

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Aug. 1, 2024

HCA's investment in HCH is paying off

By Kim Lewicki

At the July Town Board meeting, Tom Neal, CEO and CNO at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, gave an update on Hospital Corporation of America's (HCA)

"Investment in Healthcare" which has amounted to \$16 million since its acquisition in 2019.

The \$16 million Neal referred to was solely invested at the Highlands campus which has been a

boon for healthcare in the Highlands and Cashiers community – healthcare that consistently gets high marks from the community.

The money spent in capital

• See **INVESTMENT** page 14

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Pre-K tuition increasing for upcoming school years

By Kristin Fox

At the last meeting of the Macon County School Board, school officials unanimously approved a rate increase for the Pre-K program as recommended by Brooke Keener, Macon County Schools System Exceptional Children Director. In addition, the board unanimously approved changes to the after-school program also including a rate increase.

Speaking on behalf of Keener, Jennifer Love, STEM and coordinator for the after-school program, presented the request for the rate increase for the Pre-K program.

The new rate increase for Pre-K will be staggered over the next three years. The board approved to raise the monthly rate to \$650 in the 2024-2025 school year, then increase it to \$700 in

• See **PRE-K** page 19



'Catch Me if You Can' on stage through August 10 at PAC

Catch Me If You Can is a rousing musical set during the jet-set age of the 1960s.

This 2.5 hour musical comedy with a 15-min. intermission is based on the unbelievable true story of one of the most famous con artists in history, Frank Abagnale Jr., and the hit film starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hanks. Seeking fame and fortune, precocious teen-

ager, Frank, runs away from home to begin an unforgettable adventure. With nothing more than his boyish charm, a big imagination, and millions of dollars in forged checks, Frank successfully poses as a pilot, a doctor, and a lawyer over the course of several years – living the high life and winning the girl of his dreams. But when Frank's lies catch the attention of a sleuth-

ing FBI agent, an epic chase across the globe ensues.

Catch Me If You Can is a big and bright musical with high-energy dance numbers and a riveting story. This splashy spectacle was nominated for four Tony awards, including Best Musical. Tickets are \$68-\$78. Go to <https://www.mountaintheatre.com>

- Submitted

Grants will help close internet gaps county wide

By Kristin Fox

With help from the state, Macon County continues its work to provide high-speed internet to communities across the county.

Over the next four years, more areas in Macon County including parts of Highlands and Scaly Mountain will have access to broadband services through the cooperative efforts of the state, county and internet providers.

At the recent meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners, Jeff Lee with Little T Broadband gave an update on the Macon County Board Broadband Project.

Little T Broadband has worked with the county to provide broadband consulting. The

• See **INTERNET** page 13

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• HIC'S VIEW •

Sometimes community fears don't materialize

At the Community Coffee with the Mayor last Friday, Hank Ross, the president of Friends of Founders Park and the park's designer gave a brief history of how the park came about. His presentation made me have flashbacks of how the community, at times, stumbled but persevered to make the park a reality. Founders Park is a point of community pride today because so many citizens committed to make it a reality.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

My flashbacks were before the park and during its creation. Hank presented a wonderful narrative of how the park came about and what Friends of Founders Park does to enhance its ongoing operation. We can all agree the park is truly a community treasure, but that was not necessarily the collective view in the past.

Flashing back, I remember relocating to Highlands in 1999 and seeing a derelict building, the old post office building, on the current park site. The building and site looked like something from a decayed metropolitan area, not a site for a small mountain community. Eventually, the building was removed.

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There is a 500-word limit. 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.

Obituary Policy:

We do not charge for obituaries at this time, but we reserve the right to edit as needed for space.

Flash forward to around 2005, and I am on the Highlands Planning Board.

A distinguished and legendary Realtor came before the board — well, actually, he was on the planning board also. His client proposed buying the post office property and building an interior, climate-controlled storage warehouse on the site. The only problem was that the property would have to be rezoned to allow a storage facility.

The planning board was presented with detailed drawings, and the proposed owner and Realtor assured everyone that it would be a wonderful project. I sat there with apprehension and finally said I was against the rezoning because a storage building just didn't fit the site and surrounding businesses.

Larry Gattenbien, the storied zoning administrator, informed me I had to give specific reasons. I did my best to amplify my concerns. Other board members chimed in and agreed, including the Realtor, who was also a sitting member of the planning board. The proposal was DOA, and the rest is history; Founders Park eventually became a reality.

My point is that, as a community, we need to be very mindful of how decisions are made about land and development. A bad decision can have long-lasting impacts. By the way, that climatized storage facility was eventually located on a corridor site and has been very successful.

The other flashback I had was of a political nature. As the Town Board weighed in on the park approval process, concerns were raised about Hank Ross's design, where Pine Street would be paved with pavers and closed for special events.





Some folks thought this notion and design was a Trojan Horse and that eventually Pine Street would be closed and absorbed into the park. A previous town manager even thought the pavers would be destroyed when our snowplows cleared Pine Street. After a decade, neither prediction has happened. It's funny how our fears and predictions sometimes do not materialize.

At the coffee, Commissioner Brian Stiehler gave an update on the proposed playground at the recreation department. It, too, is an ambitious project like the park was decades ago. I can't wait for the playground to become a reality; it will serve the children, parents, and grandparents for years to come.



"Nope. It's your turn to tell the Mayor he has a new garbage problem."

• WEATHER •

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Register now for the 2024 Town of Highlands Scholarship Golf Tournament

Registration is now open for the 2024 Scholarship Golf Classic, brought to you by the Bryson Family of Highlands. The event is scheduled for September 16th at Cullasaja Club and this year is shaping up to be the best event to date.

After last year's event, Mike and Jim Bryson stepped up and wanted to see this golf tournament turn into a revered community event, one that everyone will look forward to year after year. For the next five years or more, the Bryson Family will be a partner for the event and cover all the expenses associated with the golf tournament.

"The Town is so fortunate to have Bryson Family's support for this important annual event," said Highlands Mayor, Pat Taylor.

The day will begin with a light breakfast, followed by a 10:30AM shotgun start. Following golf, you'll sit down to a full buffet dinner in the beautiful Cullasaja Club Clubhouse.

The event will be capped off at 28 teams, so be sure to call soon to reserve

your spot. The cost for the event is \$700 per team (\$175/player). Hole sponsorships are available for \$150.

Since 1975, the Town of Highlands Scholarship fund has benefitted Highlands School graduates by giving scholarships to those furthering their education after high school. All Highlands School graduates are eligible and will receive some form of support for the duration of their post-secondary education provided they apply each year.

"It is an honor to have the support and partnership of the Bryson Family because it enables us to generate substantially more for the Town of Highlands Scholarship Fund. This is such a unique program, and we know the community has been, and will continue to be, behind this 100%," said event chair and Town Commissioner, Brian Stiehler."

If you have any questions about this year's event, reach out to Commissioner Brian Stiehler (787-2778) or to register, contact event co-Chair, Rebecca Shuler at Town Hall by calling 526-2118.

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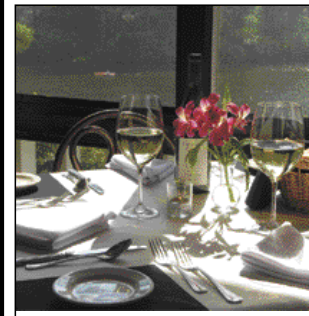


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• LETTERS •

Pay attention! Project 2025 doesn't help every day Americans

Dear Editor:

As we are learning, Project 2025, The Heritage Foundation's expansive plan for overhauling the federal government, seeks to dismantle, weaken or reassign just about every function of government.

This includes weakening or eliminating federal banking restrictions and regulations; most alarmingly, the protections afforded depositors under the FDIC (created in 1933 for reasons we are all familiar with).

Although skirting direct language to that effect, William L. Walton, Stephen Moore, and David R. Burton, co-authors of the chapter on the Department of Treasury, write: "Policymakers should create new charters for financial firms that eliminate activity restrictions and reduce regulations in return for straightforward higher equity or risk-retention standards."

In other words, Project 2025 seeks to replace federal regulation and the FDIC with market discipline. It goes on to state that FDIC protection as it stands, "increases moral hazard and leads to higher financial risk than would otherwise exist, thus weakening the banking system."

This ironic philosophy suggests that under FDIC protections, banks are more likely to feel confident enough to abandon their morals and go wild, relying on a soft federal landing if their risky schemes fail.

However, as we've seen, lax rules don't generally lead to moral discipline when it comes to so much money.

Marc Jarsulic, Ph.D., senior fellow and chief economist at the Center for American Progress counters: "If this part of Project 2025 were enacted, FDIC protection for depositors would end, exposing ordinary Americans [to] financial loss at failing banks."

(Take note that prior to publishing Project 2025, The Heritage Foundation was not so coy about its position

regarding the FDIC. It unequivocally advocates for phasing out the FDIC in its entirety and recommends limiting federal coverage during the phase-out period to about \$40,000 per individual! Ordinary people relying on hard-earned income to support their families and their futures will suffer the most.

At its best, the purpose of our democratic government is to protect and defend all of us, hence the rule of law and the many regulations some find too burdensome.

But let's take care not to "throw out the baby with the bath water." Project 2025, in all its radical expansiveness does just that.

Mase Lucas
Scaly Mountain

Thank you, President Biden

Dear Editor

You have done something rare in American politics putting the needs of the country above your own by ending your run for a second term. I agree with your statement, "I believe my record as president, my leadership in the world, my vision for America's future all merited a second term, but nothing can come in the way of saving democracy. That includes personal ambition."

When I first heard that you were stopping your campaign, I was relieved, but then quickly I was sad that you will not be able to continue working for the American people and accomplishing your goals. I do believe your presidency has been one the most productive and beneficial in our country's history. You led us out of the COVID pandemic with the strongest rebound in the world shown by higher growth, lower unemployment and lower inflation than any other industrial nation, while avoiding a predicted recession. Today America is in its strongest position over China in years. Our economy is driving the world's growth and we are stronger militarily than we have been in years, making us the envy of our friends and enemies. You renewed our global partnerships, strengthening NATO and supporting Ukraine.

These concrete accomplishments are important, but also vitally important is the tone you have set for the nation. These days, it is easy to question whether we still believe in honesty, decency, respect, justice and democracy. You have modeled those for us. Thank you, Joe Biden, and Godspeed.

Al Brady
Highlands

If you don't like Highlands' policies - you can leave

Dear Editor,

Highlands has about one thousand choosers, five deciders and one advisor/influencer.

The last count I saw for choosers was 863. That was the number of persons registered to vote for our council members and the mayor (the advisor/influencer). The five deciders are the council members we choosers have selected to make policy decisions for our town. The mayor can be a decider only in the event of a tie vote which is a rare occurrence.

I am one of the choosers and I take exception to the radical elements who have invaded our community and who have recently criticized and belittled two of my he-

• See LETTERS page 10

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NAR Settlement Changes

I will be upfront in stating that this is a dry subject, but it is something that buyers and sellers are asking about when I meet with them. Most importantly, they want to know how it is going to impact them and will this impact commissions going forward. It is the result of the Sitzer-Burnett antitrust lawsuit last year related to broker commissions.



Carl Romberg
Landmark Realty

Back in November, a federal jury in Missouri found the National Association of Realtors and two brokerage firms liable for \$1.8 billion in damages. There were several changes agreed to as part of the settlement. August 17th is the deadline for implementation of the NAR's practice changes and there have been many questions raised by buyers, sellers, and agents wanting to understand how this impacts them.

First, the settlement covers most NAR members and most realty firms but does not cover firms with over \$2 billion in in transaction volume. There are two primary areas of change related to the settlement. The first is a new rule about offers of compensation on the MLS (Multiple Listing Services) and the second is a new rule regarding written agreements.

Listing agreements cover the amount of compensation to be paid to the listing firm by the seller, usually a percentage of the sales price. They also cover what amount the listing firm will share with a buyer's agent or seller's sub-agent (if offered), which is usually half of the total compensation, also known as cooperating compensation.

For many years, this compensation has been listed in the MLS and bound member firms to pay without separate written agreements. Going forward the compensation can no longer be communicated in any way through the MLS. The types of compensation for a buyer broker can be a fixed-fee commission paid directly by the consumer; a concession from the seller (a portion of the closing costs); or the cooperating compensation. Soon, to find out what that amount is, a call must be made to the listing firm or agent before a house can be shown. If neither the listing firm nor the seller is offering compensation, then the buyer's agent must negotiate compensation with the buyer. If no one is offering compensation, there is

no incentive to show the house. Note that compensation is negotiable and should be negotiated between clients and agents. However, keep in mind that most firms set the rates that the agents must adhere to.

The new rule about written agreements is a little more cumbersome. Not only must an agent obtain and disclose the amount of compensation to the buyer before a property can be shown, but a written Buyer Agency Agreement must be signed that states what services and value will be provided, and for how much.

In North Carolina we have long had the practice of oral Buyer Agency Agreements until the time an offer is submitted, when it would have to be put in writing. Written Buyer Agency Agreements can be Non-Exclusive or Exclusive. Now they must be in writing before a house can be shown in person or virtually and must disclose the compensation. If the buyer refuses to sign the Buyer Agency Agreement, the buyer must arrange a way to tour the home themselves while being unrepresented.

To summarize, the changes make for more paperwork before a house can be shown in an effort to make the process more transparent to the consumer. So far, we are not seeing buyers offering to pay for services and sellers are still paying a commission that is to be split with the buyer's broker.

Currently, the services and value provided to buyers and sellers have remained the same, noting that different agents provide different levels of experience, service and value. Learning the implications of the new rules has provided more questions than answers, but it will ultimately produce more of a consumer centric environment.

Disclaimer – the information presented above was derived from the NAR website and is believed to be presented correctly. Carl Romberg is the Broker-in-Charge of Landmark Realty Group's Highlands Office and a Resort and Second Home Property Specialist (RSPS). Stop by his office on Main Street to say hello or reach him at 678-936-9309 or carl@landmarkrg.com.

Concerts August 3-6



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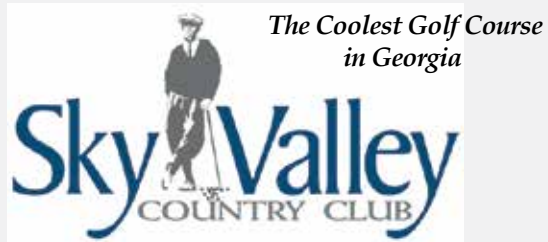


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Highlands Hurricanes win 'MSL All' meet

**By Steve Hott
Head Coach**

On Saturday, July 20, 31 Highlands Hurricanes traveled to Sylva to compete in the MSL (Mountain Swim League) All Star meet. A swimmer had to meet qualifying times to be eligible to swim in the meet.

The Hurricanes won over FAST (Franklin Amateur Swim Team) 338-247. SMAC (Smoky Mountain Aquatics Club) finished third (102), CCAC (Cherokee County Aquatics Club) 4th (91), and JCST (Jackson County Swim Team) 5th (63).

The Hurricanes were led by Jr. Olympians Lilliana Jandera-Chambless (4 golds medals, 24 pts), Justin Powell (3 golds, 1 silver, 21 pts), Conner Hughes (2 golds, 2 silvers, 20 pts), and Finneaus Garner (3 golds, 20 pts). Jandera Chambless, Powell, and Garner won the 1st place trophy for meet high scorer in their age groups. Hughes won the 2nd place trophy.

Anna Shchelnagova (2 golds, 2 bronzes), Jr. Olympic qualifier Emilina Hernandez (also 2 gold and 2 bronzes), Jr. Olympians Jasmine Abranyi (1 gold, 2 silvers), and Ben Halldin (2 gold, 2 bronzes) and all scored 18 pts. All four were awarded the 2nd place

trophy for their respective age groups.

Bella Batista (2 gold and 1 bronze) and Dodo Zhang (1 gold, 2 silvers and 1 bronze) both scored 17 pts. Jr. Olympic qualifiers Alex Lopez (4 silvers) and Alex Petric-Sakonjik scored 16 and 15 pts. Batista, Zhang, and Petric won 3rd place trophies, and Lopez won a 2nd place trophy. Jr. Olympian Chase Kenter had 2 silvers, 2 bronzes, 14 pts and a 3rd place trophy. Wylie Hinton (1 gold and 2 bronze medals), and Ivan Shchelnagachov (1 gold and 1 silver) with 13 pts each. Hinton won the 3rd place trophy. Jr. Olympians Aniah Mc-Kim (1 gold, 1 silver) and Corena Dearth (1 silver) scored 11 and 9 pts.

Nikita Denisoff (2 bronzes) had 7 pts. Ian Batista, Max Basil, Andre Jimenez, and Jr. Olympian Paolo McRae had 6 pts. Asa Garner and Jaycee Powell each had a bronze medal and 5 pts. AnnMarie Hinton won a silver medal and 4 pts. Stefan Halldin (1 bronze medal) and Harper Bresnahan scored 3 pts. Max Jestin and Rocco Basil scored 2 pts., Penelope McRae scored 1 pt., and Charlie Hinton swam well.

Dasha Halldin and Emma Denisoff were out with injuries.

...LETTERS continued from page 7

roes! Those are Amy Patterson and Mayor Taylor.

I am 90 years old and starting in 1939 have moved frequently from town to town across the US and seen first-hand the workings of many local governments. There are none better and more honest and less self-serving than the Highlands local government. They, my heroes have been the most active in trying to preserve the aspects of Highlands that attracted myself and others wanting to escape the outside mean and divisive world.

They, my heroes, have always been honest and transparent. If the council decides to make decisions that risk a lawsuit and are willing to be the first town in North Carolina to take such a decision for the betterment of us choosers, I fully support them. If it is not to your liking, perhaps you remember the road you used to come here. You are free to use it or any of the other three roads and get out.

**Larry Brannan
Highlands**

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What is the Short-Term Rental Debate All About?

The debate is about the future of Highlands and what kind of Town we want to live in.

We want the Town to ensure that our **residential neighborhoods** are peaceful, quiet, and free from hotels and motels masquerading as single-family homes.

Eliminating short-term rentals from **residential neighborhoods** will simply support Highlands' long-standing zoning policy that commercial activities – those engaged in for profit – are not appropriate for single-family residential neighborhoods.

This debate is only about rentals of less than 30 days **in residential neighborhoods**. Long-term rentals have always been allowed in residential neighborhoods. Short-term rentals are permitted in all of the commercially zoned areas of the Town, the R-3 zoned area, and outside the Town limits without restriction.

In 2022, the Town froze the expansion of short-term rentals but allowed existing ones to continue to operate. Allowing STRs to continue to operate in neighborhoods is an assault on the property rights of the neighboring traditional homeowners who are forced to suffer the noise, traffic, late night parties, excessive parking and garbage from a commercial use adjoining their home.

The Highlands Neighborhood Coalition believes in protecting and preserving the historic character of Highlands' residential neighborhoods. If you share this belief, please join us.

Highlands Neighborhood Coalition
Neighbors and Neighborhoods Working Together
www.highlandsneighborhoodcoalition.com/join-now/



HIGHLANDS
NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION

PRESERVE | PROTECT | ADVOCATE

HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS



Chip Snyder, with American Legion 370 presented Lester Norris, director of the Highlands Rec Park and Civic Center an American flag.

"Thanks for being a part of the presentation today," said Snyder. "It is the Highlands American Legion's pleasure to present this American flag to the Rec Park, a facility that so many of us enjoy."

SUMMER POOL SCHEDULE

Lap Swim Mon.-Fri. 6am-9:45am, and Saturday 10am-1pm 6 lanes. **Water Aerobics** 18 years plus Mon.-Fri. 10am-1am with Karen Chambers. **Public Swim** Mon. thru Thurs. 11am-7pm, Fri. and Sat. 11am-6pm and Sun. 1pm-6pm. For info, call 828-526-1595.

Thurs. Aug. 1

• The Highlands Biological Foundation (HBF) next lecture in their Zahner Conservation Lecture Series at 6 PM at the Highlands Nature Center. The lecture, titled "The Surface Water and Ocean Topography Mis-

sion: NASA's New Eye in the Sky for Earth's Water," will be delivered by Dr. Tamlin Pavel-sky, a renowned professor of global hydrology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A small reception will follow.

• At The Bascom, The Aaron Shearer Foundaton Summer Guitarfest 7 p.m., cash bar opens at 6:15 p.m.

Fri., Aug. 2

• At The Bascom, Artist Talk with TJ Erdahl and Beau Raymond from 4:30-6p.

• Friday Night Live in Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – Ezra & Katie

Sat., Aug. 3

• The Highlands Fire & Rescue annual Open House with free hotdog lunch and free truck rides 11at o 2p. Donations accepted.

• The Cashiers Historical Society will hold their annual Mountain Heritage Lecture on at 3pm at the Albert-Carlton Cashiers Community Library. The topic will be "The Politics of Storytelling: Preservation, Community Engagement, and Changing the Narrative at Stratford Hall." Dr. Kelley Deetz will discuss how Stratford Hall has interpreted the legacy of Robert E. Lee and family in recent years. This is a free event open to the public.

• Pop-Up Bagpipers are scheduled from 4:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

• Saturdays on Pine at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. – The Holiday Band

• Old Time Community Dance at Macon

County Library on Siler Road from 6:30-9: p.m Dance caller is Harrison Keeley; Late to the Party band provides live music. The event opens with 30 minutes of basic dance instruction for beginners, followed by two hours of dancing. Admission is by donation. The event is produced by the Arts Council. Phone 828-524-ARTS or email arts4all@dnet.net.

Mon., Aug. 5

• High Mountain Squares is sponsoring a new class for beginning students beginning Monday. The classes will be taught by Keith Lester, caller and instructor, from 6:30-8:30pm at the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building on Highway 441, Franklin, NC. The first two of 12 classes are free; the remaining ten classes are \$50 per person. For more info call Betty at 828-787-2324 or Bob at 828-332-0001.

Thurs., Aug. 8

• At The Bascom, Artist talk with TJ Erdahl and Beau Raymond 4 pm

• The Highlands Biological Foundation (HBF) invites the community to its next Zahner Conservation Lecture on Thursday, from 6 to 7PM. Dr. Aimee Rockhill, an Associate Professor at Western Carolina University, will present "Roaming the Wilds: Exploring NC Mammals Shore to Summit." A small reception will follow.

Fri., Aug. 9

• Friday Night Live showcases traditional mountain music and exceptional local talent on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – ABC Combo

Sat., Aug. 10

• Saturdays on Pine at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. – Will Thompson Band

Thurs., Aug. 15

• At The Bascom. A Barn Dance. Tickets are \$10 for adults. Children under 12 are free. Food will be available for purchase from The Secret Garden. A cash bar will also be available. Reserve your tickets today by visiting thebascom.org or calling 828.526.4949

Fri., Aug. 16

• Friday Night Live showcases traditional mountain music and exceptional local talent on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – Steady Hand String Band

Sat., Aug. 17

• At The Bascom, Blacksmithing Trunk Show 1-5 p.m.

Thurs.-Sun., Aug. 22-25

• At PAC, Highlands Community Players presents "The Lifespan of a Fact" at 7:30p and 2p on Sunday. For tickets go to: www.highlands-cashiersplayers.com or call 828-526-9047.

Thurs., Aug. 22

• Highlands School Orientation/Open House is 3-6 pm • At

• The Bascom, From the Lowlands to the Highlands Exhibition Reception 5-6:30 pm

Fri.-Sat., Aug 23 - 31

• Cashiers Designer Showhouse is the Cashiers Historical Society's signature fundraising event. The Showhouse has become a cherished tradition for over two decades, showcas-

ing stunning homes and exquisite designs by interior designers from the Southeast and beyond. The special events during the Showhouse are a beloved part of this tradition, highlighting community and lifestyle events. Tickets for this event are \$40 and \$50 at the door. They are available for purchase at cashiershistoricalsociety.org and select local retailers.

• The Cashiers Historical Society's Jan Wyatt Symposium Exhibit "Talking Trout" will be displayed at Brookings Anglers Fly Shop throughout the run of the 2024 Showhouse. Stop by Brookings Cashiers location to see the exhibit and to learn about the history and evolution of native trout and fly fishing in Western NC.

Fri., Aug. 23

• The Cashiers Historical Society presents "Historically Cashiers Designer Panel Luncheon" on Friday, from 11am – 1pm at Canyon Kitchen in Lonesome Valley. This is a Cashiers Designer Showhouse Special Event and all proceeds benefit the Cashiers Historical Society. Tickets for this event are \$175 and available for purchase at cashiershistoricalsociety.org.

• Friday Night Live on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – Southern Highland Band

Sat. & Sun., Aug. 24-25

• Art and Craft Show in KH Founders Park on Pine Street. 10a to 5p Saturday and 10a to 4p on Sunday. Rain or shine.

Sat., Aug. 24

• The Cashiers Historical Society presents "Talkin' Bourbon with Blade and Bow" on Saturday, 1– 2pm at the Pavilion at Village Green. This is a Cashiers Designer Showhouse Special Event that is free and open to the public. Visit cashiershistoricalsociety.org for more information.

Sun., Aug. 25

• The Cashiers Historical Society presents "Introduction to Mountain Gardening. What am I supposed to do with my landscape?" with the Oconee Bell Chapter of the NC Native Plant Society on Sunday 1 – 2 pm at the Pavilion at Village Green. This is a Cashiers Designer Showhouse Special Event that is free and open to the public. Visit cashiershistoricalsociety.org for more information.

• OEI's Chef Dinners at The Farm. 3RD ANNUAL SUNDAY SUPPER. Book Online at OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners

Mon., Aug. 26

• The Cashiers Historical Society presents "Shag You Say, Let's Dance the Away" - Step into the World of Carolina Shag with Danie Beck on Monday 3 - 5 pm at Micas Mountain Kitchen. This is a Cashiers Designer Showhouse Special Event and all proceeds benefit the Cashiers Historical Society. Tickets for this event are \$40 and available for purchase at cashiershistoricalsociety.org.

Thurs.-Sun., Aug. 29-Sept. 1

Pop Up Pipers!

Celebrating Highlands' Heritage

Listen for the call of the Highlands Bagpipers as they perform from a different location one Saturday of each month through October.

This Month's Performance:

Between Wine Shoppe & Ruffed Grouse

Saturday, August 3

4:30 – 5 p.m.

Performances are made possible by the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC.

EVENTS

• At PAC, Highlands Community Players presents "The Lifespan of a Fact" at 7:30p and 2p on Sunday. For tickets go to: www.highlandscashiersplayers.com or call 828-526-9047.

Thurs., Aug. 29

• The Cashiers Historical Society presents "Entertaining with Biscuits" - Live Cooking Demo & Luncheon with Food & Lifestyle Expert Chadwick Boyd on Thursday, 11 am - 1 pm at The Orchard Restaurant. This is a Cashiers Designer Showhouse Special Event and all proceeds benefit the Cashiers Historical Society. Tickets for this event are \$175 and available for purchase at cashiershistoricalsociety.org.

• The Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC will host a FREE community shred event Thurs., Aug. 29, from 9:30am - 12:30pm in Highlands Plaza, near Bryson's Food Store on Highway 106. Allowed items, paper products with staples or paper clips, spiral notebooks. Items NOT allowed, 3-ring binders and cardboard. Donations accepted for The Gordon Center and the Literacy & Learning Center.

MOVIES at PAC's MLPC

507 Chestnut St. Highlands



**Sunday, Aug. 4
at 5:30p**

**Tues., Aug. 6
2p and 5:30p**

**Tickets:
Adults: \$13.20
Children: \$11**

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828-526-9047

...INTERNET continued from page 1

project, which was started in 2022 and is expected to be completed by 2028, will ultimately provide broadband services to 12,330 locations in the county at a total cost of \$21.77 million. The county match for the total project is \$1.59 million.

State and federal grant funding has helped to make this total project a reality for seven projects including South Macon (completed in 2022), GREAT Frontier (two projects), Nantahala Fiber, and Public Wi-Fi, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) and The Completing Access to Broadband (CAB).

The Completing Access to Broadband (CAB)

Macon County was recently announced as the recipient of a CAB grant that will provide internet service to 1163 locations in the county. Through the CAB program, the county's broadband committee identified areas in the county that were important for expansion. The committee identified seven priority areas for the CAB program.

The CAB project will finish broadband installation in the U.S. 64 gorge area north of Highlands, Cullasaja, Sanderstown and Nantahala. The project will be completed over the next two years with an expected completion date of October 31, 2026.

The county's broadband committee worked with North Carolina Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) to create a statement of work for the CAB project, which was posted in April and closed early June. The committee received bids from three providers for the project.

County Manager Derek Roland, Lee, and two other members of the evaluation team from NCDIT evaluated the proposals and unanimously selected Balsam West as the provider for the project.

The total cost of the project is \$5.49 million and will provide service to 1163 homes. The CAB grant will cover \$4,113,903 with a county match of \$548,520 and a vendor match from Balsam West of \$822,781.

The CAB program provides

an opportunity for individual North Carolina counties to partner with the NCDIT to fund broadband projects in unserved areas of counties appropriating \$400 million from the American Rescue Plan. Counties are required to provide matching funds for CAB projects. These matching funds are combined with NCDIT's contribution and the vendor's contribution according to the match amounts.

Counties work with the NCDIT to define areas or locations to prioritize for the CAB program that best align with their priorities. All counties within North Carolina are eligible for participation in the CAB program.

GREAT Frontier

Lee also gave commissioners an update of two ongoing GREAT grants awarded to Frontier and Balsam West for work in Macon County.

Under the GREAT Frontier program, Frontier received \$3.8 million from the state toward the \$4.44 million project that will provide internet to 2700 locations in the county. Macon County will provide \$50,000 as the required match for the project.

The areas covered by the Frontier project will include parts of Highlands and Cullasaja, parts of Scaly Mountain, west and south of Franklin down to Otto and north of Franklin. The project's engineering is complete with permitting in progress. Frontier is still work on permitting with Duke and other right way areas.

Lee pointed out that most of the equipment already in place in the county is obsolete and has to be rebuilt. Fiber subcontractors for the project have been selected, and the project manager has been assigned. Construction will begin in the fall of 2024 and is expected to be completed in a year.

Balsam West received a \$1 million grant from the state for a project that is estimated to cost \$1.17 million. Macon County will also provide the required match of \$50,000.

This project will provide broadband to 263 locations in the county including homes in Otto and Scaly Mountain.

Engineering for this project is

complete with permitting in progress. Material orders and deliveries as well as the selection of a fiber contractor are also in progress. Fiber construction is expected to start late summer or early fall 2024.

Nantahala Fiber and Public Wi-Fi

The Nantahala fiber project, which was started last fall, has been completed by Balsam West with the network management handoff to Macon County in place this week. The county committed \$350,000 to connect five facilities in the Nantahala lake area at a total project cost of \$600 thousand.

Fiber infrastructure is now complete providing internet service to the Nantahala Recreation Center, EMS, volunteer fire and rescue, the community library and VFR substation.

Nantahala's public Wi-Fi was completed as a separate project completed by SMS Integration made possible through a \$50,000

grant from the Southwestern Commission.

Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF)

In his update, Lee said he has not heard from Charter that was awarded funding through the RDOF federal grant program. The Charter project would serve 8,191 locations in rural Macon County at a cost of \$9 million. Lee said he expected the project to have been started by the spring of this year. Charter has until 2028 to complete the project.

Lee told commissioners Macon is eligible for additional CAB and Stop Gap grants. The county has \$518,000 left from the original \$1.067 million match commitment for future grants. The broadband committee will pursue additional grants when available to continue its work to provide internet service to Macon County citizens.

Come Walk Through History

Visit the Highlands Historical Society Museum

524 North 4th Street

Museum is Open through October:

Thursday-Saturday 10:00 to 4:00
Sunday 1:00 to 4:00

Free Admission!

Visit www.highlandshistory.com for more information

Bring in this advertisement to enter a monthly raffle to win a book on Highlands History



Each Friday and Saturday night from May through October, the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/ Visit Highlands, NC hosts live music downtown.

Join us for our August concerts!
All shows take place from 6 – 8:30 p.m.

Friday Night Live

Town Square | 343 Main St.

Showcasing traditional mountain music and local talent

AUGUST 2
Ezra & Katie

AUGUST 9
ABC Combo

AUGUST 16
Steady Hand String Band

AUGUST 23
Southern Highland Band

AUGUST 30
Spare Parts Bluegrass Band

Saturdays on Pine

Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park
Pine St.

Featuring a variety of popular, regional bands and musicians

AUGUST 3
The Holiday Band

AUGUST 10
Will Thompson Band

AUGUST 31
Full Circle

visithighlandsc.com



From left: Todd Holder, Host; Randy Foster, President; Jennifer Collier Wilson and Max Gibbons, Pisgah Legal Services (not pictured: Leslie Manning, Regional Development Officer, Pisgah Legal Services)

Pisgah Legal Service takes the floor at Rotary meeting

The Rotary Club of Highlands was honored to host representatives from Pisgah Legal Service at a recent club meeting.

Jennifer Collier Wilson, Director of Volunteer Engagement, and attorney Max Gibbons, Director of ProBono Attorneys, were our guests.

Pisgah Legal service, formed in 1978, provides a broad array of free, civil legal aid, anti-poverty advocacy and access to health

care in 18 counties and the Qualla Boundary in Western North Carolina, addressing needs in housing, domestic and elder safety, healthcare (Medicaid), and income security (tax preparation) services.

In 2023, over 23,000 individuals were served. For more info: www.pisgahlegal.org or call Highlands/Cashiers office at (828) 210-3424.

...INVESTMENT continued from page 1

investment has been in two areas: Direct Patient Care and Infrastructure Investment.

Direct Patient Care encompasses equipment upgrades and placement of equipment to better serve patients. Those include a 128-slice CT replacement, MRI replacement and relocation inside the hospital, a pneumatic tube system set up between the ER and the lab, 3D mammography, a digital radiology suite, improved bone density and ultrasound capabilities, surgical suite renovations with LED surgical lighting, ortho equipment, sterilizer and Neptune suction, cell phone booster and a second chemistry analyzer.

Infrastructure improvements include: \$300K in kitchen equipment replacement, \$500K in the Cashiers Clinic generator replacement, an electric power system upgrade, air-handler and boiler upgrade, medical air and vacuum replacement, grease trap replacement, elevator modernization, alarm panel upgrade, chill water pump replace-

ment, replacement of the nurses' station, and ADA improvements.

He was most excited with the investment in healthcare colleagues since keeping healthcare facilities staffed is challenging across the country.

The Certified Nursing Assistant program where high school graduates are introduced to the world of nursing has been growing steadily. Many times, those who graduate the program, move on to a nursing program. He cited two CNA graduates who are going to attend the Galen College of Nursing this fall.

There are also Nursing School partnerships with Southwester which recently restarted its LPN program with clinical rotations at HC Hospital and the Eckerd Living Center.

HC Hospital continues to utilize the MAHEC – Mountain Area Health Education Center – which is a medical mentor-

• See INVESTMENT page 16

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



Rotary Bingo winners

On Thursday, July 25, the Rotary Club of Highlands partnered with the Scaly Mountain Women's Club to sponsor Bingo. All net proceeds benefited the Scaly Mountain Women's Club.

The photo shows several children of

the Jess Dalton family, whose table won the final Super Bingo game and took home \$290. Also pictured are Rotary Bingo chair Bob Baxter and Rotary member and Bingo caller Rachel Wavra.



NC Election 2024: Insights from Dr. Chris Cooper, WCU

Dr. Chris Cooper, Madison Distinguished Professor of Political Science & Public Affairs at Western Carolina University recently gave the Rotary Club of Highlands insight into North Carolina's 2024 election. Author of the soon-to-be-published *Anatomy of a Purple State*, Cooper traced the transition of NC from a predominantly blue state to solidly purple state over the last 45 years.

Noting the rise in unaffiliated voters,

Cooper pointed out that changing demographics in North Carolina put the state on the precipice of turning red OR blue in the November election. Cooper also noted that unaffiliated voters are the largest group of registered voters under 40 years old and unaffiliated make up the largest group of registered voters born outside NC.

Anatomy of a Purple State can be pre-ordered at Amazon – free delivery on Tuesday October 15.



Community Barn Dance!

Aug 15 | 5:30 - 7:30 pm

\$10 General Admission
12 and under FREE

Join us for an evening filled with toe-tapping rhythm and lively tunes, as bluegrass band, Jackson Grimm and the Bull Moose Party takes the stage. Enjoy dancing with the help of an old-time country caller, create unforgettable memories, and embrace the vibrant spirit of community.



Food & Drink:

Delicious sandwiches and other goodies will be available for purchase from The Secret Garden.

Cash Bar | Free Popcorn



Reserve Your Ticket:

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Call us at 828.526.4949

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...INVESTMENT from page 14

ing program in which Highlands' Dr. Patti Wheeler participated years ago.

He gave a sneak peek of the proposed 60-80 unit workforce housing project in the works on hospital property which will be open to any healthcare worker, not just HC Hospital workers, though he said HC Hospital will likely be the prominent user of the property.

The Macon County Board of Commissioner signed a resolution in support of the project in May. (See MC BOC signs resolution for Highlands healthcare housing <https://www.highlandinfo.com/PDFs/24may23.pdf>)

Neal said HC Hospital has received the highest Emergency Room overall rating for seven quarters in a row and ranks in the Top 10 in HCA's 109 hospitals and the Eckerd Living Center has a 5-star rating. HC Hospital also earned accreditation from the Joint Commission for its Primary Stroke Care and most impressive, the hospital has been infection-free for catheter associated urinary tract infections and central line associated blood stream infections.

HCA has invested in new providers in Cashiers - Allyson Litchfield, PA-C, Dr. and Kate Shattenkirk with recruitment for

a third provider is in the works.

In Highlands, through Blue Ridge Health, providers include Dr. Kristy Fincher and Julie Arnold, NP. (See "Blue Ridge Health-Highlands Cashiers hits the 10,000-patient visit mark" on page 16 of this issue.)

This recruitment in both Cashiers and Highlands has been subsidized and spearheaded by the HC Health Foundation which was created by the sale of Mission Health to HCA Healthcare.

Surgery is again up and running at the hospital with Facial Plastic Surgeon Chris Wenzel, General surgeon/ Hand Surgeon, James Osborne, General Surgeon Zach Phillips and coming in September, Pain Management Doctor Jennifer Windsor.

Recruiting for a surgical physician assistant and an orthopedic surgeon is underway.

Neal ended the presentation noting that since HCA's HC Hospital isn't a non-profit anymore, it contributes to the community tax base with \$520K in property tax, \$874K in sales/use tax and \$435K in unemployment tax - a total of \$1.86 million. It also contributes \$19.7 million in charitable care.

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



Pictured center is Charlotte Muir, Health Foundation Executive Director, with Dr Kristy Fincher and the Blue Ridge Health-Highlands Cashiers staff.

Blue Ridge Health: Highlands Cashiers hits the 10,000-patient visit mark

Blue Ridge Health, a federally qualified health center, has achieved a significant milestone by serving its 10,000th patient visit at their Highlands-Cashiers clinic. Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation is extremely proud to recognize this accomplishment, as it reflects the Health Foundation's commitment to supporting accessible and quality healthcare for all by investing in organizations like Blue Ridge Health.

Blue Ridge Health-Highlands Cashiers offers comprehensive care for individuals and families, regardless of their ability to pay. This includes family medicine, pediatrics, women's health, screenings, vaccinations, preventative care, testing for minor infections, mental and behavioral health services, nutrition services, and more.

"When the Health Foundation set out in 2019 to improve the health of our community, we immediately prioritized access to healthcare," said Charlotte Muir, Executive Director of the Health Foundation. "Blue Ridge Health is an ideal partner for this as they serve all ages, all levels of income, and offer comprehensive care. We are incredibly proud to have made healthcare more accessible here on the Plateau and look forward to the future success of Blue Ridge Health."

Through its partnership with Blue Ridge Health, Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation is helping to ensure that all resi-

dents have access to high-quality, compassionate, and affordable healthcare. This is especially important in our rural mountain communities, where access to healthcare can be limited, and barriers such as transportation and financial resources can make it difficult for individuals to receive the care they need.

In addition to recognizing the 10,000th patient visit, the Health Foundation will celebrate National Health Center Appreciation Week, observed from August 4th to August 10th. This is an opportunity for health centers nationwide to be acknowledged for their tireless efforts in delivering primary care services, particularly to underserved and vulnerable populations.

The Health Foundation encourages everyone in our community to take this opportunity during National Health Center Appreciation Week to express their support, recognize the dedication of healthcare professionals and staff, and advocate for the continued strength and sustainability of health centers across our region.

Blue Ridge Health-Highlands Cashiers is located on the 3rd floor of the Jane Woodruff Clinic located at the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital campus. For more information or to make an appointment, please call (828) 482-6160.

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Dine in or Call in your order for Pickup! • 828-482-1513
462 Dillard Road, Highlands (across from Dusty's)

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Mountain Findings Thrift Store proceeds help 31 Highlands-area nonprofits

Mountain Findings, Highlands' Community Thrift Store, distributed \$369,000 this week to 31 non-profit organizations serving the needs of the Plateau. Earlier this year, another \$50,000 of the store's earnings went for scholarships for graduating seniors at Highlands High School. Taken together, these contributions represent 90 percent of the store's 2024 earnings.

With no payroll or mortgage, Mountain Findings' 65 volunteers turned their sweat equity into grants that strengthen the Highlands-Cashiers, NC community, especially for the economically distressed or disadvantaged, including animals.

"We receive hundreds of lightly used items each week," says Board President Jill Helmer. "Our volunteers sort, clean, and price the items quickly and efficiently. Those items with high appeal

are posted to the Mountain Findings Facebook page each Wednesday, showing shoppers what's available and building excitement for Thursday's opening."

Mountain Findings assists organizations in these areas: Human welfare, Youth Enrichment, Conservation and the Environment, Animal welfare, Cultural Enrichment, Civic engagement, and Public Safety.

The 2024 grant recipients include:

Appalachian Animal Rescue Center, Appalachian Wildlife Refuge, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of WNC, Blue Ridge Free Dental Clinic, Boys and Girls Club of the Plateau, Carpe Diem Farms, Cashiers-Highlands Humane Society, Community Care Clinic of Highlands-Cashiers, Counseling Center of Highlands, Glenville Cashiers Rescue Squad, Highlands Emergency Council, International Friend-

ship Center, Highlands Historical Society, PAC Educational Theatre, Highlands Plateau Greenway, Highlands School, Athletic Booster Club, Highlands School Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Highlands School Parent-Teacher Organization, Highlands-Cashiers Chamber Music Festival, Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, Highlands Cashiers Players, Literacy and Learning Center, Magnolia Mission, Mainspring Conservation Trust, PAWSITIVE Shelter Volunteers of Macon County, Peggy Crosby Community Service Center, REACH of Macon County, Sky Valley-Scaly Mountain Volunteer Fire & Rescue, The Gordon Center for Children, Town of Highlands Recreation Department, and Wreaths Across America, Highlands.

Mountain Findings is located at 452 Spruce Street in Highlands and is open Thurs., - Sat., 10a to 1p.

• UPCOMING EVENT AT THE BASCOM •

The Bascom Barn Dance: An Evening of Appalachian tradition and bluegrass music

The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts invites the community to an unforgettable evening of old-time Appalachian square dancing and bluegrass music at The Bascom Barn Dance on Thurs., Aug. 15, from 5:30-7:30 PM.

This lively and family-friendly event will feature the energetic sounds of the bluegrass band Jackson Grimm and the Bull Moose Party. Attendees can enjoy dancing with the guidance of an old-time country caller, creating lasting memories while embracing the vibrant spirit of community.

Food and Drink: Delicious sandwiches and other goodies will be available for purchase from The Secret Garden. A cash bar will be available for your favorite beverages and enjoy complimentary popcorn throughout the evening.



Tickets: \$10 are for adults, free for children under 12. Reserve your tickets today by visiting thebascom.org or calling 828.526.4949

• About The Bascom: The Bascom creates visual art experiences that inspire and empower

individuals and communities through seeing, thinking, and doing. For more than 30 years, we've served as a vital cultural resource for Western North Carolina, and we continue to build on that legacy through our work and advocacy

Celebrate 45 years with Nancy and Bob



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828-482-1112**

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

While traveling through Townville



Pastor Randy Lucas
Highlands United
Methodist Church

When you serve as pastor of a congregation in Highlands North Carolina, hospital visits can frequently have you crossing state lines. During my eight years in this community, I've made out-of-state pastoral visits in Florida, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina.

Recently, while making pastoral visits to hospitals in Georgia and South Carolina, my travels took me through a little South Carolina town called "Townville." Maybe you're familiar with it, but it was my initial introduction to Townville and it struck me as a pretty cool name for a little South Carolina town. While traveling through Townville I passed by an electronic sign in front of the Townville Baptist Church and I was immediately intrigued by the church sign message. It read - "Be the reason someone believes in the goodness of God."

And I thought, "three-cheers" for the Townville Baptist Church in the town of Townville South Carolina! "Be the reason someone believes in the goodness of God!" Amen to that! Just think about the implications. Be the reason someone believes someone cares, the reason someone realizes they're not alone, the reason someone believes they are loved, the reason someone hopes again. Be the reason someone believes there is a God!

Philip Yancey once pointed out that "no one ever converted to Christianity because they lost the argument." Neither you nor I will give anyone reason to believe in the goodness of God with a cleverly crafted intellectual argument. We will not advance the kingdom of God by silencing detractors with a skilled apologetic. Raised voices and harsh words will never ever do it!

If we will be the reason someone believes in the goodness of God we will be vehicles of God's goodness in the world. Plain and simple. We will be people of mercy and compassion, people of understanding and acceptance, people of hospitality and forgiveness. We will engage in acts of kindness. We will love without condition. We will offer a hand of fellowship to all, without qualification or exception.

It's such a simple thing really. And I'm grateful for a really good reminder from a Baptist church sign in the South Carolina town of Townville. I'm grateful for a really good reminder about the importance of sharing God's goodness in the world. And come to think of it, I'm really grateful for all the good folk though the years, both inside and outside the church walls, who have given me plenty of reasons to believe in the goodness of God!

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH
Rev. Oliver Rice. Pastor (828) 421-1315
Sundays: School: 10 a.m., Worship: 11
Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7
Wednesdays: Mid-week prayer meeting: 7 p.m.

BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH
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Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Rev. Aryn Williams-Reubel. Pastor 828-743-5298
Sundays: School at 9:30; Worship 10:30

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Sundays: 10 a.m. Worship; Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH
The Rev'd Dr. Michael Matlock, Rector
464 U.S. Hwy. 64E, Cashiers, NC
CAC@christanglicancashiers.org • 828-743-1701
Sunday: 9:30a Adult Christian Ed; 10:30a Holy Eucharist;
6p Contemplative Worship with music and prayer thru Oct. 27
Wed: 6p Potluck, Bible Study

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS
Pastor Brent Metcalf • 743-5470 www.cashiers.church
Sun. S.S 9:30a, 10:45a; Tues. Guys study 8am. Gals 10am.;
Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH
283 Spring Street - Sunday Service: 10:30 a.m.
Testimony meeting: 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Jim Kinard
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.
1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7 p.m.
Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

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Sundays: Service 10:45am, Children's 10:30am
Wednesdays: Youth 5:30-7pm; Women's Bible Study: Mondays
4:30pm, Tuesdays 10am; Men's Bible Study: Wednesdays & Thurs-
days 7am @ Zookeeper Bistro

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
Rev. W. Bentley Manning, Rector • 526-2968
5th and Main streets • www.incarnationwnc.org
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am in Sanctuary, Wed: Healing Eucharist 12 pm in Chapel, Morn-
ing Prayer: Mon-Thurs 8:30 am in Chapel

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Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Women's 10:30 am

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Sun.: Adult Ed.: 10 a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.
Tues: Men's Group 10 a.m. Wed: Bell Choir 4 p.m.. Choir: 6p

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HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD
Randy Reed. Pastor 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street
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Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road
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Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

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290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212
Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

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

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Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers • 828-743-2122
Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from July 18. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

July 18

• At 12:12 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident at Mountain Lori Drive where the driver backed into a split rail fence while attempting to back into a driveway.

July 22

• At 2 p.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident in Highlands Creek Village when a driver attempting to park hit another parked vehicle.

July 24

• At 8:45 a.m., officers responded to a call of vandalism to a window valued at \$1,000 at McCulleys on S. 4th Street.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from July 23.

July 23

• At 7:54 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

• At 3:23 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm and a Co2 alarm at a residence on Summit Trail.

July 24

• At 10:08 a.m., the dept. responded to a medical alarm at a residence on Hickory Hill Road.

• At 5:01 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Morewood Road.

July 25

• At 8:47 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

July 27

• At 1:44 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Dendy Orchard Road.

• At 8:24 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on N. 4th Street.

At 11:31 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire

alarm at a location on Cullasaja Club Drive.

July 29

• At 7:03 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on S. 4th Street.

• At 9:47 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

This Saturday, Aug. 3!

The Highlands Fire & Rescue annual Open House with free hotdog lunch and free truck rides, 11a to 2p.

Donations accepted.

• UPCOMING EVENT •

Interlude Concert at First Presbyterian to feature pianist, Edward Eikner

The Interlude series which is sponsored by First Presbyterian Church continues with a concert at 2pm on Wednesday, August 7 with a performance by pianist, Edward Eikner.

Native Texan Edward Eikner attended Baylor University on a Van Cliburn Scholarship and did his graduate work at the Eastman School of Music. He pursued extended studies in Europe on a Fulbright grant. His appearances as a recitalist, soloist with symphony orchestras, and as a chamber musician have taken him all over

the world. After 40 years as the Comer Professor of Fine Arts, he retired to become Professor Emeritus at Wesleyan College in Macon, GA.

There is no charge for the Interlude concerts, which constitute a ministry in music to the community. Dress is casual- come as you are. Visitors to Highlands are especially invited to these concerts. First Presbyterian Church is located at the corner of Main and Fifth Streets. Handicapped accessible entrances are located on Church Street on and Fifth Street.

...PRE-K continued from page 1

2025-2026 and then to \$750 in 2026-2027.

“It has been a while since we have raised rates for the program,” said School Board Member Hilary Wilkes. “I think the increase is falling in line with inflation and the economy. I appreciate that she staggered the increases to give families a time to adjust.”

The program will still offer a hundred-dollar discount per month for school employees to enable them to send their children to Pre-K so that they can work for Macon County Schools.

The Pre-K program is not state-funded but is a program that the school system sees as a value in providing for Macon County students. Currently there are three schools that offer a Pre-K program – South Macon Elementary and Iotla Valley Elementary which have two Pre-K classes and Cartoogechaye Elementary with one Pre-K classroom. Highlands School will be adding a Pre-K program with two classrooms next August after the new addition to the school is complete.

The program is primarily funded by private pay. In addition, some families receive some subsidy money to pay for the program through NC Pre-K funding.

According to the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education, the NC Pre-K is designed to provide high-quality education experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-old children.

The NC Pre-K Program is “built on the National Education Goals Panel’s premise that to be successful academically in school, children need to be prepared in all five of the developmental domains that are critical to children’s overall well-being and success in reading and math as they enter school: Approaches to play and learning; Emotional and social development; Health and physical development; Language development and communication; and Cognitive development.”

To be eligible for the program the child must be four years on or before Au-

• See PRE-K page 22



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SEASONED FIREWOOD - Any size load. call 828-342-6806. (st. 1/25)

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TINY HOME LOTS FOR SALE. \$55k-\$85k ea. Each lot comes with water, power, and sewer run to each lot. www.TinyMountainEstates.com for more info. (st. 11/22)

RV SITE - class A only - in Wildflower Creek RV Resort. Just minutes from Highlands and Sky Valley. Full hook-up, concrete pad, landscaped and storage shed. Reduced \$192,500. For more info call 828-421-1709 or email bobnncync@gmail.com. (st. 1/25)

FOR RENT

DREAM SUMMER GETAWAY IN KEY LARGO, FLORIDA. Newly remodeled 2 bed 3 bath condo on the bay. Amazing sunset views, great amenities and more. CasaPalmaKeyLargo.com. (st. 5/23)

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nee7726@gmail.com (st. 5/2)

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TRAINED SINGER NEEDED TO CANTOR Sunday morning Masses at Our Lady of the Mountains (Highlands) and St. Jude (Cashiers / Sapphire) Catholic churches. Qualifications: strong vocal and sightreading skills; technical ability to access music digitally; experience singing in liturgical settings; commitment to Sundays, Holy Week, Christmas services. Pay negotiable. Contact: 828-526-2418 or olmountainhighlands@rcdoc.org. (7/25)

ORGANIST/PIANIST NEEDED to play for 11am Sunday worship services and Wednesday evening choir rehearsals (5:30-7pm) at First Presbyterian Church, Highlands, NC. \$20K annual salary. No administrative duties involved. Our organ is a circa 2004 16-rank 2 manual Wicks pipe organ. For more information, contact Angie Jenkins, Director of Music Ministry @ 828-200-0183. (st. 6/13)

ESTABLISHED CUSTOM HOMEBUILDER IN HIGHLANDS/CASHIERS area looking for project superintendent to manage multiple sites and subcontractors. Please send resume to: JW Underwood Construction LLC P.O. Box 147, Highlands NC 2974. Or email: john@jwunderwoodconstruction.com (st. 5/2)

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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Registration is open: Learning is fun at TL&LC's after-school program

As the school year approaches, a key consideration for parents is after-school learning opportunities for their children. The Literacy & Learning Center's after-school program provides a welcome solution that's both fun and enriching for students in grades K-8.

TL&LC provides a safe and nurturing environment where children can thrive after the final school bell rings. This program offers a variety of engaging activities designed to support academic achievement, social development, and overall well-being – all free of charge!

There is dedicated time for homework assistance for students needing a little extra help. Caring and experienced staff and volunteers can answer questions, clarify concepts, and ensure children stay on top of their schoolwork. After



homework there are arts and crafts projects, physical activities, and provide a space and time to relax and unwind with engaging games.

Children find opportunities to build friendships, develop communication skills, and learn healthy ways to manage their emotions while gaining the

confidence and social skills they need to succeed in and out of the classroom.

Registration is now open for the 2024-'25 school year beginning August 26. Contact Caroline Cox at 828-526-0863 or CCox@TheLiteracyandLearningCenter.org to secure your child's spot.

...PRE-K continued from page 19

gust 31 of the program year. A child that meets the requirement is eligible for the NC Pre-K subsidy if that child is from a family whose gross income is at or below 75 percent of the State Median Income (SMI). Children of certain military families are also eligible without regard to income.

In addition, up to 20 percent of age-eligible children enrolled may have family incomes that exceed the 75 percent SMI if they have documented risk factors in specific categories including developmental disability, limited English proficiency, educational need or chronic health condition.

Although a child may meet one or more eligibility factors, placement is not guaranteed in an NC Pre-K classroom. Waiting lists exist in counties, such as Macon County, when funding is not sufficient to serve all eligible children.

One problem with the subsidy is that the school system is only reimbursed \$496 per spot, not covering the costs of providing the Pre-K program to

students. Even with the subsidy through the NC Pre-K, Keener said she is having a hard time with her budget especially with trying to match salary increases.

Part of the struggle with salaries for Pre-K teachers is that the teachers they work with in the school are getting pay raises, and Pre-K teachers are not eligible to get the same raises because they are not state mandated positions. However, in order to continue to retain her teachers, she gives them the same pay raises as the locally paid teachers.

Even with the rate increase, Keener said she has concerns about still falling short in her budget to provide the necessary funds to run the program.

To continue in the NC Pre-K program for the 2025-2026 school year and beyond, she is earmarking 50 or more spots for those students who are part of that program. Since Keener will still be falling short of where she needs to be in order to pay the increased salaries for Pre-K teachers and teacher assistants, she is

determining if the school system should continue participating in NC Pre-K or create those slots as private pay spots to sustain the program.

"I have dealt with Pre-K funding issues for several clients, several who reached out to their counties," said John Henning, Macon County Schools Attorney. "Pre-K is not a mandated program. It is not a school program that you are required to have. However, it is enormously beneficial for kids to get into it, because that jumpstart into school for the kids who need it is tremendously helpful. More than anything I have seen this work in other counties as it is a tremendous support for the local economy, because it frees up a lot of people who might not otherwise be able to go work," he added.

Keener conducted a salary comparison with what surrounding counties are charging for their Pre-K programs, and the rate increase is in line with or even less than what the other counties are charging for their programs.

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