Campbell. Like him I was a country boy with little knowledge of towns. Papa told me that at the end of the classes he and his brother would make a mad dash through the little town of Phil Campbell because all the town boys would hide out along their way home. Some of the boys would throw rocks at Papa and his brother while others would try to ambush the Cummings brothers to try and fight with them.

Anyway after three weeks of bruises and black eyes Papa had enough and quit school and I think Uncle Pick quit a year later.

So, as I began classes in September of 1973 I was almost sick with worry. However, I had it much easier than Papa. I knew many of the kids in my classes and had one particular class I really enjoyed. Mr. Chappell taught American History and I enjoyed his stories about the colonies and the revolution as well as WWII. The class was a mix of students from different grades and I enjoyed being the only freshman in the class.

Audie was one of the 11th graders in the class. I really admired Audie because of his rebellion. I remember our school having a rule about the length of a boy's hair. As I recall the boy's hair could not be touching his ear. For most of the year Audie never got a haircut. But, his hair did not touch his ear. You see, he was the only kid in school with an afro. He had to turn sideways to walk through the front door. I admired Audie because he was a lot like our founding fathers. He rebelled against our school administrators like George Washington rebelled against England. However, Mr. Chappell noticed Audie having to turn sideways to get through the door and told him to go home and get his hair cut. Mr. Chappell did not like and would not tolerate rebellion.

There were many seniors in the class including Greg who played football and threw the shot-put on the Track Team. Stony was a forward on the basketball team. Also, on the basketball team was a guy named Bob who played center. He was the tallest kid in our school. Like Audie, Bob was a rebel. Bob was always trying to see how far he could push the envelope of society in Chickamauga, GA.

Sometime in 1973 streaking became popular in the United States. I remember seeing editorials in our local paper denouncing the practice of streaking. For the life of me I couldn't understand why a person would take off their clothing and run through a crowd of people naked as a jay bird. But, I admired anyone who did because of their courage. I could never muster enough courage to try something that audacious. I guess that

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



See Cummings, page 5A

Avian Influenza

A new year has brought in a new threat to our backyard birds. This month, avian influenza (AI) was detected in wild fowl in Montana. Though that seems far away, we're entering migration season.

so it is still possible for this virus to be a threat even though no domestic flock have been affected yet. Georgia's number one agricultural commodity is broilers so naturally something like this could be devastating, but by both commercial producers and backyard flock owners working together to understand the virus and prevent its spread, we can keep our birds happy and healthy!

There are two types of AI: low pathogenic (LPAI) and high pathogenic (HPAI). LPAI often goes undetected in flocks as it rarely causes sickness and, even if it does, symptoms are very minor. This type of AI also occurs naturally in wild birds, especially water fowl, and is not usually a cause for concern as flocks are so seldom affected by it. However, LPAI strains sometimes mutate to become HPAI strains, as was the case in Indiana last month. HPAI strains are highly infectious and elicit severe symptoms in birds, including diarrhea, nasal discharge, swelling of the eyelids, combs and wattles, purplish discoloration of wattles and combs, lethargy, and sudden death. It's especially important to be on the lookout for excessive diarrhea, because AI is spread primarily through feces.

While there have been cases of HPAI strains infecting humans, they are rare and usually caused by close contact and improper handling of infected birds, so don't panic! However, with the inclement weather driving waterfowl farther and farther south, it's still important to protect yourself and your birds. You can do this through 6 steps.

1. Keep a distance: Restricting access to your birds from roaming animals and other flock owners can minimize the chance of people or animals exposing your birds to the virus. If you're a small flock owner, keep your birds sheltered in coops as much as you can to keep them away from wild bird feces.

2. Keep it clean: When you tend to your flock, always wear clean clothes that have not been exposed to any other poultry.

3. Don't bring it home: Even though it's inconvenient, it's important to clean truck tires, cages and equipment regularly as the virus can live on these items for months if the conditions are cool and moist enough.

4. Don't borrow the disease: We all like to be neighborly, but letting someone else with birds borrow equipment and tools can put your own flock at risk. If you do share equipment, make sure to clean it thoroughly before taking it home.

See Mattee, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison



Linda and Tate have done in the renovations of the facility. If you are interested in hosting an event there, you can give Linda Coughlin a call at (770) 654-5894 or go to their website at www.enotahvalley.com.

We also want to say a special thank you to Epic Catering for providing the delicious food for the evening. All I can say is wow; Karl and Ellen, you did an awesome job. Thank you so much for being a part of this special event. If you would like to reach out to Epic Catering

See Allison, page 5A

Letters to the Editor...

Trump

Dear Editor,

For the last few weeks in the Letters to the Editor, opinions have been posted calling the Trump "win" a mandate from Christians. I find this opinion perplexing. First and foremost, Trump lost by over 2.8 Million votes. How is that a mandate?

A second concern I have is the notion that Trump is a Christian. What is Christian about multiple marriages? Cheating on your wives? De-meaning and molesting women? What is Christian about lying and stealing? What is Christian about being selfish and ego driven and cavorting with prostitutes? If this man is a Christian, I want nothing to do with his type of Christianity.

Writers claim our liberties are being taken away. I am curious, what liberties would those be? The liberty to discriminate? To fire some-

See Connell, page 5A

Humane Society

Dear Editor,

The Humane Society's Mountain Shelter is no way involved with any property that is mentioned sheltering animals for us. We house all of our animals at the shelter located at 129 Bowling Gap Circle, Blairsville, GA. We very rarely have a foster home, but these are usually employees or Board members on a temporary basis.

At this time we have no animals fostered off of our Bowling Gap address nor have any affiliation with Pat Colwell Road, Blairsville. I can assure you that someone has confused The Mountain Shelter with another rescue group.

Respectfully,
Lisa McConnell,
Shelter Director

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