

# Highlands Newspaper

Happy Presidents Day!

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 19, Number 7 Real-Time News, Weather & WebCams: HighlandsInfo.com Thurs., Feb. 17, 2022

## COVID-exposed students with no symptoms can now go to school

By **Brittney Lofthouse**  
The StrongSchoolsNC Public Health COVID-19 Toolkit was updated Thursday with some

changes to quarantine and isolation rules for students and staff that will keep both students and staff in the classroom.

One of the most significant updates the agency recommended involved how students handle  
• See **SCHOOL** page 17

## Dangerous fire sends Otto Fire Chief to burn center

*HF&R Chief Gearhart weighs in*

By **Brittney Lofthouse**  
Otto Fire and Rescue Chief Terry Rholetter Jr. was working a fire over the weekend that resulted in severe injuries, sending him to the Augusta Burn Center in Georgia.

Gusty winds and dry conditions kept fire departments across Macon County responding to numerous brush or wildland fires over the weekend with numerous departments responded to a wildland fire around 1 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 12 in the area of Highway 441 North. In addition to the injuries, Rholetter sustained, one  
• See **FIRE** page 17



Highlands Bella Wilson smiles as she breaks to the basket against Nantahala. — Photo by Brian O'Shea

## Highlands advances to LSMC Tournament Championship

By **Brian O'Shea**  
Plateau Daily News  
Highlands boys and girls varsity basketball teams both won their first round of the Little Smoky Mountain Conference

Tournament hosted by Hiwassee Dam on Tuesday and will head back to HD tonight to battle for the Championship.  
**Highlands girls varsity**  
• See **LSMC** page 22

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## Scammers are prolific right now: Beware

**Andrea Holland**  
HPD Chief

The Highlands Police Department would like to warn the community of phone and internet-based scams occurring in the area and around the country. These scams are widespread and do not have specific targets. To protect the community, we ask that you please read over this article. If you feel that you have been the victim of a scam, are not sure if you were, or think someone may be trying to scam you, please contact your local law enforcement. An officer will be happy to answer your questions and make a report if needed.

Scams occur year-round. The FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center reported that in 2020, there was 1 billion (\$1,000,000,000) in losses to scams. We are here to give you some strategies to limit the chances of becoming a victim. Remember that if it feels wrong, sounds wrong, looks wrong, it is

probably bad.  
This will be a shortlist of some ways to avoid becoming a victim. The Highlands Police Department will be holding a Scam Prevention and Internet Safety workshop in the spring (Date TBA) this year. More dates may be announced based on public interests in the workshop.  
The event will be free and taught by Master Officer James Bethea.  
Scammers need you to believe them. They work hard to exploit our inclination to trust others.  
They will pose as friends, employees of well-known companies, managers, government officials, and so on. They try to convince you that you can trust them and that you need to work with them. They will portray that there is some problem (virus on your computer), or a reward (money you are owed or that you  
• See **SCAMMERS** page 11

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### Town still weighing fate of STRs

The Town Board will hold its February meeting tonight at the Highlands Community Building next to the ball field. It will begin at 7 pm with public comment being the first agenda item. The agenda has a substantial list of items for board action.

A request will be made by John Lupoli to amend the cleaning contract for the restrooms at Town Square. His company maintains the facilities for the town. There has been an increase in cleaning costs such as water usage.

The board will receive an update from Kaye McHan of the chamber concerning a new landscape plan for the Highlands Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center. The facility is owned by the town and is leased to the chamber.

The board will consider a proposal for a second opinion from an attorney who specializes in land use and STR issues. The review would involve the attorney examining the planning board STR recommendations and how they comport with existing residential ordinances. A letter from the attorney outlining the services to be provided



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

and fees charged will be considered.

The approval of resolutions to apply for ARPA funds to replace a pre-clarifier tank at the water plant and for the Dog Mountain waterline and water tank replacement is on the agenda. A conflict of interest policy for grant applications is included. These procedural items need to be in place before we can begin the grant application process.

In my mayor report I will share my proposed procedures for conducting the public hearing concerning the planning board's STR recommendations. The hearing is scheduled on February 24 at 5 pm at the Highlands Community Building. Let me briefly review my plans.

First, both verbal and written statements will be accepted. Speakers at the hearing will have 3 minutes to address the board. That timeframe translates into about 20 speakers per hour. Speakers will also be allowed submit written comments. For people not able to attend the hearing, they will be able to submit written statements for the record within a given timeframe.

People wishing to comment will have to sign up to speak. Staff will be at the hearing site at 4:30 to start the list. There will be an email option for signing up. I will call in the order the people on the list and keep the time.

All public comments will be recorded. Written statements will be copied and distributed to town commissioners.

I will be seek advice and guidance from commissioners concerning the hearing procedures. I have also consulted with the town attorney.

The Highlands Planning Board recommendations can be reviewed at the Town of Highlands website. After the meeting tonight, the hearing procedures will be posted on the town website some time Friday.





Finally, the hearing on the 24th will be just that, a forum where commissioners will hear and receive public feedback concerning the proposed STR recommendations. There will be no final action taken concerning the recommendations at the hearing. Board action will occur at later meetings.

## • HIC'S VIEW •



"I hear they are on the endangered species list. They're very grumpy and don't play well together."

## • WEATHER •

Thu, 17-Feb	Fri, 18-Feb	Sat, 19-Feb	Sun, 20-Feb
			
55°F 44°F	50°F 24°F	49°F 26°F	51°F 29°F
Heavy rain and a thunderstorm	Breezy with periods of sun	Plenty of sunshine	Plenty of sunshine
RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®
High: 45° Low: 38°	High: 41° Low: 26°	High: 48° Low: 22°	High: 54° Low: 27°

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### Highlands Newspaper

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# Chefs Dinner at The Farm

with Hugh Acheson & Christopher Hathcock

Sunday, February 27, 2022



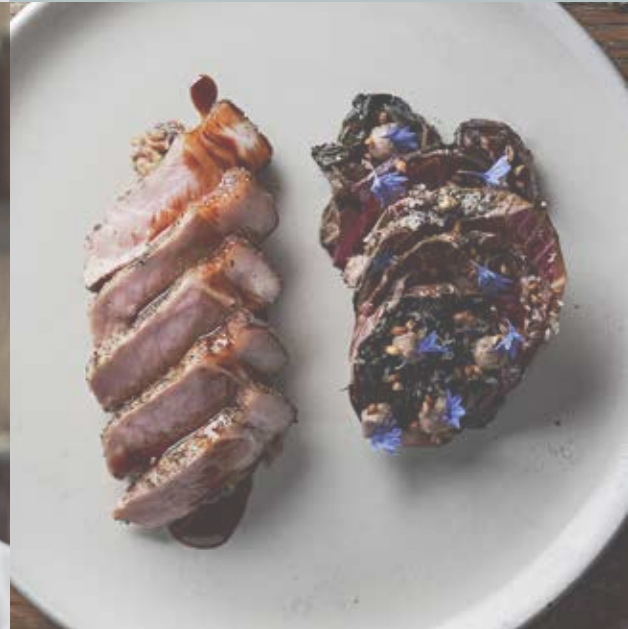
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**The Porker** – Shaved ham, Jarlsberg cheese, DJs pickles with homemade honey mustard on ciabatta. \$12

**The Hudson** – Turkey, Provolone cheese (Have it your way - cucumber, lettuce, onion, banana peppers, black olives, DJs pickles). \$13



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# • LETTERS •

## Artificial Stimulation

Dear Editor,

The Bear Shadow Festival caused so much warranted controversy last year that it had to be moved from its original location in peaceful, unsuspecting Horse Cove to seven miles out of Highlands to Winfield Farm in the town of Scaly. It looks like this year the Festival planners are out for revenge for being forced out of town last year and are determined to get here one way or another.

Festival director Casey Reid is quoted as saying “We want to continue to complement the natural beauty of the area with one-of-a-kind musical experiences for our guests,” and that they want to “provide special moments for music fans to interact with the talented roster of Bear Shadow musicians....” It is my humble opinion that those music fans will have three days of Special Moments with the musicians over the three-day long Festival weekend planned for April 29th -May 1st. The “special moments” director Reid is referring to are acoustic musical performances in the woods and on the trails of Highlands, specifically the Brushy Face Preserve trail and the trail up to Sunset Rock. These trails are normally free to the public and are supported by the local residents of Highlands, but on April 29th and 30th music fans will have the distinction of being charged \$65 for the privilege. Also, as both of the trails are on Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust property, I wonder if there is a conflict of interest. But perhaps the Land Trust will be the recipient of the \$65 fee which will serve as a justification for providing the venue for these Special Moments. Who knows?

I realize that there are some people who might consider a man-made acoustical experience out in the middle of Mother Nature a “complement to the natural beauty of the area,” just as there are people who don’t mind having an apple shot off of their head by someone with a bow and arrow from 30 yards away. If you are thinking I must not like music, you have missed the point. I like music very much, and I especially like the music Mother Nature makes all by herself - wind, birds, water, rain, thunder and silence. Mother Nature needs no artificial assistance from man to “complement” her natural beauty.

Last but not least, I don’t want to get on the bad side of the nice people at the Chamber of Commerce, but I do wish they would slow down with encouraging, if not actually creating, all of these extraneous events and artificial festivals; last month’s Sno-Fest is a good example. Highlands does not need to have a big event, a big celebration, a big festival for every month of the year, all year, every year. It is too exhausting, it is unnecessary and it is just plain fake. It’s like pulling rabbits out of a hat; it is disorienting for the rabbits and, after repeated performances, the hat doesn’t like

• See LETTERS page 7





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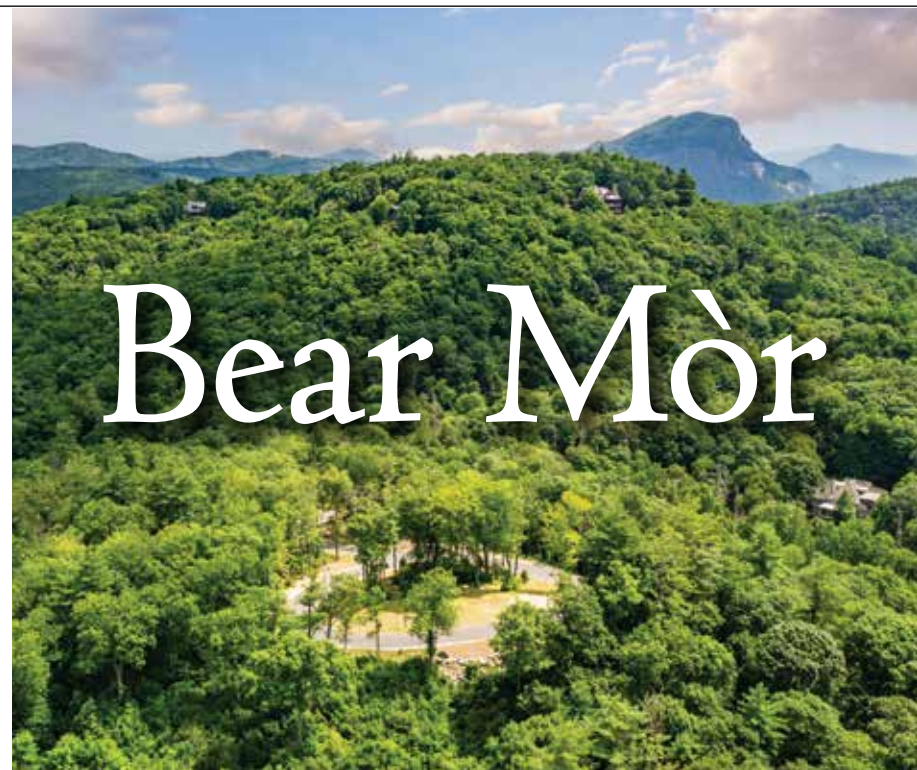
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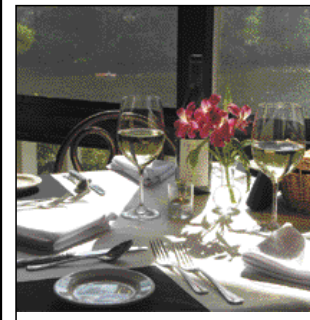
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## ...LETTER from page 4

it, either. Are the residents and visitors so impoverished in their imaginations that they can't figure out how to entertain themselves or how to occupy their time at least once in a while? Is the town so devoid of charm and the surrounding area so devoid of fabulous places to explore and discover that we have to create these phony "festivals?"

Highlands needs to have a little rest now and then, and to slow down the wear and tear on the town and on its people. As the saying goes, Don't Fool With Mother Nature - there is a time to be quiet. Maybe the Chamber can come up with a Quiet Festival and don't do anything.

Alice Nelson  
Highlands

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# • OBITUARIES •

## Gwendolyn Mae Austin Brammer

Gwendolyn Mae Austin Brammer, passed away peacefully in her home in Highlands on January 20 at the age of 93. She and her husband, Harold Brammer, were longtime residents of Highlands area. They were active in both church and community.

She was born March 20, 1928 to Stella and Bob Austin in Welch, WV and was raised there. She graduated from Mary Baldwin College and married Harold on Aug 5, 1949. They began their family in Welch and moved to Florida where Harold started his first business. They settled in Largo, FL for more than 40 years. Gwen was named the Woman of the Year in 1971 by the Largo LaSertoma Club for her church, school and civic service.

In 1978, they built a home on Scaly Mountain where she served as the President of the Scaly Mountain Woman's Club. Ten years later they created Brookside Lane



in Highlands and built the home they would live in for the rest of their lives.

The couple joined First Presbyterian of Highlands in 1981. Their work in the church became a cornerstone of their life. Gwen sang in the choir for many years and was active in all the Women's Committees including the Seekers Women's Bible Study. She served as chair both for the Seekers and Women's' Circle, taught high school Sunday School and helped lead youth retreats. She served on the Highlands Playhouse Board and volunteered with the Literary Council, the Chamber of Commerce the Hospital and various fundraising activities.

She is survived by her children Karen Austin, Leah Brammer Long and Austin Brammer, three grandchildren and four great grandchildren. A service is planned at First Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St, on March 14, at 2 p.m.

## Julian Kenneth Franklin

Julian Kenneth Franklin, long time Highlands resident and Highlands Falls Country Club member, entered rest Monday, February 14, 2022 at the age of 87.

Julian was born January 5, 1935 in Gainesville GA. He graduated from the University of Georgia with a Bachelor's Degree and was a member of Sigma Nu fraternity. After graduation, he received a U.S. Army Reserve Commission, serving as a captain in Army Intelligence Reserves and as a Post Quartermaster on active duty, earning the Army Commendation Medal.

His business career started at WDUN announcing high school and college sporting events. He later began his 38-year career as an executive with Belk Department Stores before retiring as Regional Store Manager in Athens, Georgia

Julian was a community servant, active in various committees, boards and organizations in both the Athens and Highlands communities including Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, Highlands-Cashiers Chamber Music Festival, The Bascom, Highlands Falls Country Club, First Baptist Church Athens, Athens Regional Health System, SunTrust Bank of Northeast Georgia, Athens Symphony Orchestra, Samaritan Counseling Center, and Rotary Clubs. He also served as



President of the Northeast Georgia Council of Boy Scouts of America earning an award of distinction.

Julian loved trail work with the Highlands Plateau Greenway, playing Twilight Golf at HFCC, working in his wood shop, and the Georgia Bulldogs.

Left to cherish his memory are loving wife Margo Franklin, daughter Pam (Chuck) Carver; son Rick (Jennifer) Franklin; grandchildren Monica, Laura, Sam, Max, and Sarah and great granddaughter Margo.

Private graveside services for the family were held at Alta Vista Cemetery in Gainesville with Reverend Becky Matheny officiating. A public celebration of life may be announced at a later date

Online condolences to the family may be made at [www.wardsfh.com](http://www.wardsfh.com) or to Margo at 4145 Misty Morning Way, Room 105, Gainesville, GA 30506.

In lieu of flowers, please make contributions to the Highlands Plateau Greenway, P.O. Box 2608, Highlands, NC 28741. [www.highlandsgreenway.com](http://www.highlandsgreenway.com) or the Northeast Georgia Council for Boy Scouts of America, 148 Boy Scout Trail, Pendergrass, GA 30567. [www.donations.scouting.org](http://www.donations.scouting.org)



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Edie Chrestman-Brown's mom Betty Chrestman looked over and found Edie perusing Highlands Newspaper.

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## The Next Big Things in Home Design

If you are purchasing a new home or just want to give your current home a makeover, here are some of the new design trends floating through the industry for 2022:

1. **Bold colors:** Even though the 3,000 different shades of white still seem to proliferate in homes today, darker, more saturated colors are going to be everywhere in 2022;

2. **Wallpaper:** Wallpaper reminds me of my grandmothers. Why did it go out of style? But the pendulum has swung, and wallpaper is the newest way to give personality and depth to any room;

3. **Massive lights:** Mammoth modern light fixtures provide a wow moment, and a large chandelier can provide a sense of coziness like a fireplace, according to designers who are using them in large rooms;

4. **Garage Takeovers:** Homeowners are going beyond the extra room or home office to transform their under-utilized garages into welcoming spaces, such as an art studio, a bar for friends and family, a classroom, a "she shed" for the lady of the house or a sports lounge;

5. **Dark kitchens:** In reaction to the all-white kitchen, homeowners are using moodier and darker colors. Even leathered stones on the countertops provide a matte surface and bumpy texture to hide messes;

6. **Banquettes:** Banquettes are extremely popular right now creating cozy nooks and saving space in rooms of all sizes;

7. **Details:** With so many homeowners spending more time at home, people want to have fun with design. They are willing to use bolder combinations of colors, patterns and decorative elements on cabinet hardware and decorative trim which adds drama to a room;



**Jody Lovell**  
Highlands Sotheby's  
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8. **Something Old, Something New:** Antiques were ignored for years, but they are staging a comeback mixed with new custom pieces that make a home uniquely yours. Since furniture takes so long to receive even when ordering stock items, custom furniture makers are a good source of supply to get exactly what you want;

9. **Quiet Rooms:** The desire to be still at the end of a busy day lurks in all of us. A place that you can retreat to process the day and recharge your internal batteries involves recovery from the daily stresses. The hybrid work scenario where people no longer go to the office but work from home creates an ambiguous feeling of disorientation. The ability to go to a room or area where you take time to read, draw, write or just be alone is a healthy practice;

10. **Joyful Utilitarian Spaces:** No longer just the pass-through mudroom, messy laundry room or cluttered scullery kitchen, these workhorse rooms are places where beloved collections and artwork is displayed. The ability to evoke a warm memory from a worthy piece of art or photograph creates joy in our everyday lives.

Happy designing in 2022! May these ideas give you inspiration to refresh your own nest!

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# • HOSPITAL NEWS •

## The Importance of Keeping Up with All Vaccines, and Radon Levels in the Home

With COVID-19 permeating every aspect of our lives these last two years, there's hardly been a subject that has been more discussed than the COVID vaccine. I continue to be grateful that we have this critical tool now. It has been proven to lessen the severity of the virus if you get sick, lower a patient's chances of needing to be hospitalized, and reduce the number of COVID-19 deaths.

With the development and rollout of COVID-19 vaccines coming to the forefront of our lives, it's easy to forget about the fact that people of all ages should be up-to-date on their other vaccines as well.

Though each state determines its own vaccine requirements in order for children to enter public school and daycare, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) notes that common im-

munizations for children from infancy to age six include:

- MMR (Measles, mumps, and rubella)
- Polio (IPV) vaccine
- Tdap (Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis)
- Hib (Haemophilus influenza type B)
- Hepatitis A and B
- RV vaccine (Rotavirus)
- Varicella vaccine (Chickenpox)
- PCV 13 (pneumococcal bacterial diseases)
- Yearly influenza vaccine

Some of these vaccines are series of shots that start in infancy, while others should be received annually, such as the flu shot. When children are 11 or 12, they should receive the HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccine, which has cut the risk of certain adult cancers significantly, including cervical cancer for women.



**Tom Neal, CEO/CNO  
Highlands Cashiers  
Hospital**

Adults should remain vigilant about getting boosters for conditions like MMR and Tdap, as well as yearly flu shots. Shingles vaccines are recommended for people 50 and older, and anyone 65 or older should receive the pneumonia vaccine. These are both serious conditions, and shingles is long-lasting and very painful.

Vaccines have long been a controversial topic, but every vaccine is carefully vetted for safety and FDA-approved, or in the case of COVID-19 vaccines, FDA-cleared first, and then approved. Some worry that the COVID-19 vaccines were somehow hurried in their development, but the opposite is true. The medical mRNA technology that's central to the COVID-19 vaccines was developed over the course of two decades.

Now that we've discussed vaccine schedules for children and adults, let's turn our attention to the topic of radon. Radon is an odorless, colorless radioactive gas that occurs naturally and breaks down into soil, rocks, and groundwater. High levels of exposure to it can cause lung cancer. In fact, exposure to radon is the second overall leading cause of lung cancer after smoking, and the #1 cause for nonsmokers.

According to the Environ-

mental Protection Agency (EPA), because of our area's geology, Western North Carolina has the highest radon levels in the state. Radon levels are measured in picocuries per liter (pCi/L) and you can test your home for radon levels with a simple, low-cost test kit that you can buy at home stores and other large retail outlets. A high radon level is considered 4 pCi/L picocuries per liter, but the EPA advises mitigation if your level is between 2 and 4 pCi/L.

When your doctor assesses if you're at higher risk for lung cancer, tobacco use and radon level exposure are the two key factors they will consider. Fortunately, HCH now offers a screening — the low-dose CT scan — that certain patients can get. It's an important test that allows us to diagnose early stage lung cancer much more frequently. Before its development, diagnosis at an early stage was very rare.

Radon awareness is especially important in the winter, when we spend much more time in tightly enclosed spaces. Modern houses built within the last couple of decades are especially airtight.

Partner with your primary care physician and talk about your vaccine status at your next wellness exam, as well as the issue of radon. Our primary care providers are your allies, and their goal is to guide your care carefully so it can be as customized as possible.

With it being February, I also couldn't forget to mention that it's National Heart Month. Your heart health is another critical topic to discuss with your doctor regularly. Depending on your age and gender, they may recommend tests like echocardiograms and stress tests to monitor your heart health, and they will discuss your lifestyle habits and their impact on your heart. As we know, what you eat and how much you move impacts

your heart health significantly. Effective stress management is also key to keeping your heart healthy.

Become familiar with the symptoms of a heart attack, which include chest pain, shortness of breath, and pain in your arm or shoulder. Know too that women can experience different symptoms, including nausea, lightheadedness, and fatigue. Even though your age and gender impact your heart attack risk, there are plenty of things you can do to support your health and lower your risk, such as eating well, exercising, controlling your cholesterol and blood pressure, and refraining from smoking.

Think of you and your physician as troubleshooters for your health. The more you can get ahead of health problems, the better off you will be, with less chance that you'll need to go to the Emergency Room with a sudden health crisis. We are here to help you prevent illness and treat it if you do experience it, with state-of-the-art technology, exceptional expertise, and compassion.

• *Tom Neal, RN, MBA, MHA, is the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) of Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. Neal is a proven leader with more than 30 years of progressive healthcare experience. Prior to his role at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, he held the position of Chief Executive Officer of Community Health Systems (CHS) and served as Chief Executive Officer of both Berwick Hospital Center in Berwick, Pennsylvania, and Greenbrier Valley Medical Center, Roncoverte, West Virginia. Tom has an MBA from the University of Louisville, MHA from the California College of Health Sciences, BSN from Regents College of New York and an ADN from Jefferson Community College.*

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## ...SCAMMERS continued from page 1

won) and that they want to help you, and they have to do it now. The scam will progress as they try to convince you that you need to provide private information (social security, bank information) or that you have to pay them for one reason or another. There are many scams, and this article won't go fully in-depth on that. The workshop will break down different scamming tactics in detail.

To help fight this, don't answer calls from unknown numbers. Even if it is a local number, you may not be able to trust it. Let them leave a voice mail. Block numbers that you determine not to be trustworthy. If you do answer, be skeptical. If someone claims to be from a company, ask yourself if I asked them to contact me.

While a company may contact you to try and sell you something, they often won't call to give you something.

Further, companies such as Microsoft will not call you about problems occurring on your computer. You have to contact them. Anytime you are contacted by a company, be skeptical. Don't provide the caller with any of your information.

Remember, they called you and claimed that they knew something about your account.

If you want to verify a company is calling you about an issue with your account, call the company. Please don't use any numbers they give you. Look up the company's contact information through Google or another trusted source. If you didn't solicit the call, don't provide any identifying information. A scammer will try to convince you that you cannot hang up and that there will be consequences if you do. This is not true, do not let them pressure you. You have a right to verify who they are.

Anytime you conduct business by phone, keep in mind how you are asked to pay for something. Companies do not ask for customers to go to stores to buy gift cards for them. They will not ask you to wire money to them.

Do not agree to deposit checks and transfer money for someone.

Gaining popularity in the scamming world is cryptocurrency as well. Cryptocurrency such as Bitcoin is nearly impossible to trace and is easy to purchase now. You can buy it at Ingles, for example. Remember, if you did not solicit the company to contact you, be skeptical.

You have a right to call someone else. Scammers will tell you not to tell anyone else what's going on. Some will even ask you to stay on the phone with them at all times to make sure you don't call anyone or talk to anyone else. They want to isolate you and pressure you. No legitimate company will do this.

If you did not contact the company on a trusted phone number or expect to be contacted, never give a caller access to your computer. Some scams work on gaining access to your computer. This is very easy to do in the modern age. If you are called, and they ask you to allow them to access your computer, again, be skeptical. Did you call them? Were you expecting a call from a help desk? Why do they need access to my computer? Once you give them access, they can begin to steal your information. Scammers can install malware (viruses, worms, etc.), and They may ask you to log into banking or personal accounts. They could capture your credentials while you do this.

The list goes on. If you did not contact a solicitor or solicit their service, do not allow them to access your computer.

Be wary of anyone telling you that you have to act now. There are very few things in life that have no time to wait. You have a right to verify that what is happening is legitimate. You have the right to call the company back. Anyone telling you that you have to act now is a red flag.

Know that the IRS, Police departments, Sheriff's offices, FBI, and so one will not call you to tell you that you have charges or warrants out for your arrest. Further, you cannot pay to have your charges dropped. If you get a call from

someone claiming to have warrants for your arrest, don't provide them any information and do not pay them anything.

Also, if you get a call from someone claiming to be with a friend, family, or loved one who was in an accident, know that we will never ask for you to send money for that person. Ask what hospital they are at and verify it by calling that hospital or the injured person themselves. Law enforcement will try to talk to you in person if we need to tell you someone is hurt. If a law enforcement officer contacts you, verify that the caller is a legitimate officer. We will never ask you to send money or provide private information.

Trust your instincts. If it feels wrong, look into it. Ask questions. Talk to someone else. Please, call us or your local law enforcement and discuss the call. It is always easier to prevent a scam than to try and recover from it. If you feel that you have become a victim of a scam, do not hesitate to reach out to law enforcement.

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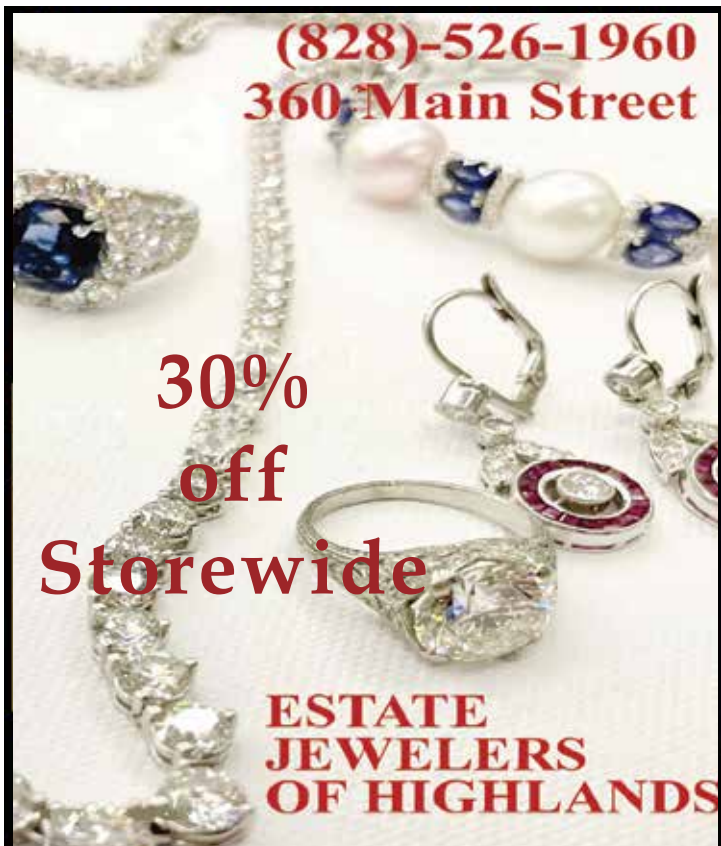
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# • HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

## Spring Sports Registration is on

**Macon County Youth Soccer Registration** is underway for ages 5-15 year olds.

Registration open now through February 24th. Practice will begin in mid march and games will start April 2nd. Register online at [maconsoccer.net](http://maconsoccer.net)

**Franklin Little League Baseball** registration is underway for ages 4-14 year old. Registration Open Now through March 7, 2022. Register online at [www.flbaseball.com](http://www.flbaseball.com).

**Franklin Little League Softball** registration is underway for ages 4-14 year old. Registration Open Now through March 7, 2022. Register online at [www.franklinlittleleague softball.com](http://www.franklinlittleleague softball.com).



## Backyard Bird Count

Great Backyard Bird Count is Feb. 18-21 from 9 to 10 am Participants will meet at the North Campus of the Highlands Biological Station (111 Lower Lake Road) for an introduction to the Great Backyard Bird Count before taking a walk around the campus to find our feathered friends. On Saturday, guest leaders from the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society will take part in the count as well. These walks are weather dependent and masks are encouraged. Binoculars will be available if you need them. Register for one or both strolls at [highlandsbiological.org](http://highlandsbiological.org). Stop by the Valentine Meadow (888 Horse Cove Road) on Saturday, Feb.19 from 1 to 4 PM, there will be a bonfire, hot drinks, and bird-themed fun for all. For more information about the Great Backyard Bird Count and ways you can participate, visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

### Ice Rink Schedule

• Thursdays 1-8pm, Fridays and Saturdays 1-10pm and Sundays 1-5pm. Cost is \$5 per skater.

### Rec Pool Schedule:

• Lap Swim Monday-Friday 6am-10am, Monday and Thursday 11:15am-7pm and Tuesday and Wednesday 11:15am-3:30pm 6 lanes AND 3:30-7 (shared Pool) and Saturday 10-11am 6 lanes.

Adult Swim Monday-Thursday 11:15am-7pm.

Call ahead for Public Swim Weekend schedule due to staff shortages. 828-526-1595.

• Tickets for Bear Shadow Music Festival are on sale now. For more information, visit <https://bearshadownc.com/information/>.

### Mondays

• ESL classes are held at the Presbyterian Church in Highlands from 5:30-6:30pm. No registration required – just show up and participate. Questions? Visit [www.maconncliteracy.org](http://www.maconncliteracy.org), call 828-526-0863 or email [info@maconncliteracy.org](mailto:info@maconncliteracy.org)

• **American Legion** meets Mondays at 9 AM Highlands United Methodist Church. All veterans invited

### Second Mondays

• The local chapter of PEO, an off-campus sorority founded in the 1800s that provides grants and loans to women who want to return to school or further their education and have a financial need, meets at 10 a.m. If interested, please call president Paula McDonald at 706-372-3004 for meeting places.

### Mon-Fri

• Water Aerobics 18 years plus 10:15-11am.

### Mon., Tues., Thurs.

• The Food Pantry behind the Methodist Church on Spring Street is open from 10a to 6p,

### Mon. & Wed.

• Cardio Kickboxing with Crystal Corbin 5:30-6:30 p.m. A full body workout that engages every muscle in the body.

• New Mobility Class with Anna Norton It's all about movement. 5:30-6:30pm and Wednesday 6:45-7:45. For more information, call Anna 267-825-

0716.

### Mon. & Thurs.

• Drive-thru flu clinics at the Public Health Center at 1830 Lakeside Dr. in Franklin from 1-4 pm \$36 for the regular dose and the \$73 for the high dose (recommended for those 65+). Insurances will be filed; please bring your insurance card with you. Questions? Call 828.349.2081.

### Mon, Wed, Thurs

• Indoor and outdoor Pickle Ball 10:30 am-1 pm.

### Mon, Wed, Fri

• Heart Healthy Exercise Class 8:30-9:30am. \$25 a month, The class is led by Cathy Hodgson. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

• Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9 am.

### Mon., Wed., Fri.

• Highlands/ Cashiers Alcoholics Anonymous "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. recovery program. Open meetings are held in Highlands @ the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 p.m. and on Wednesday & Fridays @ 12:00 noon.

### Tues. & Thurs.

• Pilates-Strength and Stretch with Autumn Lucas

• New Zumba class with Gay Chalpin from 4:30-5:30p.

• Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at 5:30. A combination class with many different types of exercise.

### Tuesdays

• Strength Training 8:15-9:15am. Aim for strong, lean muscles using light weights, body weight, and high repetition to shape and tone.

### First Wednesdays

• Highlands-Cashiers Hospital is featuring "Walk-in Wednesdays" Hiring Event. Interviewing for RNs, CNAs, Allied Health Professionals and Support Services Professionals, 1-3:30 pm. 190 Hospital Drive, front entrance. On the spot offers, Sign-on bonuses offered for select positions, Bring updated resume. Casual wear.

### Thursdays

• Kickboxing 8:15-9:15am. An exhilarating and fun mix of martial arts for a calorie-burning workout.

• Free Covid vaccination clinics – 9 am to 5pm at the Rec Park. (Closed for a half-hour lunch break) Location subject to change. please check <https://myspot.nc.gov/> for the latest location information. Walk-ins are accepted, however we encourage residents to pre-register and schedule an appointment at <https://myoptumserve.com/covid19> or by calling (877) 505-6723 if you do not have internet.

### 2nd Thurs. thru - May

• Story Telling & Listening at Shakespeare & Co. in Village Square from 2-4 p.m.

### Fri.-Mon., Feb. 18-21

• Great Backyard Bird Count from 9 to 10 am Participants will meet at the North Campus of the Highlands Biological Station (111 Lower Lake Road) for an introduction to the Great Backyard Bird Count before taking a walk around the campus to find our feathered friends. On Saturday, guest leaders from the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society will take part in the count as well. These walks are weather dependent and masks are encouraged. Binoculars will be available if you need them. Register for one or both strolls at [highlandsbiological.org](http://highlandsbiological.org).

### Sat., Feb. 19

• Birding Bonanza from 1-4 p.m. at the Nature Center. Join us for a bonfire, hot drinks, a scavenger hunt, & bird-themed fun for all as we celebrate the 25th annual Great Backyard Bird Count.

### Mon. Feb. 21

• Jackson County Republican Party Meeting Monday at 6 PM at the Cashier Recreation Center located at 355 Frank Allen Road in Cashiers.

### Sun., Feb 27

• Chefs Dinner at the Farm with Hugh Acheson & Christopher Hathcock. Book online at [OldEdwardsHospitality.com/AchesonandHathcock](http://OldEdwardsHospitality.com/AchesonandHathcock)

### Tues. March 15

• Highlands School Kindergarten Registration is on. Children who reach the age of 5 on or before August 31, 2022 are eligible for admission into the Class of 2035 Call 828-526-2147 for more information.

### April 29-May 1

• Bear Shadow Music Festival. For tickets go to [bearshadownc.com](http://bearshadownc.com).



# • HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

## Kindergarten Registration Class of 2035 Tuesday, March 15, 2022

On March 15, 2022, Kindergarten registration for the 2022-2023 school year will begin, for parents, at 10 am in the school's media center. Children who reach the age of 5 on or before August 31, 2022 are eligible for admission into the Class of 2035.

To make the transition from preschool to Kindergarten as fun and positive as possible, we would like to offer the new students a taste of great things to come by providing transportation to and from Highlands School for registration. At approximately 10:30am Highlands' school bus driver, Jacob Henry, will pick up eligible students

from Highlands United Methodist Church and the Highlands Community Child Development Center aboard one of our activity buses, and bring them to school to meet their parents. They will arrive at Highlands School by 10:50 am. PTO volunteers will be on the bus to help with the students. Students not enrolled in a day care center may meet before 10:30 am at the Highlands Community Child Development Center, Inc. located at 89 Church Street, Highlands, to catch the bus. Riding the "school bus" is an exciting experience for the students. Please encourage your child to ride to school on the bus that day whether or not you plan

for your child to ride during the school year. Please be aware that the bus will be returning students to the day care centers.

Complimentary lunch for all students and their parents in the school cafeteria is provided as part of Kindergarten registration. Registration packets can be picked up at Highlands School or at Highlands Community Child Development Center. All forms in the registration packet (except the Health Assessment Transmittal Form), will need to be completed and returned on March 15th. The Health Assessment Transmittal Form should be completed and

turned in to the school by August 1, 2022.

In addition to the registration documents, the following items should be presented at registration on March 15th for photocopying:

1. Certificate of Immunizations (School must have within 30 days from the start of school). Students without a complete Certificate of Immunizations presented within 30 days from the start of school will be placed on administrative suspension until in compliance.

2. Certified Birth Certificate (must present original, certified birth certificate. No copies or "un-

certified" birth certificates will be accepted.

3. Proof of Residency.

4. If you are not the biological parent of the child enrolling, and/or there is a custody agreement in place, please provide any legal documents you have giving you authority to enroll the child (i.e., custody papers, name change documentation, adoption papers or educational domicile affidavits).

The faculty and staff look forward to meeting you and your child. Please feel free to call us at 526-2147 should you have any questions.

## Bear Shadow announces one-of-a-kind, experiential daytime events on Sat. April 30 to bolster weekend-long April 29-May 1 music festival

For festival-goers looking to enjoy more music and revelry alongside the beauty of the mountains in the resort town of Highlands, N.C., Bear Shadow music festival announces a selection of experiences sure to delight, including an intimate acoustic evening with critically-acclaimed, award-winning singer-songwriters Suzy Bogguss, Gretchen Peters and Matraca Berg. Guided biological hikes that culminate in acoustic performances, musician clinics from headlining acts and soulful fitness sessions in the park are also planned throughout the weekend-long event April 29 – May 1.

- "Wine, Women and Song"

– Join critically acclaimed, award-winning singersongwriters Suzy Bogguss, Gretchen Peters and Matraca Berg for an intimate evening of acoustic song, conversation and fine wines at Skyline Lodge, overlooking the beautiful Appalachian Mountains. Wine, Women & Song will be held on Saturday, April 30 from 24 p.m. Tickets are \$125.

- "Hike & Mic" – Enjoy a guided adventure through Highlands' forests and trails followed by acoustic performances by Bear Shadow performers Wild Rivers and Jamestown Revival at the conclusion of the hike. Hike & Mic events are Friday, April 29 from 1-3 p.m. at Brushy Face Preserve and Saturday, April 30 from 1-3

p.m. at Sunset Rock & Highlands Biological Station. Tickets are \$65.

- Bearfoot in the Park – Join instructors from The Works – Charleston's Sweat Studio for a one-hour soulful fitness combining vinyasa yoga, meditation, breathwork, plyometrics, core and strength work at Kelsey Hutchinson Park in downtown Highlands. Bearfoot in the Park sessions are free and will be held from 9-10 a.m. on Saturday, April 30 and Sunday, May 1. Reservations are recommended.

Tickets are on sale now. For tickets and reservations, visit [bearshadownc.com](http://bearshadownc.com).

Musician clinics hosted by Bear Shadow performers are also



"Wine, Women and Song" – Join critically acclaimed, award-winning singer-songwriters Suzy Bogguss, Gretchen Peters and Matraca Berg for an intimate evening of acoustic song, conversation and fine wines at Skyline Lodge.

being planned. More details to come. Sign up for the Bear Shadow

newsletter at [bearshadownc.com](http://bearshadownc.com) for the latest updates.

## Purchase Bear Shadow tickets by Feb. 18 and you could win tickets for Highlands Food & Wine!

Want to attend not one, but TWO epic weekends on The Plateau in 2022? Here's your chance. Purchase Bear Shadow tickets by February 18th, and you'll be entered to win tickets for Highlands Food & Wine.

Purchase any Bear Shadow

2022 tickets by February 18 at 11:59 pm, and you'll be entered to win a pair of Highlands Food & Wine 2022 weekend tickets!

If you have already purchased any Bear Shadow tickets, you're automatically entered to win a pair of Highlands Food & Wine weekend

tickets for November 10-13, 2022.

The winner will be selected by random drawing and notified via the email address provided at ticket checkout on Monday, February 21 at 9 am.

Anyone who has purchased tickets from the on-sale date

through February 18 will be entered to win.

Prize package will be two (2) 2022 General Admission weekend tickets to Grand Tasting, Truckin', the Main Event, and Sunday Shindig.

Purchase tickets at the link below. Tell your festie besties they'll have another weekend of fun planned at 4118 ft and GOOD LUCK. #bearshadow  
<https://bearshadownc.com/tickets/>

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Bill Futral and Pat Allen at Rotary.

## Pat Allen receives Rotarian Award

Pat Allen recently received the Paul Harris Award given to Rotarians who contribute \$1000 or more to help accomplish goals and apply leadership and expertise on social issues at home and around the globe. One of Allen's focuses has been to eradicate polio in third world countries. "When I still see photos of kids in wheel chairs and unable to function normally due to polio I have to ask "why?" When the vaccine is readily available why hasn't it been part of global solutions in other countries," asks Allen?

Rotary is a global network of 1.4 million neighbors, friends, leaders and problem-solvers whose focus is a world where all people unite and take action to create lasting change-across the globe, in local communities, and in ourselves. "I am proud to be a member of this wonderful organization and recipient of this award," says Allen.

Pat Allen is Broker-in-Charge of AllenTate/PatAllenRealtyGroup and has lived in Highlands for 27 years.

## Head of School at Rabun Gap Nacoochee School visits Rotary



Jeff Miles, Stell Huie and Tom Graham.

Rotarian Stell Huie introduced Jeff Miles, Head of School at Rabun Gap Nacoochee School as the featured speaker for the Highlands Rotary February 8 meeting.

Miles, a former lacrosse player and coach, started his first year as Head of School at the start of the pandemic in 2020. With many students living on campus (from more than 52 countries), the school adopted a "safer together" motto for dealing for the pandemic, allowing students to remain on campus.

Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School is one of

the top private schools in the South. It boasts a 7:1 student-teacher ratio to 680 students from 52 countries and 16 states. Academically, the school is ranked 18<sup>th</sup> boarding school in the country, and 100% of their graduating class attends a four-year university. The soccer team won the 2021 soccer state championship, and finished their season ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the country. Both their basketball and baseball teams are ranked top 5. For more information about Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School, please visit [rabungap.org](http://rabungap.org).

# Make Valentine's Day Last



*Center for Plastic Surgery*  
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209 Hospital Dr, Ste 202, Highlands

[PlasticSurgeryToday.com](http://PlasticSurgeryToday.com)



## ...SCHOOL continued from page 1

COVID-19 exposure saying, "Individual contact tracing and exclusion from school of asymptomatic people after an identified exposure is no longer recommended state-wide in K-12 schools."

That means, effective on Monday, Feb. 21, students exposed to COVID-19 who don't show any symptoms will be allowed to stay in the classroom.

"I am cautiously optimistic that this decision is a step in the right direction," said Macon County Schools Superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin. "At this point in the school year, we have seen over 3,200 quarantines with only 52 of those quarantined resulting in a known positive COVID transmission. This means that less than 2% of students and staff quarantined have actually contracted the virus. Considering this data, it would appear that we can safely move forward with only quarantining those folks testing positive for Covid. Not only will this change allow otherwise healthy students to remain in school, it will also free up our nurses to help address the health needs of our students rather than spend an inordinate amount of time contact tracing."

Macon County Schools reported Friday that 75 students were currently under quarantine with 8 students testing positive in the district. There were 11 staff quarantined as of Friday, with four staff members across the district testing positive.

As Dr. Baldwin noted, in-person learning and keeping children and staff in schools while decreasing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is the priority for these new guidelines.

The new guidance comes as the number of daily COVID-19 cases in the state has fallen in recent weeks, as the omicron

variant wave has waned. The number of people with COVID-19 in the hospital also has dropped from a pandemic high of over 5,200 two weeks ago to below 3,700 as of Wednesday, according to DHHS data.

Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives sent a letter to Governor Cooper on Thursday asking for the state to change the Department of Health and Human Services guidelines that the Speaker claims "have all but compelled local schools to keep their mask mandates in place."

The NC toolkit recommends that districts in high areas of COVID19 spread have a universal masking requirement, which Jackson County Schools recently voted to continue due to the spread of the current Omicron variant. Local districts are permitted to decide what is best for their individual districts, with no state requirements for or against mask policies.

According to the N.C. School Boards Association, as of Feb. 4 most systems required masks. Twenty-eight, the association said, were mask optional. Macon County Schools is among the 28 districts out of the state's 115 districts with a mask optional policy currently. In Western North Carolina, Cherokee County and Graham County are the only other school districts with an optional mask policy.

Following the release of the updated Toolkit, House Speaker Tim Moore released a statement saying that the updates did not do enough. "We must do more to protect our children from further learning setbacks and the other consequences of keeping these (mask) mandates in place." The statement also says that legislation that gives parents the ability to opt-out of mask requirements will soon be advanced in the House.

## ...FIRE continued from page 1

structure was damaged.

"He received several burns and was flown to Augusta Burn Center," Otto Fire and Rescue reported on Facebook on Sunday afternoon. "As of right now he is undergoing surgery which will be the first of many."

Macon County Emergency Services warned on Sunday that burn conditions remain dangerous throughout the week with fuels being very dry and humidity being very low.

Though people don't think about it often, Highlands Fire & Rescue Chief Ryan Gearhart said anytime fire and rescue departments go out on a call members are at

some level of danger.

"With wild fires in particular it is heightened because of the unpredictability of the fire, wind, and moisture," he said.

He also echoed Macon County EMS about conditions.

"Fire conditions are bad right now with it being so dry on the top and the wind being up and low humidity. I would advise to blow all the leaves and debris away from houses and try to wait to burn yard debris until we get some substantial moisture," he said.

As of Tuesday, Gearhart said neither the state nor the county has issued a burning ban, however safety is being stressed.

## ...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING from page 18

claimed to be was actually true. The Lord was not a purveyor of misinformation, what he said and did has withstood the test of time, 2,000+ years of time.

In 1998 a man named Lee Strobel was the legal editor for the Chicago Tribune and an unbeliever in God. Around that time, he undertook an exhaustive, wide-ranging, thorough investigation of Jesus' life and ministry and subsequent claims made about him. Then, as he relayed in his 1998 book, *A Case for Christ*, he was convicted, in a

manner of speaking, that he had heretofore believed a raft of misinformation and lies about Jesus the Christ. The evidence proved to be true. He had followed President Regan's advice and found truth that everyone could trust in.

In the midst of our days, when truth seems to be a moving target and often in doubt, we can rest assured through verification and faith, that Jesus is the "real thing," the Way the Truth and the Life.



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# • SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

## Misinformation: Temporal & Eternal



**Father Jim Murphy**  
Christ Anglican Church  
Cashiers

The late President Ronald Reagan had a penchant for turning a phrase. He was quoting a proverb, understood to be Russian in its origin, when he said, "Trust but verify." The former president made the remark in the midst of an era when ongoing, bilateral talks between the Soviet Union and the United States regarding nuclear disarmament were taking place.

"Trust but verify" would be a great motto for our times. It seems that around every corner someone claims to be guarding us from the dreaded "misinformation." Facebook has a series of currently running commercials that describe how they are going to great lengths to protect their users from misinformation. Most of other media outlets have made similar claims about their platforms. Voices from the current administration in Washington D. C. have not been shy about expressing their hopes that "the media" would police the ubiquitous stain of misinformation that permeates public discourse.

With that in mind and following the sage advice of President Reagan, should not we take pause to "trust and verify" those who have been appointed or have named themselves as arbiters of that which is claimed to be truth and that which constitutes misinformation? This is a very important distinction and an immensely powerful position, is it not? In our current milieu it seems that ideas or situations that were long reported as verified and true, i.e., the Trump-Russia collusion story, have lately themselves turned out to be misinformation. Where can we turn for someone, something to trust?

Pontius Pilate, the first century Roman Governor of the province of Judea in Israel, asked a critical question for all of us. During the trial of Jesus the Christ, Pilate asked the accused, "What is truth?" Perhaps Pilate was the progenitor of today's guardians of misinformation. The Governor's question came on the heels of a discussion with the Son of God that was riddled with misinformation brought forth by Jesus' accusers. Check out their conversation in the 18th chapter of John's gospel.

For those of us who have come to believe in Jesus the Christ as Savior and Lord, we know him also to be "truth" or, the Truth. To him alone we can turn to unravel the conundrum of misinformation. In the 14th chapter of the same gospel, he assured his followers and all who were to come that he was "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," that no one may be saved outside of him. There is no other path, no alternative truth, and no honest life except through Jesus.

For anyone to say that he was the "Truth" is a rather outlandish claim, to be sure. Taking Reagan's advice however, we can historically "trust and verify," by way of the Holy Scriptures and a realm of other evidence that what he

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 17

## Proverbs 3:5

# • PLACES TO WORSHIP •

## John 3:16

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

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

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

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

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828-269-3546 • Rev. Jamie Passmore, Pastor

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

### CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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www.christanglicancashiers.com

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School; 10:30am Worship Service.

Mon. Night Church Study & Dinner: 6pm. call for details.

### CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS

Pastor Brent Metcalf • 743-5470

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Tues. Guys study 8am. Gals 10am.

### CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

### COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685

3645 Cashiers Rd. Highlands, NC • Sr. Pastor Gary Hewins

Sun.: 9:30am - Adult Sunday School; Worship Service 10:45am;

10:45am Children's Program. Youth-12:15 - 2:30pm Tues:

Women's Bible Study 10am-noon

Thurs: Men's Bible Study 7:30-8:30 a.m.

### COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY

706. 746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447

Pastor Steve Kerhoulas

Worship: Sun. 10:30 a.m. Holy Communion 2nd Sunday

### EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

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5th and Main streets • www.incarnationwnc.org

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with Choir; Morning Prayer Mon-Thurs 8:30 am in the Chapel

Ash Wed. services March 2, 12 p.m., & 5 p.m.

### FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS

828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org

Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor • 220 Main Street, Highlands

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

Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Choir 5p; Prayer Mtg 6:15p

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors

828-526-3175 • fpchighlands.org

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Tues: Men's Group 10 a.m. Wed: Bell Choir 4 p.m.. Choir: 6p

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Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

### HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

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Rev. Marty Kilby

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Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

### SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212

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

### SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

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Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am



# • POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

**Highlands Police entries from Jan. 10. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.**

## Jan. 10

• At 12:59 p.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on US 64.

## Feb. 4

• At 12:59 p.m., officers responded to a call about someone removing a face plate on a burial plot on Memorial Drive.

## Feb. 9

• At 1:57 p.m., officers received a report of an utility trailer worth

\$1200 being taken from a residence on Bowery Road.

## Feb. 10

• At 10:23 p.m., officers received a report of someone trespassing at a residence on Mirror Lake Road.

## Feb. 12

• At 12:35 p.m., officers received a report of a shoplifting incident at Wits End where about \$500 worth of merchandise was taken.

## Feb. 13

• At 4:22 a.m., officers responded to a call of a verbal argument at a residence on Picklesimer Road.

**The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Feb. 9**

## Feb. 9

• At 1:55 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Forest Trail.

• At 3:16 p.m., the dept. responded to a brush fire on Myrtle Speed Road.

## Feb. 10

• At 8:56 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Pierson Drive.

• At 10:39 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers on a structure fire.

• At 1:37 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance to a residence on Kettle Rock Road.

## Feb. 11

• At 1:50 p.m., the dept. responded to a brush fire on Myrtle Speed Road.

## Feb. 12

• At 4:43 p.m. the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

## Feb. 13

• At 9:30 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Lucerne Drive.

## Former Highlands Police Chief and Town of Franklin named in lawsuit

By Brittney Lofthouse

Former Highlands Police Chief Bill Harrell has been named in a lawsuit alongside the Town of Franklin filed in Macon County Superior Court last month. Harrell currently serves as the Franklin Police Chief. The lawsuit was filed by one of Chief Harrell's current officers, Randy Dula.

While Dula's lawsuit names current police Chief Bill Harrell and the current Town of Franklin administration and is seeking more than \$25,000 in damages, the narcotics position in question was originally discussed and created by former Chief David Adams and former Town Manager Summer Woodard. Chief Harrell was sworn in on June 1 and filled the vacant position by promoting Sgt. Pellicer.

On January 18, Jeffery Warren and Michelle Liquori, Raleigh-based attorneys, filed a lawsuit on behalf of Franklin Police Department Officer Dula and claims that during his tenure with the department, Dula has been passed over for several promotions within the department — which allegedly violates the Town of Franklin's Personnel Policy.

The focus of the lawsuit stems from Dula, who has worked for the department for the last five years since August 2017. He was passed up on a promotion which was instead given to Sgt. Matt Pellicer, who has worked for the department for 21 years, since March 2001.

The lawsuit alleges that Franklin Police Department stats show that he is responsible for 42 percent of the department's total citations, 27 percent of the department's total arrests and 65 percent of

all drug charges brought by the department. Those stats are for charges, not convictions, however.

In the lawsuit alleges that Dula has been treated unfairly by the police department.

The lawsuit has been filed by the attorneys representing Dula, however the Raleigh-based law firm has not served Chief Bill Harrell or the Town of Franklin with the suit. Since the suit has not been served, the parties are not able to comment on the matter at this time.

Specifically focusing on the five years Dula has been employed, the lawsuit alleges that Dula has been one of the most "productive" officers and is responsible for 30 percent of the department's total workload.

According to the town's personnel policy, "when vacancies occur, the Human Resources Officer shall publicize these opportunities for employment, including applicable salary information and employment qualifications."

In his suit against the Town of Franklin and Franklin Police Chief Bill Harrell, Dula claims a newly established narcotics detective position was not posted or otherwise advertised to the Franklin Police Department as a whole before Sgt. Matthew Pellicer was promoted to the position.

According to the law suit, additional promotional opportunities became available following the narcotics position, all of which were awarded to other members of the department and not Dula — and Dula claims those positions were also not properly advertised. The positions mentioned in the suit include a new lieutenant position, two sergeant positions, a K9 position, a Captain position, and a first sergeant position.

While the lawsuit notes the Town of Franklin's hiring policy, it doesn't address that the town of Franklin is also an "at-will" employer. At-will means that an employer can terminate an employee at any time for any reason, except an illegal one, or for no reason without incurring legal liability.

At-will also means that an employer can change the terms of the employment relationship with no notice and no consequences. For example, an employer can alter wages, terminate benefits, or reduce paid time off.

The Town of Franklin's personnel policy also specifically outlines how appointments should be handled during an application process: "Before any commitment is made to an applicant either internal or external, the Appointing Authority shall make recommendations to the Human Resources Officer including the position to be filled,

the salary to be paid, and the reasons for selecting the candidate over other candidates. The Human Resources Officer and department head shall recommend approval of appointments and the starting salary for all applicants to the Appointing Authority.


After an investigation of the qualifications of the applicants, the department head and Human Resources Officer shall recommend the most qualified candidate to the Town Manager for appointment. The department head and/or Human Resources Officer shall document reasons why the successful candidate was selected, the classification of the position to be filled, and the recommended salary. Appointments of part-time employees may be filled by department heads with the approval of the Human Resources Officer."

## JB brings a smile for Valentine's Day



The garden club ladies were at it again this time offering a bit of whimsy for Valentine's Day. Several times during the year, they dress up JB (Jail Bird) who resides outside the old jail on Maple Street.




— Photo by Kim Lewicki



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**WOLFGANGS RESTAURANT** 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. 2/17)

**CASHIERS COLOR CENTER** is looking to hire a full-time individual to assist in the paint department. Duties will include mixing paint, assisting customers with color selections and sundry items, stocking shelves and daily cleaning. Must be able to lift 50 pounds. This individual must be dependable, self-motivated, have great customer service skills and be willing to learn. We will offer on-the-job training, so experience is not necessary. For more information, call Derek Taylor @ 828-200-9226, or stop by Cashiers Color Center to fill out an application. (Jan 20-Feb 10)

**HIGHLANDER MOUNTAIN HOUSE DINING ROOM SUPERVISOR**— HMH is seeking a full time shift supervisor to coordinate reservations and oversee all aspects of service in the front of the house at TRG. This role will act as Maitre' D to the dining room, work service for lunch, dinner and brunch and be responsible for the proper execution of each service period. This position will begin as an hourly position and has the potential to grow into a salaried position based upon performance. This candidate should be positive, reliable, hard working, have a love of people, service and have aspirations to lead and grow with the company. (st. 12/16)

**CHESTNUT HILL OF HIGHLANDS** is an Upscale, Small Assisted Living Facility looking for Med Aides, CNA's, Housekeeper and Dietary Staff. You may apply in person at 24 Clubhouse Trail, by Phone at 828-526-5251 or by email to ce.chestnuthill@yahoo.com or lindabtiff@aol.com.

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## ...LSMC continued from page 1

The Tournament kicked off with the Lady Highlanders winning a solid victory over Nantahala ending with a final 66-16. Highlands was riding a 21-point lead by the end of the first quarter and by halftime extended the lead to 36 points with 41-5 on the scoreboard.

Highlands takes on Hiwassee tonight at 6 p.m. in HD. The HD Lady Eagles advanced to the Championship after defeating Blue Ridge Early College 68-50 in the first round on Tuesday.

### Highlands boys varsity

Highlands boys varsity took on BREC and won a tough game with a final 59-47. The Highlanders maintained the lead throughout the game, but the Bobcats didn't give up and never strayed far behind.

BREC trailed by 8 points at the end of the first quarter, 5 points at halftime, and 7 points at the end of the third.

Highlands plays Hiwassee Dam in the Championship game tonight on HD's home turf beginning at 7:30 p.m.

## Undefeated MS girls lose tough champ game

By Brian O'Shea  
Plateau Daily News

Highlands Middle School girls basketball team rocked an undefeated 12-0 season this year taking them to the championship game on Feb. 4 against Towns County on TC's home turf.

The Lady Highlanders fought hard and never gave up but couldn't clinch the win ending with a final 29-20.

Highlands will be losing several 8th-graders next year, including Jaylin Raby, Hunter Conner, Caden Pierson, Heidi Doerter, Margret Cole, Lillian Rutter, and Ann Elizabeth Woods.

Photos by Brian O'Shea  
Plateau Daily News



Highlands B Bryson brings the ball down the court and sets the play in motion against Nantahala in the first round of the LSMC Tournament in Hiwassee Dam on Tuesday.



The bus ride to Hiwassee Dam did nothing to diminish the Highlands High School Cheerleaders' enthusiasm to support their teams during the Tournament.



Highlands Win Dyleski keeps the ball moving around the perimeter.



Highlands Jeffrey Olvera under pressure from BREC in round 1 of the LSMC Tournament.



Highlands James Earp snags a rebound against BREC.



Highlands Harrison Gates shoots a short jumper against BREC on Tuesday in Hiwassee Dam.



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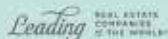


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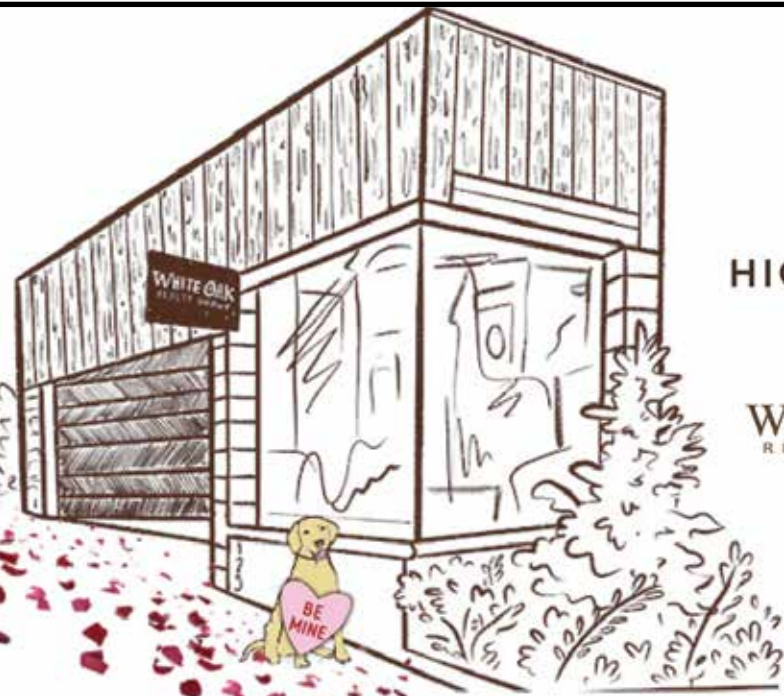


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