

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Our Town Has It Together

I'm really not one to get excited. Whenever the doctors told me they would have to crack my chest open in 2009, I said, "Do what you have to do, Doc."

When they had to take five toes off in 2015, I said, "Do what you have to do, Doc."

The process of cracking my chest open occurred again in 2016. In addition, I lost my left leg later that same year.

Again, I said, "Do what you have to do, Doc." Not once did I get anxious or excited.

When reminded that August 2017 would bring a total solar eclipse, I wondered if I would make it to that event.

Well, I'm back on my seat (wheelchair), and I'm excited about a once in a lifetime event. And I'm proud of our public safety people, I'm proud of our Chamber of Commerce, and I'm astonished at all the volunteer effort that continues up until 2:36 p.m., Aug. 21st.

I must say that Regina Allison, Tobie Chandler and Sheila Freeman, and all of our Chamber of Commerce employees have done everything possible to get the word out and make sure that our community is ready for this incredible event.

I want to thank EMA/Fire Chief David Dyer, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason and all the public safety employees from top to bottom for being prepared for the influx of visitors. I want to thank Lamar Paris and Jim Conley for their exhaustive efforts.

It's estimated the number of visitors to our small mountain community ranges from 10,000 to 40,000. It's like all the snowbirds have invited all their friends to come visit in the mountains. Actually, the visitors probably will migrate here from the friendly confines of Atlanta, GA.

Regardless, I'll have my Eclipse glasses, my t-shirt and probably a sandwich in hand as I join the countless others enjoying this event from Blairsville, Georgia, Young Harris, Georgia, or Hiwassee, Georgia.

I hope that Mr. West won't charge me \$300 to view the eclipse in the North Georgia News parking lot. Anyway, Happy Total Solar Eclipse Day!

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Eclipse

A once in a lifetime experience will descend upon our town on Aug. 21. We're about to find out what it's like to be in the full shadow of the moon for 2 minutes in the middle of the day. The "path of totality" sounds ominous.

Every person here, including thousands of our friends from elsewhere (if predictions materialize), will be affected by this event. So I would like to offer context somewhat more enlightened than this being just a marketing opportunity.

On that day we will set aside our daily routines and watch creation, specifically the sun, the moon, and light. Consider two questions. Life would not exist without the sun and its light and heat. Where did it come from? God created "ex nihilo" or out of nothing.

The non-theistic answers to that question depend on the pre-existence of material and energy. We know that the universe normally operates along observable principles, or "laws of nature," hence we can predict an eclipse. Why is the universe ordered? Either matter and energy are eternal and they organized themselves, or an eternal Creator is the source of the world as we know it.

It is the Christian world view of a God who is reliable that set the context for western civilization's scientific advances. He is not like the unpredictable pantheon of the Greeks and Romans, nor is He like the innumerable and competing spiritual beings of animism. So, why would a God like this create? Thierry of Chartres, a 12th Century theologian said, "Because the Creator, rationally speaking, is in need of nothing, having perfection and sufficiency in Himself, it is necessary that He should create what He does create only through benevolence and love." Behind the eclipse is a Creator that cares for you.

Science can be an act of worship when it honors the Creator. Science and faith have a common goal to embrace truth. The more we understand about the universe, the more we know about God. Astrophysicist Hugh Ross, PhD, observed, "Astronomers who do not draw theistic or deistic conclusions are becoming rare, and even the few dissenters hint that the tide is against them." It is difficult to stare at the stars or experience an eclipse

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Commissioner's Q&A Part II

Q. What type of ordinance applies to clearing out old mobile homes, homes that are no longer habitable and homes that just look bad?

A. We do not have an ordinance that deals with this. It costs about \$1,500 to have an old mobile home removed and even more to have an old foundation home disposed of. Obviously, most of them have been there a long time. We try to work with the property owners on a case by case basis. Sometimes it can be difficult to find a solution and can be very expensive. This process also takes a lot of time, often six months to a year, as there can be many legal entanglements.

Q. Is there anything that can be done about abandoned and falling down buildings?

A. Not at this time. We are certainly considering implementing a process to deal with this. In the past, we have been successful in working with people on an individual basis. It takes some time, but with all parties working together, we can usually get the issue resolved. I had rather be able to do this, than to file a lawsuit on someone who may be having financial difficulties already.

Q. Can the county assist private property owners in cleaning up their junk or removing dilapidated buildings and homes?

A. Yes, we can. We can contact organizations or churches who are willing to assist in the cleanup process. This usually works very well, as sometimes the property owners are just overwhelmed by the cleanup process or are physically unable to take care of it themselves. Based on the severity of the situation and the circumstances of the property owner, we can take additional steps to improve the situation, especially if the property presents a potential hazard to the public.

Q. Can't you just pass an ordinance requiring everyone to keep their property in a neat manner?

A. The answer to this is similar to the noise ordinance issue. See Paris, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Anti-Drug Coalition

Signs and Symptoms of Drug Use

There is no question that "normal" adolescent moods can resemble signs of drug use, but watching for multiple symptoms and frequent behavioral changes are the signs to watch for in a young person. Many parents of children in rehab programs report that they saw no overt signs of substance abuse.

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. Visit and Like our Facebook page for additional articles and videos.

Signs to watch for: Frequent sniffles, cough, stuffy nose. Redness of eyes, dilated or constricted pupils. Change in sleep patterns, such as insomnia, napping or sleeping at inappropriate times. Sudden appetite, especially for sweets ("munchies"), or unexplained weight loss or loss of appetite. Refusing food, lying about eating. Neglect of personal appearance, grooming. Tobacco smell on person or clothes. Unexplained periods or reactions. See Coalition, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Climate Change

Dear Editor,
The scientific method, used by legitimate scientists, requires the use of measurements and observations to establish a repeatable hypothesis, i.e. objective data that other scientists can repeat. Scientists do not reach conclusions by "consensus."
Statisticians playing the "magic numbers game" reach conclusions by consensus by manipulating the numbers until there is agreement on the results.
The American public has been duped by "climate change experts" using "magic" See Blanchard, page 5A

Bloodletting?

Dear Editor,
In the Aug. 9, 2017 edition of the North Georgia News, Dr. Dixon indicated that we should believe that since the majority of scientists believe in climate change, that we should also.
Dr. Dixon, since for a long period of history the majority of scientists believed in bloodletting as a cure, shouldn't we also believe that too?
Just asking.
George Burch

Threat to Medicaid very real

Dear Editor,
Tucked within the text of both the House and Senate's bills to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act is language, which seeks to fundamentally change the Medicaid program. While the enactment of this legislation is unknown, the principle remains, and rural seniors would be hurt.
For rural states and regions that already encounter the health care challenges of an older, poorer and less healthy population, Medicaid allows access to care to remain for even those who are not enrolled under the entitlement.
In our nation's rural areas, 15 percent of residents over the age of 65 are on Medicaid. Yet, 36 percent of total Medicaid expenditures pay for costs accrued by Medicare beneficiaries over the age of 65.
Of this Medicaid spending for seniors, a significant portion covers long-term care costs - three in five nursing home residents.
Remove Medicaid from the payer source for rural seniors and entire communities are left to suffer. Nursing homes not only provide care See Rasmussen, page 5A

Be prepared for the Eclipse

Are you ready? This is it. Monday, August 21, 2017, Union County will be in the pathway of the Great American Eclipse and there will be a large influx of people traveling to this area to experience it. Most will come for the weekend and stay until the eclipse is over. It's what everyone has been talking about and most of us are not certain as to what to expect.
The estimated number of visitors ranges from 10,000 to 40,000! That many people visiting our small mountain community will have an impact. Union County EMA/Fire Department would like to provide a few tips on how to prepare for this event.
There are several concerns. First and foremost will be the increased traffic that may be a problem all weekend and especially the day of the event.
Increasing the amount of traffic on the road increases the possibility of accidents. We are asking everyone to please be aware and be careful. Be watchful of pedestrians and other drivers. It would also be helpful to practice some patience and have tolerance of other drivers.
Increased traffic also means that it may be difficult to travel. It is a good idea to stock up on supplies that may be needed prior to the weekend. Fuel up your vehicle and make sure that you have supplies such as food, water, medications, etc. If you are going to another location for the eclipse, make sure that you have supplies that will sustain you for the entire day.
The Emergency Management Agency/Fire Department, along with Federal, State, and local public safety agencies, will have an increased number of resources in the area to respond to incidents and to provide order. The Emergency Operations Center will be open and the Fire Department is strategically placing career and volunteer firefighters in several stations throughout the county to provide a quicker response and to handle the predicted increase in emergency calls.
Although there will be more resources in our county, expect delays in response due to traffic and increased call volume. If there is a true emergency, call 911. If the situation is not an emergency but you feel it should be reported, please call the non-emergency line at (706) 439-6038. The Solar Eclipse is an extraordinary event. We all want everyone to have a safe and enjoyable experience.
Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Mack's Teeth

My mother's two uncles, Mack and Rufus Baker, were two men that everyone loved and respected. I looked up to each one because they were tough and yet kind. They paid extra attention to young boys. Each man spent a great amount of time in the woods. Each of them enjoyed hunting. As young men they especially enjoyed coon hunting the hills and hollows of Newberg Mountain.
Before my dad ever dated my mother he was coon hunting with Mack and Rufus. In an article a week or two ago I introduced you to my dad's two Black and Tan Coon Hounds, Lou and Sam.
When the two dogs were about 6 months old my father asked Mack and Rufus if he could go hunting with them. The two men pulled up in the yard and waited with my grandparents as my daddy fetched his dogs. The trio of men and the young boy walked across the cotton and corn fields to the "James place."
The dogs struck a coon and began the trailing just after dark. The raccoon led the dogs up and down Turkey Creek and under bluffs for about an hour. Finally, the old coon went up a Black Gum Tree standing on the banks of Turkey Creek.
Uncle Rufus tied the old dogs and told my dad to let Sam and Lou continue tree barking. Uncle Mack waded out into the middle of Turkey Creek and began to try and squall the coon out of the tree. Basically, Uncle Mack would make a sound that resembled a fighting coon. This squalling sound will entice a raccoon to walk down a tree and jump into the middle of a pack of dogs.
This was no exception; the sound worked and the old coon began to make its way down the tree. The coon got to within 10 feet of the ground where the dogs and Uncle Mack could see the coon. Uncle Mack made one more of the squalling sounds and the old coon jumped from the tree into the creek.
But, before the coon hit the water Uncle Mack's false teeth flew from his mouth and hit the water. The sound of the splashing convinced the dogs that the coon was in the water.
So, Sam dove into the water right where the false teeth had landed. Almost immediately, the coon landed on the dog's back. So, there was Uncle Mack bending over looking for his teeth and the dog was swimming in circles all while howling because the coon was biting his ear.
Just when you thought matters couldn't get worse Lou, the other dog, joined the fight. See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings

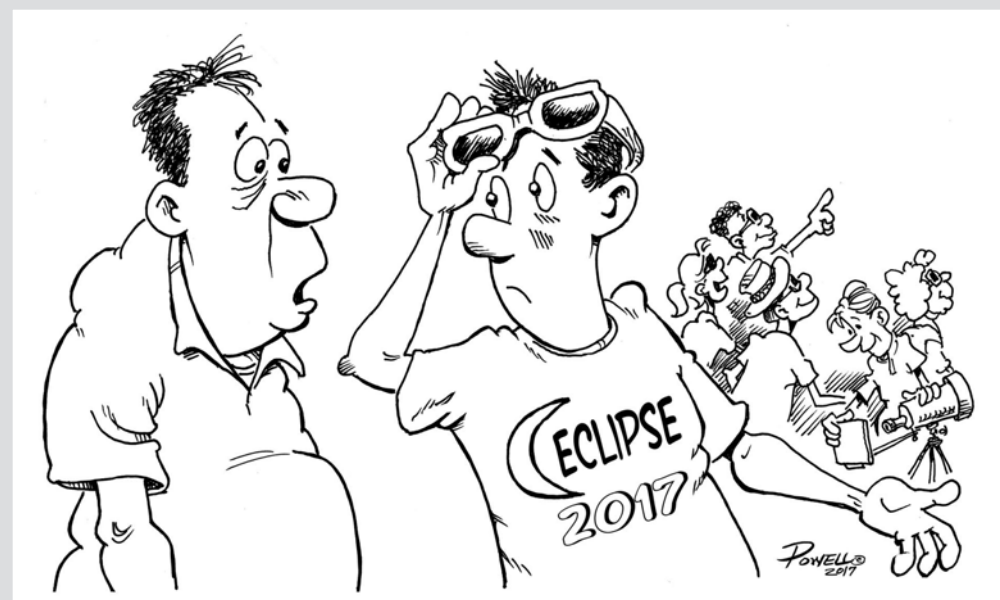


Protecting Pollinators

Pollination is one of the most important processes that a plant undergoes. It is what gives us those juicy tomatoes for our sandwiches in the summer and those crisp apples for pies in the fall. Pollination is the movement of pollen produced by the male portion of a flower to the female portion, causing fertilization. It is the main way that plants can reproduce by forming fruit and fertile seeds. Many plants can self-pollinate, but even more need help from animals such as insects, birds, bats and many others. We can promote the presence of pollinators in our garden and amongst our crops by providing food sources and additional shelter for them.
One of the best ways to promote the presence of native bees on your property is to plant native flowers. There are many invasive species that have been introduced to our forest ecosystem over the years, and some of these can out-compete our native flora for resources. However, our native bumblebees, mason bees, sweat bees and other important pollinators rely on these native shrubs and wildflowers for their nectar and pollen. Planting species native to our area not only preserves our ecological history, but also provides shelter and food for bees that have come to rely on them for so long. You can also build mason bee houses out of long tubes all bunched together to provide a living space for their colonies.
Hummingbirds are also important pollinators, and many can be seen overwintering in Georgia or just passing through on their annual migrations. Many people have asked me when they should take their hummingbird feeders in to make sure that the birds don't gorge themselves and miss their chance to migrate. Well, I'm happy to tell you that you can leave your feeders out as long as you want! Hummingbirds do not base their migration on food availability, but rather the length of the day. As long as you see hummers at your feeder, feel free to leave it out because they're getting much needed energy to fly the long distances to their tropical winter homes. Just make sure to clean it every week so the sugar water does not get moldy or fermented. You should also add an ant moat or invest in a yellow-jacket proof feeder to make sure pest insects don't gang up on your precious hummers.
Butterflies are often seen floating through our gardens drinking sweet and fragrant nectar, but they need to survive on more than just sugar. Sometimes, you will see them gathering on the banks of streams or even on piles of animal waste, inserting their proboscis into the soil or feces just See Mattee, page 5A

From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



What's the big deal about being in the dark for two and a half minutes? Washington is always like that!"

Total, uh... Effort!

Whenever a big event is happening, there is always a lot going on behind the scenes to make things happen. Our community is getting a great opportunity to shine on Aug. 21st. At the Chamber, we get asked multiple times a day, "What do you expect?" "How many people will be coming to visit?"

The truth is, the science of the Eclipse, we understand. We know the moon will pass in front of the sun and for 1 minute and 58 seconds, there will be darkness at roughly 2:36 p.m. in Blairsville.

As for the exact number of visitors, we can say we expect roughly a certain number of visitors, some have said 8,000 - 10,000 or more depending on how many travel up for the day from the Atlanta area.

Considering this, I would be remiss if I didn't take time to thank so many people who have worked so hard for months, planning, preparing for our best guess of what will happen. Saying that is not easy is an understatement. See Allison, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison



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