

Opinions

Everybody has one...

There's potential in bass fishing

I've been studying on the national college bass fishing championships that will be held at Lake Chatuge Aug. 1-3. Just think if bass fishing had been a sport when I was younger. I might have received an athletic scholarship.

The way things were, no one considered me an athlete. Nope, just ask the old ball coach, Terry Rogers.

But, if bass fishing had been a college sport, I might well be in the Georgia Athletic Hall of Fame.

I like to fish, just ask anybody. I can catch a fish too. Bass, bream, crappie, trout, you name it, I've caught it.

The biggest fish I ever caught was a shark off the coast of Tybee Island. That was a thrill, especially since the boat captain asked us to yell "shark" if we got one on our line. Yep, I yelled.

I've caught some nice redbfish too, along the Gulf Coast. Now, there's a fighting fish. Black drum are pretty interesting fighters too. And then there's the spotted sea trout and the ultimate fighter, amber jack.

But, the old wiley largemouth bass is about as tough of a fish to catch as any I've ever tried to reel in with my Zebco.

It's all about the crankbait and holding your mouth just right to lure in a largemouth bass. There's a trick or two to catching largemouth. Ultimately, the best one is to out smart them.

They can be outsmarted, but, for the most part, you also better make sure you've got the right rig to catch them first.

I think Union County High School could field a champion bass fishing team. Let's face it, there would be no arguing whether it's a man's sport or a woman's sport.

There would be no Lady Panthers or just Panthers. A bass fishing team could easily be coed. I know a lot of women that can catch fish, especially bass.

And as rapidly as the sport is growing today, it might not be a bad idea to start up a tournament bass fishing team at the high school level. I don't think there would be any one individual that would miss practice and Lake Nottely would be our home course.

Playing hooky would be a thing of the past, and daily classroom attendance might improve five fold.

And talk about your high school All-Americans, wow. And then there's the ever-stressful recruiting game that colleges play. I'd have to stick with the hometown Mountain Lions.

Yes, I'd say we have some of the most talented anglers in the state. The athletes could practice by catching those huge carp out of the river. And, come to think of it, Union County might just win a few state bass fishing championships. Ah yes, there's potential in bass fishing.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Life's Defining Moments

In most cases all of us are the summation of life's defining moments.

There are exceptions where only one defining moment has caused us to be where we are today. You may be where you are today because you took that first drink of alcohol. Today, you are an alcoholic. Or you may be a drug addict today because you chose many years ago to try drugs. You may feel guilty and unclean because you made a choice to surrender your virginity and you know what a terrible price you have paid to live a promiscuous life-style.

Perhaps you live in fear because you chose to have an extra marital affair and you live in constant fear that your spouse will find out. There are 10,000 scenarios that could be expressed. Some people live life saying "If only!" If only I hadn't... taken my first drink, stolen that object, run that stop sign or red light, had sex, started that fight, quit my job, dropped out of college, smoked my first cigarette, married him or her, etc.

Well, all of us have made wrong choices, sinned, made mistakes, erred and fallen short. That's one of the reasons I love the Bible. It not only gives us hope, but it identifies by name individuals who messed up big time, but found God's forgiveness and grace. It also identifies individuals who made the right choices and reaped the wonderful results of choosing wisely.

The Bible also lists by name those like Esau, Saul, Jezebel, Judas and others who were profane, and despite knowing truth and having truth, they chose to do despicable things and suffer the horrible results.

The Bible reveals God's wonderful choice to send His Son into this sin cursed world of depraved sinners. God could have chosen to send judgment and wipe us from the face of this earth. He could have sent fire upon us like Sodom and Gomorrah; He could have sent warring angels to fight against us; He could have sent pestilences, plagues or chosen a million other ways to punish us.

But thank God, He loved us so much that Christ came to take all of our punishment and through that awful death on

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



What Happens When It Snows?

Q. We have had several snow events lately. Can you tell us how much it cost the county to keep the roads clear during a snow like we had on March 6th?

A. This was a relatively easy snow in that there was little to no ice involved and the following day the roads cleared. This has actually occurred with both main snow events this year. So the extra cost to the county, while still an impact, is within our budgeted amounts. When it snowed March 6th the basic out of pocket cost to the county was in the \$5,000 range. This is for salt, gravel and overtime. This does not include our normal labor cost, or equipment time and repair cost.

Q. How many miles of road does the Road Dept. typically scrape and apply salt and gravel to?

A. On March 6th, the Road Department treated and worked with salt mixture on 108 roads for a total of 172.56 miles which includes the Suches area. Of course we only treat county maintained roads and GDOT works the state roads. The county and state crews do a heck of a job and we appreciate that so many of you have recognized this. The City of Blairsville also does a very good job on maintaining city streets.

Q. How many snowplows does the county utilize?

A. Soon after I took office in 2001, it was obvious that during a serious snow, we did not have adequate equipment to deal with the situation. Over the first two years, we began purchasing additional equipment so that not only could we maintain the main county roads, but could also scrape and salt many of the smaller county roads. Now, during a regular snow event, we have 2 large spreader trucks with plows and 5 smaller 1 ton trucks with salt spreader boxes and plows. There are usually two Rd. Dept. employees per truck. The City of Blairsville has one truck with a snow plow and salt spreader box. GDOT usually has two trucks and sometimes three, so we have about 10 or 11 vehicles working in our county. There is no other rural county in Georgia that has this much equipment. In the event that we have a large snow over 4", we also have several privately owned motor graders in the county that have agreed to help when we call. Our surrounding mountain counties have the following equipment: Towns, 4 snow plows; Fannin, 4; White, 2; Lumpkin, 2; Rabun, 6 snow plows and 6 spreader beds.

Q. How do you decide what roads to treat during a snow event?

A. We try to scrape/ salt all main roads first.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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See Paris, page 5A

Introducing, Blairsville Connect

While some of you are probably already familiar with the concept of podcasting, others are probably reading this and thinking pod-what?

Don't worry. It was not until just a few weeks ago that I was fully introduced to the unique world of podcasting and already I am receiving daily inspiration as well as brushing up on my Spanish.

So what is a podcast?

A podcast is similar to a radio program in that it is a broadcast; however, they differ in that a podcast is an online, prerecorded radio program over the Internet that consists of audio or video files.

The format can be anything from audiobooks and poetry to sports commentaries and more.

The word Podcast is derived from the terms 'iPod' and 'broadcast.'

There are a variety of programs in which the episodes are delivered online and the topics are unlimited and can satisfy almost any inquisitive mind.

Because the Chamber has always desired to introduce and utilize the latest technology, in manageable doses of course, we are proud to introduce to you - Blairsville Connect - a podcast series.

Our recently launched podcast program is a lovely blend of business support and business development. Each week the Chamber will introduce you to a different business leader.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



See Williams, page 5A

Fe! Fi! Fo! Fum!

Do you remember that Jack sold his old cow Daisy for five magic beans? His mother was furious with him for the outrageous exchange, threw the beans out the window, and presto! A giant beanstalk appears overnight.

The adventure goes on as Jack climbs the beanstalk, finds a treasure and a Giant.

He escapes the grips of the Giant, his mother chops down the stalk, and the Giant falls to his death. The son and mother, who at one time were penniless, now have the fortune, a Giant to bury and a stalk to clean up. They probably needed to replace Daisy, too.

Here's what you didn't know. Where the beans landed was the compost pile that all the neighbors had contributed to in order to help Jack and his Mum (they were English) grow a very successful garden. Jack was one of those brainy kids, and didn't have a good deal of physical prowess, so he needed a few volunteers to get him up that beanstalk.

The axe his Mum used to chop the tree down was donated by the local Volunteer Fire Department, so that she would be able to have the best chance of having firewood to keep them warm through the winter. When the stalk fell, FEMA showed up to remove the menacing vines and repair the little cottage. The body of the Giant remained there for several days until someone could come and identify the body.

Then the local canning plant sent an artist in to draw renderings of this massive man of verde, converting his image from haunting to jolly, and they made it their mascot. Today he still serves as the trusted symbol of canned corn and peas.

See, it takes a village, money, volunteers, ingenuity, brains and brawn to weave

Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



See Leone, page 5A

"I'd be more encouraged about the state jobless rate holding steady if we weren't the ones still out of work!"



Making Things Happen for Rural America

Georgia Grown: a program that the RC&D wholeheartedly supports was developed by the Georgia Department of Agriculture, under the leadership of Commissioner Gary Black a few years ago. Georgia Grown feels good to say and sounds good because we know that a lot of good things are grown in Georgia. We see Georgia Grown products in our local farmers markets, at road side stands, and in the back of pickup trucks during the summer. Then we go to the grocery stores and are presented with peaches grown in California, watermelons grown in Indiana, "home grown" tomatoes from Mexico, and many other products that we eat that come from lands far-far-away. I saw a bin of watermelons last summer that had a "Local grown" sign displayed on the bin. I looked at the small labels on each melon and "Local" was Indiana...for some reason my GPS doesn't show Indiana as being local in Georgia. Selling these products in Georgia not only does not help Georgia's farm economy, but it increases transportation costs, creates more pollution, and helps the economy of far-far-away, not Georgia's. The purpose of Georgia Grown is to encourage the citizens of our state to buy food that is grown in the State. Buying local food that our farmers produce starts an economic chain that allows the farmer to pay his bills to the local businesses who then can pay the regional businesses that provide the products for the local community which keeps the money in Georgia to be returned to the economic chain. This cycle keeps our money in Georgia instead of sending it to "far-far-away."

The Georgia Grown program is a marketing and economic development program of the Georgia Department of Agriculture. The No. 1 goal of this program is to aid the state's agricultural economies by bringing together producers, processors, suppliers, distributors, retailers, Agritourism and consumers in one powerful, statewide community. They're here to help new agribusinesses grow, and established agribusinesses thrive. Georgia Grown is also a brand with deep roots in sustainability, quality and integrity. The Georgia Grown brand is desired by business and consumers who want to buy and promote Georgia's locally grown products. There are many ways producers can be a part of Georgia Grown - they can join by completing a free Business Profile on the Georgia Department of Agriculture's website, become a member and promote their business as Georgia Grown! They can then use the official Georgia Grown labels on all products that they produce, which

Executive Director of RC&D

Frank Riley



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The Grand Old Man

Clifford Hyde was originally from the Shoal Creek area of Dawsonville, Georgia. However, he was involved in a bar fight in Atlanta and thought he had killed a man. So he fled Georgia and migrated to Alabama sometime around 1890 and raised his family in the town of Phil Campbell. Clifford was my Dad's grandfather. He lived to the age of 96. I can remember him as a white headed old man that wore a gray Stetson hat with round wire rimmed glasses. He was less than 6 feet tall and only weighed about 150 pounds.

When my great grandfather was 75 he came down with some kind of ailment which caused him to lose his drive. He felt listless and really just wanted to lie around all the time. He asked my Dad to take him to see the doctor. They drove to the doctor's office in Haleyville. When his name was called Clifford went into the examination room and told the Doctor about his problems. The old Doctor told him to cough and listened to his chest. He looked in his ears. The doctor checked his reflexes. He found nothing abnormal and so, he looked at Clifford and told him he would be right back.

The doctor left the room and stayed gone about 5 minutes. Upon coming back into the room Doc Underwood looked at Clifford and told him he was going to give him the newest medicine. The doctor further explained that if Clifford would take the medicine correctly he could expect to live another 15-20 years. Clifford lived until 1968, a full 15 years after his doctor's visit where he received nothing more than cherry Kool-Aid. Dad and his family knew the Doctor had given Clifford Kool-Aid. But, Clifford thought it was a wonder drug and he told everybody about this drug. He told all his friends, "This stuff is a miracle. You should be using it." Doc Underwood's Office was bogged down with requests for this special Kool-Aid.

As Clifford aged he became known as the "Grand Old Man" of Phil Campbell. Each Saturday Clifford visited 3 places in town, the Barber shop, the Pool Hall and the Old Men's bench in front of City Hall. One of his best friends was the local Chief of Police, Mr. Looney. Mr. Looney enjoyed sitting with and listening to all the old men on the Old Men's bench. He was especially fond of Clifford and anytime a still was busted the Chief of Police would bring a pint to Clifford.

As Mr. Looney aged he became a little slower and the City Council decided he needed some help. So, a young deputy was hired. The young man didn't know about the arrangement between Mr. Looney and Clifford. One Saturday my father drove 85 year old Clifford to town. They were in the pool hall and Clifford

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



See Cummings, page 5A

Letters to the Editor ...

Good Intentions

Dear Editor,

In spite of all the stated good intentions, our property taxes have doubled over the past 13 years and the prime reason is the local schools and how this board - and other boards which preceded this one - prioritize. Inevitably, "need" becomes a word fraught with emotion, colored by image.

"Need" is not "want."

Over my 36-year teaching career in four states - through being a bus driver, coach, teacher, department head, principal, college instructor - I've seen the same game played time and again. The rhetoric is predictable. Only the faces have changed.

I have mentioned to State Rep. Stephen Allison and State Sen. Steve Gooch that the Georgia General Assembly ought to seriously consider finding an alternative source of education funding other than the "fair market value" of real property.

I've also asked a school superintendent's financial function(s) could easily be assumed by a CPA. Absent a superintendent, principals would inherit the task of budgeting, hiring and recommending directly to the school board. The superintendent's six-figure-plus salary and expenses could (ought to) be absorbed back into the classrooms of Union County. In my considered opinion, the cost to the taxpayers of Union County of superintending a system of 2,500 students is excessive.

However well-intentioned, school boards - whether rural or urban - seek positive image and, too often, place the emphasis on glamor rather than on function. It's more to the point to be proud of graduation rates and after-graduation employment than on new ball fields, for example.

I have worked in systems much smaller

See Mitchell, page 5A

ESPLOST Enables

Dear Editor,

If you had a family member who was an alcoholic, would you give that person a bottle of liquor in exchange for their promise to try to quit drinking after they had consumed it? I don't believe there is a rational person among us who would agree to do that, and yet that is exactly what the Union County School Board is asking us to do with the extension of ESPLOST. Under the present ESPLOST the board has spent incoming revenues with reckless abandon on projects that almost never relate directly to the education of our children, and now we are being asked to trust that they will do it right this time.

I have been told by a school member that if ESPLOST passes, by the time it expires in five years they will be able to understand how the system works and will be able to bring things under control, something I do not believe can or will happen. It is my opinion that at the end of 5 years, and the expenditure of \$21 MILLION, we will be in even worse shape than we are now. If we are to believe that past performance is a good indicator of future actions, then one would logically expect the school board to continue operating just as it has in the past. Just as giving liquor to an alcoholic is a bad idea, so too is the passage of ESPLOST.

Sincerely,
Robert K. Honea

North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m.

Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - 1 Year \$35.00. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 10, 1987 at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. Advertising and subscriptions can be paid by cash, check or credit card.

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