

Opinions

Everybody has one

A heartfelt thank you

Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll isn't the type to get all choked up in public.

No, he's a lawman and that's something you just don't see very often.

On Saturday, he was giddy, and emotional. He was watching 61 children ages 11-17 realize something that truly is difficult in today's economic climate.

Chief Carroll and the officers that make up the Blairsville Police Department took these giddy youth on a Christmas shopping adventure called Shop With a Cop.

Many of the youth look up to Chief Carroll like he's a second father to them. It's Christmas time and the chief didn't let them down. He made sure they were going to have a good Christmas.

Along with nine other BPD officers, Union County Schools SRO Sally Tanner and a host of volunteers, Chief Carroll took the largest group of young people ever on a Shop With a Cop adventure to Walmart.

The program also made sure these children are going to have a Christmas dinner, as all the fixings for that meal were provided to their parents. They also fed them good before they sent them home.

Chief Carroll doesn't take the credit for this seasonal gift of giving. Instead, he credits the community for making sure it happened.

Never before has Shop With a Cop been able to afford Christmas for much more than 40 children. This year, the community came through in a big way and made sure there were 61 smiling faces on Shop With a Cop Saturday at Walmart.

Chief Carroll said without the good folks that make up Blairsville-Union County, the efforts of his department and all the volunteers would have been for naught.

"The folks here, especially the natives, they know what it's like to rough it at Christmas," Chief Carroll said. "If Shop With a Cop had been here when I was a kid, I would have been one of the first in line."

"The folks that grew up here remember what it was like to meet Christmas morning and basically, it was just another day," the chief said. "Oh, our folks managed to get us an orange and an apple or two and some candy, but it was nothing like today."

"I'm just proud to see these young people smiling and happy," he said. "I guess all-in-all, it changes a young person's perception of law enforcement and their community in general. They know people love them, and really care."

"That's what Shop With a Cop is all about," Chief Carroll said.

There it is in black and white, the true meaning of Shop With a Cop. It's not about elections, popularity or anything that puts one individual or individuals in good standing within their community. No, the folks involved with Shop With a Cop come through because they care.

The cops that you see on the force are in agreement with Chief Carroll, they would have loved to have been a part of Shop With a Cop when they were younger.

Christmas would have been a whole lot brighter and there would be memories to share for forever and a day.

I'm not sure who came up with the idea for this program, but, it's a program that will continue for years to come, maybe forever.

The big factor in how long this program continues its success is our community.

The old adage that it takes a village to raise a child holds true. Blairsville-Union County, pat yourselves on the back. Once again, you've done a good deed that changes the lives of the very people we love the most, our children.

School Funding / Property Appraisals (part 2 of 3)

Q. How much money do the Governor and State Legislature pay out to school systems in Georgia?

A. The State currently pays out approximately \$6.285 billion in school funding to all school systems, including Union County. This has been drastically reduced due to austerity cuts in the past few years and has caused a real hardship on school systems throughout the state because they have to go to local property taxpayers for more of their funding to make up the difference.

Q. How is most of the state funding distributed to public school systems?

A. The distribution is based almost exclusively on the average attendance of each school system (FTE). Then an additional \$436 million (approx.7%) is distributed under the "Equalization funding" that Union County does not qualify for.

Q. Do the QBE and other State school funding formulas unfairly penalize Union County tax payers?

A. Many have always thought it did because they believe that in basing some of the local funding on property values alone to determine wealth was not accurate. They believe it should have also factored in free and reduced lunches along with property values. 62% of Union County students receive free and reduced lunches which is an indicator that all our citizens do not benefit from the higher property values. However, many school folks and politicians have tried to get the formula changed over the past years without any success.

Q. How much State funding does the Union County school system currently receive?

A. The Union County Board of Education received \$6,969,388 in QBE funding from the State of Georgia this past year based on stu-

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Charles Duncan
Straight Shooting



"Looks like we are going to need a bigger bag."

The Name Given Him

The Bible describes the events leading up to Christ's birth in Matthew 1:18.

This passage tells us that Mary was expecting a child before she and Joseph were husband and wife.

Joseph was troubled about this and was in the process of working out something whereby Mary would not become a public spectacle to live in shame.

While he was attempting to come up with a compassionate solution, the Angel of the Lord came to Joseph in a dream to inform him God had already worked it out. The Angel instructed Joseph to marry Mary. He further instructed him to name this child Jesus.

The name given to Him was a CHOSEN NAME. Neither Mary nor Joseph had the privilege to name this child. The name given to Him was chosen by God. That CHOSEN NAME was the name Jesus (Matthew 1:21).

The name Jesus was a COMMON NAME. In Hebrew the name was Joshua. When Mary and Joseph called the child Jesus no one thought that unusual. Running up and down the streets of Bethlehem and Nazareth were many boys named Jesus. This name was about as common as John is today. Thus, the name Jesus identified Him with humanity, but it also described His mission to save us from our sins. His name is a CONQUERING NAME.

The Bible declares He shall save, that means to deliver, to give salvation. The Bible says He shall save people. God's creation has deliberately fallen prey to the dominion of Satan, sin and darkness. The result is death - eternal separation from God. Jesus saves. Jesus saves people. Jesus saves people from their sin. The only way to avert eternal separation from God is to be saved by the only Way which is Jesus (John 14:6). We are saved by the only name given (Jesus) under heaven whereby men on earth can be saved (Acts 4:12).

His name is a CHOSEN NAME, a COMMON NAME, a CONQUERING NAME and the CROWNING NAME of all the ages. Name the oldest, the bravest, the best, the richest, and the greatest among men and you must place His name at the very top because Paul said when Jesus died on the cross that "God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). Jesus is truly the name that calms our fears, and bids our sorrows cease. That name is music to the sinner's ear. It is life and health and peace.

Express Gratitude

To me, there's something very magical about this time of year. From the first hint of pumpkin spice before Thanksgiving, through the frenzy of Christmas and into the New Year, like many, it's my favorite time of the year. Hearts are lighter; smiles are bigger; and the world is a merrier place to be. Grateful is a word that comes to mind over and over. Be grateful. Express gratitude. And so I encourage you to think about the many things you have to be grateful for through the holidays. Here are a few of mine.

As loyal North Georgia News readers know, this column once belonged to our exceptional Board Chair, Mr. Joe Garner. As he transitions from his role as Board Chair, I am grateful for the opportunity to step into his big, mighty shoes and serve as an interim columnist. Having read all of his articles over the past two years, I can't thank him enough for the wisdom he provided and the commitment he fulfilled. Joe Garner is a genuinely kind individual who has been an outstanding leader of our organization.

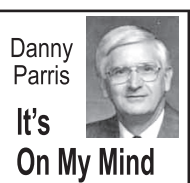
In a world of uncertainties, I am extremely grateful for small business owners. The risk that these entrepreneurial individuals are willing to accept in order to chase the American dream and provide jobs and community support along the way is beyond my imagination. The admiration I have for our small business owners is unmatched, and those who have chosen to partner with the Chamber of Commerce as members, have an extra feather in their cap!

Finally, I appreciate all those who are willing to serve their community in some capacity beyond their everyday roles. We have so many local heroes who are working behind the scenes every day in Union County to make this a wonderful place to live, work, and play. Great communities don't just happen. They take vision, leadership, and dedication

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Lamar Paris
Q & A



Danny Parris
It's On My Mind

The BBQ

I was 15 years old when our little church decided to build the new Fellowship Hall. But first we had to raise the money. We did everything we could to raise funds for the building. The kids program raised money by having car wash days at the church. The ladies of the church held bake sales. Men, women, boys and girls were all trying to raise the money that would allow our church to build the new Fellowship Hall. In the midst of this fund raising effort a man came to our church with a novel idea.

Calvin was a man of small stature. He worked in a saw mill and operated a bulldozer for his living. He loved to coon hunt and he was uneducated. However, he had more common sense than anyone I had ever met. Calvin talked with the pastor, my father, and the deacons and suggested that our church conduct a big Labor Day BBQ. Calvin stated that he knew someone who would donate some beef and pork. The idea was to sell tickets and use the funds toward the building of the new Fellowship Hall. Everyone liked the idea and Calvin was put in charge of the event.

Calvin met with local farmers and some of them agreed to donate their animals for the event. Calvin and his committee began selling tickets in early June. The group originally anticipated selling 500 tickets. However, by July there had been 1,000 tickets sold. This presented a problem to Calvin. He had exhausted his meat donations. Calvin realized he had to find more meat product. Calvin soon hatched a plan, but, kept it to himself.

Calvin found a cheap supply of all the meat he wanted. He found a goat farmer in the southern part of the county that provided all the goats he could use for \$5 each. Calvin knew some people would turn their nose up at goat meat. So, he chose not to tell anyone. The people of our small country church sold nearly 3,000 tickets for the Labor Day picnic. Calvin and his crew were up all night before the Labor Day BBQ. When the cooking was complete the delirious BBQ as far away as Chattanooga. People loved this BBQ. The BBQ had a little different taste.

When asked about his secret Calvin would smile and tell people he liked to smoke the meat with apple wood and hickory wood. Calvin never let anyone know that he was selling goat meat instead of beef and pork. But, his product, BBQ, was in high demand. Our church continued to hold the Labor Day BBQ for another 3 years. During the last year more than 5,000 tickets were sold. The demand was high for Calvin's BBQ. After the third year of the event the Fellowship Hall was completed and paid for due to the efforts of Calvin.

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The Gift of Time (Part I)

You are making a list, and checking it twice. You are trying to figure out if you can do it all online, shop locally, or do you have to brave the crowds and head south to get everything on the Christmas list you've put together for those kids and grandkids that are near and dear to your heart.

I know that the greatest gifts I was given as a youngster were not bought. They were all the gift of time. My Mom was the brains and brawn of my parent's music store business. Christmas was incredibly busy at the shop. Yet, Mom always made time to keep the traditions. Our favorite was the making of the Italian and the American Christmas cookies. As a family, we made at least a dozen varieties each year. That special time together is indelibly imprinted in my memory. And the practice lives on. Mom's grandchildren still gather with her every Christmas to share this special cookie making tradition. It isn't about the cookies. It's about that time together.

My maternal grandfather was a barber in Jamestown, NY. He actually was Lucille Ball's hairdresser when she was just a little girl. He never would divulge to me if she was a real redhead. Every day, Grandpa went to work wearing a white starched shirt and a three piece suit, with the pocket watch and chain in the vest. When I would go stay with my grandparents in the summer, he would leave work early on one afternoon to take me fishing. He'd pick me up after he left the shop, but didn't take time to change his clothes. We'd take the auto ferry across the lake. When we arrived at our favorite spot, he'd very methodically take off his suit coat, vest and shirt and fold them carefully, placing them in the back seat of the car. Then we'd sit on the grassy embankment, fishing; he in his white muscle man t-shirt, suspenders and suit pants, and I with a grin from ear to ear, basking in the glory of fishing with my Grandpa.

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Mickey Cummings
Around The Farm

Letters

To the Editor

Please do what's right

Dear Editor,
I am Cheli Collins, mother of Kenny Henson. I lost my son on 9-11-10 in a terrible automobile accident. Kenny was a sixth grader at the Union County Middle School. As a way of remembering Kenny, Mr. Kelly (the school principal) and several community members volunteered their time and created a memorial to Kenny at the corner of the school parking lot. Wayne Briton donated his time and funds to plant and care for flowers inside this memorial. As a mother of a child lost too soon,

See Collins, page 5A

Important note from Gary Black

Dear Editor,
During the past legislative session, important tax reform passed which focuses on updating and modernizing our tax code in order to make us more competitive with the surrounding southern states. As part of this legislation, not only are the previous agriculture exemptions defined and re-branded, but new exemptions are established for farmers and producers.

Sales tax exemptions for agricultural inputs are broadened through including equipment.
See Black, page 5A

A letter to State Rep. Stephen Allison

I don't know if you'll have time to read this but, just in case, might I revisit my two concerns for the upcoming Session?

One: Please pursue the bill which would remove from the Governor's prerogative the control of the right of Georgians to keep and bear arms in the event of a declared emergency.

Two: Please consider a less volatile, more stable and less antiquated method of determining millage other than "fair market value" of residences.

When we bought our Blairsville home in 2000, it paid right at \$150,000. Taxes that year were \$480.

This year, our home is assessed at \$134,000. Our taxes are touching \$800. Over the past 12 years, Lamar Paris has done an excellent job in holding the line on spending but his frugality goes by the board because more

See Mitchell, page 5A

Opossums with rabies rare

Dear Editor,
I wanted to clarify a statement that was printed in the opinions section of the North Georgia News on Nov. 28.

Mr. Duncan stated that the opossum is immune from the rabies virus. It is important to know that any mammal species can contract rabies, a nasty virus that has a nearly 100 percent fatality rate if not treated immediately.

Opossums can be infected with rabies although it is rare. One reason may be that the possum has a very low body temperature (94 to 97 degrees F) compared to other mammals that average 98 to 101 degrees. In April 2008 a 5 year old Arkansas boy was bitten by a sick possum the child found in his yard. The boy's father brought the sick animal to a veterinarian; the possum was submitted to a lab for testing, and that possum tested positive for rabies.

The child and a veterinary assistant who handled the possum immediately underwent a series of vaccinations to prevent the virus from developing into the rabies disease. Raccoons, skunks, foxes and coyotes, in that order, are the most common wild animals that

See Malone, page 5A

The war on taxes

Dear Editor,
Americans are once again in war mode. (Muslims of the world, relax!) This time, for a change, it's Americans against their fellow Americans - income tax warfare, complete with war cries: "Soak the rich!" and "Pay their fair share!" The latter, ironically, usually coming from those who pay no income tax at all.

It is estimated that fifty percent (probably a low figure) of Americans pay no income tax because either they are on entitlement programs, work for cash that they do not report as income, or deductions and exemptions result in no tax due.

A spokesperson for the Obama re-election campaign proudly announced that much of the enormous sum contributed came in the form of very small donations; no doubt from many on entitlement programs. Is it too tacky to suggest that if these individuals could afford to contribute to a political campaign, they could also afford to contribute something in

See Ramsey, page 5A

Thank you North Georgia News

Dear Editor,
On behalf of the Union County Saddle Club, I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank you and your company for your support during this year's show season. We were able to attract nationally sanctioned organizations and a great rodeo to our arena and with your help and great coverage in the paper; these shows were a huge success. It is great that businesses and companies like yours will help us with these types of projects and support the local community.

Again, thank you very much for running all of our articles!

Sincerely,
Art Miller, Vice President
Union County Saddle Club

North Georgia News

Published since 1909 4 Legal Organ of Union County

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Owner / Publisher
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Editor
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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.
Phone: (706) 745-6343 **Fax:** (706) 745-1830; **Location:** 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, GA