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Q. Do you think the unemployment rate will continue to decrease?

A. That is anyone's guess. It is already so low that it is near what some economists consider "full employment", so it is hard to believe it will get much lower.

Q. What do all these unemployment numbers really mean?

A. What it does not mean is that everyone has a great job, but a job. It also does not mean

that everyone that wants a job has a job, because they do not. We also know that some people have left the labor market and no longer look for jobs. However, while we have no idea how accurate these numbers are, they do come from the Georgia Department of Labor and compare us with other counties all over the state, using the same data. So relative to other counties, this means that our county is recovering

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it will be much easier for you to take on the tougher parts of parenting, such as discipline and setting rules. They are more likely to respect your rules if they believe that you also care for them.

Teens are inexperienced and can't always be counted on to do the right thing. Many of us made choices in our own teenage years that make us cringe today. Those experiences should be a potent reminder that it's

always good to trust your teen, but verify and monitor their activities. Be proactive, set some ground rules about what you expect and most of all, keep communications open.

Whether you are a mom or dad, single or married, grandparent or other guardian, visit www.TheAntiDrug.com for more ideas from the Office of National Drug Control Policy on raising healthy teens.

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I wonder if Hiram ever met the men who dug the old mines in Gumlog or on Cass Mountain. Maybe he knew about the double oven moonshine still which can be found close to Bob Branch? Did Hiram come here via the old Indian Trail which comes out of Tennessee and North Carolina? It travels down to Ivy Log Mountain and crosses the Chestnut Flat descending the mountain and going toward Little Brasstown Gap where it crosses to Trackrock Gap. The old trail is still visible in places. Or maybe Hiram came here on the Logan Turnpike. This road comes across Tesna-

tee Gap from Loudsville. The trail descends from Tesnatee Gap toward Blairsville through a cove called "Lord a Mercy" because the first people coming down the road from the gap exclaimed "Lord a Mercy"; Because of the view northward toward Choestoe.

I may never know if Hiram knew about these places or people, but, I hope he was able to see them and meet them. I know many of the places we have discussed. I have found them to be both interesting and wonderful. These places are all around us in Union County and can be reached with little effort. All you have to do is find them!

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flock might be infected, don't hesitate to report it. The USDA and University of Georgia are encouraging you to contact your local extension agent (that's me!) if there is the slightest possibility you think your birds might be sick with AI.

Here's a few programs we have coming up:

Tuesday, February 16th: Northeast Georgia Corn Production Meeting, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. at the GMREC in Blairsville (lunch is provided!). Topics include pest and disease management, agronomy, and the latest

and greatest corn production strategies. RSVP to the Union County Extension Office, (706) 439-6030.

Friday, February 26th: Apple Grafting Workshop, 10 a.m. at the GMREC in Blairsville. Registration is \$15, and space is limited! RSVP to GMREC, (706) 745-2655.

Feel free to call me at the Union County or Towns County Extension offices if you have any questions about agriculture, natural resources, or anything in between. I'm happy to help!

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trout streams; help maintain the biodiversity of the ecosystem and protect the air and water quality we depend on; and create special places that restore our bodies and refresh our spirits.

But Arbor Day is more than a time for reflection. It's also a time for action to save one of our most majestic and iconic evergreen trees. The hemlocks are being attacked and killed by the millions by a tiny invasive insect, the hemlock woolly adelgid, that was accidentally imported from Asia to the eastern U. S. more than 60 years ago and now infests the entire Appalachian chain. The bad news – the massive loss of the hemlock would be a disaster on the scale of the American Chestnut.

The good news – property owners can treat and save as many of their own trees as they choose.

It's safe, easy enough for most people to do themselves, highly effective, and surprisingly economical, especially compared to the cost of losing the trees. And volunteers can help save the hemlocks in our national forests and state lands too.

If you want to learn how to help, please contact Save Georgia's Hemlocks at 706-429-8010 or donna@savegeorgiashemlocks.org or visit www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org for information on training classes and volunteer service events.

Save Georgia's Hemlocks is a 100% volunteer, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization of concerned citizens dedicated to preserving, conserving, and restoring endangered hemlocks through education and charitable service.

Dave Teffeteller

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a huge blight given to our beautiful little mountain area.

Oh, we're going to hear a lot about the "pillars" of the community and how great they are; plus, we will hear "Don't believe everything you read and hear." However, our brains have been numbed by these current events and we are saddened that our children, our

neighbors, and our friends may have been affected by these allegedly criminal acts.

Our Sheriff, Mack Mason, and his deputies, work feverishly to keep drugs out of our community, only to have others undermine all the law enforcement's hard work. Thankfully, we have that.

Joan Taber

your loved one. Treat your sweetheart to an event that she will cherish. You can take her out to dinner after the concert.

This Sunday Habitat for Humanity is sponsoring a "free" Valentine Concert at First United Methodist Church of Union County from 2-4 featuring Cody Killian.

Cody is well known to many locals. A graduate of Young Harris College, he has previously been the lead pianist/organist at Sharp Memorial Methodist Church in Young Harris and is currently the Music Director at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Hayesville.

For your enjoyment and reminiscing, Cody will be featuring traditional romantic love songs and music from popular Broadway Musicals. Past memories will come to life and new memories created to endure forever.

There will also be an opportunity to have a lovely photo taken with your sweetheart which will make a lovely keepsake.

For those who don't know, the church is located across from Meeks Park on Hwy 515.

from the recession and there are not a lot of people out of work. But we always want to look for more and better jobs for those who still want to work.

Q. Are the sales tax numbers increasing in Union County?

A. Yes they are. This is another indicator that the general economy in the county is

improving. Here are some of the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) numbers to compare.

Year	SPLOST Collections
2010	\$3,234,496.45
2011	\$3,377,917.95
2012	\$3,427,077.60
2013	\$3,518,271.69
2014	\$3,681,848.47
2015	\$3,806,952.41

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ne, red onion and some garbanzo beans and salt and pepper to taste. Lip smacking.

For a Latin flair, change the fresh basil to cilantro, use lime juice instead of the balsamic, and then toss in some chopped jalapeno, cherry tomatoes, chopped green onions, a can of black beans and a chopped avocado. Greek is also very doable. Use a combination of zucchini and cucumber as your spiral raw spaghetti, and trade the herbs to oregano and parsley, olive oil, adding lemon juice as your acid, crumbled feta cheese, sliced kalamata olives, chopped red onion and serve with a warm pita.

Feel like Asian tonight? Let's switch to making our cold pasta out of yellow squash instead. Our marinade will be 2 teaspoons of soy sauce, 2 teaspoons of teriyaki sauce, a tablespoon of sugar, a ¼ cup of olive (or peanut) oil and a ¼ cup of rice vinegar. Sprinkle the pasta with just a dash of Chinese 5 spice, then add the marinade. Toss well and let sit in the refrigerator till minutes before you are ready to serve. Now add the following chopped items: green onions, snow peas, red or yellow pepper, radish, celery, water chestnuts (canned) and cashews. Toss and serve immediately. For an added touch, sprinkle each serving with some toasted sesame seeds.

These spiralized veggie noodles are wonderful in soups, too. Just add them to any of your soup broths just minutes before serving. They don't take long to cook soft. I also use cauliflower for my cut pasta substitutes, such as ditilini, acini pepe or even ziti. Cut it, steam it and then serve it as if you would the pasta. Cauliflower Ziti with a Bolognese sauce is delicious, nutritious and gluten free.

I will talk more next week about the virtues of the cauliflower, but before I close this week, let me tell you my Trash to Treasures breakfast I devoured, today. With cauliflower being in such demand, the prices are sky high on this gem of a veggie. Most of you who buy a head of cauliflower, take all the green leafy thick stems surrounding the florets and trash them. In my Sicilian family, these leaves were treasured. They were boiled until fork tender, then served hot with garlic and olive oil – or small pasta was thrown in and a soup was made from the broth and leaves, served with freshly ground pepper, olive oil and lots of fresh grated parmesan. I had these cooked cauliflower leaves I had saved in the fridge this morning. I sautéed them in some butter,

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Chamber of Commerce, Wal-Mart and WoodmenLife.

Additionally numerous individuals throughout Union County have stepped up with contributions that have allowed us to serve more than 280 children throughout Union County. Each donation keeps the program viable and allows us to improve our early childhood literacy rate.

However the need is great so we are looking for additional businesses, organizations and individuals to join the Union County Ferst Foundation team and permit us to serve even more children in the future.

For more information on how you can get involved visit <http://www.ferstfoundation.org/> or contact Janice Cochran anicecochran@brmemc.net or (706) 897-0045

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Grahams learned to practice "agape" or selfless love. That kind of love is patient, kind, not jealous. It does not brag and is not arrogant. It is not rude, self-seeking, or easily offended. Love protects, trusts, hopes, and never fails (1 Cor 13). It held them together for a lifetime.

Flowers, chocolate, greeting cards, romantic dinners are nice. But "agape" is what steadies a marriage amid the turbulence of life. Incompatibles cannot become irconcilable in the presence of selfless love, just as in the happily incompatible marriage of Billy and Ruth Graham.



Valentine's Day holds a special place in the heart of every woman! More than birthdays and other holidays, it is a time to be remembered and cherished by the love of her life. Flowers and candy are nice, but a personal note is much more appreciated. Guys, once you have her attention, top it all off with romantic music which will make her day (and yours)! Ladies, if he doesn't see this article make sure he does!

Love has no age limit! To be endeared every day is something special; to be forgotten on Valentine's Day is unforgivable!

Young men and old, husbands, boyfriends and wan-abees, this is an occasion that will long be remembered by