

Opinions

Everybody has one...

If spring isn't here, it's close by

After several weeks of freezing temperatures, ice, snow, and all that wintry mix stuff, Mother Nature is no longer in beast mode.

Fortunately, we're seeing the sun every now and again. And, even if that comes with some raindrops, we're satisfied.

Yes, if you were at Ag Day on Friday and Saturday, you could feel the crops busting out of the ground.

There's nothing like the Farmers Market to make spring feel like it's already here.

And, it's about time. From freezing hikers, to little old ladies without propane for heat, to vehicles gliding across frozen highways, we've seen enough cold weather.

Here's hoping that 2015 is the best growing season in decades. There was certainly enough precipitation over the winter months to soak the ground.

And now the forecast seems ripe with liquid precipitation, meaning, the growing season should get off to a grand start.

On Friday and Saturday, the first Union County Ag Day came off as smooth as silk.

Festivities featured fun for the whole family in a three-fold Farmers Market extravaganza: the FFA Blue and Gold Auction, the John Deere Drive Green event and market vendors who set up shop in advance of the market opening on June 6th.

More than 200 items were consigned for the auction, ranging from pipe fittings to farm tractors and motorcycles.

More than 200 bidders registered for the event, and preliminary figures put proceeds between \$65,000 and \$70,000, of which the Union County FFA will receive a commission.

The FFA Blue and Gold livestock auction was as popular as any event in quite a while. Hundreds attended the now annual event.

The livestock portion of the auction, animal sales exceeded \$6,000. More than half of those sales went directly to FFA students who raised market hogs themselves.

Yes, spring is here we hope, and we look forward to many days at the Union County Farmers Market just like this past weekend when a community turned out to support Future Farmers of America.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



The Sacrifice

After studying journalism and law (Yale), Lee Strobel became an award-winning journalist at the *Chicago Tribune*. His wife disrupted his secular life when she announced she had become a Christian. Though pleasantly surprised by the change in her character, he remained skeptical of Christian claims of history and truth. So he systematically interviewed experts in history, science, medicine, and psychology looking for answers. You can read about it in "The Case for Christ."

We are in the midst of the season celebrating the central events of the Christian faith: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Despite the evidence, skeptics remain. Some question not only his death by crucifixion, but that Jesus even existed.

First-century historians Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny, and Thallus mention the Jesus story. From these sources, we find that: Jesus was a Jewish teacher that many believed performed miracles. Some believed he was the Messiah, but not the Jewish leaders. He was crucified until dead under Pontius Pilate, but his followers believed that he continued to live. His following spread into the Roman world in the first century as people worshipped him as God. All of this from non-Christian sources!

The Bible adds historical details to these accounts. The Jewish leaders killed him because he was a perceived threat to their authority. The Roman governor Pilate killed him, and washed his hands in front of the crowd to exonerate himself of innocent blood. The angry mob killed him because they chose the known criminal Barabbas to be released instead. As for Jesus, they shouted, "Crucify Him!"

So if a real Jesus lived and died, the next question is, "Why?" I was enjoying lunch with a fellow once, when he pronounced that he respected Jesus because "he died for what he believed in." I almost choked. To him, Jesus was just some revolutionary, an activist that got what was coming. Didn't his death mean much more than that?

A Hebrew prophet tells us, "The Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief" (Is 53:10). Think of Jesus' tortured

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Questions and Answers

Building and Building Regulations

Q. Am I required to get a septic tank installed before I can get power?

A. Yes. Before you can get power connected you must get a valid sewage disposal permit and water system approval from the county health department. Failure to get such a permit is a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, will be punished as provided by law.

Q. Do I need to get a building permit if I am building a carport?

A. The county will require a building permit for all construction projects that either:

- Are residential or commercial buildings
- Alter the existing footprint of a structure
- Are accessory buildings of 150 square feet or more
- Require water, sewer, gas or electricity connections
- Are located within a designated stream buffer regardless of size

Q. What are some examples of projects requiring a building permit?

A. Commercial buildings, residential buildings, location or relocation of a mobile home, location of a travel trailer used as a full time or part time residence, garage, carport, completion or renovation of any unfinished areas within a residence or building, decks, porches, porch roofs, additions to an existing structure, any structure or disturbance within a designated stream buffer. Boat docks costing more than \$5,000 require a building permit.

Q. I plan to put a new roof on my house. Do I need a permit?

A. No, you do not. Examples of projects which do not require a permit include but are not limited to roofing material change, exterior siding change, replacement of floor covering, painting, wallpapering or sidewalks or driveways.

Q. I just want to clear some land. Do I need a permit?

A. Yes. No electric power may be connected to the property and no construction or grading may take place until a building permit is issued. Minor land clearing activity of less than 1 acre which is unrelated to a building construction project is allowable without a permit unless the property is in a mountain protection zone or a

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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Agritourism Symposium

In 2013, the Chambers of Commerce in Towns, Union, Fannin, and Gilmer counties, along with local and state partners, launched the North Georgia Farm Trail. The inaugural guide included 140 sites and attractions along Highway 515, each having an agricultural component that visitors could explore. Union County sites included places like the Union County Farmers Market,

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center, Southern Tree Plantation, and Logan Turnpike Mill. The second edition in 2014 saw the addition of Pickens County and included hand-made retail destinations. At that time, the Farm Trail grew from 140 sites to an astonishing 277 sites to explore! As preparations are made for our third addition, a new opportunity is being offered to those interested in agritourism. I am proud to announce that the first ever North Georgia Farm Trail Agritourism Symposium will be held on April 21, 2015 at Southern Tree Plantation in Blairsville.

The purpose of the Agritourism Symposium is first and foremost to connect the members of the North Georgia Farm Trail to suppliers, local and state partners, and each other. In addition, the symposium will allow participants to learn about the latest in effective marketing strategies and on-farm activities and hear first-hand testimonials from agritourism operators

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Mom's Color Wheel

(This week I'm reprinting a column from a few years ago because I would like to encourage you to take advantage of the seminar "Paint Your Garden with Color" being held April 22nd. More details at the end of the column.)

When I was six years old we moved from an old home (circa 1905) my dad had restored that was located in town, to a house my folks had built on the outskirts of town. This roomy split level, the most popular architectural design of the 60s, was majestically placed on a lovely, large wooded lot. Well, it was a wooded lot until the bulldozers came in to clear the land to build the house. They annihilated every timber.

When the first spring rolled around and it was time to plant grass on this barren soil, I can remember my dad going to the Salvation Army where he bought an old bed box spring. After he removed all the fabric from the metal spring, he threw a large rope around one end of it - tied it to his waist and walked all over the property, dragging this makeshift grater. Using this method he removed loads of rock and stone out of the dirt, preparing the earth for the grass seed. After the whole lot was seeded, we watered the earth. And we watered some more. And then some more...

Eventually we had a gorgeous Kentucky Blue grass yard that was joyous to run barefoot and roll in, the earth below it having been so painstakingly grated, there wasn't a stone to stub a toe. Over the years, Dad kept up with the lawns, but the gardens were my mom's domain. Most youngsters hone their knowledge of colors sifting through a deluxe box of Crayolas. My sister and I developed our color wheel from Mom's magnificent cut flower garden. There were asters, bachelor buttons, calla lilies, daffodils, echinacea, foxglove, gladiolus, hyacinth, iris, larkspur, marigold, narcissus and peonies. That takes care of the first half of the alphabet...

Then there were zinnia, violets, tulips, and my favorite, snap dragons. Mom had every color combination of snap dragon imaginable. As a child I loved to watch the enormous bumble bees gracefully maneuver in and out of

Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



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Letters to the Editor ...

Standing up for Teachers

Dear Editor,
I am writing in response to a Letter to the Editor in a recent issue. First I want to say that there is not a teacher's union in the state of Georgia. There are two professional organizations, Georgia Association of Educators, and Professional Association of Georgia Educators. Both are voluntary to join and have lobbyists at the Capitol. Neither negotiate for the Teachers, who are dependent on the State and Local governments for salaries and working conditions.

Next, I would like to address the issue of teacher tenure. There is a Right to Fair Dismissal that is granted to teachers after three years.

What tenure means is that a teacher cannot be dismissed without just cause. A lot of superintendents and school board members use this as an excuse to not fire a teacher. Yes, they have to show just cause, but if a teacher is not doing the job, that can be just cause for firing. However, it has to be proven and documented, and a lot of times it is easier to overlook than to risk going to court.

Union County has some of the best teachers in the state. They work hard and deserve nothing but support from the good people of our county.

Jim Hughes

Thank you NGN

Dear Editor,
I want to thank you on behalf of Hope House for our coverage in ads and press releases in the paper. That was such a wonderful benefit for us. We had a good turn out last Saturday. We appreciate the *North Georgia News*.
Thanks,
Evelyn Ueltzen

Clearing the air

Dear Editor,
First I would like to commend Mr. Dixon on an excellent assessment on the consequences of doing nothing to combat Climate Change. He truly hit the nail on the head.

Next I must reply to Mr. Crawford who apparently misread most of my comments about the Keystone XL pipeline. Koch Industries is owned and operated by Charles and David Koch who are two of the wealthiest men in the world. While their primary interest is in the oil and gas industry they are diversified into other areas as well. They have pledged to contribute \$900 million to the 2016 Presidential campaign to put a Republican in the White House. They are willing to do this because they know that a Republican President and Congress will institute large

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My take

Dear Editor,
If one objectively reads my letter of February 17 that Michelle Maloney criticized so vehemently in her exuberance to extol the accomplishments of the Obama administration and chastise his critics, they will find I make no mention of the legislative accomplishments of the Obama administration or lack thereof. Neither was Obama accused of being a practicing Muslim - only a Muslim sympathizer, which he surely is. After all, we are keenly aware that he is a 20-year disciple of that great patriotic Christian minister, The Reverend Jeremiah Wright. My letter at issue addressed: 1) that our Congress seems to have no simple recourse to unilaterally prevent a ruthless president from becoming a dictator and 2) some of my observations as to why I see Barack Obama as the most insidious president we have had during my 60 years of being an active voter. If one "Googles" the subject, "Obama's Top 50 Accomplishments," one will find a long laundry list. (I believe the tax

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March Madness



Thank you UC Fire & Rescue

Dear Editor,
When we moved to Blairsville three years ago we were worried that if our family ever had an emergency it might be difficult to get help living about 12 miles from town. But when the need arose for emergency help on February 25 the fire and ambulance personnel were here in 5-10 minutes. I didn't get their names but it was six of the nicest and caring young men I have ever met.

The residents of Blairsville and Union County are indeed very lucky to have these individuals among us. Thank you all and God bless you.
Mary and Roseanne Ashley & family

Public versus Private

Dear Editor,
For decades, students at the traditional public schools in Georgia have been denied the chance to win a state championship because the system overseen by the Georgia High School Association (GHSA) ignores the fact that there is no parity among traditional public schools, private schools, and city schools.

Whether you are in South Georgia or North Georgia, coaches from traditional public schools talk about the disadvantage of having to play against city schools and private schools. Traditional public high schools have a defined border or service area. Private schools do not. For city schools, that defined border or service area is vague, at best. Some city schools have open enrollment. In my statistics and comparisons below, "public schools" refers to traditional public schools and "private schools" refers to private, independent, and parochial schools.

On Jan. 20, 2015, the GHSA held a meeting on reclassification. At issue was a debate that has been brewing for many years: whether private and city high schools should be judged differently than public schools during this reclassification process. 2A public schools are saying the GHSA needs to do what it did with 1A schools a couple of years back: split the state playoffs between public and private schools. Private schools are asking for

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Mark Your Calendar

Dear Editor,
With all the news of ugly beheadings of the 21 Egyptian Christians, the killing of children, the kidnapping of women and the crucifixions at the hands of jihadists, it is urgent that those who call themselves Christians join to pray together in unity.

We are fortunate that Blairsville has many churches, so it should be easy to swell the number of people who meet once a month, joining hearts and voices with other like-minded Christians across the country in a growing nationwide movement called Awake America. This is an urgent call to prayer for Christians in Blairsville.

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Bob

I began high school with much apprehension in 1973. I had heard my grandfather talk about going off to high school in the town of Phil Campbell. Like him I was a country boy with little knowledge of towns. Papa told me that at the end of the classes he and his brother would make a mad dash through the little town of Phil Campbell because all the town boys would hide out along their way home. Some of the boys would throw rocks at Papa and his brother while others would try to ambush the Cummings brothers to try and fight with them. Anyway, after three weeks of bruises and black eyes Papa had enough and quit school and I think Uncle Pick quit a year later.

So, as I began classes in September of 1973 I was almost sick with worry. However, I had it much easier than Papa. I knew many of the kids in my classes and one particular class I really enjoyed. Mr. Chappell taught American History and I enjoyed his stories about the colonies and the revolution. The class was a mix of students from different grades and I enjoyed being the only freshman in the class. Audie was one of the 11th graders in the class. I really admired Audie because of his hair. I remember our school having a rule about the length of a boy's hair. As I recall the boy's hair could not be touching his ear. For most of the year Audie never got a hair-cut. But, his hair did not touch his ear. Audie was the only kid in school with an afro. Audie would have to turn sideways to walk through the front door. I admired Audie because he was a lot like our founding fathers. Audie rebelled against our school administrators like George Washington rebelled against England.

There were many seniors in the class including Greg who played football and threw the shot put on the Track Team. Stony was a forward on the basketball team. Also, on the basketball team was a guy named Bob who played center. He was the tallest kid in our school. Like Audie, Bob was a rebel. Bob was always trying to see how far he could push the envelope of society in Chickamauga, GA. Sometime in 1973 streaking became popular in the United States. I remember seeing editorials in our local paper denouncing the practice of streaking. For the life of me I couldn't understand why a person would take off their clothing and run through a crowd of people. I could never muster enough courage to try something like that. I guess that is why I admired Bob. He could and did in the spring of 1971.

One Monday in April word got around that everyone should plan on being on the town square on Thursday evening after the baseball game. We were told someone was going to streak through town. Every kid in school must have been in town that evening. It was about 5:30 when the baseball game ended and we all just walked over to the square. We hadn't been

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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