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little as five minutes, trying to find a street, could mean the difference in life and death," Commissioner Paris said. "It could be your own family that is impacted."

Over the past five years, Union County government has spent more than \$100,000 replacing stolen and vandalized street and road signs.

The commissioner says

it's a real waste of taxpayer dollars.

The stolen sign phenomena began in 2008 when more than 500 signs were stolen locally. The next year, the number jumped by 200 stolen signs. The numbers began to drop in 2010 because county workers began to put the street signs on taller posts.

"A couple of years ago

we started putting the signs on 12-foot high posts, which is taller than thieves could stand in their pickup beds and reach, so they started backing into the post and knocking down the entire post," Paris said. "We no longer use the taller post."

What they do today is to offer a reward, and given the hard times the county and the nation are experiencing,

it's just the carrot someone needs to turn over a thief.

"It worked a few years back and I think it'll work again," Commissioner Paris said.

To give the Commissioner's Office a confidential tip on who is stealing county road signs, call (706) 439-6000.

Free Adult GED Classes

Registration for Free Adult Ed (GED) classes will be January 2, and January 3, 2013 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. We are located at the Shirley Miller Bldg. beside the library. Your GED credential can be the door to a brighter future!

Register now by calling 706-439-6342. Adult Ed will be on break from 12/24 until Registration day. N(Dec26Z2)CA

Don't let your holiday cheer go up in smoke

The holiday season is the time of year when most people are thinking about shopping for gifts, office parties, and spending time with family and friends. Sadly, this is also the time when home fires peak. State Farm Spokesman Justin Tomczak said that "Approximately one-third of home fires and home fire deaths occur during December, January and February."

State Farm® reminds consumers that the potential for a home fire is highest during the winter months. A recent survey conducted by Harris Interactive found that nearly 50 percent of Americans age 23 and over increased their chances of a home fire because of decorating for the holidays: 34 percent connect multiple extension cords together; 16 percent put up holiday lights without inspecting them for frayed cords; 9 percent let their tree dry out after it is decorated in the home; 9 percent have lit a fire without an annual chimney inspection; and 5 percent have left a burning candle unattended.

To help keep your family and loved ones safer during the holiday and winter season, learn how to avoid these 12 dangers:

Cooking calamities: While November is the top month for grease and cooking-related fires, December is a close second. Unattended cooking remains one of the top

causes of home fires. There are a lot of distractions and all it takes is a brief moment for a cooking fire to get out of control. Keep an all-purpose or Class ABC rated fire extinguisher nearby to get a kitchen fire under control.

Space heaters: Home heating equipment is second to cooking fires for causing home structure fires. More than half of home heating fires occur during December, January and February. Avoid setting up a space heater too close to curtains, furniture, or holiday decorations. Remember to keep at least three feet of clear space around it and set it up on the floor unless it is designed for other use.

Children playing with fire: The number of fires and deaths caused by children playing with fire goes up significantly during the holidays. Never leave children unsupervised with ignition materials such as matches or lighters.

Burn wood in the fireplace: Do not burn trash, cardboard boxes or Christmas trees in the fireplace. These items burn unevenly and may cause a dangerous flash fire.

Caution with candles: Christmas Day is the peak day of the year for candle fires. Make sure candles are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down. Never leave the house with candles burning.

Holiday lights: Inspect

holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots or broken sockets before putting them up. Remember to turn off holiday lights before leaving the home or going to bed.

Counterfeit electronics: Christmas lights are the perfect product for counterfeiting – high volume and low manufacturing cost. Look for CSA or UL certification marks that indicate the product was tested and met the product safety standards.

Electrical outlets: Don't overload your electrical outlets with too many lights or decorations.

Electrical cords: To reduce the chance of overheating, electric cords should never be bundled together or run under rugs or carpet.

Christmas trees: Take fire safety precautions when keeping a live tree in the house. Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches. Regularly give the tree plenty of water.

Dirty chimney: Most chimney fires are caused by the buildup of creosote, a highly combustible by-product of burning wood. To protect your chimney from creosote buildup, have it inspected and cleaned annually.

Dirty fireplace: When cleaning your fireplace, put embers in a metal container and set them outside to cool for 24 hours before disposal.

N(Dec19Z16)CA

AT&T Donates \$50,000 to help low-income Georgians pay for their GED® Test

More than 1.2 million adults in Georgia don't have a high school diploma. For many, taking the GED Test and earning a GED credential can change their lives for the better, including opening doors to higher-paying jobs.

Except that some can't afford the \$160 that is required to take the five-part GED Test.

AT&T wants to change that. For the second time in a year, the telecommunications giant has made a generous donation of \$50,000 that the Technical College System of Georgia will use to create GED testing scholarships for less-fortunate Georgians. The money will also help some GED students take the next step and complete a technical college education.

Sylvia Russell, the president of AT&T Georgia, announced the donation and presented the check to TCSG Commissioner Ron Jackson during the monthly meeting of the TCSG State Board on December 6. Russell is also a member of the board that sets the policies and procedures for Georgia's 25 technical colleges and their technical education, adult education, and workforce training programs.

"The adult education program of the Technical College System of Georgia is a critical part of the education system in Georgia ensuring qualified low-income adults have access to the classes and testing they need to continue their education and skills training," said Russell. "We are very pleased to support the TCSG's efforts to improve the lives of Georgians and to strengthen our workforce which is vital to the economic environment in our state."

Jackson thanked AT&T, which is the largest corporate donor to the TCSG's adult education program. "A more literate and better-educated Georgia means improved lives, stronger communities, and more reasons for business and industry to expand in our state. With this donation, like the one before it, AT&T shows that it cares about less-fortunate Georgians who only need a little help to discover their full potential. We thank Sylvia Russell and the entire AT&T corporate family for their great generosity and desire to provide scholarships for our deserving adult learners."

The latest donation from AT&T will create opportunities for almost 1200 low-income Georgians to receive a scholarship voucher that will help pay for most of the cost of the full GED Test. To be considered for the award, the learner must be enrolled in a state-approved adult education class and have a minimum score of 500 on each of the five GED practice exams that cover reading, writing, science, social studies and mathematics.

"This scholarship will help so many people pay for the GED test and lift the burden of having to come up with the money to pay for the test on their own," noted North Georgia Technical College Dean of Adult Education Shelby Ward.

Last year, the TCSG Office of Adult Education served almost 82,000 Georgians through Adult Basic and Secondary Edu-

cation and GED instruction and testing programs. More than 17,000 of those adult learners passed the GED test and earned their GED diploma. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2011 Statistical Abstract, a person with a high school or GED diploma earns approximately \$10,000 more annually than a person without those education credentials. NT(Dec19Z25)CA

Merry Christmas Pilots

Twas the night before Christmas, and out on the ramp,
Not an airplane was stirring, not even a Champ.
The aircraft were fastened to tie downs with care,
In hopes that -- come morning -- they all would be there.

The fuel trucks were nestled, all snug in their spots,
With gusts from two-forty at 39 knots.
I slumped at the fuel desk, now finally caught up,
And settled down comfortably, resting my butt.

When the radio lit up with noise and with chatter,
I turned up the scanner to see what was the matter.
A voice clearly heard over static and snow,
Called for clearance to land at the airport below.

He barked his transmission so lively and quick,
I'd have sworn that the call sign he used was "St. Nick."
I ran to the panel to turn up the lights,
The better to welcome this magical flight.

He called his position, no room for denial,
"St. Nicholas One, turnin' left onto final."
And what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a Rutan-built sleigh, with eight Rotax Reindeer!

With vectors to final, down the glideslope he came,
As he passed all fixes, he called them by name:
"Now Ringo! Now Tolga! Now Trini and Bacun!
On Comet! On Cupid!" What pills was he takin'?

While controllers were sittin', and scratchin' their heads,
They phoned to my office, and I heard it with dread,
The message they left was both urgent and dour:
"When Santa pulls in, have him please call the tower."

He landed like silk, with the sled runners sparking,
Then I heard, "Left at Charlie," and "Taxi to parking."
He slowed to a taxi, turned off of three-oh,
And stopped on the ramp with a "Ho! Ho! Ho!"

He stepped out of the sleigh, but before he could talk,
I ran out to meet him with my best set of chocks.
His red helmet and goggles were covered with frost,
And his beard was all blackened from Reindeer exhaust.

His breath smelled like peppermint gone slightly stale,
And he puffed on a pipe, but he didn't inhale.
His cheeks were all rosy and jiggled like jelly,
His boots were as black as a cropduster's belly.

He was chubby and plump, in his suit of bright red,
And he asked me to "fill it, with hundred low-lead."
He came dashing in from the snow-covered pump,
I knew he was anxious for drainin' the sump.

I spoke not a word, but went straight to my work,
And I filled up the sleigh, but I spilled like a jerk.
He came out of the restroom, and sighed in relief,
Then he picked up a phone for a Flight Service brief.

And I thought as he silently scribed in his log,
These reindeer could land in an eighth-mile fog.
He completed his pre-flight, from the front to the rear,
Then he put on his headset, and I heard him yell, "Clear!"

And laying a finger on his push-to-talk,
He called up the tower for clearance and squawk.
"Take taxiway Charlie, the southbound direction,
Turn right three-two-zero at pilot's discretion."

He sped down the runway, the best of the best,
"Your traffic's a Grumman, inbound from the west."
Then I heard him proclaim,
as he climbed through the night,
"Merry Christmas to all! I have traffic in sight."

Submitted by Howard "Ty" Cobb