

Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 18, Number 14 Real-Time News, Weather & WebCams: HighlandsInfo.com Thurs., April 8, 2021

Highlands School sticking to schedule for remainder of '20-'21 school year

Mid-march, Governor Cooper signed Senate Bill 220 into law. Senate Bill 220 requires Local Boards of Education to provide in-person learning for grade K-5 in Plan A, and for grades 6-12 in either Plan B or Plan A, while meeting all health and safety requirements in the Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit (K-12). Plan A means that all students

• See **SCHEDULE** page 17

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Living for 100 years is no small feat!



Mildred Zachary Wilson, joined here with her sisters Lillian Waller and Lucille Potts has seen some changes in her 100 years. Last week she celebrated her 100th birthday twice – once on Monday and again on Thursday with luncheon celebrations that included a host of extended family members and friends.

Daughter of Lyman and Dora Zachary, Mildred was born on April 5, 1921, and upon graduation from Highlands School married to Curt A. Wilson.

Together they created Wilson Electric, now Wilson Gas Service of Highlands and Cashiers.



For a little over a week, motorist travelling US 64 west were greeted with traffic lights and one lane for travel but with work finishing up early, US 64 west is open and it's business as usual. – Photo by Kim Lewicki

Repairs at Bridal Veil and the paving of business district have finished up early

N.C. Department of Transportation crews completed the repair job at U.S. 64 at Bridal Veil

Falls ahead of schedule. It was slotted to be completed April 16. The highway is now open without traffic lights and without detours to and from Highlands

• See **REPAIRS** page 6

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Beware of legislation double talk

I'm always on alert while the North Carolina legislature is in session, especially in April when new bills are being proposed. There is one proposed bill, SB 349/HB401-Increase Housing Opportunities, that really causes me concern. It sounds so good, who wouldn't want more housing opportunities amid the current state and national housing crisis?



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

But, upon further review, I see the bill as another effort by the legislature to preempt local government. The proposed legislation would overturn R1 and other single-family zoning in all the municipalities of North Carolina. Under this law, local R1 zoning would have to permit duplexes, triplexes, quadriplexes and town homes. Accessory dwelling units would also be permitted. Communities could not have ordinances that only permitted single family dwelling on residential parcels. Furthermore with the addition of units, there could be no parking limits for added units, nor could a town set limits on future density levels.

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www.highlandsinfo.com

Phone: (828) 200-1371

Email:

HighlandsEditor@aol.com

Publisher/Editor: Kim Lewicki

Reporters: Brittney Lofthouse

Brian O'Shea

Digital Media/Circulation - Jim Lewicki

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

Highlands, N.C., 28•• 741

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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.

If that were not enough, there are barriers in the proposed legislation to curtail neighborhood legal disputes involving developments. In other words, if a developer decided to put multiple dwellings on a 1-acre lot and could meet soil and water requirements, neighbors in a subdivision would have little or no legal recourse. For that matter, municipalities would be in the same situation.

The North Carolina League of Municipalities has come out against SB 349/HB401. The bill does have bipartisan sponsors, Senators Edwards, Newton and Fitch. The League of Municipalities position is that a sweeping one size fits all bill does not address the unique situations of individual communities. There is also the concern about yet another preemptive piece of legislation that erodes a town's ability to respond to residents' needs and desires.

Ironically, in some quarters this bill is be touted as a way to address affordable, workforce housing. In fact, the bill has no provisions for workforce housing. A developer could build in residential zones extremely expensive homes near the business district of Highlands, even VRBO them at premium rates, under this legislation.

Anyone who has concerns about this pending legislation should contact our senator and state representative. Contact Senator Kevin Corbin at corbin@dnet.com, and Representative Carl Gillespie at karl@karlgillespie.com.

On another topic, I have received complaints about folks continuing to use non-conforming trash cans that are not bear-resistant nor toters. The town does enforce the bear-resistant totter ordinance. Nevertheless, a person can have a regular trash can at their residence. I have several around and in my pottery studio and outdoor fireplace, but I don't put household, kitchen garbage in them. The ordinance prohibits residents from placing household garbage in these regular trash cans and placing them on the street curb for garbage pickup. Our sanitation crews report violations to our police officer who is in charge of code en-

• See MAYOR page 21

• HIC'S VIEW •







To all businesses

The Highlands Community Plan study is currently underway. This plan will guide future policy making in Highlands and will likely impact your business as well as members of the community. Your input is critical to the ultimate creation of a plan that includes the knowledge and insight of our business community.

Here is the link to the 10-minute survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HighlandsBizSurvey>

• WEATHER •

Thu, 8-Apr	Fri, 9-Apr	Sat, 10-Apr	Sun, 11-Apr
			
61°F 49°F	64°F 48°F	61°F 48°F	66°F 43°F
Cooler; a stray p.m. t-storm	Couple of thunderstorms	A few showers in the morning	Plenty of sunshine
RealFeel® High: 63 Low: 54	RealFeel® High: 66 Low: 51*	RealFeel® High: 62 Low: 46*	RealFeel® High: 72 Low: 52

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• LETTERS •

Apparently, anything goes on the Highlands roadsides

Dear Editor,

Over the past several years those of us living near or off of Highway 28 south (The Wallhalla Road) have been curious about the roadside horror show. Drive south from Bryson's about a mile—or less—and there is a junkyard on one side and a landfill on the other.

I know most of our city government employees must live off of 64 or 106 because they would not allow this ugliness to exist if they had to see it.

We are well within town limits but absolutely off the radar.

Yes, we have complained. Yes we have brought it before the various town boards. Yes we have been promised “to look into it”. Really?

Isn't there an ordinance which requires screening for unsightly industries along the road, OEI screens beautiful areas with fast growing trees, but we can't screen unsightly ones?

I am talking about wrecked cars within a couple of feet of the roadway, one horribly mildewed Audi which has been sitting roadside for years, plus various messy vehicles everywhere,

The other side of the road has signs asking for dirt—DIRT—to cover what once was a beautiful rock garden. Dirt piles make it look like a landfill.

Why doesn't that matter? Why is it OK within the town of Highlands to have eyesores galore while the town talks about paving. It is not right.

**Glenda Bell
Highlands**

Litter abounds on GA Road - NC 106

Dear Editor,

Surely, I am not the only one driving from the Georgia line into Highlands to be appalled by the amount of litter along the Dillard Road.

For 20 of my 39 years in business in Highlands as Juliana's, I sponsored an Adopt-a-Highway section of this road and it was kept much cleaner. The business sponsoring a portion of this road now has neglected to keep it clean.

As well as litter along this road that leads to Highlands, there is vandalism. The two overlooks have had the stone pillars' wooden railing smashed and one of the USFS signs has been knocked down twice.

The individuals doing this littering and vandalism hopefully do not reside in this beautiful area. They have no regard for why Highlands, NC is a destination for those seeking nature and community at its finest.

We need to have area groups organized to keep the roads into Highlands free of litter year-round. One litter pickup in the spring is insufficient.

Help is needed now as the Dillard Road is the main road to our beloved Highlands. At the moment, this road is an embarrassment.

**Julian Stottlemeyer
Highlands**

Despite what politicians say, North Carolina's inclusion in Medicaid is a long way off

Dear Editor,

After reading the article entitled: “NC may join others and expand Medicaid,” I came away with the impression that our elected officials from Western North Carolina are ready to vote for Medicaid Expansion. That is not the case.

The NC General Assembly has voted multiple times against the program that would provide health care insurance to people who earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid, but too little to qualify for a marketplace subsidy. That is about 600,000 North Carolinians.

Senator Corbin says he will be filing a bill that would expand access to healthcare. Do not be confused. The partial expansion that Senator Corbin spoke of is not the solution, nor is it Medicaid Expansion. It is a band-aid on a gaping wound. Why cover some when we can cover all?

Why leave Federal money on the table that would pay for this coverage? The latest COVID relief package will bring \$1.7 billion into our state over the next two years IF we expand Medicaid. With Senator Corbin's plan? Nothing.

A statewide poll found that 64% of Republicans, 76% of unaffiliated voters, and 83% of Democrats support closing the Medicaid gap. Saying “I don't think there's the votes in the House or Senate to get that” treats our lives like they're a political game. Rural North Carolinians are dying. We need health insurance now. And we need Senator Corbin to fight for what we need, not just what's politically convenient.

**Jean Wright
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...REPAIRS continued from page 1

via Buck Creek Road.

According to Division 14 Maintenance Engineer Wesley Grindstaff, the repairs needed to be made to secure the structural integrity of the road.

“It was necessary to limit the possibility of long-term damage to the highway, and it was necessary for the safety of many visitors and residents in the area.”

Heavy rains from Hurricane Zeta in October damaged the drainage pipe under U.S. 64 that carries water from the falls under the highway and washed away material supporting the highway.

NCDOT crews have removed the broken pipe and installed a new pipe under the roadway. They also rebuilt the slope below the road by building a new embankment one stone at a time.

NCDOT officials developed a plan with the U.S. Forest Service to limit impacts on the forest below the road.



The drainage pipe under US 64 that carries water away from the falls was replaced and the embankment repaired – photo by Kim Lewicki

On Tuesday, a new guardrail was installed along the road opposite the falls where the damage occurred.

The roadway around Bridal Veil and the parking areas will be patched and paved as soon as that job can be scheduled.

Main Street Paving

In town, the paving of Main Street from 1st and a bit beyond

5th street as well as south 4th Street to NC 28 south and north 4th Street to Maple Street has also been completed ahead of schedule.

Next up is the striping of the parking spaces that have been outlined with white dots throughout the business district.

A patch crew will come soon to patch areas on US 64 east past Maple and NC 28 south past 4th Street. Once that is completed, paving will continue on those roadways as planned.

– Km Lewicki

...INVESTING continued from page 7

rent year-round, they are not all workers, they're business owners, retirees and others too. We need homes for these people in our town, whether it's a home for sale or a home to rent, the need is there. We will get through this. The problem at hand reminds me of the parking problem. The REAL problem isn't when there's no place to park, it's when the parking spaces are empty. In the housing market, the REAL problem isn't when there are no houses to rent or buy, it's when there are too many empty homes. Be patient and be kind. I'll end with my Realtor prayer. "Lord, please let my sellers and landlords not be greedy and my buyers and renters not be needy."

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Surviving the housing shortage

"Spring buyers have 52% fewer homes to choose from" according to magazine.Realtor.

They were quoting Realtor.com's monthly housing trends report, and went on to report, nationwide, buyers seem to be in a hurry, perhaps trying to buy before further increases.

More homes will be listed in the weeks and months to come, but you can expect the prices to be higher.

In some parts of the country, home prices have skyrocketed.

In March 2021, Austin, TX ballooned to 39%, Buffalo, NY to 28% and Los Angeles to 24% over the previous month.

The national average list price in March was \$370,000 which is a 15.6% jump over March of 2020. Remember March of 2020?

In our Highlands-Cashiers Multiple Listing Service, which encompasses Highlands, Cashiers, Scaly Mountain, Glenville, Sapphire, Toxaway, Horse Cove and other fringe areas, the March 2021 average list price was \$788,512. Even though the average list price in our area is 2.13 higher than the national average, the increase compared to March of 2020 is very close at 17.7%.

To be more specific to our area:

March 2021 there were 90 closings with an average list price of \$788,512. and an average sales price of \$767,609. The average list-to-sales price ratio was 97%.

March 2020 there were 47 closings with an average list price of \$669,999 and an average sales price of \$632,714. The average list-to-sales ratio was 94%.

So, what happens next?

Now IS the time to sell, but you may want to carefully consider your options after the sale. Last year, we had many phone calls from jubilant sellers looking for a rental for the season. Some of them stating, "I just sold my house. I didn't expect it to sell so fast, now I need somewhere to go, the buyers want to take possession soon." Most were unpleasantly surprised to hear things like, "I'm sorry, we don't have anything for the season, no, there are no homes available for 1-3 months,



Jeannie Chambers
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they're booked up. No, we don't have a year-round rental home."

It is not unusual for our office to have vacation rentals that are also listed for sale, but last year all of those sold except for one, and activity hasn't slowed on that one either, it's just a matter of time.

The vacation rental market is suffering from a housing shortage just like the housing market.

Our area was one of "the lucky ones" during the pandemic. Not all resort areas fared the same results as

the western NC mountain region.

Yes, there are good things and not so good things that happen when all the available properties are full of people.

Some of the people are second homeowners, others new buyers, others transient vacationers, who may decide to make Highlands their home, or at least their home-away-from-home. All of them want the same thing. Peaceful times, some time with family while enjoying the beauty of our mountains. Some of the first timers won't be back because we're just too – whatever it is they don't like, or not-enough of whatever it is they DO want. But the majority of the first timers will be back because they've found a place much like we all did at one time. It doesn't matter whether if we were born here or not, the feeling of belonging or wanting to belong here is what gets into our blood and runs through our veins.

Some people come and some people go. Some stay for a few years, some stay a lifetime, while others come here to spend the rest of their life. We are saddened when some leave, especially when they die, and others, we never even knew they were here. Whether it was their choice to live in solitude or our fault for not reaching out, it's still a loss just the same. Everybody has a part in living here in these hills.

So, just how do we survive the housing shortage? We just do. We do it like we've survived all the other ups and downs of the real estate, vacation rental, and year-round housing for workers and people discovering our area, renting before they buy. You may be surprised to find out how many people

• See INVESTING page 6

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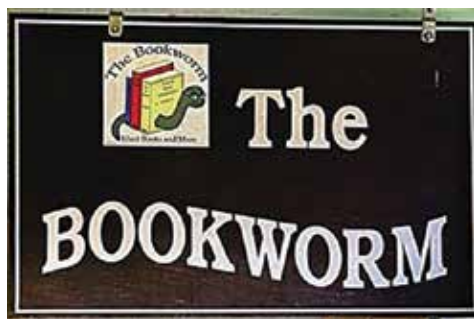
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CATSPEAK

• PRINCESS PUDDIN' SPEAKS •

Puddin' and the dentist

If you're one of my fans—and who isn't—you may recall that I don't care for vet visits. Well, this year's visit was no exception. I recall hearing Mum on the phone in December telling the vet that my dental appointment would have to wait for the New Year. It was

something to the effect that both she and Dad had dental work done in November plus the fact that my canine brother had his teeth cleaned in December. I was hoping she'd forget and I'd dodge that bullet.

Alas, Mum's memory still works, sometimes. I was grabbed, shoved in a carrying box, and driven to the dentist early one morning. My meowing the entire way didn't faze her. What part of no, no, no did she not understand?

You realize, don't you, that we kitties are knocked out to have our teeth cleaned? That's right. We're not like you humans who get to recline comfortably in a chair while still awake. And let me tell you, bad things happen when you're asleep at the vet. I woke up with four fewer teeth. They pulled four of my teeth, I tell you!

Mum was worried I would have trouble eating, and I considered letting her think I did. All too soon, though, I craved a treat, so I gave up on that idea and jumped on her desk and told her to dig out my treats. After several handfuls of those, I felt much better. I was starving after no food since midnight. I am a creature of habit and missed my puddle of milk that morning. Mum claims the vet told her not to feed



me too much the first night, but I put my paw down about that.

I ate almost an entire can of cat food after wailing plaintively at my dish as Mum put dab after dab of wet food in it. The worst was over. At least that's what I thought. But nooo. Mum grabbed

me, wrapped me in a towel, and handed me to Dad. What's up with this? I thought.

Oh, the indignity. What happened next was Mum squirting liquid antibiotics in my mouth from a syringe. I showed her when I deposited the first mouthful on Dad's shirt, but Mum didn't give up. Her aim was better the second time. Quite possibly, seven days of medicine squirts were worse than the vet visit. Between the two of them, Mum and Dad managed to sneak up on me and wrap me like a mummy every night for a whole week.

I tried hard to shun Mum as punishment, but it's hard to stay away from the woman with the kitty treats. Dad? I figured he was just following orders, so I forgave him and crawled in his lap to watch TV every night as usual. All I can say is that's one week I won't soon forget.

Mum and Dad should be happy I handled it as well as I did. Can you imagine what Grumpy Cat would have done?

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Beware of extra copperheads out snacking on cicadas in North Carolina this spring

By Robin Jarvis
North Carolina Nature

Recently, word got out about the upcoming emergence of the Brood X Cicada set to take place this spring in parts of North Carolina.

Expect the volume to roar to an all-time high when the event occurs, as this brood is the largest in mass of all of the 15 broods that appear periodically and in 17-year increments.

Well, as if the annoyance of the noise weren't enough, it seems there is more than one reason for this year's emergence to turn your head: copperheads!

While these uncertain times are limiting many aspects of life while you venture out to experience the elements and destinations that make North Carolina great, please take proper precautions or add them to your bucket list to see at a later date.

It turns out, copperheads love to snack on these crispy little creatures.



Copperheads will be feasting like kings on Brood X Cicadas set to emerge this spring.



And soon, Brood X will be covering the landscape in many parts of the Tar Heel State, as they make their way to the surface for the first time in 17 years in efforts to breed — and then go back deep underground again for another 17 years.

But thanks to the copperheads in North Carolina, many of them won't even make it back underground.

Copperheads are carnivores by nature. They eat mice, small birds, lizards, amphibians, other smaller snakes and they absolutely love cicadas.

A copperhead is typically an ambush predator and will lie in wait for long periods awaiting the next opportunity to dine.

The cicadas this year won't last long in a copperhead's territory.

Be on the lookout for copperheads anywhere you find cicadas this spring. You never know when one may be disguised by the landscape and you certainly won't want to step on one.

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• SMALL TOWN, BIG THOUGHTS •

The soothing sounds of the spring thaw

Though I hated to watch while all the daffodils and forsythia of these mountains shivered, the cold snap of the past week gave me a chance to have a last meeting with the icicles, to remember what I loved about winter. They returned as quickly as they had vanished when the balm of early spring started to come on, and as I write they are melting on the east slope near where I live on Brushy Face. Icicles are a kind of weather koan. They form when the air is sub-freezing but the ground has already started to melt off. Of course they are never the same when they return, taking on new points in new places, new ice accumulations, sculptures more extravagant than I've ever seen at any banquet, depending on the wind, and this variation and surprise pleases me more than I ever knew it could. For a couple of days last week, there was the opportunity to be in two seasons



Anna McDonald

at once, to experience the discomfort of transitions, to be given a chance to be more resilient and nimble than I wanted to have to be. Everyone waits for spring, but maybe people in the mountains wait for it differently, and longer. And this must be the spring of all springs, with more waiting -- for vaccines, for the slowing of death rates, for the opening of the social world -- than I have ever known.

In fact, despite the actual seasons, all of the last year has felt like a kind of winter; I have alternated between feeling cozy and feeling the onset of madness, back and forth, many times. Christopher Kurtz, a furniture maker I know in the Hudson Valley of New York, has made during the pandemic a large wardrobe which looks from a distance to be covered in a great billowing cloth, but come closer and you see that the undulation is actually in the carving. Something about the way that the object appears to be covered up speaks to the now: we have not been social witnesses to each other. Our houses lie around waiting to be dusted off and peopled again. Even introverts want to be invited to a party.

Living in the city, I had my favorite coffee shop, my favorite blocks to walk from here to there. In Highlands I have my favorite grotto for listening to the icicles melt. It is on the slope up the drive to Little Bear Pen mountain, and the sound of the melt there right now rivals all my favorite songs. I

have heard that melting glaciers (may they slow) sound like frying bacon from all the trapped gas and air being released. Icicle melt sounds like a symphony of drips, inside a cave, or like a microphone is being held up to an ordinary slow rain. And of course there is the distinct, uncanny sensation of standing there listening to this loud and constant trickle while not being rained on.

I started giving other awards inside my mind to that which has, collectively, saved me this year. Favorite mushroom (cordyceps), favorite lichen (usnea, also called old man's beard), favorite dock (Cliffside Lake), favorite encounter with a rattlesnake (Bartram Trail), favorite winter 50% off sale (JG Gabriel), favorite unaffordable object (a Chinese export urn lamp at CK Swan, \$1800), favorite seasonal discount (Half Mile Farm), favorite coffee and reading destination (Sylva, for White Moon Coffee and City Lights books), favorite seasonal mascot (stuffed prisoner at the old jail), favorite store relocation (Oakleaf into the old Stone Lantern), favorite procured non-native herb (saffron from the Spice & Tea Exchange), favorite donut (the Homer from Sugar Cloud), favorite secret coffee place (Wells Hotel) favorite bakery item (pimiento cheese biscuit at Bent Willow in Franklin), favorite local festival (Dahlia festival), favorite weaver (Mary Catherine at the Farmer's Market), favorite farmer and forager (Joey at the Mountain), favorite weed (jewelweed), favorite winter bird encounter (so many murders of crows).

In stoic philosophy, there is a practice called the last time meditation. You have to think of whatever you are doing, and you have to imagine that you are doing that thing for the last time, with the knowledge that someday, it really will be. Most last

• See McDONALD page 19

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The Literacy & Learning Center students enjoy visits from Ben the Reading Dog

By Brian O'Shea
Plateau Daily News

Ben the Reading Dog, a.k.a Ben Crenshaw, is an 85-pound silver lab who often visits students at The Literacy & Learning Center (TL&LC) for a bit of story time. During each visit, students gather around Ben and read a book of their choice aloud giving them a chance to work on their literacy skills.

"Reading aloud can sometimes be difficult for children, especially those who struggle overall with reading," said TL&LC Executive Director Bonnie Potts. "Having a friendly face like Ben's to listen patiently to them helps alleviate some of the anxiety associated with reading aloud and helps them grow as readers. We've seen a lot of this firsthand. The students are excited to see the dog and often volunteer to read aloud to him when otherwise they might not."

Aubrie Potts, 11, said she loves when Ben stops by for a visit.

"It's so fun when Ben visits because he's a dog, and I love dogs," said Aubrie. "He's really fun and sits down in your lap and listens to you read."

Miley Zagal, 9, said Ben is a such a good listener she started reading at home to her dog, Rocky.

"Rocky likes interesting adventure stories, especially about dogs," said Zagal. "He always lays down on my bed and listens really well and I really like reading out loud to him."

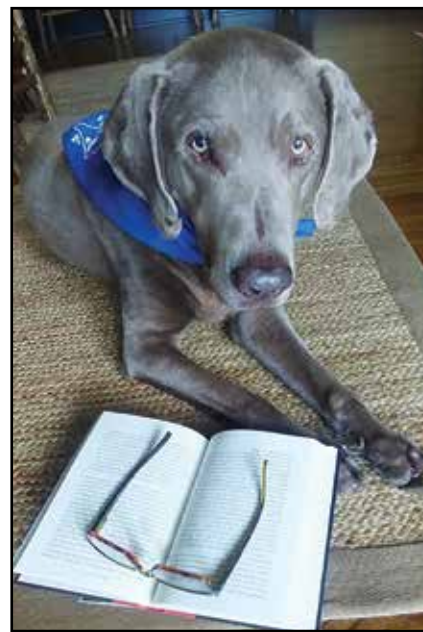
TL&LC Marketing Manager Jenni Edwards said it can be easier for children to read aloud to animals.

"It increases a student's confidence who may have trouble reading out loud," said Edwards. "Ben is an active listener, but not someone who will judge you. He is patient and good natured, and the kids love when he visits."

Ariana Trejo, 6, said she really likes reading to Ben at TL&LC but doesn't have a dog at home to read to, so she works with what she has.

"I read to my little sister, she sits there and listens," said Trejo. "But I think it's awesome because she learns new words."

Ben is a licensed therapy dog and has been volunteering at TL&LC since 2017. He is named after two-time Masters Tournament champion Ben Crenshaw.



Ben the Reading Dog.

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Ben the Reading Dog often visits TL&LC and listens to students read books aloud helping them improve their reading skills.

– Photos courtesy of the Literacy Council.



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Spring Home Improvement -2021

The Essential Guide to Spring Home Improvement

By Manasa Reddigari

Spring brings blooming flowers and budding trees, but it also brings a long list of home improvement chores that accumulated over the winter. Now is the time to

tackle cleaning projects, exterior maintenance, and routine HVAC checkups in preparation for the summer months ahead. But with so much to do, it can be hard to decide which tasks are essential and which can wait. Most homeowners will admit that they're short on the time (and manpower) required to complete all that must be done. So what do you do with a to-do list that never ends? Take a cue those in the business. With the help of their tips and expert advice, you might just gain the tools you need to chart a road map for your spring home improvement journey. So, get reading, then get to work on giving your home the TLC it deserves.

to employ an effective cleanser and a bit of elbow grease. For wood siding, use mild soap and water, then scrub with a gentle brush to remove spots and stains. If your home has brick siding, try a mixture of bleach and water to eliminate mold or mildew. And if you're looking for the lowest-maintenance siding material, consider vinyl. – cleaning vinyl means nothing more than rinsing with a garden hose. No matter what kind of siding you have, make sure you put a good cleaning toward the top of your springtime to-do list. Sparkling siding boosts curb appeal and keeps your admiring neighbors happy.

- Give faucets and sinks a facelift: Over recent years, numerous sink and faucet design trends have emerged, including deep basin sinks and faucets with detachable sprayers. But one trend has never been in vogue—mold and mildew-lined faucets and sinks. If your kitchen or bathroom sinks are less than fresh, clean them with a non-damaging solution like vinegar, lemons, or mild detergent. While a good cleaning can solve many sink problems, some issues—such as chipped enamel or stubborn rust stains—might call for a full replacement.

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Leesa Manley

Gene Borino

CLEANING

Don't consider your spring cleaning done and dusted until you have attended to hardworking surfaces and fixtures both indoors and out. Deep cleaning the oft-neglected—but vital—elements of your home like window sashes, exterior siding, and bathroom fixtures not only preserves, but also prolongs the life of these features.

- Wash windows: Giving windows a thorough cleaning requires more than polishing the panes. Inspect your windowsills, jambs, and sashes once a year for rot and mold, and replace the windows or casings as necessary. If your windows have seen better days, consider replacement windows, which can really boost curb appeal. As well, new window insulation technology affords more comfortable indoor temperatures, keeping warm air out in the summer and inside during the winter. And remember that even newer windows have to be maintained, and this task takes conscientious effort. To save time and elbow grease, consider purchasing no- or low-maintenance windows. Moisture-resistant vinyl windows. Because the frame is made of vinyl instead of wood, there's no need for paint and the frame is not prone to rot. Plus, easy-to-access tilt-in sashes make cleaning the exterior panes a breeze.

- Hose down exterior siding: A fresh-faced house begins with clean siding. No matter what kind of siding you have—wood, brick, or vinyl—you can start by giving your home exterior a quick hose-down. To banish destructive mold, mildew, and discoloration, however, you may need



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April Hours: Mon.-Fri. 8a to 5p
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Spring Home Improvement -2021

HOME EXTERIOR CARE

If Old Man Winter pummeled your home with snowstorms, deep freezes, and fallen trees last season, it may now have the damaged roof, gutters, doors, and walkways to prove it. Inspect exterior features for damage or deformity, replacing or refreshing them so they can continue doing the work they were designed to do, protecting your home from wind, rain, and other dangers.

- Check the roof and gutters: If, during your spring roof inspection, you observe broken, buckling, or missing shingles, you should either repair or replace the damaged sections to keep water and pests from entering your home. Likewise, replace cracked or sagging gutters so that water channels away from the foundation, where it can lead to flooded basements or worse. To get a start on your roof or gutter repair, check out the service ads in this issue.

- Update the front door, or more: A weatherworn entry door that bears no other signs of distress, such as cracks, dents, or a sagging frame, may just need a fresh coat of paint. In fact, paint can be a great solution for a tired exterior. Painting the exterior gives your home an all-new look, and it's a great option for those on a tighter budget. If your whole house could benefit from an up-

dated paint job, begin by choosing a paint color and prepping the exterior surfaces. Hose off dirt, scrape flaking paint, and caulk cracks and gaps before you get started to make your new paint job last longer. If you decide to have the work completed by a pro, consider calling one of the experts in this issue.

- Replace chipped walkways or patios: Winter weather is hard on concrete walkways and patios. Fluctuations in temperature—repeated freezing and thawing—can cause these hard surfaces to crack and chip. Spring is the perfect time to repair this damage. First, purchase a concrete repair mix from your local home center. Once you've gathered the necessary tools and materials, use a chisel and hammer to chip away loose pieces of concrete, then rinse the area before applying the repair compound with a putty knife. Pick a rain-free weekend for the fix to allow the patch enough time to set. Or, hire an expert!

HVAC

Soaring temperatures will be here before you know it, and by then it will be too late to perform preventive maintenance on your HVAC system. Now is the time to inspect your HVAC units and prepare them to handle the blistering summer. So, eyeball your air conditioner, attic fan, and ductwork for signs of trouble, replacing them if needed to ensure that fresh, cool air circulates throughout your home

no matter how hot it gets outside.

- Inspect the air conditioner: Power on your AC unit to make sure it's still providing clean, cool air to your home. If yours isn't quite cutting it anymore—if you have to endure poor indoor air quality, excessive noise, or uneven cooling—it's time to consider repairing or replacing it. Before you opt for a repair, take the unit's age into account; repairing an older model may not be worth it. An AC unit older than a decade “may already be on borrowed time.” It's important to evaluate the situation and select a course of action that will result in peace of mind and a cool, comfortable home.

- Test the attic fan: An attic fan keeps your home cool and your energy bills low. The downside of a whole-house fan, however, is that the fan motor frequently burns out. Test your attic fan motor by switching it on. Replace it if it won't run—most new motors cost between \$50 and \$100 and take little effort to replace. If you have an older model, though, consider the benefits of replacing the whole fan rather than just the motor. Newer fans boast greater energy efficiency, resulting in lower utility bills, so it may actually be more cost-effective to upgrade than to repair an old unit.

- Check ductwork for efficiency: Ducts that channel

• See GUIDE page 13

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As its name implies, universal design is meant to help everyone live comfortably and safely in their home. Regardless of age, size, and physical or mental ability, universal design best practices can improve living spaces for everyone, including:

- Elderly adults who want to remain at home throughout their golden years.
- Individuals who are significantly taller or shorter than the average person.
- Individuals with limited dexterity or mobility.
- Families who have young children.
- Individuals who have either a permanent or temporary disability.

While universal design best practices can be applied to the entire home, doors and windows are two of the easiest components that can be upgraded to best suit the needs of your family and guests.

In keeping with universal design best practices, we believe that windows and doors should be upgraded to provide comfortable, safe, and beautiful solutions that will serve your unique needs for decades to come.

Features to Utilize For Doors and Windows

Did you know that the right doors and windows can help to prevent in-home accidents, improve living conditions, and provide safety? Leveraging the power of universal design for your doors and windows makes sense in a world where life consistently throws unexpected curveballs. From that skiing trip that resulted in a six-month stint on crutches, to helping your elderly parents and loved ones maintain their

independence as they age, the right doors and windows can deliver a number of benefits.

No-Step Entryways, Wide Doorways & Drop-Down Thresholds

Universal design features state that every home should have at least one no-step entryway. A zero-step entryway ensures that people with mobility challenges and certain disabilities (such as being in a wheelchair) can more easily and safely enter and exit the home. In addition to the no-step entryway, the exterior doors should be at least 32 inches wide. Interior doors should be at least 30 inches wide. The latter measurements allow ease of access for individuals walking with a cane or walker, using crutches, or are wheelchair bound. The wider doorways also makes it easier for medical equipment and furniture, such as hospital beds, to pass through the threshold.

Another universal design component that can be implemented into doors and doorways is a drop-down threshold. The drop-down threshold creates an air-seal without compromising the no-step feature. In fact, a drop-down threshold delivers a seamless entry and exit for all individuals, while simultaneously improving energy efficiency levels by sealing in heat during the winter and air conditioning during the summer. The drop-down threshold is a great option for hinged doors; however, an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) sliding door provides the flexibility needed for large openings. An ADA sliding door is a great universal design feature that can be incorporated into both the interior and exterior of the home.



Spring Home Improvement -2021

Smart Home Features

Universal design ideas are about creating a more comfortable and safe living experience for everyone. In this vein, some universal designs focus on convenience. For example, remote control window shades or automated curtains are two great home features that can be easily controlled by your smartphone. The use of smart window shades or curtains can help to reduce optical strain, deliver additional levels of privacy, and improve the quality of life for individuals of all ages, sizes, and physical or mental ability.

Another smart home feature that can be applied to your exterior doors are keyless locks. Keyless locks remove the fumbling and dexterity issues that are often associated with traditional keys. The keyless lock option can involve a digital code or be synced to a smartphone. It can also be easily synced to an alarm system, so that you can receive alerts when your family members exit or enter the home.

Handle Designs That Maximize Efficiencies and Comfort

Universal design can easily be seen in window and door handles. Instead of using a crank or knob, a handle with a lever option improves the functionality of the window or door. Stainless steel or powder-coated handles add a touch of style and beauty without sacrificing function. The handle placement can also be customized to best accommodate the unique needs of your family and guests.

Easy to Open Windows and Doors

One of the final universal design components that should be implemented into your home's windows and doors has to do with ease of use. In layman's terms, windows and doors should be easy to open by any member of your family. From lever-style door handles that are easy to operate by anyone with dexterity issues, to lightweight materials, to automated features, your home's windows and doors should keep you safe, look stylish, and above all be easy to operate.

...GUIDE from page 13

air from the HVAC system to your home's interior spaces are notorious for collecting and distributing irritants and allergens.

These airborne annoyances can then make their way into the home, causing poor indoor air quality.

While you can easily clean your system's grilles and return registers to remove accumulated dust and grime, experts are better equipped to perform a comprehensive duct clean-up. Using truck-mounted suction equipment and other specialized tools, they can restore good air quality—and let you get back to more enjoyable spring activities.

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Friday: Managing Yourself In A Crisis

• BIZ/ORG. NEWS •

Rotary hears from Dr. Wilkes

Jonathan Wilkes, brother of Rotarian Christopher Wilkes, was the speaker for the March 23 Rotary Club of Highlands meeting. Dr. Wilkes is a UNC Chapel Hill graduate in Piano Performance who earned his PhD in Music Composition at the University of California Davis. A composer and acoustical performer, Dr. Wilkes described the broad range of applications open-source music software provides for musicians at all levels. He works primarily with PureData (PD) software which uses input from many different sources, tapes the sounds and allows the user to manipulate the sounds in many ways – essentially



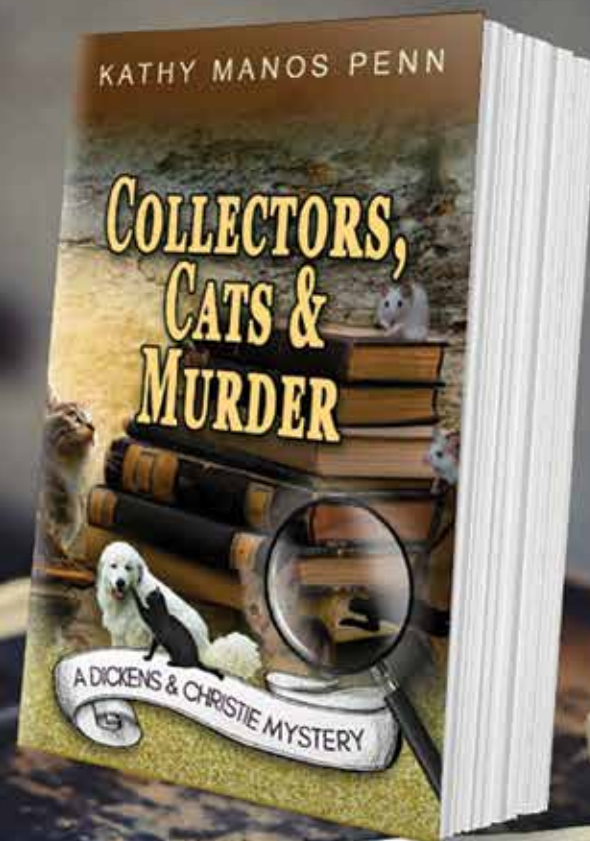
Dr. Jonathan Wilkes

allowing the consumer to build their own synthesizer. Wilkes uses PD to record himself and improve his performance; sometimes he “chops up” his recording and reconfigures the composition.

Dr. Wilkes also described Google’s “Summer of Code”, an international program that awards stipends to university students 18 or older who successfully complete a free

and open-source software coding project during the summer. He has served as a mentor to participating students for a number of years and spoke very highly of the program.

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...SCHEDULE continued from page 1

dents will return to classrooms. However, Cooper also said parents can still keep their children in virtual academies if they choose to do so.

"There is a full option for a parent to chose a virtual option for their children," he said.

Plan B means schools are limited to

50% of their maximum capacity with each district planning for students to alternate between in-person and remote lessons. Heightened safety procedures should still be implemented, including 6 feet of distance between all students and staff.

While the Macon County School system is currently meeting the requirements

that are outlined in Senate Bill 220, the school system can choose to allow all of students to return to school. The schools are still required to offer families the option of attending school virtually as well.

Now back from spring break, Mountain View Intermediate, Macon Middle School, and Franklin High School are operating under Plan A.

But Mountain View Intermediate School, Macon Middle School, and Union Academy will continue to require that each Friday be a virtual day in order to adequately interact with their virtual students.

Franklin High School and Macon Early College will operate under Plan A five days per week.

The current schedule of operations for Cartoogechaye Elementary, East Franklin Elementary, Iotla Valley Elementary, South Macon Elementary, Nantahala School and Highlands School will not change.

"We are keeping all the things we have done all year in place – masks, taking temps, social distancing, eating lunch in the classroom, deep cleaning the rooms on Friday, fogging the rooms twice per week, taking mask breaks outside only," said Highlands School Principal Brian Jetter. "Our students are used to doing most of these things, and we only have 35 days of school left this year."

Jetter also said it's best to err on the side of caution since there are strains of the viruses – variants – which are causing sickness and outbreaks affecting the young at high rates.

"We will continue to do remote learning on Fridays so students and teachers can continue to improve their teaching and learning skills remotely," he said. "There is no telling if we'll have to do this again or not. In addition, teachers are required to do deep cleaning in their rooms on Friday."

However, the last two Fridays of school – May 7 and May 14 – will in-person learning for everyone in school because those are state testing on those days.

The board of education said it's important to note that Senate Bill 220 requires that schools continue to adhere to the Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit (K-12).

While more of our students are allowed back on campuses, face coverings remain a mandate in North Carolina schools.

– Kim Lewicki

WCU extends optional satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading system for spring semester

Western Carolina University's Faculty Senate passed a resolution to extend its satisfactory/unsatisfactory guidelines for the 2021 spring semester due to the prolonged strain of non-standard teaching modalities at a primarily residential instruction institution.

Within the guidelines, faculty members will provide traditional letter grades as usual at the end of the semester. Students may accept their letter grade for a course or may request grades of satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A grade of satisfactory will be awarded, if requested, for any letter grade from A to C, and a grade of unsatisfactory will be awarded for any letter grade from C-minus to F.

Courses that are graded satisfactory or unsatisfactory will not be factored into a student's GPA, but they will count toward completion of the degree and required number of hours.

Students will have the option to petition the Registrar's Office to shift any or all of their courses to satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading by completing a grade change form that will be posted at registrar.wcu.edu on April 30. All student transcripts will include a note regarding the unusual circumstances of the semester.

Last semester, the Office of the Registrar reported the conversion of 1,759 letter grades to a satisfactory or unsatisfactory out of 51,234 grades needed and that 45 students from a student body of more than 12,000 improved their academic standing by using this option.

"Our faculty continue to showcase their dedication to the success and safety of our students while encouraging them and teaching with poise during a very difficult time in all of our lives," said Richard Starnes, WCU provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs. "Our students are working passionately and tirelessly despite the ongoing pandemic and we are grateful for their commitment to WCU."

Highlands School End of the Year 2020-21 Revised Calendar of Activities

EVENT	TIME	DATE/PLACE
AP Exams	AM+PM	May 3 – May 20
Reading EOG	8AM	Tuesday, May 11
Math EOG	8AM	Wednesday, May 12
5th, 8th grade Science EOG	8AM	Thursday, May 13
EOG Make-ups	8AM	Friday, May 14
Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 Academic & Athletic Awards and Scholarships		
New Gym	10AM	Tuesday, May 11
Yearbook Assembly: High School only		
Track	11AM	Friday, May 14
High School Pizza Lunch & Field Day to follow at Track Field Day ends at 2:30PM		
Grades K, 1, 2 Award Assembly		
New Gym	9AM	Tuesday, May 18
Grades 3, 4, 5 Award Assembly		
New Gym	10AM	Tuesday, May 18
Elementary Field Day	9AM	Wednesday May 19
MS Academic awards	10AM	Wednesday, May 19
MS Courtyard or old gym		
MS Graduation	5PM	Wednesday, May 19
MS Courtyard or old gym		
MS Field Day	TBA	Thursday, May 20
Graduation Practice	1PM	Friday, May 21
Track or Gym: To be decided by Thursday, May 20		

All seniors and mascots are required to attend.

Seniors/mascots that do not attend cannot participate in Graduation.

Graduation 10AM Saturday, May 22

Track or New Gym: To be decided by Thursday, May 20

Teacher Workday/Faculty Luncheon:

Noon Tuesday, May 25

Outside in rear drive-through weather permitting.

All faculty and Staff are required to attend.

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from March 29.

March 29

- At 10:45 a.m., the dept. investigated the source of smoke at a location on N. 4th Street.

- At 10:25 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a location on Hospital Drive.

March 30

- At 9:10 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on BigView Drive.

- At 5:38 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Brookside Lane.

April 1

- At 5:37 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on

NC 28 south.

- At 8:28 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east.

- At 12:13 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on BigView Road.

April 2

- At 8:13 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on NC 106.

April 4

- At 4:24 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on N. 5th Street.

April 5

- At 2:09 p.m., the dept. investigated the source of smoke at a location on NC 28 south.

...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING from page 18

be murdering your joy. Hidden sin, guilt, condemnation tucked away from the light of day needs to come out. Talk with someone trustworthy and credible. That which festers in the crawl space of your soul is damp, musty and mold ridden. Bring it out into the light and experience new life. You may wear doubt or fear or anxiety as your favorite outfit. God has a garment of praise for your spirit of heaviness.

Hug! A man named Eutychus fell from a third-floor window and died. He was raised to new life in the midst of a bear hug by the apostle Paul. New life is available to you and others through affection. Hug someone today. Hold someone's hand today. Let someone know you are not only physically there for them but emotionally and spiritually as well. I once read that we each need 12 hugs a day. If that is true is your affection account overdrawn?

Shaking! Christ was crucified on Friday as you know, and he was resurrected from the dead on Sunday. On each day there was an earthquake. In each instance there was a "shaking" and "quaking" going on. If you sense a loss of your foundation, if you no longer know exactly what you stand on or stand for, perhaps there is a shaking going on. Perhaps you are on the brink of newness, change and revitalization. God allows and at times brings about a shaking in our

lives to draw us nearer to Him as our foundation.

To truly experience newness of life one must come to understand that there is more to new life than acting on a few catch phrases. Most people fail to understand that resurrection is not something that Christ does for us. Resurrection is far more than that. Resurrection is far too important to have uncertainty about. A better way to look at resurrection has to do with the definition of the word. Christ Himself is resurrection. If you have Him, you have resurrection power and authority at work in your life. Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; (John 11:25)

We are each in dire need of new life in Christ and eternal life after we inevitably die. If you believe in Christ, your belief in Him provides you with new life. It may be a "stretch" for you, to "get up" and acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. It may be difficult to allow your pain, guilt and sin to "come out" before Him but He will love and forgive you. When He "shakes up" your life, it is not to harm or hurt you, it is to "hug" you. Humble yourself before Christ today. He has come that you may have life and life more abundantly. (John 10:10)



Plateau Pickup is extended to two dates: April 10 & 17

Volunteers are needed!

The Highlands Chamber of Commerce is hosting its annual Plateau Pickup in April. After considerable discussion about safety of volunteers and the amount of trash needed to be picked up, the Chamber has decided to extend the 2021 Plateau Pickup to two days: April 10 and April 17.

On April 10 pickup assignments will be the US Highways 64, 106 and 28. April 17 will be the downtown area. Families are encouraged to participate. For safety, younger children will be assigned with parents in the downtown area.

Volunteers will meet both dates at 8:30 a.m. at Kelsey Hutchinson Park. Social distancing will be practiced during the pickup. Bagged breakfast and lunch will be served by Fressers Courtyard Café to volunteers, and everyone will be supplied with gloves, pick up tools, safety vests, garbage bags, and a "thank you"

tee shirt.

For more information or to sign up contact the Chamber at (828) 526-2112 or visitor@highlandschamber.org.

Litter Sweep, the state's project name, is conducted the last three weeks of April every year. It's the North Carolina Department of Transportation's bi-annual statewide roadside litter removal initiative. In 2019 North Carolina residents, in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the US Forestry Service picked and bagged roadside trash into recyclable bags, then loaded them onto trucks for a grand total of 245 tons (489,000 pounds). Previously known locally as the Gorge Road Clean-up, the project now includes Highways 64, 106, 27 and the downtown Highlands streets. Over 80 volunteers from the plateau assisted in the clean-up.

What's more, they'll be back, and so, hopefully, will I, changed, older, vaccinated, and full of whatever is about to happen to me right after I chase this new-flying Carolina Swallowtail until it leaves me for the sky.

- Anna McDonald, a poet originally from Gainesville, GA, and most recently Brooklyn, NY, is Highlands' newest year-

...McDONALD from page 10

times come about without commemoration, because to live is to not know just when, or how, the story ends. I did not know when I saw my grandfather, who is the reason I live in Highlands, since I live in a house that he built, on a mountain that he loved, for the last time this fall. Compared with people, icicles are easier on the heart to imagine never seeing again.



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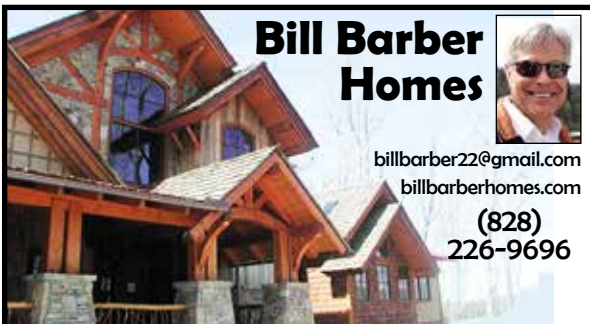
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...MAYOR continued from page 2

forcement. If a resident sees a violation, feel free to call it into the police department at (828) 526-9341. The code enforcement officer will be dispatched to investigate the complaint. The bears are stirring now that it is spring-time, so it is important that we all secure our household garbage.

Speaking of trash, I hope to see everyone at the Highlands Plateau Pickup on Saturday. Call the Highlands Chamber of Commerce at 526-2112 to sign up. Volunteers will gather at Founders Park at 8:30 am for instructions and assignments.

Chamber of Commerce Events slated for 2021

- Plateau Pick Up – April 10 & April 17
- Highlands is Blooming- May 9
- Meander in May – May 22
- Fri. & Sat. Outdoor Concerts May 22 – Oct. 31
- July 4th Fireworks and Concert – July 4
- Halloween On Main – Oct. 31
- Lighting of the Park and Main – Nov. 27
- Trim Our Town – Nov. 27
- Olde Mountain Christmas Parade – Dec. 4
- Santa in the Park- Nov 27th – Dec 24th
- New Snow Event coming Jan 2022

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- Are you looking for a summer job? We are still looking to fill the following positions: Kitchen Staff, Cabin Counselor, Health Center Coordinator (must be 21+, EMT certified or higher), CIT Mentor (21+), ASCENDER Mentor (21+) You can find more details about these positions and apply on our website: The MountainRLC.org. Please reach out with any questions or concerns at youthcamp@themountainrlc.org. I look forward to seeing your application! (st. 4/1)

HIGHLANDS ABC STORE –

IS TAKING APPLICATIONS for a full time clerk. Full benefits. Lifting up to 55lbs, standing for long periods, good customer communication, and some computer experience necessary. Apply at ABC store in Highlands Plaza. 828-526-5470 (st. 4/1)

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– Three-quarters acre needs restoration and creative ideas. Between Highlands and Cashiers off Hwy 64. 864-423-9623. (st. 3/25)

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AT DON LEON'S. Various duties. Call 828-200-0388.

PART OR FULL TIME SALES ASSOCIATE needed. – Retail experience preferred. Please call 828-371-2582. (st. 2/18)

WOLFGANGS RESTAURANT Now open for the season. Looking for full-time hostess (great pay) dishwasher, prep cook, pantry and waitstaff. PM shift only. Call Jacque at 828.526.3807 or email wom2@me.com. (st. 2/4)

LOOKING FOR A MATURE CAREGIVER/HOUSEKEEPER to care for elderly woman 3 mornings a week. Duties include house cleaning, and caring for elderly mom, including driving to appointments, etc. Decent car required. Experience necessary. Medical knowledge a plus. Please send inquiries/resumes to builtinl@aol.com. (st. 3/25)

CASTING CALL! The Highlands Playhouse is reopening and we are looking for talented and committed team members in a variety of roles. Leadership and box office staff positions are available (both full and part-time). Experience in business management/customer service and an interest in the arts is a must! The Highlands Playhouse is an 83 year old institution offering movies year-round and live entertainment in the Summer and Fall. Please send resumes and inquiries to HighlandsPlayhouse@gmail.

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LUXURY LODGE MANAGER NEEDED FOR LIVE IN POSITION. -- Prefer a local couple/individual to entertain and maintain facility while enjoying living in an exceptional facility. Strong people/communication skills needed. Must be flexible and have impeccable references and experience in hospital/facility maintenance. Background/knowledge in wine and bar beverages a plus. Interest/knowledge in hiking/construction and outdoors is good also. Email mrpaulkrk@yahoo.com. (st. 2/11)

THE SUMMER HOUSE BY REEVES FURNITURE STORE IN HIGHLANDS is looking for full and part time sales and administrative positions. Sales — must be professional appearing, friendly, self-motivated, and enthusiastic. Previous sales and customer service experience preferred. Design Assistant — must be attentive to detail, have computer and organizational skills. Duties include placing and following up on Purchase Orders, managing accounts, and working closely with our in-house Designer and design clients. Apply in person at 2089 Dillard Road, Highlands, NC 2874. (2/25)

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