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Administration directive that all blood banks nationwide screen donations for the infection.

Zika is a growing concern because of its mysterious connection with serious birth defects, which can occur with women who are pregnant.

Catching the virus itself can result in either no symptoms or mild symptoms, such as fever, rash and joint pain, and the long-term effects of the virus are not presently known.

Not all is doom and gloom concerning the virus, however, and Union and Towns Ag Agent Melissa Mattee says that people shouldn't panic about Zika.

"I really don't think

we're going to get mosquito to human transmission up here," said Mattee, who has bachelor and master's degrees in entomology and did lab research on mosquitoes at the University of Georgia. "There aren't enough mosquitoes and there aren't enough people."

As with most things in life, preparedness is essential in staying ahead of the curve, and Mattee urges everyone to be know the proper prevention protocol for Zika, which can be implemented anywhere residents travel.

"The only way to really prevent it is to prevent mosquito bites, so don't have any standing water around your house, and if you do have birdbaths or something, clean them out once or twice a week, because mosquito larvae take about seven to eight days to mature," said Mattee. "Get rid of tires, get rid of trash, dump

out kiddie pools, anything like that.

"Planters, even, don't overwater your plants to the point that water stands in their tray or their pots. Mosquitoes can breed in half an inch of water, so it doesn't take that much at all. Rain barrels are okay as long as they have a lid, but a lot of times their lids will have a lip around them and will still collect water at the top. So just look for the little wriggling larvae."

"Wear insect spray when you go out. I know DEET is really effective. There are also some natural alternatives, mainly extracts from eucalyptus are very effective."

Mattee also suggests long sleeves and pants for people who are going to be outside, and added that mosquitoes hate heat and smoke, which is good news for people cooking out. Mosquitoes are also particularly weak fliers, so sitting outdoors with a box fan is a good way to enjoy a worry-free porch excursion.

There are several species of mosquito in the area, not all of which carry the Zika virus, though Mattee said that it's important to protect against mosquito bites even if Zika weren't a concern at the moment.

"My worry with this is that people are going to start to forget about the dangers of West Nile and other diseases that are more common here," said Mattee. "Zika is pretty much travel-related, but because we have so many people that overwinter in Florida, it's also important for us to keep in mind to protect ourselves, too."

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individual county leaders.

For the county, many residents were concerned with maintaining the "small town" atmosphere and integrity of Towns County while still promoting economic opportunities within the county.

Young Harris will hold a public hearing in regards to the city's comprehensive plan in September. The date for that meeting has yet to be released.

A comprehensive plan is the product of a comprehensive planning process that determines goals and aspirations in terms of community development within a specific municipality or county. The plan typically covers a 10-year span, including a five-year earmark for amendments to be made to goals within the plan that have already been accomplished.

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission is assisting Towns County, Hiawassee and Young Harris with revising their respective comprehensive plans, at no cost to the cities or county. GMRC has helped many similar neighboring communities, such as White County, with the comprehensive planning process.

"We're trying to really take planning into consideration for current and future community actions to create a better Hiawassee, a better Young Harris, a better Towns County," said Joe Rothwell, who is regional planner for GMRC. "It's a way to help communities grow better through wise

management resources, smart investments in utilities, strategies for managing land use and ways of supporting economic development.

"It is required by state law through the Department of Community Affairs. It's something that, by being current with your comprehensive plan, you are eligible for state and federal grants depending on your current local government status. It also provides the foundation for land use policies and grant applications."

The comprehensive plan itself is managed through a stakeholders committee of local citizens who gather information and go through the on-file comprehensive plan. These committees have been meeting since May of this year to discuss revisions to the current plan.

Surveys also play a role in managing and amending the comprehensive plan, allowing citizens to provide feedback on what they expect to be happening within the community, future goals for the community, as well as providing personal frustrations with the conditions and authority of the city and county.

Public input is imperative for the preciseness of the plan so that local government officials can better understand what the residents of the community anticipate. Through this input, authorities can strive to improve the community based on the goals established by the locals.

As of right now, close to 200 surveys have been turned in to the stakeholders committee.

Locals are encouraged to fill out all surveys that personally apply. Residents can pick up a copy of the survey at Hiawassee City Hall or TATA on Main. The survey can also be found online via www.surveymonkey.com.

The plan is first divided between long-term goals and short-term goals. From there, each section is further allocated to specific areas within the community, such as urban development, beautification and natural resources.

"The components are a vision statement for the county and for the cities," said Rothwell. "Then you're identifying critical issues and areas that require special attention."

"You're looking at needs and opportunities that could be cultural and natural resources, that could be economic development or anything that goes into the planning for the city and county as well as any future land use through the short-term work program."

"The short-term work program is basically your five-year plan to capitalize improvements. It may be that you need a new ambulance, fire station or anything that the city or county plans on purchasing or working on."

"This establishes what you want for your city or county, both present and for the future."

The revision of the comprehensive plan will be due in January to be reviewed by the Department of Community Affairs. However, the final implementation will not be adopted by either the county or the individual cities until February.

Mountain Heritage Festival September 3rd and 4th

The Union County Historical Society will be celebrating its annual Mountain Heritage Festival this week-end at The Museum of Mountain Life. Activities will start on Saturday morning, September 3rd and conclude Sunday evening, September 4th. The Mountain Life Museum is located one block south of The Old Courthouse on the Square on the Cleveland Street (19/129S).

The Butt/Mock House, built in 1906, is an example of an upscale house of the period in which it was built. It has been refurbished and furnished as it might have been at the time when electricity became available, the early 1940s. There will be several activities and demonstrations going on, in and around the old landmark.

Farm buildings, representative of local farms in the 1800s, have been reconstructed on the grounds. All of the buildings were original to Union County. The Payne cabin (dwelling) is the centerpiece. There is also a blacksmith shop (Duncan-Gillespie), corn crib (Byers) and barn (Mauney).

Ongoing each day will be demonstrations of early life in the county. Some of these include spinning, quilting, buttermilk churning, basket weaving, chair building, etc. Mrs. Cindy Rafter will be cooking on the old fireplace in the Payne cabin.

Live farm animals will be on hand to photograph and pet. Several activities are planned for children of all ages such as gold-panning, face painting, and storytelling. The side porch of the Mock/Butt House provides an excellent stage for the



live music that will be going on both days. A large tent with chairs will be in front of the stage for shade and keeping dry in case of rain. In addition to the Mountain Life Museum, The Old Courthouse on the Square will be open as well as the refurbished Haralson/Carr Law Office. Both are within walking distance, and there

will also be shuttles running both days.

There will be plenty of crafts and other local goods offered for sale by the many vendors. These include many good edible delicacies and canned goods. The Mountain Heritage Festival is noted for the quality of the merchandise from its vendors.

There is no admission

charge to the festival or any of the other venues of The Union County Historical Society. It is all part of the society's mission to show and help people understand the bygone days in Union County and this mountain area. We hope to see you at the Mountain Heritage Festival.



The Union County Saddle Club is gearing up for the National Barrel Horse Association barrel race on September 3rd. Exhibition barrels start at 11 a.m. and pee-wee barrels start at 2:30, followed by adult/senior, youth 4D, and open 4D. It is free to come and watch, so if you want to see lots of barrel racing, here is your chance.

If you are interested in watching four professional horse trainers compete in a two-day training contest, leave September 24 and 25 open. The trainers will draw an un-broken horse and have 3.5 hours over the course of 2 days to saddle and ride it! Throughout the two days there will be demonstrations, trainer meet and greets, and much more! Admission is \$15 for a single day or \$25 for both days. For more information visit All Purpose Horsemanship on Facebook or call 706-897-3244.

For questions regarding anything else Saddle Club related, visit www.unioncountysaddleclub.org.