

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., May 2, 2024

North Carolina's childcare crisis: A far-reaching looming catastrophe

Lack of childcare is set to derail NC's economy

By **Brittney Lofthouse**

As the American Rescue

Plan Act's temporary lifeline for its end, the state faces an impending childcare in North Carolina nears

• See **CHILDCARE** page 10

Highlands Dog Park to be revitalized

Will hopefully reopen May 3

By **Kim Lewicki**

At the April Town Board meeting, President of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC Kaye McHan told the board the chamber is going to give the Dog Park a much needed face lift to the tune of \$40,000.

This joint effort between the town, Tate Landscaping and the chamber will be paid for by Visit Highlands, NC funds, and will focus on enhancing the park based on feedback from park users.

The Dog Park is at the lower end of the Rec Park's back parking area and is accessible from the dirt parking lot on Foreman Road with a new entrance off the upper parking lot planned as part of the

• See **DOG PARK** page 15

King & Queen HS Prom 2024



Highlands School 2024 Junior/Senior Prom was Saturday, April 27 at Highlands Country Club's Hudson House. Disco was the theme. Senior Cooper Hall was crowned King and Senior Brooke Fogarty was crowned Queen. See more pictures on page 8.

- Photo by Gina Billingsley

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Rescuers extract man from Cullasaja Gorge

Man had no life-threatening injuries

By **Kim Lewicki**

On Friday, April 26 at approximately 9:45 p.m., Cullasaja Fire & Rescue responded to a call of a person in peril on the California Mountain/Peeks Creek side of the Cullasaja River Gorge.

What transpired over the next 10 hours exemplified the definition of camaraderie and expertise of Western North Carolina's rescue, emergency and fire personnel in an area fraught with topographical obstacles.

According to a life-time volunteer and board member of the Cullasaja Fire & Rescue Dept. (CF&R), Michael Lequire, that night a motorist travelling the Gorge Road saw a light in the woods across the river. After stopping the vehicle and getting out he heard someone yelling and screaming for help on the California Mountain/Peeks Creek side.

A call to 9-1-1 initiated a rescue that ended around 8:30 Saturday morning.

A reference meeting with MC Sheriff's officers first took place at the area of the rock cut in the Cullasaja Gorge (US 64) and then rescue efforts began.

"After searching with spotlights from the Gorge Road-side switching them on and off while trying to determine where he was, using binoculars they finally saw some movement, maybe an arm waving, and a small light was also located," said Lequire.

At that point, a spot light was kept on him.

Crews were already enroute to the Peeks Creek side of the Gorge and at that time, several other agencies were asked to respond.

NC Mountain Rescue had been notified and were assembling in Haywood County.

At about 2 a.m., it arrived at the Cullasaja Fire Department. and after a briefing, Lequire said a team along with some of CF&R

• See **RESCUERS** page 19



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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Let's talk STRs and TDA revenues



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

Once, I thought I was the only elected official who believed it was time to reform the North Carolina room tax and tourist development authority system. Apparently, according to an April 5th article in the Asheville Citizens Times article by Sarah Honosky, that is not the case. I have talked with other mayors and legislators who share similar concerns.

The Tourist Development Authority (TDA) in Asheville is illustrative of concerns about tax dollar accountability and how tax dollars are spent. When reporters recently made inquiries about TDA expenditures, the Asheville TDA staff initially stated that they did not have to provide that information. What? No accountability for tax dollar expenditures? Embarrassingly, after learning they had to provide that information, it was revealed that their TDA director was making around \$450,000 in salary and benefits. Even after these accountability concerns were publicly aired, John Boyle in a February 26, 2024 Asheville Watchdog article revealed that

\$17,000 in tax dollars had been spent on a retirement party for a TDA staff member, among other questionable expenditures.

A growing number of people think it is time for reform in the TDA system at the state level. Currently, there is an array of local legislation for almost all the counties and municipalities across the state. The periodic Magellan Reports illustrate the diverse ways room occupancy tax is collected and distributed in North Carolina.

It is time for the state legislature to streamline the entire process and have consistent regulations on how much can be collected and how those tax dollars are spent. There needs to be a clear public process for spending and accounting of those funds. Every county and municipal government has to conduct a yearly audit and document all expenditures by general statutes. TDAs should be expected to follow similar procedures that are clearly open to public input and review. Or at least TDAs should be required to annually publish their federal 990 tax filings in a local newspaper for citizen review.

One emerging criticism is that more revenue continues to be collected in a circular pattern of more and more promotion of tourism while some related critical needs generated from promotion are ignored or expected to be addressed from other revenue sources.

For instance, most hospitality workers tend to fall on the lower end of the wage scale. There are huge pressures on these workers to make ends meet, especially when it comes to affordable housing. Why not direct some room occupancy tax revenue or even tourist-related sales taxes to a fund for workforce housing statewide?

Let me share my proposed reform the TDA tax system which would address at some level workforce housing shortfalls. The state should eliminate TDA room taxes and sales taxes on short-term rentals. Instead replace these taxes with a short-term rental tax that could be earmarked to create a state workforce housing fund. Currently, most counties have a 7% sales tax rate with TDA taxes ranging from 3% to over 6%. Why not just have an across the board 10 or 12% tax on short-term rentals? Revenues from this STR tax could easily be accounted for by the state, as STR companies would collect it for the state as they currently do for sales and room

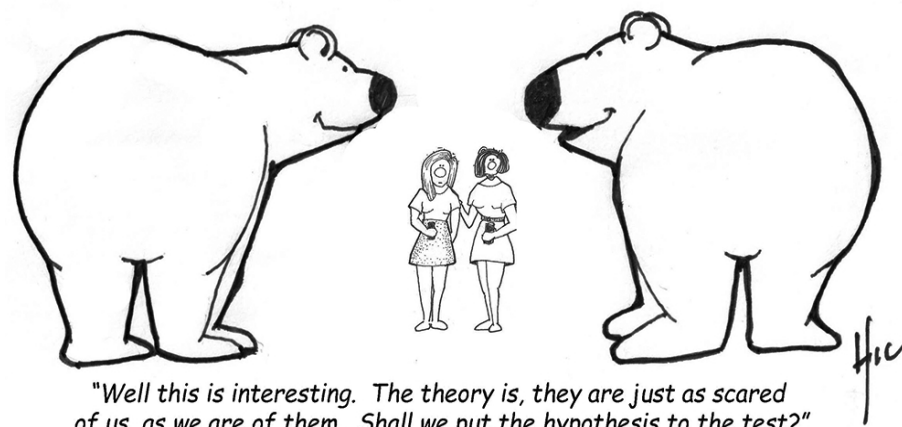
occupancy taxes. It would be a clean and direct tax base for funding workforce housing initiatives, or a portion could be carved out for counties and towns for capital infrastructure projects. My proposal would

retain TDA taxes for hotels and motels, so tourist promotion programs would remain in place.

The STR phenomenon generated

• See MAYOR page 16

• HIC'S VIEW •



• WEATHER •

| Thu, 2-May | Fri, 3-May | Sat, 4-May | Sun, 5-May |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 75°F 53°F | 68°F 54°F | 65°F 55°F | 69°F 54°F |
| Partly sunny | Clouds and breaks of sun | Cloudy, a shower and t-storm | A.p.m. t-storm in spots |
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We do not charge for obituaries at this time, but we reserve the right to edit as needed for space.

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• INVESTING AT 4,118 FT •

When is the right time to sell?

In my last column, I shared how acquaintances often ask me "How is the real estate market?" and I explained that the relative health of the market varies significantly across neighboring communities. So, it is imperative to get more information to answer their underlying question of "How is my home being affected by the current market?"

In this column, I'd like to shed light on the second question they often pose: "When is the right time to sell?" Well, that too, is best answered by not looking at the broader market, but rather taking time to consider the situation with the historical and current status of the market within a home's subdivision/community and the condition of the physical property itself.

Your REALTOR should advise you on what is happening nearby and how that can influence the best timing. Homes for sale in your close community are often the source of the most direct competition for your potential buyers. If the volume of active home listings is low in your community, that is often a great time to list your home; before more competition sets in.

Up-coming changes to the community and surrounding area may also influence the optimal timing to establish your listing; guiding the seller to either accelerate or delay the time for a home listing. Think about how potential HOA rules or local ordinance and tax law changes that are being considered might change perceived home values. Another example might be



John Sheehan, Broker
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for one to consider how a significant community amenity coming-soon might raise a home's value.

Additionally, situations within the physical home itself can impact the determination of the best time to list; especially if a set of needed home repairs and/or improvements will be well worth the time and expense to attract more buyers and a higher offered purchase price.

One last consideration is to recognize that most Sellers have personal situations and sentiments impacting the

timing of when they are best positioned to list a home. A good REALTOR will carefully listen and ensure all factors play a part in a recommendation.

We all love simple and direct answers, since most of us have too much complexity in our lives. Yet, the significance of a real estate decision deserves professional guidance and not an off-the-cuff answer. When you ask, "When is the right time to sell?" beware receipt of a sales pitch to win a quick listing. Instead, you deserve a professional who cares enough to provide you with a well-reasoned response after considering information from you, about your home, and your community.

• John Sheehan is a Broker at Mountain Life Properties. Adeptly serving the luxury real estate sales market and located in Highlands within their log cabin office at 134 Maple Street, the Mountain Life Properties team welcomes all to stop by to say hello, visit our website MountainLifeRE.com, or reach us at 828-239-8814.

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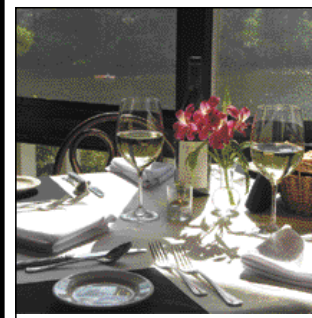
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• OBITUARY •

Stephen Glenn Clark

Stephen Glenn Clark passed away on Wednesday, April 17, 2024, at his home in Cashiers, NC following a brief illness.

We are all sad to announce the passing of Stephen Glenn Clark of Cashiers, NC at the young age of 53 after battling brain cancer. He was born on August 9, 1970, in Orlando, FL. He was adopted shortly thereafter by Betty (Clark) Whisman and Herman Clark.

Stephen graduated from Edgewater High School in 1988. He attended all the school's proms and was crowned Homecoming King by his peers. He was incredibly studious and wildly intelligent — both academically and emotionally. Consequently, he was frequently sought out by his friends for advice and support.

He moved to Highlands in 2001. A lucky chance meeting with Linda and Tommy Clark led to his new career at Buck's Coffee Cafe in Highlands, NC, where he quickly became known as the best barista in town. His eldest daughter, Lydia, would later note that whenever he was absent from his scheduled days, regular customers would instinctually ask "Is your dad working today?"

It was at this coincidental place of employment that he met his now ex-wife, Stacey M. Clark with whom he had his three children; Lydia Sage Clark (21), W. Alexander Clark (20) and India Jade Clark (18).

As an avid tennis player, he joined the Highlands group during his time at Buck's, playing tennis as often as he could on days off. He made a conscious effort to keep his mind and body active, the importance of which he instilled with vigor into his aforementioned children.

One of Steve's greatest personal accomplishments was his running; he would often travel to participate in races throughout the South. Steve frequently competed in 5ks, 10ks and half marathons, creating detailed physical schedules to keep him on track to success in these arenas. Ultimately, his hard work coalesced in his accumulation of a variety of placement medals, with the pinnacle of his success coming from a 1 hour, 37-minute half marathon with a 7:24 minute-mile pace at "The Big Beach Marathon" in Gulf Shores, AL.

He had a short but well lived, well loved life.

• LETTER •

Ban your own books

Dear Editor,

I think I am part of the silent majority who considers the kerfuffle about banning books a tempest in a very small teapot, but regardless, maybe more of us should publicly express our opinion on book banning in libraries.

I agree any parent has a responsibility to raise their child based on their own values and principles. But that responsibility does not extend to other people's children. If there are certain books you do not want your child reading, there is a very simple solution: go to the library with your child and help them find books you consider appropriate.

Public libraries (and including public school libraries



Stephen was predeceased by his father, Herman Clark, stepmother Sara Clark, grandmother, Nellie Clark and stepbrother, Greg Whisman.

Stephen is survived by his children, Lydia Sage Clark, W. Alexander Clark and India Jade Clark and the mother of his children Stacey Clark. Stephen is also survived by his mother, Betty (Clark) Whisman, his stepfather, Jim Whisman, his sister, Lori (Bill) Shindel, stepbrother Steve (Tami) Whisman, stepsister, Sue Ann Munnell and many more loving aunts, uncles, and relatives.

A celebration of life was held at Macon Funeral Home in Franklin, NC, Wed., May

Online condolences can be made at www.maconfuneralhome.com

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

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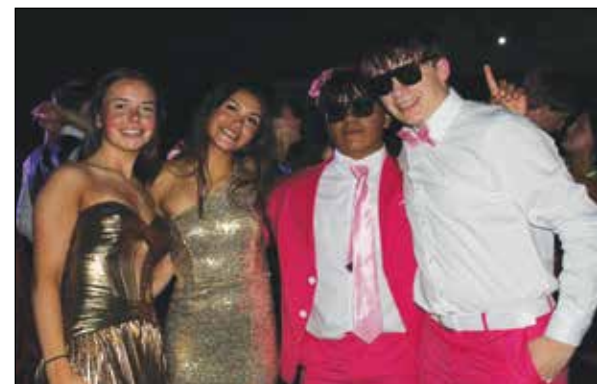
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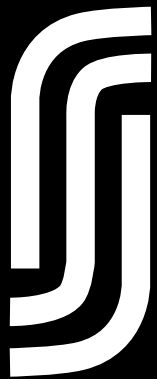
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...LETTER continued from page 7

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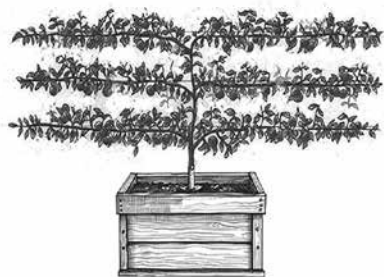
Librarians do not make book selections based on their personal beliefs; they rely on professional resources to identify materials that reflect their patrons' diversity. A community library would be doing a disservice to its community if it did not have materials that some community members would never read. I don't like science fiction or horror novels so I don't

read them. I know people who love those genres, and are welcome to them.

My hope is that rather than trying to ban books, people expand their reading interests. The only reason I know I don't like science fiction and horror stories is because I read enough of them to know they were not for me. Knowledge requires freedom to explore the unfamiliar, and only knowledge begets wisdom, and wisdom is what saves us.

**Karen Patterson
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...CHILDCARE continued from page 1

ing crisis that threatens the well-being of families and the economy alike. With nearly 221,000 children under the age of five reliant on childcare services, the repercussions of inadequate funding and systemic challenges are becoming increasingly dire.

The substantial increase in federal support provided by the American Rescue Plan Act, amounting to about \$1.3 billion annually, offered a vital cushion for childcare facilities throughout the pandemic. Ariel Ford, overseeing North Carolina's Division of Child Development and Early Education, emphasized the critical role this funding played in keeping childcare centers operational during tumultuous times. However, this financial support is set to expire in July unless immediate legislative intervention occurs.

In Raleigh on Tuesday, NC Child, a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to every aspect of child health, held its inaugural "State of the Child" summit, bringing together over 100 organizations and leaders dedicated to serving children in North Carolina. The first topic addressed was the impending childcare crisis.

The consequences of funding shortfalls are already being felt across the state as childcare centers grapple with closures and staffing shortages. Unable to sustain operations without state and federal subsidies, these centers are forced to shutter their doors, leaving families scrambling for alternatives and exacerbating an already strained system.

"300 childcare centers in North Carolina closed last year," NC Secretary of DHHS Kody Kinsey said during the summit. "Right now we are having to face the reality that many more are slated to close this year if something isn't done. It is a lot harder to fix something after it is closed and shut down than to do something now to provide the resources needed to keep it going."

Among those 300 childcare centers were centers across NC's western most states operated by Southwestern Child Development, which announced the closing of seven childcare facilities last October. The seven centers operated by the organization served 300 children from birth to 5 years old, the majority of whom received child care subsidy or NC Pre-K services.

"These closures are devastating to children, families and communities who rely on child care to nurture their children's healthy development and learning, allow parents to work and support their families, and keep local businesses running," said Ariel Ford, Director of NCDHHS Division of Child Development and Early Education. "Across North Carolina, we're seeing a grow-

ing crisis of a lack of child care access and increased financial pressures driven by the need for competitive wages and increasing supply costs.

Without access to additional funding, more child care centers could face closure. Unfortunately, the budget passed by the legislature did not include significant new funding for childcare. State health officials join Governor Cooper in urging the General Assembly to make this child care crisis a priority."

According to NC Child, childcare costs have risen 32% in North Carolina since 2019, and if something isn't done soon, 155,000 children are estimated to lose care. An estimated 1,800 childcare facilities could be unable to pay the bills. And on top of that, parents could be forced to stay home, costing parents millions in revenue.

Debra Derr, Director of Government Affairs for the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce lead the childcare discussion for NC Child and cited a recent report that underscores the far-reaching impact of childcare challenges on the state's workforce and economy.

Shockingly, a quarter of families with young children report leaving the workforce due to unaffordable childcare, hindering businesses' ability to recruit and retain employees. Moreover, the prevalence of missed workdays due to childcare issues and the rejection of job opportunities due to escalating childcare expenses further underscore the urgency of the situation.

The financial burden on families is staggering, with childcare costs surpassing even the price of in-state college tuition. Parents of infants and toddlers face average annual childcare expenses exceeding \$17,000, a daunting figure in a state where the median wage for childcare workers hovers at just \$14 per hour. This disparity in wages, coupled with the demanding nature of the profession, contributes to difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified childcare professionals, ultimately compromising the quality of care provided.

North Carolina's childcare crisis extends beyond financial strains to encompass concerns about quality.

Despite exorbitant costs, providers struggle to attract and retain skilled workers due to woefully inadequate compensation. Michelle Shepherd with the Wilkes Community Partnership for Children explained that a recent survey in Wilkes County revealed that parents are turning to social media to find individuals willing to keep their children due to the lack of adequate childcare facilities, raising a serious question

• See **CHILDCARE** page 15

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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

HS Interact Club runs April 23 Rotary Club meeting

On April 23rd Interact Club President (and Highlands School Valedictorian) Olivia Cole and her Interact colleagues ran the entire meeting according to Rotary's traditional rules of order. Rotarians were impressed by the details of the 14 different projects the students carried out this year. Projects ran the gamut from designing and distributing new mouse pads throughout the school, to helping renovate a Together We Can house for children awaiting placement in foster homes, to distributing candy to Highlands merchants for Halloween on Main.

Tate Wilson, two-time Rotary Youth Leadership Award winner gave an enthusiastic review of her TYLA leadership experience. At the meeting, Rotary's Club's Interact mentor Tracy Franklin announced that Wilson has been chosen for the North Carolina RYLA 2025 Leadership Planning Committee. Twenty Interact members took part in the Rotary meeting, putting an inspirational face on Highlands' rising leaders.



2023-24 Interact Officers: Olivia Cole, President, Tate Wilson, Secretary, Caitlyn Tingen, Sergeant-at-Arms, and Nicole Taylor, Vice President.



2023-24 members of the Highlands School Interact Club.

Interact Clubs are a part of Rotary International designed to bring together students ages 12-18 to develop leadership skills while discovering the power of Rotary's motto "Service Above

Self". For more information contact Tracy Franklin at tracy.stribling@gmail.com or Nicole Lui, Highlands School counselor, nicole.lui@macon.k12.nc.us

Atrium Series

The Bascom Shop

From May to October, The Bascom will present its Atrium Series, featuring 20 retail artists in The Bascom's Greehey Atrium through four six-week presentations of work. The series will showcase artists from across the Southeast in a variety of mediums, curated by Anna Huff, the Grants Program Manager for the Metropolitan Arts Council in Greenville, SC.

Image credit: Meredith Skinner

THE BASCOM

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Funding is due in part to a Tourism Grant with Visit Highlands, NC.

"Good Plays Well Done"

Presenting two fabulous new plays from the Highlands Cashiers PLAYERS

Always a Bridesmaid
Written by Jones Hope Wooten
Directed by Ricky Siegel
May 9, 10, 11, 12
and May 16, 17, 18, 19
Nightly at 7:30 pm, Sunday Matinees at 2:00 pm
Cabaret Seating \$35

THE LIFESPAN OF A FACT
A NEW PLAY
Written by Jeremy Kareken, David Murrell, & Gordon Farrell
Directed by Michael Lanzilotta
Aug 22, 23, 24, 25 and
Aug 29, 30, 31, Sept 1

Highlands Performing Arts Center, 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands, NC
For tickets go to: www.highlandscashiersplayers.com or call: 828-526-9047

2024

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

Fri.-Wed., May 17-22

• **The Rec Park gym and aerobic room will be CLOSED. floors are being refinished. For more information, call Lester Norris or Janice Mathis at 828-526-3556.**

POOL SCHEDULE

• Lap Swim: Mon.-Fri., 6.-9:45a, and Sat., 10a-11p - 6 lanes. Water Aerobics: 18 yrs plus, Mon.-Fri. 10 -11am with Karen Chambers. Adult Swim: 18 years old+, Mon.-Thurs 11a-3:30p and Fri., 11a-1:30p. Public Swim Mon.- Thurs. 3:30-7p; Sat. 11a-6p and Sun. 1-6p. For info, call 828-526-1595.

MEETINGS ALL WEEK

• Highlands/ Cashiers Alcoholics Anonymous "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. recovery program. Open meetings are held in Highlands @ the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St.,

on Monday at 5:30 p.m. and on Wednesday & Fridays @ 12:00 noon. Open in person meetings are held in Cashiers @ the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library, 249 Frank Allen Rd. on Sunday at 5:00 pm, on Tuesday @ 7:00 pm, on Friday at 5:00 pm and on Saturday at 9:00 am. Cashiers Open ZOOM Meetings are on Wednesday @ 700 pm. ZOOM ROOM 921 817 2966 PASSWORD CVG2020. For more information please visit our website www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of A.A. 24/7 call our HELP Line 828 349-4357.

Mountain Findings Hours

April & May: Fri. and Sat. 10a to 1p. **June:** Thurs.-Sat., 10a to 1p.

Mon.-Fri.

• Nantahala Tennis plays at the Highlands Rec Park 9a-1p.

Mon-Wed-Fri

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

• Heart Healthy Exercise Class at the Rec Park 8:30-9:30am. The cost for the class is \$25 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

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 Hudson Library, Nature Kids on selected Tuesday mornings, For more info call the Hudson Library at 828-526-3031

• 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

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.

• Pickle Ball inside and outside at the Rec Park. 10am-1pm, everyone is welcome so come

out and enjoy a game of Pickle Ball.

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 combination class with different types of exercise. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information

2nd & 4th Thursdays

• Dementia Caregivers Support Group, Moderators Chris and Fred ensure that the group is a safe place for judgement-free discussion. The next meeting of the Dementia Caregivers Support Group is February 22 at 10:15 AM at Hudson Library. For more information about the group, contact Chris at 772-473-1088.

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, Family Storytime continues throughout the year on Thursday mornings at 10:40 AM.

• At Hudson Library, Kids Zone at 3:30 pm with a wide variety of STEAM, nature, and craft activities. For more information about any of these summer activities, contact Hudson Library at 828-526-3031.

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 ncp370@gmail.com for more information or just join us at 9 AM on the 3rd Saturday of the month.

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 May 10

• Register now for Summer Flag Foot-

Muddy Sneakers
OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

S.T.E.M.
MACON COUNTY

MACON COUNTY SCHOOLS

SUMMER CAMP

June 17 – 20; 9am – 3pm
GRADES 4 – 6
SCIENCE IN NATURE
Transform into a scientist and investigate the forests, streams, and outdoor spaces on our nearby public lands.
HIKING · JOURNALING · SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS · GAMES

June 24 – 27; 9am – 3pm
GRADES 6 – 8
OUTDOOR DISCOVERY
Navigate through nature's playground and discover the adventures that await in the forests and streams.
HIKING · OUTDOOR SKILLS · TEAM-BUILDING · GAMES

Mountain View Intermediate* \$150/student
*Camp start/end; students will also visit Tennessee Bottomland Preserve
Questions? Contact jennifer.love@macon.k12.nc.us or 828-524-3314
To register, scan QR code or visit: www.bit.ly/Maconsummercamp

HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS

ball for ages 5-18 to be held Tuesdays and Thursdays in Highlands and Franklin in June. Registration is \$45 per person May 2 and May 9 from 6-7p at the Town of Highlands Baseball field, Saturday, May 4 from 10a-noon at the Highlands Rec Park OR at the Highlands Rec Park Front Desk any time through May 10.

Sat., May 4

- Pop-Up Bagpipers outside the First Presbyterian Church from 4:40-5p.
- At PAC, Mojo & The Bayou Gypsies at 7:30p. For tickets go to www.highlandspformingarts.com.

Thurs.-Sun., May 9-12

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

Fri., May 10

- At the Hudson Library, NC author Diane Kelly, who has several cozy mystery series to her credit, will give a talk about her books and The Appeal of Appalachia on Friday at 11AM. Books will be available for purchase and signing at this free program.

Sat.-Sun., May 11-12

- The 4th annual Bear Shadow will be held again at Winfield Farm in Scaly Mountain. Visit <https://bearshadownc.com/> for information about how to purchase tickets.

Sat., May 11

- 3rd Annual FREE Highlands Dog Show in K-H Founders Park on Pine Street. Registration 1-1:30. Judging begins at 1:30 p.m. Award ceremony 2:30-3:30 p.m. Categories: Best in Show, Best Trick, Happiest Dog, Best Behavior, Looks Like Owner.

Mon., May 13

- At Rejuvenate Laser Center 209 Hospital Dr. Ste #202 in Highlands.. OBAGI DAY 9:30a to 3:30p. Raffle for Prizes and 20% off OBAGI Products. Free consultation. Call 828-482-4430 or 828-349-1280 for more info.

Thurs.-Sun., May 16-19

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

Fri., May 17

- At the Literacy & Learning Center, Tinker time for Tots at 10 a.m., No registration needed. Free.

- High Style Meet & Greet in Kelsey Hutchinson Founders Park on Pine Street 5-6:30 p.m. Join us for an evening of mingling, sipping, and savoring. Music by Zorki. Food, beer and wine included in the ticket price. \$45

- Friday Night Live showcases traditional mountain music and exceptional local talent on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – Silly Ridge (High Style event weekend)

Sat., May 18

- High Style Fashion Show in Town Square at 341 Main St. from 9:30-11 a.m. Whether you are a fashion enthusiast, a trendsetter, or simply looking for entertainment, the High Style Fashion Show promises an unforgettable experience for all. Price includes seating, beverage and swag bag. * We encourage guests to embrace their personal style and dress to impress.* \$25 VIP seating

- Saturdays on Pine features a variety of popular, regional bands and musicians at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. – Continental Divide (High Style event weekend)

Tues., May 21

- Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau ribbon cutting ceremony at its Highlands location on the HC Hospital campus - 171 Hospital Drive. Refreshments, outdoor activities and optional self-guided tour following the ceremony.

- Free Sports Physicals at Highlands School at 2 p.m. Rising 5th-12 graders who will be participating in NCHSAA sanctioned sports. A state-mandated sports physical is required prior to trying out for any sport. Parents or guardians should plan to attend the sports physical to answer questions the medical team may have during the exam. For more information contact Highlands School's Mission Sports Medicine Athletic Trainer Will Mathiowdis at William.Mathiowdis@HCAHealthcare.com.

- Democratic Women of Macon County will have its monthly meeting at Hudson Library, Tuesday at 5 PM. Men are members and welcomed to attend. The speaker will be Hilary Wilkes, who is the Board of Education member from Highlands. Please come out and support her and enjoy the camaraderie. You are also requested to bring either wine or an hors d'oeuvres to share.

Fri., May 24

- Hudson Library welcomes Alabama author Terah Shelton Harris on Friday at 12:30 PM for Books & Bites to talk about her new novel "Long After We are Gone." Books will be available for purchase and signing at this free event.

- Friday Night Live in Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – McClain Family Band.

Sat., May 25

- Saturdays on Pine at KH Founders Park features Southside Station 6-8:30 p.m.

Thurs., May 30

- OEI's The Orchard Sessions with Highbeams, a trio of brothers and best friends who offer a high-energy performances and rich three-part harmonies. Light bites, a cash bar 6-8 p.m. \$40. Book Online: <https://www.simpletix.com/e/highbeams-orchard-sessions-at-the-farm-tickets-149352>

Sun., May 31

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

Sat., June 1

- Pop-Up Bag Pipers are scheduled from 4:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

- Saturdays on Pine features a variety of popular, regional bands and musicians at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. – High 5

Sun., June 2

- The Literacy & Learning Center's spring fundraiser at The Farm at OEI, 336 Arnold Road in Highlands, from 6 - 9 pm. Open Bar. Heavy hors d'oeuvres, dancing. Free shuttle service looping from 200 Main. Tickets are \$150 per person.

Wed., June 5

- **Josh Stein, the Democratic candi-**

date for NC Governor, will be in Cashiers (Village Green) at 5 PM. Even if you are not able to attend, your contribution will be appreciated. Tickets for the event are \$125 and larger donations are accepted and desired by the campaign. You may purchase a ticket at www.joshstein.org/cashiers.

Thurs., June 6

- Highlands Motoring: "One Lap of the Mountains- Grande" - Driving Tour 8:30am-4pm

Fri., June 7

- Highlands Motoring: "One Lap of the Mountains - Speciale" Driving Tour 9:30am to 4pm. Main Street Parade of Classic Cars 5:30pm to 6:30pm

- Friday Night Live on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – The Foxfire Boys



HIGHLANDS TRANSPORTATION MUDDY SNEAKERS CAMP

PICK UP 8:00 AM AND DROP OFF 4:00 PM HIGHLANDS SCHOOL

Students who are interested in participating in the Macon Muddy Sneakers Camp June 17-20 and June 24-27 can now opt for transportation to and from Highlands. The cost is \$40.00 per student (\$10.00 per day) for each camp. Please note on your registration that transportation is needed. A minimum of 5 students is needed for this service to be provided.



MUDDY SNEAKERS
OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

SUMMER CAMP

June 17-20, 8am-3pm
SCIENCE IN NATURE

June 24-27, 8am-3pm
OUTDOOR DISCOVERY

Activities include: nature exploration, field studies, journaling, science experiments, games, team building, and more!

Registration: www.muddy-sneakers.com

Scan to register or contact Jennifer Love at jennifer.love@macon.k12.nc.us





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:

The First Presbyterian Church of Highlands

471 Main Street

Saturday, May 4 | 4:30 - 5 p.m.

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



828-526-2112
visithighlandscnc.com

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

The Atrium shopping experience begins at The Bascom

The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts Invites You to Explore the Atrium Series – an exclusive Plateau shopping experience.

Highlands, NC – April 25th - The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts is delighted to announce its second annual Atrium Series, running from May to October. Showcasing a diverse range of mediums including sculpture, pottery, paintings, textiles, glass, photography, and more, the Atrium Series promises an enriching experience for art enthusiasts and shoppers alike. All work will be available for purchase.

Curated by Anna Huff, the Grants Program Manager for the Metropolitan Arts Council (Greenville, SC), known for her multimedia sculptural works and installations. Huff brings her discerning eye to curate works for this exceptional Plateau shopping experience. With a background rooted in sculpture and a passion for exploring themes such as technology, religion,

and theater, Anna's selections promise to engage, delight, and provoke thought.

Jessica Lammers, Retail Manager at The Bascom, extends a warm invitation to all, stating, "We encourage you to join us at The Bascom to view and explore the Atrium Series; these curated works promise visitors a truly unique shopping experience."

For a complete list of participating artists, visit thebascom.org/shop/atrium-series

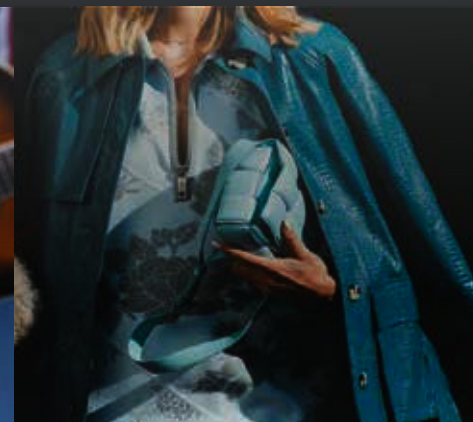
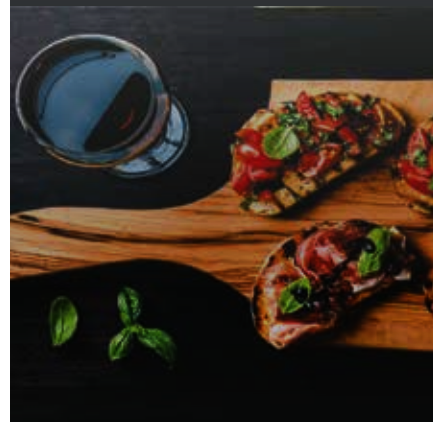
About The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts

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 for the arts.

MAY 17 - 19, 2024

HIGH Style

ELEV. 4118



A celebration of Art, Cuisine, Fashion & Music featuring interactive art demonstrations and classes, culinary experiences, a fashion show, musical performances and so much more.

visithighlandscnc.com



...DOG PARK continued from page 1

renovations.

Major drainage improvements will ensure the park remains dry even after rainfall - something that is an ongoing issue including "washed away" chips that leave muddy areas.

An expanded lawn area around the pavilion will offer additional space for relaxation and socializing for dogs and their owners.

Moreover, repairs will be made to fencing.

In addition, foliage throughout the park - some of which is growing through the fences - will be trimmed.

"The Town of Highlands is pleased to work with the Highlands Chamber of Commerce to enhance the Dog Park," said Commissioner Jeff Weller. "We know this park is a favorite destination in our community, and we look forward to the positive impact these updates will have."

For more information about the Highlands Dog Park project or to learn more about the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/ Visit Highlands, NC call 828-526-5841 or visit www.highland-chamber.org.

...CHILDCARE from page 10

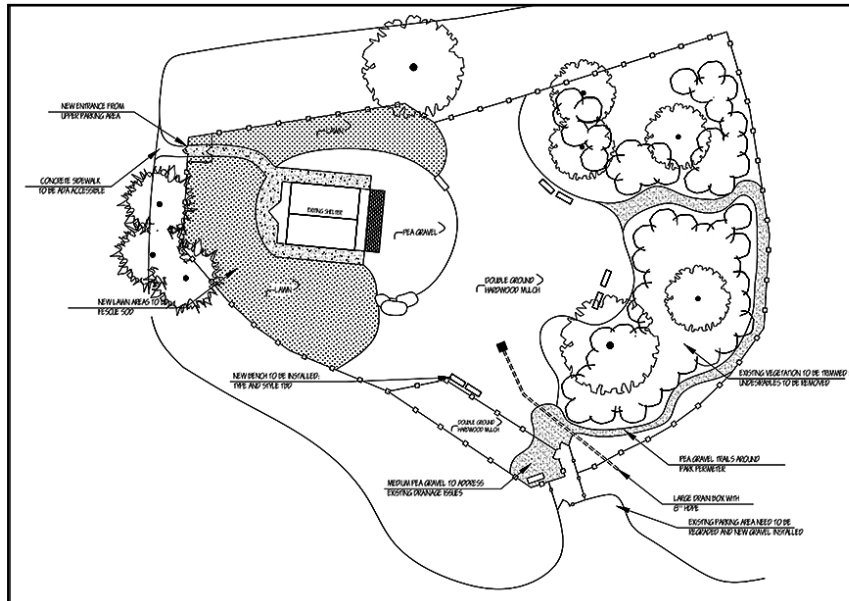
regarding the quality and safety of those children.

The dire state of childcare in North Carolina demands immediate attention and decisive action from policymakers.

Sustainable funding solutions must be prioritized to ensure the accessibility, affordability, and quality of childcare services for families across the state. Failure to address these challenges risks not only the well-being of children and families but also the long-term prosperity of North Carolina's economy.

Read Highlands Newspaper for free from everywhere ... on the street or on the web.

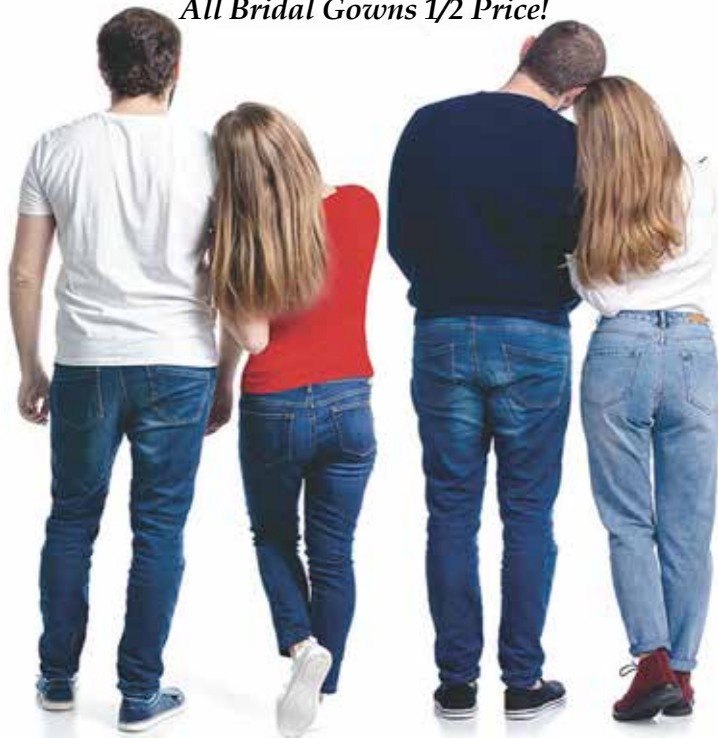
Go to www.highlandsinfo.com. Click on Local News.



The renovated dog park will be greener and dryer.

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School teams are commended

By Brett Lamb
HS Athletic Director

MS Girls soccer with a 3-1 over Cherokee county

HS Girls soccer 2-0 win over Cherokee



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Upstairs and Across the
Walkway at Falls on Main
Highlands

HS Boys golf with a 4th place finish in the Smoky Mountain Conference Golf tournament. That finish qualified the team for regionals. Regionals are next Monday May 6th at Mountain Harbor golf course in Hayesville.

And big shout out to Carson Forrester for his 3rd place overall finish.

Right: members of the MS Girls Soccer Team: Keeley Bosdell, Amaryrani Campos, Rebekah Scott, Mia Craig, Lucy Dela Cruz De Dios, Penelope McRae, Miley Zagal, Mims Henderson, Cassie McDowell, Ava Penland, Christina Craig, Anabelle Hays, Aubree Brooks, Corena Dearth, Nataly Aguilar.

...MAYOR continued from page 2

windfall income for TDA systems. It is time to reallocate this wind fall to address a critical issue, affordable housing. There is an emerging correlation between shortages of long-term rental units and skyrocketing rental costs. Since 2020, long-term rental costs have exploded by 78% in the Asheville area. In Highlands, affordable long-term rentals have all but disappeared.

I know there would be resistance to such reforms, specifically the tourism and hospitality lobbies might oppose such changes. The hospitality industry has enjoyed great latitude in how these revenues have been allocated. It is time for a broader community perspective concerning how STR and TDA revenues are allocated.



Photo by Natasha Kittrell



The cast of Always a Bridesmaid at their first table reading. From left to right: Deandra Mundy, April Getz, director Ricky Siegel, Julie Harris, stage manager Cathy Myers, Jamie Haselhurst and Lorine Spencer.

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HCP presents 'Always a Bridesmaid'

The Highlands Cashiers Players will present Always a Bridesmaid, a comedy by

Jones Hope Wooten, May 9-12 and 16-19 at the Martin Lipscomb Theater in the Highlands Performing Arts Center. The play, directed by Ricky Siegel, features four women who make a vow in high school to be in one another's weddings, and more 30 years later these friends-for-life are still standing up for each other wedding after wedding - no matter what.

The cast draws from the across the area - Cullowhee, Highlands and Rabun County. Playing the four friends and returning to the Highlands Cashiers Players stage are Julie Harris as Deedra; Jaime Haselhurst as Charlie; Diandra Mundy as Monette; and Lorine

Spencer as Libby Ruth. Rounding out the cast are newcomers April Getz, who plays ax-wielding wedding planner Sedalia Elliott, and Dannyale Williams, who plays Libby Ruth's daughter, Kari Ames, who is getting married on the day the play is told through flashbacks. Cathy Myers is the stage manager, overseeing a production that requires almost 25 costume changes in two acts.

Performances are nightly at 7:30 except for the Sunday shows, which are 2 pm matinees. Tickets are available at highlandscashiersplayers.com, or by calling the box office at 828-526-9047. The Highlands Performing Arts Center is located at 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands.

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Haley's Fine Lingerie is now open

On Monday, April 29 the Highlands Chamber of Commerce officially opened Haley's Fine Lingerie at 468 Carolina Way.

Haley's Fine Lingerie embraces women of all shapes and sizes, aiming to empower them to embrace their natural beauty and confidence. The shop offers an extensive selection of everyday lingerie, comfort bras, bridal wear, and loungewear. Haley's mission is to help women reconnect with their feminine side and express their distinct style. The belief in the importance of confidence is central: when you look and feel your best, you can achieve anything. Whether you're treating yourself or searching for the perfect gift, Haley is on hand to assist in finding the ideal fit and

style. Personalized bra fittings are also available for a tailored experience.

"The opportunity to establish a business in Highlands as a fifth-generation entrepreneur is incredibly exciting," says owner Haley Hays. "This town has always been close to the heart, and opening a new venture here fulfills a long-held dream. It is a privilege to bring this vision to life and contribute something new, and much needed, to the community."

Regular business hours for Haley's Fine Lingerie are Tuesday-Saturday from 11am-6pm. For more information about Haley's Fine Lingerie call 828-371-7890 or visit their Instagram profile @haleysfinelingerie.

Right: friends and family gathered to celebrate.
- Photo by Kim Lewicki



Mojo & The Bayou Gypsies

Saturday, May 4, 2024 7:30pm



Louisiana
Zydeco
Music
&
FUN



Highlands Performing Arts Center
507 Chestnut Street Highlands NC
www.HighlandsPerformingArts.com



THE
HEIGHT
OF
ENTER
TAINMENT

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

A Godly wife and mother Proverbs 31:28-31



Pastor Sam Forrester
Whiteside Presbyterian Church,
Cashiers

A Godly wife and mother is one of the first blessings God bestowed on men and children. In Genesis 2:24 He says that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. This becomes the foundation of the family and society. Man was made to serve God as His vice regent over all of creation. He was to go forth and worship, work and populate the earth. The woman was given him to help in these tasks. Man was to lead his wife and family in worship, to work and earn the things needed to keep them alive. He was also to populate the earth. How could he do any of these things without his wife? Let's look at the Proverbs 31 wife and learn how she served her family.

Proverbs 31:28 declares "Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her." I know my children call their mother blessed because she worked all of their lives to teach and guide them in all they did. She used the events in their everyday lives to teach them they were sinners in need of a Savior and that Jesus Christ is the only Savior. She taught them the Ten Commandments and how to live their lives by those teachings. She helped them through their personal disasters and assisted them in their recoveries. She is a gracious woman, in that there were more times than I can count she placed the interest of her husband and her children before her own. She was in her youth a strikingly beautiful woman but today her beauty is greater because she has so selflessly given her life to others. It is ingrained in my heart the tender guidance I have seen her give, the wise council that has come from her mouth, the loving discipline and godly example she has been. She is still called blessed by her children and husband because they know what an invaluable gift she is.

Verse 29 "Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all." This speaks of a noble or virtuous woman. What makes a woman noble? I have learned, it is a woman that holds to the truth of God's Word and lets it direct the affairs of her life and family. She does not turn away from the truth but holds to it with an unyielding commitment to God and those she loves. She can assess the situation and choose the important things over the nonessentials, making the lives of those in her family stronger and more blessed. She watches over the needs of her family, cares about the comforts of others, keeps her conduct right and true, shows tenderness to the down-trodden and is always gracious. Such a character could only come from the grace of God and the virtue that is derived from a vital faith in God.

A woman of such virtue does not care for or seek the praise of others. She is content to be known and loved by those around her and she never seeks the notice of people. But they never fail to see her because her heart is

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 19

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

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Sundays: School: 10 a.m., Worship: 11
Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7
Wednesdays: Mid-week prayer meeting: 7 p.m.

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Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

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Thursdays: 11:30 am Healing Eucharist

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Pastor Jacob Tedder jacob@cashiers.church • 743-5470
www.cashiers.church

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Contact Ellen@cashiers.church for add'l programming

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4:30pm, Tuesdays 10am; Men's Bible Study: Wednesdays &
Thursdays 7am @ Zookeeper Bistro

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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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Rev. Kelley Connelly, Associate Pastor
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Rev. Marty Kilby
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Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

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

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from April 14. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

April 15

• At 7:58 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on N. Cobb Road.,

April 20

• At 8:55 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on 5th Street.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from April 23.

April 23

• At 2:35 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Skyline Lodge Road.

• At 5:03 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Elm Court.

April 25

• At 6:21 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers FD.

• At 6:23 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence

on Joanna Lane.

• At 10:07 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Calloway Lane.

• At 6:05 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Chestnut Hill Drive.

April 26

• At 10:31 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cullasaja FD on a rescue call.

April 28

• At 1:35 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Azalea Lane.

...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING continued from page 18

so filled with the beauty of her life and the joy of her family.

We are told in verse 30 “Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.” Her charm and beauty are subject to change over the years. There is one thing that will never change and this I can testify to with the mother of my children. The

woman that makes the fear of the Lord the center of her heart will be praised by all who know her. Her name will be known because of her acts and her love. Verse 31 says “Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.” She will earn a reward and her works will bring her praise whenever and wherever she is known. A mother

is a beautiful and glorious gift of a gracious God and she should be praised for the love she gives and the compassion she shows to her family and friends. My children and I were very blessed of God to have a wife and mother who taught such invaluable lessons. May God bless her and all others who strive to be such an example to their families.

...RESCUERS continued from page 1

members went to the top of the Gorge on the California Mountain side.

“After assembling repelling gear and roping off, the team started down the mountain mov-

ing toward where the lights were, calling out ‘mark’ every 10 feet to mark the route. About daylight, the team reached the subject 475 feet below. They realized they had started down directly above him,”

Lequire said.

The man was injured but nothing appeared to be life-threatening.

Meanwhile, a National Guard

• See **RESCUERS** page 22

Jess & Jane
is back for Summer!



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...RESCUERS continued from page 19

helicopter had left Salisbury, NC at about 7 a.m. and after stopping in Asheville to pick up medical personnel was on scene about 8:30 a.m. at which point medical personnel were lowered down.

After evaluating and packaging the man, they were all hoisted up to the helicopter and taken to the Macon County airport where MC EMS was waiting to take him to the hospital in Asheville via ambulance.

According to Lequire, the man was taking photographs and at some point, lost his way.

“There are lots of logging roads on the California Mountain and Goldmine side and if you don’t stay on the roads and aren’t careful

it’s real easy to end up lost and potentially in the river,” he said. “He said he was taking photographs but we don’t know when he began – he could have started 8 or 9 hours earlier during the day prior to getting lost and hurt at night.”

No rescuer, officer, or fire personnel were injured.

“We at Cullasaja Fire & Rescue are so thankful to our members, to Macon County 9-1-1, Macon County EMS, Cowee Volunteer F&R, Macon County Sheriff’s Office, Highlands F&R, Highlands Police Dept., Macon County Emergency Management, NC Mountain Rescue Team #4 out of Haywood County, NC

National Guard Helicopter and Glenville-Cashiers Rescue,” said Lequire.

All told between 50 and 75 people responded.

“Everyone involved worked as a team. The community needs to know how fortunate we are that just a few phone calls is all it took for rescuers to assemble. We are a very lucky community,” he said.

And it should be noted that if not for the keen eyes of a passing motorist with the wherewithal to call for help, the outcome of this story could have been very different.

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Students of the Month



Left to right: Dave O’Harra, Rotary Club of Highlands-President, Jackson Fairchild (elementary), Annamaria Silverthorn (high school), Mia Craig (middle school), Nicole Lui Guidance Counselor and Alyssa DeBois, Assistant Principal at Highlands School.

Ron Leslie updates Rotary Club of Highlands on Highlands Cashiers Players

Ron Leslie, President of the Board of Highlands Cashiers Players, recently gave an inspiring update on the progress of HCP to the Rotary Club of Highlands.

First known as “The Little Theatre” when it was incorporated in 1939, the Highlands Community Players was established in 1995 and in 2008 it evolved into the Highlands Cashiers Players. Devoted theatre lovers continue to be the heartbeat of the group, which is the area’s only all-volunteer, non-profit theatre that welcomes experienced and inexperienced actor in its ranks. That volunteer dedication has resulted in over 80 full-length plays, featuring over 250 actors since inception.



Dave O’Harra and Ron Leslie of HCP. HCP’s next production is “Always A Bridesmaid” is May 9-12 and May 16-19. HCP performs at the Martin-Lipscorn Theater, at the PAC, 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands. To purchase tickets, or to volunteer, please visit www.highlandscashiersplayers.com



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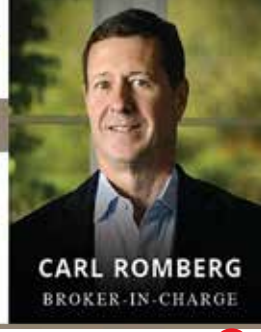
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