

Highlands Newspaper

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Volume 17, Number 36 Real-Time News, Weather & WebCams: HighlandsInfo.com Thursday, Sept. 3 2020

Survey points to employee housing need

Last week's discussion about workforce housing between the Town Board and HC Hospital's Tom Neal pointed to an ongoing problem in Highlands – that of affordable housing for employees

critical to Highlands' businesses. During the week of August 15-19, the Chamber of Commerce emailed a Housing Survey to 124 downtown business owners to gauge the need for housing; 34 re-

sponded. "The intention of the survey was to show there continues to be a growing need for workforce housing and to seek creative solu-

• See HOUSING page 10

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Citizens are 'planning their vote'

By Brittney Lofthouse

States are making it easier for citizens to vote absentee by mail this year due to the coronavirus. While every state's election rules are different and each state has its own rules for mail-in absentee voting, many are still in the process of deciding how they will handle voting during the pandemic.

Macon County Board of Elections Director Melanie Thibault said that the local board of elections has seen a significant increase in absentee ballot requests this year and her office is prepared to handle the changes.

"Currently, the BOE office has an extra person working in the office until absentee by mail ends," said Thibault. "This person will help with the increase in absentee requests and the outgoing ballots when they are available"

During the 2016 Presidential

• See VOTE page 18

It was a Doodle Dog day at the Dog Park



Labradoodles Buddy and Bailey Smith whose people are Josh and Andrea, gave birth to 11 pups – six boys and five girls – on Aug. 20 one year ago. To celebrate their offsprings' birthday, several pups gathered with their people at the dog park on Monday, Aug. 24 for a photo shoot. Pictured from left is Annie Wilkes with Mama Bailey, Charlies Wilkes with Jinx, Ian and Walker Kittrell with Brady, Hudson Tilley with Waffles who is interacting with Papa Buddy, Jake Smith with Duke and his brother Oliver in the back is with Hank.

Jawbreaker kingpin arrested for harboring a fugitive

By Brittney Lofthouse

Wade Ennis bonded out of Transylvania County Detention Center the first week in August after being arrested for possession of methamphetamine. When Ennis was arrested he was with James Steele – both men have a history of criminal charges across Western North Carolina most notably from 2018 when Ennis and Steele were identified as two of three masterminds behind Operation Jawbreaker, a drug trafficking ring operating across NC and Georgia.

Last week, the Macon County Grand Jury indicted Ennis on charges of harboring a fugitive connected to the August 3 arrest in Transylvania County because at the time Ennis was arrested with

• See JAWBREAKER page 10

Gov. Cooper declares NC is in phase 2.5

Submitted

Tuesday afternoon Governor Roy Cooper said North Carolin-

ians need to continue doing "what we know works." He announced that after a summer of hard work

to slow the spread of COVID-19, North Carolina will take a modest

• See PHASE 2.5 page 18

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Honor those before us and vote

Labor Day signals change in seasons, including the earnest kickoff of the political season. COVID-19 has the potential to impact these events.

It will be a special election in 2020, although I have come to believe all elections are special.

In messages to get out and vote, we will hear the reframe that our veterans fought so we may have the right to vote. While that is certainly true, others have also fought to affirm everyone's right to vote.

One hundred years ago many of our grandmothers and even great and great, great grandmothers fought for the right to vote. The women's suffrage movement had begun some seven decades before their 1920 victory. Year after year the men who were legislators and the only voters, denied women access to the ballot. In order to win, women had to fight for the vote.

Before, during and after World War 1, a group of dedicated women decided to stop playing nice and took drastic actions to demand the right to vote. These women developed tactics that had never been done



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

in America. First, they developed an organized and systematic lobbying plan directed toward senators and congressmen. They would go in small groups to congressional offices to make their case. They lobbied in public, in full view of the press, not in back rooms and saloons. These women were civil, yet determined. They would not go away, but returned over and over again demanding the right to vote.

The suffragettes also implemented another tactic that had never been done before. They picketed in front of the White House. At first President Wilson was amused, but the women didn't go away and continued to picket daily, in the rain, heat and snow.

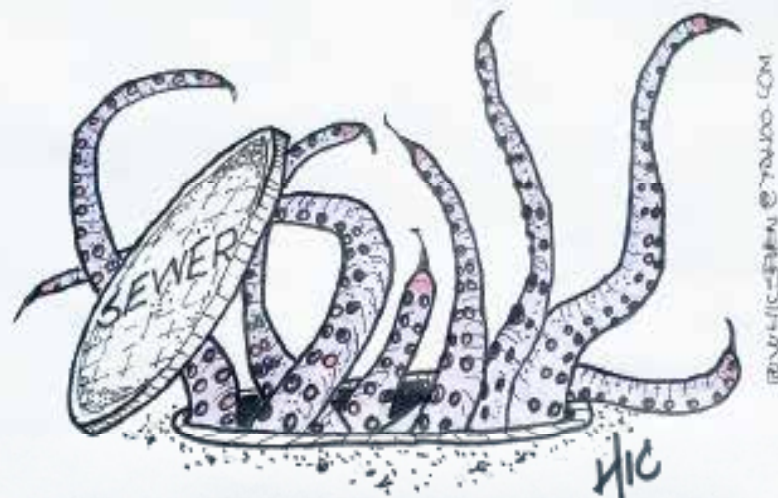
The suffragettes also endured physical pain. Crowds shouted at them, threw things at them and physically assaulted them. They would not yield. Finally, many of the suffragists were arrested and jailed. In jail several women went on hunger strikes only to be tied to chairs and force fed by having tubes shoved down to their stomachs.

The public began to see the determination and endurance of the suffragettes. Finally, in 1920 woman won the right to vote. I say won, not given the right the vote. Our grandmothers and great grandmothers battled for the vote. So, in this election season, I hope we will all be mindful of the past struggles of people to vote. It didn't stop in 1920, voting rights struggles in the South continued into the 1960's.

I want everyone, regardless of political affiliations, to cast a ballot on or before November 3. With COVID-19 still with us, I will be early voting. Early voting will begin on the third Thursday before Election Day. If just 50 to 100 people voted on each day of early voting, coupled with folks doing mail-in ballots, there would be no large crowds of voters at our Highlands Civic Center precinct on November 3. The fear of COVID exposure could be minimized.





A final thought about the suffrage campaign. Some folks 100 years ago took the position that it was unseemly for women to be involved in politics and voting. Many congressmen said a woman's place was in the home. Those defensive arguments of that past time are now laughable and even bizarre 100 years later.

• HIC'S VIEW •



CALAMARI TAKES REVEGE AGAINST RESTAURANTS IN A SMALL MOUNTAIN TOWN. MAYOR ISSUES EMERGENCY ORDER PROTECTING CHEFS.

• WEATHER •

Thu, 3-Sep	Fri, 4-Sep	Sat, 5-Sep	Sun, 6-Sep
 82°F 63°F	 81°F 60°F	 76°F 54°F	 76°F 56°F
Times of sun and clouds	Some sun	A t-storm around in the p.m.	Partly sunny
RealFeel® High: 84° Low: 68°	RealFeel® High: 87° Low: 65°	RealFeel® High: 81° Low: 65°	RealFeel® High: 84° Low: 60°

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Highlands Newspaper

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Locally owned and operated by

Kim & Jim Lewicki

Adobe PDF version at

www.HighlandsInfo.com

265 Oak St.; P.O. Box 2703,

Highlands, N.C., 28741

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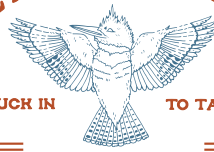
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• OBITUARY •

Edgar Jayco Owens

Edgar Jayco Owens age 82, of Highlands passed away August 29, 2020.

He was the son of the late Hayman Luther Owens, and Mary Ethel Miller Owens. He was also preceded in death by his wife Martha Carolyn Munger Owens, son Bennie Owens, grandson Noah Owens, six brothers Harry Owens, Bud Owens, Buck Owens, Waco Owens, Ronnanie Owens, and Charles Owens, four sisters Euwilda Pickelsimer, Madge Munger, Irene Owens, Christine Owens.

He is survived by four sons James Luther Owens of Highlands, Edgar Eugene (Stacy) Owens of Satolah Ga., Dennis Sr. (Sandra) Owens of Greenville, SC, Johnny (Mary) Stephens of Satolah, Ga., three daughters Mary Owens Ridgeway of Anderson, SC., Sherry Lynn Owens Highlands, NC., Melissa Euwilda (Brian) Grace of Satolah, Ga., two brothers Cleveland Owens of Satolah, Ga., Clinton (Connie) of Kentucky, and one sister Dorothy Keener of Social Circle, Ga., 16 grandchildren and 25 plus great grandchildren.

Jayco was superman to his children and grandchildren. He was a father to many that weren't his own. He was loved by many and respected by all. He was an avid outdoors man and enjoyed coon hunting, fishing, and working in his garden.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic a private family service will be held.

The family asks in lieu of flowers, donations may be to Beck Funeral Home 898 Hwy 441 South Clayton, Ga., to help with funeral expenses.

If there are any questions, please call 706-782-9599. An online Memorial Register Book is available at www.beckfuneral-home.com.

• LETTERS •

When Does Life Begin?

Dear Editor,

I remember I could hardly wait until I reached 16 and I could get my driver's license. So excited to graduate from high school. Wow, would I ever finish college? Some people suffer exquisite trauma when they reach the "big four-oh" or that "fearful 50." When does life really begin? Life

• See LETTERS page 11

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DOGSPEAK

• LORD BANJO REFLECTIONS •

The little Dickens

Since I've retired from writing books, Mum sometimes asks me to help her out. She wanted to write a column about Dickens, the dog in her cozy mystery series, but she's been too busy writing more and more books. I mean, can you believe the third one just came out and she's already got another one ready?

She thought me writing about a dog would be right up my alley, and I agreed. After all, Dickens is a smaller

version of moi—and younger as Mum likes to remind me. He's not any better looking, mind you, just smaller and younger. Now that we've got that straight, let me tell you more about him—the little Dickens.

My fans may recall that two of my great-grandparents were Great Pyrenees, and they were the Royal Dogs of France. That's how I came to be known as Lord Banjo. Even though my fur is black, I'm a Pyr. Full-blooded Pyrs are white and weigh much more than I do. I weighed in at 80 pounds when I first arrived here at the royal abode, but I'm down to around 60 now. Let me tell you, the first ten pounds were a struggle, but the next ten weren't so hard.

Dickens is a Pyr, but the boy's a dwarf Pyr. Sometimes it just happens that two Pyr parents have a dwarf puppy. Dickens weighs only 40 pounds, though some of the dwarves weigh a little more. Some are deaf too, but not Dickens. He hears everything, and if you read Mum's books, you know he can communicate with his owner. That's right, Leta understands him and vice versa. How cool is that?

Dickens has a great life in the Cotswolds, where Leta owns a cottage with a garden. He likes to roll in the grass and sniff around the stone wall that encloses it. He's a big believer in corner-checking which is what he calls sniffing every inch of the wall. Leta lets him out to do that every morning. She tosses him a treat as he heads out the kitchen door and he goes to work. And like me, Dickens is a fiend for belly rubs. When anyone approaches him and leans down to pet him, he assumes the belly rub position. That little Dickens is a smart boy.



Lord Banjo

He enjoys his garden, but his favorite thing is visiting the donkeys. He and Leta walk a mile down a country lane to see Martha and Dylan, and Leta takes carrots to feed 'em. Those donkeys come running—well trotting—when they see them coming because they know Leta always has carrots in her pockets. They duck their heads down to touch Dickens, and he loves it.

Dickens and Leta are originally from Atlanta, and it had only been in the last few years that Leta could take him to sit outside at a restaurant. The Cotswolds are different, though. If you can believe it, Leta can take him into pubs—and some pubs have dog beds scattered around for dogs to snooze in. If he doesn't go for a bed, he hangs out in front of one of the fireplaces or beneath the table. Leta has two friends who sneak him snacks. She says they're incorrigible because no matter what she says, they sneak him chunks of buns or chips or sometimes a bite of a burger.

She's worried Dickens will turn into a little butterball, but they go on lots of long walks, so I think he'll be okay. He also gets to go lots of places with Leta in her refurbished London taxi. He has a special harness in the back seat so he's safe.

I think the boy has a wonderful life, and I'm just a teeny bit jealous. The part I'm not jealous of? He had to ride in the cargo hold of a jet to get to England—nine hours. My thoughts on that? No way, Jose. No one's getting me on a plane. I'm staying right here in the royal abode. I can enjoy Dickens's life vicariously by reading Mum's books. And you can do the same. You can find Mum's Dickens & Christie series on Amazon.

• Lord Banjo lives in Georgia with his Mum, Kathy Manos Penn. Find more stories in his book, "Lord Banjo the Royal Pooch," available on Amazon and locally at Highland Mountain Paws. To contact him, please email inkpenn119@gmail.com.

• WORD MATTER •

Elections in America

As we cautiously approach the 2020 election we should examine voting, and how we hold elections in America. I'd like to share some insights regarding how we got here, and offer a suggestion or two on how things can be improved. Some of this you've heard before.



Bud Katz

Elections are an industry in America. They provide a lot of jobs and they pay well; in some instances, very well, in both hard currency and in influence over the lives of the rest of us. Change is not going to happen willingly, or easily.

The current system is rife with corruption, and fails to operate in the interest or to the benefit of the American people. Parties in power do everything possible to remain in power. Their donors do what's

necessary to keep THEIR elected representatives in place in order to do THEIR bidding. They do need our votes, so they tell us what they think we want to hear. Then, when they get into office, they pivot to the concerns of those who financially supported them.

There are some simple things our leaders could change that might make it more equitable and might generate higher voter turnout, as well as more confidence in the process.

Unfortunately, this is another example of simple, but not easy.

First, pass a 28th Constitutional Amendment that takes ALL corporate and PAC money out of every election, on all levels. People, with heartbeats, vote, not PACs or corporations. Political Action Committees, trade associations, unions and corporations don't have hearts, never mind heartbeats. Public financing, and limited private financing, by individuals only, will reduce or eliminate corruption.

Second, eliminate partisan gerrymandering everywhere, along with any other activities and government-sanctioned efforts that suppress or inhibit any or every citizen's right and ability to vote.

Third, establish election day as a holiday, and consolidate ALL local, state and national elections into a single event every cycle. If it takes more than one day, vote on Friday and Saturday. If parties must have primary elections, let the parties pay for them and conduct them outside and apart from the actual general public election apparatus.

Fourth, ensure that every citizen eligible and wanting to vote can vote, either in person, by mail, or via secure technology. Set standards for early voting dates, and election

• See **WORD MATTER** page 11

Four amendments to the U.S. Constitution were ratified in order to provide the vote, which originally was left to the individual states, to more than just white, Christian, male, property owners.

The 15th Amendment, ratified in 1870, gave African American men the vote, however some states employed literacy tests to establish barriers not placed upon white men.

The 19th Amendment, ratified in 1920, provided women with the vote.

In 1964, the Twenty-fifth Amendment eliminated poll taxes on African American voters.

And, in 1971, the 26th Amendment lowered the voting age to 18, so as to honor those who were old enough to serve and die in America's wars, but until then, not to vote.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibited discrimination based on race, national origin, or membership in a language minority group. Parts of this law have been rolled back through recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions, indicating that at least a portion of the American political class doesn't want everyone – read: minority voters – to have an equal opportunity to vote.

One might be excused for thinking that by now, everyone who is a citizen, who is old enough, and who registers to vote, can vote. It would be nice if this were so, but it's not.

If you're shaking your head, join the club.

It's no secret that the political parties in America (Word Matter's favorite punching bags), along with their corporate patrons, have enormous, undue, and frustrating influence over almost every aspect of every election anywhere, anytime on any level of government. This includes so-called non-partisan elections.

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...JAWBREAKER continued from page 10

Steele, Steele was wanted on fugitive warrants for skipping Macon County Superior Court in June.

Ennis, 60, is accused of helping Steele, 47, elude law enforcement after Steele skipped a \$2.5 million bond. He didn't show up in June as ordered in Macon County Superior Court for court dates to face charges that were made in relation to Operation Jawbreaker.

Operation Jawbreaker targeted a well-organized criminal enterprise involved in distributing large quantities of methamphetamine and heroin – not only in Macon County, but in Western North Carolina and North Georgia.

In the April 2018 sweep that resulted in 25 arrests, Ennis was charged with continuing criminal enterprise, conspiracy to traffic opium/heroin, conspiracy to traf-

fic methamphetamine, trafficking opium/heroin, possession with intent to manufacture, sell or deliver methamphetamine, maintaining dwelling/place, possession of heroin, possession of methamphetamine.

Steele was arrested for continuing criminal enterprise, conspiracy to traffic opium/heroin, trafficking opium/heroin, possession of heroin, deliver heroin X2, and possession of a controlled substance on jail premises.

Lasts week, District Attorney Ashley Welch asked Macon County Senior Resident Superior Court Judge Bill Coward to revoke Ennis' bond last Tuesday in court, however Judge Coward did not order a revocation.

Ennis' defense attorney, Wade Collins, argued against the bond

revocation, saying the allegations from Transylvania County are, at this juncture, unproven. His client has not fled the jurisdiction since being charged in Jawbreaker, and he would not flee now, Collins told the judge.

While the bond was not revoked, Judge Coward did set a \$700,000 bond for Ennis for the new charges of harboring a fugitive in addition to a previous bond. Ennis remains in custody at the Macon County Detention Center. Ennis' is scheduled to appear in Transylvania Court in November for his second appearance on those charges. His next Macon County appearance is scheduled for February 15, 2021. Steele, who is scheduled to appear in court in September 2020, also remains in custody.

...HOUSING continued from page 1

tions to work toward a sustainable economy," said Chamber executive director Kaye McHan. "With the hospital seeking ways to fulfill their need for employee housing it

brought the need of all businesses to the surface."

Basically, the answers mimicked what is already known – the home price range and the annual

income of Highlands' workforce does not afford workers the luxury of owning a home – especially

• See HOUSING page 19

together WE CAN MAKE A difference

"As mayor of Highlands and a long-time resident, I want you to know I support the Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation and the tremendous impact they're having in the areas of COVID-19, improved access to healthcare, education and other initiatives that are making us a safer, healthier community, and I encourage everyone to learn more about how they can help too."



Pat Taylor
Mayor, Highlands, NC

**Please consider a donation to the
Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation.**
Visit hchealthfnd.org to learn more.

 **Highlands
Cashiers
Health Foundation**

Lifting health and well-being, together

hchealthfnd.org



...LETTERS continued from page 7

begins the first time and every time we find a reason for living – a goal, a purpose, a mission, a desire that excites, energizes, and gives us courage.

All happy events create a new life, one that might last for decades or might end in a few memorable moments. Each of them either has passed or will pass in time. The same is true of unpleasant events. They may be long or short in duration. They are all destined to pass away.

So, we don't - or shouldn't live just one life. We have the opportunity to live hundreds of lives, or thousands of them during our visit to this small planet. After all, Grandma Moses started to paint when she was well past the retirement age. People become clergy-people at 70. Some enter college in their 60s and some run their first marathon after that "big four-oh." Such people always look ahead to the life they will spend rather than back at the lives that have been spent.

I like the sad epitaph about a man who didn't share this point of view:
"How sad that he died at forty,
With most of his living undone.
But sadder still that he hung around....
To be buried at eighty-one"

**Kenny Youmans
Highlands**

• See LETTERS page 14

...WORD MATTER continued from page 9

day/dates, as well as voting times and sites. Make absentee ballots available in advance, so registered voters can review them, and then mail, scan and email, or physically deposit them at secure sites.

Fifth, make election-related crime a serious felony that includes actual jail time. From fraudulent voting to campaign fraud, to election-related crimes by candidates, campaigns, and/or parties. As some might say, if you break the law, we lock you up.

Voting is the most important thing we get to do. We must demand that our leaders make elections on every level free, fair, and accessible to everyone eligible and willing to vote.

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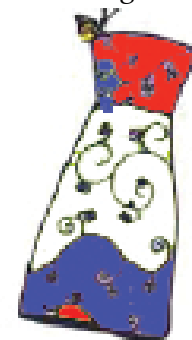
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PEAK EXPERIENCE

...LETTERS continued from page 11

It's time to organize your voting plan

Dear Editor,

This election year is probably the most intense that any of us can ever remember. We must all make the effort to express our opinions and hopes for the future. We don't want to let it go by without participating and then look back later with regrets. Everyone needs to make sure to VOTE!

Being accorded the right to vote is both a privilege and a responsibility. In this strange COVID-19 times the responsibility presents an entirely new question for many of us – How to vote? Maybe you're thinking "it's not safe this year" or "it's too complicated" or it's too much trouble" or even "it doesn't really matter that much". Please know that it does matter. Every vote is important

and the very best way to have your voice be heard and counted.

Voting in this election requires each of us to educate ourselves regarding the options available and to plan ahead in order to be safe health-wise and to be assured that our votes will ultimately be counted. Informed voters will come to learn that, following certain guidelines, they can maintain flexibility to vote in a manner that feels best for them.

Many nonprofits have seen the benefit of doing mailings of absentee ballot requests to certain voters so you may have been a lucky recipient and have one step already covered. If not, you can request your absentee ballot on line at NCSBE.gov. You will not receive a ballot unless you complete

the request form.

After completing the request form and receiving your absentee ballot, one can then plan to vote by either of four options: 1) vote in person either by "early voting" (which will begin in Highlands on October 15th and continue until October 31st) or by voting in person on Election Day itself – November 3rd. You can vote in person even if you received an absentee ballot. A bar code on the absentee ballot prevents voting twice. 2) vote by mail which will commence after absentee ballots are mailed out beginning September 4th and continue until October 27th (due to concerns about the postal speed these days it is advisable to mail as early as possible) 3) bring your completed absentee ballot to your "early voting" polling place (it will not be accepted on Election Day) and just turn it in rather than going through the voting process. 4) hand-carry your completed absentee ballot to the Board of Elections at the County courthouse.

Please know that you must have a witness on hand when filling out an absentee ballot.

At this point there has not been any approval to have ballot boxes placed in Highlands but one could reasonably expect to encounter very few people at the Highlands polling venue (the Rec Park/Civic Center) during early voting. However you choose to do it, again, be sure to VOTE!

You can get answers to any of your voting questions by either calling the Macon County Board of Elections at 828-349-2034 or going on-line to the North Carolina State Board of Elections at NCSBE.gov. You can also register to vote at NCSBE.gov if you have not had a chance to do so yet.

Vivian Brewer
Indivisible Highlands



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•Article Series by Plateau Magazine

To purchase your virtual ticket to the 2020 Cashiers Designer Showhouse, visit <https://www.cashiershistoricalsociety.org/virtual-showhouse-tickets>.

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The Showhouse is the Cashiers Historical Society's largest annual fundraiser, providing critically needed funds for operations and the preservation of historical buildings and grounds. Taking the Showhouse virtual is a huge financial impact on the organization. Please support The Showhouse during this difficult time by purchasing a ticket today!

The \$25 virtual ticket includes:

- Video Tour of the Showhouse and Glamping Tent

- 3D Matterport Tour of the Showhouse, Glamping Tent, and Silver Run Reserve (Donated by Larry Madden of Innovative Pix)

- Access to View and Shop Designer Furnishings, Art, and Vendors (20% of these sales go back to the Cashiers Historical Society)

- A Showhouse-based Zach-tivity Packet

- Interview with the owners of H+K Gallery on "Southern Art and its History Across the Plateau"

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Charming cottage on Bearfoot Lane off of Flat Mountain Estates. 3BD/3 1/2 BA, open living dining area with gas fireplace. Kitchen with ea- in bar. Nice view, covered back and front decks. Extra lot can be purchased with home. HOA fees include road maintenance, water, well and landscaping. Offered at \$699,000. mls #92487



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In Mirror lake area, this 3BD/2BA lovingly renovated with bright open plan with bamboo floors. Great room has cathedral ceilings, and opens onto a huge covered entertainment porch. Master on main with a deck and views. Lovely guest suite in the lower level with sitting room and morning kitchen, laundry room and storage. Parking and a carport. Offered at \$650,000. mls #93727

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

Fear Not

By Sam Forrester
Whiteside Presbyterian Church

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10

If you take time to read through the Bible you will find that this phrase "Fear Not" is all through its pages. Why is that? It's because man is lost and helpless in and of himself. How can any man on his own stand against the forces of nature? He is totally dependant on nature to provide his food, clothing and shelter. The world in which we live is constantly changing, sometime for the good, sometime for the worse and we have absolutely no control over any of it. Look at the devastation the hurricane in Louisiana caused.

We are seeing that with this Covid-19 virus. That there is nothing we can do to stop this virus. Yes, some are trying to develop a vaccine but that takes time and leaves us all vulnerable. A great fraud is being perpetrated on us as a whole, in order to give us some sense of hope. False hope is never good. It always leads into darkness. It will in the end deprive you of your freedom. The fraud is the idea that masks will keep you safe from the virus. Read the box these masks come in and they will tell you these mask do not stop viruses. So, why are they pushing this idea of masks so hard.

If you want to destroy our sense of community, the first thing you need to do is separate people from one another. Some cities are not allowing churches to meet because they know strong ties are developed where the gospel is clearly preached. Do you not think it strange that bars can be open and riots allowed to go on and churches can't meet? When everybody is hiding behind a mask and are fearful of any who don't wear the mask, stress grows and people take sides and war breaks out. Islam makes its women wear mask in order to dehumanize them, to make them property. Do you really want to see that in our country? People dehumanized and thus of less value than those who govern them. That is exactly where this is leading.

I believe this pandemic is serious and needs to be addressed with honest ideas about how to stop it. As a Christian I know God would tell us, as he did in Isaiah's day, "fear not". God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. He is the sovereign God and is in control of everything happening in this world. Therefore when he says "Fear not, for I am with you." It is true and he will strengthen us to face all the trials that come our way. He will help us and uphold us by His righteous hand. You can know this is true because he also sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ to do for you those things you could not do for yourself to save your soul. Stop trusting in yourself and in your government and place all of your hope and trust in the great Triune God and "fear not".

The greatest thing any man should fear is the loss of his soul. There is a sure hope that delivers you from that loss. So, fear not and believe on Jesus Christ. There is also hope that can change your view of life and death. That comes through your trust in God and the work of Jesus. If you know Jesus the fear of death is removed and the hope of an eternal life is secured. No virus or sickness of any kind can make you fear because you have the promise of God that he will take care of you no matter what. Therefore, go in the hope of Jesus Christ and fear not what this world throws at you.

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

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...VOTE continued from page 1

Election Macon County saw just 1,600 absentee ballot requests the entire election. As of last Friday, the Macon County Board of Elections had received over 2,500 requests for absentee ballots and the official request period hadn't even opened.

As of August 30, the North Carolina State Board of Elections reported 535,148 absentee ballot requests – with 65 days before the election. During the 2016 Presidential election, 34,292 absentee ballots were cast. The number of absentee ballots cast by absentee voters nearly doubled, from 14.7 million in 2004 to 24.8 million in 2016. Mail voting was tracked beginning in 2008, and the number showed a steady increase through 2016, more than tripling from 2.4 million in 2008 to 8.2 million in 2016.

Voters may call the North Carolina State Board of Elections or their county board of elections and request a blank absentee ballot request form be sent to them by mail, e-mail, or fax.

Voters will also be able to submit online requests for absentee ballots on North Carolina State Board of Elections online portal, which went live September 1.

“When a voter receives their requested absentee ballot materials in the mail it will contain the ballot, instructions, and the envelope to send the completed ballot back to the BOE office,” said Thibault. “Voters will mark their ballot, once completed they will place it in the return envelope, seal it and then sign the back of the envelope in front of one witness, the witness will then sign it. The voter should then send the envelope containing their completed ballot back to the BOE office as soon as possible. Voters can either return their completed absentee ballot by mail, or they may personally bring

...PHASE 2.5 continued from page 1

step forward move into Phase 2.5 starting this Friday, September 4th at 5pm. Mask mandates and other prevention methods remain in effect and are even more important to contain the virus, Cooper said.

Phase 2.5 means the following for North Carolina:

- Mass gathering limits will increase to 25 people indoors and 50 people outdoors from the current limit of 10 indoors and 25 outdoors.
- Playgrounds may open.
- Museums and aquariums may open at 50% capacity.
- Gyms and indoor exercise facilities, such as yoga studios, martial arts, and rock climbing, as well as skating rinks, bowling alleys, indoor basketball, volleyball etc., may

the ballot back to the Board of Elections office, or they may even drop it off at an early voting site when early voting begins. Voters are not allowed to drop a completed absentee ballot off at a polling location on Election Day.”

For those planning to vote in person, safety precautions will be taken during the November election, as they were during the second primary which occurred in June. Voting booths will set at least 6 feet apart and sanitized between each voter. Voting will have one entrance and one exit and masks will be required.

“The BOE poll workers are required to wear masks if not behind plexi-glass shields. Masks, gloves, face shields will be provided for any voter who would like to use one, however, we cannot mandate that a voter use the PPE that we provide. Voters will be provided a pen to mark their ballot – that pen is theirs to keep -- we will not be reusing pens for this election,” said Thibault.

Meanwhile, some voters may have received mail stamped as “Absentee Ballot Request Form” even though they did not request a form. Some of these were sent out by political parties or voting organizations based on voter registration database.

Similar to the political mailings people receive during elections, those address were used to send the documents for individuals wanting to submit a request for absentee voting to fill out and return by mail to the board of elections.

These mailings do contain legitimate ballot request forms. They come with a postage-paid return envelope addressed to the Macon County Board of Elections which will then fulfill the ballot request.

open at 30% capacity.

- Bars, nightclubs, movie theaters, indoor entertainment facilities, amusement parks, dance halls will remain closed. Alcohol can't be served after 11 p.m. at restaurants through Sept. 30.

- Large venues remain subject to the mass gathering limits.

In addition, outdoor visitation at nursing homes or skilled nursing facilities is allowed. To participate, nursing homes must meet several requirements, including, but not limited, not having a current outbreak, having a testing plan and updated written Infection Control or Preparedness plan for COVID-19, and having adequate personal protective equipment. This is in effect through Sept. 22.

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Aug. 24. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Aug. 24

• At 3 p.m., a breaking & Entering with burglary was reported at a residence on Laurel Street where tools valued at \$300 were stolen.

Aug. 25

• At 11:10 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on US 64 west and Third Street.

Aug. 26

• At 4:29 p.m., theft of a purse from a vehicle on Spring Street was reported which included money, jewelry, credit cards and more.

Aug. 27

• At 9:53 a.m., a breaking & entering with burglary was reported at a residence on US 64 west where numerous household items were taken.

• At 11:57 p.m., Gerardo Garcia Rubio, 39, of Highlands, was arrested for DUI on Main Street. He was issued a \$1,500 unsecured bond. His trial date is Oct. 5, 2020.

Aug. 28

• At 10:15 a.m., officers were called to the Rec Park pool about a physical altercation between two male subjects.

Aug. 29

• At 1:18 p.m., a shoplifting incident was reported at Potpourri 2 on Main Street where a piece of jewelry was taken.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Aug. 26.

Aug. 26

• At 6:47 p.m., the dept. aided in a rescue in the Cullasaja River where a man was stranded on a rock in the middle.

Aug. 27

• At 9:49 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Church Street.

Aug. 28

• At 3:35 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to Highlands Plaza.

Aug. 29

• At 1:39 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Split Rail Row.

• At 3:21 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

Scaly Mountain business owner asks for info on a robbery

On Monday morning, Aug. 24, the MC Sheriff Office was called about a breaking & entering with theft from vehicles parked at Jesse's Tree Service on Hale Ridge Road in Scaly Mountain.

According to owner Jesse Finley, based on footage from a motion camera activated around 5 a.m. at a residence next door, two vehicles pulled into the lower entry road of the parking area where his trucks were parked in which equipment was locked and secured.

His equipment trucks' lock boxes were broken into with the locks on each broken and numerous items removed valued at \$10,000.

Finley believes this was done by someone who knew where the items were and how to get to them quickly.

...HOUSING from page 10

a single parent with a family or a young professional – nor are there enough “long-term” rental options for employees who work in Highlands.

According to responses, housing is completely out of balance in Highlands, and has gotten exponentially worse in the last year with previously affordable rental homes being turned into vacation rentals. This means employees must commute anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour from areas off the mountain or opt to live with several roommates to afford rent in Highlands.

Most business owners said their employees were looking for rentals, not homes to own – in the price range of \$750 a month – which is near impossible to find in Highlands or Cashiers.

“A single person making a normal salary in Highlands cannot even afford the \$750 price range,” responded one.

When asked the preferred price point for home ownership the range of \$100,000-\$250,000 was noted.

But not only are such housing prices basically non-existent, even that price range is unattainable for hourly workers.

“For many, even a small home is completely unattainable. These are people who cherish this community but

“Not every lock box was broken into only the boxes which had the most valuable items such as chainsaws and climbing gear,” he said. “We are hoping someone who was coming down Hale Ridge Road between 4-6 a.m. may have seen vehicles pulled over on the shoulder of the road directly across from the Scaly Mountain recycle center.

Finley said it's possible the thieves were spooked by a passerby because it was obvious they tried to take a log splitter which was moved from its original location, as well as a pole saw and a bag of climbing ropes that were left out of place.

If anyone remembers any information of the type, color, make or model of vehicles in that area early Monday morning they are asked to call Jesse's Tree Service at (828) 342-1974 and the Macon County Sheriff's Office at (828) 349-2263.

feel there is no hope of long-term success. Areas zoned for smaller construction would be a game changer,” said one.

Survey respondents also said it is very difficult to retain or attract new employees for year-round or seasonal staff.

“When we have been able to retain our staff, it is still difficult for them to invest in our communities. It's sad that there isn't more affordable rental property for employees.”

One business owner said he saw the survey as another step in getting the Town Board to realize the town needs to play an active role in housing.

“I'm very disappointed that the town has not only not addressed the issue but compounded the difficulty by disallowing multi-family or smaller lot sizes in town. There should be a designated zoning area for affordable housing.”

Another said he is under no illusion the town will provide funds, or tax breaks for workforce housing.

“But the town does have planning, conditional zoning, water and sewer that can be used to help the housing shortage.”

All who answered the survey, said they were dissatisfied with Highlands current housing situation and 20 said they would be interested in an employer-assisted housing initiative.

– Kim Lewicki

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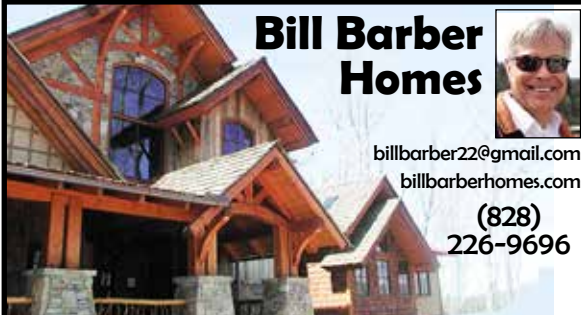
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