

Opinions

Everybody has one...

National Day of Prayer

The National Day of Prayer is set for Thursday, May 5th at First Baptist Church of Blairsville in Downtown at 6:30 p.m. I tell you this just in case you overlook it somewhere else. The signing of the official proclamation is set for April 19 at 6 p.m. in the Union County Courthouse.

Prayer means something different to us all. To me, it's been the difference between life and death.

I've had two major open heart surgeries since 2009, most recently in January.

If not for all the good folks who have had me on their prayer lists, I have no doubt that I would have been long gone from this Earth.

But, as the Good Lord would have it, He has something else in mind for me to complete while here on this Earth.

I know for a fact that from October through Jan. 27th, those praying for successful surgeries for me at Northeast Georgia Medical Center helped me greatly.

From Oct. 10th through Jan. 27th, I went through an arterial by-pass surgery on my right leg, to a triple by-pass procedure on my heart. There were a couple of surgeries in between.

Thank God for Dr. Dev. Mangalat, Dr. Sean Dunn, Dr. Daniel Winston, Dr. James Varnell, Dr. Mehrdad Toosi, and Dr. Thomas Gary for helping me along the way.

Thank you to all those who assisted me during my lengthy recovery, especially Nurse Cheryl and Nurse Sharon, physical therapists Kayla, Joe, and Mike. All from CareSouth Home Health Care.

I thank my family for being my loved ones and caring about me so deeply, helping me to get to and from doctor appointments and bringing groceries into my home.

I thank my friends who kept checking on me during this long and drawn out process. I'm still working on getting my strength back and getting back on my feet, and I appreciate everyone who has been there for me.

I want to thank Kenneth West and my loved ones at both newspapers for keeping me in their prayers. And also for keeping the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald* going during

See Duncan, page 6A

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Tolstoy

Leo Tolstoy was a Russian author probably best known for his massive novel, *War and Peace*. He died in 1910 at age 82. He was a master storyteller, and his later works were influenced by his personal experience of a profound Christian awakening. One of these is a short story, *What Men Live By*.

The story is about an angel, Michael, sent by God to collect the soul of a new mother. Michael couldn't do it, so God sent another angel to complete the task, and Michael to earth as a human until he learned some profound lessons. A poor cobbler found Michael cold and hungry, and took him home. The cobbler's wife's initial resentment soon melted into pity, and Michael quickly learned the cobbler trade under the tutelage of his compassionate host.

One day a rich man came into the shop demanding that sturdy boots be made from the fine leather he brought, threatening prison if the workmanship failed.

Needing the money, the cobbler accepted the commission despite the risk. After entrusting the task to his skilled apprentice, he was shocked to find that Michael made slippers instead of boots. But later that day the rich man's servant came with news that his master had passed away, and actually needed slippers for his burial.

A year later, a woman entered the shop with two little girls. She shared that she was raising the girls as her own, though they were orphans.

Michael realized in that moment that the girls' birth mother was the one he couldn't take. He also realized that he had learned the lessons God had for him. He explained, "I have learned that all men live not by care for themselves, but by love. It was not given to the mother to know what her children needed for their life. Nor was it given to the rich man to know what he himself needed. Nor is it given to any man to know whether, when evening comes, he will need boots for his body or slippers for his corpse. God does not wish men to live apart, and therefore he does not reveal to them what each one needs for himself; but he wishes them to live united, and therefore reveals to each of them

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. We will be really excited to have the Farmers Market open this year. What is the date of opening?

A. The Farmers Market is scheduled to open on June 4th this year. The hours will be the same as last year, which are 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays. There are a few events being held there prior to opening. There will be an Antique Tractor Show on April 23rd, Ramp Day will be April 30th, and Strawberry Day will be May 7th. We are looking forward to another busy season this year with many return vendors and some new additions also. For more information you can visit their website at www.ucfarmersmarket.com or you can call them at (706) 439-6043.

Q. When does Trash to Treasures begin at the Farmers Market?

A. Trash to Treasure begins soon! Friday April 15th is the first day and it will be held every Friday through October 28th from 7:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. For those who don't know, this is an amazing event held at the Farmers Market. Individuals are able to set up in a booth at the market and sell their yard sale or flea market type items. You never know what you might find that you didn't know you needed. The cost of the booth for the day is \$15. For more details visit the Farmers Market website listed in the previous question.

Q. Our kids are really excited about the new playground at Meeks Park. When will it be open?

A. The new playground is already open and has been for about three weeks. It has received extremely heavy use and the kids and parents seem to love the new features. The new playground is located at the same place in Meeks Park as the old playground. We are really excited to see how much enjoyment the public is receiving.

Q. Will there be more benches placed at the new playground?

A. Yes. We underestimated the crowd at the playground and will be ordering some more benches for the adults to rest on.

Q. Were you able to improve the drainage problem at the

See Paris, page 6A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor...

"We are their voices"

Dear Editor,

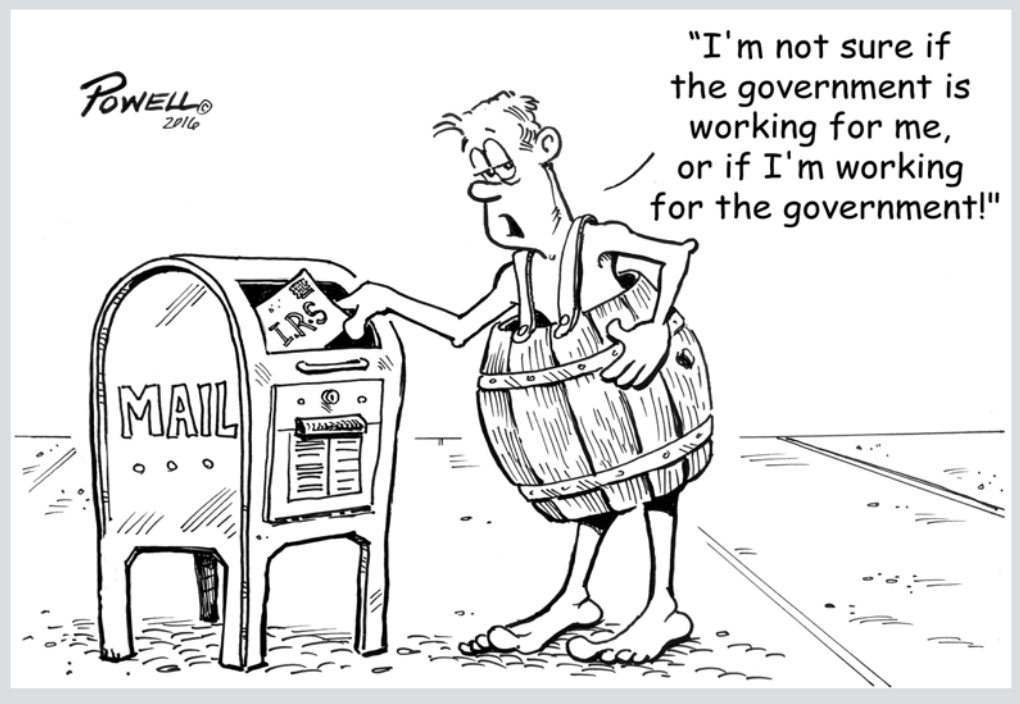
Only surviving combat soldiers can tell their story with any accuracy.

As I was hanging my American flag up today in remembrance of Memorial Day (May 25, 2015), I was revisiting my last minutes in Vietnam after being air lifted out of the field, full of morphine with my best buddy laying next to me in a UH-1 helicopter. I was going home. I was one of the lucky ones so to speak.

More importantly to this story is my recurring memory not of my circumstance but of the two American soldiers that lost their earthly voices on October 27, 1967. They did not return home and their Western Union telegram to their families was much different than mine!

I didn't know either of these two American combat soldiers but I was on the friendly side of an NVA bunker when I spotted them. These two wounded American soldiers had encountered the full wrath of enemy NVA machine

See Chamberlain, page 6A



Agritourism Symposium

In recent years, agritourism has captivated the attention of many people across our country. We are blessed to live in Northeast Georgia, where this concept is promoted through local farms and other various venues such as the local farmers markets, farm to table restaurants, wineries orchards and other agricultural venues.

We are excited that the Second Annual North Georgia Farm Trail Agritourism Symposium will be held in Union County again this year. It will take place at the Union County Community Center on Tuesday, April 12th from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. It is a great opportunity to learn ways to market your products and meet others in the industry. Even if your business does not involve agritourism, it is a great opportunity for you to learn some different marketing strategies for your business.

Dr. Christian Hardigree will be the Keynote Speaker for the event. She is the Director of the Michael A. Leven School of Culinary Sustainability and Hospitality, and professor of Culinary Sustainability and Hospitality at Kennesaw State University. She will be discussing "Sustainability and the Impact on Tourism."

Additional marketing topics will include "why Google is important," "effective rack cards," "working with groups" and other effective marketing concepts.

For more details about the event, please contact the Chamber at (706) 745-5789 or visit our website at www.blairsvillechamber.com.

Bluebirds

Once referred to as "blue robins" because of their vibrant blue hue and rust colored chest, bluebirds are a desired addition to any homeowner's backyard. Because of numerous challenges, most importantly a loss of habitat, these charismatic little birds have been facing a population decline. However, you can promote the presence of bluebirds on your property by crafting houses for them and maintaining a bluebird-friendly habitat.

Bluebirds eat insects such as grasshoppers, crickets and caterpillars, as well as berries during the colder months when insects are not as abundant. They are also cavity dwellers, meaning they normally nest in tree holes. However, as development increases, the number of trees suitable for bluebird nests is rapidly decreasing. Homeowners can help to combat this problem by placing their own bluebird houses. Installing a bluebird house is much more complicated than nailing a birdhouse to a tree, though. In order to ensure that bluebirds will be the one living in the happy little home you provide for them, you need to make sure it is well suited to their needs.

When building the house, use untreated wood that is about one inch thick. Pine, cedar, and cypress are all good choices. If you would like to paint the house, choose a light color as it will reflect the sunlight and prevent the shelter from becoming too hot. Also be sure to provide small ventilation holes at the four corners of the bottom to allow air movement and any accumulated rainwater to escape. Make an entry hole of about one inch but do not provide a perch for the house. Bluebirds do not use perches, so this will only encourage other species to inhabit your houses. Contact our extension office if you would like a publication that includes plans for how to build a bluebird house.

After the house is built, it is important to choose an appropriate place to install it. It is always best to put bluebird houses on their own separate pole about with a conical shield on it to minimize the chances of a predator such as

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison



From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



UCFD Volunteer Letter Drive

Union County Fire Department is a combination department. This means that it is made up of the career staff, which is the paid firefighters, and the volunteers who make up the majority of the department's firefighters. Station 1 is the main administrative station and the career firefighters operate from that station. The other 11 stations throughout the county are volunteer stations. A small amount of fire department budget is used for the maintenance of equipment, apparatus and buildings of the volunteer stations. However, the majority of the volunteer station's purchases and operations are made possible through donations. The annual letter drive is the main source of donations for the volunteer stations.

Every year, the volunteer fire stations send out a letter to the people who are covered by that station or district. The letter serves several purposes. It informs the people on the workings of the stations. The letter provides information on the operations of the last year including the number of members; the number of calls that we responded to; any changes to the stations; any equipment purchases; and any needs that the station may have. They also provide information on the future goals of the station to better respond to emergencies and serve the community. It is very informative.

The letter also provides dates and times for the annual open house at the stations. This is an invitation for the people to visit the fire station. The volunteer firefighters display the station, the apparatus and the equipment. They are available to answer questions that people may have about the station and the department. Often there are educational displays and demonstrations of fire and rescue equipment. The station provides lunch for everyone.

The main purpose of the letter is to ask for donations to the volunteer stations. The volunteer stations survive on the donations provided to them from the citizens and business owners of their district. They use the donations to purchase radios, turnout gear, wildland gear, and various other firefighting and rescue equipment. They also use the funds to purchase fire apparatus, rescue trucks and to make improvements to the stations.

Every donation is needed to keep the volunteer stations operational; to achieve future goals; and to respond to emergencies throughout the county. The volunteers do not ask for a dollar amount. They ask citizens and business owners to donation what they can to assist the stations in serving their community. The continued support from the citizens, the business owners and the community through these donations is greatly appreciated by the volunteer firefighters.

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Corn Planting and Baseball

When did people begin food preservation techniques which we call canning today? In conducting some research I found that a French Scientist found a way to process foods for consumption at a later time as far back as the time of Napoleon. Certainly by WWI canning some food items was being used to feed Europe's armies.

Then I pondered about when the Canning Plant began operations in Blairsville. I have found that operations go back longer than I had thought. I was talking with a friend the other day and found out that there has been a canning plant in operation at least as far back as the early 1930s. It is my understanding that there was a canning plant located next to where the Huddle House is today. The old canning plant was powered by a steam boiler.

We also know there was a cannery at the Georgia Mountain Branch Experiment Station, which began operation some time around 1933. Then sometime around 1947 the Union County School's Vocational Agriculture Program began operating a canning plant.

John Turner once told me he worked in that canning plant both as a student and then during his college years while doing his student teaching. Other people that I have known which worked in the canning plant include: Jim Allison, Harrison Bradley, Terry Queen and Junior Burnette. These individuals laid the foundation for what we have today and without them we would not have our canning plant.

Sometime around 2007 Commissioner Paris called me and said that the County would be assuming the operation of the Canning Plant and asked if I would manage it. I knew that I was not presently qualified, so, the first step was to get the qualifications.

The Commissioner sent me to a week long "Better Food Processors School" led by the UGA Food Science Faculty. A week's worth of classes on food chemistry, microbiology, thermodynamics and food borne illnesses was presented to our class. After each chapter in our book we were tested on the contents and we had to pass with a score of 80 on each exam. Pretty tough circumstances for a person whose background was crop and vegetable science. However, I got lucky and qualified to operate the plant.

So, I talked with Patrick Fix and convinced him to help me. We began operations at the old canning plant located next to the Bus Barn in 2007. We averaged processing 10,000 to 12,000 jars per year each year while we were at the old site. A few years later Lamar once again called and asked what I thought about placing a proposal to build a building for the Farmers Market and a new canning plant on a SPLIT Ballot. We had many people using the Market at the courthouse and 200 using the canning plant.

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