

Don't let the rain get you down

As I type I can hear the rush of heavy rainfall and the splash of runoff as cars drive through downtown Ellijay.



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From the sound of things, River Street is living up to its name and I may have to resort to paddling a canoe to go to lunch.

This summer, these sounds have become the normal background music for my workday, and there's little doubt we have had an abundance of rain over the last few weeks.

Ellijay isn't the only place that's feeling a bit soggy. On the radio this week, I heard about how middle Georgia received a foot of rain last month, resulting in the wettest June on record for the area.

The frequent inundations have certainly caused a number of disruptions regarding summer plans, including the schedule for the local community's Independence Day celebration.

While it's easy to complain about these inconveniences and become frustrated with the high level of rainfall accumulation, I have been striving to maintain a positive attitude and a grateful spirit.

Rain, after all, is a vital resource for our lush, growing forests. Without it we face the frightening possibilities of drought,

water usage restrictions and, like our neighbors in the western United States, the loss of life and property in uncontrolled wildfires.

Rather than begrudging rain, we should maintain an appreciation for the nourishment it brings to the earth and the many summertime activities it makes possible, such as kayaking on the Cartecay River, swimming at Carters Lake and viewing striking reflections of trees and clouds in a plethora of puddles.

As I consider the blessing of having plenty of water in our county I am reminded of a small girl I encountered while on a mission trip to Kenya.

The group with which I traveled was visiting a small village on a dry plain of brittle grass. In the distance we could see the snow-dotted slopes of Mount Kenya, and I could not help comparing the scenery to the environs around Jackson Hole, Wyo.

The living conditions we encountered, however, were in no ways similar.

The rough houses were made from mud, sticks and scavenged pieces of rusted tin, and the simple church was a small thatched shed containing a few wooden benches and some plastic chairs.

As we prepared to leave the village after our visit, a young girl approached our van and asked if she could have an empty plastic water bottle in the floorboard. It was used, dented and less than clean, but she clutched it like a treasure as she

walked away.

With that encounter fresh in my mind, we drove several miles to the village well. It was a small oasis in the midst of the open, parched landscape, and as I looked at the clump of dusty trees, I could not help but think about the little girl we'd just met. In my mind's eye, I could see her hiking to this locale to fill her new water bottle and other containers in order to carry water back home to meet the simplest needs of her family.

She recognized that every drop of water was precious and knew she needed to make the most of her resources in order to collect what she could.

When we are surrounded by plenty it is often difficult to adjust our perspective to consider being thankful for something that seems so commonplace. All too often, it's not until we go without something and see the effects of not having it that we learn its value.

I encourage you to be proactive about adjusting your thinking in this regard. Don't wait until the newspaper is filled with "pray for rain" notices to think about rain as a good and necessary thing.

So next time you hear thunder rolling over the county — an every day occurrence this week — be thankful for the blessing of rain rather than complaining of the inconveniences it poses. We have so much to be grateful for and regular rainfall is certainly something that should not be taken for granted.

New Assistant D.A. sworn in



Photo by Mark Millican

New Chief Assistant District Attorney Rita Lewis, left, smiles as Superior Court Judge Brenda Weaver shares a light moment at the Fannin County Courthouse last week. Also appearing for the Appalachian Judicial Circuit for the June 27 swearing-in of Lewis were Judge Roger Bradley (at rear), Judge Amanda Mercier and DA Alison Sosebee.

SPLOST

from 1A

was not available until the tax digest is calculated for the coming year. Wording of the resolu-

tion has been objected to by members of the Tea Party who want it more clearly defined as to where the money would go.

The BOC will hold a 2 p.m. work session fol-

lowed by a 6 p.m. regular meeting next Thursday.

The workshop and meeting agendas can be found on the county website or on page 6D in this week's edition.

Fourth

from 1A

display fired from the campus of Ellijay Elementary School is expected to conclude the proceedings Saturday night shortly after sundown, Lowe said.

However, rescheduling plans were not finalized with the fireworks company by press time Tuesday.

If the fireworks do not go on Saturday night, they will be fired Sunday night at the same time.

“The fireworks are tentative because of the company doing them. Their schedule is so messed up due to everybody cancelling,” said Lowe.

“If we do them Sunday night, we encourage people to tailgate picnic at the elementary school,” she added.

If rainfall dampens the rescheduled events Saturday, Lowe said the entire schedule of festivities will then move to Sunday at the same times.

Lowe said weather-

related updates will be posted on the City of Ellijay website (www.ellijay-ga.gov).

Eventgoers can also phone downtown Ellijay business Cartecay River Trading Company — (706) 635-2782 — before departing for the event to make sure the schedule has not changed.

The *Times-Courier* will also be posting cancellation updates on its Facebook page — www.facebook.com/EllijayTimesCourier.

Catalyst

from 1A

a competitive edge and the things that help or inhibit local job growth and workforce development.

Cohesive marketing plan

After three months of discussion, team members identified three areas of focus for moving into the future, the first of which was described as “the creation of a community wide, cohesive marketing plan and style guide recognizing the various audiences including but not limited to tourist, new residents and retirees, and investors of all size.”

As discussed in the catalyst meetings, this project would involve developing an overall vision about what Gilmer County has to offer and where it is going, educating community members about the resulting marketing plan and consistently communicating it to the world. Regular interaction among the various stakeholders and groups who are working toward area development would also be promoted.

Business creation and retention

The second project proposed by the group is “the creation of a simplified and centralized business creation and retention process including but not limited to the creation of a road map to starting a business, a concierge service for new investors, and a business friendly, customer service focused initiative.”

The emphasis of this project would be streamlining the process of navigating various agencies and regulations in order to make establishing a

residential or commercial endeavor as painless as possible for both potential new investors and existing businesses seeking to expand. The proposed concierge service would work similar to a router — one contact person who can then direct the client to the appropriate channels and escort him or her through the process.

This area of focus could also potentially feed into the development of a business incubator, which was another project discussed by the catalyst team.

The goal of an incubator would be to help participants successfully navigate the minefield of starting a business and to give them a healthy start. This would be achieved by helping minimize the initial risk of starting a business by providing insight, support and mentors. Initial overhead costs could also be reduced by grouping several businesses in one building to share the cost of office, warehouse and reception space.

Tourism development

The third point of focus identified by the catalyst group was “the exploration and development of our railroad, river walk and trail systems as a tourist, transportation and quality of life investment.”

The discussion surrounding this recommendation dealt with developing a river walk park and seeking to utilize the existing railroad line through town more effectively. The proposed green corridor along area waterways would connect Harrison Park and the River Park along Old Highway 5.

Both of these initiatives would be long-term projects that would require planning for multiple stages and lots of community involvement.

Next step

Teams have been formed to support moving forward on each of

the three goals.

Participants in these groups include members of the original catalyst

team, as well as others from the community who have interest in the subject of area develop-

ment and can offer expertise and support for bringing the projects to fruition.

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Low prices

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