

# Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

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Thurs., March 6, 2025

## Long awaited lease finalized for Chamber/Visit Highlands and more

By Kim Lewicki

At the February Town Board meeting, the Highlands Chamber of Commerce got the

go ahead on several items with the cherry on top – the finalization of its lease with the Town of Highlands.

Though the vote was 4-1 with Commissioner Brian Stiehler voting “no,” with chairman of

• See CHAMBER page 5

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## Townhomes at Oak & Maple get the final OK

By Kim Lewicki

With the conditional zoning request granted, a long-standing vacant lot at the corner of Maple and Oak streets will soon feature a townhome community dubbed “8 on Oak.”

At the February Town Board meeting, following the required public hearing, the Town Board OK’d Parkside Partners Acquisitions’ request to rezone the 1.09-acre parcel from B-3 commercial to B-1 commercial conditional zoning.

Density requirements for an acre parcel in B-1 are less stringent than for B-3 which is why the conditional zoning request was made.

Due to the size of the lot, if it remained B-3, only two dwelling units would be allowed. Re-zoned B-1, would allow for 19

• See TOWNHOMES page 5



## May peace prevail ... everywhere

By Kim Lewicki

Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with me ... was the message imparted by members of the two Rotaries in town at the February Town Board meeting.

Cath Connolly Hudson, pres-

ident of Mountaintop Rotary and Randy Foster, president of Highlands Rotary Club requested permission to erect a Peace Pole on public property in Highlands.

Though the location has yet to be decided, the purpose was

OK’d unanimously.

“The world needs more peace,” said Commissioner Brian Stiehler. “I love the idea.”

Peace poles engraved with the message “May Peace Prevail

• See PEACE page 7

## HS School coaches to get paid, like other MC schools

By Kristin Fox

Highlands School athletic coaches will now receive supplement pay for dedicating their time and talent to students – like the other schools in the MC Schools System.

At a recent meeting of the Macon County Board of Education, school officials voted to pay coaching supplements to five coaches including four at Highlands School.

Highlands School coaches for swimming, diving and golf will now receive equivalent supplements as other coaches in the school system. Prior to this decision, these coaches had volunteered their time and had not received any compensation.

• See COACHES page 4

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### Happenings at the Legislative Dinner

Last week, Town Manager Josh Ward and I drove to Raleigh to attend the annual legislative dinner sponsored by the North Carolina League of Municipalities. It was a two-day trip with us checking into a hotel and then immediately attending the reception and dinner. The next morning drove back to Highlands.

As we rode on I-40 in the Asheville area, both of us were taken back by the negative impacts caused by Hurricane Helene on the rivers and streams. Despite efforts at removal, there remains huge amounts of debris on the banks of these streams. In some areas, the actual path of a river has been altered.

Our legislative delegation, Senator Corbin, and Representative Gillespie attended the event. I was there in part as a gesture of gratitude for all the support that they have given to Highlands and Macon County. The legislators have large districts and mayors from all those communities were there to convey their needs to the legislators. May-



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

ors from Murphy, Franklin, Forrest Hills, and Maggie Valley were there, just to mention a few from this large assembly of municipal and legislative representatives.

A big topic for the entire session was the recovery from Hurricane Helene. Our representatives have constantly worked with local officials to secure funds to rebuild affected areas. A large part of the state budget in this upcoming biennium session will be directed toward recovery from Hurricane He-

lene. Roads, bridges, homes, and businesses have to be replaced. It will take time; a lot of debate and discussion will go toward how to rebuild to prepare for future similar disasters. These recovery efforts will probably impinge on funds available for other needed projects.

A big topic of discussion among representatives from towns and cities was SB 382, passed by the legislature as a recovery package near the end of the short session in December. This bill has a provision inserted that prohibits towns and cities from down-zoning an area.

Some here in Highlands might say that our recent amortization of STRs triggered this legislation, but this is not necessarily the case. Cities like Charlotte and Durham have been making zoning changes that were very problematic for some legislators. I got the feeling that many representatives of these large municipalities would like the legislature to revisit the bill and make adjustments and clarifications. Many towns are in the middle of revising their UDOs and comprehensive plans and want guidance on how to proceed from the legislature.

The morning after the dinner, I was listening to a local Raleigh television station where it was reported a senate committee was upset about long waits at DMV offices to renew driver's licenses. One senator stated we need to implement a DOGE process in the NC state government. Really? The problem with the DMV is not having too many examiners, but not enough. We need to hire more, not less. And the DMV salaries, which range from \$30,000 to \$39,000, need to be increased, just as teacher salaries and, for that matter, all state employees. Currently, 1 in 5 state positions remain unfilled. North Carolina can do better. Yes, we want government efficiency, but we also want an effective government.

## • SNAPSHOT •







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Photo by Marybeth Trevino

## • WEATHER •

Thu, 6-Mar	Fri, 7-Mar	Sat, 8-Mar	Sun, 9-Mar
 42°F 28°F	 54°F 41°F	 58°F 38°F	 57°F 28°F
Partly sunny; windy, cooler	Rather cloudy and milder	Turning cloudy	Mostly cloudy
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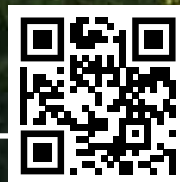
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# • INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft •

## Market dynamics in Highlands and Cashiers

As of February 2025, the real estate markets in Highlands and Cashiers, NC, are exhibiting notable growth and dynamic trends. Both areas, renowned for their picturesque landscapes and upscale living, have become increasingly attractive to buyers seeking luxury

properties and serene mountain retreats.

In Highlands, the housing market has experienced a significant surge. The median sale price of homes reached \$2.52 million last month, marking an impressive 287% increase compared to the previous year. The median price per square foot stands at

\$678, reflecting a 26.4% rise over the same period. Despite these escalating prices, the market remains relatively non-competitive, with homes typically staying on the market for about 139 days before sale. Notably, approximately 7% of homes sold for under the list price, indicating some room for negotiation.

The Cashiers real estate market mirrors the upward trajectory observed in Highlands. The median sale price in Cashiers recently hit \$2.8 million, a staggering 402.7% increase from the previous year. The median price per square foot is now \$771, up 74% year-over-year. The market here is somewhat competitive, with homes typically selling after 67 days on the market. Approximately 4.9% of homes sold below the list price, suggesting a slightly more competitive environment compared to Highlands. Highlands Properties data indicates that the average home value in Cashiers is \$1,189,415, reflecting an 8.1% increase over the past year. Similar to Highlands, the variation in reported figures may result from differing data sources and market focus.

Market Dynamics and Influencing Factors

Several factors contribute to the robust growth in these markets:

1. High Demand for Luxury Properties: Both Highlands and Cashiers are known for their luxury real estate offerings, attracting affluent buyers seeking second homes or investment properties.



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2. Limited Inventory: The number of homes for sale in these areas remains relatively low, intensifying competition among buyers and driving up prices.

3. Desirable Location: The scenic beauty, unparalleled climate, coupled with a tranquil lifestyle, makes these towns highly desirable, especially for those looking to escape urban centers.

4. Economic Factors: Anticipated decreases in interest rates over the next 12 months are expected to further stimulate buyer interest and market activity.

Future Outlook

The real estate outlook for Highlands and Cashiers remains optimistic. The combination of high demand, limited supply, and favorable economic conditions suggests that property values will continue to appreciate. Industry forecasts predict a potential increase in home prices by 6% to 10% over the coming year. For prospective buyers, entering the market sooner rather than later may be advantageous to capitalize on current price points before further appreciation. Sellers are positioned favorably to benefit from the heightened demand and escalating property values.

In summary, the Highlands and Cashiers real estate markets are experiencing significant growth, characterized by rising home prices and active buyer interest. Both buyers and sellers should stay informed of market trends to make strategic decisions in this dynamic environment.



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## ...COACHES continued from page 1

Each season, the swim coach will be given a supplement of \$2,487; the assistant swim coach will receive \$818; and the diving coach will receive \$1,000.

School Board Member Hilary Wilkes, who represents the Highlands district, encouraged the board to approve two coaching supplements for swimming and diving, because two different individuals coach each sport. Hilary said the middle and high school swim teams are very active and have been run strictly with volunteers.

Diving is especially difficult because it

requires travel time for practice. The coach and divers have to travel to facilities in Sylva and Asheville to practice.

In addition, Wilkes told the board that the golf program has been successful on both the middle and high school levels at Highlands School and urged the board fund a coaching supplement for the high school golf coach. The golf coach at Highlands School will receive \$1,544 as a coaching supplement.

Last year, the school board voted to

• See COACHES page 8

## ...CHAMBER continued from page 1

the board, Blye Hunsinger at the helm that night, commissioners finalized the terms of a five-year lease.

The mainstay of the lease was the Chamber paying for up to \$40,000 in landscaping fees for the town – landscaping that beautifies the town which makes it enjoyable for tourists.

The town will either do the work or pay to have it done and the Chamber will reimburse the town.

This all started about three years ago, when the cost of maintaining the bathrooms in Town Square became an issue.

At an annual cost of about \$40,000 a year, members of the Town Board and the Mayor felt the Chamber should pay for the upkeep since the bathrooms are largely used by tourists and visitors who come to town due to advertising by the Chamber/Visit Highlands.

Except for Chamber membership dues, the Chamber and Visit Highlands operate on Room Tax proceeds. How Room Tax can be used is regulated by the NC legislature and for now, stipulates that Room Tax money can only be used to promote tourism. According to attorneys on



New Christmas decorations

both sides, maintaining public bathrooms isn't problematic in regards to tourism.

Now a deal has been struck and the Chamber/Visit Highlands will pay up to \$40,000 in landscaping that beautifies the town thereby making a pleasant experience for tourists.

Mayor Pat Taylor has long said the legislation regulating Macon County's use of Room Tax needs to be updated, as it has been in other areas of North Carolina, so

## ...TOWNHOMES continued from page 1

residential units, but the request was for eight units which represents the "B-1 condition" for the parcel.

Before the Town Board can rule on a conditional zoning request, the UDO requires that the Zoning and Planning boards review the proposal and give their recommendations. Both boards heard the case at their December meetings and recommended allowing the conditional use request.

There will be eight detached single-family dwellings on the parcel with two on site parking spaces for each unit as well as 10 parking spaces to serve the Oak Square property at the corner of Oak, Maple and Main streets.

According to the property's deed, 12 parking spaces were to be reserved for Oak Square in perpetuity, but the owners of that property have agreed to only require 10 spaces which will be reflected in the conditional zoning documentation.

Six, three-story townhomes will front Oak Street and two, two-level townhomes will be at the back of the parcel along the Greenway.

They will be 2,400 to 3,000 sq. ft., with three bedrooms and 3 1/2 baths including fireplaces, 2-car garages, covered front porches, and covered screened back



Architectural rendition of "8 on Oak" townhome community.

Room Tax can be used to upgrade infrastructure strained by tourists – parks, performing arts centers, sidewalks, even roads. But that may be a long process.

Commissioner Stiehler voted against the five-year lease and its terms on the grounds that the anonymous donor who bought and donated the Visitor Center building at the corner of Main and 1st streets, stipulated that the building be the Chamber/Visitor Center's "home" into perpetuity, so in his mind a lease with the town shouldn't be necessary.

### Christmas Decorations

Since the red lanterns in the center of the Christmas wreaths that adorn town during the holiday season have turned pink, the Chamber asked permission to get new wreaths with white lanterns that won't fade over time.

The \$50,000 price tag will be paid for with Room Tax money, Hunsinger just needed an OK, which he got.

### Lights

He and Event Director Tina Rogers also asked for permission to keep the "snowball" lights in the trees on Main Street up through mid-March or until the ice rink closes, to extend the holiday feel

ing.

Though no one thought that would be an issue, a request was made to stipulate residents park on the property so as not to take up public parking, but it wasn't clear if such a request could be legally binding.

The Town Board voted unanimously to allow the conditional zoning request.

The final architectural design is in the works for the exterior and interior, with plans to break ground the first week in May.

and make the town less dreary looking during the winter months. The Town Board OK'd the request.

### Saturdays on Pine

With Bear Shadow nixed from the K-H Founders Park schedule, Rogers asked if the free, annual "Saturdays on Pine" concert series could start a week early – Saturday, May 10 instead of May 17 – featuring Nashville Jukebox.

The concerts are from 6-8:30p. The Town Board OK'd the request.

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# • LETTERS •

## We the People ...

Dear Editor:

A significant event in history is being replayed in our time. The Magna Carta was a landmark English document establishing that the power of the English monarchy was not absolute. In 1215, King John (1167-1216) was forced to sign the document, known as “the Great Charter,” by his barons, who were (like our U.S. Congress SHOULD be today) angered by the king’s encroachment on their rights. The Magna Carta, which included such basic rights as trial by jury and due process of law, protected the people from an authoritarian government and helped set the stage for the concept of limited government that would be created in the New Land.

The Magna Carta stipulated that the king, like the people he ruled, was subject to the laws of the land. The Magna Carta made a provision for a Great Council (envision the United States Congress) to be composed of nobles and clergy who would approve the actions of the king in relation to his subjects and ensure the tenets set forth in the charter were upheld. It is credited with laying the founda-

tion for a parliamentary government in England and is still considered by many to be the cornerstone of constitutional government.

Fast-forward approximately 450 years, the ideas of another Englishman (philosopher John Locke 1632-1704) formed the foundation for America’s democratic system of government by suggesting that “a democracy exists to give voice to the people and to protect their inalienable rights.

The word democracy comes from the ancient Greek word demokratia. Demo means “the people” and kratia means “to rule.” A democracy, then, is a form of government in which people rule. The power lies in the hands of the people, who may either govern directly or govern indirectly by electing representatives.

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence and carried John Locke’s beliefs forward from the previous century, stating that “all individuals are endowed with certain inalienable, or fundamental, inalterable rights.” Our Founding Fathers placed great value on the individual which dictates that the

primary function of government is to enable the individual person to achieve his or her highest potential, making the interests of the individual more important than those of a state (or a king).

As we witness the rise and fall of the rule of law we must consider Chief Justice John Marshall’s 1803 Marbury v. Madison ruling: “It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is.”

That doesn’t factor in statements by President Trump, VP JD Vance and “special government employee” multibillionaire Elon Musk. All three have indicated willingness to defy court rulings.

Courts alone will not be sufficient. Courts are like an antibiotic on a cut, helping healing and staving off infection, but they cannot keep a grievously wounded patient alive. For this, a vigorous political strategy is necessary. It is in all Americans’ hands collectively to make sure the constitutional structure is not only enforced but also preserved.

**David L. Snell  
Franklin**

## A few thoughts

Dear Editor,

Two of my favorite quotes are the following;

First, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, “Men will not receive the truth from their enemies, and it is seldom offered to them by their friends”. No doubt there are those who would refute this statement but, personally, I find it profound.

Second, John F. Kennedy famously said, “Too often we want the luxury of opinion without the difficulty of thought.” This particular quote is one I frequently tried to use on my Mother whenever we were in disagreement, but with dubious success.

In reference to two letters-to-the-editor, that ran in the Feb. 27th edition of Highlands Newspaper, I would humbly

like to make a couple of comments.

First, based on Karen Patterson’s recent letters to this paper, she has expressed her opinions vis à vis the current administration in Washington quite clearly. I, for one, respect both Karen and her opinions, as well as her clear right and privilege to express them. I would only ask that in the future she would document or foot-note or credit the sources from which she is citing her information and statistics. They are strong and forceful statements and deserve accreditation.

Second, in my friend Cynthia Strain’s letter concerning the proofs of citizenship required to register to vote, there was a sentence that completely flummoxed me. That sentence said “Some claim it will affect married women who

do not have a birth certificate that matches their married name...”. Have I missed something? Does the womb have some spectacular gift of precognition? Upon the occasion of my birth and in the fog of the delivery room, would my sainted Mother have instructed the attending physician to make sure my birth certificate was registered in the name of Alice Nelson, showing an uncanny ability to predict the future, not to mention a total disregard for my Father’s surname and for her own married name? It is too amusing to imagine such a scene and is worthy of a Monty Python skit. I’m sure I don’t understand that sentence at all.

**Alice Nelson, née Monroe  
Highlands**

## ...PEACE continued from page 1

on Earth” was authored by poet, teacher and philosopher, Masahisa Goi of Japan shortly after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 at the end of World War II.

Rotary International adopted this initiative around the world and now it is an international message of peace with more than 250,000 Peace Poles - at least one in every country in the world.

There are four in Western North Carolina – Franklin, Junaluska, Asheville and one in Highlands at the Mountain Retreat & Learning Center.

“We would like the location to be a public place where people can sit and reflect on peace,” said Hudson. “This is a symbolic and international effort to promote peace and

unity.”

The vision is to anchor the post in a raised landscaped enclosure which will include a plaque dedicating the message of Peace to Highlands.

The pole will be a 12-foot high, stained, black locust post with four, 10-inch sides upon which will be engraved the sentence “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in four languages – one per side.

Hudson said the four languages will be indicative of Highlands’ history – English, Spanish, Cherokee and Gaelic.

With the OK to move ahead, once the location is agreed upon, likely at the March Town Board meeting, the pole will be installed in April and dedicated in May.

RGAZ VAḶ Ḷ4ḶḶ

– Cherokee –

Gum buadhaich sith anns gach ceàrn dhe 'n t-saoghal

– Gaelic –

**May Peace Prevail on Earth**

**Que la paz prevalezca en la tierra**

– Spanish –

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# • BUSINESS / ORGANIZATION NEWS •



From left: Rotary host member Robert E Smith, Pamela Courtney Development Director of The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center, and Randy Foster, President.

## Rotary hears about 'The Mountain'

The Rotary Club of Highlands recently enjoyed an informative program hosted by Rotarian, Robert E Smith and his guest, Pamela Courtney, Director of Development at the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center. Just off Dillard Rd, "The Mountain" is an 'ecologically conscious retreat' that provides accommodations for up to 100 guests, full lodging and food services, and conference space. The property also boasts dramatic bluffs and tower views of the Nantahala Forest, hiking trails, and rare white dwarf white oak trees aging 400-600 years old. For more info contact Pamela at [gsoffice@themountainrc.org](mailto:gsoffice@themountainrc.org) or 828-526-5838.

## Chamber needs volunteers for Plateau Pickup April 26

Join your neighbors, friends, family and co-workers for the annual Plateau Pickup on Saturday, April 26. The event kicks off at 8:30am at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park on Pine Street, where volunteers will receive their assignments for stretches of U.S. 64, N.C. 28, N.C. 106, and parts of downtown Highlands.

Participants will be provided a light breakfast, safety vest, gloves, pick-up tools, garbage bags, and a thank-you t-shirt. After the morning's work, a boxed lunch will be served back at the park at 12pm.

"Last year, despite the cold weather, we had an amazing turnout, and volunteers collected an incredible amount of garbage," said Kaye McHan, executive director of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC. "It's heartwarming to see our community come together to beautify our roadways."

Plateau Pickup is part of Litter Sweep, the N.C. Department of Transportation's biannual statewide roadside litter removal initiative.

To participate, send an email to [events@highlandschamber.org](mailto:events@highlandschamber.org) or call 828-526-5841. For more information about Plateau Pickup or other Highlands events, visit [highlandschamber.org](http://highlandschamber.org).

## The Bascom welcomes Jamie Raynor as Director of Development

The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts is delighted to announce Jamie Raynor as its new Director of Development. With over 22 years of experience in nonprofit and higher education leadership, Raynor brings an outstanding record of building relationships and driving philanthropic success.

Billy Love, Interim Executive Director of The Bascom, shared his enthusiasm for Raynor's



Jamie Raynor

arrival: "We are thrilled to welcome Jamie Raynor to The Bascom team. Her proven leadership and passion for the transformative power of the arts make her the ideal fit for this role. We are confident she will provide effective leadership in development and serve as a strong advocate for The Bascom within the philanthropic community as we work together to realize The Bascom's mission."

## Upcoming openings on the Macon County and Fontana Regional Library boards

Two vacancies on the Macon County Library Board and one on the Fontana Regional Library Board will be up for appointment by the Macon County Commissioners at their March 11, 2025 meeting.

The Fontana Regional Library Board appointment can be designated to a new or existing Macon Library Board Trustee, but it is not required.

Library board appointees must be full-time, year-round residents. The appointment term for both

boards is three years, and each board has six regular meetings per year.

Applicants should indicate their interest in one or both board appointments on their application.

The application can be found on the [Maconnc.org](http://Maconnc.org) website, under Advisory Boards & Committees. Submission instructions are detailed on the application.

Monday Appointments Available



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## ...COACHES continued from page 4

raise the coaching supplements 10 percent. The supplements at Highlands School will reflect this increase.

After a request for an assistant JV volleyball girls coach at Franklin High School, Todd Gibbs, HR Director/Auxiliary Services Director for the Macon County School System, also reviewed the other athletic teams and coaching positions in all Macon County Schools.

According to Gibbs, the

school board also made a push recently to make sure every team in the Macon County School System has an assistant coach.

In his review of athletic teams in Macon County Schools, Gibbs found that several other athletic teams did not have allotted funding for more than one coach.

Gibbs looked at each sport at all Macon County schools studying coaches, assistant coaches, coaches

who received supplements and those that were staffed with volunteers receiving no supplements. In addition, Gibbs looked at the number of players for each sport and whether or not the sport consistently makes a team.

So far, the athletic program at all Macon County Schools is strong with all sports consistently having enough players to make a team for each schools' sports.



# • HERE'S THE THING •

## Fixing what's broken



**Bud Katz**

all at least suspect there's waste and fraud costing Americans a whole lot of taxpayer dollars that can be eliminated.

Immigration is, for many, the most pressing and, at the same time, the most fixable issue confronting the new administration. The oft-stated top priority is to identify and deport criminal undocumented immigrants. I don't see any argument against this. Next, though, perhaps Congress can establish a commonsense approach allowing immigrants to legally enter the U.S. to help fill jobs which native-born Americans shy away from. Finally, demonstrate that the same rules apply to our coastlines and the northern border as they do to the southern border. Otherwise, one could get the idea we're targeting only people of color and those who speak different languages.

Here's the thing; elected officials who work as hard to solve real problems as they do to making things better for their donors and parties, can be heroes to those who voted them into office by getting important things done in short order.

On DEI initiatives, most levels of government are already hiring a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce. Private business should be able to hire candidates best suited to do the job without feeling they're being pushed one way or another.

On bloated government, Americans want clean air and water, a strong national defense, sensible regulations, safe roads and bridges, safe schools, housing, drugs and food, etc. What we don't want is millions of Americans summarily dismissed without a compelling and specific reason by some unected billionaire.

On immigration, Congress already knows how to fix the system. Invest resources to get the bad people out while let-

ting good people in. Remember, except for indigenous Americans, we're all immigrants or the children of immigrants. So maybe stop the hypocrisy.

Government needs to work for the people, not the other way around.

• Bruce F. "Bud" Katz, and his wife, Lynn, have lived year-round in Highlands since 2011. Bud is the author of four novels and a work of non-fiction. He facilitates the Highlands Writers Group and spends much of his time in front of a computer making words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, ... etc. You can get to know Bud better by visiting his website, [brucekatz.com](http://brucekatz.com), and you can contact him, regarding this column, his books, or for information about the Highlands Writers Group, at [brucekatzauthor@gmail.com](mailto:brucekatzauthor@gmail.com).



Photo by Marty Boone

"Would you please adopt me?" If Bunny could speak human, that would be the first thing she'd ask. Eight-month-old Bunny is looking for her forever home while she waits at the Cashiers-Highlands Humane Society no-kill shelter. She is sweet and shy and needs a lifelong companion who is gentle, patient and loving. For more information, please visit [chhmanesociety.org](http://chhmanesociety.org).

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Some people either aren't paying attention, or they're experiencing short-term memory loss. The new administration is doing what it said it would do before the election. Did you miss those ads decrying DEI, bloated government and immigration? Nothing is happening that could not have been predicted.

Perhaps, as is often the case, it's not the "what" of what's being done, but the "how."

Regarding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives, if we're honest, there is still an unsettling amount of racism, misogyny, and xenophobia in our country. I don't understand why many Americans think many other Americans shouldn't be treated equally. None of us chose our parents, our genetic markers, our skin or eye color, where and into what circumstances we were born, our gender identity, etc. Why would anyone want to limit opportunity to any other person who also had no choice in these factors? I believe the problem with DEI initiatives isn't about the ideas themselves. It's about government agencies and private companies feeling "ordered" to adhere to them. Americans tend to push back against being ordered to do anything.

When it comes to bloated government, out-of-control spending, and unfathomable debt, there isn't much argument with the fact that reducing the size, scope, and cost of government is an urgent national priority. In this case, again, it's not the issue itself, it's the ready-fire-aim way the administration has chosen to address things. Sure, some of those unaffected by Elon Musk's chainsaw approach think random and wholesale firings are fine. Maybe consider a more measured approach, such as an audit of every agency and department of government that might reveal what and how much should be cut, and how those cuts should occur. Let's be human beings about it.

Remember, the U.S. Constitution names only two functions in which the federal government should be involved, national defense and mail delivery. Over the past 250 years, along with the hundred-fold increase in population, services like education, housing, healthcare, business regulation, transportation infrastructure, our environment, civil rights, and much more you know, things that help people have been created. While much of it is necessary, we

# SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING

## Through the Spirit

Galatians 5:5

**Pastor Sam Forrester**  
Whiteside Presbyterian  
Church, Cashiers

**E**zekiel 36:26 says "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

This is a picture of the coming new covenant. You enter this life with a dead heart or as he says a heart of stone. That heart makes it impossible for you to hear and understand anything spiritual. With a new heart of flesh and a new living spirit you will be able to see your need of a Savior. You will be enabled to hear the truth and will out of a love for it, obey its teaching. Jesus Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh to make possible these two wonderful gifts. With his death on the cross, your new heart was prepared. With his resurrection, the sending of the new spirit was made ready. Galatians 5:5 "But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope." Paul lays before you a very simplistic view of the gospel. Don't be slack in the study of these few words. In this short sentence, Paul gives all you need to understand this glorious salvation.

He makes clear everything required for you to come through the Spirit into this salvation. Your salvation was not by human striving, nor by the will of the human heart. Your salvation is a supernatural work, performed by the Holy Spirit, coming into your heart and changing it, working in your mind, renewing it, changing your want to, driving you to Christ. You cannot come to Christ by your own efforts. You don't have the strength required to turn to Jesus by yourself (John 6:44).

In Genesis 6:5 it's pointed out that the intents and thoughts of a man's heart are continually evil. Jeremiah 17:9 says "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure." The essence of this is that man has a sinful, evil nature. Man loves the spiritual darkness in which he lives. John 3:19-20 "Men loved darkness rather than light" and they "do not come to the light." Paul in Romans 3:10-18 explains "There is none righteous ... There is none who understands ... There is none who does good ... There is none who seeks after God." There is not one man who will take himself out of the darkness into the light by his own initiative.

In the fourth century, there was an English Monk named Pelagius, who began to teach that man could take the initial steps toward God and his own salvation apart from God's grace. The great fourth century theologian Augustine opposed this teaching and it was ultimately condemned by the council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. The church has maintained throughout history the teaching that it takes a miracle of grace to save someone. The Holy Spirit must work a change in the heart of man for him to be able to believe in Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John clearly declares you must be "born again" to be a part of the kingdom of

• See SPIRITUALLY page 11

# PLACES TO WORSHIP

## BLUEVALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

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

## BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

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## CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY. CASHIERS

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

Sun. 10:45a; Wed Study: 5:15p supper and childcare.

## 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

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Pastor Steve Kerhoulas

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## 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

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Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

## HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

## HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road  
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

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

## MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

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## MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church  
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## SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

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

## SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

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

## SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

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Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.  
Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 6 p.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. 24. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.**

## Feb. 24

• At 8:02 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

## Feb. 28

• At 3:35 p.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on US 64 west (Main Street).

## March 1

• At 7:15 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on NC 28 south (Walhalla Road).

• At 10:45 p.m. officers responded to a call of a simple assault of a woman at a residence on Main Street.

• At 11:50 p.m. Uriel Magana Quintana, 35, of Highlands, was arrested at a

residence on Main Street for simple assault. He was issued at \$2,500 secured bond. His trial date is April 3.

• At 3:27 a.m., Amelia Nicole Jones, 33, of Franklin, was arrested for DUI and speeding on NC 106 (Georgia Road). She was issued a \$500 unsecured bond. Her trial date is April 23.

**The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Feb. 25.**

## Feb. 25

• At 2:26 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on N. 4th Street.

## Feb. 26

• At 11 a.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Potter Lane.

• At 4:58 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cheney Lane.

• At 10:02 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on S. 4th Street.

• At 10:34 p.m., the dept. was first-

responders to a residence on Country Club Drive.

## Feb. 27

• At 11:04 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Berit Lane.

• At 3:02 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

• At 4:58 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

## Feb. 28

• At 2:52 a.m., the dept. responded to a brush fire on NC 28 south (Walhalla Road).

• At 1:21 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident NC 106 (Dillard Road).

• At 3:53 p.m., the dept. responded to

a motor vehicle accident on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

• At 10:31 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Gibson Street.

## March 1

• At 6:52 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Clubhouse Trail.

• At 12:43 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of an illegal burn on Choctaw Ridge Trail.

• At 3:33 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

## March 3

• At 2:34 p.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at a location on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

## ...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 10

God. It also teaches when you are “born again” it is “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Your salvation is the exclusive work of God. He initiates the process and carries it through to perfect completion. You are born into this world in a spiritually dead state. You are spiritually blind and totally without spiritual strength. Therefore, until you are given spiritual life, spiritual sight, and spiritual strength you are totally incapable of believing anything spiritual.

Paul says your righteousness comes “through the Spirit.” This means your salvation is not through your moral and religious works. It does not come by your own effort at being good. It does not come because you have been careful to keep the law. Only when the Holy Spirit works in your heart to make it anew will you be saved. The initial act of your salvation belongs to God alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). You can love God only because he first loved you (1 John 4:19). You are “in Christ Jesus” only because of his working in your heart.

Christianity does not operate by natural principles. It is not defined by simply learning or merely accepting a doctrine or creed. It is also not simply the act of deciding to follow a certain person. In our day Christianity has become more of a decision making religion. Terry Johnson, pastor of Independent Presbyterian in Savannah, GA calls it “decisional Christianity.” Which would declare “I saved myself by making a

decision to follow Jesus.” Please understand, people do not become Christians by simply comparing the various choices different religions offer, evaluating the benefits pro and con, and then, through rational thinking choose the best offer. Many people today believe they were saved because they walked an isle, signed a card, raised their hand or prayed a certain prayer. They think, “I made a decision.” But the truth, according to the Scriptures is that they were not capable, nor willing, to make such a rational decision. The only hope for such a proper decision had to come with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Man will always choose darkness over light even though that is a totally irrational decision. Natural man has no desire to follow Christ (John 1:10). Christianity is not a natural religion, it is a supernatural religion. No one can become a Christian except it be “through the Spirit.” Jesus says in John 15:16 you did not choose me, I chose you.

Don’t misunderstand this. Jesus in saying this, was not denying the fact, you make a decision to follow him. What he is saying is your decision comes only after his decision to call you. It happens after he has changed your heart and given you the gifts of faith and repentance. The critical decision was not yours but his. It was only because of his decision that yours was possible. You, my friends, are not saved by your own efforts, intelligence, and strength but “through the Spirit” as he brings you to recognize Jesus as the one and only Savior.

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Crews near Riverwalk and Mirror Lake. Photo by Capt. Leah McCall

## Duke took down trees

On Wed., Feb. 26, Duke turned off the power to Highlands from 8a to 6:30p to remove trees in the Mirror Lake area and Hicks Road that were in jeopardy of disrupting power during storms. They will continue to work in the area removing the remaining parts of trees under their electrical lines and other trees that are not directly next to the lines.

# • 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

## 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.

## 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

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

## 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.

## 2nd Tuesdays

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

## Tuesdays

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

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Workshop for Writers – Tuesdays from 5-6:30 PM.

• 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](mailto: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. 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 de-

vice to receive free assistance and support. No appts 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. 828-526-3556

## 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-noods.

## 3rd Saturdays

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

## 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).

## Ongoing on Thursdays

• Christ Anglican Church on 64 East in Cashiers will host "lunch and learn" brown bag sessions beginning Thursday, at noon led by Michael and Robin Matlock. For eight weeks, the book, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Peter Scazzero, will be the focal point. Come learn how healthy spirituality and healthy emotions are inseparable! Purchase your book copy at Amazon or your favorite bookstore. Call 828-743-1701 or email [cac@christanglicancashiers.org](mailto:cac@christanglicancashiers.org) with questions. All are welcome. **Mon.,**

## March 3

• Summer Camp registration

with the Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau begins Monday. The camp is June 10-Aug. 8, Mon.-Fri., 7:30a to 6p. Register at [www.bgcplateau.org/summercamp](http://www.bgcplateau.org/summercamp)

## Thurs., March 13

• Highlands Town Board Retreat at the Rec Park 9a to 3p.

## March 14-16

• At the Mountain Learning Center Youth Programs – Spring Elementary CON <https://www.themountainrlc.org/event/homecoming-2/>

## Fri. & Sat., March 14-15

• Highlands Elementary School presents Disney's Alice in Wonderland, Jr. at PAC at 6pm.

## Fri., March 14

• Megan Drake will be bringing a troop of her trained Irish Dancers to perform St. Patrick's Day music from 7-9 p.m. at the Otto Community Center. Mountain Muse Band is the musical headliner and Slanted Window Tasting Room will supply refreshments for purchase.

## Fri., March 21

• Community Coffee with Mayor Pat Taylor in the Hudson Library meeting room 11 a.m. He will be discussing the upcoming 2025-2026 budget.

## Wed., March 26

• The Cashiers Historical Society and Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library will present Lillian Smith: Breaking the Silence, a film screening exploring the life and legacy of Southern writer and activist Lillian Smith. th, from 3-5pm. This event is free and open to the public, with a discussion to follow. For more info., call the Cashiers Historical Society at (828) 743-7710 or [info@cashiershistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@cashiershistoricalsociety.org).

## April 13-18

• At the Mountain Learning Center, Music Week. Classes, workshops, and one-on-one sessions with nationally touring musicians. 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 is a community-wide cleanup day dedicated to preserving our town's natural beauty. For more info, go to [highlandschamber.org](http://highlandschamber.org) or call 828-526-2112.

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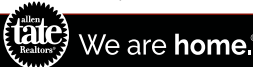
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