Opinions

Awards Banquet

On Saturday, March 16th, Union County Fire Department had its Awards Banquet. All firefighters, career and volunteer, were invited to celebrate another successful year and to recognize their achievements.

The ceremony was opened by a welcome and presentation of the colors by the newly formed UCFD Honor Guard. Dinner

was served and the fire chief provided a few words thanking the firefighters for another job well done and to thank the families who support the firefighters in their efforts.

The first awards presented were for Firefighter 1. There were 30. The firefighters receiving these awards

must have completed the Firefighter 1 course and the Hazardous Materials courses as well as pass all the exams.

The next awards were for Firefighter 2. There were 20. The firefighters receiving these awards must have completed additional advanced firefighting training in the Firefighter 2 course (over 48 hours) and pass all the exams.

The Years of Service was the next presentation. Firefighters were recognized for their service in 5-year increments. During this ceremony, there were nine 5-year awards; eight 10-year awards; four 15-year awards; three 20-year awards; two 25-year awards; two 30-year awards, and one 35-year award.

The main awards were the medals that were presented. The first was a Commendation Medal which is awarded for a credible act in the line of duty which is commendable in nature. The recipients were David Ueltzen and Eric McClure.

There were two Exceptional Duty Medals. The Exceptional Duty Medal is awarded for highly credible accomplishment bringing public acclaim to the department or fire service as a result of devotion to duty or service to the public. The recipients were David Ueltzen and Pat Schmidt.

Meritorious Conduct Award was next. To receive the Meritorious Conduct Medal, the firefighter must perform a notable act of distinction in the performance of duty. The recipients were Brent Long and Richard Jones.

The Distinguished Service Awards are usually for performance on incidents. To receive the Distinguished Service Medal,

Loneliness Recovery IV

Have you wondered how your past friends are doing in life? A college friend, a co-worker, or a past neighbor? Reaching out to those you have lost touch with can soothe the pain of loneliness. In many cases, you can pick up with them right where you left off. I call this type of meet-

ing a real hoot! The excitement can be overwhelming and thoroughly exciting. Finding out what things have occurred in the life of a long lost friend places one's attention off

PH. D.

of self and squarely on someone else. The loneliness takes a second seat while the priority seat is all about someone else. For some people, for whatever reason, it is easier to reconnect with past friends than to make new ones. Don't get discouraged if you have problems locating past relationships. Keep trying. One day a surprise may come your way, and it will be the presence or voice of a past friend.

See Ashurst, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

At The Cross

Dear Editor.

We believers in Christ celebrate Easter because of what God did on the cross to set mankind free from their sins. You and I, being helldoomed sinners had no way to save ourselves God made a way by sending His only begotten Son Jesus down to be the perfect sacrifice for every person ever born upon this earth. Lord Jesus was put on the cross at the third hour, which would be 9 o'clock in the morning. By 12 noon, man had done all he could to the Son of God. Then darkness settled in, and that cross became an altar on which the Lamb who taketh away the sin of the world was offered. Many folks wonder how Jesus could take away all the sin that humanity has done down through the ages of time, and the answer is simple: God being Holy and righteous





He Has Risen!

"Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen!" (Luke 24:5-6).

If you find it hard to believe that Jesus came back to life. you're not alone. When the women who first witnessed the empty tomb reported to the others what the angel said, "These words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them"

(Luke 24:11). So, they went posthaste to see for themselves. Soon, they saw and spoke with Jesus. The women were right.

The evidence of Jesus' resurrection is logical and compelling. The tomb was empty. The authorities could have stopped any false

claims by producing a body. They didn't. To the contrary, Jesus appeared multiple times to different people including James, his brother, who had been neither believer nor follower. Yet James became a leader in the emerging church, risking the same fate as Jesus. Jesus' followers proclaimed their belief that Jesus was alive, a counterintuitive response to the deadly persecution they faced - unless it was true. The church arose on the power of the resurrection. To those who claim his followers invented the story: without the resurrection there would have been no followers.

Jesus' resurrection communicates something personal to you. It says that the material, natural world is not all of reality. It validates evidence from your own experience as a thinking, reasoning, and moral person. These could not derive from a nonsentient, amoral, natural universe. A transcendent reality changes the meaning of life and the finality of death. If death is the end of life, it elicits indifference (it's nature's way) or bitterness (it's the greatest evil). But Jesus "has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death," C.S. Lewis writes. "Everything is different because He has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation: a new chapter in cosmic history has opened.'

Jesus' resurrection proves what He said about Himself. He is the fulfillment of prophecy, the Son of Man, Savior, King, and the "I Am." That has implications for you since He offers to forgive your sins and make you blameless before God. By faith in Him, your eternal destiny is life. Death is no longer simply the terminal outcome of nature's way or the great unconquered evil.

See Fowler, page 5A



Everybody has one...

Commissioner's Questions

Last week, I wrote about the Clerk of Court and some of the responsibilities that go with that position. This week we will talk about the County Clerk position. Though they sound similar, they are very different in function.

Q. What is the County Clerk position in Union County, and where can I find this person's office?

A. In Union County, the County Clerk is responsible for maintaining a complete and permanent history of any official actions taken by the Union County Commissioner. The County Clerk is Jennifer Mahan. and her office is located in the Union County Courthouse at 65 Courthouse Street, Blairsville, GA.



Q. What kinds of "records" does the County Clerk handle?

A. The County Clerk handles, maintains, and manages many different types of records. The County Clerk prepares documentation for County Commission meetings. This includes preparing agendas, preparing information packets, and making cop ies of the agendas to be distributed to the public at the meetings. It also includes providing the Commissioner, County Manager, and County Attorney with the information they need to address all agenda items for a County Meeting. County Commission meet-ing agendas are also posted on the Union County Government website

Q. If the County Clerk is in charge of the County Commission meeting documentation, who types up the minutes for the official County Commission Meetings and Called Meetings?

A. The County Clerk records all minutes of the County Commission meetings, prepares the official minutes, and distributes draft copies to the Commissioner, County Manager, and County Attorney. The official signed copies of County Meeting minutes are filed in the Commissioner's office. The minutes are also posted on the Union County Government website.

Q. What else does the Union County Clerk do for the **County?**

A. The County Clerk obtains signatures and approvals on official documents as required for such things as County work/ project contracts, maintenance contracts, grants, resolutions, and

See Paris, page 5A

Chamber of Commerce

Springtime in the North Georgia mountains is one of my favorite times of the year. There's nothing quite like it, right? The smell of blossoming flowers, a slightly warmer breeze, the birds chirping, and, my personal favorite, all the dogwoods blooming announcing the com-

ing of Easter. Easter and Mother's Day are two of the most popular occasions for spending time with family and putting on your Sunday's best and



attending that special Church service with your friends and family that you may have not seen in a while. The Easter egg hunt can wait until after Church, when you can hide those eggs in the grass that is just beginning to turn green.

During this time of the year, we can have rebirth, renewal, second chances, and salvation by trusting in our Savior. Because of Easter, we can know that death never gets the final word. The tomb is empty and He is alive! My prayer this Easter season is for all of us to experience

See Chamber, page 5A

Garden Ready?

Spring is officially here, but we still have a while to go before we are past the last chance of frost. Let's talk about some ways that you can plan ahead to make sure that you are garden ready when the time arrives.

If you haven't already, I would recom-



Letters to the Editor The Good Ol' Days vs Pogo

Dear Editor.

Thoughts of Grampa and Gramma, working hard and surviving the Great Depression. Schools teaching the Three R's, the Pledge of Allegiance and discipline. Kids playing outside all day, riding bikes, doing chores. Good times. I have fond memories of times past. And I wish that the world around me was kinder, gentler, smarter. Maybe if we all could go back and relive our childhood, knowing what we know today, we could fix all the things that now have seemingly gone wrong. Of course, that is not possible. But maybe, just maybe, we can just learn from our mistakes and successes and move on with life. We can read history books, talk to our parents, See McKinney page 5A

The Booger...

The Booger at the Weaning Off House

Have you ever wondered about the magnitude of which electricity has influenced our lives? For example, I am sitting at home writing this article for the newspaper. The computer I am using requires electricity. The lights are on and they require electricity. The TV Around is on and requires **The Farm** electricity. My cellphone will not op-Mickey erate without elec-Cummings tricity. Our society could not maintain

Successful Dr. James Ray Ashurs



See Combs page 5A

Politicians

Dear Editor,

When do we start insisting that politicians do the jobs they have been elected to do to benefit the citizens that voted for them? All should stop campaigning for re-election, stop trying to raise funds for re-election and devote all their time to achieving what their constituents elected them to do.

This is a problem with all political parties. Citizens need to look closely at what they have done to address the wants and needs of the voters and be ready to get re-elected based on the positive results in doing what is wanted and needed by the electorate.

It is sinful to listen to politicians rant and rave and not achieve any significant and positive achievements for their constituents.

Politics aside, we should demand that they work on our behalf.

Richard Fasanelli

Thank You & God Bless

Dear Editor,

On Tuesday, March 12, at around 11:15 p.m., my niece and her husband who live off Old Blue Ridge Highway were asleep in their home. They were awakened by loud knocking on their door. It was a sheriff's deputy and firefighters telling them to vacate their home, that a detached garage building on the property was on fire!

We want to send a special thank you to the unknown person who was driving by and called in the fire, and a very special thank you to all the Union County firefighters and deputies who responded and saved their house from the See Hilbish, page 5A

. . **Band of Steel Scores Again** Dear Editor,

Saturday, March 9, was another amazing Spring Gala for the Woody Gap Band of Steel and its passionate director, Doug Roberts. A perfect evening featuring a variety of music and delicious food finished with superb cheesecake by Melissa's Custom Cakes! The band went all the way back to the late '30s, playing Benny Goodman's "Sing, Sing, Sing," which happened to be my mother's favorite. Something for everyone and a great organization to support. Doug and Melissa contribute so much to our community, true Christian service. Thanks for a wonderful evening!

Raymond & Rick Turnbull

Re: Real Story of Jan. 6 Dear Editor,

While reading my paper today, I noticed a local conservative Christian organization is sponsoring the showing of a movie that purportedly tells the true story of January 6th. This movie is provided by the Epoch Times.

The Epoch Times is considered to be controlled by the Falun Gong religious movement. This is a non-Christian religion founded by Li Hongzhi in the late 1990s in China. He now lives in New York state and controls the 475-acre compound where the religion is based.

Li considers himself to be a human deity. He says he is capable of levitating himself, disappearing, reading minds, seeing through walls and into human bodies, etc. The movement does not believe in modern medicine and believes that scientific advancements are due to aliens controlling scientists' minds. Those who have left See Thomas, page 5A

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Derek Richards Todd Forrest Lowell Nicholson Shawn Jarrard Kenneth West Publisher/Owner General Manager/Editor Advertising Director Sports Editor Photographer Website: www.nganews.com • Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com • Mail: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

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its present status without electricity. But, there was a time when people didn't even know about electricity.

My great-grandfather had four sons and two daughters. When one of the children married, that child moved into the weaning-off house next to my great-grandfather's house. A weaning-off house was an older house generally next to the house of one's parents. The custom of living in a weaning-off house allowed a child to live under the economic protection of his or her parents while trying to build one's economic status and self-sufficiency.

Sometime around 1950 electricity came to Trapptown, Alabama. At that time Papa's youngest brother, Poggy, lived at the weaning-off house. Uncle Pick, Papa's older brother, lived about 1/2 mile north and west of the weaning-off house. My Great-Grandfather Lon lived close by as well, and very close to the weaningoff house was a storm shelter. When the TVA brought the "electricity" to Trapptown, a big power line was erected between the weaning off house and Uncle Pick's house. Everyone in the family signed up for the electricity and yet none of them really understood electricity.

Uncle Pick had taken his turn in the weaning-off house, and he never liked living in it. He said, "There was just something scary about that place." Pick's eldest daughter Polly was born sometime around 1936. On her second birthday all the family was up the road at my great-grandfather's house celebrating her birthday. After supper the family sat around the battery-powered radio to listen to a show called "The War of the Worlds." To make sure we all understand, let me explain. Orson Wells read this story to a live radio audience and pretended that he was reporting the news. People all over the USA thought we had been invaded by monsters from Mars. Anyway, this event had a profound effect on my Uncle Pick that would not have an impact for 12 years.

One night in the spring of 1950 after electricity had come to North Alabama, a serious storm hit the area around Trapptown. See Cummings, page 5A

mend taking a soil sample and bringing it to the Extension Office. The soil test report will give you recommendations for lime and fertilizer that your garden

UGA Watching and Working Jacob Williams

will need. Recommendations can be given for people who want to use organic fertilizers too. If your soil needs lime it is best to get the soil test in as quickly as possible because lime takes 6-9 months to be fully active in the soil. I have seen a number of people do soil tests on beds that are 100% compost. These samples typically have a pH of around 7.5 which is too high for most plants. Generally, plants like to have a soil pH in the 6-6.5 range.

In our area is recommended to wait until mid-May to start putting plants outside. By this time the soils have warmed up enough that seed germination will be better and we are past the threat of frost. Some years it may be possible to plant earlier than mid-May, depending on the weather. Mid-May is good general, conservative prediction.

If you are going to be planting from seed in the garden, you can begin buying the seeds that you're going to plant, if you haven't already done so. If you are going to be growing your own transplants under protection, it's recommended that you start them six to eight weeks before putting them outside. A heat pad and grow light make a big difference if you are trying to start your plants indoors. Growing your own transplants takes more work, but it can give you a wider selection of plants than if you just shop for transplants at a garden center. I do recommend using transplants over seed when possible, because it will give you a stronger stand.

Before you plant put some thought into the layout of your garden. Make sure that you have a place that has plenty of sun. Ideally at least 8 hours a day. For a vegetable garden think about crop rotation if you have been planting in the same spot for a few years. For a pollinator garden think about including as much diversity of flower color and flower shape as possible. This will encourage the most beneficial insects, and support a wide variety of pollinators. Con-sider plants of different heights, native, and nonnative plants.

Spring is the best time to plant summer annuals. I know there is a strong temptation to See Williams, page 5A

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Paris... continued from Page 4A

proclamations. The County Clerk also monitors official document destruction so that local processes adhere to State and Federal guidelines.

Q. Who handles Open **Records Requests?**

A. Under the Georgia Open Records Act, all public records are available for inspection and copying unless they are specifically exempted from disclosure under the law. Some requested records can be as easy as a one-page document. Others can be as large as a 150-page detailed county budget. Lamar Paris is the official Custodian of the Records for Union County Government. On behalf of the Commissioner, the County Clerk documents open records requests, provides public record information, and documents fulfillment of the requests. In other words, the County Clerk is in charge of searching for, locating, and copying documents requested by the public. The Union County Clerk also ensures compliance with all State Open Records requirements that fall within the Act.

Ashurst... continued from Page 4A

Seeking professional help is a bona fide method of dealing with one's loneliness. The counselor can offer different strategies that the lonely person may not have thought of. In addition, the therapist can present goals for the lonely individual to help cope with the burden of loneliness. The therapist will have suggestions for the lonely person to use with coping skills, leading to a fulfilling life. There is nothing to be embarrassed about or any anxiety by seeing a professional counselor. It offers the opportunity in which to open up about one's loneliness. Seeing a therapist allows a person to become connected with someone who can be helpful. Telling someone that loneliness is part of one's life is a vital step in the healing process. "Placing one's cards on the table" connects the therapist to the lonely individual. A connection to other people or to a pet is essential for healing and insights into the world of loneliness.

Even though the technique of meditation places the individual in a state of solitude, it is a wonderful way to deal with one's loneliness. The time of meditation can open many doors of insights and freedom from one's current negative state of mind. Meditation is a positive experience of silence. It does not have to be frightening. However, it does require loyalty and commitment. It also requires an allotted time to evaluate one's life and to be willing to change whatever in life is holding you back from growing.

Inside yourself is a place where you live all alone, and that's where you renew your springs that never dry up. -Pearl Buck

McKinney... continued from Page 4A

and examine ourselves. What troubles me, though, is today's noisy rhetoric that attempts to blame someone else for all of the perceived shortcomings. Demonizing others is a willful retreat from the challenge of thinking seriously about the issues we face. We should instead acknowledge both right and wrong behavior, both from ourselves and from our leaders. I heard a local political

figure say, "I heard this on the news. I don't know if it's true or not, but if it is, we're all in deep trouble." Then he proceeded to repeat several stories told on a TV network. Each one had been debunked as false or misleading by impartial fact-checkers. No doubt his stories will be repeated again and again, each time gaining strength until they become "truth.'

As with gossip, the practice of spreading misinformation is damaging both to the listener and to the speaker. There are few things that people like more than a juicy story with all the sordid details.

Why do fear and anxiety provoke such unsubstantiated rumor and gossip? Is it stress and fear over the present or long-term anxiety about the future? Gossip and misinformation share a common thread - that of the unseen 'others.' Well, each of us is an 'other.' Pogo Possum said, "We have met the enemy and he is us." I believe this often to be true. Can we resolve to do better than this?

You can have the "good old days" of just a hundred years ago when average life expectancy in America was 47 and the leading causes of death in the U.S. were pneumonia, the flu, TB, diarrhea, heart disease and strokes. All in all, I'll take today's life anytime. Heck, indoor plumbing and life-saving drugs alone make the choice easy. Let's face it, if I'd been my age back in the good old days, I'd be dead right now. And let's be nicer to one another. Frank McKinney

CummingS... continued from Page 4A

Uncle Pick decided to take his young family by the weaningoff house to his Dad's house where he could find safety in a storm shelter. As Uncle Pick and his family walked in front of the weaning-off house, he noticed something flying through the air. It turned out to be a big piece of tin from a barn roof.

But, in Uncle Pick's state of anxiety, he imagined it was a flying saucer from Mars. Anyway, the tin landed on the power line. When the tin hit the power line it caused the line to short out and sparks flew everywhere. The tin wrapped around the top line, and as the wind continued to blow, the tin would wave back and forth and hit the bottom line. Each time it hit the bottom line an arc would occur and sparks would fly and make an awful growling noise. All Uncle Pick could

Fowler... continued from Page 4A

Jesus' resurrection means the believer's soul is in the hands of a loving Father, who "according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). Jesus said, "He who be-

lieves in Me will live even if he dies" (John 11:25). Annie Herring's "Easter Song" lyrics capture the joy. "Hear the bells ringing, they're singing Christ is risen from the dead! Joy to the world He has risen, hallelujah!"

Williams... continued from Page 4A

plant other things too. Perennials do best if planted in the fall or winter. Planting perennials in the spring means that you will need to do a lot of watering over the summer to make sure that they survive.

If you have questions about starting a garden contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

On April 10th from 1-3 PM the Towns-Union Master Gardeners Association and the Enotah Garden Club are hosting an afternoon tea with Ashley Frasca. The cost is \$15. You can register for this event by going to https://t.uga.edu/9JK.

I am also hosting a Master Naturalist training. This is an 8 week course that focuses on the natural resources around us. If you are interested in participating in that email me or call the Union County Extension Office at 706-439-6030.

Thomas.

think about was the radio show back in 1938. The sound the arc made resembled the sound of those monsters from Mars. At any moment he expected to be taken captive by the Martians. So, Uncle Pick would take his family back toward his house. Then he would think the storm was getting worse and he would turn back toward the storm shelter. Upon hearing the arcing noise and seeing the sparks he would turn back home. He finally got his nerve up and decided to push through to the storm shelter. Just as he got to the weaning-off house a transformer exploded. Uncle Pick just knew the Martians were shooting at him so he screamed at his family to run for the storm shelter.

The family burst through the door of the storm shelter in a sheer state of panic. Young Polly was squalling, which made all of her young cousins already in the shelter begin to cry, while the look on Pick's face exhibited an indescribable terror. His brothers looked at him as if to ask what had happened. He slowly began to describe what his family had just experienced. He finally blurted out, "We barely escaped something like them Martians." Nowadays we can all sit back and laugh about this event. After all, we are more educated and think we have seen it all. And in certain ways I guess we have seen much due

to the influence of television. radio and the internet. Back in 1950 we did not have any of those things, which makes me wonder if just maybe my parents and grandparents were better off without those things.

the firefighter must perform a highly unusual act of distinction under adverse conditions. The recipients were Ernie Pruitt, Derrick Pruitt, Danny Roberts, Pat Schmidt, and Cody Allen.

Dyer... continued from Page 4A

We also had firefighter and fire officer of the year. The Career Firefighter of the Year was Adam Plott. The Volunteer Firefighter of the Year was George Hill. The Career Officer of the Year was Richard Jones and the Volunteer Officer of the Year was Steven Tanner.

The last award was the Chief's Award. The Chief's

Award is only presented to one firefighter each year. It is chosen only by the fire chief and is awarded to a firefighter who has went above and beyond the call of duty. The consistent actions and performance of this firefighter demonstrates the essence of the fire service and has a lasting impact on the department. The recipient of the Chief's Award was David Ueltzen. We want to congratulate everyone who received an award and for the wonderful job that they do.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Combs... continued from Page 4A

and pure in Spirit came down in the form of a sinless man, thus having all power over life and death. Only God could accomplish this amazing event that changed the history of the world.

Notice how Jesus died - He yielded up the ghost, that is, He dismissed His spirit. Often you will hear the death rattle of a loved one who is taking their last breath before they depart this world into the next. Our Lord didn't go that way. He dismissed His spirit, meaning He went willingly.

Note several things that took place at Christ's death. There was an earthquake. Another was the veil in the temple, the curtain which separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple, was torn into, not by man, but by God, not from the bottom up, but from the top down. The veil symbolizes the body of Jesus.

We now have access to the very presence of our Abba

BLOOD

Blood Assurance: Local Blood and Platelet Mobile Drives **Upcoming April Dates**

April:

4/01/24 ... Union General Hospital 4/18/24 ... Union County Health Department 4/30/24 ... Walmart-Blairsville

To register please call Blood Assurance at 800-962-0628 to make an appointment

Father. No longer do we have to have a priest or preacher go into the presence of God for us. We can go directly to the throne of grace, because of Christ's death on the cross.

Let me emphasize that the only way to the Father in heaven is through His son Jesus. I. Timothy says: For there is but One God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ "Jesus." If you are searching for other avenues, search no more, my friend. Only one man died for all. You either believe by faith or you don't. You wouldn't jump out of a plane without a parachute. The same is true about Christ. You can come as you are and jump on the bandwagon of redemption or throw caution to the wind and jump into hell with Satan and his demons for eternity. You only get one chance in this life. I pray you decide wisely, for eternity never has an ending. Amen. Frank F. Combs

continued from Page 4A

the movement usually describe it as a cult.

I encourage everyone to go online and research this religion. Don't read one article, read 30 in order to get a better picture.

To the organization aligning themselves with the Epoch Times and Falun Gong, I would suggest more study before endorsing a particular group's viewpoint. You lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas.

Bryan Thomas

Hilbish... continued from Page 4A

blaze. While the garage building was completely lost, their home was saved by the efforts of these brave individuals who worked until after 1:30 a.m.

Thank you all who were there, and God bless you all! Kurt Hilbish

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

the hope and promise found in the empty tomb. May you enjoy your time with family and friends and find delight in going to church again.

Invite someone to spend time with you and your family in the beautiful mountains. I hope that each of you will experience the beauty and rebirth that Spring brings.

Happy Easter, Blairsville!

Codependents Anonymous Weekly Meeting

Codependents Anonymous Meeting: Self-Help group offering a 12 Step Recovery Program meets on Tuesdays from 10:30 a.m. -11:30 a.m. at Rivers of Peace, RCO 166 Josh Hall Road, Suite 4, Blue Ridge, GA 30513. All are welcome.