

Highlands' Newspaper FREE

Volume 5, Number 10

PDF Version - www.HighlandsInfo.com

Thursday, March 8, 2007

Notices:

• Highlands School Stakeholders Reports are being sent home with report cards on Friday. Parents are asked to fill them out and return them to the school office by March 16.

• There is no school on Memorial Day for Highlands School.

On-going

• Step Aerobics at the Rec Park, 4-5 p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays. \$5 per class.

• At Health Tracks at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Osteoporosis prevention exercise classes, a total body and muscle-toning workout exercise class, and Pilates classes. Call Jeanette Fisher at 828-526-1FIT.

• A Grief Support Group is held every Friday from 10-12 at the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital for anyone who has lost a loved one through death or is dealing with a progressive illness with a loved one. Call 526-0727 or 787-1463.

• Every Tuesday Weight Watchers meets at the Highlands Civic Center. Weigh-in is at 5:30. The meeting starts at 6 p.m.

• Live music at Fressers in Helen's Barn featuring Cy Timmons 6 p.m. until.

• Live music at Cyprus Restaurant every Friday at 9:30 p.m.

Every Tuesday

• Women's Bible Study, Beth Moore's study of Daniel at Community Bible Church Fellowship Hall. All ladies invited. Call the church at 526-4685 to order your book.

Friday & Saturday, March 9-10

• The Instant Theater presents the Highlands Community Players production of *Parallel Lives*. Call the Instant Theatre Box Office to reserve your tickets at 342-9197. Performances begin at 7 p.m.

Saturday, March 10

Macon County Soccer Club Spring registration at Rec Park from 10-1.

Sunday, March 11

• A Taco Dinner after church 12-2 p.m. at Highlands United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall. All proceeds will benefit the church's mission trip to Bolivia.

March 13

• At the Rec Park at 10 a.m. Manifest Destiny: A New Direction for America, by William Pfaff, from The New York Review of Books, Feb 15th, '07. Coordinator: Walter Burnett. Material will be distributed by e-mail.

• Episcopal Church Stations of the Cross - 5 p.m.; Soup & Salad - 5:30 p.m.; Speaker the Rev. Virginia Monroe - 6 p.m. "Prayer/Spiritual Direction." All invited.

Thursday, March 15

• "Embodying Trance: Sacred Figurines of Prehistoric Crete" 7 p.m. at Highlands Yoga and Wellness on Carolina Way. Lecture and Slide Show with Clinical Anthropologist Dr. Robinette Kennedy. Tickets are \$10. Call 526-8880

Downtown parking issues undecided

Much to do about parking was once again discussed at the Town Board meeting Wednesday night and once again nothing was decided.

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Bob Kieltyka suggested the elimination of all timed

parking down the center of Main Street and on Fourth Street while keeping the strict enforcement of no owner/employee parking on Main extending to the Falls on Main complex.

He also suggested two or three parking permits per real es-

tate business on Main Street for employees on duty and requested some sort of pick-up and drop-off allowance for business owners.

"While the two-hour parking helped with the employee/owner parking issue, it placed a burden

• See PARKING page 21

Audit shows hospital on the upswing

Despite the apparent descent of Highlands-Cashiers Hospital last year, all indicators point to a hospital slowly climbing out of its fiscal and operational hole.

Though most hospitals, particularly small acute-care hospitals lose money on the operations side, the board of directors and President Ken Shull are determined to prove statistics wrong.

"My goal is to get our operations loss to zero in 18 months," he said last week during an audit review.

With a year-round surgeon team in the works, a full-time internal medicine physician and a part-time urologist and gastrologist coming on board, revenue should be strong for fiscal year 2007-08, said Shull. All tolled the new physicians should generate \$3 million

"Understandably, we lost money in operations fiscal year 2005-06 but we will never make a profit because of the size of the community we serve and the quality and range of services we offer," said Shull

The overall loss for 2005-06 was \$4,201,079 compared to 2004-05's \$2,951,476.

However, despite rising Med-

• See AUDIT page 20

Weekend Weather:

FRI	SAT	SUN
50-34°F	51-36°F	53-37°F

Girls spring soccer begins



Highlands' Jesse Johnson shrugs off a Brevard opponent at Monday night's game at Brevard. Upcoming games are: March 7, 5:30 p.m. home against Franklin; March 9, 4:30 against Rabun Gap; and March 12, 4:30 home against Tallulah Falls. The record so far is 1-1.

Photo by Noel Atherton

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Presbyterian church plans to beautify streetscape

The Presbyterian Church has come up with a way to both beautify the corner of Fifth and Church streets and create a safe pick-up and drop-off area for its members.

At the March 7 Town Board meeting, Jeff Weller with DeWolf Architecture, presented plans for a park-like setting which would make the Kelsey Monument and the area where the time capsule is buried a focal point while solving an accessibility problem for the church.

"Basically we want to increase accessibility and functionality of the site," said church board member Pat Moore.

As it is now, the drop-off parking spots on one-way Church Street cause people to get out of their cars on the wrong side while causing traffic to back up on Church Street Sunday mornings.

Two curb-cuts were requested - one on Fifth Street near the present staircase leading up to the fellowship hall; the other on Church Street close to the fellow-

• See STREETSCAPE page 17

State budget, bond issues trouble county

By Susanna Hearn
Reporter

Governor Easley's proposed budget for 2007-2008 and several bills being introduced in the General Assembly have county commissioners ready to storm the state house.

At the March 5 Macon County Commission meeting, commissioners agreed to let the state know how they feel specifically on several points: its proposed Medicaid match by counties; the state bond issue for the state-wide redistribution of county wealth for schools;

the redistribution of State Lottery funds; and the state mandated raise in landfill rates.

Commissioners also agreed to request permission to issue a bond referendum to raise money needed for capital improvements.

• See STATE page 11

• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• FORUM •

• LETTERS •

From my Perspective



Mayor Don Mullen

Several of us have just returned from our trip to South America and the Antarctica and, indeed, it was incredible. Antarctica is a truly a land of superlatives and extremes and without doubt one of the most awe-inspiring places on earth as the highest, most arid and most isolated continent in the world. Indeed, it is, as the sign says at our ship boarding City of Ushuaia at the tip of South America, "fine del mundo," the end of the world. Crossing Drake's Passage in our ship, the Explorer II, from Argentina to the Peninsula of the Antarctic was a two-day experience in itself, with swells of up to 30 feet surrounding and enveloping us and making even the most strong-hearted a bit nauseous and nervous. But once there, the scenery was amazingly beautiful.

It truly was a wonderful experience. Glaciers, icebergs and snow-covered mountains of great beauty in white and shades of violet and blue scattered amongst humpback whales, seals, penguins and birds of varying kinds greeted us as we navigated on small Zodiac boats. These boats were launched from our ship to go ashore in the various bays and inlets as we passed through and around all this beauty amongst the ice and clear blue waters. It's interesting that the ice cap over this continent holds 70% of the earth's fresh water as frozen ice which is over a mile thick in places. It was truly a wonder.

Along with us on the Explorer II was reporter Scott Pelley and his crew from the CBS show "60 Minutes." They were doing a piece on climatic warming and were dropped off at one of the research facilities. He told us their story should be aired sometime in late March. Global warming is something we all should be concerned about and

• See MULLEN page 10

Wake up and live well and free

Dear Editor,

Seems every time I write a letter to the editor my rage is beyond containment. Someday I will write something happy and positive, but for now I'm sick to my stomach over corruption, again.

As Americans, we should be used to the self-serving, lying, double-dealing politicians, but I can't get used to the massive level of this on the local level. Did we inherit this curse? I think it moved in from points north and west, partially, but some of it was born and bred right here.

I got used to party jumping, but I can't get used to the toxic waste in our landfill, taxation geared specifically toward driving the middle-class out of the county to make room for the big spending country club types with six zeroes in their bank accounts. This, when in the same year there are reports of assisted land and home ownership programs across the country. I wonder how many of the potential homeowners will speak English?

We've got a bunch of out-of-state experts bringing ETJ to teach the poor uneducated southerners how to live and what they can have in their yards. Got rules? We do now. Don't know how I made it without politicians telling me how I could live out past the town limits.

In America and locally, we've gotten used to panty-chasing, drunkenness and lies, even drug-use they think no one knows about, but we should never get used to the thieves of freedom to make rules for us. Admittedly, I lean right with a libertarian bent and I will live and die as free as possible. I am truly sick of the condescending bunch telling me how to live while their morals are in the gutter.

If our leaders can't be more honest and fair than the honest joe, what right to they have to make and enforce rules? We, the people, deserve to be represented by better examples of the human race with the interests of freedom at heart. Socialism stinks.

All statements in this article are my opinion and mine only, with no guarantee of correctness. Do your own research. Always seek the truth. Don't keep your head in the sand. To the honest and fair citizens of Highlands and Macon County may you live well and free.

Russell K. Arnold
Highlands

Highlands' Newspaper provides great service to the public

Dear Editor,

Your newspaper provides a fantastic service to property owners because you routinely report the specifics of each real estate transaction in the Town and the Township. This allows all citizens to keep up with the accuracy of the taxation system and values of real estate because you are reporting assessed values and selling prices.

Additionally, at year-end you publish cumulative transactions for the full year so that those who slept through your weekly reports can catch up. Certainly, the many pages this requires is very expensive for the newspaper. What a true service to readers. Thank you so much for this effort to inform the public!!!

Jim Whitehurst
Highlands

• See the Dec. 23 2005 and Dec. 21 2006 editions which list the year-to-date real estate transactions go to www.highlandsinfo.com/PDFarchives.htm

Regular meetings of the MC board of commissioners to change

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the provisions of N.C.G.S. 153A-40, the Macon County Board of Commissioners has fixed the time and place of its regular meetings as follows:

Day of Month:
Second Monday beginning April 9, 2007

Time of Day:
6 p.m.

Place
Commissioner Board Room, 3rd Floor,
Macon County Courthouse, 5 West Main
Street, Franklin, NC 28734

As of the 5th day of February, 2007, upon which date a Resolution establishing the meeting schedule was adopted. A copy of the notice of this notice has been duly posted at the Macon County Courthouse this the 12th day of February, 2007.

Sam K. Greenwood,
County Manager

• See LETTERS page 14

LETTERS-TO-THE-EDITOR POLICY

We reserve the right to edit submissions. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands' Newspaper. Please email letters by Monday at 5 p.m. There is a 500-word limit without prior approval.

Highlands' Newspaper

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• OBITUARIES •

Robert D. Carpenter

Robert D. Carpenter, 68, of Atlanta, devoted husband and father, died March 2, 2007. He died peacefully at home after a short bout with pancreatic cancer.

He is survived by his wife of nearly 46 years, Janet J. Carpenter; his daughter and son-in-law Beth and Roger Welker of Ft. Lauderdale, FL, and grandson Luke; and his son and daughter-in-law Mark and Stephaney Carpenter of Huntsville, AL, and grandchildren Mark Jr, Claire, Margaret, Faith, Sam, and Caleb.

Robert was a native of Ringgold, GA, and a graduate of Ringgold High School and University of Georgia (1961). He retired from Georgia Power Company as vice president, having served in customer service and regulatory & consumer affairs. His 33 years with the company took him from Augusta to Statesboro, Valdosta, and finally Atlanta. He was instrumental in the development of Project Share, a program administered by the Salvation Army to assist individuals with emergency needs such as food, shelter, rent, utility bills, or medication. Following retirement he served as a consultant for American Express, Andersen Consulting, CELLNET, and Bickerstaff Clay Products.

Robert served on the boards of Druid Hills Golf Club, Wayne Reynolds Scholarship Foundation, DeKalb Christian Acade-



Robert Carpenter

my, Nature Conservancy, and Georgia Conservancy. He was active in Ocean Forest Golf Club, Druid Hills Golf Club, Sea Island Golf Club, Gridiron Honorary Society, Atlanta Botanical Society, Atlanta High Museum of Art, and Commerce Club. He also started and finished the Peachtree Road Race for 10 years.

Robert was an active member of The Church of the Apostles. He and his wife had a personal ministry of encouraging people to read the Bible through. He was also involved with Resource Service Ministries, a religious-based organization whose focus is ministering to widows in need. His life verse was Micah 6:8: "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." It was very important to him that he be able to bless his children and grandchildren in person before his death, and the Lord granted his wish just two weeks ago.

A memorial service was held at The Church of the Apostles at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, March 6, with Dr. Michael Youssef officiating. Burial was at Westview Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to The Church of the Apostles, 3585 Northside Parkway, NW, Atlanta, GA 30327, or Leading the Way, PO Box 20100 Atlanta, GA 30325.

Jack W. Brockway, Jr

Jack W. Brockway, Jr., 63, of Highlands died Thursday February 22, 2007 after struggling many years of with the disease. The memory of Jack's zest for life will continue to live on. He believed in organ donation and would have been so happy to know that 33 people have already benefited from his gift.

Born in Boston, Mass on February 16, 1944 to his parents Jack W. Brockway, Sr. and mother, Estell "Ginger" Brockway, Jack grew up in Atlanta, GA coming to Highlands on weekends and during the summer months. He attended Sewanee Military Academy, before graduating from North Fulton High School in Atlanta. He graduated from Andrews Junior College then was drafted into service during the Vietnam War. He completed his education after his service commitment and spent his career in sales as an entrepreneur.

He is survived by his wife, Shirley Brockway of 27 years, his sister, Fredricka (Ricka) and husband, Geary Langford of Thomasville, GA; his four sons: Jack, III and wife, Tracie of Radford, VA; Anthony and fiancée, Jeannell Mimms of Atlanta, GA; Brian and wife, Nicole of Augusta, GA; and Charles and wife, Lacy of Highlands, NC; brother-in-law, Charles Baty and wife, Lyla of Miami, FL.

He is also survived by grandchildren Hannah, Emma & Wilson Brockway, two nieces, Kearsley and Ginger, and one nephew, Ford.

Jack was active in many professional organizations including the Jaycees, Navy League and Rotary Club.

Please join the family in the celebration of his life in a memorial service to be held on Saturday, March 10 at 11 a.m. at the Highlands Episcopal Church of The Incarnation with the Reverend Dr. James Yeary officiating.

Donations may be made to "The Highlands Scholarship Fund" that his father established years ago and so many graduating seniors have benefited from.

Bryant Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Online condolences can be made to www.MeM.com or bryantfuneralhomes.com.

• MILESTONES •

HS graduates shine



Jackie Reed



Claire Frederick

Two Highlands School 2006 graduates made the Chancellor's and Dean's lists at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro.

Jacqueline D. Reed made both the Chancellor's List and the Dean's List. To make Chancellor's List, full-time undergraduates must have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.65 of a possible 4.0 and be enrolled in at least 12 semester hours of

course work. They also must have completed 30 hours of course work.

Claire E. Frederick made the Dean's List. To make Dean's List, students carrying at least six hours of course work must earn an academic grade-point average of 3.5 or higher, with no grade lower than a B-. Students are eligible after they have completed 15 hours of course work.

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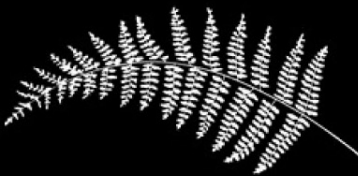
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Great golf course, lake and mountain views. This like-new home is located at Highlands Falls Country Club. Vaulted great room with stone facing and wood paneled fireplace, large screened porch and two open decks. Eat-in kitchen is open to the great room and dining area. Large, beautifully landscaped yard for children or grandchildren to play in. Great views of the golf course, mountains and lake from the decks. \$725,000



Like new mountain cottage with 2 bedroom, 2 1/2 bath mountain home offers a living room with vaulted ceiling and stone fireplace, screened and open decks, hardwood floors, and a loft. Love the way it's furnished? You're in luck, it's offered furnished. Lovely waterfall in the front yard and plenty of wrap around decking. Furnishings list available upon request. Priced at \$439,000.



Rustic cottage in an expensive neighborhood. This rustic cabin styled home could be the best buy in the area. With some remodeling, this home could be a showplace and with its location in one of the most expensive neighborhoods in Highlands, all money spent to fix this home up would be money in the bank. The great room has a beautiful stone fireplace and the home has the feeling of being in a great lodge. Check this one out!! \$775,000



Rare lot on Cullasaja Drive in the Mirror Lake area. 1.10 acres with gentle terrain. City Water and city sewer are available. Build your perfect mountain lake cottage or subdivide into 2 parcel and the building possibilities are endless. This special opportunity will NOT last long. Contact us today. \$450,000

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• LAUGHING AT LIFE •

Let's trash "The Constitution"

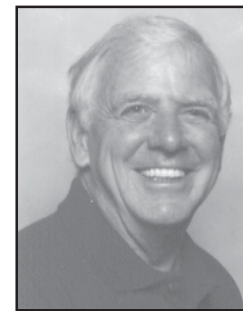
Holy Moly, did I just write that in a newspaper? Will I be labeled Benedict Wooldridge? I've been called worse. Did I mean to say we should take our beloved Constitution and throw it out? Read further before dragging out your white sheets and heating the tar buckets.

Years ago, I took my wife and three small children to Washington D.C. to gaze upon America's Constitution. I stood in awe, staring at the preserved parchment that has governed Americans' lives for more than 200 years. The penmanship, the formation of the words, the boldness of their declarations, the structure and thought put into each sentence overwhelmed me. Before walking away, I leaned forward, violating the red cords that kept me at arm's length from the document and touched the protective glass.

I am a proud American whose eyes water during the singing of the national anthem. I know that's corny but I can't help it. I am not a Democrat or a Republican, just an American. I put my hand over my heart during the Pledge of Allegiance and I always stand for the presentation of the flag.

I was also taught by my first-grade teacher, a Catholic nun, to hate Germans and Japanese. We prayed they would all be killed. That same year the U.S Supreme Court ignored our Constitution and locked up 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent just because they were of Japanese descent. Today, Executive Order 9066 is decried as a shameful and dishonest act against an innocent people. I say horse feathers! We are so quick to forget our history. Pearl Harbor was still fresh in everyone's mind so most Americans approved. Japan had just sunk most of our Pacific fleet and we were in a fight for our lives. No one cared about Constitutional violations, including the Supreme Court. When fighting for your life, you will throw out all the rules. Remember that!

During the period our Constitution was written, one-shot rifles were our main line of defense. If an infantryman was fast, he could re-load and get another shot off in about 30 seconds. Today, an infantryman can fire more rounds in 10 seconds (Dread weapon)



Fred Wooldridge

•
**Feedback
 is encouraged!
 email:**

askfredanything@aol.com

than our revolutionary militiaman could fire in a full week, and that's without sleep. Our Constitution moves with the speed of the one-shot infantryman.

An Electoral College was established as a method to determine who would be our president. We, the people, have never picked our president because our Constitution doesn't allow it. Duh! Don't you think we are now competent enough to pick our own president? More Americans voted for Al

Gore than George Bush. Would Gore have taken us to Iraq? Are the American people smarter than the Electoral College?

I point out these significant facts to suggest our beloved Constitution has become a relic and in need of revision, not replacement. Americans now have three choices in leaders: incompetence, corruption or both. All the real American statesmen are gone. The current publicity stunt occurring in Congress right now over Iraq is a perfect example of what I mean; a little circus music, please. If our forefathers returned to view the world as it is now, they would faint. Then they would beg us to revise their Constitution.

Yet any mention of revising, reviewing or streamlining the Constitution will bring the wrath of many. How noble. Britain was just as stubborn right before the American Revolution. The more I travel the world, the more I realize how much we are politically hated. I have met the infidels. Helloooo....it really is us!

We are now at a point in time when another world war can start with just one small misstep by any country. Israel and Iran come to mind. There are a rapidly growing number of radical Islamic fundamentalists out to shove our outdated Constitution down our throats. We are losing the political fight because we are weak in morals and fortitude.

At some point in the future, when the next world war is in full rage and we are being picked to pieces here as we currently are in Iraq; when the terrorists do to us what we did to the mighty British army; when we cannot tell the good Muslims from the bad ones, they

• See WOOLDRIDGE page 9

• ANOTHER VIEW •

We're in for a long sordid campaign

Ann Coulter is not a loose cannon. She is a conservative author, commentator, hit man, and a very precisely aimed cannon. She said exactly what she intended in a speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference, "I was going to have a few comments on the other Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards, but it turns out you have to go into rehab if you use the word 'faggot,' so I — so I'm kind of at an impasse and can't really talk about Edwards." Her explanatory follow-up was similarly well aimed to titillate the faithful, get a little wider coverage, increase her appearance fee, and maybe plant a seed of doubt regarding Edwards' sexual preference. In response to criticism of her statement, she wrote, "C'mon, it was a joke. I would never insult gays by suggesting that they are like John Edwards. That would be mean."

Celebrities have recently found refuge, if not recovery, in rehabilitation. Mark Foley, Mel Gibson, and Gavin Newsome all claimed alcoholism in explaining their actions, and each announced the intention to seek treatment. Their apologies can be summarized as follows, "I accept full responsibility for my dastardly actions, but booze made me do it." Someone out there may believe that Foley's interest in young Congressional pages, Gibson's hatred of Jews, and Newsome's affair with an aide's wife



Dr. Henry Salzarulo

**Feedback is encouraged.
email:
hsalzarulo@aol.com**

were caused, or fueled, by alcohol. I don't believe it, anymore than I believe that Issac Washington, a TV star on "Gray's Anatomy," really expected rehab to cure him of his homophobia after calling a fellow cast member a "faggot." Tara Connor, party girl and reigning Miss USA, tearfully entered rehab after being busted. Ted Kennedy may have reached the White House if he had entered rehab immediately after Chapaquidick.

Republican presidential candidates, Mitt Romney, John McCain, and Rudi Guilliani each criticized Coulter's slur. They were right to do so.

There is no doubt that, among her target audience, Coulter's stock rose. She fed red meat to the lions. She mocked the celebrity retreat to treatment, a position with which I agree, but she insulted the gay community, played on prejudice, and launched a personal attack against John Edwards, which I can and must criticize.

Swift Boat Veteran ads which questioned John Kerry's patriotism and service, and Dan Rather's report using forged documents to impeach President Bush's National Guard service were low points of American campaigning. The personal attack on Edwards suggests that worse is still to come in 2008. When Coulter suggested that John Edwards is a homosexual, she excited the crusaders of the coalition of conser-

•See ANOTHER VIEW page 11

• POLITICS AT THE STATE LEVEL •

Senator John Snow

50th Senate District of North Carolina

Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood (Part), Jackson, Macon, Swain and Transylvania

The news out of Raleigh this week is decidedly mixed. Early this week we received news that North Carolina's economic climate is among the best in the nation; however, later in the week we learned that our high school graduation rates are pitiful. As our state develops we are going to have to have a stronger educational system for our students in order to continue to enjoy the strong economy that we have today. Given the dual importance it is safe to assume that we will see legislation during this session of the General Assembly that will bolster our educational system while keeping our business climate moving forward. The Senate is very focused in finishing bill drafts as the final deadline for bill submission in that chamber is quickly approaching. All bills must be submitted by March 13.

Bonds, Pensions, the School Calendar, Property Tax Relief, Drop Out Rates, and Bill Movement

Bonds:

Over the last few weeks I have written a bit about our bond situation in North Carolina. To recap there are several groups that are looking for a bond issue to finance their programs. These include the education system for new school construction, the DOT for new road construction, environmental groups for Land and Water Preservation, and advocates for improving the state's water and sewer system are amongst the most prominent of those that have said they would like to have a bond. The Treasurer has said that the most the State can af-

ford is \$2 billion in new bonds. The total for all of the aforementioned projects is closer to \$30 billion. The governor, in his budget, has recommended two bond issues totaling around \$1.4 billion. The first would improve water and sewer conditions in rural counties and the other would be for the construction of state building projects including university buildings, general government buildings, and some prisons. Pensions

Standard and Poor's, one of our nation's leading financial analysts, released a report stating that North Carolina's pensions fund is the second strongest in the nation. The pension fund is currently valued at a record \$61 billion and contains the pension funds of every public school teacher, police officer, and state and local government employee in North Carolina. Nearly 700,000 North Carolinians have their retirement in this fund. The health of the pension fund plays a direct role in determining the state's credit rating

The School Calendar:

Before I was elected to the State Senate the General Assembly passed a bill that changed the school calendar. As all of us know this change was not in the best interest of our students and was largely driven by eastern and coastal interest groups who figured they could make a little more money off of people if summer vacation lasted a week or two longer. This policy change has hurt our students by forcing them to take their end of semester tests after the Christmas break.

•See STATE POLITICS page 20

• REMODELING & DESIGN •

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Parallel Lives

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Friday & Saturday,
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March 30-31
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• REFLECTIONS FROM TURTLE POND •

Why I live in these mountains

I read voraciously as a teenager. I remember haunting the fiction aisle of my local library, pulling down whatever titles struck my fancy. One day I came across *Christy*, by Catherine Marshall, and it was one of the books I read at that time that changed my life.

Christy is a true story about Mrs. Marshall's mother. Christy grew up in a well-to-do family in Asheville, N.C., and in the early 1900s heard a missionary speak about the great needs of isolated communities in the Appalachian Mountains. At 19 she traveled alone to a tiny community in Tennessee called Cutter Gap to teach school. Cutter Gap was desperately poor, and Christy suffered a great deal from culture shock in the first few months.

At first she felt only revulsion towards everyone and everything because of the poverty and filth, but as she got to know people she came to love many of them and realized there was a depth to these mountaineers that she had never noticed in her city acquaintances.

The book is very inspiring. Christy felt totally inadequate when she compared her skills and experience to those of the older missionaries, yet because of her love, compassion and strength of character she ended up making a huge difference in the life of the entire community.

This book is one of the reasons I live in the mountains of North Carolina. I grew up in St. Louis and spent time every summer in the Ozarks when I was a teen-ager, hiking and canoeing and exploring caves. When I read *Christy* I encountered someone who loved being in the woods the same way I did.

I re-read *Christy* last summer and felt like I was reading a description of myself. Christy and her friend Fairlight wander in the mountains finding pink lady's-slippers and picking berries and Turk's cap lilies. Every May I visit the special places where I know I'll find my favorite flowers, especially the lady-slipper. In early August I plan my schedule around blackberry picking and jam-making. I eagerly anticipate the first sighting of towering Turk's cap lilies by a stream I know, their orange a counterpoint to the nearby pink rhododendron blossoms.

But until last summer I thought it was just the physicality of the



Katie Brugger

Appalachians that drew me. I read *Random Thoughts and the Musings of a Mountaineer*, by Judge Felix Alley, to learn more about the 1911 Whiteside rescue that earned Charlie Wright the gold Carnegie Medal for bravery. Judge Alley was born in Horse Cove in 1873 and despite considerable obstacles obtained an education and became a respected judge.

This is his memoir, and the first chapters in particular are an interesting first-person history of this area.

Judge Alley was, in part, writing in response to the prejudice against mountain people in his time (his book was published in the 1940s)—he rails against two writers in particular who gave the impression that all mountain people were drunks, lazy, and ignorant. What is amusing though is that after asserting there are plenty of Appalachian people of integrity, intelligence, hard work, etc., Alley recounts story after story of drunkards to illustrate the wit of his people.

His book reminded me that it was the character of the mountain people as portrayed by Catherine Marshall that had also inspired my from-a-distance love for these mountains.

The word that comes to mind when I think of mountain people is "taciturn," which means "not talkative." Most of us flatlanders who have moved here have struggled with this because we are used to strangers being much friendlier.

Christy described her own struggle with the taciturn nature of the mountain people, and as she got to know people she realized that they didn't show fake emotion—particularly the automatic "hi, how are you?" routine that we cityfolk engage in. So much of conversation seems to be talking for talking's sake, to prevent silence.

The mountain people may not talk much, but if you are ever in trouble they will go out of their way to help, and that's not true of most of us flatlanders (myself included). One time my car ran off the road and some people I knew drove by because they were in a hurry, but then some locals I didn't know came by and not only did they stop to help, they went home for a chain and ended up spending almost an hour helping me out.

In our politically-correct time all

•See BRUGGER page 11

• CP: OFFICE LINEBACKER •

Calling audibles on sports and life

Ante up

By the time this hits the stands today, I will be in the middle of the Caribbean soaking up the sun and sipping a margarita. Maybe a rum punch or raspberry lemonade... but that's beside the point. I'm writing this before I have absolutely no access to the rest of the world and very little has occurred that could be considered newsworthy.

As I sit here deciding what could be worth spending my time on, the subject of poker fell into my lap. OK, it didn't fall into my lap; I booted up my online poker engine and started a futile attempt to rebuild my (play) chip stack against other players. Poker is a great game to play and watch from time to time; sometimes the idiot who calls a raise for half of his chips wins with 8-4 off suit against a flopped straight out of sheer luck (damn you FaStMoNeY394) and sometimes the pocket pair of 2s beats a strong ace king combination.

Poker, however, is NOT a sport. Sure, it takes a massive amount of mental stamina in order to be a great poker player. It takes sharp senses, excellent gut instincts, and the cajones the size of cannonballs in order to bluff someone into giving up the winning hand. Poker can be played by anyone fairly well as long as they get lucky and play with any common sense whatsoever. ESPN has increased poker's popularity by televising the World Series of Poker as well as other events featuring the more prominent poker professionals.

Unfortunately, it's getting out of hand. It's very rare to have a day where the reruns of past WSOP events aren't emblazoned on any ESPN affiliate. It has spread to other networks as well, such as Mansionpoker.net on Fox Sports and secondary events on Comedy Central and Fox. Poker has gotten a makeover, proclaiming it to be man's next "get rich quick" ideal with little effort. It all started back in 2003 when an accountant from Tennessee named Chris MoneyMaker won the Main Event as a rookie. When MoneyMaker lived the true rags to riches dream, the size of the Main Event doubled the following year with players hoping to achieve the same goal.

I liken it to the lottery, only more expensive up front. For the Main Event



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alone, just plunk down 10 grand and attempt to last longer than more than 8700 other people. Don't have 10 grand? Some poker websites offer a chance to win a smaller tournament for a "prize" of 10 grand that goes to a seat at the Main Event. The risk isn't quite as big, but the opportunity for reward is astronomical.

Poker involves almost no physical activity. Mike Matusow has proven there is some

(and I use that term loosely) physical activity in every game with one of his patented blowups. Poker players can be spoiled worse than other professional athletes. How often do you see Peyton Manning getting a massage while in the huddle for the Colts? It's a regular occurrence at the poker table, especially for Phil Ivey. Ivey once ordered a massage that lasted more than 6 hours. At least Tiger Woods works up a sweat walking the golf course.

Poker is a great game to play, but beyond that it has no credibility as a sport. I love the game, and it can have the passion, intensity, and tension levels with any playoff game, but it will never supplant the effort level of a football game. The lingo is great to use though. A message to a special someone out there, quoted from something I played recently: "My life is but a chip in your pile. Ante up!"

Democrats elect new precinct officers & delegates

The Highlands Precinct of the Macon County Democratic Party held its annual precinct meeting on March 1 and elected new officers and delegates. There were 14 party members in attendance.

The new officers are: Chairman, Allan Bryson; Vice-Chairman, Lee Hodges; Secretary, Robert E. Smith; and Treasurer, Ralph Stevens. The precinct has seven delegates, and serving along with the officers are Pat Taylor, Allen Trott and Farrel Zehr. Our alternate delegates are Edna Bryson, Mike Bryson, W. N. Bryson and Eric Pierson.

Any Democrat wishing to join the Highlands Precinct for our activities is welcome. Contact Robert E. Smith, 526-4594.

King and Queen Valentine



Residents of the Fidelia Eckerd Living Center were treated to a special Valentine's Day party recently featuring cake, refreshments and the crowning of a Valentine's King and Queen. Ed Sharp, shown here being crowned by fellow resident Frank Smith, was named the Valentine's King. Delores Belcher was chosen Valentine's Queen. Runners-up Ward Bathrick and Nona Hornbeak were prince and princess of the event, which was held Feb. 20. The festivities were originally scheduled for Feb. 14, but had to be postponed due to efforts to help prevent the spread of several viruses that have swept through both the Highlands and Cashiers communities.

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• HIS & HERS •

Like watching a train wreck

On Thursday morning, I turned on my satellite TV to surf 24-hour news programs, as I worked on the computer on various projects. To my horror, Fox News had gone to continuous coverage of the train wreck known as the Anna Nicole Smith body custody trial. As a lawyer, I watched a few minutes of it. It was horrible, but fascinatingly, it kept getting worse and worse as it went along.

It was like reading a truly dreadful book or watching a dreadful movie that you know is rotten. But you keep reading or watching to see if it can get even worse. And this one did.

I won't comment on the legal aspects of this case. I agree with many other commentators who said the case should have been decided on an obvious point, in a hearing lasting perhaps 20 minutes, tops.

I have to make a few comments about Judge Larry Seidlin. I've dealt with hundreds of judges, at every level from District Court (lowest level "police" court in Baltimore) to the US Supreme Court. I've seen judges who were characters, or fancied themselves as comedians. But, I've never before seen the likes of Judge Seidlin.

Early in his career he was a cab driver in the Bronx. I conclude that you can take the cab driver out of the Bronx, but you can't take the Bronx out of the cab driver.

A local, legal website in Broward County says that this judge is a victim of his own "inner comedian." I can believe it. He rambled. He repeated himself. He talked at length arriving at no known point. There are people who have microphone syndrome.

Confronted with a microphone, they fall in love with the sound of their own voices, and start talking interminably about essentially nothing.

Judge Seidlin also committed reversible errors by the bushel, in my opinion. Most of the testimony that he took in this case was inadmissible and irrelevant to the one real issue presented. The best analogy to how he "ran" his courtroom was a classic Superbowl commercial which began



Michelle Mead & John Armor
michiemead@aol.com
John_Armor@aya.yale.edu

with cowboys ridin' and whompin'. As the shot widened, you realized they were herding cats. The cats were running every which way and on top of each other, like the gaggle of lawyers in Seidlin's courtroom.

But that wasn't the half of what made this

spectacle so awful.

Consider the judgments the editors at Fox News, and all other news agencies, made as they decided to go wall to wall (or nearly that) with that story. As Michelle said to me, this was driven by the fact that many/most men go gaga over blond hair and large boobs on a woman, even if neither the hair color nor the boobs are real.

Couple that with the fact that this unfortunate woman wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed when she was sober – and when she was high on booze, drugs, whatever, she became as dumb as a hoe handle. The last pathetic aspect as that everyone in that courtroom was trying to stay on the financial gravy train created by Ms. Smith – never mind that she is now dead.

If anyone in that courtroom turns out to have been both honest and capable, I will cheerfully apologize to that exception to the rule.

Until then, I condemn the participants in this pathetic circus, and I condemn the American audiences who watched this empty farce. The "news" media are not in the business of providing the most important information in clear fashion. Their job is to "attract eyeballs." The more people who are watching whatever drivel is on the screen, the more money advertisers will pay for their spots.

The dumbing down of what is called news started in 1977, when ABC News put Roone Arledge, then in charge of its Sports Division, in charge of its News Division. The network was, unfortunately, correct in its judgment. News is really entertainment, except with unpaid actors and unpaid scripts.

The continuing coverage of Anna Nicole Smith, never mind that she's dead, is scraping the bottom of that particular barrel.

• THE CONSERVATIVE POV •

Don't look now....

You probably have heard about the two Border Patrol agents who are currently in prison, serving long terms for evidently doing their job. To refresh your memory,

In February 2005, agents Ramos and Compean were on the job patrolling the Texas-Mexico border when they encountered drug smugglers who had entered the U.S. with a van loaded with 700 pounds of marijuana.

Upon seeing the agents, the leader of the smugglers, Aldrete-Davila fled to his van, turning to point a "shiny object" at them. One of the agents shot, hitting A-D in the rump. What had happened since defies belief.

Our federal government sought out A-D, then once back home in Mexico, gave him total immunity so that he, an alien drug smuggler, could come to Texas to testify AGAINST our Border Patrol agents. Ramos and Compean were convicted in a court presided over by Johnny Sutton, a Bush appointee, and were sentenced to terms of 11 and 12 years.

There are reports that either two or three of the jurors convicting the agents were coerced in making their decision. There are further reports of tainted evidence, withheld information and a judge, Sutton, who seemed anxious to arrive at a conviction.

So, in January of this year, the two were imprisoned over the vigorous objection of thousands of outraged citizens and several members of Congress. In the infinite wisdom of the Bureau of Corrections, Ramos was placed in a prison with many Mexican drug smugglers, some of whom he likely arrested, and was promptly kicked and stomped into the infirmary by his fellow inmates.

Aldrete-Davila is now suing the United States for \$5 million.

One would assume that this perverse activity discourages non-imprisoned Border Patrol agents from doing their job and emboldens drug smugglers. Why has the administration turned its back on these public servants by not pardoning them? Why has the administration been so non-supportive in fence building and so willing to provide amnesty to illegals? Does NAFTA seem to benefit the U.S. to you?

Being without research facilities on the road, I'm not certain of the status of a piece of legislation which would



Don Swanson
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eliminate the 25-mile intrusion limit into the U.S. by Mexican cargo trucks and allow them free passage anywhere in the country.

From what I hear, this is baked in the cake. With the border problem staring us in the face, I can't conceive of why we would want to allow this, but I have a theory.

There is noise around that the move is on to form the "North American

Union." Not much is known about the NAU, at least that which is publicly available. It sounds to me like there is an effort afoot to eventually eliminate the borders between U.S. and Mexico and U.S. and Canada. There would be unrestricted travel between what used to be the countries, a common currency and unfettered free trade. It looks like our current immigration and border security problems are chickenfeed compared to what might be ahead.

So what is driving this effort to amalgamate? What do the following have in common? Cheney, Rice, Wolfowitz, Negroponte, Powell, Albright, Greenspan, Soros, Carter, Clinton (B) and Kerry. They are some of the members of the Council on Foreign Relations. This is one of three major organizations whose reason for existence is to promote a one world government.

With the EU a fact of life, the NAU in the talking stages and an Asia Union on the horizon, this may be the explanation for what seems now to escape our understanding. One thing that is in our understanding is that, no matter what the source, our sovereignty is under attack. Stay tuned.

... WOOLDRIDGE continued from page 4

will all be rounded up and caged for our protection. As in WW II, fear will allow that to happen.

I beg for a Constitution that temporarily suspends our freedoms in a time of crisis; one that allows the people to pick their president and not allow him to pardon and release hundreds of criminals during his last days in office; a Constitution that is flexible and can allow for rapidly changing times. Honestly, there are so many changes needed, I could fill this entire page. I know, I know, you're still coming with the tar and feathers. How noble....how naïve!

• HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS HOSPITAL NEWS •

Summary of February Board of Directors meeting

To keep the news media and the public better informed about Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, we are providing you with a summary of the more significant actions and discussion items coming before the hospital's board of directors at its most recent meeting (Thursday, Feb. 22).

- Board Chairman Bud Smith began the meeting by welcoming three new members to the board. Dr. Dave Register and Griffin Bell were in attendance at the meeting. The third new member, Charlie Sheehan, was present via conference call.

- Ava Emory, interim manager of the Eckerd Living Center presented an educational moment for board members on the Eden Alternative program, which the center has been implementing for several years now. A national initiative designed to encourage nursing facilities to strengthen their focus on caring for the whole person, not only their medical needs, the Eden program involves increasing opportunities for socialization, both within the center and with the outside community. Locally that has involved opportunities to interact with animals, children and adults from the community, field trips to regional attractions, fishing excursions at area trout ponds, and a host of other special activities. It has also involved efforts to give residents more control of their surroundings in order to create a more home-like, less institutional environment.

- Melody McMaster of the CPA firm of Dixon Hughes presented the final audit report for the 2005-2006 fiscal year to the board. The hospital received what is called an "unqualified" audit, and for the second year in a row the firm made no recommendations for any changes in the hospital's accounting practices and procedures. The audit report, which was only finalized last week, will be released to the press and public next week.

- The finance committee reported that, as anticipated, the hospital lost money during the month of January. However, that loss was only slightly more than last January (when the hospital still offering general surgery). The amount of the loss did slightly exceed the loss that had been projected in the budget. However, the hospital chose to advance some of its bad debt

expense and write that off in January for administrative reasons. That bad debt expense should equalize out over the coming months. Without charging off that expense early, the loss in January would have been significantly less than originally budgeted.

- The board heard a brief report from its Governance Committee. A day-long board retreat has been scheduled for May 10 at The Mountain, in Highlands. The need for more frequent education for board members was one of the recommendations made by the outside consultant hired to advise the hospital on restructuring last summer.

- Chairman Smith reported that he had appointed a special committee of board members to begin interviewing potential architects to design the future medical office building in Cashiers. It will be built on the old Oakmont Lodge property, which was purchased by the hospital two years ago.

- President and CEO Ken Shull reported that Dr. Toby Lindsay has reopened his practice in family medicine in Cashiers and that it is going well. He also mentioned that board-certified emergency physician Tony Fisher, MD, is already at work in the hospital's ER two days per week. Fisher has also assumed a newly expanded role as Medical Director of Emergency Medicine at the hospital.

Shull said a prospective internal medicine physician is visiting the area this week and another is scheduled to visit next week as well. He said both a urologist and a gastroenterologist continue to express strong interest in relocating their practices to the area this spring. Both are planning to semi retire and want to have only part-time practices – a perfect fit for the area's needs. Shull said the hospital continues to interview general surgeons, but is being highly selective in trying to find a surgeon with outstanding qualifications and who will be the right fit for both the hospital and the area in general.

- Shull also reported that he and other administrators from hospitals in the WNC Hospital Network had recently met with Health Shuler, the district's new U.S. Representative, to discuss issues affecting the health care industry.

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... FORUM continued from page 2

begin to take seriously in all that we do in making our own town energy efficient and as emission free as possible in the decisions we make.

And from the cold of the Antarctic we headed north to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and beyond to the magnificent water falls of Iguazu where the temperature was 107 degrees, quite a contrast from the cold of Antarctica. Iguazu was a place where we saw some of the most beautiful collections of huge waterfalls in the world. But it is indeed good to be home to our own beautiful little piece of the world. More on this trip when our pictures are developed and organized, and Hillrie Quin, Travis Goodloe, and I can show you more.

Now something about what is going on in our town.

In the Town Board meeting last week we made progress in almost completing zoning in the ETJ area north of town. Only one small area remained along Zachary Road and that was handled at the board meeting this week. It has been a long process but we are almost there. I commend both the Planning Board and the Town Board on many hours of hard work in coming to these conclusions regarding zoning in ETJ. We have all tried to be fair to all and take all considerations and suggestions seriously in making decisions fair to all in our community. The concerns of many residents regarding home businesses, equipment

sheds and non-conforming uses are being handled in separate ordinances and a public hearing has been set next month for these changes after the Planning Board completes its work on them.

Another important matter which was taken up by the Board Wednesday was the OEI proposal to restructure the bad intersection at Fourth and South Streets where new home construction is taking place on the old Nick's property. The plan looks good and has been approved by our engineer, Lamar Nix. It calls for more sidewalks and green space and makes the intersection not only look better but much safer than it is now. Although OEI will initially pay for this, we will be seeking Dept. of Transportation funds to reimburse them. It will be a great improvement on what we now have at that intersection.

The board also approved extending the sidewalk on Fifth Street to Chestnut. The DOT plans sidewalks on Chestnut this year from Fourth Street to Sixth Street, and we are hoping at sometime to also add a sidewalk on Sixth Street from Chestnut to Main. We are in conversation with Wesley Grindstaff from DOT about all of this in addition to walkways and pathways along the Dillard Rd. when it is paved later this year. We are making good progress in creating a pedestrian-friendly town in Highlands and hope soon to make major strides in greenways around it.

• HIGHLANDS FINE DINING •



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... ANOTHER VIEW
continued from page 5

vative Republicans and the religious right. She raised the issue not only of one candidate's sexual orientation but also exploited the fear her followers feel concerning homosexuals, same sex marriage, gay and lesbian rights, and even pedophilia. And you can bet that Ann laughed all the way to the bank.

It is, as we say, a free country. Ann Coulter can say anything she wants. But her popularity among conservative Republicans is a sad indictment of the state of American politics.

Most Americans are sick of negative campaigning, although their votes and opinions are influenced by the attacks.

My guess is that we are in for another long sordid campaign, one filled with distortions and attacks by candidates and their surrogates of both parties. And unfortunately, money spent on the likes of Ann Coulter still seems to be money well spent.

... BRUGGER continued
from page 6

prejudice is supposed to have been banished but it is still acceptable to make fun of "hillbillies." The "ignorant hillbilly" is still a stock character in films: I recently saw "Million Dollar Baby" and the fighter's family were stereotyped dimwitted hillbillies.

I think there is an unconscious prejudice against mountaineers here in Highlands. When people talk about preserving the character of Highlands, it seems to me that what they are talking about is keeping land undeveloped and maintaining the small town character of our business district.

But I have only heard one person mention preserving the *culture* of Highlands, and that is Betty Fisher. Betty was born here and when she returned a few years ago after many years absence, was distressed to find that there was no place to hear mountain music and clog. So she started a "Mountain Music Series" to help preserve this aspect of mountain culture.

For almost fifty years the music and dancing at Helen's Barn was the center of Highlands' nightlife. An "old-timer" once said to me, "the locals and summer people used to mix at the dances but now there's no place for that." Maybe it's too late, maybe too many locals have been pushed out, but I for one would hate to see the end of the hillbilly in Highlands.

**There is NO SCHOOL for
Highlands School on
Memorial Day, May 28**

... STATE continued from page 1

Or, instead to levy a land transfer tax or a sales tax if commissioners prefer that to a bond referendum. If they decide on a bond referendum it will be put on the November 2007 ballot in time for the 2008-2009 budget.

Currently, the state's proposed health-care program will require a Medicaid match by counties. "To accomplish fiscal relief and make the match, the county would have to raise taxes," said County Manager Sam Greenwood.

The new plan is part of the governor's proposal to expand Medicaid to 11,800 children whose family incomes are between 200 and 300 percent of federal poverty standards. The budget also includes purchasing 844,000 treatment courses for Pandemic Influenza and increasing recruitment of doctors and dentists in rural areas.

Rebecca Troutman with the NC Association of County Commissioners said the Governor's budget doesn't offer any concrete plans for county Medicaid relief. "He has charged the State and Local Fiscal Study Commission to bring forth a county Medicaid relief plan. If a consensus isn't reached, the governor's office will release its own county Medicaid relief proposal," she said.

Greenwood said commissioners should lobby representatives for a favorable position on the Medicaid situation.

Commissioner Jim Davis said the Medicaid situation isn't going to get any better. "They keep putting money into bankrupt programs like Medicaid and Medicare that aren't working," he said. "The programs are in trouble and they're making the counties pay for it."

Easley's budget, which was released late last month, also recommends decreasing lottery funds for school construction.

Easley's \$20 billion budget proposes reducing the current 40 percent of Education Lottery funds to 30 percent, and increasing the allocation to the state's early education initiatives.

"This could cause counties a potential loss of \$44 million if the budget estimate of lottery sales reaches \$1.5 billion in the next fiscal year," said Troutman.

Counties would lose \$44 million with more losses in future years, despite facing \$10 billion in school capital needs over the next five years. The proposal needs General Assembly approval to implement a change in the allocation of funds.

"The purpose is to remove an addition-

al 25 percent allocated for school construction and put it in a pool to expand education programs state-wide. This is self-defeating in itself," said Greenwood. "They want to expand programs, which would require more space and yet take money away to acquire the space."

The budget also recommends a state-wide \$2 per ton landfill tipping fee to support evaluation and remediation of abandoned landfills and hazardous waste sites. This fee would be on top of any fee levied by the counties to support current landfill operations and availability.

"This is another example of the state's continued unfunded mandates," said Greenwood. "DENR is lobbying for the \$2 a ton tipping fee increase at land fills which will be forwarded to the state to be used state-wide to clean up industrial sites. This would be in addition to what we charge to operate our program."

The 2007-2008 budget would increase state spending by 7.2 percent or \$1 billion.

The budget also has recommendations for tax changes which include retaining the quarter cent sales tax and the upper income personal tax bracket which is set to expire July 1. This would provide \$300 million in

• See STATE page 14

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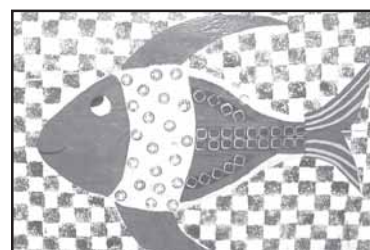
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Citizens air views about recent tax reval

On Saturday, citizens gathered at the Rec Park to complain and to discuss ways to get tax relief as it applies to the recent reval, but they learned there will be no quick fix and there's little county commissioners can do.

"There's not much we can do for you expect lower the millage rate," said Macon County Commissioner Vice Chairman Ronnie Beale. "The state mandates the procedure and we have to do it."

Right now Macon County has one of the lowest tax rates in the state. "And it should be one of the lowest considering the property values," said Beale.

Beth Greenlee, a Jackson County resident who owns acreage in Whiteside Cove and is a previous resident of Florida, organized the meeting to try to start a grassroots movement to revamp The Machinery Act which allows counties to assess property at market value for the purposes of establishing the property tax.

"The problem is, when The Machinery Act was written, no one foresaw the astronomical rise in property values that has resulted in today's ruinous taxes," she said. However officials say it's unlikely The Machinery Act will be revamped because that's how money is raised across the state.



Robin Armstrong addresses about 40 people who turned out for the "Tax Talk" at the Rec Park, Saturday, March 3.

The Machinery Act, which has been amended a few times since it first passed in North Carolina in 1939, says the current market value of property is to be considered by the assessors during revals for the purpose of levying property tax.

Clear Creek resident Harold Neely said the fallacy is that property values rise faster and higher in Highlands than elsewhere in the county so its citizens are penalized without seeing extra services for their efforts.

Beale said that argument is as old as the system and realtors would say that the increase represents a good investment.

But even some realtors say property values are getting out of hand. "My clients can't sell their properties for the current assessed value and yet they have to pay taxes based on that value," said Janet Chester with Keller-Williams.

Beale said since Highlands' inception, which was started as a "destination" place and quickly became a second-home market and resort area, the property values have risen more than elsewhere in the county. However, MC Tax Assessor Richard Lightner said this year Nantahala saw higher percentage increases than Highlands.

But each property reval cycle sees the market value of real estate in Macon County rising so taxes rise, too.

To combat this, commissioners have passed revenue neutral budgets over the years — actually lowering the millage rate or keeping it the same year to year.

This year, Sam Greenwood, county manager said once the budget is ready for presentation in May, he expects the millage rate to drop to at least .30 (\$3 per \$1,000) from the current .37 (\$3.70 per \$1,000). Four years ago the assessed market value of real estate in Macon County was \$5.5 billion. This year it's \$8 billion.

At Saturday's meeting Commissioner Beale said the millage tax could even drop to the mid-20s.

"All the counties in Western North Carolina are in the same boat," he said. Senator John Snow emailed Beale and said he recognizes that this is the number one financial hardship facing the people of Western North Carolina and he's introducing a Homestead Act bill to address the problem. (See "State Politics" on page 5).

Beale said the problem with the Homestead Act is that all 100 counties in the state have to agree to it.

"That will never happen in the center of the state," he said. "It's great for the mountains and the coast but not for the center counties because they need the mon-

• See TAX REVAL page 14

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Macon County Soccer signups on now



MC Soccer signups are Saturday, March 10 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Highlands Rec Park. Also, plan for the 4th Annual Challenger Soccer camp this summer. July 9-13. Half-day camps are available for all ages from 3-16 and full-day camps are available for children 10 and older. To register call Christy Nix Weller at 526-9931 or Tony Esterwood at 524-1928. Learn more about Challenger Camps through the website at www.challengersports.com. Register online 45 days prior to camp to receive a free challenger soccer jersey! Highlands children who participated in Challenger Soccer Camp of July 2006 include From left: Kaitlyn Wolfrey, Josh Wolfrey, Remy Adrian, Kenan Lewis, Emma Weller, Jessica Tilson, Colin Weller, Andrew Figel, Whitney Billingsley, David Long, Adam Schiffl, Evan Schmidt, and David Long. Back row, Coaches, Stephan, Henrique, and Phil. Not pictured, Christian Trevathan.

High school graduation rate county and state concern

By Susanna Hearn
Reporter

The State Board of Education released the four-year cohort graduation rate on Feb. 28 and Highlands School ranks high in Macon County with a rate of 87.8 percent.

North Carolina public school officials have kept tabs on each ninth-grader as he or she progresses through high school since 2002. This record keeping has provided the state with a four-year cohort graduation rate. It's the first actual count of how many students graduate with a diploma in four years.

The overall rate for students in the state is 68.1 percent, but according to the Department of Public Instruction this does not mean that 32 percent of students have dropped out. About 15 percent of ninth-graders are held back each year and some of those students will probably graduate in five years or more.

The cohort graduation rate only shows how many students graduate in four years or less, but not how many actually drop out. The NCDPI will publish the four-year cohort graduation rate for students who entered ninth-grade for the first time in 2003-04 in the summer of 2007. This report will include a fifth-year rate for the students who entered ninth grade for the first time in 2002-03.

Franklin High School's graduation rate was slightly lower than the state average at

62.4 percent and Nantahala School's was slightly lower than Highlands at 85.7 percent. The four-year cohort rate will replace the "On-Time Graduation Rate" in 2007. This will necessitate changing the NCLB workbook for North Carolina but this has yet to go to the State Board of Education.

Concerning the drop-out rate, Senator Snow has reported that members of the legislature are suggesting ways to combat this situation. One of the first ideas introduced is to increase the compulsory school age from 16 to 18. "By mandating students stay in school until they are legal adults we may be able to entice more students to stick with school for all of high school and increase their chances of graduating," he said.

On a separate but related matter a controversy is brewing over a new core curriculum that is being developed for submission to the State Board of Education. The new curriculum would require that students take more math and foreign language classes before they graduate from a North Carolina high school.

"The controversy stems from the recognition that added graduation requirements could only compound the drop-out rate problem," said Snow.

State policy counts students who leave public schools to enroll in GED or adult high school programs as dropouts, while some states count these as transfers. Public

• See RATE page 17

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... STATE continued from page 11

additional revenue. The budget proposes eliminating or lowering state income taxes for 1.2 million individuals or families making \$25,000 or less.

Teachers would benefit under the new budget with five percent salary increases, a step increase and an additional flat \$1,240 to bring teacher salaries above the national average by 2008-09. School administrators would also benefit with a 4.44 percent increase. A 2.5 percent increase would go to state employees and university faculty with

... TAX REVAL continued from page 12

ey."

With the Homestead Act, a length of time is determined for occupancy – say five years — at which time "homesteaders" are entitled to a lower tax rate. In some cases, like in Florida, a tenure requirement and a cap has been placed on how much taxes can increase for homesteaders. In Florida's case it's three percent.

"That means that regardless of the property valuation, homesteaders' property taxes can't increase more than three percent," said Lightner. "Florida has a double system in place."

He said homesteading would work well here in Macon County because 50 percent of homeowners are second homeowners so the county would still get the money it needs through property taxes while the full-timers would see tax relief.

Beale suggested citizens request county commissioners to join forces with the other western counties to work as a team for property tax reform. He said to suggest a few avenues in a letter including the Homestead Act, and a transfer tax. "There's more power if we're all pulling for the same thing because we need relief for folks," he said. "Ask us to pass a resolution to push for a transfer tax if we see fit."

He said a transfer tax, where the buyer of real estate pays one percent of the selling price to the county, would make a lot of sense and would enable the county to continue to decrease the property tax rate while accumulating the money needed for services and programs.

But Lightner said the Homebuilders and the North Carolina Association of re-

... LETTERS from page 2

Town should focus on in-town problems

Dear Editor,

At the Feb. 7 Town Board meeting J.P. Johns of McGill & Assoc. gave his report on the town's stormwater collection and drainage system. He pointed out what some of us have been complaining about for quite some time – the town's existing stormwater drainage system is insufficient and these inadequacies should be corrected to prevent the degradation of the streams and riparian areas associated with those streams.

In several of our public meetings about ETJ, concerned citizens in the ETJ said the

another 2.5 percent going to full-time community college faculty and professional staff.

The new funding in the budget is directed at Governor Easley's education initiatives and increased enrollment in public schools, community colleges and universities. Plans include expanding the Learn and Earn High School/Community College initiative and giving a \$4,000 college tuition grant to 25,000 students whose families earn less than 200 percent federal poverty

altors lobbies have a lot of money and a lot of clout in Raleigh so it's unlikely a transfer tax bill would pass.

However, in 1986, the N.C. General Assembly allowed seven of the 100 counties in North Carolina to impose a one percent land transfer tax. Five coastal counties — Dare, Camden, Currituck, Pasquotank, and Chowan — incorporated the tax. "And they have a lot of money," said Beale.

Proponents say a transfer tax is a viable solution for raising revenue in resort/second-home markets in mountain counties like Macon and waterfront counties where real estate is churned and property values escalate. It's also where second- and third-home owners enjoy income from their purchase as vacation rentals which represents an added seasonal strain on local services and infrastructure of the communities.

Lightner said in 1986 those coastal counties had the right senator with the right clout to push the tax through.

Property owners who filed for an appeal by the February 22 deadline will be heard during the 11-day appeal process which begins April 11. Citizens can go all the way to Raleigh for relief. "But you should know that Macon County has never lost an appeal in Raleigh," said Beale.

Though Greenlee is pushing for reform of the Machinery Act she encouraged anyone interested in working on the property tax relief reform to contact her at 526-3150 or Robin Armstrong at Highlands Whole Life Supply at 526-5999.

– Kim Lewicki

guidelines to complete a four-year degree without incurring debt. (See related story page 13.)

There is also a "Wealth Redistribution Education" bond issue where the wealth of one county will be redistributed to help less fortunate counties pay for education.

"It shouldn't matter if a county is wealthy or not," said Commission Chairman Charlie Leatherman. "It should be based on the money spent per student and what's needed. The state pays the same rate for teachers statewide regardless of the county."

Commission Bob Simpson said Macon County sets the tax rate as mandated by the state based on property's market value and because Macon County has a high market value and a low tax rate it is being penalized.

"The state figures we have enough money to pay for what we need in education so instead of giving back to us, it's go-

•See STATE page 19

SOAR activities coming

The legacy of the countries fallen warriors continues with the 2007 SOAR campaign.

SOAR stands for the Special Operations Adventure Race whose proceeds fund the Special Operations Warrior Foundation. The Foundation provides funds to guarantee the post high school education of children of fallen Special Operations operatives.

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Today more than 700 children have fallen parents with nearly 100 of them eligible for college in the upcoming years. The foundation's estimated financial need through 2018 is \$40 million.

The foundation also coordinates with the Special Operations Command to ensure the needs of the wounded special operations are met including providing \$2,000 for immediate needs when special operations personnel are hospitalized.

This year's adventure race activities are set for June 19-23. There is a golf tournament at the Sapphire Mountain Golf Club on June 19; The Silent/Live Auction at the Highlands Conference Center on June 21; and the Special Operations Adventure Race on June 23.

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• See CLASSIFIEDS page 17

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

Are you Squirming?

By Darlene Melcher

Community Bible Church

Jersey, my loveable sandy-colored cat, was perched contentedly on my chest with both paws nestled

around my neck. She usually loves cuddling this way and this was no exception as indicated by the loud purring. All was well until... Ellie, my other cat entered the room. All Jersey could see was the intruder she feared. Neither of my cats are mean or violent, but most of their playing looks more like something from Monday night wrestling; they keep each other on their toes. By this point, Jersey was trying to jump from my arms to get to a better position. I looked down at her and said, "I know you're just a cat, but don't you see how much bigger I am than Ellie? Nothing is going to happen to you while I'm holding you."

Ah, how God loves word pictures and this one was not lost on me. One minute we are enjoying God's presence and trusting in Him and suddenly... some perceived problem or fear enters the scene. Our eyes dart back and forth like a nervous cat. Only moments before, we were focused on God alone, enjoying the comfort and joy of His nearness. We fidget and squirm and try to run away from the danger, not realizing how much bigger God is than what we fear.

Never before have I had such understanding of Psalm 46:10 in which God says, "Be still and know I am God." The first two verses in this chapter give us an even greater understanding, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea." How in the world can we have this kind of peace and assurance? We must keep our eyes fixed on the God who made this world and all the universe and everything in it. We must not allow the fear to fill our view and suddenly seem so big.

I am reminded of Peter. One minute he is walking on the water out to Jesus and suddenly... the crashing waves divert his eyes and before he knows it, he and his faith began sinking below the water. Thankfully, Jesus is just as faithful to reach out and pull us up when we call to Him, as He was to save Peter from drowning.

When something comes along that diverts your attention and makes you want to squirm and panic or even run and hide, remember God. A God big enough to create the heavens and the earth. A God big enough to start the clock of time ticking. A God big enough that He can be with you at all times, in all places. A God big enough to come down to earth in the form of a man, Jesus Christ, and pay the price for sin, which we deserved to pay, with His perfect blood on the cross.

Remember and "Be still."

• PLACES OF WORSHIP •

BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice, Pastor (706) 782-3965
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

Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11
First Saturday: Singing at 7:30 p.m.

CHAPEL OF SKY VALLEY

Sky Valley, Georgia
The Right Rev. Dr. John S. Erbelding, Pastor
Church: 706-746-2999

Pastor's residence: 706-746-5770

Sundays: 10 a.m. – Worship
Holy Communion 1st Sunday of the month
Wednesdays: 9 a.m. Healing and Prayer with Holy
Communion each service

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS

NC 28 N. and Pine Ridge Rd., (828) 369-8329
Rai Cammack, Branch President, (828) 369-1627

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

Office – 526-2320
Sunday: Holy Communion -- 2 p.m.
(Community Bible Church on U.S. 64 between Highlands
and Cashiers)
Visiting Rectors Series: March 11: Rev. Ed Moore; March 18:

Rev. Frederick Richardson
March 25: Rev. Don Alley
Tuesday: Womens weekly Bible study at 2 p.m.
Wednesday: Mens Bible study at 8 a.m.
at First Baptist Church

Pot Luck Supper last Sunday of each month.
All are Welcome!

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Everett Brewer
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11
Prayer – 6:30 p.m.
Evening Service – 1st & 3rd Sunday -- 7 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

(Evangelical Presbyterian Church)
www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685
3645 U.S. 64 east, Highlands
Sundays: 9:30 a.m. Sunday School; 10:45 Worship;
Tuesdays: 10 a.m. Womens Bible Study
Wednesdays: 5:15 p.m. Students' Dinner (free for kids in
8th grade and younger);
5:30 p.m. Supper; 5:45 p.m. - 7:15 pm Small Groups for
kids Pre-K through 8th; 6:15 pm - 7:15 pm Adult Bible
Study 6pm-7pm Choir Practice
• Small Groups are offered for all ages throughout the
week, see our website or call for more info.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

Rev. Brian Sullivan – 526-2968
Sunday: 8:30 a.m. - Breakfast; 9 a.m. - Sunday School;
9:45 a.m. - Choir Practice; 10:30 a.m. - Holy Eucharist - Rite
II; 5:30 p.m. – Youth Meeting

Monday: 7:30 a.m. – Stations of the Cross; 11 a.m. –
Contemplative Prayer; 4 p.m. - Womens Cursillo Group; 5
p.m. - Evening Prayer

Tuesday: 8 a.m. - Mens Cursillo Group; 9:30 a.m. - Staff
Meeting; 11 a.m. – Contemplative Prayer; 4:30 p.m. – EFM
Meeting; 5 p.m. – Stations of the Cross; 5:30 p.m. – Dinner;
6 p.m. – Speaker

Wednesday: 11 a.m. – Contemplative Prayer; 5 p.m. –
Evening Prayer

Thursday: 10 a.m. - Holy Eucharist with healing; 11
a.m. – Contemplative Prayer; 5 p.m. – Evening Prayer

Friday: 7:30 a.m. – Stations of the Cross; 11 a.m. –
Contemplative Prayer; 5 p.m. – Evening Prayer

• Sunday Service on Channel 14 Sun. at 10:30 a.m.

FIRST ALLIANCE CHURCH OF FRANKLIN

Rev. Mitch Schultz, Pastor • 828-369-7977
Sun. Worship 8:30 & 10:45 a.m.; 6: p.m. (nursery provided)

Sun. school for all ages 9:45 a.m.
Wed: dinner 5 p.m. followed by childrens
Pioneer Club 6 p.m.; Junior & Senior Youth Group 6:30 p.m.;
Adult Bible Study & Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.
Small groups available throughout the week.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Dr. Daniel D. Robinson, 526-4153
Sun.: Worship – 8:15 a.m., 10:45 a.m., 6:30 p.m.; School –
9:30 a.m.; Youth – 6:30 p.m.; Choir – 7:15
Wednesdays: Dinner – 5:30 p.m.; Team Kids – 6 p.m.;
Prayer – 6:15 p.m., Choir – 7:30 p.m.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. J. Hunter Coleman, Pastor, 526-3175
Sun.: Worship – 11 a.m.; Sun.School – 9:30 & 9:45.
Mondays: 8 a.m. – Mens Bible Discussion & Breakfast
Tuesdays: 10 a.m. – Seekers
Wednesdays: Prayer – noon; Supper – 6 p.m.; Choir – 7
Sat: Adventistas del Septimo Dia – 10 a.m. & 5

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Sixth Street
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11
Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study – 7

HIGHLANDS 7TH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Wednesday evening prayer & Bible Study
Call Lloyd Kidder at 526-9474

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Pastors Eddie & Kim Ingram, 526-3376
Sun.: school 9:45 a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.;
5 p.m. Youth Group
Wed: noon – Mens Emmaus Reunion Group; 4:45 –
Childrens choir and handbells; 5:30 – Supper; 6 – Adult
Handbells; 6:15 – children, youth, & adults studies;
7:15 – Adult choir

(nursery provided for Wed. p.m. activities)

Thurs:12:30 – Womens Bible Study (nursery)

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH – ELCA

Rev. Delmer Chilton, Pastor,
2152 Dillard Road – 526-9741
Sundays: Worship/Communion – 10:30

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

8 miles south of Highlands on N.C. 28 S in Satolah
Pastor Jamie Passmore, (706) 782-8130
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11
Choir – 6 p.m.

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

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

St. Cyprians Episcopal Church, Franklin 369-6871
Friday: Sabbath Eve Services at 7 p.m.

For more information, call (706)-745-1842.

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Tien, Priest
Parish office, 526-2418
Sundays: Mass – 11 a.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Clifford Willis
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 Alfred Sizemore
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 10:45 a.m.; Evening
Worship – 6 p.m.

Wed: Adult Bible Study & Youth – 7 p.m.

For more information call 526-3212.

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Wayne Price
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11
Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study – 7

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

Rev. Maureen Killoran (part-time) 526-9769
Sundays: Worship – 11 a.m.

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Cashiers, Rev. Sam Forrester, 743-2122
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11

... **RATE** continued from page 13

schools in North Carolina cannot count students as having transferred to another school unless they receive a request from that school for their records. The cohort graduation rate also does not reflect students with disabilities who make it through the twelfth grade but do not qualify for a normal diploma and earn a Certificate of Achievement or Graduation Certificate.

Public school officials hope that projects like the New Schools Project which has smaller, more focused schools: Learn and Earn, which gives high school students the opportunity to earn a two-year college degree while in high school to help improve the four-year and five-year graduation rate.

High school turnaround efforts for the lowest performing North Carolina high schools; adolescent literacy coaches; and an increased focus on rigor, relevancy and relationships in high schools are also meant to improve the graduation rate. The Learn and Earn initiative from the state has made the Early College High School possible in Macon County. That school opened its doors August of 2005.

• **CLASSIFIEDS** •

VEHICLES FOR SALE

2001 JAGUAR S-TYPE 4.0 – Excellent condition. 98K miles. Still under warranty. \$15,000. Call 828-243-6447.

ANTIQUE 1926 MODEL T FORD TOURING CAR – Fully restored. Needs a new starter. Selling for health reasons. \$15,000 but will discount cost of starter and ignition work. Great car and lots of fun. Call Horace Duncan at 526-3760.

2003 DODGE STRATUS – red exterior, gray interior, 30,000 miles, AM/FM cassette, A.C. PW, PS, PB, clean. \$8,000 OBO 828-526-3257.

1991 SUBURBAN 3/4 TON, 130K miles, 20K on Tranny, 350 V8, lift w/wheels & tires, good condition, never off-road, white/blue \$4350. Call 200-0013.

SERVICES

PERSONAL CARETAKER – Run errands, clean house, buy groceries, Transport to appointments. References available. Call Cheryl. 828-421-6685.

FIVE STAR CLEANING & MAINTENANCE – Light and detail cleaning, concierge services, openings and closings, grocery shopping, personal shopping, personal chef and table service, house repairs, improvements: lighting, plumbing, fixtures, tile, dry-wall repairs and more. Call 828-332-7201.

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C&C CONTRACTING – WE GET IT DONE – SMALL OR LARGE – Remodeling, decks, doors, windows or the whole house! Call Art Doughty at 828-508-1360 Workmen's Comp, General Liability, References

HIGHLANDS SHUTTLE SERVICE – Atlanta Airport Shuttle. Drive - Away • Auto Delivery. All Out-of-Town Trips Driving Services. Call 526-8078.

... **STREETSCAPE** from page 1

ship hall building.

The driveway would enter the property from Fifth Street and loop back to exit at Church Street so people can disembark at a covered walkway. "This will create a safe, functional access to the church," said Weller.

The Town Board unanimously approved the request for the curb cuts but said church representatives would have to go through regular channels – the appearance commission and the planning board – for approval of the proposed park-like setting extending from the corner of

Church and Fifth to the corner of Fifth and Main streets.

In the proposal, asphalt along Fifth Street – other than what's needed for existing parking – would be removed and replaced with grass and foliage. In addition, a meandering sidewalk would connect the existing Church Street sidewalk to the existing Fifth Street sidewalk.

"The extension of the sidewalk would create a continuous sidewalk loop between Main, Church, Fourth and Fifth streets," said Weller.

Next the plan goes to the appearance commission.

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• UPCOMING EVENTS •

On-going

- NA open meeting every Saturday at 7:30 p.m. of the ACC Satellite Group at the Graves Community Church, 242 Hwy 107 N. in Cashiers. Call 888-764-0365 or go to the website: www.ncmana.org.

- Step Aerobics at the Rec Park, 4-5 p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays. \$5 per class.

- Beginner Classical Yoga Group meets On Mondays, 5:45-7 p.m. at Highlands Yoga and Wellness, 464 Carolina Way. Mats and blankets provided. Learn the basics and improve your health. Other classes available. Call 526-8880 Ashby or Chad.

- Yoga Classes at the Rec Park. Mondays and Wednesdays at 7:30 a.m. Bring your mat. \$7 per person per class or \$50 for a monthly pass.

- Angie Jenkins on the piano at the Old Clayton Inn in Clayton on Fridays and Saturdays for dinner.

- Beginners Clogging class Tuesday, 6-7 p.m. at the Sapphire Valley Community Center. Come have lots of fun and exercise. Call 743-7663.

- At Health Tracks at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Osteoporosis prevention exercise classes, a total body and muscle-toning workout exercise class, and Pilates classes. Call Jeanette Fisher at 828-526-1FIT.

- A Grief Support Group is held every Friday from 10-12 at the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital for anyone who has lost a loved one through death or is dealing with a progressive illness with a loved one. If interested in attending, please contact Helen Moore (Hospice) 526-0727 or Martha Porter (Chaplain at HCH) at 787-1463.

- Every Tuesday Weight Watchers meets at the Highlands Civic Center. Weigh-in is at 5:30. The meeting starts at 6 p.m.

- Live music at Fressers in Helen's Barn featuring Cy Timmons 6 p.m. until.

- Live music at Cyprus Restaurant every Friday at 9:30 p.m.

- Children's classes resume at Bascom-Louise Gallery - cost is \$5 per student. Mondays: For Home-schoolers, classes are from 1-3 p.m. For 2nd to 5th graders, classes are from 3:15-4:15 p.m. Tuesdays: classes for pre-school are 11-11:30 a.m.; for kindergarten-1st grade, classes are 3:15-4:15 p.m. and for young adult independent study, classes are from 1-2:30 p.m.; Wednesdays classes are for middle school students from 3:15-4:15 p.m.

Every Tuesday

- Women's Bible Study, Beth Moore's study of Daniel at Community Bible Church Fellowship Hall. All ladies invited. Call the church at 526-4685 to order your book.

- Open Studio Night Figure Drawing Informal instruction available for beginners. Bring your sketch pad or paint box for a leisurely session of figure drawing/painting. Cost is \$12, \$10 for "Friends" of the Gallery.

Every Third Wednesday

- As part of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Franklin's "Life-Span Learning Curriculum," there are "Wednesday Night Chautauquas" which are media enhanced study sessions at the UU Fellowship Hall in Franklin. A \$5 soup-supper will be served at 5:30 p.m. Study sessions will begin at 6:30 p.m. For more information call 828-524-6777 or 706-746-9964.

Friday & Saturday, March 9-10

- The Instant Theater presents the Highlands Community Players production of *Parallel Lives*, by Kathy Najimy and Mo Gaffney. Directed by Mary Adair Leslie and featuring Katie Cochran, Bonnie Earman, Jenny King, Mary Adair Leslie, Lee Lyons, Nancy Reeder, Jennifer Royce, Breta Stroud, Ronnie Spilton, and Sandie Trevathan. Tackling such subjects as religion, death, diversity and dating, the play is for adult audiences as it contain strong language and adult content. Call the Instant Theatre Box Office to reserve your tick-

HCP's 'Parallel Lives' at ITC in March



Fridays and Saturdays, March 9-10 and 23-24, The Instant Theater presents the Highlands Community Players production of "Parallel Lives," by Kathy Najimy and Mo Gaffney. Directed by Mary Adair Leslie and featuring Katie Cochran, Bonnie Earman, Jenny King, Mary Adair Leslie, Lee Lyons, Nancy Reeder, Jennifer Royce, Breta Stroud, Ronnie Spilton, and Sandie Trevathan. Tackling such subjects as religion, death, diversity and dating, the play is for adult audiences as it contain strong language and adult content. Call the Instant Theatre Box Office to reserve your tickets at 342-9197. Performances begin at 7 p.m.

ets at 342-9197. Performances begin at 7 p.m.

March 8

- The League of Women Voters of Macon County will host a program featuring women who make significant contributions to our community. Speakers will include Susie McCoy of Macon Program for Progress and School Board member; Barbara McRae, editor of The Franklin Press; Sissy Patillo, Franklin Town Alderman; and Karen Wallace, director of Fontana Regional Library and head librarian of Franklin Public Library. The program will be held at Tartan Hall of the First Presbyterian Church in downtown Franklin. Lunch is available at noon, by reservation. Call 524-5192 by March 6. The program will begin at 12:15. The public is invited.

March 10

- Macon County Soccer Club Spring registration March 10 at Rec Park from 10-1.

Sunday, March 11

- A Taco Dinner after church around noon at Highlands United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall. All proceeds will benefit the church's mission trip to Bolivia.

March 13

- At the Rec Park at 10 a.m. Manifest Destiny: A New Direction for America, by William Pfaff, from The New York Review of Books, Feb 15th, '07. Coordinator: Walter Burnett. Material will be distributed by e-mail.

- Episcopal Church Stations of the Cross - 5 p.m.; Soup & Salad - 5:30 p.m.; Speaker the Rev. Virginia Monroe - 6 p.m. "Prayer/Spiritual Direction." All invited.

Thursday, March 15

- "Embodying Trance: Sacred Figurines of Pre-historic Crete" Sacred Art Reveals a Shamanic Practice from the first European Culture, 7 p.m. at Highlands Yoga and Wellness on Carolina Way. Lecture and Slide Show with Clinical Anthropologist Dr. Robinette Kennedy. Tickets are \$10. Call 526-8880

Friday & Saturday, March 16-17

- Lives of the Saints," one of the four short, zany plays by David Ives presented in the ITC'S evening of Carpe Noctum Theatre. Carpe Noctum Theatre invites you to "Seize the Night" on March 16-17, 23-24 at 8 p.m. at The Instant Theatre Company's intimate studio on Main at 310 Oak Square. Call the box office at 342-9197. Reservations are strongly suggested as seating is limited. Tickets are \$20. Complimentary wine and beer are served. Four performances only!

Saturday, March 17

- A "Talent Show" at Highlands School in the old gym on the main campus at 6 p.m.

Sunday, March 18

- Auditions for Highlands Community Players production of "Enchanted April" At 3 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center on Chestnut Street in Highlands. A read-

ing copy available at the Hudson Library in Highlands. In 1922, when two frustrated London housewives decide to rent an Italian villa for a holiday away from their bleak marriages, they decide to recruit two very different English women to share the cost. There, among the Mediterranean sunshine, all four women rediscover themselves and rejuvenate their marriages. Needed are three adult males and five adult females Performances dates are May 10-13 and May 17-20. Call (828-526-0306) or E-mail (rspilton@verizon.net) Director Ronnie Spilton for additional information.

Monday March 19

- Auditions for Highlands Community Players production of "Enchanted April" At 6 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center on Chestnut Street in Highlands. A reading copy available at the Hudson Library in Highlands. In 1922, when two frustrated London housewives decide to rent an Italian villa for a holiday away from their bleak marriages, they decide to recruit two very different English women to share the cost. There, among the Mediterranean sunshine, all four women rediscover themselves and rejuvenate their marriages. Needed are three adult males and five adult females Performances dates are May 10-13 and May 17-20. Call (828-526-0306) or E-mail (rspilton@verizon.net) Director Ronnie Spilton for additional information.

Tuesday, March 20

- Episcopal Church Stations of the Cross - 5 p.m.; Soup & Salad - 5:30 p.m.; Speaker the Rev. Buck Hanks - 6 p.m. "Bible Study." All invited.

- HIARPT's Faith and Politics: How the Moral Values Debate Divides America and How to Move Forward Together by Senator John Danforth. Coordinator: Don Mullen 10 a.m. at the Highlands Civic Center. Lunch will follow at 11:30 for those wishing to attend. All are welcome.

Friday & Saturday, March 23 & 24

- Lives of the Saints," one of the four short, zany plays by David Ives presented in the ITC's evening of Carpe Noctum Theatre. Carpe Noctum Theatre invites you to "Seize the Night" on March 16-17, 23-24 at 8 p.m. at The Instant Theatre Company's intimate studio on Main at 310 Oak Square. Call the box office at 342-9197. Reservations are strongly suggested as seating is limited. Tickets are \$20. Complimentary wine and beer are served. Four performances only!

Saturday, March 24

- Movie Night with The Jackson-Macon Conservation Alliance is presenting a day of movies on Saturday, at the Martin-Lipscomb Performing Arts Center from 1-8:30 p.m. The five movies and one slide presentation all explore global climate change or energy usage and alternatives, and include Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, as well as the highly acclaimed *Who Killed the Electric Car?* Both admission and the popcorn are free.

Tuesday, March 27

- Episcopal Church Stations of the Cross - 5 p.m.; Soup & Salad - 5:30 p.m.; Speaker the Rev. Gray Temple - 6 p.m. "Forgiveness/Reconciliation." All invited.

- HIARPT's Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass. Coordinator: Bill West 10 a.m. at the Highlands Civic Center. Lunch will follow at 11:30 for those wishing to attend. All are welcome. For information, contact Creighton Peden at cphi2@verizon.net.

Friday & Saturday, March 30-31

- The Instant Theater presents the Highlands Community Players production of *Parallel Lives*, by Kathy Najimy and Mo Gaffney. Directed by Mary Adair Leslie and featuring Katie Cochran, Bonnie Earman, Jenny King, Mary Adair Leslie, Lee Lyons, Nancy Reeder, Jennifer Royce, Breta Stroud, Ronnie Spilton, and Sandie Trevathan. Tackling such subjects as religion, death, diversity and dating, the play is for adult audiences as it contain strong language and adult content.

• UPCOMING EVENTS •

Call the Instant Theatre Box Office to reserve your tickets at 342-9197. Performances begin at 7 p.m.

Tuesday, April 3

- Organizational Softball Meeting at Highlands Rec Park, at 6 p.m. If interested, have a representative attend the meeting. For more information, call 526-3556.

- Episcopal Church Holy Eucharist, in the Chapel, 5:30 p.m. All invited.

- HIARPT's "Frozen in time: the disabled nine-year-old girl who will remain a child all her life." From The Guardian (UK) and other sources. Coordinator: Beverlee Kritz. Brief reading material will be sent by email and also be available at the preceding session. 10 a.m. at the Highlands Civic Center. Lunch will follow at 11:30 for those wishing to attend.

Saturday, April 14

- Hurricane Creek at the Instant Theatre at Oak Square on Main Street. Come dance the night away beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$20. Complimentary wine, beer and mixed drinks. Call 828-342-9197 for tickets and reservations.

July 9-13

- 4th Annual Challenger Soccer camp this summer. Half-day camps available for all ages from 3-16 and full-day camps for children 10 and older. For more information on registration or camp you may call Christy Nix Weller at 526-9931 or you may also contact Tony Esterwood at 524-1928. Register for camp at www.challengersports.com, 45 days prior to camp to receive a free challenger soccer jersey!

Ruby Cinemas

Playing

March 9-15

300 rated R

Fri: (4:20), 7, 9:20

Sat & Sun: (2), (4:20), 7, 9:20

Mon – Thurs (4:20), 7

WILD HOGS rated PG-13

Fri: (4:20), 7:10, 9:20

Sat & Sun: (2:10), (4:20), 7:10, 9:20

Mon – Thurs: (4:20), 7:10

GHOST RIDER rated PG-13

Fri: (4:15), 7:05, 9:15

Sat & Sun: (2:05), (4:15), 7:05, 9:15

Mon – Thurs: (4:15), 7:05

BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA rated PG

Fri: (4:10), 7:10, 9:10

Sat & Sun: (2:10), (4:10), 7:10, 9:10

Mon – Thurs: (4:10), 7:10



Becky Schilling as "May the mayfly" and John Gaston as Sir David Attenborough in "Time Flies." One of the 4 short, engaging comedies by David Ives being presented in the ITC'S Carpe Noctum Theatre, March 16-17 and March 23-24.

Environmental Movie Day at PAC

The Jackson-Macon Conservation Alliance is presenting a day of movies on Saturday, March 24 at the Martin-Lipscomb Performing Arts Center. The five movies and one slide presentation all explore global climate change or energy usage and alternatives, and include Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth, as well as the highly acclaimed Who Killed the Electric Car? Both admission and the popcorn are free.

The shows schedule is:

Kilowatt Ours: 1– 2 p.m.

An Inconvenient Truth: 2:15–3:15 p.m.

Global Warming: The Signs & the Science

3:30 – 4:30

Climate Change Slide Show: 4:45–5:30

Power Shift, dialog with Avram Friedman

5:45–6:30 p.m.

Who Killed the Electric Car? 6:45–8 p.m.

Open discussion: 8–8:30 p.m.

Synopsis:

"Kilowatt Hours" – A Plan to Re-energize America was created by Jeff Barrie to explore the sources of the electricity that we take for granted in our daily lives. It also shows numerous ways in which each of us can dramatically reduce both our electric bills and our impact on the mountains of West Virginia.

"An Inconvenient Truth" features Al Gore's personal crusade to move global warming – and the risk of planetary catastrophe – from the realm of politics to recognition as a great moral challenge for mankind.

"Global Warming: The Signs & the Science" presents scientists doing fascinating work to unlock the mysteries of climate change, and to understand why the current period of warming may be different from those in the geologic past.

"The Climate Change" slide show is presented by Breta Shroud, a Highlands resident. Shroud was inspired by "An Inconvenient Truth" to become one of 1,000 volunteers trained by The Climate Project to educate the public and governments on finding solutions to our warming climate.

"Power Shift: Energy + Sustainability" is a short magazine-style documentary addressing the relationship of energy (both its sources and uses) and sustainability, with a focus on transportation issues. Avram Friedman, executive director of the Canary Coalition, will lead a discussion following the film.

"Who Killed the Electric Car?" is a 2006 whodunit about the disappearance of a General Motors car that was clean, reliable and much-loved by the hundreds of Californians (including Tom Hanks and Mel Gibson) who leased them in 1996. Eight years later, GM recalled each and every one, and destroyed most, effectively expunging a partial but promising solution to oil dependence.

In addition to the Highlands presentation, the JMCA Movie Day will be held at the Albert Carleton Community Library in Cashiers from 1-8:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 18.

ITC's Carpe Noctum Theatre March 16

The Instant Theatre Company presents four witty and wildly original short plays by David Ives in the ITC'S Carpe Noctum Theatre on March 16-17, 23-24th at 8 p.m. at The Instant Theatre Company's Studio on Main at 310 Oak Square.

What is so "witty and wildly original" about these plays? An example. "In Time Flies," two teen-aged mayflies on a date realize that they have a mere 24 hours to live and decide to seize life completely — if only they knew how. Sir David Attenborough has a compelling suggestion for them.

Since opening in Evenings of Little Entertainments on February 4, 2005 Becky Schilling and Scott R. Paxton, have consistently delighted audiences with their enthusiastically daft and quick witted improvisations in the ITC's long running Little Entertainments and last summer's Cocktail Hour Theatre. Now, as May and Horace, the ill fated mayfly lovers, they will again leave you breathless with laughter at their insect like antics as they dance to "The Crickets," cover in fear from bull frogs, and mutually palpate each others proboscises. Fluttering and bzzzzzzzzing about the stage costumed by Mary Wooten of The Wooten Performance Company, these two are a theatrical delight. John Gaston, genial host of The Highlands Public Radio segment of Little Entertainments, appears in Time Flies, complete with safari jacket, as Sir David Attenborough hosting "Life on Earth" in an episode entitled "Swamp Life."

Also featured in the cast are, Madeleine Davis, who will be remembered by ITC audiences not only for her clever improv

appearances in Little Entertainments and Cocktail Hour, but also for her stunning performances as "the governess" in Turn of the Screw and as the beset upon "Kate" in last fall's production of Sylvia. Bill Nellis, appearing as TV Man in "Captive Audience," the play that opens the show, has made guest appearances in Little Entertainments and played the role of the humorous dog lover "Tom" in Sylvia.

Carpe Noctum Theatre tickets are available by calling the box office at 342-9197. Seize the Night and make your reservations early. Our theatre is small and fills up quickly. Tickets are \$20. Complimentary wine and beer are served.

... STATE from page 14

ing to redistribute our wealth elsewhere in the state," he said.

The budget also recommends using \$250 million of the state's bonding capacity for local water and wastewater improvements. Qualifying water systems would be those with drought issues, interconnection and regional linkage projects, and upgrades to maintain current service levels. Qualifying wastewater systems would be under consent agreements, new connection moratoria, substandard collections, or systems with failing septic tanks.

Commissioner Davis said all tolled there is \$152 million which the state is gleaning from counties through various mandates to fund pet projects of the legislature. "They take our money for their pet projects and I'm all for fighting them every step of the way."

...ON THE VERANDAH

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James "Popcorn" Manley
Owner/Operator

... AUDIT continued from page 1

icaid costs, pharmacy costs and increased salaries, operational expenses for 2005-06 compared to 2004-05 were only up \$.5 million.

Shull said the hospital's decrease in gross revenue over last fiscal year of \$4 million is directly linked to the loss of its surgeon. Gross patient revenue of 2005-06 was \$19,321,068; down from 2004-05's 23,217,284.

Understandably, Medicaid contracts were down, too. In 2004-05 they were 7,840,433 and in 2005-06 they were 5,257,428 as was net patient revenue — revenue the hospital hopes to collect — \$14,063,640 for 2005-06 and \$15,376,851 for 2004-05. Total revenue, for 2005-06 was \$14,868,370 compared to \$15,877,656 for 2004-05.

To get the hospital out of the red, a turnaround plan has been developed with the finance committee.

First off, positions aren't being filled when vacated and workloads have been tightened — increased in some cases so the hospital can work with minimal staffing.

The Fidelia-Eckerd home is full and that helps with the bottom line because Medicare and Medicaid pay most of those bills but it means more work for everyone.

"Because you can't ask folks to work harder and not take care of them, we're paying more in salaries," said Shull.

Though operational costs have been cut, pharmacy costs and Medicaid expenses increased, and employees were paid more showing a seven percent increase in operations. Regardless, Shull said they were still able to cut overall costs by \$.5 million.

"We're positive about where we are and where we're going, said chairman of the board Bud Smith. "Revenue has been down significantly, but we've reduced expenses while maintaining the quality of care — something that is very significant to us."

He said 2006-07 the hospital will still budget a loss. "Operations sees a loss every year, which is very common for hospitals in a seasonal resort market. It's the nature of the beast," said Smith.

The end of the next fiscal year, which

is Sept. 30, Shull said the hospital will still see a \$1 million loss which can be directly attributed to the loss of doctors — the surgeon and primary care physicians, in particular. "We make more on the surgical side than anywhere else and internal medicine and primary care physicians can bring in \$1 million each," he said.

Thanks to the foundation the hospital has no debt. Property and state-of-the-art equipment, like the recent MRI and the planned nuclear imaging machine are paid for by the foundation.

Shull said most comparable hospitals don't have the foundation and community support Highlands-Cashiers has. "We offer services our community wants and can do that through foundation support," he said. This past fiscal year, the foundation gave the hospital \$810,000.

Depreciation and impairment losses hurt the bottom line. "We have a lot of depreciation for a hospital this size, but the age of our plant is better than most. "How well you're doing is indicated by the average age of the plant, whether hospital's

•See AUDIT page 21

... STATE POLITICS continued from page 5

This disrupts needed family time and in all likelihood has a detrimental effect on the test grades. The calendar change has been one of the worst things for our mountain students that has passed the General Assembly. I have introduced Senate Bill 461 to change the school calendar and give more flexibility to our local boards of education. This bill should give us the time we need to ensure that students have the time they need to finish the semester before Christmas. However, this bill will NOT be easy to pass. The coastal lobbyists are already starting to form with the intention of stopping this bill. I need your help to have this bill passed. Please contact your friends, especially those in the eastern part of the state, and ask them to support Senate Bill 461.

Property Tax Relief:

The rapid increases in property taxes is the number one financial hardship facing our people. This is an issue that we talked about a lot during the campaign. The increases in property taxes are forcing life-long property owners to have to give up their property and move away from land that they purchased before the mountains of North Carolina became a real estate broker's dream. I am currently working on legislation to reduce the property taxes that people have to pay and to put in place a real and meaningful homestead exemption for our State. I will be introducing this bill soon. I know many of you are very passionate about this issue and even more have written me about it. I want you to know that I have heard your letters and your per-

sonal stories and I am going to do something about it this session.

Drop Out Rates:

We received horrible news this week when the State Department of Public Instruction released a report stating that only 68.1 percent of freshmen who entered high school in 2002 graduated four years later. The report paints a very disturbing picture. Proposals are already being put forth by members of the legislature to combat this situation. One of the first ideas introduced is to increase the compulsory school age from 16 to 18. By mandating that students stay in school until they are legal adults we may be able to entice more students to stick with school for all of high school and increase their chances of graduating.

On a separate but related matter a controversy is brewing over a new core curriculum that is being developed for submission to the State Board of Education. The new curriculum would require that students take more math and foreign language classes before they graduate from a North Carolina high school. The controversy stems from the recognition that added graduation requirements could only compound the drop-out rate problem. I will continue to let you know what develops out of this proposal.

Sexual Predators:

This week I was able to introduce my internet sexual predator bill with Attorney General Roy Cooper and Sen. Walter Dalton. We introduced this bill in front of the Judiciary II committee.

Trial dates set for Gantenbeins

Larry and Michael Gantenbein were arraigned Feb. 26 in a Covington, LA, Division I, in front of Judge Reggie Badaeux. Their pre-trial date is April 5 and their felony jury trial date is the week of April 9.

They were arrested Jan. 5 for possession and intent to distribute 369 pounds of marijuana.

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• BUSINESS NEWS •



Kathy Garren



Elizabeth Matej



Sharon Dalton



Gary Garren



Bill Bubenik



Sherman Pope



Bob Shipp



Tom Bommer

Agents honored

On Saturday, February 3, numerous CENTURY 21 Mountain Lifestyles agents received awards for their 2006 real estate production at a banquet given in their honor at the Asheville Renaissance Hotel.

A consistent Top Producer and the Regional Manager of the Cashiers and Highlands offices, Cathy Garren was recognized for her outstanding production qualifying her as Centurion Producer.

The Masters Ruby Award was awarded to Sherman Pope of the Highlands office.

Receiving the Bronze Producer Award was Elizabeth Matej of the Cashiers office.

Bob Shipp of the Highlands office was acknowledged as "Rookie of the Year." In order to qualify for this distinction, agents must be in their first 12 months of production and have shown the qualities and work ethic of a future Centurion Producer.

The following agents received honors as the Top Listing Agent in their office:

In Cashiers Elizabeth Matej was named Top Listing by Volume & Units.

In Highlands Bill Bubenick was named Top Listing by Volume & Units.

The following agents were recognized as

... PARKING continued from page 1

on shoppers and diners," said Keiltyka. "By eliminating the timed parking, merchant's clients have unfettered access to their wares with time to shop and dine."

He said issuing passes for real estate personnel whose wares are not within the confines of four walls, would be a way to accommodate their needs.

Main Street Realtor John Schiffler said he'd like to see the elimination of the two-hour parking but reiterated what he's said in the past – that he doesn't like that fact that employees and employers can't park on Main Street.

"Taking care of business is great, but we want to protect our lifestyle, too," he said. "I drive into town, drop my kids off, shop and do business in town. How will you verify if I'm working or not? I don't want the police following me around or other business owners calling the police and telling them I'm in town. I want to live in relative peace and privacy."

Commissioner Amy Patterson said some timed parking was needed. "The reason for two-hour parking was to allow people who don't want to spend all day shopping to park and run in and out of stores

Top Sales leaders in their respective offices:

In Cashiers Elizabeth Matej was named Top Sales by Units and Cathy Garren was named Top Sales by Volume & Production.

In Highlands Sherman Pope was named Top Sales by Volume, Units & Production.

Due to his exceptional leadership of both his multiple offices and the six Broker/Owner LLC team, Mike Demos received the Broker of the Year award for 2006. A resident of Sapphire Valley, Mike is the Principal Broker of the Central Asheville office and Broker/Owner of the Cashiers and Highlands offices. In February 2007, Mike and his wife Jill were awarded the 2006 Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce "Over the Top Customer Service Award" for the extraordinary customer service demonstrated in their Central Asheville office.

During his real estate sales career, Mike sold in excess of 1,500 homes and earned the Certified Residential Specialist designation as well as the Certified Residential Broker designation.

Cashiers office expanding services

Mike Demos, Broker/Owner of CENTURY 21 Mountain Lifestyles Cashiers, Highlands

easily."

Joe Luke, with Reeves Hardware said two-hour parking in front of his store facilitates turnover for his customers.

David Young asked the board to keep the parking regulations as they are.

Police Chief Harrell suggested extending the time period to three-hour parking to give shoppers and diners more time while giving real estate personnel longer access and still promote parking space turnover.

Commission Herb James said two-hour parking with employee restrictions was working pretty well and he hadn't heard any complaints until the chamber started complaining.

Rick Siegel, president of the chamber board said the chamber doesn't have a problem with the two-hour parking but merchants have told the chamber two hours isn't enough for people to shop.

In the end, the board agreed to think about all the suggestions and to discuss parking further at the March 21 Town Board meeting.

Parking restrictions go into affect April 15-Nov. 30, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

and Central Asheville office has now introduced the CENTURY 21 Fine Homes & Estates brand extension designed to market upscale properties in his Cashiers office.

"The marketing support of CENTURY 21 Systems global network provides our office with the strongest means to connect a buyer with their dream home," said Demos. "With our participation in the CENTURY 21 Fine Homes & Estates program, we can offer an upscale consumer the same quality service we have always extended while meeting the specific needs of the upscale market."

Cathy Garren, Regional Manager of the Cashiers and Highlands offices and a certified Fine Homes & Estates Specialist, commented, "This program is an example of the many tools CENTURY 21® provides for our buyers and sellers. We are excited to be able to offer this added service to our customers."

New agents

CENTURY 21 Mountain Lifestyles is pleased to announce that Tom Bommer has joined its firm in the Highlands office as sales associate specializing in residential sales and Sharon Dalton has joined the firm in the Cashiers office.

... AUDIT continued from page 20

upgrade equipment," said Shull.

Impairment loss was realized for the Toxaway property and Dillard properties where book value exceeded appraisals and because the hospital's 1997 Certificate of Need for expansion was never realized.

Depreciation and impairment loss equaled \$2,594,950 for 2005-06 compared to \$1,108,513 for 2004-05.

What's on the horizon?

Year to date figures from Oct. 1, 2006 – the beginning of the fiscal year – show 10.54 people per day versus 8.11 per day this time last year. So business is up, said Shull. Dr. Patti Wheeler is admitting patients again; Dr. Toby Lindsey opened his practice in Cashiers and Tony Fisher is the new ER medical doctor

"Ken has done a great job finding the right fit for the community and we have a good team now, including the wants, needs and desires of spouses which has been a problem in the past and the staff is very supportive of the hospital and the community," said Smith. – Kim

A 40-year resident of the Cullowhee/Sylva area, Tom has worked in real estate since 1997.

Originally from Virginia, Sharon lived in Palm Beach, Florida for 20 years. She has worked in real estate for 3 years and as a commodities broker for 4 years. In her spare time, Sharon enjoys horseback riding, cooking and canoeing. She has two sons and three grandchildren.

February producers

The following CENTURY 21 Mountain Lifestyles agents were top producers for their office during the month of February:

In the Cashiers office, Sharon Dalton was named Top Listing Agent and Elizabeth Matej was named Top Sales Agent. Elizabeth was also awarded the Bronze Producer award for her production in 2006.

In the Highlands Office, managing broker Gary Garren was named top listing agent.

OEI's 2nd annual Women's Wellness Retreat Sept. 9-13, 2007

Old Edwards is pleased to announce our second annual Women's Wellness Retreat in conjunction with the renowned Cleveland Clinic September 9-13, 2007. Dr. Tanya Edwards, Medical Director for the Center for Integrative Medicine Clinical Practice, returns to present on topics such as Integrative Therapies for Menopause, Integrative Therapies for Cardiovascular Disease and Integrative Approaches to Cancer Treatments and Prevention. Staff members including a dietician, mind-body coach and Reiki Master will accompany her. They will discuss Preventive Nutrition with Whole Foods, The Healing Touch of Reiki, Laughter Therapy and Relaxation Techniques.

The Fitness Center will be offering a variety of new activities and classes this year. One addition to this retreat will be water aerobics in the new outdoor heated, mineral-water lap pool. Yoga, fitness training, aerobic conditioning and weight training will also be available.

Four-night packages for the Women's Wellness Retreat begin at \$1,879 and are inclusive of meals, taxes and gratuity. Early registration rates are available through July 1, 2007 and reflect a 10% discount. Space is limited and advance registration is suggested. For local residents, there will be a limited number of day packages.

More information is available online at www.olderedwardsinn.com, or by calling reservations at 866.526.8008.

... LETTERS from page 14

ter issues. This should be corrected.

It is my opinion that the town must take on the heart of this problem within the town limits before extending its responsibility beyond its capabilities.

The town's already undersized stormwater system is the town's responsibility. The development of a Master Storm water Plan and implementing such a plan is paramount in protecting the biodiversity within the town. The town of Highlands should be "setting and example."

C. Mitch Gurganus
Highlands

Reval procedure not fair

Dear Editor,

I do not have a big argument with the need for Macon County to collect a variety of revenues, including taxes, with which to fund the county government and associated services. What I am most concerned about right now is the way taxes are being determined. Currently, I do not believe they are being determined in a fair and equitable manner, both locally and throughout the county.

At the local level, and I am going to use myself and my neighbors as an example, there are major differences in the valuation of property used to determine tax burdens. Property taxes are calculated based on the "fair market value" of the land and the structures on it. While the types, quality and size of the structures may vary from lot to lot, the value of the land from lot to lot should not change drastically, especially if it sits right next to each other with similar views and topos. However, I have found this not to be the case in my area. Within a quarter of a mile of my home in Mirrormont, according to the county, the land values vary over 100% from \$83,000 to \$192,000 per acre. Even along the same side of the street on which I live with the lots being about the same size with similar views and topography, the taxable values vary from \$98,000 to \$192,000 per acre. This is outrageous. This means that one neighbor is going to pay almost twice the taxes on their land as their next door neighbor. This is not the way to run a railroad and I can understand why folks are upset.

While the county is reevaluating of our property, they need to take the time and the effort to add a little stability, fairness and common sense to the formula. At the end of the day, they need sit back and take a long hard look at the land and building valuations and ask themselves "Does this make sense?" and "Is this a fair and equitable measure of the value to the property compared to other properties in the area?" Right now I'd say the answer to both questions is a resounding "No".

I have filed an appeal to my revaluation. I'll let you know how it turns out.

Bob Vickery
Alpharetta and Highlands

• THANK YOU •

Community support appreciated

On behalf of the membership of the Highlands Mountaintop Rotary Club I would like to thank the public for their enthusiastic support at the Harlem Ambassadors Basketball Game. Your support, along with the financial support of the many sponsors will allow Mountaintop Rotary to provide funds to numerous local endeavors. Last year we were able to provide over \$5,000 to six local projects and we anticipate being able to do even more this year.

I would also like to thank the individuals who played for the Hometown Heroes. You provided the stage for the fun-filled evening. This could not have been done without the help of the Highlands School, their janitorial staff, Highlands School Booster Club, and Coaches Smart and Lamb.

Funds from the Highlands Effective Living Program (an outreach program of the Highlands ABC Store) provided the outstanding school assembly done by the Ambassadors which focused on staying in school and avoiding drug use.

Jim Mullen, President, Highlands Mountaintop Rotary

• POLICE & FIRE REPORT •

The following is the Highlands Police Dept. log entries for the week of Feb. 28.-March 7. Only the names of persons arrested or public officials have been used.

Feb. 28

- At 6:20 a.m., officers found an open door at Raspberry's on Oak and Main streets. All was secure.
- At 9:20 a.m. a motorist was cited for speeding 36 mph in a 20 zone at Main and Third streets.
- At 3 p.m., Bryson's Food Store reported receipt of a bad check for the amount of \$95.50.

March 2

- At 8 a.m., officers responded to an accident at Raoul and U.S. 64 west.
- At 8 a.m., the driver at an accident at Raoul and U.S. 64 west was cited for driving without a license.
- At 11 a.m., a motorist at S. 4th and Third streets was cited for speeding 41 mph in a 25 zone.

March 3

- At noon, officers responded to an alarm at a residence on Satulah Road which was set off by a relative entering the house.
- At 1 p.m., officers responded to the report of a public disturbance on Main Street near the Stone Lantern..
- At 2 p.m., a motorist at N.C. 106 and Cobb Road was cited for speeding 51 mph in a 35 zone.
- At 11:40 p.m., a suspicious vehicle was reported on Main Street.

Over the week, officers wrote three warning citations and responded to one alarm.

The following is the Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. log entries for the week of Feb. 28-March 7

Feb. 28

- The dept. was first-responders to assist EMS with a medical call at a residence on Dillard Road. The victim was transported to the hospital.
- The dept. was first-responders to assist EMS with a medical call at Chestnut Hill where someone had fallen.

March 1

- The dept. responded to an accident on U.S. 64 west.
- The dept. responded to an accident on U.S. 64 west and Raoul Road. There were no injuries.
- The dept. responded to an alarm at a residence on Summit Trail. Smoke in the fireplace flue set off the alarm.

March 3

- The dept. responded to an accident at U.S. 64 west and Raoul Road..

March 5

- The dept. responded to a fire alarm on Clubhouse Trail. It was set off in the kitchen by accident..
- The dept. responded to a vehicle fire at D&J Express Mart..

- The dept. was first-responders to assist EMS with a medical call at a residence on Memorial Park Drive. The victim was transported to the hospital.

March 6

- The dept. was first-responders to assist EMS with a medical call at residence on Hickory Street.

March 7

- The dept. was first-responders to assist EMS with a medical call on Foreman Road. The victim was transported to the hospital.

• RE TRANSACTIONS •

TOWN OF HIGHLANDS

- 0532277, 3309 HORSE COVE RD., MORRIS WILLIAM T TRUSTEE, 2/20/2007, \$1250,000., HARLAN FOREST LLC, \$1,183,340.
- 0515621, 114 CHEROKEE DR., EDWARDS FRANK D., 2/20/2007, \$175,000., US BANK NATIONAL ASSC. TRUSTEE, \$330,260.
- 0500821, 19 DOGWOOD DR., CLYATT PEGGY A., 2/16/2007, \$242,500., COLLIER J CHRISTINE TR., \$258,290.

HIGHLANDS TOWNSHIP

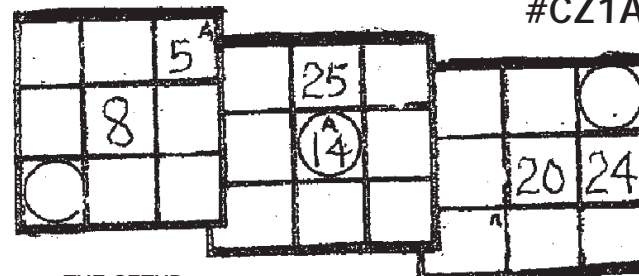
- 0501667, 375 FLAT MOUNTAIN RD., HARRINGTON CLAIRE ANN & CHARLES, 2/16/2007, \$950000., BOND MARY, \$831,980.
- 0549008, 137 HICKORY LN., WOODLAND COTTAGES, COPELAND D., 2/20/2007, \$350,000., WOODLAND COTTAGES INC., \$666,810.
- 0502089, 264 AZALEA LN WILDCAT CLIFFS CC, HOLLOWAY SAMUEL N TRUSTEE, 2/20/2007, \$0., HOLLOWAY SAMUEL N TRUSTEE, \$349,090.

FLATS TOWNSHIP

- 0600555, 48 HAPPY HILL RD., MOSELEY CHARLES J., 2/20/2007, \$35000., MOSELEY CHARLES J., \$129,920.

PseudoCube[©]

#CZ1A



THE SETUP:

The cube has 27 consecutive numbers in it, arranged in three layers with 9 numbers each. These numbers are arranged in a special pattern: For each layer, the sum of the three numbers in each row, column or diagonal, is 3 times its center number. Eight diagonals connect all 3 layers by running through the center number of the middle layer. Each diagonal contains 3 numbers equalling the total of the three center numbers. One of the diagonals is shown with circles.

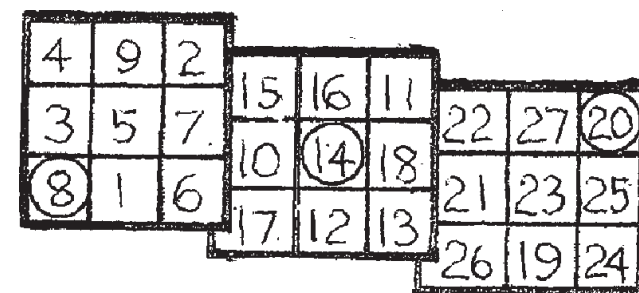
THE CHALLENGE:

Start with the three center numbers for each layer and two other numbers. Now pour a cup of coffee, pick up a pencil and eraser and try to figure out where the other 22 numbers belong. Good Luck!

The first correct solution emailed earns a coupon for a FREE cup of coffee from Buck's Coffee Cafe on Main Street.

Email: pseudocube8@aol.com

Solution for March 1 puzzle #BN1A



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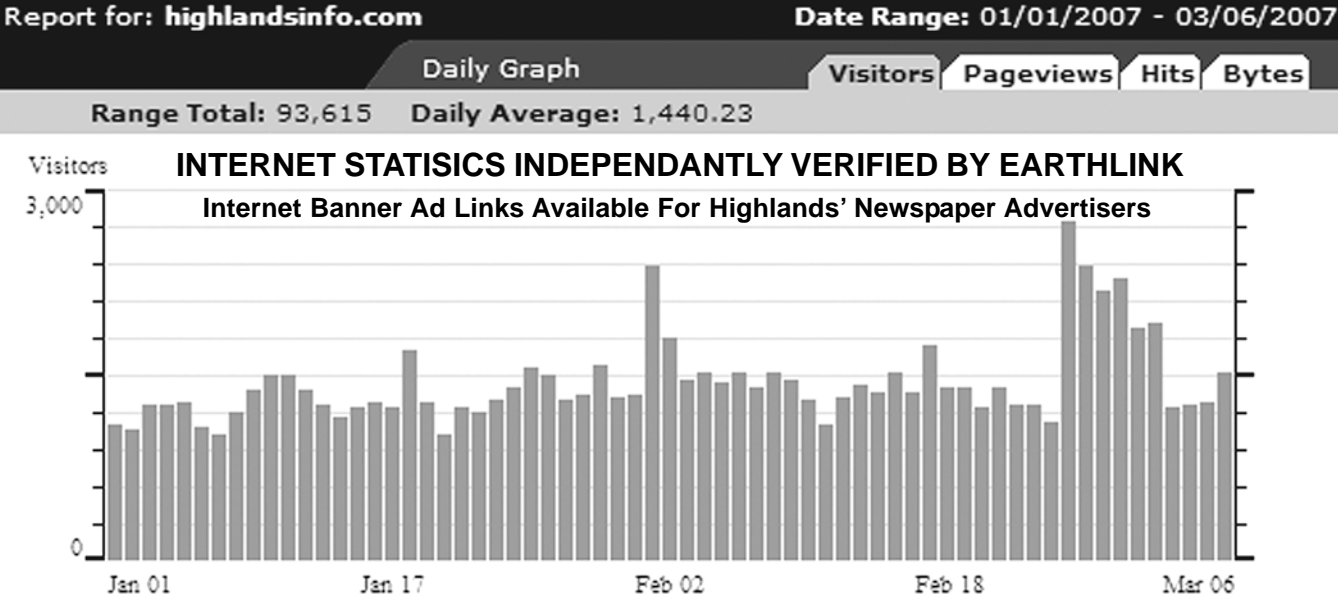
Highlands' Newspaper
 Ad Info. 828-526-0782

Highlands' Newspaper
 Ad Info. 828-526-0782

Map Dots Legend:

1 Summer House	4 Outdoor Tool	7 Century 21	10 Macon Bank	13 Grinning Frog	16 SMC Realty	19 New 2007
2 Tin Roof Gallery	5 Skyline Lodge	8 Mtn Golf Properties	11 Fairfield Realty	14 Rand Soellner Arch.	17 Hampton Inn	20 Updates
3 On The Verandah		9 Buyers' Real Estate	12 TUBBY Tubing	15 HomePlace Blinds	18 Brew Bird Cafe	21 Coming Soon

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