

# Highlands Newspaper

Early Voting Starts Today!

Volume 21, Number 42

Real-Time News, Weather & WebCams: HighlandsInfo.com

Thurs., Oct. 17, 2023

## FEMA approves \$96 MM in aid in NC

*Opens Disaster Recovery Center in Sylva; Resource Center in Highlands*

By Kristin Fox

This past weekend, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) opened up a fourth Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) in western North Carolina to help survivors of the recent hurricane Helene. The new DRC was opened in Jackson County in an effort to reach more North

Carolina survivors who experienced loss from the recent hurricane.

The Jackson County DRC is located in the Jackson County Annex Building, 198 WBI Drive, Sylva. The recovery center hours are from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Sunday. The other DRC's are located in Asheville, Lenoir

and Marion and operate during the same times and days as the new center in Sylva.

To find these centers' locations go to [fema.gov/drc](https://fema.gov/drc) or text "DRC" and a zip code to 43362. Additional recovery centers will be opening soon as the need demands. All centers are accessible

• See FEMA page 27

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Secure Foods kits are delivered to the Beloved Asheville sorting and distribution warehouse.

## 'Secure Foods' provides emergency meal kits for WNC Hurricane Helene survivors

By Kim Lewicki

Secure Foods, a woman- and minority-owned small business nestled right here in the Highlands, is reaching out to the heart of our community for support. They're calling for donors to sponsor non-perishable meal kits, crafted to nourish families and individuals

who are facing the aftermath of Hurricane Helene's wrath in Asheville and nearby towns such as Swannanoa, Black Mountain, Lake Lure, Boone and others.

"We've already delivered thousands of non-perishable meals to the Highlands Food Pantry and

• See SECURE page 24



David, Kwiyong and Zion Baumgarten



Jim Breedlove



John DeVille



Danny Reitmeier

## Three candidates vye for BOE District 4 seat

By Kristin Fox

This November when Macon County voters go to the polls, there is one local competitive election on the ballot – the Macon County Board of Education District 4 at large seat.

For the District 4 seat, voters will have three candidates to choose from with incumbent Jim Breedlove being challenged by John DeVille and Danny Reitmeier.

Two other seats are also on the ballot; however, both candidates are running unopposed. Incumbent Hilary Wilkes is running for District 1 while incumbent Melissa Evans is running for District 3.

Incumbent Breedlove will be seeking another term adding to the 16 years he has served as the Board Chairman. Breedlove was recently named 2022 Macon County Chamber of Commerce "Citizen of the Year" award.

Deville who is a 30-year teacher and public education advocate has been a longtime Franklin High School social studies teacher teaching American history, government and philosophy. DeVille was named the 2006-2007 Macon County Teacher of the Year.

Reitmeier is a veteran who served in the U.S. Air Force and

• See CANDIDATES page 20

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### Lessons Helene taught us

The town and residents are now entering an assessment period to Hurricane Helene response. What did we do well and what can we do better? I will focus this article on how each one of us should prepare for the next storm. Preparation for the approaching Helene was made by the town and by many residents, but honestly no one in WNC anticipated the severe impact and loss of all utilities and communications services. Such disturbances could happen again, or another Blizzard of 1993, or a Carrington solar event as in 1859.

Preparation in this case translated into having the resources to respond to difficult situations after the storm had passed. A surprise to the entire region was how internet and cell phone communication was completely lost. The communication failure initially crippled the town and region and hampered emergency response efforts. I believe the town should have an emergency StarLink system ready for immediate deployment for the next severe storm.

What I learned was that our private



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

vehicles can serve as a personal emergency center. That may have not been the case for many folks in flooded areas north of us where homes and property including vehicles were lost, but for Highlanders the vehicles remained operational.

Like as in Helene, for the next impending storm approaches, I will make sure my car is fully fueled. In Highlands we discovered our service stations had no internet which is needed now to pump gas. To solve this problem, I hope the owners of the gas stations, as well as other critical providers such as hardware and food services, will have generators and internet – Starlink or Hotwire, which never went down -- to at least provide marginal services.

A fully fueled vehicle can charge cell-phones and other devices. Also, one can listen to local radio stations from a vehicle. I recommend also having an emergency radio that runs on batteries and or has a hand cranked generator.

As mayor, my only way of communicating for a while was sending out updates by way of WHLC. On the Saturday, a week after the storm, a resident saw me in the downtown areas and began asking me about road closures and other questions about the storm. I was puzzled in that the person did not seem to know anything about the updates I had sent out by way of radio. One update had just been on WHLC just before I talked with the person. I asked him if he had been listening to WHLC? His response was what was that? I told him it was our local radio station. He told me did not know about it since he only listened to Sirius. So, being able to access our local station is critical. WHLC with their old FM technology was a reliable source for information.

My other recommendation is to have a stash of cash prior to a storm. We all found that the credit card systems were down just after Helene and remained down at many facilities some time. Cash, too, is old school stuff, but still viable and the only option in an emergency.

Another suggestion would be to draw water into several containers prior to a storm. Thank goodness Highlands was

• See MAYOR page 4

## • SNAPSHOTS •





### Northern Lights ignite



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

Photo by Amy Ramey

## • WEATHER •

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### Highlands Newspaper

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# • INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft •

## Home values rise amongst a steady volume of sales

How's the market doing?" remains a frequent question and topic of interest amongst local homeowners who've benefited from a steady rise in values over the last few years.

Since 2020, when COVID spurred increased interest in owning a rural mountain home, we have witnessed particularly high growth in terms of both sales volume and prices. Locally, we saw average closing price increases in excess of 20% in both 2021 and 2022, but we noticed in 2023 average closing sales prices increased slightly less than 10% year over year. While still a nice gain, it seemed we were returning to a more normal pace. Yet in 2024, home values are charging upward again.

When comparing home sales in our MLS from June 1st to October 14th for 2023 against 2024, one can see a couple of things. First the "Big Three" of Highlands, Cashiers, and Sapphire accounted for nearly three quarters of all home sales in our MLS; 34%, 18%, and 21% respectively; while the other areas of Glenville, Lake Toxaway, Cullowhee, Franklin, Scaly Mountain, etc. shared the remaining sales.

The second curiosity is we experienced nearly the same volume of home sales (296 vs 280) in the compared time period, but we had a 21% increase in the average closing price of homes. Here are my thoughts on why.

Early this year many REALTORS, myself included, believed the local real estate market might be "held back" due to the upcoming election and the related uncertainty of what could happen to investment markets, depending on which party wins. Since our local real estate market is highly tied to



John Sheehan, Broker  
 Mountain Life  
 Properties  
 828-239-8814

cash-buyers and therefore tends to mimic the trends in investment markets, it seemed a good assumption that this year would not see exceptional growth in housing demand nor home values.

However, the stock market has quietly risen to a recent all-time high, and it seems the coincidental increase in personal wealth has enabled investing here to continue to thrive. Beyond that influence and in light of the very unfortunate storm impacts to our sister communities of Western North Carolina and areas across Florida; it is possible we may experience even more demand for homes within the bounds of our MLS, which was spared from the horrific impacts realized elsewhere.

As of October 14, 2024, we had 416 active homes for sale with 175 (42%) of the homes at a List Price above \$1,500,000. 175 is not a lot of homes to satisfy the potential demand from deep-pocketed buyers who could soon be turning their eyes to find and purchase an available second luxury home here, rather than rebuilding in one of the negatively impacted areas.

Time will tell us the answer to an equally important question, "Where is our market going?"

• *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.*

## ...MAYOR continued from page 2

able to keep water services during and after the storm but having a supply of potable water is always advisable.

The Highlands Town Board of Commissioners will meet tonight starting at 6 pm at the Highlands Community Center. The first session will be a workshop reviewing building code policies. The 7 pm meeting will be the official business meet-

ing. One response to the emergency will be a review of the town website and how it can be enhanced to provide updates during an emergency as well as during routine operations.

Both meetings can also be remotely accessed by using a link on the town website.



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# • LETTERS •

## United we stand, Divided we fall!

Dear Editor,

A Trump supporter mistakenly said I thought Trump wrote Project 2025. Of course not. It was written for the next Republican POTUS by those who fund and support Trump, and many who worked for him in his first admin. It's been written by people who want to have rights in this country for the few, not all. It is a way of expressing their beliefs that started in the late 1970s and has evolved into the authoritarian playbook they hope to enact with the next POTUS elected that has been bought and paid for by the ultra-wealthy of America and the world.

You are correct that he did not write it, but those Republicans that support him and many that worked for him did write it. And as everyone knows, Trump lies almost every time he opens his mouth. Trump is the Lawless One from religious text. How can anyone who believes that the way of Jesus is the path of life that we should try to follow still support this provoker of hate, fear, exclusion, and heartlessness?

Trump puts wealth over everything else, and there are many people in nations across the world that have put the accumulation of wealth above all things spiritual. A narcissistic person like Trump who insists citizens put loyalty to him over loyalty to our country, and who has never served anyone but himself, should never be president.

How can those who profess to believe in our Constitution seek to limit Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness for all those who disagree with the religion or sexual preference of those in power?

Are we to go back to the society rules that existed pre civil war? Why should the government dictate who you are allowed to love or the decisions you make about your life?

Why should women have to go back to a time when they had few rights and were forced to do as they were told by their husbands and the government? And before you try to deflect and reply with your "Democrats are killing babies" nonsense that Trump and some of your pastors told you to say, I don't know anyone who is Pro-Abortion, and neither do you!

People are Pro Choice and believe that everyone has God-given free will, and that you are not the judge! Mind your own business, because your judgement day will come!

Many Republicans have joined in this fight and are voting for Harris. It certainly does not mean you are a Democrat, just that you are putting your country first. Elect the Democrats; then we can continue to work on the problems that need to be fixed.

United we stand, Divided we fall!

**Rick Rawlins**  
Highlands

## The record speaks for itself

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to a letter in the Oct. 3 "Mr. Trump has proven he's not up to the job."

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French political philoso-

pher, expressed in Democracy in America, that no democrat has ever been known to wish for more common sense, more natural insight, wisdom and judgment than he already has. In applying Tocqueville analysis to last week's letter "Mr. Trump has proven he's not up to the job" Democrats remain devoid of desire of these traits. One would have to be delusional to believe that Kamala Harris has made and would make our country more safe and secure.

When Biden/Harris came into office, the U.S. was involved in no "hot" conflicts anywhere in the world. No U.S. soldiers had been killed for 18 months in Afghanistan. ISIS had been wiped out. Biden/Harris' national security advisor, Jake Sullivan stated that "the Middle East is quieter today than it has been in two decades." The Abraham Accords had been signed securing peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. What's happened since?

We are engaged "for however long it takes" in a proxy war with the largest nuclear power in the world. We have committed \$115 billion to Ukraine, including \$20 billion to pay the pensions of their government workers. Biden/Harris nixed peace talks and are considering firing long range missiles into Moscow.

A complete FUBAR of a withdrawal from Afghanistan including 13 dead U.S. soldiers and the loss of \$80 billion in military hardware. Stuningly, since the killing of our soldiers, Biden/Harris has given \$2.1 billion of "humanitarian aid" to the Taliban.

Biden/Harris lifted Trump's crippling economic sanctions that denied Iran means to fund terrorist ventures. Biden/Harris then granted Iran access to \$6 billion frozen by the Trump administration. Tied to Iranian funding, Hamas murdered 1,200 in Gaza, the Houthis launched 72 attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea resulting in seafarers' deaths and billions in lost goods, and Hezbollah launched thousands of rockets into Israel from Lebanon. Biden/Harris announced a \$157 billion aid package to Lebanon one week after the devastation of Helene. (I can personally attest FEMA has not shown its face in Spruce Pine or Burnsville 8 days after the storm.)

Every year of Biden/Harris, the military has fallen tens of thousands of recruits short of its goals, despite lowering standards, offering large bonuses and reducing strength force numbers. The U.S. Navy utilized a drag queen in an effort to "increase recruitment and attract a diverse workforce". Doesn't that make you feel safer already?

The impact of unbridled illegal immigration may be the most consequential security issue of all. Yet, these delusional Democrats would point to a cadre of "experts" who cannot construct a logical argument that we are safer today than four years ago. Some of these were the "experts" that told us Hunter Biden's laptop had the earmarks of Russian disinformation. Trump has his own cadre of over 400 "experts" that vouch for his capacity to competently steer foreign policy.

Both Biden/Harris and Trump have records we can assess. No "experts" are needed.

**Chip Miller**  
Highlands, NC

• See LETTERS page 8

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...LETTERS continued from page 7

## Debunking Helene response myths

Dear Editor,

Amidst all of the support, we have also seen an uptick in untrustworthy sources trying to spark chaos by sharing hoaxes, conspiracy theories, and hearsay about hurricane response efforts across our mountains.

While it is true, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's response to Hurricane Helene has had its shortfalls, I'm here to dispel the outrageous rumors that have been circulated online:

**Hurricane Helene was NOT geo-engineered by the government to seize and access lithium deposits in Chimney Rock.**

Nobody can control the weather.

Charles Konrad, director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Southeast Regional Climate Center, has confirmed that no one has the technology or ability to geoengineer a hurricane.

Current geoengineering technology can serve as a large-scale intervention to mitigate the negative consequences of naturally occurring weather phenomena, but it cannot be used to create or manipulate hurricanes.

**Local officials have confirmed the government is NOT seizing Chimney Rock.**

There was no "special meeting" held in Chimney Rock between federal, state or local governments about seizing the town.

**Local officials are NOT abandoning search and rescue efforts to bulldoze over Chimney Rock.**

**Chimney Rock is NOT being bulldozed over.**

Rutherford County emergency servic-

es personnel are going to extensive lengths to search for missing people, including in debris by using cadaver dogs to locate any remains of individuals trapped in the debris.

Just as every other community in Western North Carolina, Chimney Rock officials are focused first and foremost on recovery efforts, followed by plans to rebuild in the future.

**FEMA is NOT stopping trucks or vehicles with donations, confiscating or seizing supplies, or otherwise turning away donations.**

FEMA does not conduct vehicle stops or handle road closures with armed guards - all road closures are managed by local law enforcement who are prioritizing getting resources to their fellow community members.

**FEMA has NOT diverted disaster response funding to the border or foreign aid.**

Disaster response efforts and individual assistance are funded through the Disaster Relief Fund, which is a dedicated fund for disaster efforts.

FEMA's non-disaster related presence at the border has always been of major concern to me, even before Hurricane Helene, and I will continue to condemn their deployment of personnel to the southern border, but we must separate the two issues.

**FEMA is NOT going to run out of money.**

FEMA officials have repeatedly affirmed that the agency has enough money

• See LETTERS page 10

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Located close to town home sits level to enter and has a side yard with a firepit. The cottage has a kitchen/dining room, primary bedroom and bath on the main level and it opens out to a lovely porch for outdoor living. The terrace level has a living room that opens to the side yard, 2 bedrooms and a bath. Grandfathered Short-Term Rental. Furnishings negotiable. Offered at \$749,999. mls #104017



Lovely 2/BD, 2/BA, with guest room, recently renovated. Comfortable layout with a massive outdoor porch-deck area. Modern kitchen and living room with fireplace. One of the best houses available for the price. Offered at \$699,000. mls #104147



Three bedroom, 2 1/2 bath home on 1.15 acres. Lovely, wooded lot with beautiful landscaping, window boxes, firepit and water feature. Outdoor shed and workshop. Main level has an open kitchen and dining area. Large living area with primary bedroom, ensuite bath with garden tub. Upstairs are two bedrooms with walk-in closets, large hall bath and extra storage. This home can be a vacation or short-term rental. All for only \$595,000. mls #104651



Beautifully resurrected from 2 log homes dating back to the early 1800s. It combines the old with all the creature comforts of new. The kitchen, dining and hallways are lined with River reclaimed cypress.. Ceilings are painted pine and antique tobacco poles. Reclaimed heart pine flooring, custom made chandelier from South Africa, reclaimed wormy chestnut accents on walls. Guest cabin suite: separated from the main cabin by a covered breezeway to insure privacy for your guest. Offered at \$2,195,000. mls # 103597



Lovely cabin on the Highlands side of Franklin. Sits high on a ridge with some mountain view and privacy. Home features a great room, fireplace, dining room and kitchen, one bedroom and bath on the main level, upstairs has two loft bedrooms and a bath. Terrace level has a family room with a full bath, laundry room and additional storage. Detached carport. Offered at \$550,000. mls #103751



Off Buck Knob Road, this one of a kind log cabin on a knoll with a lovely yard and view. 2/BD and 2/BA on the upper level; main level has living room, dining room, kitchen, bath and two large porches. Lower level has a garage, family room and bath. Offered at \$1,495,000. mls #102878



Move-in condition, off Buck Creek Road on Western Rhodes Road. 3 bedrooms, plus additional flex spaces. Multiple fireplaces. Open Great Room concept with custom kitchen, plank wood floors, stone fireplace in the covered porch with hot tub spa. Masters on main and upper floors, plus guestrooms Offered at \$1,895,000. mls #100481



Located close to town, this Starter cottage features 2 bedrooms and 3 baths. One car garage could be converted to a family room. 3 levels that house a livingroom/kitchen/dining on main, bedroom and bath on 2nd level. Primary bedroom, bath, den with tv, office, and full bath, outdoors has a patio-deck that enjoys the rushing water of the Cullasaja river overflow from Mirror Lake. Offered at \$499,000. mls #103969



In Highlands Mountain Club, this beautifully maintained, 2/BD 2/BA condo is offered furnished with some exceptions. With hardwood floors throughout, an updated kitchen and main bathroom, this unit is move-in ready. Enjoy covered porch or open deck looking out on a pond. A friendly adult community w/clubhouse, pool and tennis court. Offered at \$549,000. mls#104688



Lovely year round living with this 3 bed/3 ba dwelling that has a small yard. The house has a nice living room and open dining and modern kitchen. split bedrooms each with baths. rear deck and a covered side porch. Lower level has a bedroom and bathroom, 2 car garage and great workshop with storage. In excellent condition. Offered at \$695,000. mls#103898



Million dollar views minutes from downtown Highlands in VZ Top. Upper level unit with one-level living Two bedrooms, two updated baths, an open kitchen with breakfast bar, living room with a wood burning fireplace, and custom built-ins. Offered at \$530,000 mls # 104136



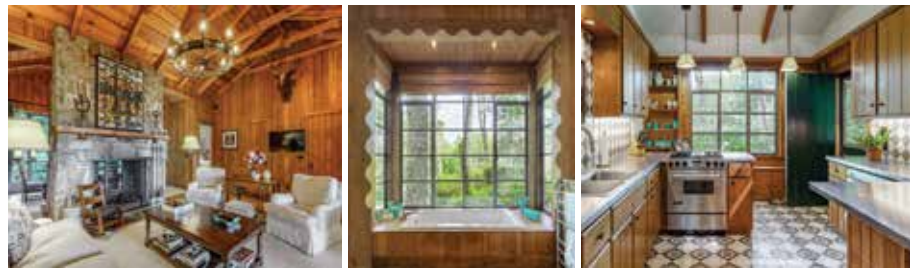
The home has wood floors in every room, in addition to the open floor plan, double pane cathedral windows and solid wood doors. This home has been lovingly cared for. Boasting an updated kitchen, bathrooms and a great screened in porch with tile floors for enjoying the fresh mountain air. Come enjoy our Mountain town in your new home! Offered at \$1,399,000. mls #103736



Close to downtown, this home has a primary suite on the main level with a living room with a gas log fireplace, half bath, dining room and large kitchen. French doors open to the wrap-around covered deck with outdoor wood-burning fireplace and large seating area. Below the deck is a large fire pit. Upstairs are two large bedrooms and a bath. Movie theatre and pool table with workout room upstairs. with a 1/BD and 1/BA. Also, morning kitchen guest cottage with covered porch. Offered at \$1,595,000. mls #105793



Furnished, 2/BD, 2/BA on a secluded hill in town. Gas fireplace. Full kitchen, covered and open deck. Covered carport and ample parking. Offered for only \$615,000. mls #104652



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Overlooking the historic Donald Ross golf course in Highlands Country Club, this charming 4BR/4BA cottage was built in 1940, establishing it as one of the "grande dame" homes in Highlands. Details you won't find in today's homes, such as scalloped wood trim, give it an abundance of character. Featured highlights are:

- Views of the 17th hole of the golf course from the stone front porch
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- Wall of windows in the dining room
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## ...LETTERS continued from page 8

for immediate response and recovery needs over the next few months.

In the coming months, Western North Carolina is going to need more disaster relief funding than is currently available to assist with recovery efforts.

I'm confident that supplemental disaster relief funding, which I am already involved in the process of creating, will be considered in the House once we return to session in mid-November.

### FEMA cannot seize your property or land.

Applying for disaster assistance does not grant FEMA or the federal government authority or ownership of your property or land.

### The FAA is NOT restricting access to airspace for Helene rescue and recovery operations.

Nobody seeking to fly resources into Western North Carolina will be prohibited from doing so by the FAA or North Carolina Emergency Management so long as they coordinate their efforts with NC Aviation.

If you are looking to conduct an airdrop of resources but don't know who to contact for approval, please reach out to my office and we will share that information with you.

### FEMA is NOT only providing \$750 to disaster survivors to support their recovery.

The initial \$750 provided to disaster survivors is an immediate type of assistance called Serious Needs Assistance that may be made to individuals in need as soon as they apply for FEMA assistance.

The \$750 is an upfront, flexible payment to help cover essential items like food, water, baby formula and medication while FEMA assesses the applicant's eligibility for additional funds.

This award is just the first step of a longer process to provide financial assistance to disaster survivors in need of federal support.

As an application moves through the review process, individuals are eligible to receive additional forms of assistance for other needs such as temporary housing, personal property and home repair costs, etc.

I encourage you to remember that everything you see on Facebook, X, or any other social media platform is not always fact. Please make sure you are fact checking what you read online with a reputable source.

These conspiracy theories, while certainly frustrating, have done more harm than most people may realize. The spreading of falsehoods has diverted state, local, and federal resources from helping NC-11 recover toward refuting hearsay and repeatedly trying to set the record straight.

Our priority MUST be unified on the

recovery and repair of Western North Carolina's mountains, businesses, families and homes. Any attempt to impede that goal is a disservice to the people of NC-11.

**Chuck Edwards**  
 Member of Congress

## Country above party

Dear Editor,

The only rational reason I can come up with for why the presidential race is currently as close as it is must be because Republicans, especially women, have not actually taken a close look at who their party has brought forth as the presidential candidate. This is one of those times, in my opinion, when putting country before party is extremely important.

Now, I know that it is very common for many (perhaps most) of us to just say to ourselves "Well, I'm a Republican or a Democrat so of course I will vote for the candidate of my party." If you plan to vote for Trump simply because he is a Republican are you assuming that he will naturally share your values and govern accordingly? Please look deeper!

Trump's conservative policies and tough stance on social and cultural issues are certainly appealing to many Republicans but, in my opinion, do not outweigh the danger he presents in so many other ways. Those dangers can be summed up by taking a close look at Project 2025 and becoming familiar with Agenda 47. Even if you are in agreement with many of those guidelines put forth in these extremist blueprints, it is very likely that you will be in opposition to many points and even offended by some.

It's also important to ask yourself why so many people who had worked in Trump's previous administration and had the opportunity to observe his governing first hand, including a number of top-ranking generals, are now vehemently opposed to the possibility of him becoming president again.

Recently a bipartisan group (741 members) of national security leaders came out in a letter to endorse Harris (see LTE from The Board of the Highlands Democratic Precinct in the newspaper on 10/3) ultimately stating that "Mr. Trump has proven he is not up to the job."

Many other high-profile Republicans have made the same decision—to put Country Above Party. Please take these facts into serious consideration when you make your voting decision. The well-being of our country is at stake regarding this

• See LETTERS page 12

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## ...LETTERS continued from page 10

election outcome!

**Vivian Brewer  
Highlands**

### Democratic support is disgusting

Dear Editor,

Please stop printing FALSE Advertising supporting the Democratic Party. It is lies and disgusting.

**Michael Andrews  
Cashiers**

### The problem of judicial corruption

Dear Editor,

As the new term begins, the SCOTUS resumes under a cloud of adverse public opinion with most of the public favoring reform, particularly term limits. Recent illiberal decisions: Citizens United

(political funding), Common Cause (Gerrymandering), Bruen (gun rights), Dobbs (abortion rights), W. Va v EPA & Chevron (government regulations), Trump (presidential power) provide portents of more decisions that will dramatically impact our democracy.

Although no bombshells yet in the new term, there are cases before the court concerning LGBTQ rights, voting rights, and government regulatory power. Most concerning is the aura of corruption that hangs over the court regarding political biases, collusion, and received favors (bribes?). Judicial corruption at any level is alarming as it undermines the foundations of a fair and functional legal system. A case in point is the bizarre series of biased rulings in the classified documents case in FL that makes the concept of a speedy trial laughable and points out the danger of a partisaninfluenced judiciary.

While SCOTUS reform is dependent upon unlikely congressional action and the slow turnover of members, judicial reform is more attainable at the state level and voters should pay attention to the election of members of the state high court to precipitate change. All down-ballot seats should be viewed as at least as important as those at the top of the ticket. The outcome of the current race for the NC Supreme Court is illustrative as Justice Allison Riggs must keep her seat if the current party affiliation imbalance of 5 to 2 does not become 6 to 1!

Judicial reform will require public outcry and action. So, follow and support those reform- minded national legislators

such as Sen Whitehouse (D-RI) and petition your state legislators to support reforms at that level. But most importantly Vote!

**H. Hackett Cummins  
Highlands**

### What is a lie?

Dear Editor,

What is a lie? A lie is an untruth, something that is not correct.

Why does someone lie? 1. To manipulate. 2. To save themselves from the consequences of their behavior. 3. To communicate a statement that is fake with the intention of misleading or deceiving someone.

Is it OK to lie? Sometimes we tell "white lies." Usually when we do this, we don't want to hurt someone's feelings or make them feel uncomfortable.

When our children were growing up, my husband and I made sure they knew that lying was unacceptable behavior. When they did something wrong, but told the truth about what happened, we always told them we were proud that they owned up to the truth. Truth is important.

Now we have politicians who lie with every breath. They are the very people we elect to lead, to take care of our precious democracy, the democracy too many of our young men and women have died to protect.

My question to you is: Are you okay with this? Are you comfortable to elect top of ticket candidates who don't tell the truth, not just one time, but repeatedly and dangerously? Are you comfortable with tolerating unprecedented bad behavior in a team who want to win no matter the cost? These are not "white lies," but a continuous stream of untruths that are sometimes dangerous. Is this what we want, the same behavior we won't tolerate in our kids? We need to hold this team to the same standard we hold our children. Do we love our country enough to vote this nonsense down? When we vote, it is a commitment to our democracy.

Please vote carefully on November 5th. Please vote for a future based on truth, integrity and accountability.

**Janet Clarke  
Highlands**

### May the best man win

Dear Editor,

Hello to all my Macon County friends

• See LETTERS page 13



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## ...LETTERS continued from page 12

and associates for near 20 years in North Carolina. I am in shock after over 80 years living in five southern states, that the country I loved and defended for 24 years and serving in the US Army National Guard has become a no man's land.

We are now facing the most important election in my lifetime. Therefore, I am begging those who are making mass decisions politically running our country to wake up and smell the roses.

My life may be toward the end, but I worry not for me, but for our children's, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. To be safe and have a future to be proud of and be happy.

I pray that we never forget our freedoms are at stake! Good must overcome Evil!

May God bless our country, we now are witnessing how society can be stirred and twisted with a philosophy that can be damaging to our people and country.

Brainwashing repeated TV

ads that twist your mind and state of consciousness to believe that they are going to help you! We are reminded now by looking at the response to Helene and in the southern states. A response that stinks of distrust with our dollars and needs. Revenge is devilish and forgiveness is saintly!

I remember many years ago being told that there are those who would like to take over our country the {USA}. I well remember in my past military service being told we will have to be on constant alert and watch for those who hate us. Our enemies will intentionally take over by walking in and tearing us apart split us up take control of our liberties and country. {social-istic attitude}

Now take note by being true to yourself God and your family, your vote to protect our rights and country are now being tested. You could be the difference in your vote soon. If you are here legally (a citizen) you have that right. Please use common sense!

Love conquers all things. Be

kind to all, wherever your personal beliefs or convictions are, that lead you.

May God bless America! May the best man win!

**SFC Harold Alexander  
Hawkins Jr. (Retired Veteran)  
Franklin, NC**

## Vote and make a difference

Dear Editor,

My name is Kira, and I am a high school sophomore who belongs to a country that I didn't choose to be a part of. I've grown up with the words "America the Beautiful" ringing in my ears, but the past several years makes the patriotic notions I witness on the Fourth of July feel disgusting. How can we praise a country that feels so incredibly divided, where women aren't allowed to feel safe, and where humans who look or love "differently" are treated like refuse? I'm 15 years old. My voice is too young to make a difference right now. But I'm guessing that yours isn't.

**Kira Wamsted, Atlanta GA**  
• See LETTERS page 15

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## • INK PENN •

### What do Kansas and London have in common?

These mysteries have two things in common. Given my love of murder mysteries, the obvious commonality between the settings of Kansas and London is, of course, murder. I must admit, however, that what I enjoyed most about them was that they both involved writers.

#### The Mystery Writer by Sulari Gentill

I recall reading “The Woman in the Library” by this author and marveling at that mystery set in Boston. Her latest is set in Lawrence, Kansas. The main character is Theodosia Benton who leaves law school in Australia and lands on her brother’s doorstep in Kansas. She’s pursuing her dream to write a novel.

Described as a “literary thriller that turns the world of books and authors upside down,” this one kept me guessing. What does a conspiracy theory have to do with a mystery writer? A yet to be published mystery writer? Hints from online posts are dropped throughout the book, and before long, you may believe in conspiracy theories yourself.

Gentill’s writing process as described in a Q & A in the back of the book intrigued me. “I’m not a plotter,” she says. “I just sit down and start writing. For me, the story unfolds as I write it. I don’t really know what will be on the next page, let alone at the end of the book, and I discover what I’m trying to say through the novel as a whole as I write it.”

As a writer, I describe myself as a pants-er, not a plotter, meaning I write by the seat of my pants. I do create what I call a quasi-outline, and yes, my characters often lead me in a slightly different direction, but her process seems quite a bit looser.

In “After She Wrote Him,” her first standalone novel, she “found herself writing a mystery that spoke about the writer’s relationship with her characters.” That description was enough to send me in search of that book. “The Woman in the Library,” her second standalone, was “about the relationship between the writer and the reader.”

This third one concerns “the writer’s place in society and the power of the story to influence behavior.” Doesn’t it make you wonder what the next one will tackle?

While I wait to find out, I plan to find



Kathy Manos Penn

her Rowland Sinclair WWII Mysteries, set in Australia. It could become a favorite series. You never know.

#### Close to Death

by Anthony Horowitz

Perhaps you’re familiar with the author because you’re a fan of Masterpiece Mysteries on PBS, or because you’ve read his Sherlock Holmes mysteries. Most recently, I’ve watched “Moon-

flower Murders”—the sequel to “Magpie Murders”—on Sunday nights. Both are based on Horowitz’s mysteries. I first discovered the author when I watched “Foyle’s War,” for which he wrote the screenplay.

“Close to Death” is the fifth book in his Hawthorne & Horowitz series. Hawthorne is a former London police detective, and Horowitz is tasked with writing about his exploits in the private sector. In the first four books, the author follows Hawthorne as he solves a murder case in real time. Supposed to be an observer, Horowitz never fails to insert himself into the action, mistakenly thinking he’s stumbled onto clues. Instead, he inevitably puts himself in danger as he fumbles around. All of this is written from Horowitz’s point of view.

This time, the tale starts out in third person, and it’s only sixty pages in that you hear from Horowitz in a section titled “The Fifth Book.” It’s an ingenious structure. We learn that his publishing contract obligates him to write a fifth book, but because Hawthorne doesn’t have a current case, the author is forced instead to write about an old one. Thus, the book flips back and forth between the past and the present, and between first and third person.

Filled with twists and turns until the very last page, this book will keep you guessing. Horowitz is surprised to learn who killed the victim “with a crossbow bolt through his neck,” and I predict you will be too.

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](mailto:inkpenn119@gmail.com), and follow her on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/](http://www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/).

...LETTERS continued from page 13

## Inflation, deflation, and presidents

Dear Editor,

The economy of this great nation, and indeed, the world, is a huge thing that, like those super tankers and container ships that help keep it all running, does not change direction very fast or easily short of some major shock to the system.

There is also very little that a President can do to or for the economy without the help of Congress. That is because almost everything that will seriously affect the economy involves either spending money or collecting money (taxes), and Congress writes the budget. Economists and historians have found that it takes about two years for a new President's policies on the economy to begin to take effect. Laws have to be passed and budgets written and passed. This is why Presidents tend to get credit and/or blame for things their immediate predecessors did or put in motion.

Inflation is more money in the marketplace chasing the same amount of goods, or the same amount of money chasing less goods, causing prices to rise.

Prices going down is called deflation, and that scares economists and the managers of the Federal Reserve even more than inflation, because it is a sign or a pathway

to recession and unemployment.

Keeping prices from going either up or down too fast is mostly the job of the Federal Reserve, over which the president has almost no control at all.

So, who's to blame for the inflation? Well, both Trump and Biden did things that contributed to it.

Under Trump, the big ones were the huge tax cut (people and companies having more money to spend) and the deal with OPEC to cut oil production by 20% for two years which raised gas prices very quickly (It expired in 2022 after Biden took office.)

Under Biden, it was mostly the spending on programs to keep families and businesses afloat during the COVID Crisis, which was intended to prevent a severe recession with even higher unemployment and business failures. And, much of the inflation was also caused by shortages of things due to breakdowns in supply chains and shutdowns here and in other countries.

There is not enough space in one letter to consider the plans and proposals of the two candidates in this election and how they would or might affect the prices American consumers pay.

I'll close with this from Philip K. Dick: "Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away."

**Robert G. Wertzler, Franklin, NC**

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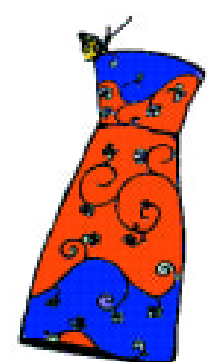


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**Water Aerobics:** 18 y+ Mon.-Fri. 10-11am with Karen Chambers.

**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](http://www.aawnc80.org) or to speak with a member of AA 24/7 at 828-349-4357.

### MOVIES

• Movies at the Martin Lipscomb Performing Arts Center at PAC on Chestnut Street See adjoining ad.

### PICKLE BALL

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

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### 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.

• 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 Tuesdays 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](mailto: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@macconcliteracy.org](mailto:info@macconcliteracy.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.

• 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 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](mailto: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).

### Thru Mid-October

• Visit the Cashiers Historical Society every Friday & Saturday for a



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# • HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

guided tour of the 1850s Zachary-Tolbert House and other historic structures on their five-acre campus. Tours will be available from 11am - 3pm on the top of the hour. CHS is located at 1940 HY 107 S Cashiers, NC 28717.

## Through Fri., Oct. 18

• There will be a FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance staff posted at the Highlands Police Department Conference Room on 372 Oak Street from 10am to 4pm. They will be assisting those impacted by the disaster in registering for FEMA assistance or inquires on existing applications.

## Fri., Oct 18

• At Hudson Library in Highlands, Arts & Crafts of Bhutan with Dennis Desmond at 4 p.m. sponsored by the Arts Council of Macon County.

• Highlands and Macon middle school swim teams are teaming up for an end-of-season swim meet at 3 pm at the Franklin Health and Fitness Center to help some of the middle school swim teams in Asheville hurting badly after Helene. Donations of non-perishable food, hygiene products, medical supplies, blankets, blow-up mattresses, clothing, card games, books, and pet supplies can be taken to the Highlands Rec Park Pool and the Franklin Health and Fitness Center.

## Sat. & Sun, Oct. 19-20

• At the Highlands Civic Center, Tall Colors Fine Art Show, sponsored by the Art League of Highlands Cashiers from 10a to 5p. Artists Supporting WNC Disaster Relief. 35 juried artists.

## Sat., Oct. 19

• Highlands Greenway monthly workday and lunch at 4118 this Meet at 9a at the Rec Park; will concentrate on Helene cleanup. Lunch is at noon.

• At Hudson Library in Highlands, Arts & Crafts of Bhutan with Lama Yeshe Palmo, a retired Buddhist nun now residing in Otto, Tales of the Thangkas, Part I. Sponsored by the Arts Council of Macon County.

• At 3 pm, the Cashiers Historical

Society will host New York Times best-selling author Anne Byrn at the Albert Carlton - Cashiers Community Library. Reservations not required. To learn more about the event, please contact CHS at (828) 743-7710 or at [info@cashiershistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@cashiershistoricalsociety.org).

## Tues., Oct. 22

• HCH's Dinner with Doc - Surgical services options at HCH such as general surgery, hand surgery and colonoscopies - James Osborne, MD, 6-7p in Whiteside Cafeteria. For more information, call 828-526-1345. Attendance is limited to 50 people. A buffet-style dinner will be provided.

## Wed., Oct. 23

At Highlands School, groundbreaking for Highlands Project at 9:30a.

• At The Secret Garden in Village Square, Fall Flavors Wine Tasting with paired Fall Flavor charcuterie 5-7 p.m. \$40 per person. RSVP to 828-305-7509, or TEXT to 828-200-5830.

## Thurs., Oct. 24

• Highlands Parks and Recreation

will have a Halloween Spooktacular Event on Thursday night from 5:30-7:30pm. The event will include pumpkin decorating, face painting, apple bobbing and other games geared to ages 5-10, but everyone is welcome. Wear your spookiest costume or come as you are. We look forward to a fun event for the whole family.

• Bingo for Wreaths Across America 6:30-8:30p at the Community Building.

## Fri., Oct. 25

• At Hudson Library in Highlands, Arts & Crafts of Bhutan with Lama Yeshe Palmo, a retired Buddhist nun now residing in Otto, Tales of the Thangkas, Part 2. Sponsored by the Arts Council of Macon County.

## Sat., Oct. 26

• Highlands School Fall Festival 5-8 p.m.

## Thurs., Oct 31

• Highlands' Main Street will transform into a festive pedestrian zone for "Halloween on Main" from

6-8pm on Thursday, October 31. This family-friendly event invites ghosts and goblins of all ages to enjoy an evening of safe, fun activities. Participating merchants will hand out candy, supported by the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC and delivered by the Interact Club. Entertainment includes: ABC Combo in front of The Park on Main, High Five playing in front of Berkshire Hathaway, DJ Mike Murphy spinning tunes mid-way on Main Street

## Fri., Nov. 8

• OEI's Chef Dinners at The Farm. FARM HARVEST DINNER & BARN DANCE. Book Online at [OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners](http://OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners)

## Sat., Nov. 9

• At Molly Grace, Beaudin Trunk Show.

• OEI's Chef Dinners at HALF-MILE FARM. JAZZ SUPPER. Book Online at [OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners](http://OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners)

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# ...CANDIDATES continued from page 1

saw combat in Saudi Arabia during Desert Storm. He is a Landscape Maintenance Operations Manager at Clark & Co. Landscape Services in Franklin. This is Reitmeier second run vying for a

seat on the school board.

In an effort to give readers information about the candidates, we gave them questions and their responses are as follows:

**Jim Breedlove**

I am a graduate of The UNC at Chapel Hill with a BS and MBA in Business Administration and Finance. I have been a local banker in the Franklin community for over 44 years.

My community service includes 16 years and currently serving on the Macon County School Board, all four terms as Board chair, serving six terms as board member and two terms as President of the Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce, two terms as President of Iotla School PTO, three terms as President of the Franklin Jaycees, Secretary/Treasurer of Macon Program for Progress Board of Directors for 4 years, currently serving my sixth year as a member of the Economic Development Commission Board, 10 years on the Community Foundation of WNC Board, three terms as President of Franklin Little League Baseball Board, Macon County Youth Soccer Organization Board, Volunteer Soccer, Baseball and Basketball coach and referee/umpire for over 20 years, and taught business and finance classes at SCC for several years.

I was deeply honored to be recognized as recipient of the 2022 Macon County Chamber of Commerce "Citizen of the Year" award.

**1. Why do you feel you are qualified to sit on the BOE?**

I feel I am the best qualified candidate to serve on the BOE due to my long tenure and experi-

ence serving on the board for the past 16 years. I was first elected in 2008 and have been re-elected every cycle since then. In addition, I have been unanimously elected to serve as board chairman each of those years. My experience, knowledge base, and proven results accumulated over these years would be essential the next four years as well.

**2. What issues do you feel should be addressed at this time for the MC school system?**

I feel that there are many and varied issues that need to be addressed at this time. Perhaps first and foremost is the successful completion of the new Franklin High School which will be a state-of-the-art facility. This new facility will ultimately serve every student in Macon County Schools. In addition, the facility safety issues at Highlands and Nantahala schools must also be addressed. It is also vital to continue to fight for more competitive salaries for our employees as well as seeking to hire, train, and retain quality teachers in our system.

**3. What direction would you like to see the school board take in meeting the demands of current and future Macon County students such as schools, teachers, resources, etc.?**

I truly feel that the current School Board is strategically taking the best possible approach towards meeting the demands and needs of the current and future Macon County students. We have placed excellent and qualified people in

our administrative positions to help facilitate the best possible decisions concerning our curriculum offerings. In doing so, it will in turn give our students the best avenue to achieve their full potential. In addition, the current board is committed to mapping the best future course of action to help enable both students and school personnel to meet the current and future demands of our system. It is our hope to not only meet but exceed these demands in all possible aspects of providing the best educational experience to all students and staff.

**4. What are some examples of what our schools need to do to improve test scores?**

Macon County Schools has created a three to five year strategic plan to increase student learning, increase test scores and to provide teachers and staff with high impact professional development. Our goal is to provide all Macon County students with a quality education and to learn critical thinking skills that will impact their lives so they can become productive citizens. Our plan is to ensure all elementary students receive quality instruction utilizing pacing guides, CKLA (content knowledge in language arts) LETRS program (language essentials for teachers of reading and spelling) and fast bridge math program so our students have been exposed to relevant, consistent, high quality knowledge once they

• See CANDIDATES page 21

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## ...CANDIDATES continued from page 20

enter 5th grade. Once students enter 5th grade, we feel they are prepared and have been exposed to the same learning opportunities. In 5th-8th grade, students continue with consistent reading and math programs and higher order thinking skills so we can ensure all students are challenged.

Upon entering high school, students continue taking high quality core classes. Once students are in high school, they begin to follow a strategic career path based on their goals and interests. Students are exposed to CTE (career and technical) and other electives that will help prepare them for their future. These learning opportunities are created to allow students to have choices so they can pursue their academic goals.

It is our belief that by empowering our teachers while providing them with high impact teaching strategies as well as staff development, to ensure all levels of learners are being challenged in the classroom. MCS has just embarked on our final goal of our strategic plan and that is implementing AVID learning into our K-12 curriculum. AVID is a high impact, critical thinking skills program that provides teachers, staff and students with quality staff development opportunities through the use of PLCs (professional learning communities) collaborative learning groups\* Socratic seminars and peer tutoring.

Together with consistent learning programs, high quality staff development, PLC's and a desire to become the best we can be, MCS will continue to provide a world class education while

challenging each student individually so they can move forward and prosper.

**5. With school shootings continuing to be a nationwide problem, how safe do you think our schools are? What precautions/measures do you think we need to add to our schools to provide a safe learning environment for our students?**

School security continues to be one of the most important topics for both the current Board and future boards to address and oversee.

Currently, Macon County Schools is working closely together with the Macon County Sheriffs department to insure that each and every school has a School Resource Officer on site and monitoring the safe operation of the schools. In addition, Macon County Schools has provided an office whereby a qualified deputy from the Sheriff's department can act as the coordinator for all of the SROs on an ongoing basis and will be available to assist each and every school in the case of emergency.

In addition, the current board approved the installation and implementation of a county-wide communication system known as RAPTOR that can be utilized in the case of an emergency. All school personnel and every individual school has been provided access to RAPTOR which insures that everyone is receiving the same information and updates if the need arises.

Finally, cameras have been provided at each and every school to help insure that the campus can be monitored for safety purposes

and provide early detection in the case of an unauthorized intruder being present and posing possible danger.

**6. Are you in favor of the one-quarter local sales and use tax increase? Why or why not?**

I wholeheartedly support the passage of the one-quarter local sales and use tax increase. The passage of the increase provides a welcome source of revenue that can be used for future capital outlay needs and any needed future construction of new schools along with the possible expansion of our existing schools. The financial impact of the increase for the citizens of Macon County will be negligible in most cases. For example on a \$100 purchase at a local store, the increase will only result in an additional amount of 25 cents being required to be paid. My final point is that by implementing the increase, our local visitors will be contributing on each and every purchase they make during their time spent in Macon County.

**John deVile**

**1. Why do you feel you are qualified to sit on the BOE?**

I know in my bones that I can make a positive difference in Macon County Schools and in the lives of our students who attend our schools. My 30-year track record as an outstanding teacher and successful public education advocate, in addition to my successful career in the private sector attests to this. I know what works and what doesn't.

What Helene is reteaching us is that first responders see the pain — teachers are first responders — we assess, we listen, we problem solve, and we act; we

• See CANDIDATES page 22

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## ...CANDIDATES continued from page 21

don't kick the can. Outside consultants and programs are expensive and don't address the fundamental issue, that teaching requires hard, supported, focused work. We only get one chance to get a child's education done right and I don't believe we are serving the vast majority of our students as well as we could or should. I am goal-oriented and have high expectations for all students and staff.

**2. What issues do you feel should be addressed at this time for the MC school system? 3. What direction would you like to see the school board take in meeting the demands of current and future Macon County students such as**

**schools, teachers, resources, etc.? (I'm combining these two questions and my responses.)**

(A) We need urgent advocacy to stop students falling through the cracks with better mental health support, more existing dollars targeted into the classroom, and higher expectations for all.

(B) Better teacher and support staff retention and recruiting. We need to develop affordable housing partnerships, a more supportive work environment, more involvement with the community by creating mentorship opportunities. We need to speak with a unified voice to bring the half billion dollars spent on unaccountable vouchers

flipped into better pay for teachers, support staff, bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria staff.

(C) Clear, transparent prioritization of budget needs in quarterly coordination with the County Commissioners. We need to be more responsible to the taxpayers.

I called for this last month during public comment at the county commission meeting. This past budget cycle saw no prioritization of capital outlay and current operating expense budget in this past budget proposal to County Commissioners. The School Board leadership penciled in an amount of \$35 million for construction of a new East Franklin school and then when directly asked a few weeks later at the joint May 28th meeting, BOE Chairman Breedlove said he "had no idea" how much a new East Franklin School would cost.

I find that sort of attitude to be irresponsible both to the children and the taxpayers.

Over the past several months we have seen substantial lack of execution on the part of the BOE leadership. We can't get simple Memoranda of Understandings to be clear and coherent with county commissioners. We have gone hat in hand for school lunch funding which we could have had, if the board had directed FHS leadership to do what they're now doing, which is massively increasing school breakfast participation at Franklin High School. We can't seem to properly supervise the construction of a middle school track and we can't do something as simple as build a weight room without going not once but TWICE to the commissioners to ask for additional funding. That isn't fair to the commissioners and it isn't fair to the Macon County Taxpayers.

The county needs to hire a construction/building specialist who is tasked with reviewing the entire physical plant of Macon County Schools and designing either the maintenance schedule of our existing buildings to prolong their life and then prioritizing replacement so that the commissioners can budget for replacement. Every county commissioner has called for this for over a decade so I see this as totally nonpartisan and common sense. I am committed to seeing the construction of a new soccer field for Highlands in the most fiscally responsible fashion.

(D) We need to stop the mere talk, stop kicking the can and we need ACTION on the mental health needs of our students. North Carolina's Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) addresses the three tiers of mental health (promotion, prevention, and intervention) through a continuum of education, universal screening, and appropriate services and supports for all students in response to varying

levels of need. Recognizing the interrelatedness of academic outcomes and mental health/well-being of students Project AWARE seeks to provide an embedded approach within an existing system (schools) versus fragmented and reactive approaches. Jackson County has this, it is working beautifully, and our students deserve the same as Jackson County students.

I have been working with Elke Kennedy and Gracie Parker of Why Us Kids. What we see is that there is \$10 million at the state level which is currently untapped that we could use for the mental health needs of our students. Getting the Macon County Commissioners to go with Option B on the opioid funds is another option for funding of mental health specialists for our students.

But currently, we see no sense of urgency. There is a lot of talk and absolutely no action for mental health in Macon County Schools. Macon County Schools hasn't done the Youth Risk Behavior Survey since 2014 and so we don't have the data to either properly service the mental health needs of our students nor apply for grant funds which are out there for the taking. We closed down our mental health positions this past year and so can no longer serve students we did a year ago.

I can lead on all four of these fronts.

**4. What are some examples of what our schools need to do to improve test scores?**

In 2001 and 2002, several of us got together across the state to fight the new high stakes standardized tests. We fought them because:

(A) The design and validation of the tests were exceptionally slipshod.

(B) The tests were designed to measure schools but ended up being used to measure students -- we're still, in 2024, telling students in the third grade that they aren't going to succeed because of these tests, EVEN WHEN THE TEST SAYS THE STUDENT IS "PROFICIENT!"

(C) We formed NC Citizens for Democratic Schools and I was the communications director/webmaster for the organization -- you can see the archived website here <https://www.oocities.org/nccds/>.

You can listen to an interview I did in 2022 with public education advocate Kim Mackey on how the NC testing scam works <https://tinyurl.com/nctestingscam>

With all that said, I want to create a community mentorship program that is similar to the senior English project we used to do at Franklin High School, where students were matched with mentors. I would like to do that starting in kindergarten by vetting volunteers and then matching them with

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### Highlands JV Girls Volleyball

Front row from left are Mims Henderson, Jordyn Borino, and Hannah Valerio. Back row from left are Mia Craig, Jaylin Raby, Taylor Hays, and Charlotte Westendorf.



### Highlands Varsity Girls Volleyball

Front row from left are Claire Worley, AE Woods, Karen Gomez, Cayden Pierson, and Olivia Corbin. Back row from left are Jaylin Raby, Shirley Diaz, Katie Earp, Mal-lory Shriver, Aislynn Wyatt-Luck, and Birdie Sherwood.

## ...SECURE continued from page 1



Zion and David Baumgarten gathered with friends and members of First Baptist Church before heading out to deliver meals and other supplies. The truck later broke down near Sapphire but was fixed by an "angel."

Beloved Asheville, a non-profit that's dedicated to current relief efforts in Western North Carolina, thanks to the generosity of local donors who purchased our emergency food kits," said Kwiyoung Baumgarten, co-founder of Secure Foods. "And now, we're working with the Mountaintop Rotary Club Highlands, to collect more donations, so we can continue to deliver these essential kits over the coming weeks and months."

Secure Foods meals are simple to prepare with hot and boiling water. The meals balance protein, carbohydrates, and fiber to provide adults with more than 2,250 calories per day.

The 72-Hour Kits are special as they are precooked for on-the-go fueling and can be prepared with any temperature water right in their packs. All kits are designed to keep people satiated and alert through stressful and challenging times.

Donations can be made through the Rotary Club's site at [tinyurl.com/Mountaintop-Rotary-Donation](http://tinyurl.com/Mountaintop-Rotary-Donation), and be sure to mention "Secure Foods." Every dollar goes straight towards discounted meal kits, with no added shipping costs.

"Never did we imagine our emergency food kits would be so needed right here in our own backyard," Kwiyoung reflected. "It's a blessing to be able to step up and help our neighbors during this difficult time. Highlands is a community with a big heart, and we're committed to doing everything we can to support the relief efforts."

Recently, David Baumgarten, co-founder, and his son, Zion, headed out to deliver meal kits, water, and other essentials collected by First Baptist Church Highlands (FBCH). On the way, the brakes went out

on the truck near Sapphire, but in true small-town fashion, a mechanic at a country store stepped right in to help. As if by some miracle, the part they needed was in stock nearby, and within hours, they were back on the road, arriving at Beloved Asheville just in time.

"I call this 'Angels and Miracles,'" says Kwiyoung. "The outpouring of generosity ... from private donors to FBCH volunteers loading our truck, to the stranger who stepped in to repair our vehicle ... is a testament to the spirit of community that defines us. Beloved Asheville reported that those meal kits were gone within a day, and we're already planning more trips with water and supplies for washing and sanitation."

Secure Foods was founded during the early days of the Covid pandemic when Kwiyoung and David felt compelled to provide hope and help during times of disaster. Recognizing how disasters of all kinds — hurricanes, floods, fires, and more — put immense strain on communities, they poured their savings into creating an emergency meal kit business to support organizations and companies that need to take care of their staff before the unimaginable strikes.

"We're a small team, just the two of us here in Highlands with operations out of Atlanta," Kwiyoung shared. "It's a coincidence that we're right here in the middle of Helene's path, but we're so grateful to be in a position to help. Each meal kit we send out carries with it a piece of our hearts and our hope for healing."

For more information or to donate toward meal kits, visit [www.securefoods.com](http://www.securefoods.com).



## ...CANDIDATES continued from page 22

students, especially those students who may need extra help with adult tutoring, encouragement, and mentorship. I want to bring back NON COMPETITIVE history, science, math fairs where students can work on projects with adult mentors and then strut their stuff in front of community audiences to get the validation and encouragement they need and deserve.

If we do that, I am convinced the standardized test scores will rise, even though the tests themselves are deeply flawed.

**5. With school shootings continuing to be a nationwide problem, how safe do you think our schools are? What precautions/measures do you think we need to add to our schools to provide a safe learning environment for our students?**

I think current BOE leadership has gotten us two thirds of the way there in terms of making our schools safe and reducing the possibility of a mass casualty event. One of the two key steps that have been taken are hardening the schools with fences and electronic locks. The second is that we have School Resource Officers at all of our schools. But what we're missing is that vital mental health component.

Here's what we know — most school shooters are internal — they are a current student. One of the reasons we rarely, if ever, do active shooter drills is because we don't want to tip our procedures to a potential shooter. In my 29 years at the high school, I know of two students who were within an eyelash of engaging in a shooting. In both cases, other students fortunately spoke up and law enforcement interdicted the youngster before any violence occurred. I believe that the essential third prong to defend against an internal school shooter is a robust mental health program which can provide vital interventions for a student in crisis who might be thinking about resorting to violence. Again, Jackson County has this working model and I think we deserve it and need it both for the everyday mental health of our students and to maximize student safety.

**6. Are you in favor of the one-quarter local sales and use tax increase? Why or why not?**

I am always in favor of finding more resources for our resource-strapped schools. Three things:

(A) The sales tax increase wouldn't cost us that much.

(B) It would leverage tourism to help fund our schools.

(C) It would add about two million additional dollars for our school system.

But it wouldn't be where I would go

first which is why I'm hesitant about supporting it.

NC started its private school voucher program in 2013. I authored the first resolution to be passed by any school board in the state that year. At that time, the voucher program expenditures were \$10 million a year. For fiscal year 2024-2025, the voucher program has ballooned to nearly HALF A BILLION DOLLARS a year — an increase of 5000%. And North Carolina's voucher program is the LEAST ACCOUNTABLE voucher program in the entire country — it is inherently not conservative given all the fraud and abuse that the program has experienced. And now we are giving these funds to parents who are millionaires, a far cry from the program's initial beginnings to assist parents in poverty.

It's time to bring these unaccountable, welfare-for-millionaires, voucher dollars back to the traditional public education classroom because over two million of those dollars, are out of the pockets of Macon County taxpayers.

For the past few years, the North Carolina General Assembly has ignored state courts which have ordered it to comply with the ruling in the Leandro case. If the General Assembly complied, that would mean an additional \$2.3 million a year for Macon County Schools — almost the exact same amount the sales tax increase would provide. It's time to bring Macon County tax dollars to our schools and our students where they belong.

You can read more about my platform and 30-year history of advocacy at [JohndeVilleville.com](http://JohndeVilleville.com).

**Danny Reitmier**

**1. Why do you feel you are qualified**

**Majority of economists state inflation, interest rates and deficits would be much higher under the policies proposed by former President Donald Trump, than under those proposed by Vice President Kamala Harris, according to a quarterly survey by The Wall Street Journal. **Vote for Kamala Harris.****

*Paid for by the Highlands Democratic Precinct Committee*



**to sit on the BOE?**

I believe the most important qualification is to have a passion for working with our youth and a strong desire to see them succeed at the highest level. I have both of those things, in abundance. I have worked with youth in many different areas. I've been a Sunday school teacher, worked in vacation Bible school, helped with our church youth group, been a coach of baseball, basketball and football, and I have been an umpire and referee and use sports. I've also volunteered at schools. I am an Air Force veteran, having served in a combat arena in Saudi Arabia during Desert Storm. I have been trained to handle stressful, difficult situations when they arise. I am a people person who gets along with most everyone I have ever met. I believe that would allow me to work well with anyone and get the job needed to help our students staff and administrators succeed at the highest level.

**2. What issues do you feel should be addressed at this time for the MC school system?**

There are several things that need to be addressed. Here are some that I have been talking about during my campaign. This is not an all inclusive list and they are not in any particular order...

• **CAPITAL PROJECTS** — we need to see the current capital projects through to completion as quickly as possible, and keep them within the budgets that have been set for them. Then we need to look at the other projects that are waiting in the wings, prioritize them, and put a plan in motion to get those started and completed as well

• **SAFETY AND SECURITY** — We need to make sure that all of our campuses are as safe and secure as possible. We do not

need to wait until an incident happens. If that happens, it will be too late.

• **TEACHER RECRUITING AND RETENTION** — We need to be able to recruit quality teachers and retain them, so our students are given the best opportunity to succeed. We have great teachers in our county, but we will need to do this to ensure the future is bright for our school system.

• **MENTAL HEALTH AWARE-**  
• See **CANDIDATES** page 27

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## • SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



### The miracle of your existence

**Pastor Randy Lucas**  
Highlands United  
Methodist Church

I've been on my bi-annual preaching retreat this week at Hinton Rural Life Center in Hayesville NC. I make the trip in the fall and spring to prayerfully imagine six months' worth of sermons. I spend time in one of the hermitages in the woods, take some hikes and naps, pray, plan, read, rest and repeat. I always find this to be a valuable time to reset, reflect and renew.

One of my retreat reading companion is always Samuel Wells. A priest in the Church of England, for over a decade he has served as the Vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in central London. Twice a year, when on my preaching retreat, I carry my copy of his book, "walk humbly - encouragements for living, working, and being."

In one of the early chapters in his book, he encourages readers to ponder the mystery of their own existence, inviting reflection around the myriads of prior relationships that had to exist in order for their existence to be a reality.

He writes, "Reflect on how many of your ancestors clung to life to the point where they could conceive the one whose birth eventually led to yours. Realize how fragile a thread their existence hung and behold how the miracle of your birth is made up of a concatenation of other such miracles. Your existence is a thing most wonderful: almost too wonderful to be."

By the way, "concatenation" is defined as "a series of interconnected things or events" (Don't feel bad, I had to look it up too). Every time I re-read this part of Rev. Dr. Wells' book, the absolute mystery of it all boggles my mind. One relationship missed in the long line of relationships that brought you into being, and you are not here. All the previous relationships in your bloodline had to be, in order for you to be. Let that sink in!

How easy it would have been for your very existence to be derailed. How easy it would have been for us to miss out on you. And may I just state the obvious: That would truly be a shame! I don't know who needs to hear this today. Maybe we all do. Your life, my life, our lives are mysterious gifts from God. Our very existence is a divinely inspired and orchestrated miracle.

My faith invites me to make a bold statement. You exist because God wants to exist. You are, because God has ordained you to be. Your life, your work, your relationships, it all matters. You matter!

I suspect we all need to be reminded of that beautiful and mysterious truth from time to time. Maybe it's a good reminder for you today. So, here's my simple invitation. Believe your amazing life is truly a gift from God. Live like you mean it. And while you're at it, do everything you can to make the world a better place. In the words of the great preacher Dr. Fred Craddock: "Love generously, speak truthfully, serve faithfully, pray daily, and leave everything else to God."

## • PLACES TO WORSHIP •

### BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

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

### BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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  
Sundays: School at 9:30; Worship 10:30

### CHAPEL OF THE SKY

Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999  
Sundays: 10 a.m. Worship; Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

### CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

The Rev'd Dr. Michael Matlock, Rector  
464 U.S. Hwy. 64E, Cashiers, NC  
CAC@christanglicancashiers.org • 828-743-1701  
Sunday: 9a Fellowship; 9:30a Adult Christian Ed; 10:30a  
Holy Eucharist Wed: 6p Bible Study and Prayer

### CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY CASHIERS

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

### CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

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

### CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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

### COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685  
3645 Cashiers Rd. Highlands, NC • Sr. Pastor Gary Hewins  
Sun: Service 10:45am, Children's 10:30am  
Wed.: Youth 5:30-7pm; Women's Bible Study: Mon. 4:30pm, Tues.  
10am; Men's Bible Study: Wed. & Thurs. 7am @ Zookeeper Bistro  
**COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY**  
706. 746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447  
Pastor Steve Kerhoulas

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

### EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

Rev. W. Bentley Manning, Rector • 526-2968  
5th and Main streets • www.incarnationwnc.org  
Sunday: Rite I, spoken, 8 am in Chapel, Rite II with Choir 10:30  
am in Sanctuary, Wed: Healing Eucharist 12 pm in Chapel,  
Morning Prayer: Mon-Thurs 8:30 am in Chapel

### FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS

828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org  
Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor • 220 Main Street, Highlands  
Sun.: Worship 10:45 am; Sun.: Bible Study 9:30 am  
Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Women's 10:30 am

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Emily Wilmarth, pastor, Kelley Connelly Asso. Pastor  
828-526-3175 • fpchighlands.org  
Sun.: Adult Ed.: 10 a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.  
Tues: Men's Group 10 a.m. Wed: Bell Choir 4 p.m.. Choir: 6p

### GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

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Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm; Dinner - Wed. 6pm

### HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Hwy 107N. • Glenville, NC • 743-2729 • Nathan Johnson  
Sunday: School 9:45a. Worship 11a & 7p. Bible Study 6p  
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  
The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily  
sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.  
Sunday Worship is at 9a. Wednesday Worship is 6:30p

### HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376  
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### MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

8 miles south of Highlands on N.C. 28 S in Satolah  
Pastor Zane Talley

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m. Choir: 6 p.m.

Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.: 7 p.m.

### MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

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(4.5 miles from NC 107)

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Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone - 526-2418  
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### SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby  
Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11 a.m. & 7  
Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

### SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

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

### SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

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Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 6 p.m.  
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schedules of activities.

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### UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

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### WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

## ...FEMA continued from page 1

to people with disabilities or access and functional needs and are equipped with assistive technology.

A DRC is a one-stop show where survivors can meet face-to-face with FEMA representatives, apply for FEMA assistance, receive referrals to local assistance in their area, apply with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for low interest disaster loans and much more.

To date, FEMA has approved 96 million in housing and other types of individual assistance for more than 75,000 households in North Carolina alone.

According to La-Tanga Hopes, FEMA Media Relations Specialist, the assistance Helene survivors can apply for at the DRC's is different than the \$750 one-time offering that is available to survivors.

The one-time offering is given to survivors to meet serious, immediate needs such as food, shelter, water, blankets and gas for transportation. The DRCs are for repairs and rebuilding as opposed to the resource centers manned by volunteers for survivors to apply for the initial \$750.

FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance staff will be posted at the Highlands Police Department Conference Room on 372 Oak Street through Friday, Oct. 18 from 10am to 4pm. They will be assisting those impacted by the disaster register for FEMA assistance or inquiries on existing applications.

FEMA financial assistance that can be applied for at a DRC

## ...CANDIDATES continued from page 25

NESS— We need to keep this on our radar. I have met with every principal in the county over the past few weeks to discuss the needs for each of their schools and I will be sitting down with Superintendent Josh Lynch this week also. Every principal has mentioned the increase for the need of mental health professionals to be available. This is something that we must address sooner than later.

**3. What direction would you like to see the school**

may include money for basic home repairs, personal property losses or other uninsured, disaster-related needs, such as childcare, transportation, medical needs, funeral or dental expenses.

“When your home is no longer safe, sanitary or functional due to damage caused by hurricane Helene, one should apply for help from FEMA,” said Hopes. “You do not have to be on a fixed income to apply, help is available to all income levels. If a survivor is on a fixed income and already receive a government check, this it doesn't hinder their ability to receive help from FEMA.”

Homeowners and renters in 27 North Carolina counties and tribal members of the Eastern Bank of Cherokee Indians can visit any open center, including location in other states. No appointment is needed.

“We are encouraging survivors who are in need of help and are unable to contact FEMA by phone or internet because service is not available to come to one of the DRCs and ask as many questions as they have,” said Hopes. “Many may take for granted that they can't receive help from FEMA, but there are many ways FEMA can help. One example is FEMA can provide disaster unemployment insurance for those who can't go back to work.”

FEMA can also help survivors repair and replace homes and cars that were lost or damaged during the hurricane. FEMA can help both survivors with and without insurance.

“Survivors may find some-

**board take in meeting the demands of current and future Macon County students such as schools, teachers, resources, etc.?**

In the previous question, I mentioned teacher recruiting and retention. I believe that is something we must look at strongly. As far as schools go, I know there are several current capital projects underway or about to be started. In my meetings with the principals in the county, there are other projects waiting in the wings. We will need

thing insurance won't cover and FEMA could possibly supplement the insurance and cover it,” said Hopes. “In addition, any assistance provided to survivors is a grant that doesn't have to be repaid and it is also non-taxable.”

Although survivors are encouraged to visit a DRC for assistance, it is not necessary to go to a center to apply for FEMA assistance. The fastest way to apply is online at DisasterAssistance.gov or via the FEMAapp. You may also call 800-621-3362. If you use a relay service, such as video relay, captioned telephone or other service, give FEMA your number for that service.

For the latest information about North Carolina recovery, visit [fema.gov/disaster/4827](http://fema.gov/disaster/4827). Follow FEMA at X at [x.com/femaregion4](https://twitter.com/femaregion4) or on Facebook at [facebook.com/fema](https://facebook.com/fema).

FEMA's mission is helping people before, during and after disasters. The goal of FEMA is to provide helpful services to storm survivors.

“As long as FEMA services are needed the DRCs will remain open,” added Hopes. “If people are coming in and utilizing FEMA services, we will be there for them.”

Meanwhile, Hopes said she is investigating whether a DRC can be opened in Macon County, too.

In addition, Stacy Bernash, FEMA Division Supervisor for Macon County, said additional stationary resource center sites like the one at the Hudson Library this past weekend and the one currently at the Highlands police station are being planned for Highlands and Franklin.

to address those as soon as the current projects are completed. We need to ensure that we provide the best resources for our staff and students. This will give them the best chance to succeed. All of these things will require funding, of course. I would work tirelessly to help procure any grants and/or funding available to help offset the cost of these things.

**4. What are some examples of what our schools need to do to improve test scores?**

This is an item that I have had

• See **CANDIDATES** page 30

## • POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

**Highlands Police entries from Oct. 9. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.**

**Oct. 9**

• At 8 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident in the Sphinx parking lot on N. 4th Street.

**Oct. 12**

• At 7:54 p.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident in Highlands Plaza.

**Oct. 13**

• At 5:05 p.m., officers received a report of a shoplifting incident at Potpourri on Main Street.

**Oct. 14**

• At 1:09 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on Bowery Road.

**The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Oct. 7.**

**Oct. 7**

• At 3:47 p.m., the dept. responded to a miscellaneous fire at a location on N. 5th Street.

**Oct. 9**

• At 6:57 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Morewood Circle.

• At 9:14 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Spring Street.

• At 1:41 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

• At 5:22 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east (Cashiers Road.)

**Oct. 10**

• At 3:29 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Thistle Drive.

• At 7:23 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Half Mile Drive.

**Oct. 12**

• At 7:24 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Oak Street.

**Oct. 13**

• At 1:16 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

**Oct. 14**

• At 4:31 a.m., the dept. was first-responder to a residence on Overlook Villas Drive.


• At 6:43 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Skyline Lodge Road.



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## Rotaries unite for Helene vic-

In the wake of the disaster that struck Western North Carolina, the two Rotary clubs of Highlands, NC have teamed up to offer some relief to the affected areas of our state.

The Mountaintop Rotary and The Rotary Club of Highlands combined to buy and ship a tractor trailer load of water to Marshall. We also loaded up a truck belonging to one of our Rotarians with water, diapers, flashlights, batteries, and other essentials. Another truck rolled out this morning for Arden, NC.

The two Rotaries will continue to aid as we can to help those so heavily impacted by Hurricane Helene. They are accepting donations daily from 2-4pm at the old Bank of America location on Carolina Way and 4th Street



Rotary President Randy Foster, FEMA Representative Stacy Bernash, Mayor Pat Taylor.

## FEMA rep visits Rotary

Mayor Pat Taylor, a member Rotarian introduced us to Stacy Bernash of FEMA who is here in this area to help coordinate relief efforts for the towns in our area that were so horribly impacted by Hurricane Helene. We are so grateful for all that FEMA has done to facilitate relief for our communities!

## NC General Assembly passes Disaster Relief Package

The North Carolina General Assembly returned to Raleigh on Wednesday, October 9, 2024, and passed a \$273 million disaster relief package following Hurricane Helene's devastation of Western

North Carolina. House Bill 149, Disaster Recovery Act of 2024, is an initial appropriation with additional and more extensive disaster relief funding to follow in the coming weeks.



## Thank you to all Emergency Response Teams

The Boys and Girls Club of the Plateau would like to extend its heartfelt thank you to all the emergency personnel, essential workers and volunteers who have been working tirelessly around the clock to restore power, water and crucial services to our area.

Hurricane Helene was a catastrophic storm that presented significant challenges for our community, but it also highlighted the resilience and bravery of those who serve.

Amid the chaos of a devastating natural disaster, the response of emergency personnel was nothing short of inspiring. As the community was trying to understand

the repercussions of the damage, firefighters, paramedics, EMTs, and volunteers rushed into the fray, displaying extraordinary bravery and unwavering dedication.

Fire and Rescue first responders immediately went to work clearing the roads to ensure access and safety. Their coordinated efforts to rescue trapped individuals, provide medical aid, and distribute essential supplies are a testament to human resilience and compassion. Linemen worked tirelessly to restore power and critical services to the community while NCDOT workers cleared/fixed roads.

At the Boys & Girls Club, we were proud to do our part by

providing much-needed space for emergency supplies and emergency response vehicles at our Cashiers location while also keeping our Highlands location open to care for the children of essential hospital workers during this critical period.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the emergency personnel, essential workers, and volunteers who risked their lives for others — they are the true heroes!

We also say thank you to our generous donors, whose invaluable support has made our participation in this initiative possible and impactful.

## ...CANDIDATES continued from page 27

as one of my talking points during my campaign. As I have sat down with each of our principles, they all have the desire to help their schools score as high as possible during testing. We need to work together with each of them, layout the needs for this, and do our best to get them the help they need to improve test scores in the county.

**5. With school shootings continuing to be a nationwide problem, how safe do you think our schools are? What precautions/measures do you think we need to add to our schools to provide a safe learning environment for our students?**

Having been on every campus, it is clear that our schools are not as safe as they could be. As I

mentioned earlier, we don't need to wait until an incident happens before we take action. Nobody wants to feel like they are in a prison environment. However, however, I do believe some fencing around the perimeters of our schools would certainly help. I know there are some cameras in place at our schools, but perhaps we could add some more to have better coverage on our campuses. There has also been discussion about the idea of additional school resource officers. That is something I would certainly be willing to discuss and listen to. Ultimately, the safety of our students and staff is what matters most.

**6. Are you in favor of the one-quarter local sales and use**

## tax increase? Why or why not?

The short answer is... Yes, I am in favor of it. I am generally not a fan of raising taxes, if it all possible. This one is a little different to me, though. It is actually only 1/4 of ONE CENT. The citizens of our county would not bear the entire burden. We would be able to capture tax revenue from ALL people who spend money in our county on most retail purchases. It is estimated that it would generate in the neighborhood of an additional \$2 million for our county to use. I would push hard for our school systems to be given as much as **possible**. We should keep this money in our county instead of sending it to Raleigh, which is what is happening right now. Let's use it for our people!

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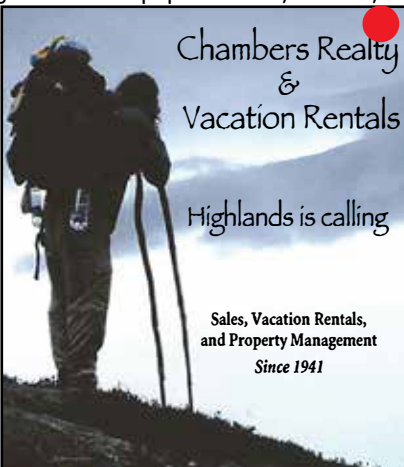
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