Opinions

Everybody has one...

Ray recommends Mark Ivester

Last week I wrote a column supporting Dr. Ray Perren as the new president of North Georgia Technical College. I know a bunch of people who would like to be president of NGTC and Ray Perren would love to be president of the rapidly growing school. However, there is one problem. You see Dr. Per-Straight

Shooting

nical College, based in Oakwood. With that being said, I'll let you read a letter from Dr. Perren and his reaction to my nomination of him for

ren is already president of Lanier Tech-

NGTC president.
"Let me begin by thanking you

for writing an editorial regarding North Georgia Tech in the May 25 edition. North Georgia Technical College is an outstanding institution. Any person would love to be president there. While I appreciate the confidence you show in me through last week's editorial regarding the presidency at North Georgia Tech, I want to say that I am deeply entrenched at Lanier Technical College. As a young boy I learned that ministers were called to serve as pastors of churches. In a very like manner, I believe that the most effective college presidents are those who feel "called" to serve at the institution at which they lead. I feel called to serve at Lanier Tech. I hope to have the opportunity to remain at Lanier Tech for many years to come.

"North Georgia Tech is getting an outstanding leader as president in Dr. Mark Ivester. I am 100 percent in support of Commissioner Gretchen Corbin's appointment of Mark as the next president of North Georgia Technical College. I have had the good fortune of knowing Mark for many years. Like me, Mark Ivester is a servant leader. I am convinced Mark will continue to provide the exceptionally strong level of leadership that Dr. Gail Thaxton has provided North Georgia Tech since her arrival there. The Technical College System of Georgia guarantees our graduates. Similarly, I can guarantee you will be more than pleased with the leadership Dr. Ivester will continue to provide North Georgia Tech.

Finally, having been raised in the southernmost community in Appalachia in Georgia, my twin brother Roy and I love the mountains of North Georgia. North Georgia is home to us. I believe I can speak for Mark Ivester and my twin brother Roy when I say we are all committed to working to help North Georgia continue to prosper for generations to come.'

Sincerely. Ray Perren

Letters to the Editor... **Church and State**

Dear Editor,

I could not let the gentleman's letter in reference to the founding fathers and their Christian beliefs pass without a response. Unfortunately we have done a very poor job of educating our students about the history of our country. The founding fathers were Christians, but not in the sense that we think of most Christians today. They were products of the Age of Reason as espoused primarily by Thomas Paine and others, one of the tenets of which was what Paine saw as the corruption of the church and its efforts to acquire political power, thus the idea of separation of church and state. The founding fathers were not that far removed from the Puritan days of New England when the church ruled the colonies with an iron hand, often putting those who opposed their theology to death or

See **Reed**, page 5A

Is your Child a Dabber?

The mission of the Union County Anti-Drug Coalition is to support an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse. Visit and Like our Facebook page for additional articles and videos.

Have you heard of dabbing? Dubbed the "crack of pot," dabbing is a form of consuming highly concentrated marijuana in a vaporized form and has been described as freebasing mari-

Marijuana extracts—concentrated oils from the marijuana plant (sometimes called "hash oil")—are a lot stronger than dried marijuana. The higher THC levels are what draw some people to try marijuana extracts. On average, regular marijuana has a THC content of 12–13 percent. (Remember, THC is the chemical in pot that makes users feel high.) But the average marijuana extract has a THC content of more than 50 percent, and some extracts are as much as 80 percent THC.
The oil or wax-like THC concentrate from

the marijuana plant is placed on a "nail" attached to a specialized glass water pipe or bong called a "rig." A blow torch is used to heat the rig that the dab is put on, which produces a vapor that can then be inhaled. This ingestion method means the effects of dabbing can be felt instantaneously.

Because the THC and other chemicals are more concentrated in marijuana extracts than in regular marijuana, the side effects of dabbinglike poor judgment and coordination—are likely to be more powerful than those from smoking

Popularity with inhaling hash oil is increasing because it is the fastest way to get an intense high. Smoking a tic-tac sized drop of BHO, or "hash oil," is equivalent to two or three typical sized portions of marijuana hitting the system all at once.

Marijuana extracts can also be very dangerous to make. One method for extracting the concentrated drug from regular marijuana involves forcing butane (a flammable chemical found in lighter fluid) through a marijuana-packed pipe. Step-by-step instructions with pictures and videos are available online and only require a quick Google search. The ability of teens to easily access the supplies and information needed for dabbing is a cause of great concern. As this trend grows, more YouTube videos are being uploaded by teens chronicling their dabbing experiences. These videos showcase teens dabbing for the first time or experimenting with higher and higher doses trying to outdo their peers on the Internet. On the news you may see the results of explosions or house fires from cooking the con-

centrates with butane. In a 2015 study, over 80 percent of marijuana extracts studied were contaminated with pesticides or poisonous solvents left over from the extraction process. Dabbing comes with a slew of negative side effects, including a rapid heartbeat, blackouts, feeling like something is

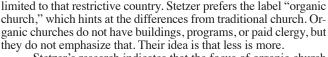
See **Dabber**, page 5A

Organic Church

Even though churches and denominations have distinctive beliefs, most have a form common to the modern Christian church. Dr. Ed Stetzer recently blogged about a different form as old as the church itself, and becoming more common today. He has two doctorates and works as a researcher,

but his observations are more than **All Things** ivory tower ideals because he has also served as a pastor and church planter. Various authors label this form

as simple church, or house church. You may have heard about the growth of Christianity in China through house churches, but the movement is not



Stetzer's research indicates that the focus of organic church is discipleship. I would define that as helping believers apply God's Word as they follow Christ. He finds that in the U.S., organic church is more likely to be found on college campuses and urban, high-density areas where the cost of real estate is high. According to Stetzer, "People who are disenfranchised, weary, or intimidated by the more institutional and organized forms of church may be open to an organic church." Such believers and seekers might live anywhere, even in rural areas and small towns. Organic churches may be networked, but they exist across

denominations. Stetzer, a Southern Baptist, admits that he almost lost his job once for defending organic church as an authentic expression of the body of Christ. He still supports it as he expects this form of church to grow. Referring to the early church meeting in homes, Stetzer encourages believers to "cast their boat into a new sea that is really as old as the New Testament church.'

An older pastor once told me, "Not everyone is a good candidate for your church." Likewise, if a person is looking for highly proficient music and well-organized children's activities, they will gravitate toward traditional churches, and most communities have excellent choices for those. All healthy churches believe that church is people, not just a building, program, or meeting. Jesus once declared, "I will build my church." If history is any indication, He will accomplish that in different ways and forms, some as old as His Church itself.



"Hello, stranger. It's always nice to meet another member of the middle class!"

Old Country Stores

ing your lifetime. That old country store with

all kinds of stuff hanging from the walls. Places

where you could purchase everything from a can-

dy bar and Coke to a

good pair of over-

many of them left in

today's modernized

world. Let me tell

I remember.

ou about a few that Cummings

alls. There are not

I know you have been in at least one dur-

Around

The Farm

One of the first ones I went into in Union

County was Brookshire's Store over in the Such-

es area of Union County. I loved going into the

store to sit by their old wood stove and listen to

Mr. and Mrs. Brookshire tell stories about Such-

es. I also met a fellow by the name of Benny

Brookshire in the store. Benny is a farmer and

a fellow who has become a good friend over the

years. Another old country store in Suches in-

cludes Wolf Pen Gap which is still open; a place

I enjoy going to and meeting people. I enjoy

listening to people and if you listen you'll learn

something from the folks at this store. Plus, the

some pretty good old country stores. The old

Owltown Feed and Seed Store was a great old

country store. And who can forget Howard Rich-

ards' Country Store out on old 76 in the Jones

Creek area. You could buy fishing supplies, can-

dy bars, hunting stuff and you could also listen to

The following is a great story which happened at one of our local country stores. The

most recent owner recently told me that during

a remodeling stage at the store some of the floor-

ing was pulled up. Underneath the flooring was

found some bootleg whiskey. It seems that a for-

mer owner had used the store to sell the illegal

drink. So, one day the previous owner came by

the store and was presented with the bottle of

aged alcohol. So, I asked the old man about the

showed up at his store and unknown to our friend

this man was a revenue agent. After a little dicker-

ing he purchased a bottle of the illegal stuff from

our friend. As a result our man was brought up

on charges. His appearance in court soon came

around. There were three others in front of our

friend and each one received a \$1,000 fine. So,

upon hearing the evidence the judge struck his

gavel on the desk and said, "Sir, you are guilty

and the court fines you the amount of \$1,000. I

do not want to ever see you in this court again.

Do you understand?" Our friend looked up at the

judge and responded, "Your honor, it weren't my

idea to come in here today. It was that revenue

I spent the summer with my grandparents. One

morning Papa got up on the wrong side of the

See Cummings, page 5A

When I was very young, probably 7 to 8,

agent that made me."

He smiled and told me one day a fellow

Other places in Union County also had

store has some really good food.

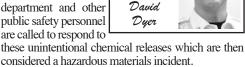
hunting and fishing tales.

Hazardous Materials

We use chemicals every day and they are everywhere. They are stored in many businesses and in stores. They are transported on the highways. They are even in your home. When these chemicals are uninten-

tionally released outside of their container; they can be considered harmful thus a hazardous material. The fire department and other public safety personnel are called to respond to '

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief



Public safety personnel attend hazardous materials training each year to better respond to such incidents. Recently, members of Union County Fire Department, Union County Sheriff's Office and Blairsville Police attended the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency's (GEMHSA) Awareness for Initial Response to Hazardous Materials Incidents class conducted at Union County Fire Department.

The class is described by GEMHSA as an eight-hour course designed to provide all first responders with the OSHA Level I awareness training for hazardous materials. Participants are introduced to the problems associated with responding to or discovering hazardous materials incidents. Skills taught include recognizing, identification, emergency planning, and resource identification. The class is approved by POST, EMS and Georgia Firefighters Standards and Training Council

for continuing education credit hours. The first part of the class involves lecture on how to recognize and classify a chemical release as a hazardous material incident. The lecture also included information on the various methods to identify the hazardous material. This involved recognizing various shipping containers and transport trailers. It also included using the Emergency Response Guide (ERG) to identify hazardous materials by the chemical name or DOT placard identification number. Once the hazardous material is identified, the emergency guides in the ERG can be used to determine the initial response actions of the responders.

The second part of the class involved practicing responses and using the ERG. Students were given DOT placard numbers and students were instructed to identify the chemical, determine which ERG guide to use, identify response priorities, describe the response and identify needed resources. Students also had to do the same procedures for shipping containers and highway trailers. Hazardous materials incidents can be very

stressful and demanding. The classroom environment provides students with chance to practice set procedures in a non-stressful situation. Members of Union County Fire Department, Union County Sheriff's Department and Blairsville Police now are better educated and equipped to respond to hazardous materials incidents.

Union County Fire Department ~ Our Family Protecting Your Family ~

Mailing: POBox 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

Commissioner's Questions County Road Maintenance - Part I

Q. Is there anything special going on this weekend in Blairsville?

A. At 10 a.m., Saturday, June 4th, a TVA representative will

biking trails at Nottely Dam, parking lot No. 2, to give a guided walk-through from Union County Commissioner tour of the new area. If there are those who have not yet had a chance to try out the new trails near Nottely Dam or want to take a leisurely stroll with a Paris nice group of people, stop by. This is in honor of TVA's 24th Annual National



Also, on Saturday, June 4th, Volunteer Fire Station 10, located in Blairsville at the intersection of Jones St. and Jackson St., behind Circle K (or at least for the past 20 years it was Circle K) will be serving free hot dogs and hamburgers for their Open House for the Blairsville Precinct.

This is also the day of the Grand Opening of the Farmers Market for this season!

Q. Who do we complain to about the tall grass along the

A. Let's first determine which road had the tall grass on it. There are three different jurisdictions in the county. (City of Blairsville, State of Georgia and Union County) The State of Georgia controls all state highways, including the four main roads in and out of Blairsville, Hwy 515 East & West, and US 19/129, North & South plus Hwy 325 beginning at the Horse Arena all the way to and across the Nottely Dam, Hwy 180 to Brasstown Bald and Hwy 180 to Suches and Hwy 60 in Suches. The State of Georgia has subcontracted out most of the mowing this year, so I think they have had a little late start. Hopefully they will have many of the roads done by the time you read this.

Q. Our county always does a great job of keeping our roads mowed, but it seems like they have been slow to get started this year. Is there a reason for that? A. Yes. With all the rain leading up to Spring, the Road

Department has been absolutely covered up repairing roads and ditches. With the spring rains, the first cutting of grass is always

See **Paris**, page 5A

Thank You Mr. Steppe

I want to thank Mr. Gary Steppe for all of his hard work with the Union County School System over these past five years. When he came on board, he wanted to make a positive impact in the community and the lives of the faculty and students. His goal was to improve upon the solid foundation that was already in place. He has succeeded in that vision Blairsville

and he will continue to leave a legacy of excellence in the school system. The most re-

County Regina Allison

vision comes in a new startup program at Union County High School called INCubatoredu. Mr. Steppe got the idea while attending a conference and he became so enthralled with the concept that he decided to bring it to Union County. The

the 2016-2017 school year. The idea for the program came as an offshoot of the television show The number of students participating in the program is limited to 25 for this school year. Each of the students participating will take a personality test and then will be grouped together in teams of five based on these results. The goal is to bring together different people with varying strengths. Each member has something unique

pilot program will begin this fall at the start of

to contribute to the project. The group is to come up with a business idea. Each group will be assigned a mentor and they will also work in conjunction with classroom teachers and an advisory panel throughout the year. In the middle of the school year, the group will be required to give a "soft pitch" of

See Allison, page 5A

Fire Blight

As trees begin to fruit and we look forward to harvesting our apples, pears, cherries and other tasty treats, we need to be diligent in scouting our fruit trees for diseases. One devastating disease that has plagued many in this region is fire blight. This harmful plant illness is caused by a type of bacteria known as Erwinia amylovora and can ruin leaves, fruit, and even kill several types of trees.

We first start to see fire blight symptoms right about now, in the early to mid-spring. The disease is worst when temperatures are be-



tween sixty to seventy degrees and the weather is moist. Unfortunately, over the past few weeks. our weather has fit this exact description. If a tree is infected, the flowers will often turn black and die, and the disease will progress up the branches until the branch tips also die. Instead of falling off the tree, the leaves will shrivel up, turn brown and hang down from the branch, giving it a characteristic "shepherd's hook" shape. On the main part of the branch, or stem, sunken areas known as cankers may appear.

This disease affects numerous species and varieties of trees. The most commonly infected are apples and pears, though plums, cherries, and almond trees are also susceptible. Even roses and other ornamental plants can be damaged by the bacteria, so it is important to keep an eye on both fruit trees and ornamentals throughout the grow-

There is no cure for fire blight once a tree becomes infected. However, there are numerous preventative options that producers and homeowners can use to protect an outbreak on their property. Many varieties of trees that are resistant to fire blight are available for purchase. Though a resistant plant may still become infected to some extent if the local conditions are favorable enough for the pathogen, they will tolerate it better and the disease will be easier to manage. Also, always make sure all pruning and collecting equipment is adequately cleaned. Because the bacteria are found in the branches, healthy

See Mattee, page 5A

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