

# Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 14, Number 3

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Thurs., Jan. 19, 2017

## Zoning Board rules on two variance requests

At its continued meeting, Jan. 11, the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA), a quasi-judicial board whose procedures are outlined by the NC General Assembly, heard two variance requests as set forth in the town's Unified

Development Ordinance. The properties differed drastically – one was residential and one was commercial – but both requested variances to encroach into the setback from the adjacent roadway's right-of-way. After

testimony and deliberation, the residential variance was denied; the commercial variance was granted. When unnecessary hardships would result from carrying out the strict letter of the ordinance, the ZBA can vary any of the pro-

visions of the ordinance upon a showing of all of the following:  
1. Unnecessary hardship would result from the strict application of the ordinance. It shall not be necessary to demonstrate

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## WNC County commission salaries vary widely

**Michael Gebelein**  
Carolina Public Press

County commissioners in North Carolina control some of the most important facets of a community, including the county tax rate, development and rezoning policy, the makeup of county departments, compensation of county employees and, in some cases, large portions of a county's education funding.

### WNC Counties

Another thing they control: Their own salaries. Every commissioner in Western North Carolina receives a salary, the level of which the board of commissioners sets in the county's budget, according to North Carolina law. Those salaries vary greatly between counties, as do the benefits like health insurance and retirement payments that commissioners receive. Sometimes they vary

•See SALARIES page 7

## HF&R Firefighter of the Year announced Saturday



At the annual award celebration Saturday night at OEI's Spring House, Jason Tardo was named Fireman of the Year. From left is Assistant Chief Robbie Forrester and Chief Ryan Gearhart. - Photo by Kim Lewicki

## Mission's CEO to serve on National Committee

*Says repealing ACA has potential to reduce Mission Health revenue by hundreds of millions of dollars*

Ronald A. Paulus, MD, Mission Health's President and CEO, has been selected to serve on the American Hospital Association's Committee on Health Strategy and Innovation.

In a letter to the appointed members, Nancy Howell Agee, Committee Chair and President and CEO of Carilion Clinic, said, "We look forward to critical and important discussions on significant strategic issues for the membership and AHA as we seek to innovate and transform health care delivery."

In reference to this appointment  
•See MISSION page 5

## Excursions soothe the body and the soul

By Merritt Shaw

Chances are that if you have spent time around Highlands in the past year, you have seen a cool looking Range Rover driving around town with a Highlands Excursions sign on the side.

Highlands Excursions (a.k.a. Overland Unlimited Highlands Excursions) is a company, owned and operated by Justin Kingsland, a relatively recent Highlands resident. He is a mountain guide who takes people for hiking and

sightseeing tours all around the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau and the surrounding area. The tours are usually five-hour custom excursions and Kingsland supplies knowledge and stories of the area,

•See EXCURSIONS page 4

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### It's time for the state to acknowledge its volunteer firefighters

I had the honor of attending the Annual Highlands Fire Department Awards Dinner last Saturday night. Josh Ward, our new Town Manager, was there to show his support, in addition to Commissioners Donnie Calloway and Eric Pierson. Jimmy Tate, the Chairman of the Macon County Commission, was there, too. Both Eric and Jimmy were doing double duty as elected officials and as long standing volunteer firemen themselves.

The event was at the OEI Spring House where the chefs put on a feast. The folks at OEI always step forward to support our first-responders and public servants.

As mayor, I thanked Chief Ryan Gearhart, Assistant Chief Robbie Forrester, and all the volunteer firemen and women for their total commitment to protecting our community, especially in light of the many threatening wildfires that plagued Western Carolina this fall.

Our volunteer firemen were more like soldiers in that state of emergency. They were always on call and ready to fight the fire battles on the front lines. I told the volunteer firefighters that I wanted to do more than just thank them for their service, but rather advocate for them.

There is an emerging national prob-

lem in recruiting, training and retaining volunteer firefighters. Contemporary life is very busy and complicated for the young men and women who can serve in this capacity. As a result, many fire departments are struggling to maintain basic staffing levels of volunteers. The Highlands Fire Department is doing OK in staffing, at least for now.

Volunteer firemen are facing the ever expanding need for additional training and growing number of calls. A volunteer firemen is expected to attend 2-hour training meetings every week. The gold standard is for a volunteer to respond to 40% of the calls in a year. Last year the Highlands Department had about 540 calls. For a volunteer fireman engaged in a career and family life, these demands are huge and many a potential recruit just can't see making the commitment.

In North Carolina a volunteer firemen is paid a small fee when he or she responds to a call. In Highlands it is \$15. Not \$15 and hour, but per call. A call may be two, three or more hours. Furthermore, If they continue as a volunteer firemen for 20 years the firefighter can retire with a monthly stipend of \$160.

It is time for the state legislature to step in and add incentives that will help recruit and retain volunteer firefighters. We are really behind what other states already provide. For example, Georgia has much stronger benefits for volunteers. Georgia's retirement



Mayor Pat Taylor

is about three times as much as North Carolina.

My goal is to work with Macon County Commissioner Tate and Highlands Commissioner Pierson in urging our state legislative delegation to address this issue. Now I know some may think this is an example of more taxes and government expansion. My response is that our state is facing a budget surplus this year, and this is an issue of fairness,

value and support. Firefighting is one of the most dangerous and demanding endeavors a person can embrace. The state and local governments should increase support for a few brave people who are willing to accept this daunting and dangerous responsibility. Our volunteer firefighters aren't willing to go into a burning building because of the money; they are willing to make the sacrifice because they love the people of this community. Improving their benefits will demonstrate that as a state and community we value what they do.

By the way, a call came in during the dinner. A handful of firefighters got up from their tables and rushed out the door. Their spouses and children continued eating.

The Town Board meets tonight at 7 at the Community Building next to the ball field. The major agenda item is a public hearing to rezone the residential property next to the Performing Arts Center from residential to the governmental/institutional designation. Hope to see you tonight.

## ...VARIANCES continued from page 1

that, in the absence of the variance, no reasonable use can be made of the property.

2. The hardship results from conditions that are peculiar to the property, such as location, size, or topography. Hardships resulting from personal circumstances, as well as hardships resulting from conditions that are common to the neighborhood or the general public, may not be the basis for granting a variance.

3. The hardship did not result from actions taken by the applicant or the property owner. The act of purchasing property with knowledge that circumstances exist that may justify the granting of a variance shall not be regarded as a self-created hardship.

4. The requested variance is consistent with the spirit, purpose and intent of the ordinance, such that public safety is secured and substantial justice is achieved. No change in permitted uses may be authorized by variance. Appropriate conditions may be imposed on any variance, provided that the conditions are reasonably related to the variance.

So, for a variance to be granted a hardship must be acknowledged for all four points. And that's why getting one is so difficult.

The Moynihan family of 688 Big Bear Pen Road requested permission to build a carport at the entrance of their home on the existing driveway 10 feet into the 25-ft. setback from the centerline of Big Bear Pen Road.

The reasons: so they could have safe entry and exit from their home in inclement weather; the topography of their .88 acres is detrimental in that it drops off drastically behind the house; and erecting the carport at either end of the house would be too costly and would disrupt renovations al-

•See VARIANCES page 6

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Locally owned and operated by

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#### Letter Policy:

We reserve the right to reject or edit letters-to-the-editor. No anonymous letters will be accepted. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands Newspaper.

## Highlands Fire & Rescue notables



Fire & Rescue Dept. Officers: from left, Asst. Chief Robbie Forrester, 2nd Lt. Lenny Metrick, 1st Lt. Hunter Leffler, Capt. Roger Lee Wilson, Rescue Lt. David Leffler, Chief Ryan Gearhart and Rescue Captain Eric Pierson.



Jody Zachary – recognized for 20 years service – with Asst. Chief Forrester and Chief Gearhart



Noted for Perfect Attendance – never missing a weekly Tuesday meeting – is Roger Lee Wilson and Jason Tardo with Forrester and Gearhart. In 2016 the department responded to 534 calls which amounted to 1,885 manhours and also logged 1,883 training manhours.

## • OBITUARY •

### Faye Bolton Lail Carter

Faye Bolton Lail Carter, 75, died Sunday, January 15, 2017 in Highlands, NC. Mrs. Carter was born July 6, 1941 in Richmond, Virginia to the late Aubrey and Grace Lail. She was in the medical billing profession and was the first person to set up a medical provider fraud prevention unit.

Survivors include her husband, Michael Carter of the home; three children and two step-children. No services are planned at this time.

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the Carter family. Online condolences may be left at [bryantgrantfuneralhome.com](http://bryantgrantfuneralhome.com)

## • MILESTONE •

### Schiffl graduates from WCU

Olen Felix Schiffl graduated from Western Carolina University with a Bachelor of Computer Information Systems degree (CIS). The CIS course of study focuses on practical applications of technology; a broad range of subjects are covered such as communications, business, networking, software design, and mathematics.

Olen plans to continue working in western North Carolina before traveling and exploring job opportunities outside of the area.

Olen is the son of John Robert Schiffl, Jr. and Susie deVille of Highlands, as well as Stephanie Russell of Maxton, NC. He has a sister, Bevan Elizabeth Schiffl and a brother, Adam deVille Schiffl.



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# ...EXCURSIONS from page 1



transportation, snacks and drinks.

Even though Kingsland enjoys being a guide there is another occupation he has that is close to his heart. It is the reason Highlands Excursions was started and the way for

• See EXCURSIONS page 5

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## ...MISSION continued from page 1

ment, Paulus said, "In such a rapidly changing time for healthcare, I cannot think of a more important committee on which to serve than one charged with finding ways to innovate and transform the way we deliver healthcare in our communities."

"Recent proposals related to the repeal of the Affordable Care Act have the

potential to reduce Mission revenue by hundreds of millions of dollars, placing extraordinary stress on our health system," Paulus added. "I am honored to be a member of this committee that will work to ensure the future success of Mission Health and healthcare systems nationwide."

## ...EXCURSIONS continued from page 4

this outdoorsman to give back.

Kingsland is the founder of a program called The Warrior Survival School which is funded through a 501c3 called "Bridge of Hope." This program helps veterans deal with the stress of life after service through "military resilience training."

Kingsland is prepared for this kind of work because of the good and bad things he's experienced in his life. He trained for combat in the British Special Forces (Airborne) for 12 years, fought in the Falkland War, trained in the Arctic Warfare School with the 21st Regiment which is the same regiment and training as Bear Grylls, the star of the reality show Man vs. Wild, was a commercial helicopter instructor, and later became a

• See EXCURSIONS page 8



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Vintage hand appliqued quilts given by the Cason Calloway family of Highlands and Atlanta.

## ...VARIANCES continued from page 2

ready made to the interior of the home.

However, the variance request was denied because reasonable use of the property can still be had without the variance; the topography of the property is common to the neighborhood and not peculiar to them. (There are 25 homes in the neighborhood which were all built close to the road due to the topography); the hardship resulted in changes made to the property prior to requesting the variance; and public safety was not an issue.

The vote was unanimous to deny the variance 5-0.

Members of the board felt for the applicants but said "We have to follow the law."

The second variance request was from Old Edwards Inn which asked for a setback variance into Spring Street's 10-ft setback.

Basically, it wants to expand the laundry building situated on the far northeast corner of the parcel bordered by Spring, S. 4th and 5th streets to accommodate a new machine.

The parcel is home to seven original buildings that though renovated by OEI were all already in the setback when the property was purchased. Furthermore, all "empty" space on the parcel houses the required parking for valet parking, lodging, an event venue and its laundry facility. So, expansion into those "empty" areas isn't feasible.

OEI wants to expand the laundry facility 300 sq. ft. to house a special machine designed to press and fold sheet sets and the space is needed to house the machine and keep the workspace safe.

According to the UDO, a variance may be requested that doesn't exceed a current non-conforming condition. The addition will butt up against the existing building at its west and south walls but not exceed the existing nonconforming setback of the adjacent building.

The setback request is for 5 feet 11 ¾ inches at one corner and 6 feet 3 ½ inches at another.

The addition will be compatible with the existing buildings in design, scale, detail and finishes.

The board ruled that an unnecessary hardship would result from the strict application of the ordinance since the only option would be to uproot and move the entire operation elsewhere in town. The vote was 4-1 to grant the variance. Board member Jack Peay voted no on the grounds that he thought OEI could relocate its laundry facility elsewhere in town.

President and Managing Director Richard Delany said the operation is huge and needs to be on town sewer and out of the public eye due to exhaust, chemicals and traffic.

The hardship peculiar to the property is due to the fact that there isn't any extra space to both house the building out of the setback and satisfy parking requirements.

The hardship didn't result from actions taken by the applicant; rather it is due to the confines of the parcel.

Public safety was an issue in that the majority of the board felt the laundry facility was out of the public eye and safer if left where it is.

In every case, the ZBA struggles with the granting or denying of variances.

"The question is are the options realistic and are they based on common sense," said Delany. "As Town Attorney Coward said, 'is it in keeping with the spirit of the ordinance to require an applicant to move a 2,500 sq.ft. building to another location when yes, it would impact the applicant but also the entire town simply because of a 300 sq.ft. expansion on a building that by itself is already a non-conforming precedent?'"

Delany said it's true OEI has property, but it is mostly on main gateways to town and to work the property would also have to be zoned for such a commercial operation and have town sewer.

"I don't think seeing such an operation on a main gateway to town is what our residents or guests want to see every time they come into town."

Furthermore he said just because OEI has property elsewhere in town and could move, that would only be an option if the variance wasn't granted and it would be very difficult.

"Nothing is just black and white with zoning in that there is usually another option. But just how viable or 'in keeping with the spirit of the variance process' are those options is what the board has to weigh. But just because we 'could' relocate, that does not mean it is not a hardship to us," he said. "It would be a huge hardship for the town and for us to relocate such a huge commercial operation."

"Just think about what that would involve -- the down time and total inefficiency of having an off-site laundry where all laundry had to be delivered by motor vehicles and then re-distributed around the properties throughout town by motor vehicles whereas now we have housekeepers and golf carts picking up the majority of laundry and distributing to and from the facilities," he said. "It truly would be a serious hardship, I believe, to us and a hardship and nuisance to the town. I would suggest most people do not even know the operation exists and that would certainly change if it were to move."

— Kim Lewicki

## ...SALARIES continued from page 1

based on the size or economic prosperity of the county, but not always.

Carolina Public Press requested records detailing the compensation packages for county commissioners from each of the 19 WNC counties. The only county that did not provide those records in a timely manner was Haywood County, though older figures from another source are provided below.

Although counties can have different numbers of commissioners on their board, each of the 19 WNC counties has a five-member board.

### Highs and lows

Buncombe County commissioners are, by far, the highest paid in the region. It's also much more populous than the other counties.

Former Buncombe chairman David Gantt received an annual salary of \$37,650. That seat was claimed by Democrat Brownie Newman, the former vice chairman of the board, in November's election. Newman, as vice chairman, received an annual salary of \$31,254. Each of the other commissioners receives \$26,475 per year. Commissioners elected Ellen Frost to serve as vice chair at a meeting earlier in December. Records show that, prior to her election as vice chair, Frost was receiving a salary of \$28,916 per year, slightly higher than other commissioners.

By comparison, the per capita income in Buncombe County for 2015 was \$27,066, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Henderson County, the second largest in the region, with about half of the population of Buncombe County, pays its commissioners an annual salary of \$11,917 for regular members and \$19,194 for the chairman. Each commissioner receives a travel allowance of \$3,649.99. The chairman also receives a \$546 mobile-phone allowance. Henderson County commissioners additionally receive \$75 for each special called meeting – these are meetings that commissioners call apart from their regular meeting schedules.

Avery County commissioners are the lowest-paid in the region, with regular members receiving a salary of \$5,665 per year. The board's chair receives \$8,755 per year. Mitchell County commissioners are paid \$6,300 for regular members and \$8,100 for the chairman. Polk County officials range from \$6,100 for regular members, \$6,822 for the vice chair and \$7,534 for the chairman.

In Graham County, WNC's smallest county by population with 8,600 residents, according to census data, commissioners make \$7,040 per year. Clay County, with a slightly larger population than Graham

County at 10,700 residents, pays its commissioners \$10,452 per year for regular members and \$16,066 per year for the chairman. Clay commissioners also receive a \$2,400 travel stipend. Swain County, with a population of \$14,400, pays its chairman \$12,545 per year and a \$3,900 mileage allowance. Regular commissioners are paid \$6,273 per year and are given a \$3,250 mileage allowance.

### County-by-county breakdown

The following list gives the basic numbers for each county, with the population number in parenthesis next to each county being the July 2015 estimate from the state Office of Budget and Management.

#### Avery County (pop. 17,816)

Chairman: \$8,755

Commissioners: \$5,665

#### Buncombe County (pop. 254,836)

Chairman: \$37,650

Vice chairman: \$31,254

Commissioners: \$26,475

#### Burke County (pop. 89,114)

Chairman: \$9,094.08, \$720 (mileage), \$480 (cellphone)

Commissioners: \$8,074.38, \$720 (mileage), \$480 (cellphone)

#### Cherokee County (pop. 27,770)

Chairman: \$13,610

Commissioners: \$13,186

#### Clay County (pop. 11,036)

Chairman: \$16,066

Commissioners: \$10,452

#### Graham County (pop. 8,761)

Commissioners: \$7,040

#### Haywood County (pop. 60,631)

Editor's note: Haywood County responded to CPP's request for other county salaries, but so far not those for county commissioners, though no one has said that the county is refusing to provide this information. The figures below are for the 2014-2015 fiscal year and are taken from a report by the University of North Carolina School of Government. This information will be updated if Haywood County provides the requested information.

Chairman: \$13,949

Commissioners: \$12,205

#### Henderson County (pop. 112,511)

Chairman: \$19,194, \$546 (phone), \$3,949 (mileage)

Vice chairman/commissioners: \$11,917, \$3,649 (mileage)

#### Jackson County (pop. 41,597)

Chairman: \$17,096.51, \$2,600 (mileage)

Commissioners: \$12,164.41, \$2,600 (mileage)

#### Macon County (pop. 34,771)

Chairman: \$11,724.63, \$4,800 (mileage)

• See SALARIES page 14

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## ...EXCURSIONS continued from page 5

certified wilderness and mental health first-responder.

With all this training, nothing could prepare him for the tragedy he has faced. When he was a Regional Manager for BMW he had to make a life changing decision to retire early and take a severance package to stay home and care for his wife who was dying of brain cancer. Plus he lost

a number of "brothers" he fought with in the Falkland War, through combat and through suicide.

He said there is no follow up for these men and women after they serve in combat.

"There is a suicide rate now of 22 vets a day. It's basically loss of hope and depression. And they are getting into medication and

alcohol as a substitute to cover up their anxiety and pain and depression. We are unplugging them for two or three days, taking them back to basics, taking away all the distractions and putting them in nature and the present moment."

Kingsland compares the Warrior Survival School program to The Big Brother Program where they take their "military brothers" out and use the training they've gotten through the military.

Kingsland said, "Vets have common experiences and feel comfortable talking to each other about it. They feel productive and useful. It works. It really works. We talk about nutrition, talk about simplifying life, kind of like a life coach plan."

He may take four or five veterans at a time, small groups, two or three days, and it's based around basic Bush Craft. The idea is to put the warrior spirit -- the survival spirit -- back into the veteran.

The participants are taught fire and shelter making and how to gather food, then they are dropped in the middle of the wilderness with just some supplies and a knife and there's a real sense of the now. It's an unusual experience and puts them in the present moment and reboots their brain. There is a curriculum or a plan for each outing: Bush Craft, fire building, shelter building, tool and knife safety.

Kingsland said that there have been over a hundred vets who have been through the Survival School and some come back as instructors.

"There is a Christian element to the program. It's non-denominational and it's not religious. We are teaching about faith and what love looks like through our own testimony. Any religion or non-religious vets are welcome. It is a ministry, but we're not pushing an agenda. We talk about purpose and mission and how to make it come true."

Highlands Excursions has only been in business since February of 2015, but Kingsland has been helping vets through the Warrior Survival School since as far back as 2010. Keeping the non-profit going has been a struggle, but he keeps pushing on.

"It took eight months to get the special use permits for Nantahala National Forest by the Federal Government to operate Highlands

Excursions," Kingsland said.

Before he left BMW, he purchased a few Jeeps to start the excursion business, but his wife's illness took its toll and she passed away in 2013 leaving him to raise their only daughter. He eventually had to downsize and had to reinvent the non-profit. He needed a business to supplement the non profit and saw the potential of the beautiful terrain in Highlands, and that's how Highlands Excursions got started.

"I have a Board of Directors down in Greenville, SC where it all started. My veterans come from mainly South Carolina because of the V.A. down there and I've introduced myself to the Franklin V.A. and I'm moving the program up here."

He is looking for people who might be interested in helping out with the program. "I'm looking for veterans who live in Highlands or anyone interested in helping to serve on the Board of Directors."

"The exciting news is that we have someone who has stepped up to match monies we get through fundraising," Kingsland said the matching donor wants to remain anonymous. "For every dollar, he will match that dollar, up to five thousand dollars."

If you are interested in helping with the project, please contact Kingsland at 828-333-7980 or justinkingsland@gmail.com. And for more information visit www.warriorsurvivalschool.org or www.facebook.com/overlandunltd.

Kingsland said, "When you go out with me you get history, geography, you get natural history. It's an education, too. I make it simple and fun. I have a friend who is a geologist and he was telling me that Whiteside Mountain is the oldest mountain in the world. It used to be 45,000 feet high, higher than Mt. Everest is today and it has ground down from wear and tear. The mountain started as molten rock and that is why it is rippled like it is. So imagine the erosion over time that now is the sand on the beaches of the Gulf of Mexico. So when you're on the beach in Panama City, you're standing on Whiteside Mountain, because it washed down river." Kingsland said, "Floridians have more of a connection to this area than they know."



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Every day from 11:00am - close

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See our website for more info.

### Pizza

Every day from 11:00am - close

Authentic Neapolitan and NY deck oven pizzas made from scratch. Pasta bowls, daily specials and weeknight dinner specials.

See our website for more info.

### Soup & Salad Bar

Mon-Sat 11:00am - close

Fresh salads, homemade dressings, soups, chili and more.

\$9.99 each (dine in) or \$9.99 a pound (to go)

### Weekday Lunch Special

Monday - Friday 11am to 2pm

Pizza, pasta, soup and salad bar  
 Continuous fresh pizza from our pizza ovens, pastas, fresh breads from our bakery, plus the entire soup and salad bar... \$9.99 each (dine in) or \$9.99 a pound (to go)

## SUNDAY SOUTHERN BRUNCH BAR

Every Sunday from 11am - 3pm

Skillet fried chicken, country angus steak, skillet corn, biscuits & preserves, mashed potatoes, veggies, cobbler, plus the entire soup & salad bar.

\$11.99 (dine in) or \$9.99 a pound (to go)

## PREPARED FOODS

A large selection of take-away items fully prepared, ready to take home including grilled pork loins, homemade mac & cheese, mashed potatoes, herb-rubbed chicken, made-in-house bbq, chicken salad deli salads & much more!

## DINNER TO GO

A different full dinner every night.  
 Serves four serving Monday through Saturday from 4:30 until we sell out - Call ahead to reserve.

### Monday: choose either:

Four chicken and four cheese enchiladas, refried beans, monterey rice, homemade tortilla chips, salsa, shredded lettuce, tomatoes, sour cream.

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24 buffalo wings or 2 lbs chicken tenders and hand cut fries.

\$21.95 serves four.

Tuesday: Made in-house Italian sausage lasagna and a large house salad.

\$21.95 serves four

Wednesday: Chicken or steak pot pie and a large salad.

\$21.95 serves four

Thursday: Roasted meatloaf with mashed potatoes, gravy and a large salad.

\$21.95 serves four

Friday: Wild caught fried shrimp, baked potatoes, hush puppies & coleslaw. \$24.95 serves four

Saturday: In-house smoked bbq, coleslaw, apple and bacon-baked beans, and yeast rolls. \$21.95 serves 4

### Weeknight Pizza Special:

Available Monday -Thursday 4:30 to close  
 16" NY style pizza with up to 5 toppings.  
 Comes with garlic bread & salad \$21.95

or

Baked Linguini: Meatballs, tomato sauce & cheese. Comes with garlic bread and salad \$21.95

or

Baked Penne Pasta: Italian sausage, onion, bacon and mushrooms in white sauce. Comes with garlic bread & salad \$21.95

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# • INVESTING AT 4,118 FT. •

## End-of-year real estate statistics tell all

Judy Michaud, the owner of our firm provides these statistics for our clients monthly. We share the end-of-the-year report in this real estate column and have found that the readers really appreciate it.

As many of you know, trends on Highlands real estate tend to be behind the trends on many of our feeder markets. The most severe market downturn happened in 2008 and 2009 in most parts of the country, but in Highlands we were still moving along and didn't really feel the pinch until 2010 when there were only 74 sales in the entire township that year. We have seen a slow and steady improvement in the years that followed as evidenced in the numbers below.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
# sales	102	121	156	172	206
Days on market	587	543	433	483	395
Median price	\$440,000	\$425,000	\$394,500	\$397,500	\$450,000
Average price	\$572,129	\$565,586	\$570,253	\$613,609	\$563,472
List to sale ratio	86.68%	87.27%	88.13%	90.09%	90.27%
Foreclosures/ short sales	27	29	19	9	8

Following are the end of year numbers for residential closed sales compared to 2015.

	Highlands	
	2015	2016
\$300K and under	64	48
\$301K-\$500K	57	58
\$501K-\$750K	46	39
\$751K-\$1M	11	21
\$1M-\$2M	25	29
\$2M and over	3	10
Totals	206	205

The average residential sales price in Highlands in 2016 was \$764,501 and the median selling price was \$485,000. Remember that the median price is more significant than the average price. The list to sale ratio was 91.40% and the average days on market was 360. Nine of the sales were foreclosures or short sales in 2016.

There were 32 land sales in Highlands last year, with an average selling price of \$358,845, average days on market of 373 and a list to sale ratio of 82%. This a marked improvement over 2015. Although there were four more sales in 2015, all the other numbers have improved dramatically over 2015 when the average sales price was \$170,796, the list to sale ratio was 72% and the average days on market for a closed land sale was 668.

In 2016, there were 33 condominium/townhouse sales with an average selling price of \$435,306; a list to sale ratio of 94% and the average days in market for a closed sale of 423. This compares to 30 condominium/townhouse sales in Highlands in 2015

	Highlands/2015	Highlands 2016
\$300K and under	43	35
\$301K-\$500K	82	74
\$501K-\$750K	71	56
\$751K-\$1M	48	41
\$1M-\$2M	35	38
\$2M and over	23	21
Totals	302	265

• Lynn Kimball has over 43 years of real estate experience, with 31 years serving the Highlands Cashiers area. She has gained Emeritus Status with the National Association of Realtors and previously served as Director and Vice President for the Highlands Cashiers Board of Realtors. Whether you are interested in searching properties or comprehensive information about our area, you are invited to visit her user friendly website at [www.signatureproperties-nc.com](http://www.signatureproperties-nc.com). Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Meadows Mountain Realty has three locations, at 41 Church Street in the Old Edwards Inn complex, at 488 Main Street or visit Lynn at her 2334 Cashiers Road location across from Highlands Falls Country Club. Lynn Kimball may be reached at 828-421-8193 or by email at [Lynn@MeadowsMtnRealty.com](mailto:Lynn@MeadowsMtnRealty.com)

with an average sales price of \$458,033, a list to sale ratio of 93% and average days on market of 535.

As the year closed, we thought it was time to take a look at the club activity in 2016:

### Highlands CC

14 home sales and 2 condominium sales (14 homes, no condos in 2015)

### Highlands Falls CC

19 home sales and 5 condominium sales (19 homes, 5 condos in 2015)

### Cullasaja Club:

21 home sales and 4 land sales (14 homes in 2015)

### Wildcat Cliffs CC

12 home sales and 1 condominium sale (11 homes, 1 condo and 2 land sales in 2015)

### Highlands Cove

4 home sales, 6 condo sales, 2 land sales (7 homes, 2 condos & 7 land sales in 2015)

### MountainTop

6 home sales, 1 condo sale and 26 land sales (3 homes and 6 land sales in 2015)

The amount of inventory in Highlands has been one of the most troublesome factors in our recovery. Where our feeder markets have very, very low inventories with homes barely on the market a few weeks before they are snatched up by some eager buyer, we have continued to remain in a buyer's market with the average days on market staying above 300.

We are finally starting to see a decline in the amount of inventory and compared to last year at the same time, the number of properties on the market is down significantly.



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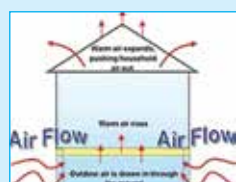
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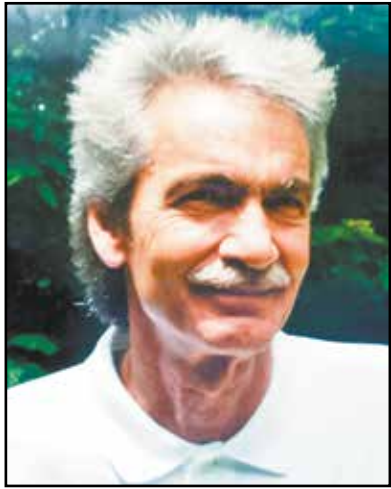
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# • SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

## George Washington and Donald Trump



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It is a fantastic thought. So fantastic that many (perhaps most) will simply dismiss it out of hand or assign it to the fanciful musings of a religious extremist. Here it is: The destiny of our nation is determined by praying Christians.

In his Inaugural Address on April 30, 1789, our First President proclaimed: "It would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being Who rules over the universe...no people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States...Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of Providential Agency."

Our first President understood the connection: Prayer and the Favor of God upon a nation are inseparable. Our nation is very divided. The answer is not in the White House or in either political party. It is in Jesus Christ Himself. It is no less than remarkable to see in scripture how God acted when people prayed. Daniel prayed and God acted. The Jewish people were released from Babylonian Captivity (Daniel 9-10). Abraham prayed and God was willing to spare Sodom and Gomorrah if He could find righteous people there (Genesis 18). Hezekiah prayed and God spared Jerusalem's invasion by the Assyrians. (2 Kings 19). The list goes on and on.

God honors prayer on behalf of nations. He rules and reigns over all nations. This week Donald Trump becomes our 45th President. Every President has needed prayer. I believe now more than ever. Will you pray?

The needs in our nation are overwhelming. Our enemies outside this nation are myriad. We need God's help. If we will cry out, repent of our sins, and seek His Face, He will hear and answer. The Washington Monument in Washington, DC, stands over 555 feet high. Engraved on the metal cap are the words: "Praise be to God." A fitting tribute to a President who believed that God would, indeed, hear and answer prayer on behalf of a nation. Will you pray?

## Proverbs 3:5

## • PLACES TO WORSHIP •

## John 3:16

### BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice, Pastor (706) 782-3965

Sundays: School: 10 a.m., Worship: 11

Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7

Wednesdays: Mid-week prayer meeting: 7 p.m.

### BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

### CHAPEL OF SKY VALLEY

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Wednesdays: 9 a.m. Healing and Prayer w/Communion

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Rector: Jim Murphy, 252-671-4011

464 US Hwy 64 east, Cashiers

Sun.: 9:30a Sunday School; 10:30a Worship w/ Music

Mon.: Bible Study & Supper at homes - 6 p.m.

### CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS

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Tues. Guys study 8am, Gals 10am.

### CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.

1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7 p.m.

Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

### COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

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3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC

Senior Pastor Gary Hewins

Sun.: 9:30am: Sunday School

10:30am: Middle & High School; 10:45am: Child. Program,

10:45am: Worship Service

Wed.: 5pm Dinner (\$7 adult, \$2 child), 6pm CBC U.

### EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

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828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org

Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor

220 Main Street, Highlands NC 28741

Sun.: Worship 10:45 am; Sun.: Bible Study 9:30 am

Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Prayer Mtg 6:15 pm;

Choir 5 pm

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors

526-3175 • fpchighlands.org

Sun.: Worship: 11 a.m.; School: 9:30

Mondays: 8 a.m.: Men's Prayer Group & Breakfast

Wednesdays: Choir: 5:30p

### GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

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Hwy 107N. • Glenville, Nc • 743-2729

Pastor Nathan Johnson

Sunday: School 9:45a, Worship 11a & 7p, Bible Study 6p

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

### HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Randy Reed, Pastor 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street

Sundays: Worship: 11

### HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson

670 N. 4th Street (next to the Highlands Civic Center)

Sun.: Morning Worship 10:45 a., Evening Worship, 6:30 p.

Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.

### HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Pastor Randy Lucas 526-3376

Sun: School 9:45a.; Worship 9:09, 10:50.; Youth 5:30 p.

Wed: Supper: 5:15; youth, & adults activities: 6; Handbell

rehearsal, 6:15; Choir Rehearsal 7. (nursery provided); 7pm

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Worship/Communion: 10:30

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Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11, Choir: 6 p.m.

Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.: 7 p.m.

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### MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church

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4224 Big Ridge Road (4.5 miles from NC 107)

Weds: Bible Study 6:30 p.m.; Youth Group 6 p.m.

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### SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby

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Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

### SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Jerry David Hall • 526-3212

Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

### SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.

Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 6 p.m.

### THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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Rev. Rob Wood

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June-Sept: Sunday Services: Rite I, 8a, Rite II, 9:15 & 11a

Nursery available for Rite II services

Sept 6-Oct 25- Informal Evening Eucharist- 5:30 p.m.

Thursday: Noon Healing Service with Eucharist.

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# POLICE & FIRE REPORTS

The Highlands Police log entries from Jan. 2. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

## Jan. 2

- At 9:37 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on Main Street.

## Jan. 5

- At 9 p.m., officers checked on a resident on Watkins Road.

## Jan. 8

- At 2:48 a.m., officers were called to Old Edwards Inn and Spa concerning a man being drunk and disruptive.

## Jan. 9

- At 9 p.m., officers responded to a call of a larceny at a residence on Hummingbird Circle where someone entered the dwelling with a key and took a watch valued at \$2,800 from the victim's bedroom.

## Jan. 15

- At 2:51 a.m., Pierson Benton, 23 of Arden, NC, was arrested for Driving Left of Center, Driving without a drivers license and DWI. He was issued a \$2,000 unsecured bond. His trial date is Feb. 1.

**The Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. log from Jan. 12.**

## Jan. 12

- The dept. investigated smoke at a residence on Cowee Ridge.

- The dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

- The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Mack Wilson Road.

## Jan. 14

- The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Ravenel Ridge.

## Jan. 16

- The dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Country Club Drive.

- The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Wilson Road.

- The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Mack Wilson Road.

## Macon County Employee Service Awards



At its January meeting, the Macon County Commission recognized employees for 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 years of service. Above with Vice Chair Ronnie Beale and Chairman Jim Tate is June Cassada – Business Manager I – Solid Waste - 30 years.



With 25 years of service: Lora Beegle – EMT Paramedic – Franklin Base; Lisa Henry – Social Worker III -- DSS; Lisa Hilliard – Social Work Supervisor III -- DSS.



With 20 years service: Kim Angel – Transit Director; Kenneth Cole – EMT Paramedic – Franklin Base; Kathy McGaha – Coordinator of Health Services – Public Health; Pam Shook – EMT Paramedic – Franklin Base

## The Atlanta Boy Choir welcomes in the New Year in New Orleans

Atlanta's Grammy Award winning Boy Choir, under the direction of its founder Maestro Fletcher Wolfe recently returned from New Orleans where it was invited to perform on New Year's Day for an overflowing crowd at the famous Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, the King of France on Jackson Square. The many hundreds of parishioners who attended morning Mass and a choral concert following, rose and applauded the choir in a 15-minute appreciation.

Joining the 38 boys and 25 men for this event was the renowned American Soprano, Indra Thomas. Thomas, one of the most acclaimed singers of our time, appears both here and abroad with all the major opera companies and orchestras. She was recently the featured soloist at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, S. C.

The choir, well known throughout the world for its many outstanding performances, stopped along its route in Selma, AL where it appeared in concert at St. Paul's Episcopal Church to honor its life-long relationship with the Civil Rights movement and the family of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The church, which was filled to capacity, included many of those involved with Dr. King in his now famous march. Included in this audience was Mrs. Ora Shannon, one of Selma's leading Civil Rights leaders who took part in this demonstration.

The choir recently received the following e-mail from the church's Rector, Father Jack Alvey. *"Dear Atlanta Boy Choir- I have received rave reviews from everyone at St. Paul's. They were honored that you came to bless Selma with this event."*

The choir now in its 60<sup>th</sup> year under the direction of Maestro Wolfe was heard again on Friday, January 13 at the State Capitol along with Governor Deal and Ambassador Andrew Young when it honored the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The choir boys, some 75 in all, come from every racial, ethnic and economic background. Many of its 8,000 Alumni men include famous actors and musicians as well everyday business personnel.

Georgia is truly fortunate to have developed and sustained such an outstanding group of young men who inspire others with their beautiful singing.

Their famous motto of *"They Sing and the World Listens"* certainly lives up to its meaning.

The Atlanta Boy Choir has performed here in Highlands for many decades at The Episcopal Church of the Incarnation preceding its international tours.

This year the choir will be performing at the Presbyterian Church on Sunday, May 21 for the first time and will honor W. Stell Huie the founding attorney for its incorporation back in 1957.

Mr. Huie, well known Highlands's soloist, will perform along with the choir for this event. Maestro Wolfe, longtime choir director at the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation and Dr. Robert Henry, current choir director, will be joined by soprano soloist, Indra Thomas.

There is free admission, but reserved seats are available for sponsors who support needy boys. These may be obtained by calling the choir at 404.378.0064 or email info@atlantaboychoir.org


  
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## LOST

**LOST DEC. 29TH** on upper Fourth Street area a gold ring with 5 stones in a row. Please call 828-526-8860 or turn into Police Dept. Greatly appreciate your kindness!

## ITEMS FOR SALE

**MAYTAG GAS DRYER, \$100.** Office furniture by Cashiers Custom Furniture. 2 desks, bookcase, file cabinet. Call 828-226-2083. (st. 7/28)

**KOBALT DIAMOND SHIELD REGULAR TRUCK BED TOOLBOX.** Deep low profile full size. 17"x69"x19" fits most full size trucks OBO. Call Frank in Scaly Mountain 828-526-1953. (st. 5/11)

## HELP WANTED

**GIS AND COMPUTER SUPPORT SPECIALIST** – The Town of Highlands invites candidates to apply for the position of GIS and Computer Support Specialist. This employee performs responsible technical work installing and maintaining the Town's geographical information systems (GIS) including computer hardware and software for departments, and gives aid periodically to the IT Dept. Minimum qualifications for the position include graduation from an accredited college or university with an Associate's degree in geographic science, or other field of study related to the position. Salary for the position is negotiable DOE/DOQ. Position will be open until filled. To review the full recruitment posting for the position and download an employment application, visit our website [www.highlandsnc.org](http://www.highlandsnc.org), or at the Town Hall. The Town of Highlands is an EOE. (1/19)

**COMPUTER SUPPORT SPECIALIST** – The Town of Highlands invites candidates to apply for the position of Computer Support Specialist. This employee performs responsible technical work installing and maintaining the Town's information technology and communication systems, including computer hardware and software for departments. The

salary for the position is negotiable DOE/DOQ. Minimum qualifications for the position include graduation from an accredited college or university with an Associate's degree in information technology, computer science, or other field of study related to the position. Salary for the position is negotiable DOE/DOQ. Position will be open until filled. To review the full recruitment posting for the position and download an employment application, visit our website [www.highlandsnc.org](http://www.highlandsnc.org), or at the Town Hall. The Town of Highlands is an EOE. (1/19).

**PART TIME CLEANERS** needed after hours cleaning banks. Please call Cathy @ 828 772 9831 (st. 12/22).

**MOUNTAIN FRESH GROCERY IS HIRING FOR FULL-TIME** positions in the Deli. Please come in person to 521 East Main Street in Highlands to apply, or call 828-526-2400.

**PIANIST WANTED FOR SUNDAY SERVICES AT HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH, HIGHLANDS.** One service per week, easy liturgy and 3 hymns, piano only. No choir, so no extra rehearsals. (keyboard available). \$85 per week. Please contact Pastor Margaret Howell at 704-516-7893. Students welcome! (st. 12/1)

**EXPERIENCED ELECTRICIANS NEEDED.** Call 828-526-5147. (st. 11/22)

**HAVE OPENINGS FOR WAIT-STAFF AND COOK** for Clubhouse dining. Also hiring for C.N.A. for Assisted Living. Apply at Chestnut Hill of Highlands, 24 Clubhouse Trail, Highlands NC. (828)526-5251. (12/24)

**CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION IN HIGHLANDS** is looking for a Nursery Attendant for the 10:30AM Sunday Service three Sundays a month for approximately 2.5 hours. Experience working with children 0-5-years old is required. Please contact the church office by phone 828-526-2968 or email at [incarnation@incarnationwnc.org](mailto:incarnation@incarnationwnc.org) (st. 8/25)

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF HIGHLANDS, NC,** is seeking a part-time

director of music, salary DOE. Musical training and experience required. Resumes, including references, may be sent to FBC Highlands, POB 625, Highlands, NC 28741 or emailed to [info@fbchighlands.org](mailto:info@fbchighlands.org), 828-526-4153 (st. 8/4)

## DEVELOPMENT FOR SALE



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[www.fallingwatersnc.com](http://www.fallingwatersnc.com)  
828-508-9952

(Note: Messages sent Dec. 3-15 were not received. The email now working)  
(st. 12/8)

## RESIDENTIAL FOR RENT

**BEAUTIFUL 3/2 TIMBERFRAME HOME** in in Horse Cove. \$1500 per month, minimum 6 month lease. No smoking & no dogs, please. Call 606-402-1213 for more details and/or showing. (2/2)

**ONE BED/ONE BATH,** furnished. All utilities paid. Call 828-371-0829. (st. 1/12)

**REMODELED EFFICIENCY APARTMENT RIVER RUN II.** Washer Dryer Large Deck. Walking distance to Skiing, Swimming, Restaurants, Exercise Amenities, and Meeting rooms and Public Golf Course \$550 monthly annual rent plus utilities. 561-626-7467 (1/19)

**FURNISHED HOME FOR RENT.** 2/2. Mt. Lori Dr. Quiet street with no through traffic. Minutes to town. Very well kept with nice furniture and pretty yard. Wood burning fireplace, open kitchen, deck in back, hardwood floors,

garage. \$1,200/mth. Does not include utilities. 904-403-8090. (st. 12/8)

## 3/3 FURNISHED OLDER HOME,

walk to town, fuel oil heat, for year-round rental. \$1050/month. 828-526-5558. (1/19)

## CASHIERS/SAPPHIRE - Furnished

Split level 3 Bed/ 3 Bath home. Year round Mountain Views. Yearly lease 1,850. per month. Will consider renting 2 Bed/2 Bath level for \$1,250. (561) 346-6400 Commercial for Rent. (1/26)

## 1575 SQ FT OF COMMERCIAL

**SPACE AVAILABLE** Jan 5 at The Shops at Kettle Rock. \$950 per month. For inquiries call 828-526-9948. (12/1)

**APPROXIMATELY 900 S/F AND RECENTLY UPDATED.** Ideal for retail/professional/service. Plenty of parking + excellent visibility for \$1,750/ month. Contact Susie deVillie at White Oak Realty Group for details, (828) 371-2079. (st. 7/29)

## SERVICES

**GENTLE YOGA WITH JILLIAN JOHNSON** Tuesdays 10.30 am, The Wellness Place 468 Dillard Road 828-526-9698. (st. 1/12)

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**HIGH COUNTRY PHOTO/KEVIN VINSON:** scanning photos, slides & negatives to CD or DVD for easier viewing. Video transfer to DVD. Everything done in house. Leave message at 828-526-5208. (st. 11/17)

**MOLD AND MUSTY SMELL IN YOUR HOME?** Call for free inspection. 828-743-0900.

## BIZ/ORG NEWS



At a recent meeting of the Rotary Club of Highlands, Rotary member Julian Franklin drew the weekly drawing's winning ticket and generously donated the money to the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Foundation. The photo shows Julian (l) with Rotary member Robin Tindall, Director of Philanthropy of the Foundation, and Rotary President Hank Ross.

## ...SALARIES continued from page 7

Commissioners: \$10,062.70, \$4,800 (mileage)

**Madison County (pop. 21,663)**  
Chairman: \$7,702, \$6,840 (mileage)  
Commissioners: \$5,269, \$3,420 (mileage)

**McDowell County (pop. 45,370)**  
Chairman: \$15,792

Commissioners: \$13,392

**Mitchell County (pop. 15,335)**  
Chairman: \$8,100

Commissioners: \$6,300

**Polk County (pop. 20,828)**  
Chairman: \$7,534.02

Vice chairman: \$6,822.92

Commissioners: \$6,100.12

**Rutherford County (pop. 67,617)**

Commissioners: \$10,894

**Swain County (pop. 14,953)**

Chairman: \$12,545, \$3,900 (mileage)

Vice chairman/commissioners: \$6,273, \$3,250 (mileage)

**Transylvania County (pop. 33,745)**

Chairman: \$11,006.84

Commissioners: \$9,210.76

**Watauga County (pop. 53,737)**

Chairman: \$8,688, \$3,325.80 (mileage)

Commissioners: \$7,212, \$2,426.88 (mileage)

**Yancey County (pop. 17,959)**

Chairman: \$9,726.82

Commissioners: \$8,402.45



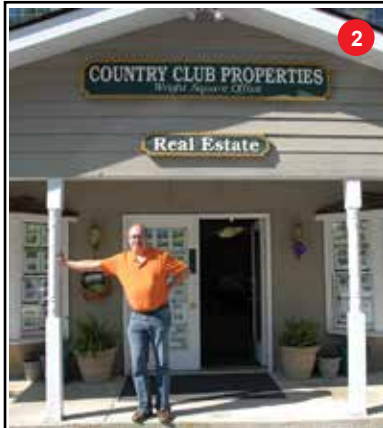
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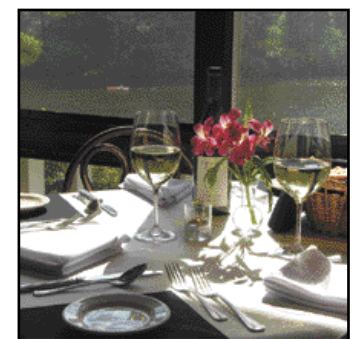
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