

Highlands Newspaper

Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays!

Volume 21, Number 51

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Thurs., Dec. 19, 2024

5th Bear Shadow venue is undecided

By Kim Lewicki

During the public comment period of the December 12 Town Board meeting, four people spoke against the Bear Shadow Event request on the agenda that was

set to be discussed by the commissioners.

Having lost access to Wingate Farms, Highlands Events, Inc, proposed relocating the 5th annual Bear Shadow event to Kelsey-

Hutchinson Founders Park on Pine Street. According to the proposal packet, the festival would emphasize wellness, environmental conservation, and community.

• See BEAR SHADOW page 17

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Highlands students' history project tells local veterans' stories

By Brian O'Shea
Plateau Daily News

The Military History class at Highlands School received a standing ovation after unveiling a project they've been working on for several months that focused on the stories of local veterans through in-person interviews conducted by the students.

believer in giving them a task and setting them on their way. If they had a question, I would answer it, but they did this all on their own. From the interviews, lighting, sound, video editing, graphics, writing, etc. These five high school kids made a profound documentary."

Over the course of the assignment, students interviewed 14 local veterans on camera and asked them questions about their experiences during the time of their service. Wars and conflicts covered a span from World War I to the global war on terror.

Woods said the project had its challenges, but he's happy with the final result.

"Editing the whole project together took the longest time," said Woods. "The interviews also took time, but they were fun be-

• See STORIES page 4

The group edited clips from those interviews together into a 45 min. documentary called Red. White. Blue. & you, and was shown to students, veterans, and family members at Highlands School on Dec. 13.

Under the guidance of History Teacher Caleb Brown, students involved in the project include Anderson Woods, Olivia Corbin, Taylor Hays, Jake Smith and Alex Barranco.

"I think they truly did an excellent job," said Brown. "I'm a



HCP Capt. Leah McCall with her recipient decked out in her new coat. Photo by Caroline Cook

Shop with a Cop brings out the best in all

By Sgt. Tim Broughton

Last week, Highlands Police Department had the privilege of taking 39 kids shopping for Christmas and the holidays.

Each year, in cooperation

with the Macon County Sheriff's Office "Shop With A Cop" program, kids from Highlands School are taken shopping by Highlands Police officers.

• See SWAC page 7

It looks like the opening of NC 106 is on schedule

But the weather is in charge; 'the schedule is changing every hour'

By Kim Lewicki

When exactly NC 106 will open to through-traffic is up to the weather. It could be in as little as a week or it could be in two weeks.

"The schedule is changing every hour," said Ryan Bryson, president of Bryson Grading and Paving.

Either way, when it opens, it will exemplify an incredible feat by a bevy of dedicated Bryson Grading and Paving workers.

The day Bryson's took on the job, the date of January 3 was named as the completion date.

And according to Bryson, if the weather cooperates, both

• See NC 106 page 19

We extend our warmest wishes to you for a joyous holiday season filled with peace, goodwill, and happiness.

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

• SNAPSHOTS •

What it takes to fix or maintain NC roads

I chaired the quarterly Transportation Advisory Committee of the Southwestern Regional Planning Organization last week at Southwestern Community College. We had several presenters, one of which was Wanda Payne, the NCDOT Division 14 Engineer.

Payne gave us a regional update on the aftermath of Helene on the road system in Western North Carolina. She emphasized that NCDOT had been dealing with over 800 road and bridge outages in the region. While Division 14, which includes Highlands, suffered some major outages, Division 13, which is to the east, took the major impact of road damage.

We were shown aerial photographs of road washouts and damaged bridges. NCDOT has a schedule to address these major problems. Payne said that 80% of the road outages should be repaired within the 6 months after Helene. Included are the repairs to NC 106 between Highlands and Scaly. The schedule calls for 90% restoration of damaged roads and bridges within the first year of Helene's impact. After 2 years, 100% restoration will be the goal.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

One might ponder why making all the repairs will take so long. The answer is that some major highway bridges in the hurricane's direct path were washed away or sustained major damage. A case in point is I 40 near the Tennessee border.

The Pigeon River hit I-40 with an explosion of water, as the photos our committee saw. To do a full and permanent repair to that section of I-40 will take a long time. The one-lane opening on both ways to I-40 scheduled to go into operation around the New Year will only be a temporary fix.

I asked our division engineer if the rumor of the fix to I-40 costing around 1 billion dollars was accurate. Her reply was the billion-dollar estimate for a permanent solution for that stretch of the interstate is in that ballpark.

Our Transportation Advisory Committee is tasked with prioritizing road construction projects in the seven-county tip of Western North Carolina. We follow a prioritization formula developed by NCDOT and approved by the state legislature over a decade ago. Prior to Helene, our priorities were more than 39 million dollars over what NCDOT had allocated, so we were about to start the process of paring down the needs to meet the financial realities.

Payne broke the bad news that with all the pressing needs coming from Helene, the financial situation would become even more dire. The committee came to this meeting knowing needs would have to be adjusted and project schedules delayed.

At the end of the meeting, I thanked Payne, Division 14, and her staff for their response to the critical situation on NC 106. She assured me they are doing everything possible to get the road open as soon as possible.

NCDOT is in the same situation as building inspectors are in the region. Both are under pressure to cut corners to get roads open and people back in housing. On the other hand, if best practices are not followed, injury and loss of life could result. Public patience is needed and certainly appreciated.





...and they followed the star to Bethlehem



Photo by Linda Harness

Do you have a heartfelt, funny, interesting, or beautiful photo you would like to share in our new "SnapShot" section? Email it to highlandseditor@aol.com or text it to 828-200-1371, with a brief description and a name. No anonymous photos will be accepted.

• WEATHER •

Thu, 19-Dec	Fri, 20-Dec	Sat, 21-Dec	Sun, 22-Dec
 51°F 35°F	 44°F 27°F	 38°F 21°F	 38°F 17°F
Plenty of sunshine	Cooler; breezy in the p.m.	Turning sunny and chilly	Chilly with sunshine
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'O, Little Town of ... Highlands'

*"How still we see thee lie.
 Above thy deep and dreamless
 sleep, the silent stars go by.
 Yet in the dark streets shineth
 the everlasting light,
 The hopes and fears of all the
 years are met in thee tonight..."*



Pat Gleeson
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All due credit goes to the Carolist Phillips Brooks, who wrote these words in 1868 for his Sunday School class having visited Bethlehem and it's surrounding fields on Christmas Eve in 1865.

The Civil War had ended, and President Lincoln had been assassinated. Most carols back then emphasized the Glory of God as seen by the Chorus of Angels. But Brooks focuses on the quietness of Christ's birth, and how little the larger world paid attention. But the world needed peace and stillness in 1865, just as it does now. Could Bethlehem (and the birth of the Messiah) provide it?

It's made me think a lot about Highlands, NC, and the town's ability to provide this same peace and stillness in the World. I believe it can.

If you're reading this column from New Orleans, Charleston, Nashville, Atlanta, Mobile, Tupelo, South Florida, or anywhere in between; I know what you're thinking. What does a measly real estate guy know about peace and stillness? Good question!

Absolutely nothing. But I live in Highlands, NC. which qualifies me as an expert because this town is all about providing peace and stillness. You see it every day.

People come to Highlands because this is where you build lasting relationships, the kind that become great friendships. As an example; it takes a lot longer to check out at Bryson's grocery store in Highlands, because everyone is on a first name basis with the cashiers. You're asked about the kids, the grand kids, you discuss the weather which changed since you entered the store, and then you complain about the rising price of eggs and

products (like red wine).

You need to hang out at the local coffee shop. Just like in Bethlehem you'll meet the Three Wisemen, who gather at the big table in the back of Calder's Coffee nearly every morning and solve the world's problems. You'll not meet a nicer or more welcoming bunch of guys.

While it's recommended you do it every year, at least once in your life you need to take in the Highlands Christmas Parade. It's a spectacle of Peace and Stillness for all to

see. One local company Bryson's Grading had a large Christmas Card on their big red dump-truck reading "Our Gift this Year is to open Hwy 106 as soon as we can!" Now that's a great thing for a small town.

In the same parade, there's a guy driving an old John Deere tractor with a pair of socks on his hands instead of gloves. Highlands has it all!

There are two reasons Conde Nast Traveler just listed Highlands as one of it's "Best Places to Go in 2025." Peace and Stillness. Not unlike Bethlehem, people come here to find it. I encourage you to embrace the relationships that come along with being in Highlands, NC.

And as the next verse of "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem" so aptly reminds us:

*For Christ is born of Mary and
 gathered all above. While mortals sleep,
 the angels keep their watch of
 wondering love.*

Merry Christmas to you and yours!

• Pat and Bee Gleeson are proud to be with a team of "Helpers" and Real Estate Brokers at Christie's International Real Estate Highlands-Cashiers. You can reach us at 828.782.0472. Please stop by for coffee and conversation at 210 N. 5th Street in Downtown Highlands.

...STORIES continued from page 1

cause you get to hear their stories. We were talking in the back during the documentary about things we saw and little changes we could make. We were all pretty nervous, but it turned out great I think."

Hays said she was careful throughout

her interviews given the sensitive subject matter and didn't want to force the interviewees to relive the topics under discussion.

"I was pretty nervous during the in-

• See **STORIES** page 9

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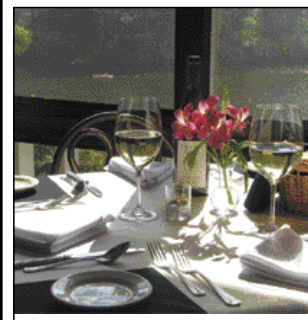


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• LETTER •

What will tariffs mean for consumers?

Dear Editor,

I am writing to share my concerns about tariffs and how they might affect everyday prices for all of us. Mr. Trump said during a press conference last week that he cannot guarantee that we will not see higher prices at the store even though he campaigned on much needed lower prices.

Tariffs are taxes that the government adds to certain imported goods, like electronics, clothes, and food. While they are meant to protect American businesses, they often make things more expensive for regular consumers.

...SWAC continued from page 1



These children used some of their money to donate toys for the Toys for Tots initiative.

Each of them is always asked to buy at least one gift for someone else with their \$200, but often, the kids have to be encouraged to buy at least one thing for themselves, as they want to spend all their money on gifts for their siblings and family members.

Officers, volunteers, and kids all have a great time during this event.

"Each year we enjoy shopping with the kids, but something was different this year; I felt more joy than I ever have in the past," said Highlands PD Chief Andrea Holland.

Highlands Police Department would like to thank everyone who has donated through the years to the Shop with a Cop program; without your donations, this event would not have been possible.

We also want to give a huge shout-out to the Highlands Episcopal Church of the Incarnation for donating coats, hats, and gloves to each kid and helping with the event, Franklin Walmart for hosting us for the shopping, and each of our volunteers who came to help the kids pick stuff out.

All donations go through the Sheriff's office and are not handled by the HPD.

If someone still wants to donate to the cause, they can make out a check to Shop with a Cop and take it to HPD who will get it to the Sheriff's Office

When tariffs are added, companies that buy imported goods end up paying more. To cover those costs, they increase their prices for consumers. That means we could see higher prices on things like smartphones, clothing, toys, groceries, and cars among others. Overall household expenses are estimated to cost an additional \$1,200 per year and it could easily be more.

Trump has said he would implement a 25% tariff on imports from Mexico. In recent years, the US imported 51% of fresh fruit and 69% of fresh vegetables from Mexico. Adding tariffs will mean these fruits and vegetables will cost much more at the grocery store. Additionally, there is a risk of retaliatory tariffs from other countries, which could further affect trade relations and economic conditions.

Our leaders should think carefully about the implications of tariffs on those of us who were promised that the new administration would bring lower prices. I must admit that promising the relief of lower prices during the campaign, only to see them rise because of tariffs, feels like a broken promise to the American people.

Constance Neely
Scaly Mountain

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The chefs at Old Edwards Hospitality Group create a gingerbread house each year and display it in the lobby.

— Photo by Kim Lewicki



John Sheehan with Mountain Life Properties got into the act this year and created his version of a gingerbread house. It's on display at the Mountain Life Properties office at Maple and N. 4th Street.

— Photo by Kim Lewicki

Highlands' bakers perpetuate the worldwide ginger- bread house tradition

For years, the chefs at Old Edwards Hospitality Group have made a gingerbread house and displayed it in the lobby. The scope and design differ year to year.

This year, John Sheehan of Mountain Life Properties created his version of a gingerbread house. It is on display at the Mountain Life Properties office.

Gingerbread houses originated in Germany between the 16th and 18th centuries. The word "gingerbread" comes from the Old French term *gingibras*, which meant "preserved ginger" before the 15th century.

Gingerbread houses became more popular after the publication of *Hansel and Gretel* in 1812. The story is about two children who find a house made of gingerbread and sweets in the forest. However, it's unclear if the story inspired the gingerbread houses, or if the gingerbread houses inspired the story.

Nuremberg, Germany became known as the "Gingerbread Capital of the World" and spread gingerbread across Europe. The trend spread to Britain in the 19th century and on to America.

...STORIES continued from page 4

interviews, I didn't want to say something wrong and bring up any more trauma than I had to. During each interview, I always told them we can stop at any time."

Smith said he feels it's important for students to learn about past conflicts and what our service men and women faced at the time.

"Hearing their stories gives us a better perspective on past wars," said Smith. "You get their point of view and see how they dealt with the challenges they faced."

Corbin interviewed her family member David Wyatt, who served in Operation Desert Storm. She said the interviews were the best part of this project.

"It was kind of crazy, he doesn't talk about it, ever," said Corbin. "It was cool to hear all

the veterans' stories and what they went through."

Barranco said he enjoyed the teamwork he shared with the other students throughout the project.

"I enjoyed the five of us working together the most," said Barranco. "We're an odd combo of people, but we stick through it. Plus, it was a fun experience hearing from the veterans."

US Marine Corps ret. Captain Rick Trevathan served in Vietnam and shared his story for the documentary. After watching the final product, he said the students did an excellent job in both preparation and covering relevant topics.

"I think it's very important that the younger generation is exposed to the experiences of veterans for several reasons," said Trevathan. "As I mentioned, some of our nation's military involve-



Students and staff with the 14 veterans interviewed for the project.

— Photo by Brian O'Shea

ment has proven historically to be unwise and hopefully the younger generation will not repeat our mistakes. I also think it's important to expose young people to the lasting benefits of military service. Often military experience can open doors to a brighter future. Military service creates a mindset of service above self."

After the documentary was unveiled, Trevathan said it felt

good to tell his story.

"Personally, I benefited from my being asked to resurrect my memories and emotions from a very impactful time in my life," he said. "As I said in the opening, it was the best of times. It was the worst of times. My Marines will always be in my heart. They suffered through incredibly difficult times but always moved on with smiles on their faces. It created in-

delible memories that never fade."

Ed McCloskey served in the US Marine Corps and said it was an honor being asked to participate in the project.

"I was honored that these students indicated interest in veterans and the subject of our experience," said McCloskey. "Knowing history guides their knowledge going forward, es-

• See **STORIES** page 16

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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

WINTER POOL SCHEDULE

Lap Swim: Mon.-Fri. 6am-9:45am, and Saturday 10am-11pm - 6 lanes.

Water Aerobics: 18 y+ Mon.-Fri. 10-11am with Karen Chambers.

Adult Swim: 18y+ Mon.-Thurs. 11am-3:30pm, Friday 11am-1:30pm

Public Swim: Mon. thru Thurs. 3:30-7pm, Saturday 11am-6pm and Sunday 1-6pm

ALL WEEK

• Alcoholics Anonymous: "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. program of recovery. Highlands Mountain View Group holds open meetings in Highlands at the First Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 PM and Wednesday and Friday at noon. Women's Group 5:30, Tuesdays. The Cashiers Valley Group holds open meetings at the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library Monday at 8:30 AM, Tuesday at 7 PM, Friday and Sunday at 5 PM, and Saturday at 9 AM. For more information, please visit www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of AA 24/7 at 828-349-4357.

PICKLE BALL

• At the Recreation Dept. every Monday - Friday 10am-1pm indoors for the winter (notice the days and time has changed),

MOVIE

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MOUNTAIN FINDINGS

• Open 10a to 1p. Dec. 20-21; Feb. 7-8 and 21-22; March 7-8 and 21-22; April 4-5 and 18-19. For more info, call 828-526-9929.

Mon-Wed-Fri

• Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9am at the Rec Park.

• Balance, Stretch & Strengthen Class at the Rec Park 8:30-9:30am. The cost for the class is \$30 a month. The class is led by Cathy Hodgson. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

Second Mondays

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

• Indivisible Highlands from 5:15-6:15pm at the Hudson Library Meeting Room.

1st Tues. through Dec.

• HUMC's Community Table Dinner at the Community Building at 6 p.m. Sept. 3, Oct. 1, Nov. 5 and Dec. 3.

2nd Tuesdays

• Highlands Writers Group meets on alternate Tuesday afternoons at 3pm. Writers still uncomfortable with in-person gatherings may participate via Zoom meetings. For more information contact Bud Katz at either 828-526-3190 or at budandlynn@me.com

Tuesdays

• Strength Training at the Rec Park 8:15-9:15 am. Aim for strong, lean muscles using light weights, body weight, and high repetition to shape and tone. Learn proper form and range of motion to safely target all muscle groups for a metabolic boost and feel great.

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Workshop for Writers - Tuesdays from 5-6:30 PM. Facilitated by Sam Renken, this group has a simple mission: to foster and provide consistent community for local writers thereby giving writers of all ages and genres the opportunity to write, read, revise, and present their work to the group.

• ESL classes are held at the Presbyterian Church in Highlands from 6:30-7:30pm. No registration required - just show up and participate. Questions? call 828-526-0863 or email info@maconncliteracy.org

2nd Wednesdays

• Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health topics, held on the first Wednesday of each month at 11 AM. This series is aimed particularly at older adults and will focus on mental health topics of particular interest to them, but all ages are

welcome to attend. The November 1 program is Dementia: A Deeper Understanding. Reservations are required for this free event. To register, stop by the library or call 828-526-3031.

2nd & 4th Wed.

• Digital Navigators will be at the Hudson Library the second and fourth Wednesdays 1PM - 3PM of each month to help patrons with their tech needs. Bring a smartphone, laptop, or other digital device to receive free assistance and support. No appointments are required - all are welcome.

Mon., Tues., Thurs.

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

• Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at the Rec Park at 5:30. A combo class with different types of exercise. Call the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information

Thursdays

• Kickboxing 8:15-9:15 am. at the Rec Park. An exhilarating and fun mix of martial arts for a calorie-burning workout. No martial arts background necessary. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more info.

• At Hudson Library, special children's events will be on tap on Thursday afternoons at 3:30 Kids Zone programs.

Fridays

• At Hudson Library, Friday afternoons at 2 PM, there's a variety of children's programs including board games, STEM programs, and crafternoons.

Saturdays

• Story Ballet - a gentle ballet & creative movement class for Children 3-4. The flow of class follows a story or theme that changes each month, engaging imaginations! Saturday 5:30-6:30pm. 828-421-6720

• Adult Ballet - crafted for beginners, but mindfully taught for all levels. Ballet is an excellent way to move, grow stronger, improve balance, flexibility and coordination while having fun. 6:30-7:30pm. 828-421-6720.

2nd Saturdays

• The Western North Carolina Woodturners Club meets in Highlands at The Bascom at 10 a.m. thru Nov.

3rd Saturdays

• The American Legion Post 370 meets at the First Methodist Church at 315 Main St. in their community room/909 chapel. We serve breakfast at 9 AM and hold our monthly meeting at 10 AM. We invite ALL veterans to attend - email ncpost370@gmail.com for more information or just join us at 9 AM.

Sundays

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Sunday Service: 10 AM Sunday Morning. Stick around for visitation and coffee hour immediately after service. (Coffee hour is replaced by potluck dinner the 1st Sunday of each month).

Through-March

• The Highlands Parks and Recreation-managed Ice Skating in the Park The hours are Thursdays, 3:30-8pm, Fridays, 3:30-10pm, Saturdays, 1-10pm, Sundays, 1-5pm. The price is only \$8, with or without skates. Coffee and hot chocolate are available for purchase.

Through Dec. 27

• At PAC, Mountain Theater Company's "Home for the Holidays" features an all-star cast from across the nation singing festive favorites and original holiday arrangements, plus dazzling costumes and theatrical magic that will leave the entire family in amazement.

Thurs., Dec. 19

• Highlander Mountain House final Salon Series performance of the year featuring The Secret Sisters whose kaleidoscopic sound boldly blurs the edges of country-folk. For tickets, go to highlandermountainhouse.com.

Fri., Dec. 20

• Senior lunch at the Rec Park at noon in the Meeting Room. Senior Lunches are free and held the third Friday of each month through April.

Sat. Dec 21

• Photos with Santa in the K-H Founders Park.

Wed., Dec. 25

• At the Ruffed Grouse Tavern a cozy Christmas Day supper between 2-6 p.m. Enjoy signature dishes alongside a roaring fire. Reservations required. Go to highlandermountainhouse.com. • Lighting of the Menorah in KH Founders Park at 5:30pm.

Mon. Dec. 30

• At PAC, Fabulous Equinox Orchestra PRE-New Year's Eve Party and Concert at 7:30p.

Tues., Dec. 31

• At The Ruffed Grouse Tavern in the Highlander Mountain House a multi-course New Year's Eve meal from Chef Adam and his team. Reservations required. Go to highlandermountainhouse.com.

• Upcoming Workshop with Hagan Binder Landscape Architects, The Art of Bulb Forcing at 4 p.m. Register online at haganbinder.com

May 1-4

• At PAC, Educational Theatre performance, Matilda.

MOVIES

at PAC's MLPC

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Sat., Dec. 21 – 2 & 5:30p
Sun., Dec. 22 – 5:30p

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'Twas the night before ChristmEX

by **Stuart Armor and Lee Lyons**

She: 'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house I awaited the arrival of my old ex spouse.

The kids had been bundled up, all with great care to ship them off on this day we once shared.

He: Who knew the holidays would get so much shorter due to the existence of our court imposed order.

Forget about peace to every person and nation; fat chance of that due to our litigation.

She: It certainly wasn't my fault, naturally, of course.

He: I guess it's all mine, our bitter divorce. I had to wheedle and whine and beg for permission.

She: While I tried to keep some sense of tradition.

He: It wasn't this way in those early years.

She: Sweetness and laughter caused all the tears. It was fun and silly, a little frantic.

He: In its own crazy way, a little romantic.

She: We'd be up all night, assembling toys.

He: A bit of a hassle, a bit of a joy. I could hardly fit in that old Santa suit.

She: But truth be told, he looked kind of cute.

He: I was just at the point to stop being mad. As I looked at the children, all teary and sad.

She: There was this moment of pure Christmas bliss as we stood under the mistletoe and started to kiss.

He: When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter. We both

ran outside to see what was the matter.

She: When what to my wondering eyes should appear. But his new girlfriend who was calling him dear.

He: The moon on her breast in the new fallen snow. Dressed all in fur from her head to her toe.

She: A bottle of champagne, she pulled straight from her sack. And before I knew it, I'd jumped on her back.

He: My ex might look old, but she's still lively and quick. I knew in a moment I was going to be sick. O Connie, how stupid, you darn little vixen. This isn't the time for a family mixin'.

She: More rapid than eagles, the curses they came. I yelled and I shouted and called her bad names. Connie ran to the car and was gone in a flash. I knew come Monday, I'd ask for more cash.

He: Santa zoomed down in his sleigh, right out in the yard. The elves were dressed up like the National Guard.

She: It was Rudolph, him-

self, who blew on a whistle. Then Santa tazed us with shiny bright pistols.

He: As if in a dream, I opened my eyes. Everything looked different, oh what a surprise.

She: Had I been shot or had I been zapped? It seemed I awakened from a long winter's nap.

He: Her eyes how they twinkled, her dimples how merry. Her cheeks were like roses, her nose like a cherry.

She: His sweet little mouth was turned up in a smile. His teeth had been whitened, he looked quite in style.

He: She wasn't chubby or plump, rather a vision of her former self. I smiled when I saw her in spite of myself.

She: He seemed rather handsome and was no longer smelly. Why, he'd quit drinking beer and got rid of his belly.

He: She gave me a wink so I must not be dead. And visions of co-parenting danced in my head.

She: I didn't call him a jerk, moron or bum. Out it flowed, dear, darling and hon.

He: Whatever the reason for all the confusion. We'll always be grateful for our little illusion.

She: After all, we still have children to raise. And that's a good reason for much thanks and praise

He: The children were happy and all danced with glee. As we opened our presents right under the tree.

She: We made a pact that at least once a year. We'd treat each other with love and good cheer.

He: Santa sprang in his sleigh and flew up in the sky

She: And just for a moment I wanted to cry.

He: But we heard him exclaim as he flew out of sight

She: Merry Christmas (to him).

He: Merry Christmas (to her).

Both: And to all a good night.



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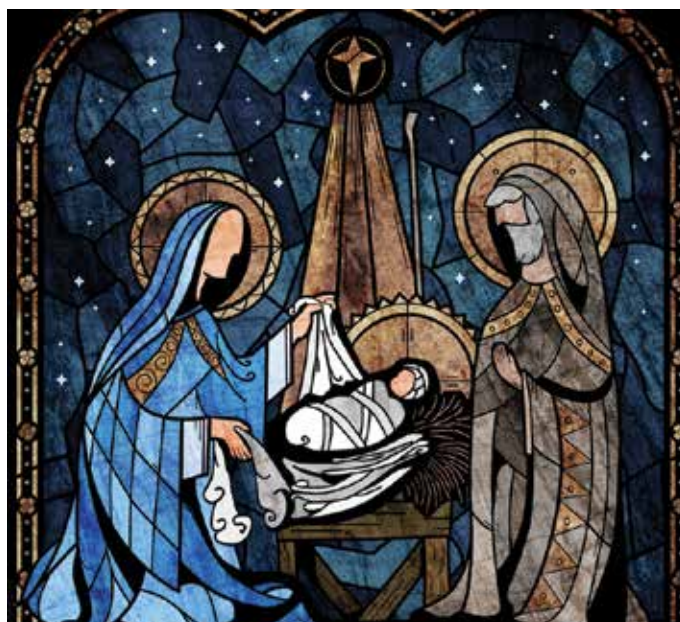
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• HOSPITAL NEWS •

Let's reflect on the priceless gift of family as 2024 comes to a close

As we approach the holidays, and the promise that a brand-new year holds, I reflect this month on the great gifts we received at Highland-Cashiers Hospital (HCH) and Eckerd Living Center (ELC) this past year. They were exceptional, especially because of the past couple of months, as we have navigated the devastating fallout from Hurricane Helene. At HCA Healthcare, we believe in unlocking possibilities, and we eagerly embrace the challenges of our profession and welcome new opportunities to grow and make an impact.

I am always mindful of how special, involved, and supportive our community is, but this year, I am also thinking about the communities beyond the Plateau. As we responded and recovered from the storm, our community reached out to help out in special ways.

But I have to start by thanking a few from our community who helped us during the storm. The first is the Highlands campus of the Boys and Girls Club. When schools closed, we risked losing valuable team members. They graciously allowed us to use their facility to care for children of hospital employees - what a gift! I have to add that the presence of children as we recovered from the storm was uplifting. They would make trips to our cafeteria or to see some of the amazing HCA Healthcare helicopters making deliveries. To me there is something about the innocence and vulnerability of children that puts things in perspective. Their laughter and sense of joy seemed to make everything seem okay. Their presence was also a gift that reminded me our hospital had served this community for generations and would serve future generations as well.

I also have to recognize the many volunteers who came to our

aid when our employees couldn't get gas for their cars. As gas stations closed, hospital workers started sharing that they weren't sure they could make it home and back to work due to lack of fuel. When I let it be known we needed help, volunteers started coming to assist with trailers laden with 5-gallon cans of gas. As gas deliveries showed, grateful hospital workers formed a gas line. I had the opportunity to drive a few cars around to get gas, and I was able to feel their sincere appreciation. We have all heard that it is more blessed to give than to receive. How true this is, and I felt this blessing on many occasions during the storm. I am sure these community volunteers who brought us gas did as well. To each of them, I can only say thank you, thank you, thank you!

The aftermath of the hurricane also saw community members coming together and helping each other in any way they could, which expanded across our entire region. This might look like joining together to perform storm cleanup and move debris, connecting individuals and families who suffered devastating losses with the organizations that could offer help and resources, serving meals, and more. I know many community organizations stepped up to deliver critical food, water, supplies and equipment to communities harder hit than the Plateau.

At the heart of caring for our community is inspiring joy, and taking care of others while being there for each other. As I witnessed these many acts of kindness and service, I came to consider the definition of "family." Specifically, that family extends past our immediate family — that was certainly proven dramatically after the hurricane. The communities that make up Western North Carolina became one big family after Helene, as we saw our neighbors engage in acts of kindness we may consider small, but that are, in



Tom Neal CEO, CNO
Highlands-Cashiers
Hospital

reality, deeply impactful.

These caring deeds are what our caregivers do each day also: Taking a moment to really listen to someone's storm experience and emotions around it, giving a hug when needed, and going the extra mile when it comes to doing all we can to bring comfort to someone.

The needs of hurricane survivors can be immense, and for those of us who didn't sustain the loss of loved ones, damage to or destruction of our homes, or lost vehicles due to being swept away, there can be some survivor guilt. It may help those feeling that way to simply trying to get out and help those whose lives were upended by the hurricane, to take a look and go to where the need is greatest. This is a fulfilling way to become another member of our regional extended family.

For the last few months of this year, I have witnessed our HCH and ELC families pulling even closer together during the wake of this natural disaster as well. The ripple effect of this compassion is evident too, throughout our community, the Plateau, and the entire Western North Carolina region.

At this time of year and this year especially, I want to express my deep thanks to another "family" who makes HCH, ELC, and our community much richer — our family of volunteers. They are

much appreciated as they assist our caregivers and comforted our patients in many different ways. There really is no substitute for their presence and consistency, and being able to count on someone after we have endured such a jarring experience with long-lasting implications is something we should never take for granted.

It has been a true gift to see our definition of "family" broaden beyond our hospital community and even community-at-large, to envelop our hardest hit communities, and observe how generously

individuals and organizations have given back to those in need. Even through the traumatic time that we have all experienced and continue to cope with, our entire region has united in an unprecedented way, thanks to the clear vision, powerful intentions, and big hearts of so many.

I extend my wishes for a hopeful holiday season to our dedicated HCH and ELC team members, the committed members of our Plateau communities, and all our neighbors in Western North Carolina.

CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

LESSONS & CAROLS
Sunday, December 22 at 10:30 am
Main Sanctuary

CHRISTMAS EVE
Tuesday, December 24 at 4:00 pm & 6:00 pm
Main Sanctuary
(nursery available)

CHRISTMAS DAY
Wednesday, December 25 at 10:00 am
Historic Chapel

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY
Monday, January 6 at 5:30 pm
Historic Chapel

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A new favorite author

Twice this year, I've reviewed books by Jonathan Santlofer. I read a review of his second Luke Perrone suspense novel, "The Lost Van Gogh" and decided to begin with the first in the series, "The Last Mona Lisa."

Both are intriguing mysteries that mix in art history and the modern world of art. The main character, Luke Perrone, is an art history professor and an artist who sets out to learn more about his French grandfather. The tale is based on the true story of the theft of the Mona Lisa by a Louvre museum guard in 1911, but the grandson and today's art world are all fiction.

Next, I picked up the Van Gogh mystery, described as "another thrilling story of masterpieces, masterminds, and mystery." It was every bit as good as the first one, and I found myself hoping for a third Luke Perrone outing.

Imagine how surprised I was to get a message from Jonathan Santlofer himself thanking me for my review of his book. It's not often that a bestselling author takes the time to personally thank a reviewer. He also said he'd look for my books. May I just say, wow? We messaged back and forth a few times, and I found out that's he has started a third Luke Perrone book. When I indicated I planned to read some of his earlier books, he suggested "Anatomy of Fear," and that's the subject of this week's review.

Anatomy of Fear by Jonathan Santlofer

Written in 2007, this novel has nothing to do with art history or art theft. Instead, the main character is a talented NYPD sketch artist who's more comfortable with pencil and paper than he is with people.

When Nate Rodriguez is called in to sketch a killer who leaves behind a drawing of his victim at each crime scene, he also analyzes the killer's artwork. Combining what he sees in the killer's sketches with the details from a handful of witnesses, he goes beyond creating an image of the killer. He also develops insight into the killer's mind, the mind of a fellow artist. What do the brushstrokes tell him? Why does the killer draw his victims?

What sets this book apart is the inclusion of sketches drawn by the author, who is also an artist. We see how Nate's composite



Kathy Manos Penn

image of the killer evolves. We see the evolution of the killer's drawings. It's easy to see why "Anatomy of Fear" won the Nero Award for Best Novel.

I admit I was hesitant to read this book, as I long ago stopped reading novels focused on serial killers. Jeffrey Deaver was one of my favorites, but I gave him up along with all the

others whose plots were just too dark for me. What can I say? Tastes change. And change again.

Yes, this book is about the hunt for a serial killer, but somehow, there's more to it. Maybe it's Nate's back story and his relationship with his abuela. Whatever it is, I plan to get the second Nate Rodriguez book. Can you tell I'm a fan?

Happy reading!

• Award-winning author Kathy Manos Penn is a Georgia resident. Find her cozy mysteries at Franklin Office Supply & Gifts, and on Amazon. Contact her at inkpenn119@gmail.com, and follow her on Facebook, www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/.

...STORIES continued from page 9

pecially America's wars and those who fought them. Even though knowing these questions were fed to them they seemed very interested in our responses. Sorry that more of the interviews were edited as I would have wanted to hear more. Caleb should be applauded for his guidance to these young folks and your interest and coverage is always appreciated."

MC Schools Superintendent Josh Lynch said Brown's Military History class did a phenomenal job documenting historical accounts of major conflicts, including the First World War, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm, and the Global War on Terrorism.

"The project showcases interviews with veterans who served in these wars, offering a unique perspective on their sacrifices and experiences," he said. "This project serves as both a tribute to the men and women who have dedicated their lives

• See STORIES page 17

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8-10:30a
Lunch
11a to 3p

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...BEAR SHADOW from page 1

offering daytime activities that harmonize music, nature, and mindfulness, creating a deeper connection between mind, body, and the great outdoors rather than just music and food as in the previous four years.

Since the community had gotten wind of the idea, Bear Shadow was the subject discussed during the Public Comment portion of the meeting.

Each person spoke against the location of the event saying the park was too small for such a venue, the event would be too noisy, too crowded, would cause parking problems and defied the fact that the park was a “public” venue not meant for ticketed events.

Though the board was set to discuss the matter during the meeting, the Bear Shadow proposal wasn’t heard. Town Manager Josh Ward said he had received an email from High-

lands Events prior to the meeting requesting the item be removed from the agenda.

Consequently, no more discussion was had regarding Bear Shadow, specifically, but the request prompted the board to discuss the need to solidify its policy regarding ticketed events in the park.

Initially, previous boards agreed that ticketed events shouldn’t be allowed in the public park; that events held there had to be open to all at no cost and any changes to that understanding would be decided by the Town Board on a case-by-case basis.

Therefore, over the years, ticketed events have been allowed in the park – usually if a portion of proceeds were given to area nonprofits – which is why and how the Highlands Food & Wine Festival (HF&W) which is the other event sponsored by High-

lands Events, has been allowed to use the park.

In HFW’s beginning days, the park was tented and used for every aspect of that festival except for the Main Event on Main Street.

Over the years, the number of HFW events at the park during the festival decreased as other venues were used ... The Bascom and the pit behind Wright Square ... but still the Truckin’ and A Shot of Redemption aspects of HF&W were often held in the park.

The only other ticketed event that has been allowed in the park is the Friends of Founders Park shrimp boil fundraiser held in the summer with all proceeds going to park maintenance and upgrades. In that case, only the terraced area is used, leaving the rest of the park open to the public.

Commissioners agreed that a solid policy needs to be developed and discussed during the January work session or during the board’s annual retreat.



Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church

Christmas Eve Masses

Our Lady of the Mountains • 2 pm
St. Jude’s Catholic Church (Sapphire Valley) • 4 pm

Christmas Day Masses

St. Jude’s Catholic Church (Sapphire Valley) • 9 am
Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church • 11 am

New Year’s Day Masses

St. Jude’s Catholic Church • 9 am
Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church • 11 am

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...STORIES from page 16

to our country and an invaluable opportunity for students to connect with local veterans and learn their stories firsthand.”

Lynch said by hearing these accounts, young people gain a deeper understanding of the costs of war, fostering respect, empathy, and appreciation for the resilience and bravery of those who served.

“These stories not only inspire gratitude for the freedoms we enjoy but also promote a sense of civic responsibility and teach valuable life lessons on overcoming adversity. Through this project, students connected with veterans’ experiences, gained insight into the complexities of war, and learned the importance of sacrifice and peace,” said Lynch.

The public will have an opportunity to view the documentary on Jan. 30 at the Community Building next to the ballpark.

Season of Advent

Sunday, December 15
11am - Sunday Celebration

Thursday, December 19
12pm - Service of Light

Sunday, December 22
11am - Sunday Celebration

Tuesday, December 24
4:30pm - Harp Prelude
Jillionna Plemmons, Harpist
5pm - Christmas Eve Service with Candlelight
Jan Saltmarsh, Soprano

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Christmas Eve December 24

3:30 pm Christmas Eve Children’s Pageant
5:30 pm Lessons & Carols

Christmas Day December 25

12:00 pm Christmas Day Holy Eucharist

MERRY
Christmas

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING

Immanuel



Pastor Sam Forrester
Whiteside Presbyterian
Church, Cashiers

Therefore the LORD Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings (Isaiah 7:14-16).

We hear in these words that the prophet Isaiah called out against those who were ruling Israel. Their tendency was to treat the people they ruled with harshness. They abused the commands of the Lord. Isaiah speaks out and rebukes their lack of trust. He gives them a promised sign from God. This promise is one of the Lord's most famous.

He says, the Lord Himself will give you a sign. That sign is that a virgin shall conceive and will bear a Son and His name will be Immanuel. This prophecy shows us two principles of prophecy. There are two messages in this. The first is a present fulfillment and the second in a future fulfillment.

The present fulfillment of this prophecy centered on King Ahaz, the city of Jerusalem, and the attacks from Syria. King Ahaz saw the sign as concerning a time span. The span concerned a child's birth to his ability to know to refuse evil and choose good. In that time the land that you dread will be forsaken by her kings. What this means is that God promised Ahaz a sign. That sign was promising that within a few years, Syria would be crushed. To Ahaz this was a sign of deliverance.

The future fulfillment of this prophecy goes well passed Ahaz. It reached out into the future to announce the miraculous virgin conception and birth of Jesus Christ. We know this passage speaks of Jesus. The Holy Spirit shows this in Matthew 1:23 when He says "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us.'" This is also confirmed because it also speaks to the house of David. Isaiah 7:13 "Hear now. O house of David."

It is clear this passage concerns Jesus and that the virgin shall conceive. This conception is to be a sign to the whole house of David. The present fulfillment refers to a maiden giving birth, the future fulfillment clearly represents a virgin wonderfully conceiving and bringing forth a child. It was by God's miracle Jesus was conceived of a virgin.

We understand this speaks of Jesus because it declares He will be known as Immanuel, which means "God

• See SPIRITUALLY page 22

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

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

BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

828-269-3546 • Rev. Jamie Passmore. Pastor
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Aryn Williams-Reubel. Pastor 828-743-5298
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Holy Eucharist Wed: 6p Bible Study and Prayer

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Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.

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Testimony meeting: 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard
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1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7 p.m.
Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

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am in Sanctuary, Wed: Healing Eucharist 12 pm in Chapel,
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Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Women's 10:30 am

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Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Randy Reed. Pastor 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street
Wed. Bible Study: 6 p.m.; Sundays: Worship: 11

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road
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sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.
Sunday Worship is at 9a. Wednesday Worship is 6:30p

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Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Dec. 5. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Dec. 5

- At 8 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident in the Highlands School parking lot at the new gym.
- At 2:02 p.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on Satulah Ridge Road.

Dec. 10

- At 1 p.m., officers were called about vandalism to property at a residence on Netsi Place where a window was broken.

- At 1:25 p.m., officers responded to a 1-vehicle accident on NC 106 (Georgia Road).

- At 8:56 p.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on Main Street.

Dec. 13

- At 11:54 a.m., officers responded

to a 2-vehicle accident on Center Drive.

- At 11:30 p.m., officers responded to a 1-vehicle accident on US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

Dec. 14

- At 4:15 p.m., Kannah Arthur John Belflower, 40, of Franklin was arrested for failure to appear from another law enforcement agency.

- A little after midnight, Rush Van Allen, 33, of Cashiers, was arrested for DUI, simple assault and resisting arrest. He was issued a \$2,500 secured bond. His trial date is Jan. 8, 2025.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Dec. 10.

Dec. 10

- At 1:17 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

- At 10:41 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

Dec. 11

...NC 106 continued from page 1

lanes of NC 106 could be opened – right on schedule – by the first week in January or it could take a few days less or a few days more.

The new piping is in, the bank has been stabilized, curbs were poured Monday, and Tuesday the guardrail went up. Now it's all up to the weather.

“All that's left is paving and striping,” said Bryson. “Paving is weather contingent ... it doesn't work in the rain or if the temperature drops below 40 degrees. It takes one day per layer, so to do all of the needed three layers, we need three good weather days.”

The problem? The asphalt plant is set to close Monday, Dec. 23, which is typical this time of year due to the holidays and weather, said Bryson.

“If they close, they might reopen in January if it's warm, but weather over 40 degrees isn't normal for January and in that case the plant would reopen in the spring.”

Though they had hoped to get the first layer of asphalt down Tuesday, Dec. 17, the rain nixed those plans.

“We ended up losing today [Tuesday] and we need three days to pave, so that would be Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday,” he said. “If we end up losing one of

those days to weather, with the holidays it will most likely be the week of January 6 before the asphalt plants try to open again so that we can try to finish up.”

According to NC DOT – which has been on site and monitoring throughout the job – they could open the road with one layer of asphalt which could then be striped and finish the rest of the paving later, but that isn't the preferred plan.

“NC DOT has been helping whenever they can,” said Bryson. “They are working with us because they want this road open as bad as we do. If the weather cooperates, we can at least get one layer of paving down and then, if we have to, can come back in the spring to put the other two layers on.”

Since Nov. 15 when Bryson Grading and Paving officially started work on the NC 106 blowout, 50+ employees have literally been working day and night in wet and frigid weather.

The job that's been done in a little over a month is phenomenal, said Bryson.

“Our guys have been working their butts off out here at 2, 3, 4 and 5 in the morning in 10-degree weather,” he said. “What they've done is above and beyond and sincerely appreciated.”

- At 2:15 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

- At 3:03 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

- At 8:05 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on NC 28 south (Walhalla Road).

- At 9:50 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

- At 4:03 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a tree in the road on N. 4th Street.

Dec. 13

- At 11:50 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on N. 4th Street.

Dec. 14

- At 9:42 a.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a resident on N. Big Bear Pen Road.

- At 5:24 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Arnold Road.

Dec. 15

- At 6:59 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Clear

Creek Road.

Dec. 16

- At 4:01 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of an illegal burn at a location on Horse Cove Road.

- At 4:42 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cypress



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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

HaganBinder Landscape Architects offering 'The Art of Bulb Forcing' workshop Jan. 23

Hagan Binder Landscape Architects, a full-service firm based in Highlands, North Carolina, is redefining outdoor spaces with its innovative approach to design, construction, and maintenance. Known for creating timeless landscapes that harmonize with the natural environment, the firm has recently expanded its offerings to include comprehensive installation and maintenance services for its design clients, ensuring seamless execution and long-term care for their projects.

Fine Tools: A Commitment to Timeless Craftsmanship

In 2024, Hagan Binder Landscape Architects introduced Fine Tools, a curated garden tool shop. Featuring high-quality outdoor furniture and garden implements such as shovels, pitchforks, and trowels imported from the Netherlands and France, Fine Tools celebrates durability and thoughtful design. In addition to curating tools, Fine Tools designs its own products, starting with the innovative nursery bucket mover, which simplifies the process of transporting plants and heavy containers. Fine Tools offers seasonal garden supplies - bulbs, seeds, potting materials, pots and other accoutrements for the discerning gardener.

Land Plan: A proprietary cloud-based blueprint hosting service targeted towards historic preservation and estate properties.

Land Plan combines hard-



Ashley Hagan

ware and software by placing custom brass plaques with QR codes on properties, providing instant access to critical information such as historic documents, maintenance schedules, Landscape Plans, Architectural Plans and surveys. This unique integration streamlines property management, empowering owners, contractors and caretakers to preserve and maintain landscapes with precision and ease.

A unified approach to landscape care, Hagan Binder Landscape Architects, offers a holistic solution for creating, documenting, and maintaining outdoor spaces. From their design expertise as Licensed Landscape Architects to Fine Tools' craftsmanship and Land Plan's technological innovations, the firm provides clients with the resources they

need to steward their landscapes effectively.

"Our goal is to support every stage of a property's life, from its initial design to its ongoing care," says Ashley Hagan Binder, Owner of Hagan Binder Landscape Architects. "The Fine Tools shop reflects our love for craftsmanship, while Land Plan ensures that clients can manage their properties with confidence. With the addition of construction and maintenance services, we can now bring our designs to life and ensure their longevity."

Hagan Binder Landscape Architects is a full-service Landscape Architecture firm based in Highlands, North Carolina. Specializing in outdoor spaces that merge beauty and functionality, the firm offers design, construction, maintenance, and innovative solutions through its Fine Tools shop and Land Plan software. Ashley Hagan Binder is a Licensed Landscape Architect, Arborist, and an FAA Licensed Drone Pilot; dedicated to serving the unique biological region of the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau. Her gardens reflect her unique perspective and attention to detail, blending a sophisticated understanding of hardscape and grading with the artistic and biological knowledge of native and adapted plants and annuals that thrive in the Mountain region.

Website: <https://haganbinderdesign.com>

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 18

with us." This has a two-fold meaning. This word Immanuel acknowledges Jesus as the deity of God. It also shows Him and His nearness to man. I shall be your God, and you shall be My people.

There is no doubt Jesus is truly Immanuel, God with us.

Here, is the wonderful word of Christmas – Jesus as God the Son in His humanity and deity walked with us. He shared our worldly experience completely. He knew that experience because He was fully human. Jesus is nowhere in the Scripture call Immanuel, yet we clearly see He certainly ful-

filled the name.

Place your trust in Immanuel, Jesus Christ, and rest on this wonderful truth, "I shall be your God, and you shall be My people" and you will be filled with the wonderful grace that comes from the account of Christmas.

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