

Opinions

Vaping Marijuana

Teenagers have discovered a new way to inhale marijuana — e-cigarette vaporizers, according to a study reported in *USA Today*. Researchers at Yale University based their findings on answers from a survey sent to nearly 4,000 Connecticut high school students. About 28% of students in the study said they had tried e-cigarettes. Of the high school students who have used both marijuana and e-cigarettes, 27% reported using the devices to vaporize cannabis.

E-cigarettes vaporize, rather than burn, substances, allowing users to inhale nicotine (or THC, the active ingredient in cannabis) without taking in the carcinogens that are caused by combustion. However, the safety of vaping pot versus smoking it has not been well-established, the researchers write in the journal *Pediatrics*. (Nor has the safety of using tobacco with e-cigarettes. Though cancerous combustion products aren't present, other carcinogens, such as formaldehyde, are.) Vaping cannabis oils or hash may release higher levels of THC than smoking dried leaves, the researchers wrote. And previous research has shown that THC might have negative effects on the developing teen brain.

Vaporizers give kids a better way to hide what they're inhaling. It's so much easier to conceal e-cigarette pot use when "vaping" because it lacks the characteristic pungent smell of marijuana in the vapor. It's possible to use pot in a much less detectable way.

Among the marijuana users who were using e-cigarettes, 29 percent had vaped dried cannabis leaves, while 23 percent had used e-cigarettes to vaporize hash oil, a concentrated resin extract of marijuana, and 15 percent had used the devices to vape THC-infused wax, according to the researchers. Hashes and oils can have THC concentrations up to 30 times higher than dried leaves, according to earlier research. But little is known about the health effects of vaping pot versus smoking it.

Marijuana use in other forms can cause several health problems such as short-term memory loss, slow learning, decreased sperm count and lung damage, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Scientists don't fully understand the health effects of e-cig-vaporized cannabis.

The researchers say they don't yet know whether e-cigarettes may lure teens to try pot, or whether the devices are just a new way to use marijuana for teens who would have smoked it anyway.

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.

Everybody has one...

Forgiven

This presidential campaign keeps bringing up God. I admire the candidates for discussing religion even though their primary interests lie elsewhere. Their comments give us a chance to ponder such ideas and clarify our own.

Pollster Frank Luntz asked a clarifying question of one candidate at the recent Iowa Family Leadership Summit. "Have you ever asked God for forgiveness?" The response meandered past "doing a better job," and the "little wine" and "little cracker." But the candidate would not say "yes." Let's ponder this exchange, politics aside.

Perhaps from lack of serious inquiry, people can be deceived by a caricature of Christianity and a question like Luntz's can open the curtains a bit. A similar one is, "Have you ever done anything that needs God's forgiveness?" The response indicates awareness of need or self-deception. "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn. 1:8). Christianity embraces the mercy of a powerful Forgiver, not the power of positive thinking. Being forgiven makes us forgivers: It is God that empowered Emanuel AME Church in Charleston to announce that it is willing to forgive that deranged shooter.

But Christianity is more than avoiding adjudication of our misdeeds. Our infractions reflect who we are, which is our deepest need for forgiveness and restoration. We are not just well-meaning supplicants that take a little cracker and wine with a positive thinking sermon to fix us. We are enemies that need reconciling to God, captives that need freedom, the dead that need new life (Rom. 5:10, 8:2, Col. 2:13). By faith we are in Christ, holy, and blameless (Eph. 1:4). We are forgiven once and for all for what we were!

How is this possible? It turns on a question Jesus posed: "Who do you say that I am?" Only if He is God the Son can He be all that we celebrate in the elements of communion, which is neither "little" nor trite. God gave the Son to the world so that by faith we might inherit eternity (Jn. 3:16). Jesus was in a unique position to offer a perfect sacrifice for sin, and forgiveness for all who believe.

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. We are starting to see a few new homes under construction. Are the numbers verifying the perceived increase?

A. Yes they are. We have always been very blessed to have several exceptional builders in Union County and the ones that have made it through the long recession are indeed all very busy as demand definitely has picked up.

Q. How many new home permits were issued in December 2015?

A. For December 2015, there were 13 total new home permits issued. There were 11 custom homes and 2 spec homes. This is the best December since 2007, when there were also 13 permits issued. Prior to the recession back in 2002 thru 2007, we saw an average of 30 permits a month, but in December of 2008, right after the recession, we had ONE building permit issued and in December of 2011 we had 0 issued.

Q. How many new home permits were issued in 2015?

A. There was a total of 129 permits issued, which included 117 custom homes and 12 spec homes. That is a lot of homes and is a very good indication of economic recovery for our mountain area and jobs for our builders, grading and gravel contractors and all building trades including plumbing, electrical, cabinets, appliances, landscaping and much more.

Q. Is this an increase from last year?

A. Yes! The total for 2014 was 87 permits issued. We had an increase in 2015 of 42 houses, which is amazing. That is a really large increase in just a year's time. We are hopeful that this number will stay steady and increase slowly.

This list below will give you a total number of building permits issued by year since 2002. It is very interesting.

2002 - 504	2007 - 279	2012 - 88
2003 - 531	2008 - 124	2013 - 99
2004 - 543	2009 - 110	2014 - 87
2005 - 558	2010 - 68	2015 - 129
2006 - 487	2011 - 59	

Q. What can this increase of building permits be attributed to?

A. It is hard to define this exactly, but I think it is a combination of several things. As the general economy has improved

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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Meet our Board of Directors

For those who have ever served on a Board of Directors, you understand the tremendous amount of responsibility and dedication that is required from each individual. Members of any Board of Directors are the top level leaders of the organization who are responsible for determining the overall strategic direction and overseeing the financial health of their respective organizations. With this in mind, I would like to introduce you to our 2016 Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and thank them for their commitment.

The 2016 officers who make up our Executive Committee are as follows: Chair, Joey Swanson - WoodmenLife; Chair-elect, Chris Wadle - Lamin-X; Secretary, Amy Harper - WoodmenLife; Treasurer, Steve Rowe, W. Steven Rowe, CPA; and Immediate Past Chair, Rita Gunter - United Community Bank.

Joining our Board this year is Rick Siefen, Principal - Budget Blinds.

Returning Board members are Marcie Culpepper, Owner - M Design; Doug Davenport, Administrator - Union County Nursing Home; Renee Diebert, Ph.D, Satellite Operations Director - North Georgia Technical College - Blairsville Campus; Tony Dyer, Executive - Park Sterling Bank; Chad Larissey, Realtor - The Mountain Life Team; Kathryn Nelson, Principal - Reflexology by Kathryn; and Jeremy Williams, Ph.D, Assistant Superintendent - Union County School System.

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Never too Late to Learn New Tricks

I love Bob. He's been my big brother from another mother for a long time. If friends celebrated anniversaries, we'd probably be planning some sort of 25 year bash, with lots of amazing food. Bob loves to cook even more than I do. He takes

week long cooking classes at John C Campbell, and comes home to his kitchen and he creates. Yes, he's Italian too, raised in Philadelphia. His grandfather had one of those enviable neighborhood bar/restaurants where everyday his grandparents took the ingredients out of the iceboxes and prepared something magical, in his pots, to feed the workers as they floated in after their shift work to share a brew and a hot meal.

Then every weekend his grandmother had the table set for the entire family to gather for the Sunday feast. And as Bob often recants, "You had better be there, or else". Twenty-five or thirty siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles all assembled for the many courses only a Nana could single handedly prepare for a Sunday afternoon banquet.

Though Bob has about 16 years on me, he can run circles around me. During season, Bob is at the Farmers Market at 6:55 a.m. to be the first to get his pick of the produce. Then it's home to his chickens where he gathers the eggs to fix with fried peppers - a favorite breakfast for all Italians. As traditional as that is, Bob at his age doesn't do anything else "the old fashion way". Bob is actually known amongst his friends as the "gadget guy".

He and his late wife were the first of everyone to have a bread machine, and then a second bread machine and I'm sure he's now on his 4th generation. He has the newest coffee brewer and then you blink and he has a different coffee maker. After a cooking class where he learned to

Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



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Letters to the Editor...

It's All About Control

Dear Editor,
What is this political battle we are currently witnessing really all about? If you think it is immigration, entitlements, terrorists, the way veterans are treated or reckless spending or even religious freedom, you are only seeing the surface of what really lies behind this clamor. The stakes that are being played for are much larger. In my opinion it boils down to this: "will we be a nation that is ruled by laws as the Constitution requires, or will it become a nation that is ruled by men!"

The overriding difference between social democrats and republicans is just that. Republicans, especially the Tea Party, want this republic to be governed by laws while those who support socialism want it governed by men. Why is all of this big money being poured into Hillary Clinton's campaign? Certainly it's not to end immigration or entitlements or treat our Vets better. Those problems expand day by day through liberal policy. It's about control and control is about money. For example: do you think that illegals crossing our borders every day would stop if they were not value added to a socialist agenda? Why, that wall would go up so quickly your head would spin when the usefulness of

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Missing Kona

Dear Editor,
My mom, Mary Catherine (MC) Brooks, writes this letter. I am her dog Kona, the missing Bernese Mountain dog. Born in Fort Bend, IN, I first met MC when she picked me up at the Atlanta airport. There I met my new brother and sister. Sadie is 13 year-old Weimeraner and Kibo was a big male Bernese like me. Sadly, Kibo died just 4 days after I met him of an unknown bacterium. Vets think he ate part of a dead fish. My mom and dad were so sad, but they told me I was a gift and helped them to get over the loss of Kibo.

Now, I am missing and I hate to think of my mom being sad. I've been missing since Christmas Day, from Hayesville, NC, and I just want to go home. I miss playing on the floor and getting belly rubs, walking along the river, wading in the river watching mom fly fish and most especially miss playing with my sister Sadie. I know my mom has had sleepless nights, walked miles calling my name and I can almost taste the many tears she has cried for me.

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Religious Discourses

Dear Editor,
Amen to Rick Smith's letter last week. I have wondered for a long time what religious discourses have to do with the news. I don't think they have any place in a newspaper.

Helen Curtis

Encourage Your Pastor

Dear Editor,
In today's society where being "politically correct" seems to be the norm for most folks, there are those of us who have the mind set of being "spiritually correct" when it comes to going to our local church to worship and sing praises to our Lord and Savior, Christ, Jesus. If you are blessed to have a pastor who is not afraid of preaching the truth of God's word and one who does not compromise, but stands firm on God's Holy word, then you are truly blessed of God to have a pastor who has a servant's heart for God's people. We have to remember our pastors bleed just like we do. They have an awesome responsibility to tend to God's children and to make sure that God's flock are being fed with the truth of God's word. A pastor doesn't have the luxury of

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"He says he's not coming out until there's a frontrunner he can support!"

Your Fire Department Part 1

Many of you have asked questions concerning the fire department. One part of our job is to keep people informed about various emergencies but we also would like to keep you informed about the department. We decided to provide some information about your fire department because at the end of the day, this is your fire department.

One of the first questions that people ask is how many firefighters are in the department. We have a roster of 60-70 firefighters in the department. The usual misconception is that we have either all volunteer or all paid firefighters. Union County Fire Department is a combination department meaning that we have career firefighters who are paid and volunteer firefighters. The career and volunteer firefighters work together to serve Union County.

The department has 12 full time career firefighters, one paid Battalion Chief and one Fire Chief. The career, paid firefighters are divided among three shifts with four firefighters per shift. The career firefighters respond to all fires, car accidents, major medical incidents and any other emergency they are dispatched to. They respond 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year from the administration Station located on Shoe Factory Road just outside of Blairsville. The volunteers make up the majority of the department and are divided among the 11 volunteer fire stations throughout the county. They break away from their busy jobs and busy lives to respond to same calls with the career firefighters.

Another question is how to become a firefighter. Volunteers are always needed. Most people think that to be a firefighter they must enter a burning building. That is not true. There are many duties within the department that do not require a person to enter a burning building. They are classified as Support Firefighters who have a supporting role such as driving/pumping apparatus, changing air bottles, exterior fire attack, rescue, medical response and other supporting roles. However, all firefighters must complete basic training to be on the department.

Firefighters go through a great deal of training just to be called a firefighter. They must complete basic firefighter's school that ranges from 60 hours of training to 360 hours of training depending on the level of firefighter. Once firefighter school is complete, the firefighter has the option of medical training ranging from Emergency Medical Responder to Paramedic. After initial firefighting school, the training isn't over. Firefighters must maintain a certain level of training each year to keep up to date on latest firefighting techniques, hazardous materials, infection control, and medical training. They must

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Good Friends

Many of you know of my love of just being in the woods. All of my life I have enjoyed listening to the wind whistling through the White Pines, the bark of a squirrel at daylight, the call of an owl at midnight, the feel of a strong wind while standing in wild, lonely gap during January and the vision of the mountain tops protruding from a thick cloud cover below them. Along with these sounds, feelings and visions of the mountain woods I enjoy the company of certain kinds of people. One of my favorite persons to walk the mountains with is a fellow by the name of Harold Dyer.

Harold is a native, born and reared, of Choestoe. He was raised on a farm bisected by Jack's Gap Road. He grew up in a time of hardship and yet didn't know it. His tightly knit family grew up with the land. They hunted, fished and worked for a living and Harold remembers all of his adventures. And I enjoy listening to those adventures. So do most others as well. Harold is also a member of the Mountain High Hikers, a local hiking club. The group regularly takes hiking trips all around Union County and while on these trips Harold educates and entertains the group with stories of his childhood.

Recently, on one such trip a lady and potential member decided to tag along on a local hike. While walking along in the woods the group stopped in an area overgrown with Mountain Laurel and rhododendron. Harold was telling the group about a bear hunt of which he had been involved. The story must've peaked this lady's curiosity and she asked Harold, "Do we ever encounter any wildlife on the trail?" He responded by saying, "Very rarely. Most of the time we are too loud to get close to seeing any wildlife". The lady went on to specifically ask about bears. Harold knew he had a chance at this point. So he said, "I have been hiking every week for more than 10 years and have seen only 3 bears and all of them were running away from the trail". The lady then asked, "What should we do if we see any bears?" Harold paused and then responded with a question, "How fast can you run?" The lady stated, "I am pretty slow," to which Harold responded, "Well, I don't have much to worry about then". The lady walked away and never came back on another hiking trip.

On another trip Harold, Tom Starrett and I walked down the Arkaqua Trail from the top of Brasstown Bald. After a couple of miles we turned to the south and dropped off the trail toward a place called Spruce Pine Falls. The falls were farther off the trail than any of us remembered resulting in a 35 minute walk down the mountain. The waterfall was beautiful and we all took many pictures. After resting and eating a snack it was decided to begin the steep hike back to the trail.

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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