

Highlands Newspaper

Happy Valentine's and Presidents Day!

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BofEd wants HS soccer field funded

Kristin Fox
 How to fix the Highlands School soccer field is still a big question facing the Macon County Board of Education. The soccer field was a topic of discussion at the recent budget work session of the board. The board had issued a request for qualifications (RFQ) and a request for proposal (RFP) for the soccer field project. However, the board only received one response to the RFQ. In order to move forward with the bidding process, the board needs to receive two bids for the project. Due to the lack of response, the board will have to reissue the RFQ/RFP. In addition, if the

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Members of Highlands Fire & Rescue gather with man they saved, Mark Murrah. — Photo by Kim Lewicki

Murrah family says 'thanks' to HF&R

By Kim Lewicki
 At Tuesday night's weekly Highlands Fire & Rescue meeting, Mark Murrah and his wife Lane provided a buffet dinner to thank the department for saving him during a "precarious" situation at his home

• See **THANKS** page 6

What eliminating the U.S. Dept. of Ed would mean for MC Schools

By Kim Lewicki
 President Donald Trump has promised to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education, and some North Carolinians worry that could mean a steep decrease in funding for North Carolina's public schools. "We're sending all education and education work and needs back to the states because they'll do a much better job of it," said President Trump. In addition, he wants to give parents access to their student's Average Daily Membership (ADM) funding to use toward tuition for faith-based schools, or private schools. Currently, Charter schools receive the ADM amount for students based on their "home" public school's ADM. However, saddling states and counties with public school expenses would mean many changes, the biggest being tax hikes on the local and state level to support the school systems. "I understand that there are ongoing discussions regarding the potential loss of federal funds and the elimination of the Department of Education," said Macon County Schools Superintendent Josh Lynch. "At this point, I believe it's important to stay informed and wait for more details before drawing conclusions or speculating. I'm committed to understanding the full scope of the situation as more information becomes available." **What federal funding does NC specifically get?** Last year, North Carolina public schools got more than \$1.10 billion from the federal government with about 59% of federal money for NC schools going toward Title 1 programs for low-income students and students with disabilities.

• See **ELIMINATION** page 8

Email circulates about 'secret' meetings

By Kristin Fox
 This week, the Macon County Library was once again the topic of discussion during the public comment period at the February regular meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners. Prompted by an email circula-

• See **SECRET** page 4



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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

There's road work ahead

I recently chaired the Southwestern Regional Planning Commission's Transportation Advisory Committee meeting. Let me review some of the transportation issues the committee discussed.

First, NCDOT engineers stated they were working nonstop to repair and reopen I-40 next to the Pigeon River near the Tennessee state line. It was stressed that there will be short-term repairs to reopen the road and also a long-term plan to secure the road against future washouts from the flooding river. Governor Stein has set March 1 as a partial opening of one lane for each direction.

Also, we discussed how Helene's recovery challenges have delayed a number of road projects that were on the state prioritization schedule. It will take quite some time to reprioritize this list of projects and get back on schedule even before Helene NCDOT fell behind due to shortfalls in funding.

Let me highlight the status of several area projects that may impact the Highlands



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

and Cashiers area. First on the list is the intersection improvement at NC 107 and US 64, aka the Cashiers crossroads. For now, right-of-way acquisition is to begin on July 21, 2027, and the project will be let on Jan. 22, 2030. All of these dates are subject to change.

Another project is the C. Tom Bryson bridge replacement on the Gorge Road between Franklin and Highlands. Its tentative start date is April 20, 2027. This bridge replacement will be a major project

impacting traffic between the two towns, as well as impacting tourist traffic.

The proposed improvement of the parking area and a pedestrian bridge at Dry Falls is another project on the list. This project was designed and conceived by the US Forest Service over 20 years ago. NCDOT must partner and administer the project because it impacts a state road. I am hopeful and optimistic that federal funds can be appropriated for this project and construction can get underway by late 2026. The explosion of growth in the area may generate a reprioritization of this project.

Also, on the list of projects in the area is the Middle Creek Bridge replacement on NC 106 just below Scaly Mountain. That project is nearing completion with part of the new bridge already open to traffic. Several improvements will eventually be made to the road approaching the bridge. Since the old bridge was built around 1940, this new bridge project was long overdue and much needed.

At the TAC meeting, it was pointed out that NCDOT gets numerous requests to take over privately built roads, as does the town of Highlands. The concept with a takeover is that once executed, the state, or a municipality, would be committed to maintaining and re-paving the road from there on out. A light bulb went off in my head that this state takeover program might apply to some private roads that Highlands has declined to takeover because the roads did not meet town subdivision road standards. That light bulb was quickly turned off when it was disclosed very few requests are granted by the state because the private roads have to meet state standards, especially state right-of-way requirements. Some homeowners on these private, substandard roads complain that they would have no front yards left if they met the

• See **MAYOR** page 6





• SNAPSHOT •

I give you my heart



Photo by Robert Cabe

• WEATHER •

Thu, 13-Feb	Fri, 14-Feb	Sat, 15-Feb	Sun, 16-Feb
 52°F 22°F	 47°F 34°F	 50°F 45°F	 51°F 17°F
Partly sunny and not as cool	Mostly sunny	Cloudy with afternoon rain	Rain mixing with snow
RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®
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Phone: (828) 200-1371

Email:

HighlandsEditor@aol.com

Publisher/Editor: Kim Lewicki

Reporters: Kristin Fox

Brian O'Shea

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...LETTERS continued from page 5

vote if you aren't a citizen. There is no valid or legitimate study that shows voter fraud to be a problem. This is a completely manufactured issue by your party, Republicans, as part of your gerrymandering and voter suppression efforts.

This is shameful! You should be about

winning the votes of your constituents on the basis of your record; instead you are trying to suppress votes, which is clearly a twisted, non-American platform.

**Bonnie Bell
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• INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft •

Highlands, NC. Love is all around!

Meet "Lovey," our Golden Retriever puppy, we love her!

We named her Lovey because it's Valentine's Day. And, we've always loved Gilligan's Island, the millionaire Thurston Howell III, and his wife, Lovey!

She's 12-weeks old and we picked her up last Saturday morning. The love we have for her and she has for us is beyond words. All of you dog lovers understand exactly what I'm talking about. She's made me think about Highlands and Love, two things that go together!

The real estate business here is mainly about sharing with you the love and the truth about our town, its beauty, personality, and feel. If it's a fit for you, for your lifestyle, for your family and friends, and for your dreams...you'll find your way here, and we're happy to help you figure out how to make that happen!

I've admired a person for years who is a true American icon. He is a gentleman who's very own words capture the essence of Highlands, Love of life, and he expresses the reasons you need to consider being here much more succinctly than I can.

He recently received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Biden, a most deserving honor, and it is with all due respect and humility that I quote him now. This the Highlands we love:

"There is a way of living that has a certain grace and beauty. It is not a race for what is next, rather an appreciation for that which has come before. There is a depth and quality of experience that is lived and felt, a recognition of what is truly mean-

...SECRET continued from page 1

ing around the county suggesting a discussion about the MC Library leaving the Fontana Regional Library (FRL) system be discussed behind closed doors, citizens showed up to voice their concerns about the future of the FRL which governs local libraries and the potential of illegal activity.

The email, allegedly originated by MC Library Board member Leah Gaston and replied to by a "Jim," also discusses Yancey County which recently left its AMY Regionals Library System that serves Avery, Mitchell and Yancey counties.



ingful.

I love places and things that transform us, that take us someplace else for a day, an evening, or a weekend, or just for a moment.

I love the romance of movies, cars, the lyrics of Cole Porter and the songs of Frank Sinatra.

They all have one thing in common – they have no age; they have no time.

I am inspired by the movement of the seasons, by the search for newness, the diversity and breadth of

possibilities, of what somebody could like in a variety of worlds.

The world is open to us, and each day is an occasion to reinvent ourselves.

What I do is about living. It's about living the best life you can and enjoying the fullness of the life around you – from what you wear, to the way you live, to the way you love" (from the book "Ralph Lauren" written by Ralph Lauren and dedicated to the love of his life, his wife Ricky).

Ralph is right about life and he's described the "Highlands Love" well with impeccable style, grace, beauty and excellence that lives in his fashion.

So this weekend, grab a bottle of good champagne, watch "Very Ralph" on HBO, celebrate Valentine's Day, buy your sweetheart something Ralph Lauren, and stop by to meet our Lovey.

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

Prior to speaking to commissioners, citizen Betsy Baste gave each board member a copy of the email. Copies of the email were also handed out to the public.

"The rest of us all have it (the email), and so we know that people are advocating for you to do illegal things and I trust you won't," she said.

Suggesting the physical benefits of leaving FRL, the email reads, "If Jackson and Macon can both simultaneously pull out of the FRL then the FRL ceases to

• LETTERS •

A futuristic suggestion

Dear Editor,

Recently, I have experienced a number of things that suggest Highlands needs to consider now what it should do now to be ready for 20 years from now and what to do and when to start to get ready for that future.

I foresee an increase in severe weather events, more electric vehicles owned privately and by the town. The town buildings will be 20 years older and the current problematic parking situation was discussed with the possibility of a parking garage was discussed as was the increase in energy usage. Those will not just go away with-

out some action sometime.

I also foresee that with increased demand for energy as was mentioned by the Mayor energy costs will probably increase. The Commercial Geothermal Heat Pumps can reduce the cost of heating, cooling and dehumidifying large buildings by about 50 percent. Since these heat pumps extract heat from deep in the earth, it isolates the system from any temperature extremes and mitigates the effect of the extremes. Over a 20-year period, that could be many dollars saved.

The world's governments so far not been willing or able to cope

with climate change, as witnessed by ever increasing floods and fires in many countries. I personally think we humans have already, damaged the earth's very thin climate beyond the tipping point

I stayed at a resort in San Francisco two blocks from Fisherman's Wharf. The large car rental lot was located underneath all the businesses which were on a huge concrete structure.

Parking in Asheville is located underneath Talbots and the adjoining businesses. This is not a new concept.

What I had in mind was a new town complex building be built on

top of a street level concrete structure, with some parking and EV charging stations. This would locate parking and charging closer to Main Street businesses and still on town property, between Town Hall and Maple Street, the construction of the parking garage. Possibly the playhouse could provide enough space for temporary offices until construction of the new town building is completed.

Will Highlands and humans still exist 20 or 70 years from now? If we assume they will, what should we do and when do we start?

Larry Brannan
Highlands

If you want a 'pedestrian friendly town,' make it one

Dear Editor,

While I am not new to Highlands, having visited since 1958, I now live here.

In this paper, Mayor Tay-

An Open Letter to Chuck Edwards

Dear Sir,

I was appalled to see you as a co-sponsor of HR Bill 22 "SAVE" ACT which is basically meant to disenfranchise women voters and people of color. It's a horrific page right out of Project 2025.

This "act" is dangerous and irresponsible. In essence, if your birth certificate doesn't match your current name (which is the case for 79% of married women) and you don't have a US Passport (only about 43% of NC residents do, usually white and financially solvent) you can't register to vote.

It cost \$130 to get a passport. It ranges from \$150~\$500 for a married or divorced woman to legally reclaim her birth name. Not to mention the onerous tasks involved in doing so.

This "act" is completely unnecessary. There isn't an existing problem with voter fraud. Federal laws already make it criminal to

lor has addressed vehicle speeding and distracted driving several times in his Mayor on Duty column. As a frequent pedestrian, I reinforce these concerns.

Main Street doesn't seem to be a problem, but off that path, it's a walk on the wild side.

There are two intersections of primary concern. The pedestrian crosswalk at Laurel Street and the Rec Center needs a pedes-

trian light. There is a roadside yellow caution sign, but it is rare that vehicles stop for pedestrians.

I often walk to the Rec Center and have to wait, then run to cross. Young school children can be seen waiting to cross because no one stops.

There's another dangerous intersection that doesn't even address a pedestrian crossing at South 4th St, Satulah Rd. and

South Street. There is no pedestrian crossing across 4th Street/ NC 28 in the direction of Brysons/ Highlands Plaza.

In the interest of pedestrian safety, I hope you will study these two concerns.

James Maury
Highlands

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• HIGHLANDS DINING •

...THANKS from page 1

back in May.

Murrah stepped onto and fell through a rotten area on his deck and was pinned there up to his armpits with his left leg deep in the hole and his right leg spread eagle on the deck. His injuries were horrific – numerous broken bones in the right leg and torn and separated muscles in the right – that has required months of recovery. He is now using just one crutch instead of two and said he is lucky to be alive today.

“The professionalism of this trained rescue squad saved my life. They worked as a team and knew what to do and how to do it. Without them, I would be a gonner. I owe you my life,” said Murrah. “Lane and I wanted to do more than just say “thank you.”

...MAYOR continued from page 2

state right-of-way requirements. In short, state road takeover requirements are even more stringent than the town's. The crux of the matter is developers, back in the good old days, built inadequate subdivision roads that homeowners have to deal with now. Those 10-foot roads should have been 16- or 18-foot wide.

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• OBITUARY •

Tom 'Teeter' Cook Smith

It's with heavy hearts, we share the passing of Tom "Teeter" Smith on February 4, 2025, in Highlands, North Carolina.

Born on January 25, 1938, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to William Ches Smith Jr. and Carolyn Macdonald Smith, Tom moved to Atlanta at the age of two. He attended SM Inman Elementary School and



finance committee and was an elder in the church. Tom was the man that made everyone he met feel like his best friend. He was a man of principle and those that knew him loved him. He will live on in the lives of all the people whom he has touched.

Tom is survived by his children, Tracey Catharine Smith (Kent Bingham Reed) and Kenneth Happoldt

and later Henry Grady High School, where he excelled in football, basketball, and golf, earning nine varsity letters. It was during this time he met the love of his life, Kay Happoldt. He attended Druid Hills Baptist church during his formative years, and this is where he started his walk with Christ.

After graduating from Grady High School in 1955, Tom attended the University of Georgia, where he developed a lifelong passion for the Georgia Bulldogs. He was an active member of the Chi Phi fraternity and served as Vice President. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in business in 1959 and remained a devoted UGA football fan after graduating from Georgia.

Tom married Kay Happoldt on February 6, 1960 at Central Presbyterian Church in Atlanta. Their marriage spanned 62 wonderful years, and Tom often shared this was the greatest accomplishment in his life! Tom served in the Air Force Reserves from 1959 to 1968 and began his career with GMAC in Athens, Georgia. He later joined his father-in-law at Highlands Country Club (HCC), where he served as Head Golf Professional and General Manager for 12 years. During his tenure at HCC, he co-founded the Mountain Chapter of the Carolina Section PGA and designed HCC's Iconic Highlander logo still being used today.

In 1980, Tom became the Director of Golf at Horseshoe Bend Country Club (HSB) in Roswell, Georgia, where he worked for 26 years until retiring in 2006. He was instrumental in bringing the American Junior Golf Association headquarters to HSB and hosted numerous prestigious tournaments. Among his many accolades, Tom was honored as the Georgia PGA Golf Professional of the Year in 1989, a recognition he cherished.

Upon retirement, Tom and Kay returned to Highlands, where they enjoyed traveling, playing golf, and hosting friends for dinner parties. Tom was actively involved in First Presbyterian Church of Highlands, Highlands Country Club and The Literacy Council. Tom served on the golf committee,

Smith (Sheri Lingle Smith), and four grandchildren: Knox Reed, Stockton Reed, Peyton Smith and Kendall Smith. A reception will be held for Mr. Smith at the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands, NC on Saturday February 15, 2025, from 12-1:30 PM, preceding a funeral service at 2:00 PM with the Rev. Emily Wilmarth officiating. A private graveside service will take place following the service at First Presbyterian Church. Peyton Smith, Knox Reed, Stockton Reed, Scott Smith, Stacy Freeman, Thomas Grafton will serve as Pallbearers. Mr. Smith's family is also planning a celebration of life for Tom in the spring of 2025 in Highlands, NC.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Literacy Council in Highlands. May his memory bring comfort to all who knew him.

Online condolences can be left at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com Bryant-Grant Funeral Home & Crematory is honored to serve the Smith family.

...SECRET continued from page 4

exist and all FRL assets are divided equally between three counties ...,"

The email doesn't mention Swain County, but it, too, is part of the FRL.

Macon, Jackson and Swain counties make up the FRL which includes six libraries located throughout the three counties.

"Exiting the FRL must be justified as economic reasons. Less blowback and leftist drama. We must be ready to paint the FRL leadership as unwilling to serve the community and have proven they desire control and activism over service to the public," reads the email.

The email further states: "Leaving the FRL needs to be discussed extensively by commissioners in Macon and Jackson behind the scenes with a "surprise" decision to leave when the time comes just as Yancey voted unanimously to leave their regional system while the regional library director was conveniently out of town."

Baste addressed the commissioners.

"I just want to bring to your attention the Sunshine Laws from the North Carolina Department of Justice," said Baste. "The General Assembly has declared that hearings, deliberations and actions of public bodies be conducted publicly. I know you know this and know you don't need reminding, but I think some members of the public need reminding that members of public bodies may not hold gatherings or communications to evade the spirit and purpose of the open meeting laws."

After 60 years of being a part of the regional library system, The Yancey County

Board of Commissioners voted to leave the AMY Regionals Library System. The decision came after months of debating control over the library sparked by controversy over a "pride month" display in the library.

Likewise, the nearly two-year debate over Macon County leaving the FRL as well as amendments to the FRL inter-local agreement also stemmed from a "pride month" display. In March 2023, Commissioner Danny Antoine mentioned the idea of Macon County withdrawing from the

• See SECRET page 14

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...ELIMINATION continued from page 1

In the 2023-2024 school year, North Carolina public schools received \$528 million from Title 1.

Of Macon County Schools'

12 schools, all but Highlands, FHS and MEC are Title I schools.

Title 1 has been in place since 1965 and is the largest federal grant program for schools in the

U.S., totaling \$18.4 billion. Title 1 funds are reserved for schools with a large population of students living at, near, or below the poverty line.

Title 1 funding goes toward staffing, academic support, behavioral interventions and services for homeless students, among other things.

"Federal programs such as Title I, II, III, IV, Special Education, and CTE Perkins V provide financial support for specific student needs," said Lynch.

The Trump administration wants to eliminate Title 1 funding and replace it with no-strings-attached grants. How that would exactly work is not known at this time.

What a decrease in Annual Daily Membership would mean for Macon County Schools

Lynch said ADM is determined by the number of students enrolled in a school during a specific period. The state allocates

funding through position, dollar, or category allotments based on ADM. If ADM changes, whether up or down, the ADM amount changes.

"A decrease in ADM funds would likely lead to fewer resources for staffing," said Lynch. "In North Carolina, public school funding is primarily linked to student enrollment. As enrollment declines and ADM funding decreases, districts may face tough decisions about staffing levels, possibly resulting in fewer teachers and larger class sizes, especially in grades or subject areas outside of K-3."

Likewise, the ADM allocation for parents who want to use it for faith-based or private school tuition could also decrease year to year based on their "home" school ADM enrollment.

Lynch said Macon County Schools is committed to minimizing the impact on students and keeping class sizes manageable,

"but the situation would become even more challenging with reduced federal funding and potential shortfalls in state funding," he said.

Lynch said as superintendent of Macon County Schools, his top priority is ensuring that students receive a high-quality education, regardless of potential changes in federal funding.

"While the future is uncertain, I am dedicated to exploring innovative solutions to meet our students' needs and support our educators," he said. "However, the potential loss of federal funding for vital programs like Title I, II, III, IV, CTE Perkins V, special education, and child nutrition would create significant challenges. If the Department of Education is eliminated, we must closely monitor the impact on our schools and work together as a community to ensure our educators and students continue to have the resources they need to succeed."

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...SOCCER continued from page 1

project exceeds a certain amount, the board will be required to issue the project through the formal bidding process.

A RFQ is a document that solicits information from potential contractors to prequalify them for

a project, while an RFP is a solicitation process for proposals from qualified contractors.

At the end of last year, School Board Member Hilary Wilkes met with people in Highlands who have a vested interest in the project and MC Commissioner John Shearl who represents the Highlands district. At that meeting, Shearl expressed his concern about the water coming off of Satulah Mountain. He said the drainage off the mountain needed to be addressed and then suggested seeing how the field reacts before moving forward.

At the meeting, the group looked at the field and the drainage issues in addition to the year-long study that was conducted on the soccer field.

Prior to this meeting, the school board decided the best option to fix the field was to remove all the swamp muck and replace with new soil. At that time, the school board considered three different options to fix the field.

The first and most expensive option would be to take out all the swamp and pond muck and refill with solid material. This option

would be the most permanent but would come with a hefty price tag.

The second option would be to add another drainage system, but this option would only be a temporary solution. As long as swamp and pond muck are under the field, the drain will eventually become plugged up and fail, continuing to cause problems on the surface.

The third suggested option would be to add a surface drainage system. The upper 24 to 30 inches of the field would be rebuilt with a drainage layer system and a new surface. This option would keep the surface playable by handling whatever falls on it; but would be temporary as the mess underneath the field would still cause problems.

Once it was decided by the school board that option one was the best solution, it started moving in that direction to fix the soccer field. The school board received an estimate of \$48,000 for the design work to remove and replace the swampy soil under the current field, not the actual work to have it completed. The design

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING



'Roses are Red'

Michael D. Matlock
Rector
Christ Anglican Church

February 14 is St. Valentine's Day. Valentine was a 3rd-century Roman Christian martyr. There are various stories of his life and how his ministry led to some of the ways we celebrate Valentine's Day today. The modern cliché Valentine's Day poem, "Roses are Red," can be traced back to 1590 in Edmund Spenser's epic *The Faerie Queene* and has been placed in collections of English nursery rhymes since 1784. In some countries, this day is known as "Lover's Day," "Love and Friendship Day," and numerous other names.

The first recorded Valentine's card was written by Charles, Duke of Orleans, in 1415. He wrote a poem to his wife while imprisoned in the Tower of London. According to one source, around one billion Valentine's Day cards are exchanged each year, making it the second-largest card-sending holiday after Christmas. Besides cards, some people might give gifts like flowers or chocolates. Unbeknownst to most people, we send valentines decorated with flowers, hearts, and the color red, which symbolizes the blood of martyrdom.

But what about Valentine's Day's redemptive relevance for 2025? It seems wise to me to comment on the topic of intimacy or the lack thereof in so many relationships. I once heard the word intimacy defined as "into me I see." To become a wise lover, one must be characterized by self-awareness, emotional depth, and an enriching complexity. Lovers often hope that sexual intercourse itself will instantly create relationship intimacy. They fail to realize, to their great detriment, that intimate bonding is indeed a process that requires intentionality and patience.

When I marry a man and woman (Genesis 2:18-25; Mark 10:2-12; Ephesians 5:30-33), I require the couple to undergo assessment and counseling which covers these areas: their relationship with Jesus, Christian marriage, communication, family finances, sexual intimacy, life-long commitment, family history, and expectations. Within a hospitable and safe environment, engaged couples can reflect deeply on their own personal and family history, their shared desire for marriage, and what life together might look like for them. I teach that it is the loving Creator's design that married couples carefully maintain the principles of privacy and oneness in the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of their marriages because predators are always lurking.

Perhaps this February 14th, we could ask our mates or others we are close to, "How do you want me to love you?" If it is in the purview of the love of Jesus Christ, I urge you to offer this as a gift to them so that they can receive your love more fully and we can recover what God intended in loving each other. I would not be surprised if your mate or loved one asked for more attention, appreciation, affection,

• See SPIRITUALLY page 13

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

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

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

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CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH
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CAC@christanglicancashiers.org • 828-743-1701
Sunday: 9a Fellowship; 9:30a Adult Christian Ed; 10:30a Holy Eucharist Tues., 9a; Thurs., 12p Prayer & Book Study

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY. CASHIERS
Pastor Brent Metcalf • 743-5470 www.cashiers.church
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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
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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

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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

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HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH
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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
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Sunday Worship is at 9a. Wednesday Worship is 6:30p

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH
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Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.
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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers • 828-743-2122
Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Feb. 1. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Feb. 1

• At 3:51 p.m., officers were called to the scene of an aggravated assault involving a sharp object on N. 5th Street near the Kelsey Trail.

Feb. 2

• At 5 p.m., officers responded to a call of obtaining property by false pretenses through Facebook Marketplace valued at \$840.

• At 3:30 p.m., officers were notified of a potential scam regarding a cellphone representative.

Feb. 7

• At 4:13 p.m., officers received a report of a woman losing a wallet in a store

on Main Street.

• At 3:50 p.m., officers were called about a lost bag containing merchandise at a location on Main Street.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Feb. 4.

Feb. 4

• At 5:15 p.m., the dept. responded to a structure fire on Brooks Road.

• At 8:23 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Hilltop Drive.

• At 5:38 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Woodland Hill Drive.

Feb. 5

• At 1:59 p.m., the dept provided mu-

tual aid to the Cashiers Fire Dept.

Feb. 6

• At 1:26 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on N. 4th Street.

Feb. 7

• At 5:14 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Chestnut Street.

Feb. 8

• At 9:41 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Satulah Road.

• At 6:57 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Pinewood Lane.

Feb. 10

• At 5:09 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers Fire Dept.



Seated from left are Wayne Crowe and Jimmy Lowe. Standing from left are John McCall and Jim Tate. – Photo by Kim Lewicki

HF&R retirees recognized

Having missed the annual award banquet in January due to weather and power outages, retirees were noted at the HF&R's weekly meeting Tuesday night. Wayne Crowe, 91, was presented a plaque for being the oldest living retired HF&R member. He served for 20 years.

• POLICE DEPT. NEWS •

Prepare for the Feb. 26 power outage

The town will experience a planned power outage on February 26. The outage is planned because several problem trees must be removed to ensure they don't later fall onto the transmission lines coming into the town. There will be no power within the city limits during this time.

The Highlands Police Department wants to remind residents and visitors that the traffic lights will also be out. NC General Statute 20-158 (b) (6) states:

“When a traffic signal is not illuminated due to a power outage or other malfunction, vehicles shall approach the intersection and proceed through the intersection as though such intersection is

controlled by a stop sign on all approaches to the intersection. This subdivision shall not apply if the movement of traffic at the intersection is being directed by a law enforcement officer, another authorized person, or another type of traffic control device.”

In short, all traffic must come to a complete stop at the intersection, and all vehicles must take turns proceeding through the intersection.

The Highlands Police Department asks for your assistance during this outage to ensure the safety of all residents and visitors.

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HIGH COUNTRY PHOTO/KEVIN VINSON: scanning photos, slides & negatives to CD or DVD for easier viewing. Video transfer to DVD. Everything done in house. Leave message at 828-526-5208.

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 10

quality time, tangible gifts, and/or acts of service.

Let's close by speaking directly with God. The Lord be with you. And with your spirit. Let us pray. Dear Jesus, teach me how to be intimate with You so that I can learn how to be intimate with others. Help me to receive Your unconditional love shown must fully in your death by crucifixion for my sins. I invite You into my heart and repent of my sins. Give me the grace to form only one spirit with You. Dear Friend of my heart, unite this poor soul of mine to Your singular goodness! You are entirely mine, when shall I be all Yours? Lord Jesus, my Beloved, be the magnet of my heart: draw, hold fast, unite forever my spirit to Your pater-

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

WINTER POOL SCHEDULE

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

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

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

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

ALL WEEK

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

4357.

PICKLE BALL

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

MOVIES

• Movies at the Martin Lipscomb Performing Arts Center at PAC on Chestnut Street. See ad on page 5.

MOUNTAIN FINDINGS

• Open: 10 am - 1 pm, Feb. 21-22, March 7-8 and 21-22, April 4-5 and 18-19

Thurs. & Fri., Feb. 13 & 14

• HCP presents Valentine's Dinner Theare at PAC at 6 p.m. 3-course pork loin dinner catered by Kristy Martin begins at 6:30 p.m. Performance begins at 7:30 p.m. The entertainment portion of the evening will consist of duo vignettes directed by Scott Ewing. A Matter of Husbands Yesterday Tickets are \$55. Non-alcoholic beverages are included. Wine and cocktails will be available for purchase. Table seating is first-come, first-served. Tickets are available at highlandscashiersplayers.com, or by calling the PAC box office at 828-526-9047.

Thurs., Feb. 13

• Highlands Chamber of Commerce members are invited to a presentation "Setting up simple IRAs for employees" with Todd Holder with Edward Jones at the Community Building. Light breakfast from 9-10:30a. R.S.V.P. Jane Ford Clark at businesservices@highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-5841.

Sat., Feb. 15

• Every Vote Counts Block Party & Rally. Food, Live Music, Guest Speakers, Information for Voters. 12 - 2 pm. Gazebo Park. 15 E. Main St. Franklin. Rain or Shine!

Fri., Feb. 21

• On Friday The Mountain will be hosting a screening of the new documentary film: COMMON GROUND. Be inspired by the possibilities and potential of regenerative agriculture. Admission is sliding scale and youth are welcome.

Wed., Feb. 26

• The Cashiers Historical Society will host author and photographer Chris Aluka Berry at the Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library from 3-4p. This event is free and open to the public, with a Q&A and book signing to follow. For more information, contact the Cashiers Historical Society at (828) 743-7710

...SOCCER continued from page 8

would determine the best way to remove all the material down to the sand/silt beneath the muck, removing it and replacing it with aggregate and soils that would drain any water on the field's surface.

However, this was stalled after the meeting with Shearl.

"It is absolutely not feasible to even consider going in there and removing all that muck out of that field," Shearl stated last year at a commissioners' meeting. "Harris Lake runs back in there. We are talking about going down below the muck below the water level. What are we going to do, dig out Harris Lake? The problem with that whole place is all the water coming off of Satulah. The drainage ditch that has been left in there is about two feet above the field level so the water coming off of Satulah hits that rock facing, jumps the ditch and goes out onto the field. I want no more discussions about it until we figure that out."

Two engineers looked at the field, but there was no information about their recommendation.

Despite Commissioner Shearl's opinion on the subject, since the project has been delayed, at the '25-'26 budget work session

Wilkes said to make it a priority for the upcoming budget.

"We need to be mindful of the timeline so we can get a line item for the commissioners for budget consideration," said Wilkes.

BOE Chairman Jim Breedlove suggested getting the school board attorney involved.

"I think where we stand now is that we need to touch base with John Henning [school board attorney] and emphasize that we need to move forward with speed," said Breedlove. "We need to get a price for this and have a figure to give to commissioners as they move forward in the budget cycle."

The school board will now issue another RFQ and RFP in one package. Wilkes requested that she be sent the package so she could make sure interested parties get the information.

"We can't do it if no one is willing to do it, but that is not my understanding," said Wilkes. "There are people out there who are interested in doing it. I want to make sure they get the request and make sure it is understood that this is the last round."

...SECRET continued from page 7

FRL due to concerns over sexually explicit books and material.

The FRL is governed by the amended 2013 agreement. Last year, after much debate and changes to the original amendment, the agreement was finally approved by all three counties and the FRL.

Macon County was the last to approve the 2024 agreement. The Macon commissioners unanimously approved the amended agreement at their November 12, 2024 meeting after a motion by Commissioner Danny Antoine who serves as the county's library liaison. In August 2024, Jackson and Swain County Commissioners also approved the revised version of the agreement.

The new agreement says that the FRL system can be dissolved if two county governments agree to leave the system.

One significant change to the agreement is that each county's

commissioners now have the authority to appoint regional board members.

Prior to the change the regional board members were selected by each county's library board. Local library boards are also selected by the county commissioners. In addition, the new agreement calls for term limits.

The new agreement also reinstates the public comment portion of the board meetings. Each speaker will be given no less than three minutes during the public comment period which will be limited to 30 minutes.

In March 2023, the FRL ended the public comment period due to disruptive and heated public comments.

In its conclusion, the circulated email also states: "In the information wars, the public needs to be assured that an independent

county library will meet and exceed the quality of the current FRL system."

Since it was formed in 1944 by the Tennessee Valley Authority, the FRL has combined resources to offer library services to citizens in Macon, Jackson, and Swain Counties. Today's local libraries initially began with the TVA's regional bookmobile that visited the remote areas of all three counties.

Combining resources for all three county's libraries is an economical way to provide a wider range of library services to its patrons. In addition to books, the libraries offer such services as access to computers, free resources and children's programs.

The commissioners didn't move on the subject but took the public's comments under consideration.

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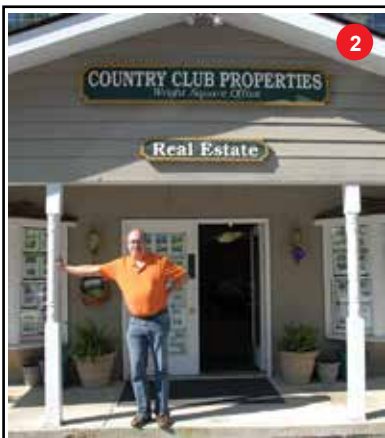
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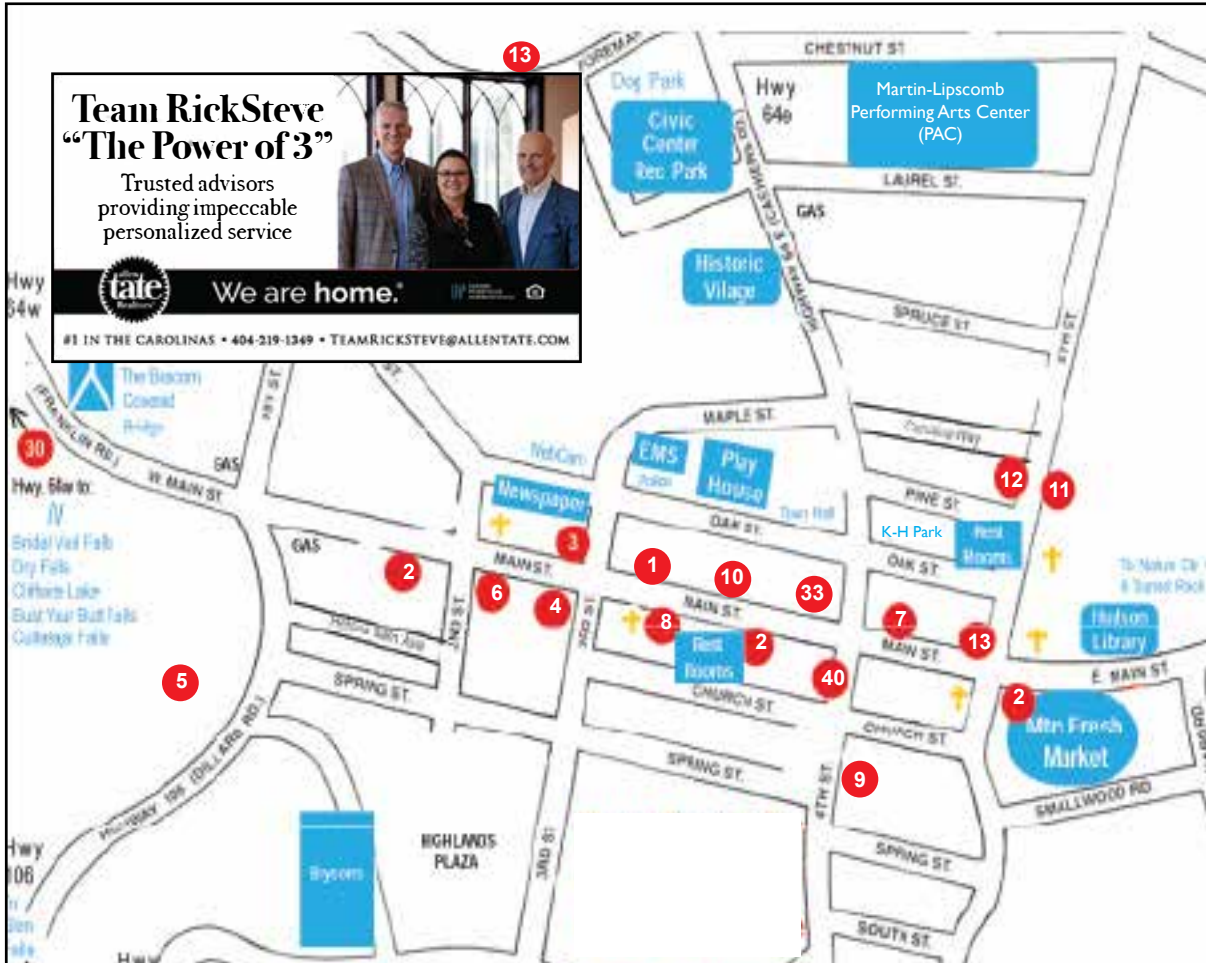
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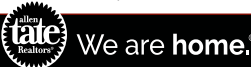
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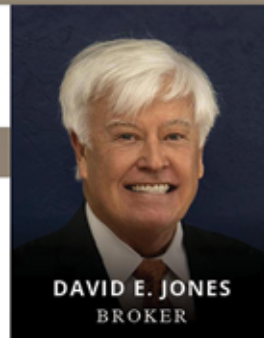
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