

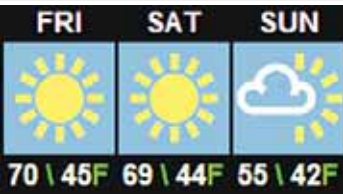
Highlands' Newspaper

FREE every Thursday

Volume 9, Number 11

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Thursday, March 17, 2011



Saturday, March 19

• The Highlands Memorial Post #370 of the American Legion meets at the Shortoff Baptist Church. Breakfast is at 9 a.m. Meeting is at 10 a.m. All veterans are invited.

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate-to-strenuous 5.5 mile hike with an elevation gain of 500 feet to Whiteside Mountain and the Devil's Courthouse for dramatic views from the top. Call leader Virginia Talbot, 526-4904, for reservations.

• Greenway Trail volunteers needed to work on the trail in the Rec Park connecting it to the Highlands Historical Society. Meet at the upper parking lot at the Rec Park (near the pool entrance) at 9 a.m. Tools and safety equipment provided. Bring water, rain gear, and a day pack. Work should be done by noon. Register with Ran Shaffner at 526-5622.

Sunday, March 20

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take an easy 2.5-mile hike with an elevation change of 200 feet to Winding Stair Gap on a Forest Service road and the Appalachian Trail. Call Kay Coriell, 369-6820, for reservations.

Tuesday, March 22

• At The Highlands Dialogue's discussion at the Civic Center 10-11:30 a.m., Virginia Wilson: Handouts article "Creativity Crisis" from Newsweek July 19, 2010. For more information email John Gaston john.gaston@aol.com.

Thurs.-Sat., March 24-26

• Operation Medicine Drop-off at Highlands Pharmacy and Main Street Pharmacy from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.. Bring prescription and over-the-counter medicines to the take-back event and keep them out of the wrong hands. For more information, call the Highlands Police Department at 526-9431.

Citizens' voices heard; board votes 3-2

The prelude to the outcome of Wednesday night's Charter-Ordinance amendment vote took place at the 4 p.m. meeting at the Rec Park where a dozen citizens turned out to hear and watch the Town Board discuss for the last

time, the pros and cons of amending the town's hybrid form of its Council-Manager form of government.

Mayor David Wilkes opened the 4 p.m. meeting saying it was called to make sure the two ver-

sions of the amended Charter Ordinance in the agenda packet matched the requests put forth at the March 2 Town Board meeting by Commissioners Amy Patterson and Gary Drake.

• See CITIZENS page 13

Town asked to ban electronic gambling

Since legalized gambling has helped other states increase revenues and balance budgets, why not in North Carolina?

That's what Governor Beverly Perdue is thinking about these days as the state faces a \$2.8 billion budget shortfall. The lottery commission says video gambling operations could mean \$576 million in state revenues.

Like scores of towns and cities in the state, Highlands is home to electronic gambling but some want to make sure no new gambling businesses aren't allowed to set up shop.

Back in July of 2010 the Highlands Zoning Board of Adjustment OK'd a Special Use Permit (SUP) for an electronic sweepstakes gaming business in Wright Square

• See GAMBLING page 4

Girls soccer going strong



Highlands School senior, Ana Damian, Keeper, keeps Brevard at bay. See story on page 8. Photo by Noel Atherton

The 'Z' word root of community controversy

Citizens request stronger High Impact Ordinance to protect property rights

Two county land use ordinances were in the county commission's sights at Tuesday night's monthly meeting – high impact and soil erosion & sedimentation.

The ordinance that took up

the most time was a requested change to the High Impact Ordinance due to a proposed commercial motor sports facility in the

• See CONTROVERSY page 8

• Inside •

Letters	2
Wooldridge	4
Salzarulo	5
Conservative POV	6
Just Hers	7
Coach's Corner	8
Events	10
Police	17
Classifieds	17

WNC's rural schools face added stress in state budget woes

One system, Macon County, has found some solutions others may learn from

by Stephanie Soucheray
Carolina Public Press

www.carolinapublicpress.org

Five percent. Ten percent. Fifteen percent.

As superintendent of Macon County schools, Dan Brigman balances numbers and percentages in his head all day. But these intervals of five are particularly bothersome.

In January, the North Carolina Department of Instruction, the branch of state government that most closely handles educa-

• See SCHOOLS page 18

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• LETTERS •

• HAWK'S EYE VIEW •

Please help us send the right message

Dear Editor,

One aspect of the new program "Gilliam's Promise" is to secure personal prescriptions and discourage easy availability of the commonly abused drugs. The practice of keeping a few extra meds just in case of an emergency is common and as Dr. Henry Salzarulo pointed out in his column in the January 27 edition of Highlands' Newspaper could save an expensive E.R. visit.

Our focus will be to either have responsible party turn the left-over, out-of-date, and more dangerous drugs in OR secure them properly. We would appreciate your help in getting our message out.

Dr. Carter Davis
Highlands

Explaining the 'reference'

Dear Editor,

In response to Dr. Davis's letter in this issue, I agree that "attractive" drugs should be secured.

The intent of the column was to advise patients that the expiration dates on drugs are, for whatever reason, unrealistic and lead people to dispose of perfectly good medicine that they might need later. Think of antibiotic eye drops in the case of a corneal abrasion, or muscle relaxants in the case of acute back pain.

Dr. Henry Salzarulo
Highlands

Swanson makes a habit of spewing misinformation

Dear Editor,

Mr. Swanson's POV column perpetuates nonsense. It would seem as if any newspaper would have some sense of responsible reporting. It's one thing



to voice opinions, but to mislead readers is another. Please reread Mr. Swanson's article and then read the <http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/prayerday.asp>. Thanks.

Clark Wheeler
Cashiers

Weber is a hero

Dear Editor,

Bob Weber is my new hero! I wish there were lots of Bob Webers in our world, those willing to stand with passion & conviction, as he did.

He stood for one, old, beautiful maple tree! No one would listen to him; he tried to get their attention, got kicked off the land, got arrested for trying to do it. Was it really necessary to go that far? Could someone in charge have asked Bob Weber, a local professional tree man, for some advice? Our world needs people who aren't working to get elected or reelected, who don't always think "money first" but those who care enough to stand up for something, especially for those things that cannot speak for themselves, like trees, the land, animals, children and our environment.

Thank you, Bob Weber, for trying to save one, beautiful, old maple tree in our town.

Helen Moore
Highlands

An open letter to State Senator Jim Davis

Dear Senator,

I ask that you lead the way for the NC State Republican representatives and vote NO to the unnecessary imposition of a government issued Voter ID on North Carolinians. This will ultimately be an outrageous and uncalled for expense for our state budget as well as for those who can ill afford, but will be expected, to obtain these IDs.

I have supplied your office with just one of several available studies on the ultimate cost this will impose on all our taxpayers. Studies, readily available on the Internet, conclude this is not a cost

•See LETTERS page 3

LETTERS-TO-THE EDITOR-POLICY

We reserve the right to reject or edit submissions. **NO ANONYMOUS LETTERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.** 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.

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... LETTERS continued from page 2

effective effort. Even studies that do not specifically state the ultimate expense of implementation, waffle on the actual benefit of such a bill.

In short, the proposed bill will not be a solution nor a deterrent to what is a virtually nonexistent problem, so why create a taxpayer expense?

Your email response was that our sources differ, however did not detail or provide a link to any source where you find proof other than nonspecific references. This appears as a ploy to block the vote of a select segment of North Carolinians. This same ploy is now being foisted as a cost-cutting effort on the public in so many other states.

You further stated that we could therefore agree to disagree. That would be fine under other less important circumstances that would not negatively impact many of our citizens, or the state budget.

Needed is a bon a fide "do-good solution" for real and present problems! A solution that actually creates jobs,

Pre-eminent citizens (trees) deserve our respect

Dear Editor,

Hooray for Bob Weber, a man with the courage of his convictions and willing to stand behind them. And hooray to him for championing an irreplaceable asset to our community and exposing the possible threat to its survival.

Isn't Highlands supposed to be some sort of official, or semi-official, "tree city?" and isn't Jane Woodruff supposed to be deeply interested in our community and the welfare of its citizens? Since she is determined to give us a new post office, perhaps she will see to it that we get a beautiful old tree to go with it. I would consider this 100-year-old red maple as one of Highlands' pre-eminent citizens and, as such, deserves our respect, concern and protection.

Thank you Bob Weber, for your brave stand and for bringing this to our attention.

Alice Nelson
Highlands

supports education, benefits our environment, and other truly pressing needs. This bill is only a "feel-good solution" to a mythical problem of extensive voter fraud.

So no, we can't simply agree to disagree - you have a vote, I do not. My option as a voter is to request that you utilize your vote to its highest and best purpose to benefit our state and our people.

Mrs. Shirley Ches
Franklin, NC

• See Voter ID story on page 15

• OBITUARY •

Phyllis Elliott



Phyllis (Grammy Phyl) Elliott, 82 of Highlands, NC, formerly of Delray Beach, FL died Saturday, November 6, 2010 at home. She is survived by her husband of 57 years, Donald H. Elliott, her children, Larry E. Elliott and wife Karen of

Delray Beach, FL, Donald E. Elliott and wife Lisa of Cullowhee, NC, Philip N. Elliott of Cullowhee, NC. She was preceded in death by a son, Richard Elliott in 1985. Six grandchildren and three great grandchildren also survive. Many, many friends also

survive.

Contributions may be made to the Christ Church of the Valley, 118 Hwy 64 E. Cashiers, NC, 28741 or to the Charity of one's choice.

The family will hold a celebration of her life on Saturday, March 19, 2011 at 2 PM at the Christ Church of the Valley in Cashiers, NC. Bryant-Grant Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

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... GAMBLING continued from page 1

– it wasn't illegal in the state or in Highlands at the time. Plus, a new law banning electronic sweepstakes was to go into effect Dec. 1, 2010, so the board figured the owner was taking the risk.

But now the game has changed and citizens want Highlands to change, too.

During the Public Comment portion of the March 2 Town Board meeting, Zoning Board Chair Tony Potts and Planning Board member John Underwood asked the board to consider amending the town's ordinance to make electronic gambling in Highlands illegal – mostly be-

cause the governor is now waiving on the issue despite the Dec. 1 law, which means more gaming businesses could open in Highlands.

"Governor Perdue is considering allowing this and manufacturers of the machines have figured out ways around the law so we already have these popping up in Highlands," said Potts.

Under the current town ordinance, an Electronic Sweepstakes Gaming business is considered a place of entertainment and is allowed in certain zoning districts, as in

• See GAMBLING page 9

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• LOOKING AT LIFE •

The Scam – Part 4

Parts one through three may be read on-line at www.highlandsinfo.com and click on LOCAL NEWS or at the Highlands Newspaper office at 265 Oak St. in Highlands.

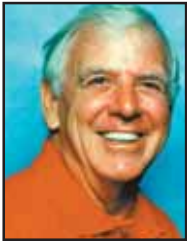
I worked four years as an undercover narcotics officer. This true story occurred in the early 70's. Drug lords from Mariel, Cuba, would not take over Miami's drug traffic for another eight years. Most of the bulk drug business coming into Miami was run by Colombians. The names in this story have been changed but little else. I'm able to write of these events because I was an active participant. These were some of the most frightening times of my career. As always, the language was atrocious but has been cleaned up for print. Note: Not suitable for children.

When Carlos Martinez was within several feet of our van, Peter opened the end of the heavy duffle bag and rolled it off the arms of his wheelchair. When the bag hit the ground with a thud, several tightly wrapped packages of 10 dollar bills spilled on the ground. The DEA sniper, sitting in the men's room at the pier, continued to focus his sights on Martinez's head.

"You should congratulate me, Carlos," Peter said. "I'm on schedule this morning. And while I don't approve of this show of fire power, I understand it. Have your men load the suitcases in the van and take the duffle bag. I'll see you in two weeks."

Martinez smiled at Peter. "As you can plainly see, we have you outmanned and outgunned. If I wished, I could easily steal your money but, as I've said all along, I'm an honest businessman who detests bloodshed."

Martinez signaled and the two suitcases full of cocaine were loaded into our van. Another gunman



Fred Wooldridge

Feedback is encouraged!
email:
askfredanything@aol.com

scooped up the spilled money and carried the duffle bag back toward the second car.

"Two weeks is an estimate, Mr. Gallo. I may be ready sooner if you can accommodate me."

Peter smiled back at Martinez. "I'm waiting on you, sir. I have the four million you requested. We can work out a meeting place when you're ready. Is that agreeable, Mr. Martinez?"

"I'll be in touch," Martinez said as he turned and walked toward his Caddy. In less than a minute, the two cars had circled the parking lot and headed down the parking lot's ramp.

Once out of sight, Gus pulled his radio from under the seat. "All units, we have a buy/walk...repeat, we have a buy/walk. Initiate surveillance."

A US postal service truck, driven by a DEA agent with a police detective passenger, pulled in behind the Caddy and the second car. "We are northbound on Collins," one agent announced.

The blue station wagon containing triangular monitoring equipment fell in a half block away from the moving surveillance and began to pick up the signal inside the duffle bag. "Eagle one, we have a strong signal. Apparently, they are not returning to Miami as we are heading north past 5th. St....copy?"

Peter reached for his radio, "Not too close, damn it. It would be nice to get our money back but not necessary. I want the mother lode so keep your surveillance loose."

"Copy that," the agent in the mail truck spoke. "We're OK. We now have three cars between us. If they look like they're suspicious, we'll drop off and let radio surveillance take it from there."

Four days later, in the Frank Sinatra penthouse suite of the Fontainebleau Hotel on Miami Beach, DEA prepared to

• See WOOLDRIDGE page 14



Fred undercover

• THE VIEW FROM HERE •

Safety net or hammock?



Dr. Henry Salzarulo

**Feedback is encouraged.
email:**

hsalzarulo@aol.com

letting the needy starve in the streets, because what was created as a safety net for the needy looks like a damned fine hammock for the lazy.

The problem is not the truly needy or honest Medicare providers, or the legitimately disabled. The problem is the cheaters. But it has occurred to me that there is a greater problem, and this is a problem the conservatives have recognized for a long time. This is the important point. Read carefully.

In our attempt to be a compassionate country, we have created a system which permits and encourages abuse. Workman's compensation is an example. I know of a neurosurgeon who no longer operates on workman's comp patients. He explains that, unlike his other patients, they rarely get better. The orthopedic literature has separated workman's comp from the general population in outcome studies because they so infrequently improve. Why, we wonder, are the outcomes so very different? The inescapable answer is that many deem continued income without work preferable to working for a living. The workman's comp commission ultimately "rates," or assigns a percentage of disability. It's an example of a system that was conceived to protect and care for the injured worker, but invites abuse and deception.

So what is the answer? I don't know, but recognizing the problem is a start.

We have, as my conservative friends claim, created a dependent population, one that is eager to take advantage of the generosity of their fellow citizens, one that believes that lying and cheating are nothing more than taking advantage of the loop holes provided. I've reached the point where I'd rather see nooses than loop holes. Lying and cheating are not acceptable and perhaps the only way to prevent them is to remove the incentive. Take down the safety net and it can't be used as a hammock. The burden of debt is too large for us to continue. Perhaps the only way to guarantee a future for our grandkids is to force people to work for a living; or go hungry until hunger motivates them to do so.

I'm mad. I know I should be angry, but I'm just plain mad. In fact, I'm mad as hell. I'm mad about government waste and government extravagance. I'm mad that the military consumes nearly a quarter of the federal budget and Medicare another quarter, that welfare recipients claim over 10% and government pensioners receive another 21%. I'm mad that retired generals lobby for defense contractors and that big agriculture and big business suckle at the federal teat. Today, though, I am maddest at the individual disability chiseler.

I suppose it's because I see them every week, these disabled citizens. They come in all shapes and sizes, but a good many are fat, which seems to me scant justification for lifelong disability payments. When asked the reason for their disability, many look slightly startled, caught off guard. Back or neck ailments are common explanations. When my question is answered with a shrug, or "lots of little things," my blood boils. I've met a goodly number of disabled men who hunt and fish regularly.

My Mom had a friend, Louise. When Mom wanted to lose weight, she decided to start walking. Louise agreed to join her. I learned that Louise was disabled, but was walking a mile or two a day with Mom. I asked Mom how she could befriend a disability cheat. Mom answered that she didn't approve, but that Louise had been a loyal friend and with the exception of her bogus disability state, was a good person. It's like saying, "Except for his inclination to rob liquor stores, Jimmy is a pretty good guy." I've known doctors who claimed disability, who believed they were entitled to more from their insurance premiums than protection. They felt that all those monthly premiums entitled them to early retirement and lifetime income. Of course, there had to be another doctor to validate the claim. There always has to be an enabler.

I don't mind supporting the truly disabled, at least not yet, although I'm evolving rapidly. Maybe tomorrow I'll applaud

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• CONSERVATIVE POV

Oil, oil everywhere...

So why am I paying for gas like it is a precious commodity? Good question.

While I freely admit that the size and scope of the oil/gas issue is way beyond me, being in over my head has never stopped me before, so I am now going to answer the question that has bugged you for years, namely, what's up with oil? Besides the price, that is.

As is my habit, when tackling a large

issue, I like to go back to the beginning. I mean literally. In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth. Part of the earth He made arable, that is, suitable for growing things. Other parts He made arid, that is, quite dry, and not suitable for growing things. Still other parts He made quite cold, suitable only for producing ice in various forms, and not suitable for living things, animal or vegetable.

We happen to live in a particularly ar-

able area, at least Maude and I do. We live on the east side of a mountain that is full of springs, and if anything resembling a seed falls on the property, boing, and you've got a tree. Wait a while and the tree is 150 feet tall and spreading little tree seeds all over the place. Soon, you have a forest. We used to have a beautiful view from our deck, now we live in a tree house.

What we probably don't have, however, is oil producible in marketable quantities. On the other hand, Abdul, living somewhere over in the oil patch, couldn't grow a daisy if his life depended on it. Some would call this the "balance of nature." OK, I can live with that, as long as you don't insist that it's a coincidence. Seems like a plan to me. We are seeing the economics of the grand scheme being played out. The arid Arab countries sell us oil to run our economy, and we sell them food to feed their people.

The plan works fine until some shortsighted nincompoop starts tinkering around with the "balance" and decides to replace fuel, naturally occurring in the world as fossil fuel, with food, namely corn and more namely ethanol, and screws up the balance. Food prices go up as a result of using corn for fuel; therefore, oil prices go up because the oil producing nations have to pay more for corn and other grains.

So who is the culprit in the ethanol thing? Who is the diving force behind our (the US) refusing to drill for oil, which is under some of us and all around us in economic quantities. Glad you asked. I don't know for sure, but I'm guessing the environmentalists have a hand in it. The problem with that is, the environmentalists seem to be a creature without a visible head. Some have claimed that there is a religious component to it, and on the surface it may be true. But where is their Rome? Who is their Pope? Gore may be involved up to a point, but not to the level of Pope. Besides, his interest is monetary, not ideo-



Don Swanson
Feedback is encouraged. Email
swansonson@dnet.net

logical. Those of you with unusual perception will have noticed a flaw in my argument. The US is not only arable but also sits on large deposits of oil. Why so? Let's just say we are dually blessed. I know you have been scratching your head wondering why, if we are floating in and surrounded by oil, why do we import 70% +/- of the oil we need? I have a theory.

I have mentioned from time to time, and you have heard from other sources, that it is said that America's supremacy is a bad thing. This would be logical if only jealous outsiders made such claims, but more and more they are coming from our own people (sad to say). We are all familiar with Obama's apology tours, bowing down to foreign leaders and asking forgiveness for our overachieving, especially in the areas of defending much of the free world and providing aid to people in need.

The drilling ban in Anwar has boiled my blood for years. Even the native caribou are happy with drilling sites and pipelines. No problem; yet certain elements of our population whine about the irreparable destruction that would come about if drilling ensues in the middle of nowhere.

Drilling in the continental US and offshore has been hindered for decades because of "environmental concerns." While the rest of the world produces most of the world's supply of oil, elements of our society fervently fight to suppress our oil production. As a current example; from the politico: "The Obama administration has fired another shot in the fight over the speed with which the Interior Department is - or isn't - letting oil drillers work in the Gulf of Mexico. The administration late Friday appealed a judge's order directing the department to act on several pending Gulf Coast deep-water drilling permits."

Earlier in February, the judge held the department in contempt, citing its

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• JUST HERS •

Us and Them, Part 4: Voir Rouge (Seeing Red)



Michelle Mead-Armor
michiemead@aol.com

mercy. In other words, "*Les carottes sont cuites*" ("My goose was cooked," trust me on this one, it's an idiom).

I arrived in Paris, the birthplace of Auguste Rodin, Émile Zola, Brigitte Bardot, and my mother. Barely unpacked, I rushed to the *Préfecture de Police* to sort out my legal standing as quickly as possible. A bored office employee yawned in my face. "Nothing until September," he mumbled. "Everything closes down in August." September was three months off, and I only had the automatic three-month tourist visa. Oh, well. I'd be sneaking in just under the wire, but it was better than nothing.

September arrived, and, armed with every scrap of paper I thought the French government could possibly desire, I trotted off to the *Préfecture de Police* on the *Île de la Cité*. Nothing could have prepared me for the noise and total chaos of that place. Whole families were there from every corner of the globe, mostly from former French colonies. It was truly a tower of Babel. Seats were at a premium, and were jealously guarded until names were called, when clumps of people grabbed their things, and surged toward the appropriate windows. Trips to the restrooms could cost you your place in line. I waited and waited and waited. At the end of the business day, an announcement came over the PA system. People who had not been seen would have to go to the desk, and get a new appointment. I joined the rush to the appointment desk, getting a date for October, knowing that by that time I'd have overstayed my welcome by one month.

October crawled around, and again I

made my way to the *Préfecture de Police*. This time I knew the routine. I had stuffed myself with food, like a *foie gras* goose, while avoiding all liquids. Squeezing myself into an uncomfortable plastic chair, I gripped my documents and waited. Mead is not a French name, and is usually pronounced "May-Add" by native French speakers. I strained my ears every time a name was called, thinking it might be mine. On one occasion, I got up and ran to the counter, only to be met by seven members of the Mehadi family, who refused to claim me as one of their own. Hour after hour rolled by, until, at last, around 3 pm, I heard it. "May-Add." I bolted to the counter, slid my documents under the glass partition, and smiled broadly at the lady who was perusing them with obvious boredom. She seemed particularly interested in the date stamp, showing that I had been in France for four months. "*Qu'est-ce que vous foutez en France?*" she snarled. ("What the hell are you doing in France?") Somehow this was not the welcome I had hoped for, returning to the land of my ancestors, me, the daughter of a genuine American Liberator. I proceeded to tell her the tale of my *visa de long séjour* woes. She was unimpressed. I opened my handbag, and took out a candy, popping one into my mouth, and pushing one under the glass partition at the bureaucratic gorgon across from me. We stared at each other, sucking on our caramels. Finally, a hint of a smile crossed her face. "You know, for an American, your French is awfully good," she admitted grudgingly. "Oh, my mother's French," I replied. "What?" she shrieked, practically jumping over the glass partition to embrace me. "Well, that changes everything."

Suddenly, there I was, the long-lost daughter of the République, coming home after years in exile amongst the Savages. "Did your mother give up her French citizenship to become an American?" she asked. In those days, you had to. Daddy was working in aerospace, on a job with government clearance. My mother had been told that she either renounced her French citizenship, or she risked having her children taken from her, in case of conflict.

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• COACH'S CORNER •

It's that time of year again, the time where people spend hours poring over their brackets before coming down with mysterious illnesses on Thursday and Friday. March Madness is now upon us, and it appears that this could be the most wide open year ever in college hoops. So, without further ado, here is a preview of the tournament. In keeping with the Final Four theme, I divided things into groups of four. (Handy, isn't it?)

Four players who can carry a team to the Final Four (that you have heard of)

- Kemba Walker, UConn – He helped the Huskies win 5 games in 5 days in the Big East tournament and can get to the rim whenever he wants.

- Jimmer Fredette, BYU – Everyone loves the Jimmer, and for good reason, the guy has terrific range and can also drive the lane. Put up 52 just a couple of games ago, and may have to do so again for BYU to get the Houston

- Ben Hansbrough, Notre Dame – you probably knew his brother from his time as Professor Beaker on the muppets (oh yeah, he played at UNC as well) but Ben possesses all of the Hansbrough family traits that Tyler displayed at UNC. He's physical, tough, and has an immense desire to win in addition to terrific ability.

- Nolan Smith, Duke – Terrific lead guard for Duke and the best defender on this list, he shut down Kendall Marshall in the ACC Championship to help Duke dominate that game

Four players who can carry a team to the Sweet Sixteen (that you probably haven't heard of)

- Kawai Leonard, SDSU – This lanky forward has an NBA body and the talent to match. He's the main reason behind the Aztecs earning a #2 seed in this year's dance.

- Keith Benson, Oakland – At 6'11, Benson is a fu-

Descent into madness



Ryan Potts
tryanpotts@hotmail.com

ture NBA player who can change the game with his shot-blocking and interior presence.

- Noah Dahlman, Wofford – He may not have the height of Benson, but Dahlman plays huge at 21 ppg and may have the ability to dominate BYU in the paint with the loss of Kyle Davies

- Talor Battle, Penn State – Normally this space is reserved for small conference players, but Battle carried PSU to the Big 10 Championship game and has the ability to take over any game.

Four possible Cinderellas

- Richmond – The Spiders defend, defend and defend some more, and coach Chris Mooney's Princeton offense

can neutralize scoring teams.

- Old Dominion- The Monarchs are one of the best defensive and rebounding teams in the nation and got a favorable matchup with Butler in the first round.

- Utah State – They have an impressive 30-3 record coming into the tournament and a ton of experience with 4 senior starters

- Washington – Despite being a high major school, the Huskies have been flying under the radar despite featuring one of the best guards in the nation in Isaiah Thomas.

Four Questions for next weekend

- Will Kyrie Irving play for Duke? Reports are that Irving has been cleared to play and may see action this weekend. If Irving can reintroduce himself quickly, Duke becomes even more versatile and talented.

- Was the ACC Tournament a mirage for UNC? The Heels played horribly for most of the tournament, turning the ball over more and shooting poorly. Both of those issues can be a sign of fatigue for the young UNC core of Harrison Barnes and Kendall Marshall, but if they can find some energy they have the talent to make a deep run.

- Which #1 seed will fall? I have a feeling one of these #1's will fall in the opening weekend, and if I had to take a guess I would say that it will be either Ohio St. falling to Villanova or Kansas falling to Illinois.

- Which game will Gus Johnson make infinitely more exciting with his commentary?

• HIGHLANDS SCHOOL SPORTS •

Lady Highlanders drop game at Brevard

By Ryan Potts

The Highlands High School girls' soccer team traveled to Brevard last Friday to face the Lady Blue Devils in a non-conference matchup.

The Lady Highlanders did not play Brevard last year, but were looking to avenge a 2-0 loss in the 2009 season to the Lady Blue Devils. While Highlands looked to start strong, it was actually Brevard who came out hot early, dominating the possession early and taking a 1-0 lead just 6 minutes into the game.

The young Highlanders had trouble maintaining possession against the older, more experienced Lady Blue Devils, and were unable to clear the ball from their half throughout the first 40 minutes of the game.

The Lady Blue Devils featured primarily juniors and seniors against a Highlands team that starts 6 underclassmen. Brevard was able to capitalize on their experience, scoring 3 goals in a stretch of 20 minutes to lead 4-0. Highlands was able to get back in the game somewhat after a goal from Stephanie Smart cut the lead to 4-1, but Brevard scored 2 more goals in the half to lead 6-1 at the halftime break. In the second half, the Lady Highlanders played inspired soccer, playing Brevard even to keep the score 6-1.

Highlands will host Tallulah Falls on Thursday in what will be the home opener for the Lady Highlanders.

... CONTROVERSY from page 1

Clarks Chapel community. The change was requested by John Binkley, who has become the spokesman for the ongoing controversy.

Neighbor Herman "Bud" Talley, who owns Nantahala Meats and has a 45-acre beef cattle farm in Clarks Chapel, plans to open a motocross practice facility on his land in the middle of a residential/farming community.

As the High Impact Ordinance now reads, this is an allowed use leaving area neighbors with little recourse.

Binkley has been making the rounds speaking out against the project saying property rights go both ways and a simple change to "definitions" in the High Impact Ordinance — specifically, lowering the level of activity under its current exemptions to include Motor Sports activities — would protect Clarks Chapel citizens.

"It is my opinion that any commercial venture should fall under the high impact ordinance," he said. "Our re-

•See CONTROVERSY page 13

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Date: March 26th, 2011

Time: 10:00am-2:00pm

Location: Bryson's Food & Mtn. Fresh Market

Contact: Highlands Police Department/526-9431

... GAMBLING continued from page 4

the Wright Square B2 district.

Now, loopholes have been discovered in the law banning electronic gambling, so certain games are allowed statewide which puts Highlands in jeopardy. Even if people don't want those kinds of businesses in town they can't be denied without an ordinance backing it up.

Meanwhile, Perdue says that if these types of businesses are going to be popping up, the state might as well regulate them, make sure they are fair and legal to the users, and make some money off them.

Proponents of electronic gambling in Highlands say sweepstake-type machines already exist in town at a few gas stations and say it's contradictory for the NC Lottery to be OK but not electronic gaming.

At July's Zoning Board meeting, citizen Alice Nelson spoke against granting the SUP in the first place.

"I don't think Highlands needs this. It is the edge of the wedge. The next thing we will be deciding is if we want a casino in Highlands," she said.

Due to loopholes in the law, talk now revolves around reinforcing the ban on electronic gaming put in place by last year's

General Assembly but struck down, in part, by a Guilford County judge as "overly broad."

Those against legalizing electronic gambling say the intent of the General Assembly's bill needs to be clarified precisely to make the games illegal.

But the state needs money and the industry represents a lucrative revenue stream.

For years law enforcement in North Carolina has tried to shut down the electronic gambling activity, but for each establishment they close, several others open. Furthermore, they have a hard time policing the video gambling machines. If the machine offers casino-style slot outcomes, police can seize the games. But manufacturers have caught on and have altered the appearance of the machines for the businesses in North Carolina.

The Town Board didn't have much to say about the request on March 2, but if members decide to move forward they will ask the Planning Board to consider amending the ordinance. The Planning Board will make a recommendation and the Town Board will vote on the issue.

— **Kim Lewicki**

...SWANSON continued from page 6

'dismissive conduct' in blocking offshore drilling during last year's spill." Speaking of the BP et al blowout last year, at the time, it was reported to be the greatest natural disaster of all time. It would irrevocably kill all marine life in the Gulf and destroy the US east coast, especially Florida, as a tourist designation. I walked Miami Beach recently and there was not a tar ball in sight, but a whole lot of tourists. The Miami Boat Show and the Coconut Grove Art Show were going strong and life was its normal, hectic self.

When was the last time you heard any sort of a news report concerning the Gulf spill? Stories of the price of gasoline seems to have forced the utter devastation off the front pages. Here is my theory. Our recent leaders, including Carter, the Bushes, Clinton and Obama are all one-worlders. Previously, they were somewhat discrete in leveling the playing field so the intent was not overly obvious. The people in oil producing countries were poor and we were wealthy.

If we had to pay more for oil and not to ourselves, theoretically their

standard of living would improve and ours would decline, and in conjunction with the NEA dummying down the general population, we would be ripe for a one-world government. With the purposeful destruction of the value of the dollar, and other currencies mentioned as replacing the dollar as the world's reserve currency, looks like lightning is striking all around us.

Buckle up – the party is going to get rough.

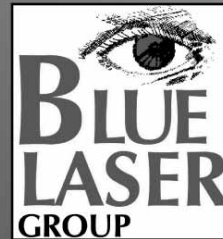


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PULL OUT

On going and Upcoming Events

Ongoing

• At Health Tracks at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, various exercise classes all week long. Call 828-526-1FIT.

• Registration is now open for the 2011 summer nature day camps at the Highlands Nature Center. Five different camps are offered: "WOW! - a World of Wonder" (ages 4-6), "Amazing Animals" (ages 7-10), "NatureWorks" (ages 8-11), "Mountain Explorers" (ages 10-13), and "Junior Ecologists" (ages 11-14). Some camps are offered more than once during the summer. Sessions run from Tuesday to Friday each week. For complete schedules, costs, and other information, please call 828-526-2623 or visit www.wcu.edu/hbs.

Mon. & Thurs.

• On the Mat Yoga at the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation on Main Street. Upper Level Jones Hall. Mon., and Thurs. at 10:45 a.m. Bring your mat. 828-482-2128. \$10/hour.

Mon., Wed., Fri.

• Heart Healthy Exercise Class at the Rec Park. 8:30-9:30 a.m. \$20/month.

• Step Aerobics with Tina Rogers at the Rec Park, 8-9 a.m. \$10 per class or \$50 a month.

Mondays

• Closed AA meeting, 5:30 p.m. at the Episcopal Church at Fifth and Main streets.

Tuesdays

• Highlands Rotary Club meets at noon at the Highlands Conference Center at noon.

• Closed AA Women's meeting, 5:30 p.m. at the Episcopal Church at Fifth and Main streets.

Tues. & Thurs.

• Study Hall at the Literacy Council of Highlands in the Peggy Crosby Center from 3 to 5 p.m. Come do your homework, projects use the resources on site and get help from a tutor. For more information, contact Faviola Olvera at (828) 526-0925.

Wednesdays

• The Highlands Mountaintop Rotary meets at 7:30 a.m. in the dining room at the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. Enter the hospital in the main or emergency entrance and follow the signs downstairs. Visitors are welcome. Meetings end at 8:30 a.m.

• Men's interdenominational Bible Study at 8:30 a.m. at First Baptist Church.

• The Homegrown Buds, a homeschool 4-H club, meets at noon at the Macon County Library on Siler Road in Franklin at 1 p.m.

Wednesdays & Fridays

• Open AA meeting at noon at the Episcopal Church at Fifth and Main streets.

Every 3rd Wednesday

• Study sessions at the Universal Unitarian 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. Call 828-524-6777 or 706-746-9964.

Thursdays

• Al-Anon meeting, noon at the Episcopal Church on Main and Fifth streets.

• The Highlands Writers Group is now meeting at 1 p.m. at the Library on Thursdays. At one o'clock they will have their free writing exercises. You may bring a seven minute writing piece to read. Newcomers are welcome. Call Anne Doggett at 526 8009

Fridays through May 27

• At The Bascom, "Highlands High School Ceramics," 8-9:30 a.m. Ceramics for high school age students desiring to learn the art of ceramics. The curriculum follows NC state guidelines and develops valuable skills Free. To register contact Highlands School, 828.526.2147.

Every Third Saturday

• The Highlands Memorial Post #370 of the American Legion meets at the Shortoff Baptist Church. Breakfast is at 9 a.m. Meeting is at 10 a.m. All veterans are invited to attend.

Last Sat. of the month through May 28

• At The Bascom, "Friends Around the Globe," 1-3 pm. Fun, creative, educational activities to build skills through the visual arts. Lessons will include a variety of media including drawing, painting, clay and other media. A collaboration with the International Friendship Center. Free. To register or for more information, visit www.thebascom.org or call 828.526.4949, ext. 100.

Saturdays

• At Paoletti's Restaurant, intimate Wine Tasting at the bar at 1 pm. Great inexpensive wines from around the world, available for retail sales daily. Cheese and Crackers are served. Cost: \$20 per person refundable with case purchase.

Through -April 2

• At The Bascom, view Regional Art League's annual exhibition. Friday, March 18

• The High Mountain Squares will dance this Friday night, March 18th at the Macon County Community Building on Route 441 South from 6:30 to 9 PM. Willis Cook from Carnsville GA will be the caller. We dance Western Style Square Dancing, main/stream and plus levels. There will be a Plus Workshop from 6:30 to 7 PM. Everyone is welcome.

For information call 828-349-0905, 828-369-8344 or 706-782-0943.

Saturday, March 19

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate-to-strenuous 5.5 mile hike with an elevation gain of 500 feet to Whiteside Mountain and the Devil's Courthouse for dramatic views from the top. Meet at the Highlands Bank of America at 10:00 a.m. or the trail head parking lot at 10:15. Share a small parking fee. Bring water and lunch. Drive 8 miles round trip. Call leader Virginia Talbot, 526-4904, for reservations.

Sunday, March 20

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take an easy 2.5-mile hike with an elevation change of 200 feet to Winding Stair Gap on a Forest Service road and the Appalachian Trail. Meet at Westgate Plaza in Franklin, opposite Burger King, at 2 pm. Drive 20 miles round trip. Call Kay Coriell, 369-6820, for reservations.

Tuesday, March 22

• At The Highlands Dialogue's Tuesday discussion, Virginia Wilson: Handouts article "Creativity Crisis" from Newsweek July 19, 2010. Handouts will be available at the meeting previous to the

Fun event to benefit Satolah volunteer firefighters

Neighbors, friends and family from Rabun, Macon and Oconee counties will gather Saturday, March 26 at the annual bluegrass and barbecue benefit for the Satolah, Georgia, volunteer fire department.

The volunteer firefighters and the hard-working women of the Station 8 auxiliary will begin serving food at 5 p.m., with the music starting around 7 p.m.

Chief James Reed is hoping for a stellar turnout, as the routine costs for properly outfitting just one volunteer takes almost \$1,000, costs borne by the volunteers. This family-friendly benefit always has been highlight of spring (and the official start of the trout season) in this part of the tri-state area. "We hope everyone will mark their calendars, and do their best to help - even in these uncertain times," Reed said.

Here's the line-up:

• Food plates will include your choice of a smoke pork barbecue or grilled chicken, served with baked beans, Cole slaw, applesauce, a roll and soft drink (\$7) or a combo plate with both chicken and pork for \$10. Those with a real appetite also can order a whole butt (\$35) or whole chicken (\$10) if pre-ordered by Tuesday, March 22. Call (828) 371-1712 or (828) 371-0722 to pre-order.

• Then, starting around 7 p.m., get set for the inimitable bluegrass sounds and singing of both Foxfire and Chatuga Ridge

• The ladies' auxiliary also will auction off its delicious homemade cakes and there will be a raffle.

The station is located 3.5 miles south of the Georgia-North Carolina line on state Route 28 (the Highlands-Walhalla Road) and about 2 miles from the Route 28 intersection with Warwoman Road. The public is invited — and bring all your friends!

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On going and Upcoming Events


PULL OUT

discussion (if not sooner) and at the Hudson Library in the Community Box available during library hours. The Highlands Dialogue's Tuesday discussions are held at the Civic Center from 10–11:30 a.m. For more information email John Gaston johngaston@aol.com.

- At the upcoming Ladies Night Out program, 6:30 pm in the cafeteria at Angel Medical Center. The topic will be Overcoming Depression and Stress Reduction. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, major depression affects over 15 million American adults. Depression occurs twice as frequently in women as in men, for reasons that are not fully understood. Major depression can significantly interfere with an individual's thoughts, behavior, mood, activity, and physical health. Among all medical illnesses, major depression is the leading cause of disability in the United States. Ladies Night Out speakers will include Susan Marks, MSW, LCSW. Susan is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with The Life Counseling Center in Clyde, NC. For more information about Ladies Night Out, call Jennifer Hollifield at 349-2439.

Wednesday, March 23

- The Piccadilly Circus will be celebrating 25 years of entertaining families when it pulls into Western Carolina University's Ramsey Regional Activity Center for two shows Wednesday. Shows will begin at 4:30 and 7:30 p.m. Children will be admitted free with a paying adult, and coupons are available at area schools and businesses. Piccadilly Circus features include "Elephant Extravaganza," "Motorcycle Madness," the giant jungle monster Katunga, the Mongolian Angels contortionists and a boxing kangaroo named Rocky. Tickets are available online at www.TheFunCircus.com using the code word "circus," or at the door. Adult tickets are \$28 and "VIP" seats are \$35. The cost is \$7 for a child to upgrade a free ticket to a VIP ticket. For more information, call the Ramsey Center at 828-227-7677.

Thurs.-Sat., March 24-26

- Operation Medicine Drop-off at Highlands Pharmacy and Main Street Pharmacy from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.. Bring prescription and over-the-counter medicines to the take-back event and keep them out of the wrong hands. For more information, call the Highlands Police Department at 526-9431.

Friday, March 25

- Highlands-Cashiers Hospital will offer a special reception and hospital update to area Realtors interested in learning more about the hospital Friday. The complimentary mid-morning session will begin at 10 a.m. and will include refreshments. The event will provide participants an in-depth look at the hospital's day-to-day operations while hearing latest news and updates from President and CEO, Craig James. For more information or to RSVP, please call (828) 526-1434.

Saturday, March 26

- Operation Medicine Drop-off at Bryson's Foods and Mountain Fresh Market from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.. Bring prescription and over-the-counter medicines to the take-back event and keep them out of the wrong hands. For more information, call the Highlands Police Department at 526-9431.

- At The Bascom, Winter Barn Dance honoring veterans from 7-10 p.m. Tickets are \$5. Call the Chamber of Commerce at 526-2112.

- The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 4-mile hike to Lower Whitewater Falls from the Bad Creek Reservoir parking area. Meet in back of the Wachovia Bank in Cashiers at 10 am. Drive 22 miles round trip. Bring water and lunch. Call leaders Mike and Susan Kettles, 743-1079, for reservations.

- The Satolah, Georgia, volunteer fire department holds its annual benefit, Saturday, at the firehouse on Route 28. Food at 5, smoking bluegrass at 7. Slow-cooked pork barbecue or grilled chicken with all the trimmings, \$7 per plate for adults, \$10 for a combo plate. Whole butts (\$35) and whole chickens (\$10) also can be pre-ordered if you call (828) 371-1712 or (828) 371-0722 by Tuesday, March 22. Music and singing by Foxfire and Chatuga Ridge. And don't miss the homemade cake auction and raffle. All proceeds benefit this volunteer fire station. The public is invited.

Tuesday, March 29

- At The Highlands Dialogue's Tuesday discussion, Bill West: Poet Discussion. Handouts will be available at the meeting previous to the discussion (if not sooner) and at the Hudson Library in the Community Box available during library hours. The Highlands Dialogue's Tuesday discussions are held at the Civic Center from 10–11:30 a.m. For more info about the Highlands Dialogue please e-mail John Gaston johngaston@aol.com or Karen Hawk hwkncrw@earthlink.net.

Wednesday, March 30

- Macon Savings Bank Blood Drive, One Center Court, Franklin, 10 am to 2:30 pm. Please call 524-7000 for more information or to schedule an appointment. Walk-Ins Welcome! Appointments preferred.

Thursday, March 31

- Bonsai workshop at the Highlands Biological Station. 1-3 pm. A hands-on workshop for beginners, presented by Dr. Bob Gilbert. \$20 per person. Advanced registration is required due to limited space; please call horticulturist Cyndi Banks at 828-526-018 for more information and to sign up.

Friday, April 1

- Calling all Independents and Democrats! April Fool's Political Vent at the Hudson Library Meeting Room from 6-9:30 p.m. Featuring the Wild Hog Band. Appetizers will be served. BYOB. \$7.50 per person, \$20 per couple.

Highlands School Kindergarten Registration is April 7

Kindergarten Registration is a special time for both parents and students. On April, Kindergarten registration for the 2011/2012 school year will begin, for parents, at 10 AM in the school's media center. The itinerary is listed below. To make the transition from preschool to Kindergarten as fun and positive as possible, we would like to offer the new students a taste of great things to come by providing transportation to and from Highlands School for registration.

At approximately 10:30 on April 7, Highlands' school bus driver, Jack Philpot, will begin picking up students aboard one of our activity buses starting at the United Methodist Church. He will stop at each day care center to pick up students and all should arrive at Highlands School by 10:50. PTO volunteers will be on the bus to help with the students. Students not enrolled in a day care center may meet before 10:30 at the Highlands Community Child Development Center, Inc. located at 89 Church Street, Highlands, to catch the bus.

Riding the "school bus" is an exciting experience for the students. Please encourage your child to ride to school on the bus that day whether or not you plan for your child to ride during the school year. *Please note: the bus will be returning students to the day care centers.*

Every child riding the bus on April 7th, must have a permission slip. Permission slips are provided in each registration packet. Extra registration packets and bus permission forms will be available at the Child Development Center and at Highlands School.

Please fill out all of the following registration forms completely and bring them with you on

April 7th:

1. Home Language Survey (white/triplicate)
2. Student Information Management Sheet (pink) *both sides*
3. Ethnicity Letter (white)
4. Macon County Schools Student Residency Questionnaire Form (yellow)
5. Highlands School Transportation (salmon)
6. Macon County Schools Consent Form and Internet Policy (goldenrod)
7. New Student Library/Lunch form (white)
8. Kindergarten Admission Information—Parent's Rating (white)
9. North Carolina Kindergarten Health Assessment Report (blue)
10. Macon County Schools Child Nutrition Services Diet Modification Request (if applicable; requires physician's signature) Any forms (except the Health Assessment) not returned will need to be completed on April 7th.

A Kindergarten Health Assessment is mandated by law for all children entering kindergarten. *Kindergarten Health Assessment forms must be turned in prior to the first day of school.* Please make sure that ALL the information on the Kindergarten Health Assessment Form is completed.

In addition to these documents, the following items should be presented at registration on April 7th for photocopying:

1. Certificate of Immunizations (School must have within 30 days from the start of school). Students without a complete Certificate of Immunizations presented within 30 days from the start of school will be placed on administrative suspension until in compliance.
2. Social Security Card
3. Certified Birth Certificate (must present original, certified birth certificate. No copies or "uncertified" birth certificates will be accepted.
4. Proof of Residency (See attached)
5. If you are not the biological parent of the child enrolling, and/or there is a custody agreement in place, please provide any legal documents you have giving you authority to enroll the child (i.e., custody papers, name change documentation, adoption papers or educational domicile affidavits).

The faculty and staff look forward to meeting you and your child. Please call 526-2147 with questions.

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

What would St. Patty think?



**The Rev'd Jim Murphy,
Christ Anglican Church**

St. Patrick (c. 390—c.460), the patron saint of Ireland and the first Christian bishop at Armagh, was a towering figure of faith in Jesus Christ. We can learn much from his steadfast dedication and the intriguing change of heart that he underwent. Then too, we might wonder what he would think of today's versions of church and society, of green beer, leprechauns and shamrocks.

Born in Britain, Patrick grew up in a nominally Christian home. His family attended church, much like many folks today, but church barely made an impact on their lives. Other than his father's service as a deacon in the church, the tell-tale signs of Christian faith in the one who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life were largely lacking from his family's day-to-day life.

At a young age, shortly after Patrick's 16th birthday, he was captured and taken by Irish pirates to present-day County Mayo, where he was enslaved as a herdsman. Due in large measure to his loneliness and enslavement, he turned passionately to the God he vaguely remembered from his youth. Jesus responded. The Lord inspired him to seek his freedom and he did so, making his way back to his family in Britain. However, he was not the same Patrick that his family had known.

Patrick, owing much to answered prayers, dedicated his life to the God who saved and saves him. Soon thereafter, he studied for ministry in the church and was ordained. Before too long he accepted a divine call to return to the land of his captors and to share his saving faith with them. He evangelized and educated some of the very brigands who had enslaved him. In his *Confession* he described himself as Bishop, though it is not believed that he was ever formally consecrated such. Nevertheless, he ordained priests, monks, and nuns, starting churches, schools and monasteries in the process. Patrick was a man on a mission, spending the rest of his life in ministry to his one-time oppressors on the Emerald Isle.

Would that the church of our day have the same effect on the lives of young people! Saint Patrick stands as a stellar example of one who's faith in Christ and a zeal for God's kingdom inspired him to serve those who persecuted him. That first bishop at Armagh understood well God's call to a service of love — not of self, but of others. He followed in the footsteps of our Lord, who "came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page16

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221 N. 4th Street
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a.m., Evening Worship, 6:30 p.m.
Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.m.

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Pastor Paul Christy 526-3376
Sun.: school 9:45 a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.; 5 p.m.
Youth
Wed: Supper; 6; 7:15 – children, youth, & adults
studies; 6:15 – Adult choir (nursery provided for
Wed. p.m. activities)
Thurs:12:30 – Women's Bible Study (nursery)

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

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Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg. – 7 p.m.

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Evening Worship – 6 p.m.
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Sunday of each month from 5 - 7:30 p.m

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Cashiers, Rev. Sam Forrester, 743-2122
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... CITIZENS continued from page 1

Both Commissioners said the ordinance was what they wanted and after a 45-minute last ditch attempt by the Mayor to turn the vote – Patterson asked “What are we doing here? We have the two versions, let’s vote on them tonight.”

Wednesday night the vote was 3-2 in favor of leaving the town ordinance as it now stands with the Police Chief and Zoning Administrator working at the pleasure of the Town Board – as intended by the previous Town Board headed by Mayor Don Mullen which changed the town’s form of government from its hybrid Mayor-Council form to the hybrid Council-Manager form.

Several citizens spoke during the Public Comment period – and as has been the case since November, the majority were for keeping the ordinance the same. Basically, citizens want to keep accountability and representation through their elected officials and believe more heads are better than one when it comes to several town issues including the hiring and firing of employees.

Those who spoke in favor were Patrick Taylor, Steve Day, Alice Nelson, Charlie Dasher, Sandra Baty, John Underwood, Jim Lewicki, Alan Marsh and Elaine Johnson.

Those who spoke for changing the ordinance to make the Police Chief and Zoning Administrator work at the pleasure of the Town Manager instead of the Town Board, thereby changing the current ordinance, were Richard Delaney, Dick Hills, and Brian Buckley.

Prior to the vote, Mayor Wilkes said the issue had divided the town and regardless of the outcome wants the citizenry and

the Town Board to come together and work for the betterment of Highlands.

“The numerous discussions about this have reached a point of polarization which isn’t good for Highlands,” he said. “Whatever the vote, we need to back the majority of the board and support it.”

Also prior to the vote, Commissioner Gary Drake said he wanted the people who have been attending the meetings on the subject to understand that though they claim he isn’t listening “to the citizens’ wishes” he is.

“I am listening to you, I just don’t agree with you. There are people in the community who agree with me. So I can listen to you but agree with someone else,” he said.

Other changes in the ordinance include:

Amending Sec. 2-47 “...No additional positions or changes to duties of existing positions shall be made by the Town Manager without prior approval by the Board.”

Adding Sec. 2-48 that says the Town Manager shall consult with the Board of Commissioners in closed session prior to the hiring or firing of any employee, unless circumstances require immediate termination.

Deleting Sec. 10-56, which dealt with a voluntary police department, as well as all other sections referring to it.

And amending Sec. 701.1, which refers to the Zoning Administrator, by adding Planning Director to the title.

Commissioners Patterson, John Dotson and Dennis DeWolf voted to keep the town’s hybrid form of Council-Manager government the way it is now.

– **Kim Lewicki**

...JUST HERS continued from page 7

Fortunately for me, I was already four when this happened, so according to French law, I was born to a French citizen, and was French. “I can’t give you a visa,” said the bureaucrat. “You’re French.” Armed with this bit of unexpected news, I went home, stopping on the way to make an appointment at my local City Hall for my French nationality papers.

Several weeks later, I sailed though the massive doors of the *Mairie du 14e*, where my parents had married at the end of the War. I had come prepared, bringing with me my birth certificate, my parents marriage license, my French grandparents marriage license, my mother’s American citizenship papers, my certificate of baptism and my library card (just for good mea-

sure). All documents in English had been translated and notarized by official government approved translators. The lady behind the glass partition stared at my paperwork, shrugged, and pushed my documentation back across at me. “I can’t give you a *carte d’identité* (an official French ID card),” she stated solemnly. “You’re American.”

• About the Author: Michelle A. Mead-Armor moved to Highlands several years ago to live on top of a mountain on the Continental divide near Highlands with her precious late husband, author and attorney, John C. Armor, and two very spoiled cats. Michelle is a dual citizen of the USA and France. She found out that she could also apply for Irish citizenship through her father’s mother, but thought it was gilding the lily.

... CONTROVERSY continued from page 8

quest to you is to take a look at reworking the definition so it conforms with the other parts of the ordinance.”

Talley doesn’t believe he will be degrading the community with his facility; he wants to build a practice motocross course that could legally operate without restrictions for 365 days a year.

At the county commission meeting Tuesday night, Binkley offered veiled threats of lawsuits, likely from both sides, he said, if the county doesn’t do something to protect the property rights of Clark Chapel residents.

Binkley said that if the commission takes a stand to protect the rights of residents against commercial projects in residential communities, it will strengthen the appeal of Macon County to outsiders.

“If you don’t, it will tell people who might move here that anything goes,” he said.

Basically, this comes down to the “Z-word,” a fighting word in Franklin and most parts of the county outside Highlands’ town limits.

There are citizens who believe that it is a person’s prerogative to do whatever he or she wants on their property regardless of how it affects the quality of life or property values of neighbors.

And that’s what Commissioner Ron Haven said Tuesday night. “I am against zoning in any way and in any form in this county,” he said, “but I see what is being asked for here and believe more discussion is needed.”

Binkley wanted the commissioners to tell the Planning Board to amend the ordinance right away, before the motocross project moves too far along and ends up being grandfathered in, should the ordinance be eventually changed.

Attorney Chester Jones said a person has a vested right (grandfathered rights) if substantial expenditures are documented and if he moves ahead with the project in good faith which was based on valid government approval.

Since the commission doesn’t know if Talley’s case hits all those points at this time, it didn’t feel there was a sense of urgency.

Add that to the fact that the commission just met with the Planning Board to set priorities – one of which was not amending the High Impact Ordinance – and Binkley’s request was shot down.

Commissioners agreed the issue needed to be looked into but felt it was the Planning Board’s job to do so because the people on the board took years to construct the High Impact Ordinance and so should be involved in an in depth discussion concerning its changes. “We have no guarantee as to rapidity either way,” said Commission Vice-Chair Bobby Kuppers, liaison to the MC Planning Board. “The Planning Board needs time to discuss this. It took a long time to work out the ordinance and they need a decent amount of time to consider changing it.”

Commission Chair Brian McClellan said he didn’t think this one issue should be put in front of the priorities set by the commission at its joint meeting with the Planning Board.

The second ordinance was the soil & erosion ordinance which involved verbiage changes as mandated by the state; turns out the county’s ordinance wasn’t as stringent as the state’s ordinance. Counties or municipalities ordinances can be more stringent than the state’s but not less.

The mandated changes were in sections 153.07 (B) Graded Slopes and Fills; Roads and 153.07 (C) Ground Cover.

Applying to graded slopes and fills on roads, “The angle for graded slopes and fills shall be no greater than the angle which can be retained by vegetative cover or other adequate erosion control devices or structures. In any event, slopes left exposed will, within 21 calendar days of completion of any phase of grading, be planed or otherwise provided with ground cover, devices or structures sufficient to restrain erosion. (Changed from 30 or 45 working days).”

Applying to ground cover, “...Except as provided in section 153.08.B5, of this chapter, provisions for a ground cover sufficient to restrain erosion must be accomplished within 15 working days or 90 calendar days following completion of construction or development, whichever is shorter. (Changed from reference 153.17 and 30 working days or 120 calendar days.)

As required by law, a public hearing has been set for amendments to the Soil & Erosion Ordinance on April 12, but since there will be no changes to the High Impact Ordinance at this time, it will not be included in the public hearing proceedings.

– **Kim Lewicki**

...WOOLDRIDGE continued from page 4

arrest Carlos Martinez and seize his cocaine, street value of four million dollars.

Peter plopped into his wheelchair and asked for quiet. Twenty-two DEA agents and detectives, crammed into the suite, obeyed. Some sat on the spiral stairs to the upstairs bedrooms while others watched from the balcony overlooking the living room. Some stood out on the patio, leaving the sliding doors open so they could hear.

Peter cleared his throat and spoke softly. "Listen up and let's get this right. We won't get a second shot at this. Again, I want everyone going home to their families tonight so keep your head out of your ass and complete your assignment. Is there anyone who isn't sure of his assignment? Speak up, now."

Peter waited and the room grew deathly quiet as everyone realized the seriousness of this moment. Peter spoke again. "Seven floors below us, Carlos Martinez and his gunmen are sitting in their room. Somewhere out on the street, he has his men riding around in an unknown vehicle containing cocaine with a street value of four million dollars. Our outside sur-

veillance has not found that vehicle as yet and may never spot it until it pulls up on the ramp in front of the hotel. This is a buy/bust. Is that clear...this is a buy/bust? Martinez is one dangerous SOB and if he plans on ripping us off, this is the time for that to happen."

The quiet in the room was eerie. I sat on the sofa and went over my assignment in my head. I was unhappy I was not going into Martinez's room with Peter for the arrest but understood this was DEA's show. I would remain just outside the door with a passkey to the room. When Martinez was arrested, Gus would open the door and allow myself and three other detectives to enter and assist with the arrest.

Twenty minutes passed before the phone rang in the Sinatra suite. Peter picked it up, "Hello, this is Gallo." Peter listened as Martinez gave him details of the transaction. Peter hung up and smiled. "There's a white van sitting on the ramp of the hotel with our mother lode. Showtime, gentlemen. Let's get on it."

The suite slowly emptied as each agent headed for his assignment.

Snake, DEA's lab tech. and two other DEA agents approached the van at the ho-

tel's driveway. The driver recognized Snake from the meeting at the dog track and invited him into the back of the van.

"What about the valet? Is he going to run our asses out of here?" Snake asked the van's driver.

"I gave him a C note and we are good as long as I stay with the truck. It's cool," the driver responded.

Two of Martinez's gunman opened the four large suitcases, exposing kilo bags of cocaine. Snake counted the bags and then pulled four test ampoules from his pocket and laid them on the bags. Pulling a pocket knife from his pocket, he made a tiny slit in four of the bags he picked at random. Each bag tested positive for cocaine. Snake climbed out of the van and nodded to the two DEA agents waiting just outside. Then Snake walked into the hotel lobby and called Peter from a hotel phone.

"Peter, this is Snake. We are good to go. Nice quick color change. I'm heading back to the van."

"Good. As planned, Fred has four uniformed cars waiting a block away for his signal to swarm and block the hotel's ramp," Peter responded. "Don't make arrests until you see the squad cars driving up on the ramp."

"I'm not a rookie," Snake grumbled. "Are you nervous about this bust?"

"A little," Pete said. "All these guys have hair triggers. Just stay safe down there."

Snake hung up the house phone and stood pondering his conversation with Peter. He trusted Peter's instincts and it worried him that he was nervous. Snake returned to the van and sat in the front passenger's seat to await the bust.

Peter rolled his wheelchair into the hallway of the hotel and headed for the elevators. Gus and I, along with my partner, Jim, carried the suitcases containing the four million dollars. When we reached Martinez's room, I knocked softly on his door. A gunman opened the door, looked down the curved hallway in both directions and then pulled the door open so Peter could enter. I sat one suitcase on the arms of Peter's wheelchair and Peter entered, followed by Gus carrying the other suitcase. The door was quickly shut, leaving Jim and me in the hallway. Once the door was closed, two more police detectives joined us in the hallway.

Weapons drawn, we waited for Gus to open the door to assist with the arrest. I held a passkey in my other hand. Two guests, a man and woman, exited their room and headed our way. When they spot-

• See WOOLDRIDGE page 16

HIGHLANDS ROTARY MOUNTAINTOP



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Voter photo ID proposal could increase state budget expenses and burden older 'faithful voting block'

By **Kathleen O. Davis**

Carolina Public Press

www.carolinapublicpress.org

Republican leaders in the North Carolina General Assembly plan to propose a bill requiring citizens to present valid photo identification when they vote, a measure that could create more costs for the state and place additional burdens on older voters, a large and growing demographic in Western North Carolina.

An analysis by Facing South and the Institute for Southern Studies, which sponsors Carolina Public Press, concluded that enacting such a law could cost the state an additional \$18 million to \$20 million over three years to implement.

When asked about the Republican plan to try to pass a voter photo identification law, North Carolina State Board of Elections Larry Leake recently said, on Feb. 28, "I don't have real strong feelings about it one way or the other."

Leake, a Madison County attorney and Democrat, said he thought the Facing South/ISS cost estimates for implementing such a law sounded high.

While he said he did not have specifics about the yet-to-be-filed bill, Leake also said he did not think such a law would create great challenges for local boards of election.

Current identification requirements

Poll workers already are required to check for identification in certain voting situations, Leake said, although that identification does not always need to be in the form of a photo ID.

When someone registers to vote in North Carolina, his or her identification is cross-checked with North Carolina driver's license and Social Security information. According to state law, if a first-time voter's data does not match, he or she must present specific identification upon voting for the first time.

Valid identification in this situation can be a current driver's license or other form of government-issued photo identification. It also can be a document – a utility bill, a pay stub or W-2, a bank statement or a document from a government agency that has the voter's name and current address.

Older citizens make up large voting block

AARP North Carolina Communications Director Bob Garner said that with voter fraud not being a significant issue in North Carolina, AARP North Carolina's position is that a proposed voter photo identification law is unnecessary and burdensome to older citizens.

"The people we represent are the most faithful voting block of all, yet more likely to not have a photo ID," Garner said.

After someone gives up driving, for example, it is not uncommon for that person to not maintain photo identification, he said. Older widows sometimes keep bills, bank statements and other accounts in their deceased spouses' names, Garner said.

Several Western North Carolina counties have larger

percentages of people age 65 and older as compared with other counties and with North Carolina as a whole, according to U.S. Census Bureau data.

North Carolina had 1.14 million registered voters age 65 and older at the time of the November 2008 elections, according to the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research. These senior voters had a 76 percent turn-out in those elections compared with a statewide turn-out of 70 percent.

"It's a population that registers to vote and votes consistently," Garner said. "A (voter) photo ID law is just going to be an inconvenience and obstacle, and we don't see that it's right."

State sends letters to 637 asking for ID verification

Veronica Degraffenreid, elections liaison with the state Board of Elections, said the agency would follow whatever is mandated by any law the legislators pass.

"There are measures already in place that we believe have kept voter fraud at bay... We do our best to have a clean voter database," she said.

One such measure is taking the statewide voter database and cross-referencing it with U.S. Postal Service change-of-address information, Degraffenreid said. Another is the systematic removal of convicted felons from the voter rolls, she said.

These processes "are ensuring we've not seen widespread voter fraud," Degraffenreid said.

Another recent effort to prevent voter fraud involved the state Board of Elections, on Feb. 22, mailing a citizenship inquiry letter to 637 registered voters holding "legal presence" driver's licenses across the state.

"Legal presence" driver's licenses are issued to people who are not United States citizens but who are present legally in North Carolina, said Don Wright, general counsel for the state Board of Elections. People in North Carolina on work visas, for example, might possess "legal presence" driver's licenses.

These 637 registered voters — out of more than 6.1 million registered voters in North Carolina — were identified when the state Board of Elections recently cross-checked voter registrations with North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles records.

The "vast majority" of the citizenship inquiry letters were sent to people in Mecklenburg and Wake counties, Wright said, though some were sent to people in Western North Carolina, too. For example, Wright said letters were sent to 14 Buncombe County residents, eight Henderson County residents and one Haywood County resident.

As of March 7, Wright said 114 of these 637 registered voters had responded to the Board of Elections' letter and had provided documentation proving they were U.S. citizens.

Thirty-eight registered voters were determined to not be U.S. citizens, so they were removed from the voter registrations rolls, he said. Of those 38, five had voted in an election, Wright said. The state Board of Elections was

waiting for responses from the recipients of the remaining 485 letters.

Wright said he had "no opinion about voter fraud" with regards to the results of the mailing and that any determination of voter fraud would be up to district attorneys.

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Date: March 24th-26th 2011

Time: 10:00am-2:00pm

Location: Main Street Pharmacy & Highlands Pharmacy

Contact: Highlands Police Department/526-9431

... on this day

March 17, 1982

Susan Birmingham makes the loudest recorded human shout, 120 db. Compare that to a pig's squeal, ranging from 110-115 decibels or the Concorde jet, which is usually under 112 decibels.

Want to stand out in a crowd?
One way to do it is to get real loud.
Think you may be hard of hearing?
Not a problem if you're nearing
Ms Susan Birmingham,
who is working, practicing, learning and
is now prepared to yell,
something she does very, very, very well.
you and I are much less able
at reaching her level of decibel.
Let's do our modest best to give a shout out
to this woman who is the loudest here about.

... from the History Guy

...WOOLDRIDGE from page 14

ted our weapons, I pulled my identification and put my finger to my lips. "Shh....police," I whispered. The couple hurried toward the elevators.

Five minutes passed and it seemed an eternity. Then, two gunshots were heard inside the room. I shoved my passkey into the lock and opened the door. I pushed the door open wide and entered the narrow passageway into the room.

"He's in the bathroom. Martinez and another gun are in there," Peter called out from a prone position behind the bed. I spotted one of Martinez's gunmen lying on the floor bleeding pretty bad. The gunman was conscious and still holding his weapon. I stepped on his wrist and shoved my automatic into his mouth. "You're going to hell earlier than expected unless you release your weapon." The gunman complied and was handcuffed.

I raced to the room phone and called for the uniformed units to swarm the ramp of the hotel and then I called for an ambulance.

"When we identified ourselves, a gunman pulled his

weapon and fired. Gus took him out," Peter said. Then Martinez and the other gunman locked themselves in the bathroom."

Peter and Gus stood next to the closed bathroom door and Peter called out, "We're agents of the DEA. We have seized your coke and your men are under arrest.

This place is swarming with agents. Don't make this a blood bath, Martinez. You are a wise man. Take your bust and live to tell about this moment on another day. If you fire on us, we will take you out. What do you say?"

There was silence for over a minute. Then Martinez called out, "We will open the door and throw out our weapons. Don't kill us. Tell us what you want." The bathroom door opened slowly and two pistols were thrown out on the floor just outside the bathroom door. Then the door shut. I retrieved both weapons and shoved them under my belt.

"We are coming out. Please don't kill us. We are unarmed," Martinez called out through the bathroom door, still not certain we were not thieves stealing his cocaine.

Gus called out, "Lock your fingers together behind your heads and walk out one at a time." As Martinez and his gunman walked out, they were pushed to the floor and handcuffed.

Outside on the hotel's ramp, four of Martinez's gunman lie face down on the ramp. Uniformed officers handcuffed them and they were placed in squad cars.

Back in the hotel, Martinez looked at Peter and shook his head. "I was suspicious of you from the get/go but the damn wheelchair made me want to believe you were just a crippled dealer. I salute you, Mr. Gallo, and I guarantee you we will meet again on another day."

Peter ignored the veiled threat and lifted Martinez to his feet. "Maybe we will meet sooner than you think. I'm interested in a good friend and business partner of yours. Can we talk?"

Martinez smiled at Peter. "Maybe another day, senior; maybe another day."

The End

Note: The Global Positioning System (GPS) and cell phones had not been invented. Triangulation was the system used for tracking. Also, portable police radios were large, ineffective and cumbersome. Still, we managed to get the job done.

Martinez worked as a DEA and Miami Beach informant for two years in exchange of a lighter sentence. He was later murdered in Colombia.

PS - Peter Spoto, in real life, was nicknamed "The Skinny Guinea" as he weighed just over a 100 pounds soaking wet. He was also one of the scarcest men I've ever known.

Note: Coming soon, look for Fred's new mystery thriller, *Deceived*, at your local bookstore or e-book.

...SPIRITUALLY from page 12

ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

What would St. Patty think of church and society, of green beer, leprechauns and shamrocks? He would be embarrassed but honored. Embarrassed, because of the extant triviality of life and of God, a life that is so precious and the God who is so responsive to need and loving. Honored, because his life changed by and dedicated to Jesus Christ made a difference. Patrick would know that there is still hope.

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• POLICE & FIRE DEPT. •

Highlands PD log entries from March 8. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor, or public officials have been used.

March 8

- At 9:49 a.m., Officers on patrol found an open door at Cottage Club Road. The door was secured.

- At 7:10 p.m., officers got a call from a juvenile at a residence on Laurel Street complaining that his grandfather had given his cat away. Upon arrival, they explained to him why the cat issue didn't warrant calling the police.

March 10

- At 5:45 p.m., residents on Wilson Road reported a suspicious vehicle in the roadway. The occupant of the vehicle told police he was waiting for a friend. He was told to move his vehicle off the roadway.

March 11

- At 5:50 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident at Upper Lake and Bowery roads.

March 12

- At 12:22 p.m., the sound of gunshots or fireworks were reported in the vicinity of Azalea Circle. Upon arrival officers met with juveniles who said they didn't shoot anything but said it probably wouldn't happen again.

- During the week, police officers responded to 6 alarms and issued 3 citations.

Highlands F&R Dept. log entries from March 10.

March 10

- At 4:34 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Buck Creek Road. It was set off by workers and the call was cancelled.

March 12

- At 11:31 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Big View Drive where an elderly woman had fallen.

March 13

- At 3:45 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Skyline Lodge Road. It was set off by workers who were changing the batteries.

- At 8:37 p.m., the dept. was first-responders on Main Street to assist EMS with a medical call.

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...SCHOOLS continued from page 1

tion funding, informed school superintendents across the state to prepare for education cuts beginning on July 1 in anticipation of the state's massive budget shortfall. With competing proposals being released, how big and where those budget cuts will be is yet to be determined.

Gov. Bev Perdue, in her budget proposal released Feb. 17, said no teacher or teacher aides jobs will be lost as she and her fellow legislators work to make up the \$2.4 billion state shortfall. Perdue also promised to fund a new program, called Career and College Promise, with existing funds. That program would pay for qualifying high school students to go to community college and obtain a two-year degree.

Perdue's plan garnered cheers from those throughout Western North Carolina who had protested teacher cuts. But some lawmakers in the region doubt the sustainability of Perdue's plan to retain all those jobs. No one knows exactly how much money will be available until around July 1.

"When 55 percent of the budget is education, I just don't see how you can not cut salaries," said Republican Sen. Jim Davis, from Macon County. Davis called that sort of budgeting naive and said Perdue's plan to shift fund management to county commissioners is an unnecessary burden.

Others, like Democrat Rep. Phillip Haire, from Jackson County, say Perdue's budget merely protects education, which should be non-negotiable.

"Education is one of the reasons that North Carolina has businesses come here," he said. "It's an educated workforce."

Brigman said Macon County's schools have a strong and beneficial relationship with the county commissioners, but he doesn't know if teacher jobs will be saved or if Perdue's budget will be conceived as naive and Pollyannaish.

"I'm going to prepare for the worst and hope for the best," Brigman said. "But even a 5 percent reduction in operating costs — even a 1 percent cut — takes Macon schools from adequate to inadequate pretty quickly."

Brigman knows that the news for North Carolina schools won't be good.

"This is the worst budget crisis I've ever seen," said Brigman who has been superintendent for seven years, five of those in Macon County.

'We're always fighting geography'

During Brigman's tenure, Macon

County has become a microcosm of everything that can go right and wrong in Western North Carolina's education scene. His county embodies the extremes of his region.

Unlike some neighboring counties, Macon County's student body is growing, introducing 60 to 100 new students into the district each year. Counties like Swain and Graham have four and three schools, respectively. Macon has 11, including five high schools and one alternative school, with 340 teachers.

In Graham County's case, only 344 students in the county are enrolled at Robbinsville High School, far less than the state's average enrollment of 792 students per high school. Macon County, by comparison, has an average of 539 high school students per school, with 944 enrolled at Franklin High School.

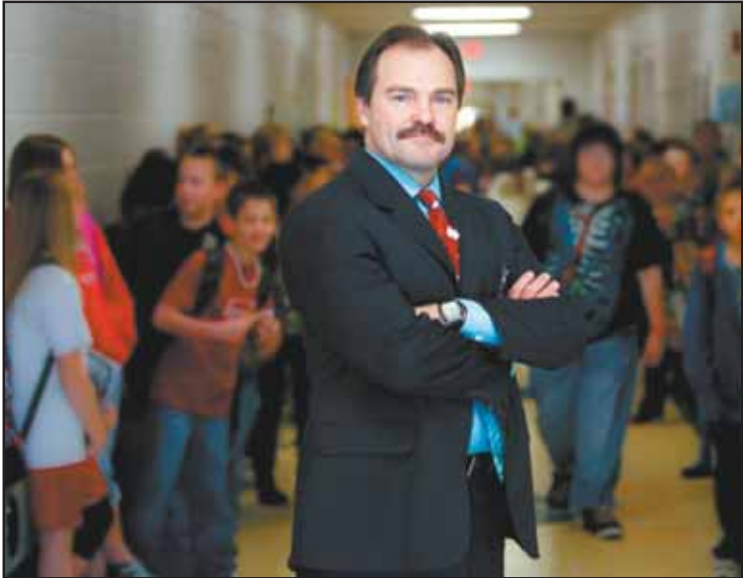
But Macon County is still small compared to Haywood or Buncombe counties. There are no charter schools dotting the county or a larger nearby city like Asheville, which draws lots of young professionals to the region.

"We're always fighting geography," Brigman said. If all the schools were in Franklin, the county seat, cutting certain programs, sharing resources and dividing personnel would be easier. But schools like Nantahala K-12, with only 117 students, need to offer the same level of academics as schools in Franklin, which has five times the number of students. And they need resources and teachers to do it.

Until now, Brigman has managed this balancing act; he's even managed to grow

his district with limited funds using a surgeon's precision when it comes to budgeting.

He consolidated four elementary schools to two without losing personnel, and in his biggest project, will open two new middle schools to meet the demands of his growing district in the next two school years. He also plans to renovate four of 12 existing schools and begin construction of



"I'm going to prepare for the worst and hope for the best," said Dan Brigman, Macon County Schools Superintendent, of looming state budget cuts to education. "But even a 5 percent reduction in operating costs — even a 1 percent cut — takes Macon schools from adequate to inadequate pretty quickly." He's pictured here, in February, at Mountain View Intermediate School, in Franklin, N.C., one of the system's 11 schools. Photo by Matt Rose

a new school for fifth and sixth graders to open capacity at elementary schools. The new school will open August 2012.

It may seem like Macon County is trying to finance a lot of projects, but Brigman said that these improvements are actually money saving in the long run.

"What we are seeing now is new facilities operating at 25 percent at costs of older, smaller schools," Brigman said. "With geothermal heating and air, the schools are high efficiency in terms of utilities. There's no operational burden, which equals savings."

One solution: Planning and programming

A building's efficiency is relatively easy to improve, and easier to measure. But an entire school district's? That's another story.

Brigman explained that this July marks

the last of the system's share of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) money, which, through the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, allotted school districts with enough cash flow to prevent layoffs and cutbacks. North Carolina received about \$1.16 billion from the fund for education.

"Since 2009, we have been trying to preserve every dollar in preparation of the removal of ARRA funds," Brigman said.

But come July 1, their \$2.4 million share will disappear.

Brigman knew the ARRA funds would only last two years, so he saved enough to float the district through one more school year. Then, some personnel may have to go, and with personnel goes a level of educational excellence that Brigman is afraid he may lose.

That impact is doubly felt in Western North Carolina, which has fewer magnet schools and lower college admission rates and high school graduation rates than the eastern part of the state.

Brigman said Macon County benefits from several North Carolina programs that allow students to take college courses at Southwestern Community College. He also says that the growth and funding of alternative education programs have allowed Macon County to raise its graduation rates. According to Brigman, the dropout rate in Macon County was almost 6 percent in 2005; by 2010 it was 2.3 percent.

"We provided various avenues to get a diploma and expanded alternative learning in grades seven to 12," Brigman said.

It's those kinds of tactics that make Macon County one of the better-performing counties in the region. Of students who graduate in Macon County, 79 percent pursue post-secondary education, according to Nancy Cantrell, director of the county's middle and secondary school curriculum. That's higher than the national average.

But like anything else, performance is closely linked to reputation. Brigman worries that no matter if he faces a 5, 10, or 15 percent decrease in funds, he's going to lose Macon County's edge as a leader of education in the mountains.

"Once you take it away, it takes many years to restore," Brigman said. "Education serves as a magnet for economic development. Without an educated workforce and a strong commitment we will see an impact that is long-lasting."



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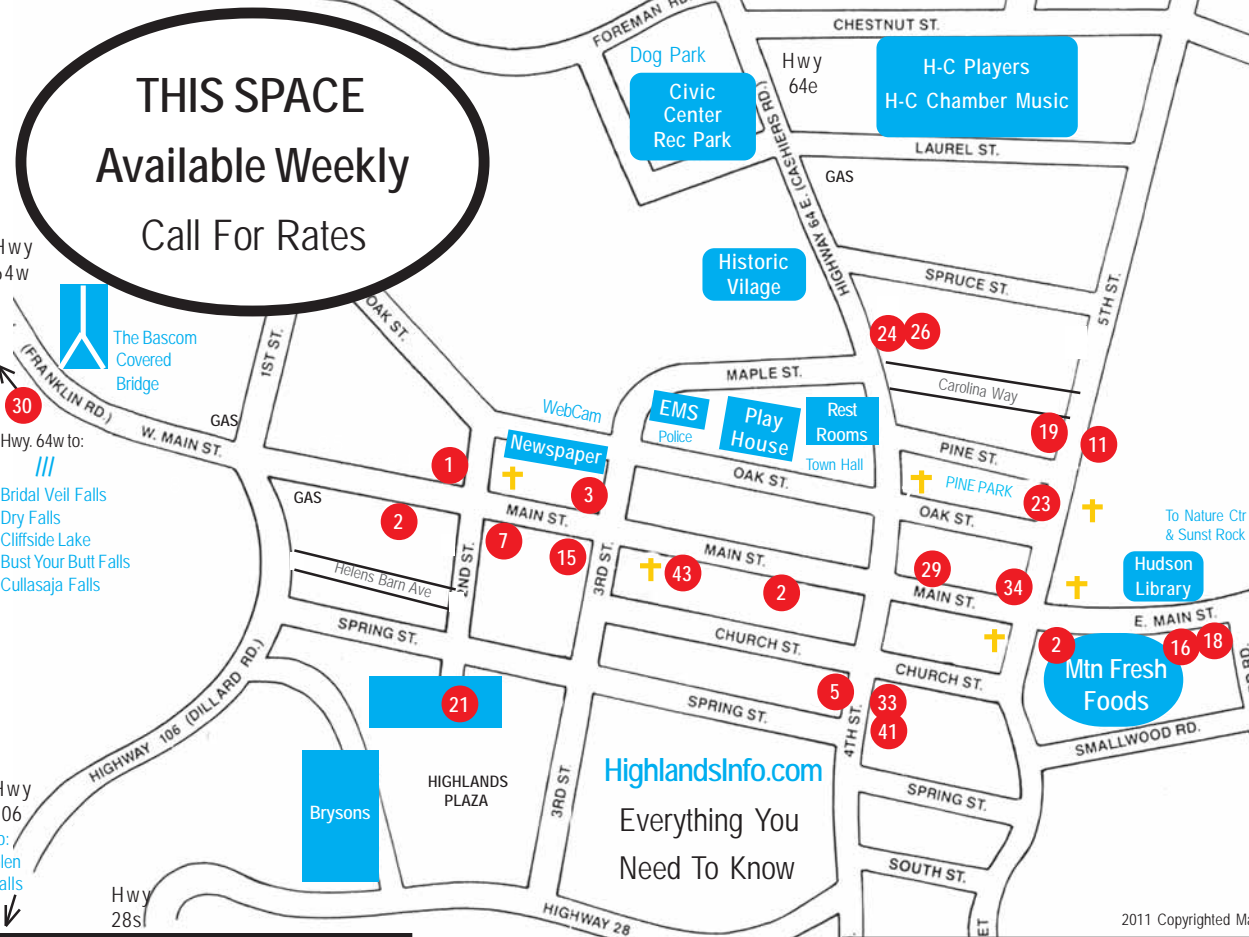
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