

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Ready – Set – Go Saves Lives

The Ready, Set, Go! Program seeks to develop and improve the dialogue between fire departments and the residents they serve. The program helps fire departments teach individuals who live in high risk wildfire areas – and the Wildland-urban interface (WUI) – how to best prepare themselves and their properties against Wildland fire threats. The program's tenets help residents be Ready with preparedness understanding, be Set with situational awareness when fire threatens, and to Go early when necessary.

The RSG! Program works in complementary and collaborative fashion with existing Wildland fire public education efforts, like Firewise, and amplifies their messages to individuals. NFPA's Firewise Communities Program encourages local solutions for wildfire safety by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, firefighters and others in creating fire-adapted communities – places where people and property are safer from the risk of brush, grass and forest fires. Firewise principles can help individuals and communities accomplish the "Ready" tenet of RSG by providing the proven steps to empower individual homeowners to lower their property's wildfire risk and to work with their neighbors to make their community safer. Used together, the Ready, Set, Go! and Firewise Communities programs can save lives and property by: Defining the risk and responsibility. Fire is a natural process and plays an important role in our environment. However, loss of homes to wildfire is not inevitable. Once residents understand what causes homes to ignite, they have a better understanding of their role in protecting their families, homes and property from wildfire – all year round.

Empowering individual action. Ready, Set, Go! and Firewise provide residents with specific guidelines for reducing risk within the home ignition zone – which includes the home and extends out 100 to 200 feet. This includes clearing property of debris and maintaining the landscape, as well as recommendations for fire-resistant home design and construction, such as Class A roofing and tempered glass windows.

Encouraging community-level engagement by taking a fire-adapted community approach to wildfire preparedness, communities can greatly reduce their wildfire vulnerability. The Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program facilitates this process

with a framework for communities to work with partners including state forestry and local fire departments to organize, plan, and conduct activities each year that make a difference in community wildfire safety. Furthering firefighter and resident safety during a fire event, a fire-resistant property enables firefighters to focus on containing the wildfire itself, rather than defending individual structures.

Ready, Set, Go! also bring fire departments and residents together to build important understanding, preparedness, and action. They may be called Wildland fires, brush fires, grass fires or forest fires, yet the threat remains the same.

Our Firewise programs here in Northeast Georgia are making a difference by making our residents aware of the wildfire risks all around them and the numbers prove it. On May 2, 2015 our Firewise team held a full scale Ready Set Go evacuation exercise in Lake Forest community on Ramey Mountain that tested our firefighters, emergency responders, and community residents to see if the RSG program that we have developed in our Firewise/Fire Adapted program over

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RC&D
Executive
Director

Frank
Riley



Faith for the Future

What will 2016 hold for you, your family, the world? The turning of the year seems to be a natural time to reflect on what is possible, probable, and hopeful. With so much chaos in the world, how else can we face it, but with faith? As Queen Elizabeth said in her Christmas message, "It is true that the world has had to confront moments of darkness this year, but the Gospel of John contains a verse of great hope... 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.'"

This year voters will elect a new President of the U.S., but the two political parties will remain polarized with starkly varying visions for the country. It is unlikely that pols will agree on what the problems are, much less the solutions. The world will reel as Islamists advance their violent agenda for a worldwide caliphate. Refugees will flee looking for peace; but will the violent hide among them? Closer to home, births, graduations, weddings will delight. You will encounter success, but also failure. Accidents, sickness, and death are possible, as this is the way of the world.

If you knew precisely what the coming year held, you would be mixed with fear, excitement, anger, anxiety, and joy. These are natural human emotions that can dictate your response to the known and unknown. I submit to you that faith in God displaces emotional chaos and uncertainty. I'm not speaking of faith that just hopes that things will work out, or that the worst won't happen. Faith is not the fatalistic surrender that "it was just meant to be." Authentic faith centers on God Himself, as He essentially accomplishes His good purposes in you and our world. The faith that brings peace agrees with Joseph that what his brothers intended for evil, God intended for good; and with the three in the fiery furnace that God can deliver me, but even if He doesn't I still trust Him alone.

Max Lucado says, "Jesus gives us hope because He keeps us company, has a vision, and knows the way we should go." His challenge is to "Meet your fears with faith." Since God has already considered your future, and since he has a plan for your life in Christ, it only makes sense that you respond by trusting

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All Things
New

Wayne
Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Since it appears it may never stop raining, I thought we would direct the questions this week on mostly rainfall.

Q. How much has it rained over the Christmas Holidays?

A. Our data mostly comes from the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center (Experiment Station) weather station. They show that over the holidays, the three largest rainfall days were December 23, 1.17 inches, Dec 24, 4.41 inches, and Christmas Day, 1.63 inches or a total of 7.21 inches.

Q. How much has it rained during December 2015?

A. There has been 13.33 inches of rainfall for the month of December. I am writing this article on December 30th at p.m. and since Christmas Day it has rained an additional 3.41 inches added to the 7.21 we received on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th. So from December 23 until today, it has rained 10.52 inches. That is a lot of rain as I am sure we all know.

Q. How much damage did the county receive from all the rainfall?

A. We lost three culverts and lots of gravel and there was damage to some headwalls on culverts, but overall, we were pretty lucky considering all the rain. Just when it could have really gotten bad, we would get a short break in the rainfall. Our Road Department guys and contractors worked all day Christmas Day and the day after repairing two culverts in Upper Plott Town where some people were stranded. They also had to repair one culvert on Stephens Road. There were over 20 trees down across roads in the county. However, we did not have to declare a disaster (government funding term), partly because the rain and wind were manageable and because of all the good work our Road Department has done over the years maintaining our roads, bridges, culverts and creek banks.

Again, a big thanks to everyone who helped the county on Christmas Day.

Q. Have you ever seen the water as high as it was during this storm?

A. Yes, a few times in different areas. Each time we have a large rain event it seems to concentrate in different watersheds (the

area around a stream where all the water flows to that particular stream and tributaries.) Sometimes it will be Butternut Creek watershed that receives the highest rainfall, other times it may be Ivy Log or Young Cane Creek areas, and this time the Nottely River watershed seemed to have the highest water levels. Even though the water was high during this rain event, it was not near the highest levels.

Q. Do you remember the highest rainfall we have had in the county?

A. The largest that I remember was in

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Thank You, Union County

It seems like just yesterday, I was pulling into the parking lot, shaking like a leaf on the inside, but trying to remain calm and collected on the outside. I had chosen the perfect business suit to wear for my big day. I had rehearsed the answers to the anticipated questions. Do you remember the name of the Commissioner?

Yes. Can you recite your resume without a hitch? Yes. Can you give relevant examples of a time when you did this or that? Yes. I was prepared. I put on my best smile and confidently walked into that room. I was interviewing for the President position at the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce. I assumed the chances were slim considering I was just out of college. I doubted anyone would want to take a chance on someone with no full time work experience. I even questioned, "Who am I to be President of a Chamber?" The friendly faces at the table put me a bit more at ease and with every question they asked and every response I gave, I found myself genuinely hoping that this might be where I would begin my future career.

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Blairsville
- Union
County
Chamber

Cindy
Williams



Letters to the Editor...

Darwin's Theory of Evolution a hoax?

Dear Editor,
For years I believed that Darwin's "Theory of Evolution" was a hoax, but after watching the news lately I'm having second thoughts. Maybe he was right or, partially right. He believed man evolved from apes, but I now believe man evolved from Jellyfish. Scientists tell us that Jellyfish have survived for 650 million years without a brain. Could this be the way many humans survive today?

As I watch the carnage being reported daily on the news I'm convinced the world is filled with people who no longer reason with common sense, but with thinking that is beyond stupid.

To anyone who studied the Holocaust and wondered how Hitler got 6 million people to follow along blindly without fighting back, must realize we're watching the world take the same path.

The late comedian George Carlin nailed it when he said: "Governments don't want a pop-

ulation capable of critical thinking. They want obedient workers. People just smart enough to run the machines and just dumb enough to passively accept their situation."

We have a president who, while on the campaign trail, said he had visited 57 states, and we elected him president. His VP choice once said: "When the stock market crashed Franklin Roosevelt got on the television and didn't just talk about the princes, of greed, he said, "look, here's what happened." What "Uncle Joe" neglected to tell us was there were no TVs in 1929 and Herbert Hoover was president when the market crashed.

Senator Barbara Boxer, made this inane statement: "We've proven in California that sensible gun laws work."

This brings us to the most recent shooting in California. From the first shot the evi-

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The Tree

I have always been fascinated by big, old trees. Some years ago a big Northern Red Oak fell in the woods in front of my house. A friend came out to our place and cut up the tree for his firewood business. As his saw cut through the trunk I thought about the history that tree had witnessed. I counted the 97 rings and realized the tree was a sprout in 1903. As I thought about the things that tree may have witnessed it occurred to me that there is some correlation between the history of men and the life of trees.

In Jenkins Gap on Ivy Log Mountain there is a huge poplar. It is the tallest tree in that immediate area. Close by the gap is a sign on another tree that pays homage to a couple. This couple lived on the north side of Ivy Log Mountain and walked through Jenkins Gap to Blairsville to pick apples. A bushel of apples was then carried back through Jenkins Gap to their home in Gum Log. Also, close by is an old home place and the only thing left of this home is a fire place and foundation. It was told that the old man who lived in the cabin on the side of the mountain starved to death one winter because he couldn't get out to get some supplies. I wonder if the old tree knew about the old man's death or the love that bound two people together through the hard times of their wonderful lives.

Some years ago in Frog Town Cove some friends and I found a huge Hemlock Tree. We wanted to protect the tree from the Woolly Adelgids which attack Hemlocks, so, the find was reported to the US Forest service. The tree is not a state record because it was not big enough in radius. However, the 47 inch in radius tree was estimated to be somewhere around 450 years of age. The tree was here prior to the coming of DeSoto. The tree was a mere 210 years old during our Revolution. The tree witnessed the removal of the Cherokee Nation. It watched as our own country nearly destroyed itself during the Civil War. The last time I checked the tree was still there and growing.

One clear day in the fall 45 years ago my papa and I were squirrel hunting in a deep hollow just up a little branch from Turkey Creek. The hunting was hard, but, the day was gorgeous. Papa wanted to show me some things so we began walking toward a small waterfall. Papa pointed to a big car sized boulder and told me "Your daddy and Uncle Bud used to play there as little boys". Underneath the rock was a small cave that Dad used to climb into and hide when he played "Cowboys and Indians". To the left and up on the side of the bluff was a stand of American Beech Trees. As we walked to them Papa told me about bringing his young bride to this spot where they enjoyed picnics while listening to the waterfall. Their young boys could play while Papa and Granny kept out a watchful eye.

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Around
The Farm

Mickey
Cummings



The Hambone Blues

This week it's about good reads, good eats and good people... and they all are connected by the hambone. Last month, a dear friend, Sue Silverman, who is funny to and from the core of her being, gifted me with a delightful book. She told me that she knows she's reading a good book when three things occur. First, she starts making audible sounds while reading it, such as gasping, or laughing out loud. Next comes when she starts reading passages out loud to anyone who will listen and third, she not only begins to encourage everyone she meets in line at the deli counter to read the book, but she goes so far as to start purchasing the book for those she wants to be sure have the same exhilarating reading experience as she has had. Hence, the gift of the book to me, entitled "Dispatches from Pluto. Lost and Found in the Mississippi Delta" by Richard Grant.

If you have enjoyed the expatriate tomes of Peter Mayle as he forages his way through France and Bill Bryson who has taken us on many adventures, most notably, through a walk in the woods, you will devour Grant's experiences as he and his girlfriend leave their 400 square foot NYC apartment and settle in their new home amongst the armadillo and alligators of the Mississippi Delta. This story is a gem.

I confess that what I know about Mississippi I could fit in a thimble. When I was very young my dad began teaching me how to spell the state's name by making a lyric out of it. I was always a horrible speller. By the time I was 15 years old, I finally figured out the correlation to his lyrical tune. Local friends, Dr. Jim and JoAnn Stith spent most of their career in Mississippi and have entertained me often with stories of the politics/shenanigans of some of the most notable of the Bayou.

And of course, I was familiar with the Delta blues. I picked up my first stringed in-

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Farmers
Market
Moment

JoAnne
Leone



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