

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Jan. 2, 2025

2024: A year that was ... memorable

By Kim Lewicki

There's no telling what a new year will bring especially since 2024 for Highlands and the surrounding area was life-changing as well as memorable.

the OK to build a new church; after much consternations, school improvements were OK'd for Franklin and Highlands; for the first time ever, the Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. named two, not just one, as 'Firemen of the Year';

a new playground is in the works for the Highlands Rec Park, Short-term Rentals took front and center for most of the year and even though the Planning Board voted against amortization, the

• See YEAR 2024 page 7

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HCLT gets 54.45 acres in Highlands

The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust (HCLT) is pleased to announce the permanent conservation of 54.45 acres of forested land just two miles from downtown Highlands. Located along the majority of the lefthand side of Glen Falls Road, this pristine property is a vital part of the area's natural beauty and ecological health.

This conservation win adds almost a mile of protection to the East Fork of Overflow Creek, classified by the State of NC as an Outstanding Resource Water (ORW). Water that falls here (or seeps out from the mountain), flows from HCLT conservation easement, Frog Pond Farms, under highway 106, across the newly conserved preserve before tumbling down the iconic USFS Glen Falls, flowing into Blue Valley.

• See HCLT page 6



HC Hospital CEO Tom Neal explains the significance of the food sculpture.

Food sculpture at HC Hospital was about Hurricane Helene response

This holiday season, Highlands Cashiers Hospital and Eckerd Living Center once again participated in the HCA Healthcare

Healthy Food for Healthier Tomorrows Food Drive. In addition to collecting approximately two tons of canned food items for

two area food pantries, Fishes and Loaves and the Highlands Food Pantry, hospital staff and volun-

• See HC HOSPITAL page 6

Highlands' 150-year celebration is coming up

Highlands will celebrate a monumental milestone in 2025: 150 years since its founding in 1875 by visionaries Samuel Kelsey and Clinton Hutchinson. The sesquicentennial year will honor Highlands' legacy as a haven for peace, beauty, and renewal through a series of commemorative events and initiatives, offering something for everyone to enjoy and remember.

The Town of Highlands, Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC, Highlands Historical Society, Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and other local organizations have curated a diverse lineup of events and programs to honor the town's past, present, and future. Highlights of the year of reflection and celebration. will include:

• See CELEBRATION page 9

Thank you for your trust and support this past year. Wishing you a fantastic year ahead filled with warmth, joy, and wonderful new beginnings.
Happy New Year!

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

A room tax increase could help fund roads

In a previous article, I discussed the issue of transportation funding, specifically how North Carolina funds road construction and upkeep through a motor fuel tax, aka, the Powell Bill. For years, this gasoline tax was adequate to meet NCDOT funding needs.

However, several factors have made this funding source inadequate to meet our state's growing transportation needs. First, as gasoline prices have increased dramatically since those OPEC days in the 1970s, legislatures have been reluctant to increase the tax rate per gallon. This hesitancy has been particularly evident during inflationary times when the average consumer struggles to make ends meet.

Inflationary costs have also put pressure on the NCDOT budget over the years. Construction costs, the cost of concrete and asphalt, and the high cost of land right-of-ways have all added to the shortfall in the highway budget. Some would contend some bad departmental decisions and mismanagement at the top in Raleigh have added to the problem.

Another contributing factor has been the proliferation of electric vehicles that do



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

not pay the gasoline tax but, of course, use the road. Some critics point out that the heavier electric vehicles, due to large battery arrays, even add more wear and tear on the state highways. Who pays for the additional road maintenance costs?

The state legislature has been grappling with this NCDOT budget problem for a number of sessions now. Legislators have been reluctant to increase the motor fuel tax and even more reluctant to raise state income or sales taxes to balance the budget. Honestly, they do not have too many good options, and what I am about to propose is probably only a partial solution.

My idea is to increase the state room occupancy tax across the board, that is, for every county and city that has such a tax—perhaps, a one or two cents per dollar increase statewide. For instance, counties with a 6% rate now would go to 8%, or cities with a 3% would go to 5%. I emphasize an across-the-board increase so that no area of the state or county would have a financial tax advantage over another. This occupancy tax increase would be earmarked for transportation needs.

With the large influx of visitors coming to our ever-growing state, this tax increase would not impact state residents, and it would help improve road access for the visitors we want to attract to this beautiful state.

Now some may contend this tax on visitors would impair North Carolina's competitive edge in attracting tourists. Really? Would potential tourists say they are going to Georgia or Tennessee and not going to North Carolina in order to save a few dollars on a hotel or STR bill? I don't think so; when Sallie and I visit another state and pay our hotel bill, we don't even look to see what the taxes are. Like almost everyone else, we give the hotel clerk our credit card and check out.

Solving North Carolina's transportation funding problems will probably take several reforms and changes. I believe increasing the room occupancy tax and earmarking the increase for transportation is one part of the puzzle. I would be interested in what the hotel and hospitality industry would have to say.

• SNAPSHOT •

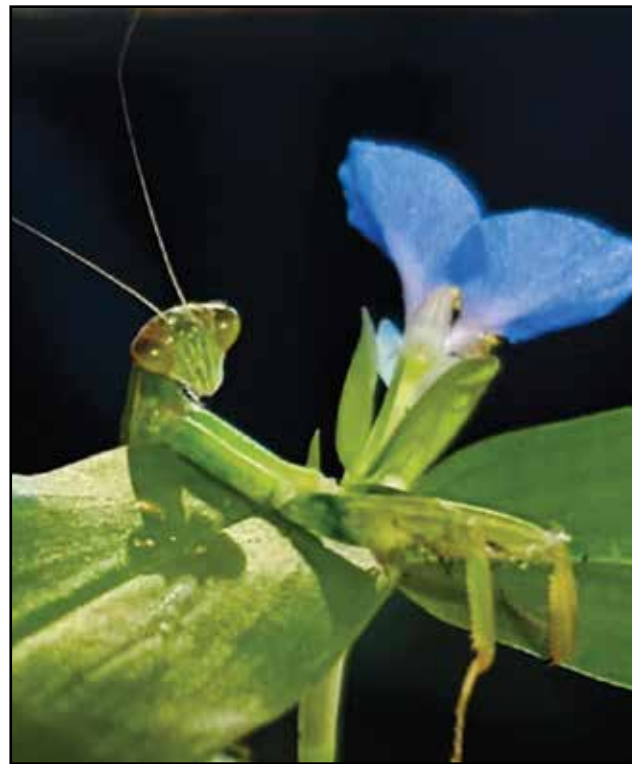






Photo by Marty Cabe

'I wonder what 2025 will bring?'

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

• WEATHER •

Thu, 2-Jan	Fri, 3-Jan	Sat, 4-Jan	Sun, 5-Jan
 42°F 27°F	 36°F 18°F	 37°F 16°F	 36°F 27°F
Mostly sunny	Breezy in the afternoon	Mostly sunny and chilly	A little ice, then rain
RealFeel® High: 44° Low: 20°	RealFeel® High: 29° Low: 17°	RealFeel® High: 34° Low: 12°	RealFeel® High: 38° Low: 18°

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• INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft •

Preparing your home for the 2025 market on the Highlands-Cashiers plateau

Thinking about selling your home in 2025?

A few key updates can make all the difference in attracting buyers to your home—especially those who are using the holidays and slower season to find their dream mountain retreat for the spring or summer time. To stand out, make your property irresistible from the moment they pull up to your driveway—after all, first impressions are everything. Start with curb appeal: fresh-

en up the landscaping, plant some vibrant seasonal blooms, and don't underestimate the power of a freshly painted front door. Clean, inviting walkways? That's the cherry on top.

Inside, think of staging as storytelling—you're painting a picture of the moun-



Kara Hardy
 (407) 617-6006
kara@bhhsmmr.com

tain lifestyle buyers crave. Neutral walls set the stage for luxury accents that feel both modern and welcoming. Got a cozy fireplace or a killer mountain view? Showcase those with intentional furniture placement and thoughtful decor. And let's not forget the kitchens and bathrooms—a quick update with sleek fixtures, energy-efficient appliances, or fresh cabinet hardware can make these spaces feel like new without blowing

your budget.

Now, let's step outside. The Plateau's natural beauty practically sells itself, so make sure your outdoor spaces are ready to shine. Think cozy seating areas, twinkling lights, and maybe even a fire pit for those crisp mountain evenings. Double-check that decks and patios are in tip-top shape—buyers dream of sipping their morning coffee while soaking in the crisp air and those serene views. Highlight the lifestyle your home offers—that's what buyers are really investing in.

Presentation is everything. Declutter and depersonalize so buyers can imagine themselves in the space. High-quality photography is a must—those dreamy mountain views and warm interiors deserve to be captured in their best light.

Make 2025 the year your home stands out. With the right updates and a focus on what makes your property special, you can inspire buyers to fall in love. Cheers to fresh opportunities and a successful sale in the New Year!

• Kara Hardy is a broker with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Meadows Mountain Realty. She serves Highlands, Cashiers, Glenville, Sapphire, Lake Toxaway, Scaly Mountain and Franklin. Kara can be reached at (407) 617-6006 or via email at kara@bhhsmmr.com.

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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

WINTER POOL SCHEDULE

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

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

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

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

ALL WEEK

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

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 Tues. through Dec.

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

2nd Tuesdays

- Highlands Writers Group meets on alternate Tuesday afternoons at 3pm. Writers still uncomfortable with in-person gatherings may participate via Zoom meetings For more

information contact Bud Katz at either 828-526-3190 or at budandlynn@me.com

Tuesdays

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

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

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

2nd Wednesdays

- Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health topics, held on the first Wednesday of each month at 11 AM. This series is aimed particularly at older adults and will focus on mental health topics of particular interest to them, but all ages are welcome to attend. The November 1 program is Dementia: A Deeper Understanding. Reservations are required for this free event. To register, stop by the library or call 828-526-3031.

2nd & 4th Wed.

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

Mon., Tues., Thurs.

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

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

Thurs.-Sat.

- Mountain Findings Hours: 10a to 1p.

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 craft afternoons.

Saturdays

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

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

2nd Saturdays

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

3rd Saturdays

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

Sundays

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

Through-March

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

Tues., Dec. 31

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

Beginning Jan. 1

- At the Mountain Learning Center Youth Programs - MountainCamp Registration opens on January 1! Reserve your spot now. Mountain Camp creates an environment where youth can learn to be sure of themselves and their values, while enjoying recreation, adventure, education, and creativity. **These weekend programs provide the perfect opportunity for youth to form lifelong bonds and memories while experiencing nature. Learn more and reserve your spot** Spring Elementary CON (3rd-5th Grade): Feb 14 - 16; Spring Intermediate CON (6th-8th Grade): Feb 28 - March 2; Spring Senior High CON (9th-12th Grade): March 14 - 16 <https://www.themountainrlc.org/event/homecoming-2/>

Jan. 23

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

April 13-18

- At the Mountain Learning Center, Music

Week - Experience our engaging Music Week through classes, workshops, and one-on-one sessions with nationally touring musicians you will discover your magic in music. Early-Bird Discount - \$50 off if registered before Valentine's Day! <https://www.themountainrlc.org/event/homecoming-2/>

Sat., April 26

- Plateau Pickup. Keep Highlands beautiful. Participate in Plateau Pickup, a community-wide cleanup day dedicated to preserving our town's natural beauty. For more info, go to highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-2112.

1st Sat., May-Oct.

- Pop-Up Pipers Discover the magic of live music as the Pop-Up Pipers perform throughout town, adding a charming, musical twist to a Main Street stroll. For more info, go to highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-2112.

May-Sept.

- Outdoor Concert Series. Feel the beat every Friday and Saturday evening. Our Outdoor Concert Series fills the warm months with live music that brings locals and visitors together under the stars. For more info, go to highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-2112.

May 1-4

- At PAC, Educational Theatre performance, Matilda.

Sat., May 17

- High Style. Explore the intersection of style and culture during the High Style event. For more info, go to highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-2112.

May 23-26

- At The Mountain Learning Center, Homecoming - Join us for our 45th Annual Gathering of Members and Friends from as we renew old connections and make new ones! Through workshops, entertainment and the annual meeting, we will speak of current projects and possibilities for the future. Featured Presentation: Environmental Impacts on Well-being with Dr. Stephen Lloyd. <https://www.themountainrlc.org/event/homecoming-2/>

Thurs., June 12

- Volunteer Fair. Looking to give back? Find the perfect volunteering opportunity at our annual Volunteer Fair, where local organizations share ways to make a difference. For more info, go to highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-2112.

Fri., July 4

- Independence Day Concert & Fireworks. Celebrate the Fourth of July in classic Highlands style with an entertaining concert and a fireworks display that lights up the mountain sky. For more info, go to highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-2112.

...HCLT continued from page 1

This land has long been admired by locals and visitors for its lush, forested character, with many unknowingly passing alongside it on their way to the popular Glen Falls Trailhead. While many assumed this land was protected by the U.S. Forest Service, it was, in fact, privately owned and potentially at risk for development. Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of Marc and Beth Reisman and Hector and Mary Ann Villarroel, along with the support of HCLT's Wildwood Fund, this land will be protected and stewarded into perpetuity.

This conservation effort is a critical step in safeguarding the health of Overflow Creek and Glen Falls and water that eventually makes its way to the Chattooga River. The land's protection also ensures the conservation of vital wildlife habitats, rare and unique ecosystems, and helps maintain the scenic beauty that defines the Plateau.

"The conservation of this land is a testament to the power of community action and generosity," said Lance

Hardin, Executive Director of the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust. "By permanently protecting this forest, we are preserving not only an important watershed, but also the remarkable character of the Plateau that draws so many people to our beautiful corner of the world."

Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is a nationally accredited non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of ecologically significant landscapes and wildlife habitats through the protection of key properties like this one. Through land conservation, education, and partnerships, HCLT aims to ensure the area remains a sustainable and beautiful place for future generations.

The Land Trust encourages other individuals and groups who are passionate about the future of the Plateau and the surrounding areas to consider contributing to ongoing conservation efforts. To participate in HCLT's conservation work in the Highlands-Cashiers area, please visit www.hcltnc.org or email info@hcltnc.org.

...HC HOSPITAL from page 1

teers constructed a sculpture utilizing the items collected.

"This year's canned food sculpture honored our Plateau community and its response to Hurricane Helene. Thank you to everyone who participated, from those who donated food to our staff members and volunteers who designed and constructed the one-of-a-kind sculpture," said Highlands Cashiers Hospital CEO, Tom Neal.

In addition to Highlands-Cashiers Hospital and Eckerd Living Center's food donation, HCA Healthcare also donated \$85,000 to MANNA FoodBank, \$10,000 of which was from their HCA Healthcare-wide award winning canned food sculpture of a water truck. More than 200,000 gallons of water was being pumped into Mission Hospital each day from water trucks until the restoration of municipal water more than a month after Helene.

Mayor Pat Taylor joined Tom Neal, along with HCH staff and community members for a presentation to both food pantries on Dec. 17.

• HIGHLANDS DINING •

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• LETTER •

'Barstool-ers' count

Dear Editor,

Sometimes I just prefer to sit at the bar. If the restaurant tables are full, then those tall stools beautifully beckon. My wife loves it, too, and we may just have our root beer and supper right there! Small talk, sports talk and political pontification ooze like melted butter from fellow "barstool-ers."

Most "barstool-ers" choose a smiling seatmate hoping no VENOM from the angry Left prevails. No crazy claims that Trump will declare himself King to fire up the logs of the failed-fantasy-fears the Dems create. No, the Barstool is a welcoming place noticeably void of venom.

"Venom" you say? Well yes. Read the editorials from the same overused smell- rhyming writer to this worthy publication and underline just the hate. Penned with redundancy the same spittle you hear on CNN (Communist News Network), one finds ourselves sliding in the venom-ed enunciation endlessly spewed to poison the path.

Not so with my fellow "barstool-ers." We edify, laugh and banter proven political truth and enjoy the camaraderie of some friendly pats on the back. Smiles and laughs,

not angry frowns, clothe my crowd.

But guess what? The "barstool-ers" have gained a reputation even off the Plateau. Clearly November 5th was a nationwide movement, more tidal wave than mountain stream. The term "Barstool Conservatism" was coined to conclude that those who think alike and talk about it, got out and voted, swamping the vote with a huge majority. The Joe Rogan Experience resonated especially with the male voter, pushing Trump to the Trump dance. The dissing delivered by Kamala in missing the Al Smith Catholic fundraiser was not lost on my fellow pro-life Our Lady of the Mountain Root beer "stool-ers".

On the other hand, watching Walz' girly flat hand right-to-left-wave, and hearing his lack of knowledge that a coach can "call" a PICK SIX was just too much for the "Barstool-ers!"

"But Trump dances", the Dems argued. Yes, and even NFL standouts and golfers embraced and copied his moves to the delight of their fans.

The Barstool gang are easygoing affable folks whose conservatism arises from the business logic they learned in

the trenches, and the anatomical logic they gleaned from their Bibles. They KNOW that Transgender/ turned want-a-be woman, did not shed their God given muscle strength at their doctors' appointments! "Barstool-ers" have athletic daughters, nieces, and wives who fought for Title IX so that women-born-girls could compete in their own female league against other women- born-girls.

Reality splashes in the eye when least expected. Americans in droves laid off Bud-Lite because a man playing dress-up selling beer did not translate poetically to the rugged and natural barstool-er-beer drinkers of America.

Yep. Trump won big and as the country chose Right and red, you can bet the "barstool-ers" will still be at it: laughing, smiling, hugging and slapping backs. They will be vigorously campaigning and supporting conservative values. They understand where America fell under Biden, and they see the next years as utter heaven!

**Bodie Catlin
Highlands, NC**

...YEAR 2024 continued from page 1

Town Board voted to amortize; a man is rescued from Cullasaja Gorge; Trump and Vance win presidential election, Corbin and Gillespie keep their seats, Wilkes and Evans keep their BOE seats, Young keeps is BOC seat and Breeden takes Higdon's seat; after years, Highlands School soccer field repairs are still pending; Art and Angela Williams sold the Old Edwards Hospitality Group; a person was bit by a runaway monkey; dredging of Mirror Lake is finally set to begin; Hurricane Helene strikes far and wide in WNC – Highlands fairs better than most but businesses suffer; there were two major road washouts – the first on the Gorge Road in January and the next on NC 106 due to Hurricane Helene; Bryson Grading and Paving repair NC 106 in time for Christmas; ex-prosecutors Mary McCord and Andrew Weissmann discuss Trump's legal woes at PAC; Wolfgang's Restaurant sells and closes Dec. 31 ... and much more.

January

• This year The Greenway presented its Trail Worker of the Year award to volunteers: Mike and Trail Boss, Jim Chance.

- Bryson Family pledges annual boost to Town of Highlands Scholarship Fund
- Gorge Road closed due to washout
- Missing Highlands man located
- HS swim team hosts 1st ever home meet
- NC AG sues HCA for failing to provide promised care

- MC School System gets 62mm for FHS
- MC teachers to get \$500 bonus
- OLM gets OK for CZ plans
- Bald Eagle visits Harris Lake

February

- NC Health Dept. tracks respiratory viruses
- Two named 'Firemen of the Year' at annual ceremony – David Leffler and RL Wilson

- HS senior Green named soccer All Region and All State

- BOC votes to move forward with Highlands School renovation project as part of 5 year capital improvement plan.

- Man reported missing is found deceased
- Business Community and Town Board discuss the need for change

- Mission sets 10-minute goal for ER patient care in response to investigators' report

- Low primary turnout prompts Election Director to urge MC residents to vote

March

- Town applies for matching grant to help fund new playground at the Rec Park.

- Super Tuesday Primary results: Barry Breeden and Josh Young win BOC seats.

- CMS lifts Mission's 'immediate jeopardy' standing. Will return in three months.

- Restaurant grease is getting into town sewer Sales Tax Referendum to be on Nov. ballot

- NC Wildlife offers help to identify bear dens
- Town Oks millions for urgent projects at Retreat

- Mitigating fires at The Mountain and treating hemlocks a new way

- Town Board hears benefits of Highlands Food & Wine event

April

- MC BOC approves budget amendment for Highlands School Expansion Project

- Sunset rock eclipse rally set for April 8
- Pine Grove schoolhouse may be sold but would be restored and preserved.

- Housing in Macon County's sights
- Public comment initiates talk about STRs and committee formations

- Pedestrian is bitten by run-away monkey
- Salutatorian Brooke Fogarty and on the right are Valectorian Olivia Cole and Asst. Principal Alyssa DeBois. Both students will be attending UNC at Chapel Hill.

May

- NC's childcare crisis is a far-reaching and looming catastrophe

- Rescuers extract man from Cullasaja Gorge
- Highlands Dog Park to be revitalized

- Senior Cooper Hall was crowned King and Senior Brooke Fogarty was crowned Queen at Highlands School prom

- Inadequate reimbursements are pushing small pharmacies to the brink

- The lack of building permits on sites is a concern county wide

- Fly fishing tourney reels in \$24,000
- District changes could dilute candidate pool for Highlands and Nantahala

- Highlands School hosts Special Olympic athletes
- MC library meetings are still contentious

• See YEAR 2024 page 8

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...YEAR 2024 continued from page 7

• What's next for STRs in Highlands?

• MC BOC sings resolution for Highlands healthcare housing

• Fundraising begins in earnest for new Rec Park playground

• At joint meeting, BOC says yes to new FHS and Highlands School renovations

• MC School System's funding request from county comes up short

June

• Say 'no' to Macon County redistricting

• TB says OK to revamping Oak Street

• Survey reveals reasons for HS soccer field issues

• Highlands and Scaly Mtn. residents to get first dibs on HF&W tickets

• It's movie-time again in Highlands!

• Eastern Band of Cherokee approves recreational marijuana sales. Sets historic precedent in NC

• Grease opens at PAC

• Williamses sell OEI Hospitality Group

• HS Class of 2004-05 have 20-year reunion

• Verbiage to amortize STRs is on June TB agenda

• Town adopt s\$45.2M budget for FY24-25

• Commissioners move on amortization ordinance

• Highlands Commissioners advocate for new playground in Highlands

July

• Highlands School soccer field woes continue

• Highlands Hurricanes sweep Cherokee and Jackson counties

• Revitalized Dog Park opens

• County votes to help fund Highlands Playground

• New Orleans comes to Bascom bridge re-dedication

• Rule about truck lengths allowed on the Gorge is signed into law

• Failure at Duke substation causes in-town outages

• COVID summer bump in cases in nationwide

• Planning Board votes 7-0 against amortizing STRs

• Ex-prosecutors Mary McCord and Andrew Weissmann discuss Trump's legal woes at PAC

• Initially school lunches increase

August

• HCA's investment in Highlands Cashiers Hospital is paying off

• Pre-K tuition to increase for upcoming school years

• Catch Me if You Can on stage at PAC

• Grants to help close internet gaps county wide

• On-line eCourts system means less trips to the courthouse and more

• HF&R holds annual open house

• Commission votes 3-2 to fund free lunch for Highlands School and Franklin HS

• With new software program, parents and students and teachers can meet in one ROOM

• Town Board sets public hearing for STR ordinance amendment for Sept. 5

• Phase 1 of Mirror Lake dredging to begin late September

• Timmy McDowell wins 5K overall

• A temporary fix vs. a permanent one is discussed for Highlands School

• First day of school in Macon County was Aug. 26

September

• Highlands School Project is on track.

• HHS presents Flower Power with Dahlia Festival

• Trillium wins Mountain Challenge Croquet Championship

• Winder shooting has affected all; Area law enforcement and school officials address concerns

• Amortization of STRs hangs in the balance

• Highlands Playground misses out on PARTF but has next round in sights

• Why eating dogs just isn't something Haitians would do

• Highlands honors 9/11 victims

• Highlands pulls the trigger on amortization of STRS; believes state legislature won't move on the issue

• Taxpayers to foot legal bat-

tle expenses for amortization

• Highlands School's Coach Lamb gets Region 8 DSA Award

October

• MC Sheriff officers dies during Helene onslaught

• County to begin search for County Manager position

• Hurricane Helene strikes far and wide in WNC; Highlands fairs better than most; NC 106 suffers washout

• ¼ cent sales tax option on Nov ballot but it fails for the second time.

• Highlands moves to help communities ravaged by Helene

• Gratitude comes full circle to the benefit Highlands and elsewhere

• FEMA approves \$96 MM in aid in NC

• Three candidates vie for BOE District 4 seat

• Closure of NC 106 makes life challenging but not impossible

• Court to decide if SAVE Highlands is due attorney fees

• Highlands School Project breaks ground

• Early voting is breaking records

• EMS Director Cabe to don MC Manager hat Nov 12

• With Highlands School Project a go, the soccer field is in the BOE's sights

November

• HF&W Festival is set for this weekend

• Trump and Vance win; NC goes red

• Callers allege bear hunters were within the town limits

• Local runner completes NYC Marathon; raises \$5K for charity

• Huff vs Town of Highlands is undecided.

• Rotary Bingo raises \$50,000 for WNC Hurricane Relief

• Planning board meets new Code Enforcement Officer

• Work begins on NC 106 washout

• MC Housing Needs report makes its debut

• Townhomes are planned for vacant lot at Oak and Maple streets

• See YEAR 2024 page 9

...CELEBRATION continued from page 1

150 Celebration Webpage

The Chamber's website will host a dedicated page featuring stories, images, and updates about sesquicentennial activities.

Weekly "Highlands Through the Years"

Local newspapers will feature historical insights that highlight the town's unique journey.

150 Trees Fundraiser

Reflecting the community's commitment to environmental preservation, residents and visitors will have the opportunity to plant a piece of Highlands' future.

Living Museum Day

History will come alive with reenactments, displays, and interactive experiences that showcase the town's cultural heritage.

Volunteer-Led History Walks and Cemetery Tours

Guides will share stories of the past, giving a personal touch to Highlands' history.

Pole Banners

New banners will adorn the streets, serving as vibrant reminders of Highlands' history.

Highlands Heritage Jamboree

A grand celebration of music, food,

and festivities will be held Saturday, September 27 to mark the sesquicentennial with joy and community spirit.

At the heart of this milestone is a collective effort to preserve Highlands' natural beauty and cultural heritage for generations to come. The Chamber is also producing a Commemorative Experience Guide filled with historical facts, events, and inspiration for visitors and residents alike.

"The Highlands Plateau has inspired generations with its waterfalls, ancient forests, and cool mountain air," said Kaye McHan, Executive Director of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC. "Celebrating 150 years is not just about reflecting on our past; it's about committing to a future that honors our roots while embracing our future."

Highlands remains steadfast in its mission to balance progress with preservation. Through sustainable tourism initiatives, support for local businesses, and educational programs, the Chamber of Commerce strives to ensure that Highlands continues to serve as a peaceful retreat and a vibrant community.

For more information visit www.highlandschamber.org or contact the Welcome Center at 828-526-2112.

...YEAR 2024 continued from page 8

- Town Lighting is Nov 30
- The Christmas Parade is set for Dec 7
- NCWRC stocks local lakes with trout

December

- Pattersons donate HC Animal Clinic property to Highlands Biological Fnd.
- Local nonprofits awarded \$15,000 in grants
- NCWRC stocks Harris Lake with trout
- Multiple fire crews save burning home on Upper Lake Road
- HS Homecoming King and Queen are Kasen Mitchell and Malloy Shriver
- 5th Bear Shadow venue is undecided
- HCLT get 150+ more acres to conserve
- It looks like the opening of NC 106 is on schedule
- Shop with a Cop brings out the best in all
- Highlands students' history project tells local veterans' stories
- Real Estate is alive and well in Highlands
- NC 106 opens for Christmas on Dec. 23!

MOVIES
at PAC's MLPC
will resume on
January 10.
Watch for listing

507 Chestnut St. Highlands

Tickets:

Adults: \$13.20 • Children: \$11

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828-526-9047

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or text 828-200-1371.

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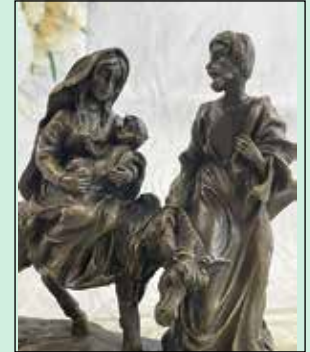
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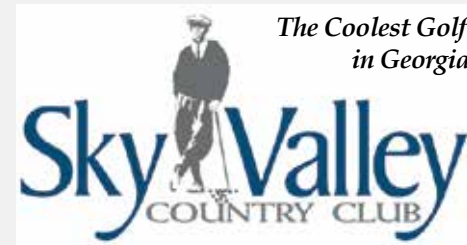
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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING

The line between good and evil



Pastor Mark Ford
First Baptist Church
Highlands

In Solzhenitsyn's Gulag he shares the most profound insight when he declares, "We are never closer to evil than when we think that the line between good and evil passes between groups and not through the human heart."

The election is over, but the lines between right and left, progressive secularists and conservatives are in place. The divisions and ideological splits remain. And whether right or left, we can all succumb to our own sense of moral superiority and regard ourselves as warriors for good and justice without taking stock of our own proclivities for policing and enforcing our take on virtue. And because of this authoritarian posturing, we attempt to legislate our truth and force compliance.

Both sides are guilty regardless of who holds the levers of government control. And both need to ask, "Is the line between good and evil simply ideological between liberal and conservatives, secularist progressives and religious traditionalists, or does it run deeper into the human heart? Given the vitriol, anger, triumphalism and desire for retribution from both sides, is Solzhenitsyn not correct in pointing out that our deepest social and cultural problems are not ideological as much as in the human heart?"

This is why Os Guinness in his recent book, *Our Civilizational Moment – The Waning of the West and the War of the Worlds* despairs over the triumph of secularism in its many forms (Neo-Marxism, "woke," progressivism, etc.) over the foundational values and truths of Christianity which laid the groundwork for Western civilization's advance in modern history. And he clearly lays the blame on Christianity and the Church! He says, "The crisis of the West is in many ways the crisis of the Christian faith," and the rise of secularism is tied to the self-induced decline of the Christian faith. Unequivocally he states, "No one has done more to tarnish the public standing of God's name and truth in the West than Christians themselves."

Simply, the line we should be concerned about is not the ideological, political lines between the right and the left, but the one that operates in our own hearts.

The biggest challenge in bringing people to accept Christian, Biblical values has always been and always will be Christians themselves. We have the eternal truth, know the One who is Truth, but block people's reception by our own failed lives. Nietzsche quipped that he might believe in the Redeemer if Christians looked more redeemed. Another atheist, George Bernard Shaw said, "Christianity might be a good thing if anyone ever tried it."

Guinness believes the crisis of Christianity goes deeper than just credibility – arguments for belief in God. Two greater crises have to do with Christianity's plausibility and

• See **SPIRITUALLY** page 13

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

BLUEVALLEY 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 Tues., 9a; Thurs., 12p Prayer & Book Study

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY. CASHIERS

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

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

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

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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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www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814
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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Pastor Zane Talley

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

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Kippur.

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(4.5 miles from NC 107)

Weds: Youth Group 6 p.m.; Bible Study 6:30 p.m.;

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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

Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.
Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 6 p.m.
ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
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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 Dec. 2. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Dec. 2

• At 5 p.m., officers responded to a report of \$77 worth of alcohol consumed by a woman at Mountain Fresh Grocery not being paid for by the customer.

Dec. 5

• At 5 p.m., officers responded to a report of a Rolex watch valued at \$16,000 being stolen from a safe in a room at Old Edwards Inn.

Dec. 18

• At 8:28 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on US 64 east (Cashiers Road) between Little Bear Pen and Sherwood Forest roads where the driver veered off the road onto an embankment crossed the road and turned over.

Dec. 20

• At 4:42 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on US 64 west (Main Street) between 4th and 5th streets.

Dec. 24

• At 1:35 p.m., officers responded to a call of damage valued at \$100 to the Menorah in KH Founders Park.

Dec. 27

• At 10:15 a.m., officers responded to a call of trespassing in second degree at Highlands Smokehouse.

Dec. 29

• At 8:25 a.m., officers responded to a call of a burglary and breaking and entering at Highlands United Methodist Church where a door window was broken.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Dec. 24.

Dec. 24

• At 12:47 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Shortoff Lane.

• At 1:09 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of an animal bit at a location on Main Street.

• At 6:10 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers FD on a structure fire.

Dec. 25

• At 8:52 a.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at the Highlands Mountain Club.

• At 9:15 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

• At 11:06 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Mountain Moorings Drive.

Dec. 26

• At 1:47 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on N. 4th Street.

• At 6:11 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Forest Trail.

• At 3:15 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a fire at a residence on Rolling Acres Drive.

Dec. 27

• At 6:29 p.m., the dept. provided a welfare check at a residence on Little Creek Road.

Dec. 28

• At 11:51 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Falls Drive East.

• At 3:08 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on South 4th Street.



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FOR SALE

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MIRROR LAKE 2/2 COTTAGE. Newly Renovated. six months to one year lease. Available starting February 2025. For more information email Scott@CottageConcierge.biz (st. 12/12)

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 10

reality. The plausibility is simply that Christianity appears to not be true because of the way Christians believe and behave. We appear to the unbelieving world to be neither true nor good. Rebranding won't cure these perceptions, but only Christians who live the faith. Standing for ideological and cultural truths born of Scripture will shine a light on the untruths, but only our living out our faith will convert people to the truth. As Guinness says poignantly, where God's name and cause stinks, Christians are responsible for the stench!

As to the issue of reality, the hollowed-out faith of empty words, unthinking traditions and formalities without power and God's presence leaves us with religiosity void of the ultimate reality we claim to know and live for – the Creator God. Put bluntly, the world sees no “there there.”

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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.

I demur the politicalization of the Christian faith from both the right and left. I disdain the ideological lines we draw between ourselves (we on the right) and others (those on the left) that create a sense of triumphalism for good and justice and promotes contentment with the new political status without taking stock of the real line between good and evil that exists in all human hearts. And for us Christians, “it is time for judgment to begin, starting with the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17). Our calling as ambassadors for Christ is not to convert people to our ideological – even Biblically based – sociopolitical persuasions, but more importantly to convince them of the truth in Christ who saves us all from our sins if we believe in Him. And we do this best in a humble, lived faith that speaks loudly of the real presence of the Lord in our hearts. Then the lines will disappear.

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• BUSINESS / ORGANIZATION NEWS •

Rotary Bingo benefits 'Shop with a cop'

During the evening of December 19, The Rotary Club of Highlands once again hosted the ever popular Highlands Rotary Bingo for 15 rousing Bingo games, culminating in Super Bingo won by Sammie Leffler, joined by grandson Walker who also won in Bingo that evening.

The evening drew a near capacity, and very enthusiastic, crowd at the Highlands Community Building, with all proceeds supporting the work of



From left: Bingo Organizer, Caroline Cook; Bingo Winner Walker Leffler; Super Bingo Winner Sammie Leffler; Highlands Rotary Bingo Caller Tracy Franklin

volunteers and the Highlands Sheriff's "Shop With A Cop" Police and Macon County program.

Greenway celebrates 2024 and prepares for 2025

The dedicated volunteers of the Highlands Plateau Greenway have been busy this year maintaining the beloved trails that connect our community. Our volunteer workforce completed a total of 393 hours, participating in 15 workdays, over the past year. These volunteers are the Greenway Heroes and we sincerely thank them for all the hard work.

This year we completed our new map, installed new signage and cleared the trail after the devastating impacts of Hurricane Helene. Our trails have never been easier to navigate or more accessible for our community. If you have not had the chance to visit the



Greenway recently, we hope you will lace up your boots and hike your favorite section of the Greenway.

We are so thankful for our many volunteers, do-nors, and supporting organizations who keep the Greenway trail system an important part of

the Highlands community. We hope you will join our monthly workdays and become a part of the team. Notify us at high-plateaugreenway@gmail.com to be included in our monthly workday email notices. Please Donate Today!

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