

Opinions

Everybody has one...

A Family Reunion

Saturday's Fifth Annual Ramp Festival at the Union County Farmers Market brought a familiar group back together.

The vendors at the Market were reunited with bustling foot traffic and shoppers. To quote Market Manager Mickey Cummings: "You ain't seen nothing yet."

The Market facility has experienced expansion and even more vendors will be on hand when the Market officially opens on June 6.

However, on Saturday, the Ramp Festival took center stage, and once again, the crowds were on hand to welcome the 2015 festival.

It was a family reunion of sorts, vendors like Mountain View Farms, Freddie Collins Farm and family, English Country Gardens, and pound cakes by Eleanor Smith, who by the way, was the birthday girl on Saturday.

Charles Thorough was there cooking deep fried pork skins (no free samples for Lamar Paris), Newt Miller was cooking his famous ramps and fried taters, Brian and Tammy Mason were there cooking ramps and hushpuppies, and more than 100 trout, cooked with ramps, went like hotcakes.

All the activity was just a precursor for June 6. We look forward to Opening Day.

Until Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris made this facility a reality, we had never had a Farmers Market before.

But I remember the days when farmers used to come to town on the weekends with a truckload of produce for sale. People used to line up, especially if the truckload of produce included watermelons and cantaloupes. Some folks fixed up small baskets of apples, peaches or tomatoes for sale.

I never saw too many potato trucks, although I believe they could have sold several bushels in Downtown at that time. I've never met too many folks that didn't like potatoes.

Local farmers now beam with pride.

Constructed with Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax dollars, the Farmers Market provides a place for local farmers to sell their produce and for once, make a profit.

See *Duncan*, page 5A

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Love your neighbor

Before I begin this story, you need to know that it does not end well. But only a persistent pessimist would not try to find some meaning in a tragedy.

In 1991 I accepted a two-year assignment to develop drinking water sources in Haiti, sponsored by a hospital. Living there with my young family was a cultural delight for me.

I traveled the countryside in a raggedy, diesel-burning Land Rover truck. Most days I was with my crew, working on pipelines and wells. Some days I ventured out solo, interacting with various communities and meeting people.

One Saturday, I had been to the market in Verrettes. With many more people traveling than vehicles to convey them, it was not unusual to turn down many friendly appeals for a free ride. But what I saw in the road in front of me was not that.

Two women were frantically waving their hands. They looked terrified and desperate. I stopped and then realized that they had laid a child, about 10 years old and unconscious, in the roadside grass and were trying to get him to hospital.

We quickly loaded the child and sped toward the hospital. Arriving there, the usual front-door crowd parted as they saw me running with this limp form. Inside, I laid him on a gurney as my coworkers responded.

In a nearby office I waited out the adrenaline. It was but a few minutes and a friend stepped in to tell me that I had carried in a dead child. Cause of the tragic death was AIDS or malnutrition.

I felt helplessness and pity for that child. In time I realized that I may not be able to change a culture, eradicate a disease, or implement effective public policy. But I could do something for one village, one family, one person, a neighbor.

Christians are particularly motivated to serve our fellow man. Our Lord Jesus set the example in the way he lived, and in his sacrificial death on our behalf. We follow his example and teaching. He said the greatest commandments are to "love the Lord your God," and "love your neighbor as yourself."

See *Fowler*, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Questions and Answers

Q. How is the new transportation bill passed by the Georgia Legislature going to affect Union County, if at all?

A. Well first, it will mean that our GDOT will have almost \$1 billion a year that they do not currently have and despite the bad press GDOT has received, I feel confident that they will be able to help all counties more than in the past because there will be more funds to draw from. Roads are a tough issue for taxpayers to cope with because there are so many and it is so confusing as to how NOT spending money on them in the short run will negatively impact the long run. Overall, I feel confident this will be a net positive for Union County and for the state.

Q. Do I have to obtain a Business License if I am renting my cabin as a weekly vacation rental?

A. Yes, you have to register your rental business with the county for the purpose of collecting the Hotel/Motel Tax, which is a part of state law. According to the ordinance, if you own a rental cabin, a hotel, or motel, you have to collect the 5 percent hotel/motel tax in addition to the 7 percent sales tax. Ninety percent of this money, according to the state law, must be used for promoting tourism in Union County. Therefore, this tax money is being used to help the very businesses that must collect the funds. If some individuals do not collect the tax, it is giving them a 5 percent competitive advantage over other rental lodgings that pay the tax.

Q. How does the county enforce the Lodging Tax ordinance, since most people who rent their cabins as weekly rentals live outside the county?

A. Enforcing this ordinance can be difficult. Tracking down the owners of the property and getting a response through letters and phone calls can sometimes be difficult. However, a new collection service has been made available to the county. At the Feb. 19 county meeting a contract was approved with Lodging Tax Solutions, which is a company that specializes in contacting and making rental property owners aware that they need to be collecting and remitting the 5 percent Hotel/Motel Tax.

Rental owners who have not been paying the tax are also going to be responsible for remitting any past hotel/motel tax as far

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



See *Paris*, page 5A

Letters to the Editor ...

Thanks for the little things

Dear Editor,

As I write this letter, my husband and I are celebrating the one-year anniversary of our move to the beautiful town of Blairsville. I drove down Hwy. 515 today and I saw Union County Sheriff's officers directing traffic into a bank parking lot. They had efficiently restricted lanes in a way that kept traffic on the highway moving, while allocating safe ingress and egress to a very large number of cars turning into the bank for customer appreciation day. As I watched their activity, other instances of their service came to mind: facilitating parades, closing the square for safe trick-or-treating, leading funeral processions, to name a couple.

We are all aware of the "big" things that our law enforcement officers do for us. I wonder if we are aware of the "small" things they do that help make our town a kinder, gentler place to live and that affect our lives in positive ways.

See *Koschler*, page 5A

Our savior

Dear Editor,

Remember back in time when your first love was. Maybe it was your high school sweetheart. Maybe the girl next door with the cute little pigtails or perhaps as a teenager your first love might have been your first car. I remember my first car. It was a 1952 Studebaker. Wow was I in love or what! As we mature and grow into manhood or lady hood we hopefully find a true love that is eternal. One that will last for an eternity. That love is Jesus Christ in all His glory. No other kind of love is unconditional. Jesus' love stirs our hearts. It makes us realize what is most important in life, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, Himself. Folks life is fleeting, it's like a vapor, then it's gone described in the Bible.

You may have been a Christian for just a short time or for many years and perhaps the tug of the world has changed the way you look at God. Remember back when you first got

See *Combs*, page 5A

Mr. Mitchell

Dear Editor,

Chrissy produces documentaries, lives in Northern California. Scott runs a computer company in Chicago. Helene is an attorney in New Jersey. Jeffrey is an attorney in Ft. Lauderdale. Chrissy had a meeting in Atlanta, invited her three best friends in the world to join her. They met at the Atlanta airport, stayed the weekend in a rented log house off Aska Road below Blue Ridge.

They were my students 32 years ago. Even though they have families and careers of their own, they came here to thank "Mr. Mitchell" personally for the what they said was the positive influence that I had on them.

We reminisced. A lot. We hugged and laughed. A lot. I shed a tear, or two. After they left.

See *Mitchell*, page 5A

Give God His Glory

Dear Editor,

First of all, I want to say I appreciate the letters you have printed from Frank Combs. I do not know him, but my impression is that he is a Christian who loves God and loves people, because he is obeying God's command to all us "followers of Christ," to share our faith and proclaim His Word.

Actually, in most parts of our country now, in this "politically correct" era, and when Christians are being slandered and persecuted just for speaking out, many newspapers would not print such letters.

I am very thankful to live in this special part of God's creation which is so beautiful now

See *Elliott*, page 5A



"I wanted to find a location that was friendly to business, so I asked my folks to move to Georgia."

Exceptional Kindness

Dear Editor,

On Easter Sunday we brought my dear father-in-law to live with us. We had lost Mom last Fall and he could no longer be alone.

Honestly, I did not think it through. I hoped that we would have him with us for many months and he would go quietly in his sleep.

That was not to be the case. The last time I took him back to an Atlanta hospital, he was treated very poorly. Dad refused to ever go back there again.

Last Sunday morning, he was in great need. I called the nurse who was on call for Tugaloo Home Health. She came quickly and recommended we call the ambulance. All the Tugaloo staff was wonderful.

Towns County EMS men were very kind as they took Dad to Union General. Dr. Albright was wonderful and actually the first one to be honest with us about how sick he was. Dr. Matthews also cared for him all week. Those two doctors took on a patient with numerous health issues and totally grasped the situation. The nurses and other staff at Union General could not have been more kind, constantly asking if we needed anything. We contacted Regency Hospice and they helped us every step of the way. Our church family at Faith Baptist blessed me by the way they dressed and conducted themselves as they came to serve us. Neighbors also were wonderful.

Dad passed away early Friday morning and the Regency chaplain was with my husband before I could even get there.

So often all we hear are bad stories because they are sensational. I cannot recall all the names but you know who you are and more importantly, God knows who you are.

Hebrews 6:10 "For God is not ungrateful to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shown toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

Kathy Norton, Young Harris

Appalachian Home Health Care

Dear Editor,

I would like to shout to the mountain tops to thank God for all the wonderful healthcare workers at Appalachian Home Health Care.

The top-notch nurses, therapists, and in home healthcare workers are gems.

Blairsville and I are so lucky to have this care available for the old guys and girls!

Thank them for me and God Bless them all for all that they do.

The old lady up the hill, Bev Willig

Uncle Clay

Uncle Clay was papa's younger brother. Clay was shorter and smaller than Papa and his brothers. But, he had the same hair color and disposition as his brothers. However, Clay had an attribute that exceeded that of his brothers. Uncle Clay was much more stubborn. Uncle Clay took me and 6 or 7 of us cousins fishing on the Tennessee River when I was a little boy. He was gentle and kind toward us kids. However, the next Sunday we had a big family dinner at my Papa's house after church. After the meal I walked out to the shade tree in the front yard where all the men of the family were having a big discussion. I sat down just as Uncle Clay began a lengthy dissertation on the subject of eternal security and he quoted scripture to back up his claim. Every person in the group disagreed with Uncle Clay. But, we wouldn't give an inch and he held his ground in the discussion. Uncle Clay was very stubborn and you could not win an argument with him.

Let's go back in time 25 years from the previous mentioned event to 1950. Uncle Clay was tired of having no money. At a family gathering he announced that he and Aunt Exxie were moving their family to Chicago. He wanted a better life for his kids and wife. They said their good byes and left the next week. Clay tried to talk his brother "Coon" into making the trip. However, Papa refused to leave Trappont because he was planting his cotton. Clay left about the time the cotton was just cracking the ground. Clay landed some kind of job that required him to grind steel and he had to breathe dust and fumes all day long. However, he made more money than he'd ever had in his bank account back in Alabama.

Clay and his family came back home on vacation about layby time for the cotton. This was the time for the last cultivation of the cotton and it was also about the time that Union Hill Congregational Church held its annual revival. Upon arriving home the first thing Clay wanted to do was to visit his brother Coon. My father remembers the event vividly. He said, "We were out in the fields chopping out the cotton while your grandfather was cultivating. Then we noticed a big new black and shiny Buick pull up to the edge of the field. Uncle Clay got out of the car and walked toward your Uncle Bud and I. When Clay got close to us we noticed he was crying. Clay bent over and picked both of us boys up and gave us a bear hug. Clay looked over us and noticed our bare feet and then told us he was so sorry we were so poor."

Daddy and Uncle Bud didn't know they were poor. They had plenty to eat, clothing to wear and a good roof over their head. This comment from Uncle Clay upset them to the point of tears so they ran to their momma and told them

See *Cummings*, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Fireworks VIP Parking

The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce has set the date of Saturday, July 4 as our Independence Day fireworks display from Meeks Park. The show promises to be another spectacular evening and will begin just after dark. This is a free event to the public provided by the Chamber of Commerce along with community sponsor, Woodmen of the World.

As in past years, the Chamber is again offering chances to win \$1,000 by making a \$10 donation toward the fireworks display. The winner will be drawn on the evening of the fireworks, and does not have to be present to win. Tickets are available from at the Chamber office within the Union County Community Center at 129 Union County Recreation Road or by purchasing online at www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com.

As a new offering this year, the Chamber has worked with local partners to secure 25 VIP parking spots in the upper lot of Meeks Park. These spots are considered "front row seats" and have never before been made available to the general public. In addition to the reserved parking spot, those who purchase a VIP package will receive five meal tickets for a cookout at the park prior to the show, two entries into the \$1,000 raffle drawing, and a complimentary goodie bag given on the evening of the event. Those who purchase a VIP package will be allowed to arrive at any point prior to the show and

See *Williams*, page 5A

Keeping seedy company

It's succulent, staining juices are drawn out with just a tad of sugar. It's the only one to dare to wear its seeds as a cover instead of hiding them inside. Every bit of this stemmed harvest is edible, but it only has its firmness a few days after it leaves the vine. It's fragile and delectable, and oh so fragrant. That's why they make shower gel and hand soap scented with it. Lip gloss tastes better. Cough syrup flavored with it makes the medicine go down much easier, ask any child. Though it is produced in so many ways for my consumption, it is fresh off the vine I like it best, and like many of my favorite vegetables and fruits, the season is too short for my liking. May is strawberry harvest month and I couldn't be more delighted.

From Pop Tarts to fruit pies, shortcakes to milkshakes, Jell-O to yogurt and daiquiris to Boone's Farm wine, the strawberry is on every menu and everywhere on store shelves. Over the last two decades, the U.S. strawberry industry has experienced increased rates of consumption at a higher rate than other fruits and vegetables. Strawberries are the fifth most preferred fresh fruit in the United States, behind bananas, apples, watermelon and grapes. An increased awareness of the health benefits of strawberries – antioxidant levels, folate, potassium, vitamin C and fiber content – also stimulated domestic consumption.

The U.S. produces 30 percent of all the strawberries farmed in the world - more than 1 million metric tons, annually. California and Florida are the leading states in production in this country, obviously with their 6-8 month growing season. It is estimated that an acre of land in California produces up to 100,000 pounds of berries, annually, shipped both fresh and frozen to all corners of the world.

I've lived in five different states in my lifetime, and in every one of them I've indulged in the fruits of the strawberry. They all taste different, partially by variety, but also the soil makeup. My least favorite has to be those grown in the sandy earth of Florida. They are pretty ber-

See *Leone*, page 5A

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