

Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 11, Number 17

Real-Time News, Weather & WebCams: HighlandsInfo.com

Thurs., April 24, 2014

Thursday, April 24

• Highlands School Kindergarten Registration at 10 a.m. Call 526-2147

• Dining Out for Life Benefit at Cyprus, On the Veranda, The Ugly Dog and the Doghouse. 20% of bill will support WNCAP, the AIDS Service organization for WNC.

Thurs. – Sun., April 24, 25, 26, 27

• A PAC Youth Theater production of “Little Women.” Tickets available online: highlandspac.org or by calling 828.526.9047.

Fri., April 25

• Community Coffee with Mayor Pat Taylor at the Hudson Library at noon. The subject: The Town Budget.

• Celebrate Arbor Day at the Botanical Garden with a “Living with Trees” guided tour 2-4p.

• Learn about Big Brother Big Sisters program in Highlands at Buck's Cafe at 5:30p.

Sat., April 26

• “Leading the Way to Wellness.” Mayor Pat Taylor and Commissioner Jim Tate will lead walks through downtown Highlands Saturday at 11 a.m. at Highlands Town Hall.

• At PAC, Così fan tutte opera by Mozart begins at 12:15 pm. Ticket are \$24 adults and students are free. Call 526.9047.

Sunday, April 27

• North Georgia Children's Chorus concert at 10:50 a.m. and 3 p.m. at HUMC. Call 828-526-3376.

• Friends of Israel presents “EHAD” in concert at 10:45 am at Christ Church of the Valley in Cashiers N.C. Call 828-743-5470.

Tues., April 29

• FREE Community Table Dinner at the Community Building at 6 p.m.

Williams offer to fund town projects

Year-round pool, gym floor & bleachers, Founders Park and school's ballfield and track

Worries over operating a year-round pool beginning the summer of 2015 nearly derailed an offer by Art and Angela Williams whose charitable donation nearing \$1 million would revital-

ize the town's Rec Park.

At Thursday night's Town Board meeting, Mayor Pat Taylor said the Williams, who own the Old Edwards Hospitality Group, (OEI) approached the town a few

weeks ago, saying they would like to make a substantial donation to the town and the community for community improvements.

•See WILLIAMS page 14

Spring Awakening



This shot of newly emerged Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterflies was snapped during a day trip to the Great Smoky National Park.

Photo by Linda Barden

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Hospital dispels rumors about its closing

Negative rumors floating around concerning the continued status and viability of Highlands-Cashiers Hospital as the area's regional hospital are unequivocally untrue. That's the word from Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Foundation and Marketing Director Robin Taylor.

Rumors revolve around Mission Health, under whose umbrella Highlands-Cashiers Hospital now operates, closing H-C Hospital, creating a walk-in clinic, doing away with the Emergency Room, but keeping the Eckerd Living Center as well as the existing medical building which would house independent medical staff.

“These rumors are totally untrue,” said Taylor. “We are transitioning while integrating with Mission Health, so changes are in the works, but not those kinds of changes!”

Obviously, if closing down the hospital as the community knows it was in the works, employment would likely decrease on the campus, but Taylor said changes in the number of em-

‘League’ sponsors candidates forum – Part 2

By Brittany Burns

At the Thursday, April 10 League of Women Voters meeting, candidates for MC Commission District 1 and 2 answered questions posed by the League.

Though only Republicans John Shearl and Jim Tate are run-

ning in the upcoming primary on May 6, all six candidates participated in the forum – Democrat Ronnie Beale (District 1), Republicans Ron Haven and Gary Shields (District 2), Libertarian John Martin (District 2) and Democrat Michael David “Bud” Rogers (Dis-

trict 1) as well as Shearl and Tate.

With the primary coming up, in this issue we featured candidates Republicans Jim Tate and John Shearl who are facing off on May 6.

•See FORUM page 6

•See RUMORS page 17

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •



More on the town's utility rates

Mayor Pat Taylor

How will we address the continuing rate increases for electricity? To raise electric rates or raise property taxes? Yes, "those are the questions." The town has several options. I will try to give my perspective on the issue without being too complicated. Being a retired college professor that is hard for me to do.

The town charges one cent more per kilowatt hour than what Duke residential customers pay. If we simply passed on the wholesale rate from Duke of 10 cents a kilowatt hour, we could not operate the Highlands electric system in the black. As I have said before, regulatory agencies would tell us the system has to be self-sustaining, or it has to be shut down. Also, the town cannot directly divert property tax or sales tax revenues into the electric fund to keep the system in the black.

Highlands currently has a 13.1 million dollar budget that is divided into two categories. The general fund is approximately 4.2 million, and it comes mostly from property, sales, and state motor fuel taxes. Traffic ticket fines go to a state system, our police are not generating town revenue.

The other part of the town budget consists of enterprise funds from the electric, water, sanitation and waste treatment departments. Water, sanitation and waste treatment basically break even in that the town charges pretty much what it costs to operate these systems. The electric utility fund makes a return on investment. Yes, it can be viewed as a profit. All of the enterprise funds comprise about nine million dollars of the town's budget. They can be characterized as user taxes or fees.

We could cut back our town budget, i.e. reduce the size of government, by getting out of the enterprise business. But, citizens would still require services. For instance, the town charge for garbage pickup is \$18.75 for two pick ups per week

with no limitation on the amount. A private company provides garbage service in the Highlands area for the same price, but just one pick up per week with a limitation of bags per pick up. I doubt private companies could operate our water and sewer departments for less than what the town does, and maintain level and quality of service.

The town could impose austere cut-back procedures. For instance, cutting the police and recreation departments' budget by half would give the town a million dollars in savings, but those cuts would not translate into decreases in electric rates. As I pointed out, general fund revenues cannot be diverted to enterprise funds of utility departments.

So, yes a huge part of the town budget is directed to these enterprise funds. Because we have a reserve in the electricity

enterprise fund, the town can move funds to the water, waste treatment and sanitation departments to hold down and stabilize rates for these utilities.

As I have stated before, the electric utility reserve funds, which can be moved anywhere in the budget, are sometimes used to fund other capital projects. Part of the costs for the new swimming pool in the Recreation Department came from the electric reserve fund. Periodically using the electric fund reserve for town projects help off set pressure for property tax increases.

The transfer of enterprise funds is a one way street. The town can move enterprise electric funds to the general fund, but we cannot move general revenue funds to capitalize enterprise funds, such as the electric. So, we could not directly absorb electric rate increases by transferring revenue from the general fund by way of a

property tax increase. On the other hand, the town could increase the milage rate to fund capital projects that have routinely been funded by the electric enterprise fund. That tax hike would lessen the need to maintain a high electric fund reserve. Some pressure from the Duke rate increases would be lessened and the rise in utility bills slowed. The question to be answered is to what level would the town need to maintain an electric reserve? Funds have to be available for equipment and supplies which are not cheap in an electric system. What additional funds would need to be available in case of a major weather event? Would the town want to stop supplementing the other utilities and raise rates to make them fully self-sufficient also?

An alternative would be to not increase the milage rate and not to pass on electric rate increases to customers. The electric enterprise reserve would decrease, and certain town projects and services would not continue. While we were following this strategy, the inevitable rate hikes by Duke would still continue. An eventual huge rate increase, like the 22% increase we recently had, would befall the customers as reserve funds were depleted.

By charging one cent above the wholesale rate, the town keeps the utility enterprises solvent and rates stable. A compromise strategy would be to have routine low rate increases of 1 or 2% along with slight property tax rate increases of about 1 cent on \$100 of assessed value. Some folks believe a formula containing slightly higher property tax rates would be more equitable for full-time residents who use more power than seasonal residents. We generate about \$180k for very one cent per 100 increase.

A counter argument to this strategy is that the minimal rate charge levied on all accounts is the foundation of the system and covers the lion's share of the operating costs. Some of our seasonal residents have stated to me that this charge is unfair to them, and they should be charged only for the power they use. If the town did not have the minimal charge policy, it could not operate the electric system at the level and rates we now have.

So would a combination of modest property tax and utility rate increases improve the situation by decreasing the need for a large electric utility reserve? Would

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 Sunday at 5 p.m. There is a 500-word limit without prior approval.

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• See MAYOR ON DUTY page 3

• OBITUARIES •

John Roy Potts

John Roy Potts, 77, of Highlands, died on Friday, April 11, 2014.

Born in Jackson County, he was the son of the late Robert Leonard Potts and Flossie McCall Potts. He was preceded in death by a son, John Michael Potts and one brother, Jimmy Potts.

After graduating from Glenville High School, he joined the Air Force and served four years. He was self-employed as a plumber and electrician for forty eight years. He served 12 years in the Naval Reserve. He served for twenty years with the Highlands Fire Department. Roy was a member of Highlands First Baptist Church and loved to go on mission trips to help in other states.

He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Nora Rogers Potts; one son, Derrick Potts and four grandchildren, Brantley, Jeffrey, Matthew and Mykenzi Potts; two great granddaughters, Aubrie and Isabelle Potts; three sisters, Helen Holden, Willene Conner and Gail Rogers; three brothers, Curley Potts, Dennis Potts and Robbie Potts and a number of nieces and nephews.

Memorial Service will be held at 3 p.m. Saturday, April 26, at Highlands First Baptist Church. Rev. Jimmy Wiggins and Pastor Mark Ford will officiate.

The family will receive friends one hour prior to the service at the church.

Highlands Fire Department will serve as Honorary Pallbearers.

Macon Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.

Online condolences can be made at maconfuneralhome.com

Dr. Louis Andrew Williams

Dr. Louis Andrew Williams, 89, formerly of Highlands, N. C., died Friday, April 4, 2014, in a Chattanooga hospital. He was born on May 9, 1924, in LaFayette, Ga., to the late Molly (Abney) and Lloyd Williams.

He graduated from LaFayette High School, University of Georgia and the Medical College of Georgia. He was employed as a Medical Doctor of General Family Practice with Dr. Thomas A. Cochran of Ringgold, and also served as a Medical Doctor with TVA of Chattanooga and Kingsport, Tenn. A veteran of World War II, he was a recipient of the Purple Heart Award. He was a member of First Baptist Church of Highlands, N.C.

He was preceded in death by his grandson, Robbie Hunsucker of Ringgold, Ga., and siblings, Oscar Williams, Bob Williams, Bea (Williams) Oliver, Lottie Mae (Williams) Maxey, all of LaFayette, Ga., Ruby (Williams) Shipp, of Rossville, Ga., and Myrtle (Williams) Spangler, of Daytona, Fla.

Survivors include his wife of 62 years, Virginia (Harrell) Williams, of Ringgold, and Highlands, N.C.; son, Chuck (Cathy) Williams; daughters, Pam (Bill) Guinn, Millie (Glenn) Cheek, all of Ringgold, Ga.; grandchildren, Heath Williams, of Chattanooga, Kristin (Randy) Overton, of Chickamauga, Ga., Brad (Lizzy) Cheek, of Ooltewah, Tn., Lezlie (Matt) Fry, of Smyrna, Tn., Elizabeth (Jamie) Ference, of Black Mountain, NC, Sara Webb of Chattanooga, Tn., Alexandria Cheek, of Ringgold, Ga., Trevor (Heather) Guinn, Trent (Holly) Guinn, Tracey Guinn Walker, all of Fort Oglethorpe, Ga., and brother Jim Williams, of Soddy-Daisy, Tn.

A memorial service will be held at 11am, Saturday, April 26th in the sanctuary of First Baptist Church Highlands with Perry Robinson officiating. The family will receive friends beginning at 10:15am in the sanctuary.

Memorial contributions may be made to The Children's Program of First Baptist Church Highlands, 220 Main Street, Highlands, NC or to the Georgia Baptist Children's Home, 9420 Blackshear Highway, Baxley, GA 31513.

Please share your thoughts and memories online at www.ChattanoogaEastBrainerdChapel.com.

...MAYOR ON DUTY continued from page 2

simply passing on the 3% to 4% annual Duke rate increases be the best way to go? Or would delaying applying the inevitable yearly rate increases as long as possible be the way to go? These are the questions the town board of commissioners will be considering in the next few weeks.

Sorry, I did my best to explain it in simple terms, but like so many things in life it's complicated.

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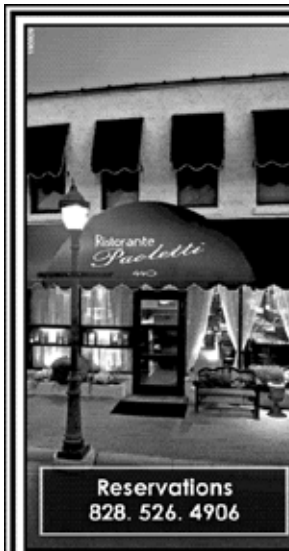
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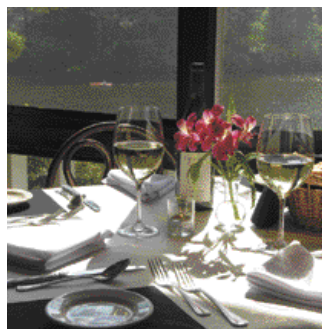


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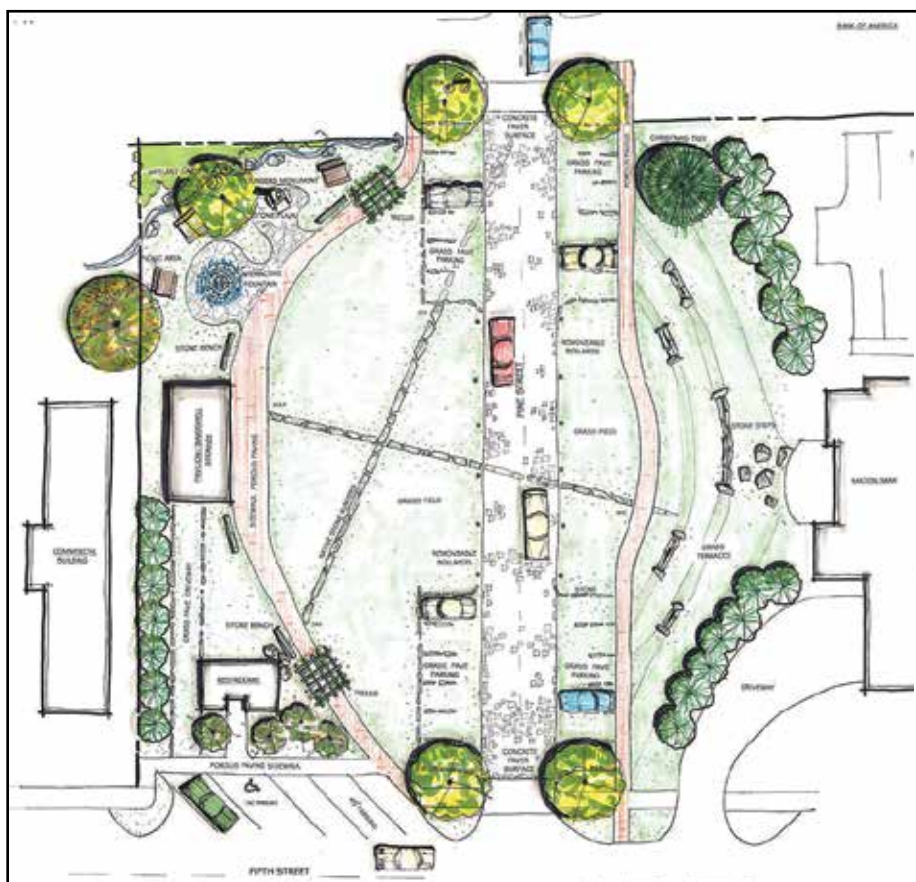
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Coalition announces major gift to finish K-H Park

Efforts to finish Kelsey-Hutchinson Park received a major boost this week, thanks to a \$390,000 gift from Art and Angela Williams, owners of the Old Edwards Inn and Spa.

The Founders Park Coalition, which only last month began a major fund raising campaign for the park, announced the gift Friday, on the heels of the town's announcement that it is also the beneficiary of the Williams' generosity. The gift to the park was made through the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, which is a coalition member.

"By their very generous gift, Art and Angela Williams, have insured that Kelsey-Hutchinson Park will finally realize its full potential," said Nick Bazan, president of the coalition. "We are very pleased that the completion of the park was their top priority when considering the list of local projects they wanted to support. I would like to think that their choice was influenced to a large degree by the wide-spread community support for the park."

Bazan said the Williams' gift will allow construction to begin on park im-

provements in late summer or early fall. "There are a number of events already scheduled for the park this summer, and we don't want to cause anyone any inconvenience. Besides, we are still working on final drawings and we have to go through the town's approval process," he added. "We probably could not have everything in place before early September, anyway."

With Williams' gift, along with other private donations and money committed from various organizations in the coalition, the total raised is now approximately \$425,000. The original goal of the campaign was \$430,000, but Bazan said a more realistic estimate of what it will take to completely finish the park is likely to be in the neighborhood of \$550,000.

The coalition has had to relocate certain structures in the park as a result of how the ground water treatment system lies beneath the park. That has resulted in some changes to the initial overall design. A slightly wider pavilion was one result, as well as moving the restrooms to the corner of Pine and Fifth Streets, which will also

• See K-H PARK page 6

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...K-H PARK continued from page 5

become the main entrance to the park. The latest design also adds more picnic tables, an area with chess/checkers tables, bike racks and other amenities.

Since the Williams grant does not include money for the restrooms, Bazan said that portion of the park project will likely have to wait, unless funding can be found from other sources.

"The generosity of the Williamses, and others who have contributed thus far, has moved us much closer to our goal and they certainly deserve the thanks of not only the coalition, but the entire Highlands community. Thanks in large part to them, we will finally have a village park that we can all enjoy, both now and for generations to come."

Anyone wishing to join in supporting the park can make a donation by making a check pay-

able to Kelsey-Hutchinson Park and mailing it to P.O. Box 1703, Highlands, NC 28741. Since the checks will be processed through the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, a non-profit organization and member of the coalition, donations are tax deductible. Anyone interested in donating time, equipment, or labor should call Nick Bazan at (828) 371-2653 or e-mail him at nicholas.bazan@gmail.com.

The coalition is composed of both Rotary Clubs, the Laurel Garden Club, the Mountain Garden Club, the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, the Highlands Plateau Greenway, the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society, the Highlands Historical Society, the Highlands Chamber of Commerce and the Highlands Biological Station.

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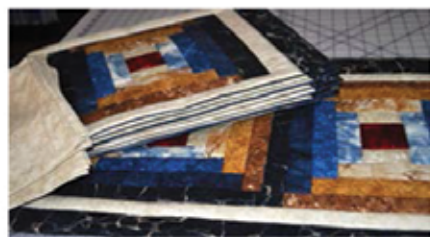
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...FORUM continued from page 1



From left: Candidates Ronnie Beale, Ron Haven, John Martin, Bud Rogers, Jim Tate and John Shearl at the League of Women Voters Candidate Forum on April 10. Not pictured is Candidate Gary Shields who arrived after the photo was taken. The League's Sue Ervin was commentator.
Photo by Kim Lewicki

This week we are presenting the questions and answers posed the candidates who will be on the Nov. 6 ballot.

Question 1

Introduce yourself and focus on the ways you are most qualified for this office.

Michael "Bud" Rogers
Democrat candidate for
MC Commission District 1

I have been in the paving business, the sewer business, the water business, the landscaping business and the blasting business. I want to try to bring jobs to Macon County to help the county so people can get a decent job here without having to run up and down the mountain. I also want to get the water cleaned up. I want to get the sewage out of the Cullasaja River and get the water back to where it is supposed to be.

John Martin
Libertarian candidate for
MC Commission District 2

My reason for filing? Given the county spending, I do not disparage our commissioners, any one of them, I believe they all have good motives. I think the bottom line is if you go from a different perspective, from bigger government, better government, you are going to get more spending. Our budget has increased substantially over the last several years. If you look at the goal spending, we will probably approach \$50 million

this budget year, compared with just a couple of years ago of \$40 million. Our situation with our revaluations, which are in process is the revaluations are going to cause some drastic either tax increases next budget year and the following year or some cuts. I believe there are some ways we can cut.

Ron Haven
Republican candidate for
MC Commission District 2

I think what I said I would do four years ago, I have done. If it is agreeable with you, you will be happy with it, if you're not, you're not. It is that simple. I believe this: We are in an economic time where we need to get the best deal on everything we have to have. I am for our services being 100%. I am for our schools being 100%. I have tried the hardest I could to weigh the balance of what it would cost and what we need. There have been several times I have looked at things that I have said, 'OK, I am not going to spend that much money because I feel it is not fair to the taxpayers.' I have to balance out if we need it or not. If we need it then fine, if not, then we need to look at other options.

If elected, I will continue to do the same thing. If the way I look at being a conservative and the way I am is not the way you feel, I don't want you to vote for me, because I am not going to change. I am going to approach this thing the same way I have for

the last four years. I am not asking anyone for a vote. I am asking for my report card. This November. If I have done what you wanted me to do, I will be willing to serve four more years. If not, I will thank you for the last four years and still think the world of you and go home and continue to serve you from the house.

Gary Shields
Republican candidate for
MC Commission District 2

I spent 37 years in education, 29 of those years in Macon County and 21 years as Principal of Franklin High School. I retired in 2010. Presently I sit on the Board of Education and we have a \$40 million budget that we are currently working through now. I am also on the SCC Board of Trustees. I serve on the AMC Foundation Board as Chairman, KIDS Place Board of Directors, Franklin Chamber of Commerce, I work with Tourism Development Commission and I am a Rotarian. I think we are fortunate in Macon County to have a lot of civic groups.

Ronnie Beale
Democrat candidate for
MC Commission District 2

It has been pleasure to work for the citizens of Macon County for the last eight years, and I am asking to be elected again.

• See FORUM page 8



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WEDNESDAY: CHICKEN OR STEAK POT PIE AND A LARGE SALAD \$18.95 SERVES FOUR

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Elect **John Shearl** County Commissioner

To the Citizens of Macon County,

As a candidate for County Commissioner, I have run an honest, factual, and positive campaign highlighting my opponents voting record and my beliefs as a 'TRUE' conservative candidate. I strongly believe that we must stop excessive spending and borrowing, out of control budgets and review the enormous fund balance sometimes referred to as the county's 'piggy bank'. If you agree with me, I would greatly appreciate your support and vote. I promise that I will work extremely hard to be a good steward of your hard earned tax dollars. It is now up to you, the voters, to decide the future of Macon County.

Sincerely, John Shearl

**Early Voting Begins – April 24th
Early Voting Ends – May 3rd
Election Day – May 6th**

**Independent Voters – You Can Vote
in the Republican Primary... Please Do!!**

Paid for by the Committee to Elect John Shearl

...FORUM
continued from
page 6

What qualifies me for the job? Well, it is the reason I ran in the first place, and that is to enhance what we have here in Macon County. Improve the services to our citizens, what we need to do is increase our citizens. Let me tell you where I am at. If you are looking for someone who does not support our law enforcement, enhance our EMS the best way we can, support our community care clinic and increase services whether it be 911 or our fire departments, then I am not your person, because I am going to support those things. That is what makes Macon County different. I also have the privilege Lord-willing, in August I become President of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners statewide. I look forward to that, it gives us avenues to work with. I was proud to have that opportunity with the support of my board. If you are looking for a person that does not support recreation, then I am not your man. I am going to support recreation.

Question 2

Tell us what two or three issues are most significant to you to take action on. What is different about your position or approach than the other candidates.

John Martin

My major issue has to do with providing services. But as it has been stated, at the best possible cost while keeping taxes as low as possible. Given the revaluation, which according to most experts means about a 30 percent reduction overall in value -- we will know when the revaluations are finished what the total tax base is -- then the mil rate will be reset.

Typically what happens in situations like this, revenue neutral is a term that is used, even if you don't increase your budget spending, revenue neutral would require substantial tax increases

• See FORUM page 10



Common sense leadership for a mountain community

Jim Tate
Macon County Commissioner: District 1

Paid for by Tate for Commissioner

An Open Letter to the Citizens of Highlands

Two years ago I was sitting on 'pins and needles' as I listened to the results of the county wide election broadcast across the Franklin radio. After 14 of the 15 voting precincts had reported, I was behind by roughly 200 votes, with only the Highlands precinct left to announce. Little did I know how my home community would react, and they did BIG TIME! The Highlands' voters overwhelmingly supported my campaign by a margin of more than 400 votes. Highlands' support allowed me to win the election and become a Macon County Commissioner. Since that time, my life has been a literal whirlwind, and I have worked extremely hard and dedicated countless hours to ensure that our community would be proud of my service with which they had entrusted me.

Before this last election, I ensured the voters of Highlands that I would:

- Not be in favor of raising your property taxes, and I did not. According to the latest information, most tax payers in Highlands can expect a tax decrease next year.
- Pay down the county's debt load, and I have. According to the Macon County finance department, since I have joined the Board, the overall county debt load has dropped from \$62,246,165 to \$43,711,679, a reduction of almost \$20 million.
- Strive to make sure that our county is run efficiently, and I have. In fact, there have been numerous improvements and many of these changes came from your suggestions that I was happy to enact.
- Make sure that our school facilities are keeping up to speed, and I have. I helped pass and oversee the \$1.5 million renovations to Highlands School last year.
- Enhance our recreational activities, and I have. We purchased and swapped land so that more than 3 contiguous acres were added to the Zachary Park facilities with the intent of finally having a community soccer field. We also provided significant funds for upgrading the Highlands and Franklin swimming pools.
- Bring civility to politics, and I have. As long as I am your representative, I will be responsible and respectful.
- Always be available for questions and assistance, and I have. On average, I receive 3 calls per day from local residents that need help with various problems ranging from social service needs to logistics.

Public service is a calling and one which I take very seriously. It has been my honor to represent Macon County as your Commissioner, and I still have a deep desire to continue to work for you and our county. Thus, I am humbly asking for your support and vote.

Early voting opens today (April 24th) at the Highlands Civic Center and will also be open next week from Monday through Saturday. The final day to vote will be May 6th. Because this is a 'Primary Election,' you can only vote for me if you are registered to vote as either Republican or Unaffiliated. If you are not sure of your affiliation, the poll workers can help you when you arrive to vote.

I ask that you join my effort to work together to ensure that Highlands and Macon County will move forward as a team in a positive direction. Let's focus on working for the common good instead of airing differences. Let's solve problems instead of criticizing. Let's continue to keep Highlands and Macon County a great place to live. Let's make sure that Highlands shows up to the polls 'BIG TIME' again.

May 6th is just around the corner, and the direction that Macon County turns is in your hands....

Sincerely,
Jim Tate


Jim Tate
Macon County Commissioner: District 1

Common sense leadership for a mountain community
Mobile: 828-371-0773 - Email: jamesptate@aol.com

Paid for by Tate for Commissioner

...FORUM continued from page 8

if you continue to spend the same amount. Of course services need to continue to be provided, and I am one who supports them 100%. Law enforcement, education, but I think there are other things that the citizens of Macon

County deserve and should get. The bottom line is, usually the ones who are hurt the most in these types of situations are the ones who can least afford it, at the lower end of the spectrum on their property taxes. Those who

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have property valued at \$100,000 or less are going to have the biggest increase. The ones I am most concerned about are the ones who cannot afford it. The ones who are on fixed incomes. We don't have numbers yet on what we are going to get next budget year in state and federal funds, but it's going to be a tough economic environment. We are going to have to make tough choices. Those things that are essential services are going to have to be provided. And I am one to support those essential services. I don't think they are getting enough funding in the Sheriff's Department. You do have tough choices to make, but I think we can do that if we are very careful.

Ron Haven

I am not one for borrowing money and spending it if you don't need it. Now, if you do need, then go for what you have to have. I am not going up there and trying to do what a Republican is supposed to do, and I am not going to do what a Democrat is supposed to do. I am not going to support a commissioner who wastes money. The way I look at it, I want to try to have as much as we can for what we have to spend on it. For those of you who have heard that I don't stand for anything, how about you check the record and see all that I have voted for. I have voted for school projects, I have voted for helping 911, the new ambulances, new law enforcement cars. I am not going to support people who spend the money unnecessarily. I think if you are going to make an informed decision on who you are going to vote for, try to find out the whole story and not just a little bit of it because if you are making a decision on that, you are losing for yourself.

Gary Shields

I think striving for economic development is a good thing, but at the same time, we should work to preserve our culture and our heritage. That is tough, but I think as county commissioner you have to keep your eye on that. As a county commissioner I am

going to be sensitive to wanting economic development, but making sure you have your culture and heritage, too.

Another thing I want to focus on as county commissioner is that your credit card cannot be your savings account. You can't spend your way out of debt. I believe you have to be good stewards of the taxpayers' money. I think if we look at the whole picture, we are going to have to work together as a group and without party consideration. We have to work for the betterment of Macon County.

We have to have a conversation about our infrastructure. You cannot have economic development without reviewing the infrastructure. I am going to use the word résumé. We all know what a résumé is. A résumé gets you to the table if you are applying for a job.

We have to make sure our résumé is strong. R stands for Recreation. We have what I call God-given recreation. The hiking trails, the lakes and those types things. Then we have things we have invested in. Recreation is very important.

E stands for education. I am product of public education and I see what it can do for the public. S is for safety. Everything from 911 to MCSO to fire departments, all these different programs are the safety.

U stands for underemployed. We want to make sure that we have people who are working who are underemployed; they should be brought to another level. M is for medical hub. The Veterans clinic, Davita, the new dialysis clinic, those types things are here. We are hub. We have to take care of that. E is for the environment. As county commissioner, I will look out for the environment.

Ronnie Beale

The average budget in Macon County for the past many years has been about \$42 million. This year it has increased. We did make some overall purchases. It is around \$46 million. Your tax rate has basically stayed the lowest in the state. We have a strong

fund balance. By state law you have to have a fund balance of 8 percent. That is one month's expenses. Many years ago, commissioners passed a law that Macon County would have a fund balance of 25 percent and over the years I have been there, we have not approached that. We are around 31 percent today. We have been pretty good stewards of your money. For the first time in 30 years, you do not have a child having to use a trailer for school, and I think that is a great accomplishment.

For the first time in many, many years we have looked to the future for economic development. We have looked outside of the box; we have an economic development director who gets up every morning and that is what he does. Our economic development center is full. We hope those people expand and create many more jobs.

My concern is what is going to be coming out of the state of North Carolina. One of the things that I do a lot of work on is mental health. Last year we spent over \$200,000 for the Sheriff's Department budget spent on mental health. Right now at this very second we have three people in the E.R. so the Sheriff's Office has three deputies with them right now. You are paying for that time and half right now. We need to work on these things. The Governor has appointed me to the crisis coalition in Raleigh. Another concern is our Dept. of Transportation. For the first time in history we do not have any secondary road money. We have over 2,000 miles of secondary roads in Macon County and 1,100 of gravel roads. We are watching those things at the state level. Lottery money: we were guaranteed 40 percent of lottery money to come back to the county for schools and we are only getting about 20 percent.

Michael Rogers

I want to expand the Industrial Park. I also want to see

• See FORUM page 14

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

Ongoing

• Artists wanted for Oct. 4 show featuring historic sites in Macon County. The moveable show will begin in Franklin and move to Highlands and Nantahala. There is a \$35 fee. To register, contact Barbara McRae at mcbbarbara@frontier.com

• Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9a.

Every Tuesday

• Community Table Diner at the Community Building at 6 p.m. It's free.

Tues. & Thurs.

• Aerobics at the Rec Park with Tina Rogers 5:15. \$5.

Mon., Wed., Fri.

• Zumba at the Rec Park at 9:05a. \$5.

Last Fri. of each month

• Community Coffee with Mayor Pat Taylor from 11a to noon in the Hudson Library.

Thursday, April 24

• Highlands School Kindergarten Registration for Class of 2027 is on Thursday at 10 a.m. For information, call 526-2147

• Dining Out for Life Benefit at Cyprus, On the Veranda, The Ugly Dog and the Doghouse will contribute 20% of your bill to support WNCAP, the AIDS Service organization for WNC.

Thurs. - Sun., April 24, 25, 26, 27

• A PAC Youth Theater production of "Little Women." Tickets available online: highlandspac.org or by calling 828.526.9047 507 Chestnut Street in Highlands.

Fri., April 25

• Community Coffee with Mayor Pat Taylor at the Hudson Library. The subject: The Town Budget, \$13.1 Million: Where does it come from & where does it go? Refreshments provided by Mountain Top Rotary Club.

• Celebrate Arbor Day at the Botanical Garden with a "Living with Trees" guided tour 2-4p. We will discuss noteworthy trees of the Highlands Plateau, as well as their identification, residential use and care. In

the spirit of Arbor Day, visitors will leave with a native tree to take home and plant. Visit highlandsbiological.org/earth-week/ for more information.

• An Informal meeting to learn about Big Brother Big Sisters program in Highlands at Buck's Cafe at 5:30p. Come by and enjoy a complimentary refreshment and learn everything you wanted to know about Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Sat., April 26

• Educators are invited to a "Project Wild Workshop at Highlands School from 8:30a to 3:30p in the school's outdoor classroom between the shops and middle school building. It is free. To sign up contact Science teacher Stephanie Smathers at 526-2147 or Stephanie.smathers@macon.k12.nc.us.

• Join Macon County Public Health's Healthy Carolinians Coalition for a new community walking program called "Leading the Way to Wellness". Mayor Pat Taylor and Commissioner Jim Tate will lead walks through downtown Highlands in an effort to improve fitness and encourage healthy lifestyles. The kick-off event will be Saturday at 11 a.m. at Highlands Town Hall. Join us for registration, free pedometers, a group walk, and the chance for door prizes; then join us for weekly fitness walks. To learn more, call 349-2426.

• At PAC, Così fan tutte by Mozart, The MET Live in HD at PAC this Saturday. The Highlands PAC pre-opera discussion lead by Beverly Pittman begins at 12:30pm and the MET Opera begins at 12:55pm. Ticket are \$24 adults and students are free and are available online: highlandspac.org or by calling: 828.526.9047 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands

Sunday, April 27

• North Georgia Children's Chorus offers public concert at 3 p.m. Come; be inspired as you hear some beautiful voices sing songs of inspiration. For more information please call the High-

• See EVENTS page 12

Confessions of a 4th Year Drama Student

The PAC Youth Theater presents Little Women.

Thursday through Sunday • April 24, 25, 26, & 27 • Starring students from the Highlands Cashiers Plateau

Tickets are available online: highlandspzc.org or by calling 828.526.9047

By Sarah Ballentine

My heart is racing, my palms are sweaty, my throat's closing up. "Breathe." The lights are about to come up. "Oh my God I think I'm going to be sick. Is it too late to back out of this? That's my cue." These are the thoughts running through my head as I'm about to go on stage. Well, these thoughts and "How did I get myself in to this?"

I started with the PAC youth theater only because one of my best friends was in it to. She had been in the previous year's one-act play festival. Students from the participating schools were allowed to go see the show for free. I was on the edge of my seat the entire performance. I fell in love with theater. The next year, I went to auditions, and even though I didn't get a big part, I was hooked. That fascination gave me the push to get out of my comfort zone and get started as an actor.

Another reason for my interest in the PAC youth theater is how new and exciting everything was, new and interesting people to meet and things to learn; I soaked it all in like a sponge. I had that feeling like when you are a little kid and your parents take you to a theme park. I wanted to do everything at once. I had acted in small scale church plays but never in anything as complex as this. I was astounded with it all, not just how much emotion it takes for an actor to portray a part, but how a tech person can take a regular piece of plywood and turn it into a life-like brick wall! I learned how much better lights can make a show. I had always thought that the theater was all about the actors, but now I realize just how much is dependent upon the tech crew. And now that I know I never want to do a show without one.

There was one problem: I was shy, so shy I could barely have a conversation with someone without stuttering. When I first started acting, I would go to rehearsal every day, even if I didn't have to be there, and just sit with my head down and watch. And now I have lead roles in



Sarah Ballentine in hoop skirt petticoat.

the shows. I went from an extra role in "Anne Frank and Me," where I was so nervous that while I was lighting a candle on stage the director thought I was going to catch the theater on fire, to "Flowers for Algernon," where I was the comedic relief that danced with and sang to a cake. Then I did "John Lennon and Me," where I had the third largest speaking role, and had a diabetic seizure scene on stage. I have so much more self-confidence now, not just in my acting abilities but also in my everyday life.

The biggest reason I love the theater so much is because it has be-

come my home away from home. I wasn't the most popular kid. And although I had friends, I felt alone and unaccepted. As soon as I joined the theater, that changed. I was accepted, not because I was popular and not because I had the coolest new electronic device. I was accepted for just being me. The theater takes people of every variety who have almost nothing in common except for the love of performing and brings them together. It's like gaining an extended family overnight.

•HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS•

The Wild Gardener to speak at Wildflower Whimsy



Wildflower Whimsy, in celebration of spring ephemerals in the southern Appalachian Mountains, is fast approaching. An important fundraiser for the Highlands Botanical Garden, Wildflower Whimsy will take place Friday and Saturday, May 2nd and 3rd. On Friday, the event begins at 5pm with guided tours of the Botanical Garden, led by staff and other garden enthusiasts. Peter Loewer, The Wild Gardener, will give a lecture in the Highlands Nature Center at 6pm focused on wildflowers and native perennials for the Southeast. The lecture will be followed by a live plant auction and reception. Carefully curated by Botanical Garden staff, the plant auction is the perfect opportunity to support the Botanical Garden and acquire interesting plants for your garden, donated by local and regional nurseries and native plant enthusiasts. During the auction, participants will enjoy live music, heavy hors d'oeuvres, and wine and beer. After dark, there will be illuminated garden tours.

On Saturday, choose your favorite of four wildflower walks from 10am until 2pm. Select from a guided tour of the Sagee Manor Gardens, or guided hikes along the Chattooga River, Panthertown Valley, or High Falls Trail along Shoal Creek.

Tickets are on sale now. Visit www.highlandsbiological.org/wildflower-whimsy/ to pay by credit card online. For more information, call (828) 526-2221.

lands United Methodist Church Office at 828-526-3376.

• Friends of Israel presents "EHAD" in concert Sunday at 10:45 am at Christ Church of the Valley in Cashiers N.C. For info, call 828-743-5470.

Tues. & Thurs., April 28 & May 1

• The Center for Life Enrichment's A Fun Guide to the Best IPAD Applications. 6-8p. Cost is \$70 Members/ \$80 Nonmember. Call CLE at 828-526-8811 to register.

Tues., April 29

• Highlands Dialogue meets at the Hudson Library. Season Wrap-up, Social Gathering, and Conversation about the future of the Dialogue.

• Community Table Dinner at the Community Building. It's free. At 6 p.m.

Thurs.-Sat. May, 1-3

• Highlands Annual Three River Fly Fishing Tournament. For information call Town Hall at 526-2118.

Fri. & Sat., May 2-3

• The Highlands Biological Foundation is celebrating the emergence of spring ephemerals in the southern Appalachians with their event "Wildflower Whimsy," guided garden tours, a lecture, live plant auction and reception (with live music), and guided wildflower walks. The event will be held Friday from 5pm until 8pm, and Saturday from 10am until 2pm.

"Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust Sunsetennial Photography Contest"

As we begin to set our sights on a much needed spring, most of us are looking for any excuse to get outside. Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is giving you a great excuse with their

"Sunsetennial Photography Contest". Why not grab your camera and head for Ravenel Park (home to Sunset and Sunrise Rocks)? Submit photos of or from the park and you could win. Photos for the Amateur Division can be

entered in one of four categories: Outdoor/Family Recreation, Open Spaces, Cultural Heritage and Plants & Wildlife. Photos for the Professional Division can be entered in one of these categories: Winter, Spring, Summer or Fall. Creativity is highly encouraged. Photos must be no smaller than 5x7, no larger than 8 1/2 x 11 and at least 300 dpi. Each submitter can enter two entries per category. There is no charge to enter. More details and entry forms

can be found on HCLT's website: hicasht.org or you can contact their offices at 828-526-111. Deadline for Amateur entries is June 1, 2014 and January 1, 2015 for Professional entries.



But what is a "Sunsetennial"? On August 16, 1909, a very civic minded and philanthropic family, the Ravenels, donated their family land to be enjoyed by all as a public park in perpetuity. Highlands-Cashiers

Land Trust is proud to own and care for Ravenel Park. Every year, countless people visit the park. It's easy access and scenic views make it a popular spot for residents and visitors alike. Ravenel Park has become an important part of the fabric of our community and the Highlands-Cashiers land Trust hopes you will be a part of the Sunsetennial celebration. Together we are saving mountains!

Sat., May 3

• Audubon's weekly bird spotting trip. Carpool from the parking area behind the Highlands Town Hall, unless otherwise noted. All walks will start at 7:30 AM. Bring binoculars if you have them, good walking shoes, a water bottle, and wet weather gear. Beginners' Walk in Highlands to Edwin and Kay Poole's home and lovely native garden. Russ Regnery (HPAS President) will lead. If questions, call Michelle at 828-743-9670.

Mon., May 5

• Rotary Golf Tournament

Thurs., May 6

• The Center for Life Enrichment's Facebook for the Absolute Beginner, 6-8p. \$35 member, /\$50 nonmember. Call 828-526-8811 to register.

Sat., May 10

• Audubon's weekly bird spotting trip. Carpool from the parking area behind the Highlands Town Hall, unless otherwise noted. All walks will start at 7:30 AM. Bring binoculars if you have them, good walking shoes, a water bottle, and wet weather gear. Trip down the mountain to Horse Cove and Chattooga River area to try to find the rarely seen Swainson's Warbler. Brock Hutchins will lead. If questions, call Michelle at 828-743-9670.

• Hike the Historic Kelsey Trail from Whiteside Mountain to Highlands. Along the way, small groups will be led to Leila's Rock, Garnet Rock, Highlands Falls and Soldier's Cave. You may see some very interesting characters from the past as you go. The first group will leave from Kelsey-Hutchinson Park on Pine Street at 8 AM. Another group will leave at 8:15 AM and if demand dictates a third group at 8:30 AM. You will be shuttled to Whiteside Mountain to start the hike. The hike will take about 4 hours. A picnic lunch at Kelsey-Hutchinson Park will follow. The shuttle, hike and lunch are all included in the donation of \$50. Space is limited, and the choice of starting time will go

to the first people to register. You may register at the Greenway website at www.highlandsgreenway.com. Follow the link for the Kelsey Trail Hike and purchase tickets by check or credit card online. More detail about the hike is provided under the Event Calendar tab.

Thurs.-Sat., May 15-17

• At The Bascom, the annual Collective Spirits Wine & Food Festival. For information, go to www.collectivespirits.com.

Sat., May 17

• Audubon's weekly bird spotting trip. Carpool from the parking area behind the Highlands Town Hall, unless otherwise noted. All walks will start at 7:30 AM. Bring binoculars if you have them, good walking shoes, a water bottle, and wet weather gear. Guest leader Rob Bierregaard will join Russ Regnery and Avary Doubleday for a trip to Flat Mountain Road and the area near the Ranger Falls trailhead. Rob is a well-known Ornithologist and lecturer. If questions, call Michelle at 828-743-9670.

Sat. & Sun., May 24-25

• The 6th Annual Spring Cashiers Arts and Crafts Show at the Cashiers Village Green 10am to 5pm both Saturday and Sunday; rain or shine. While admission is free, a donation will be accepted to help benefit local community service efforts.

Sat., May 24

• Audubon's weekly bird spotting trip. Carpool from the parking area behind the Highlands Town Hall, unless otherwise noted. All walks will start at 7:30 AM. Bring binoculars if you have them, good walking shoes, a water bottle, and wet weather gear. Joint trip with the Franklin Bird Club to the neighborhood of Ellen and Jim Shelton, where last year the group saw a Red-headed Woodpecker, not a common bird in Western NC, along with numerous Scarlet Tanagers, many warblers and

• See EVENTS page 13

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

other species. Ellen and Jim will lead. If questions, call Michelle at 828-743-9670.

- The Mountain Garden Club in Highlands is gearing up for their 32nd annual Plant Sale, featuring many varieties of native plants, dahlias, and more. Gates open at 9 A.M. Saturday at the Town ball field at the corner of Cashiers Highway (Hwy.64) and Hickory. If rained out on Saturday, the sale will be Sunday May 25, 1-4P.M. Proceeds benefit horticulture scholarships and other community projects.

Wed., May 28

- The Highlands-Cashiers Annual screening will take

place in Highlands on the first floor of the Jane Woodruff Clinic Wednesday. Those wishing to take advantage of either screening MUST register by calling (828) 526-1435 or visiting the Hospital's website at www.highlandscashiershospital.org

Sat., May 31

- Audubon's weekly bird spotting trip. Carpool from the parking area behind the Highlands Town Hall, unless otherwise noted. All walks will start at 7:30 AM. Bring binoculars if you have them, good walking shoes, a water bottle, and wet weather gear. HPAS will join the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust Eco Tour to High Hampton Resort

in Cashiers. Highlands's participants will carpool as usual while Cashiers residents and others may gather in the parking area of the New Cashiers Rec Center where the Highlands group will rendezvous with them. NOTE: HCLT members are free of charge; others may either join HCLT or pay a minimal fee for this one walk. Watch the web site or call Julie, at 526-1111 for specifics. All participants must register in advance with HCLT so that lunches can be properly planned.

Sat., June 7

Audubon's weekly bird spotting trip. Carpool from the parking area behind the High-

lands Town Hall, unless otherwise noted. All walks will start at 7:30 AM. Bring binoculars, good walking shoes, a water bottle, and wet weather gear. Beginners' Walk to the High-

lands Biological Station with Brock Hutchins leading. If questions, call Michelle at 828-743-9670.

Thurs., June 12

• See EVENTS page 14

Così fan tutte by Mozart, The MET Live in HD at PAC this Saturday, April 26th



The MET Music Director **James Levine** leads a revival of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. The ensemble cast assembled for Mozart's comic opera about the romantic complications that ensue when a pair of friends decide to test their fiancées' fidelity includes **Susanna Phillips** in her company role debut as Fiordiligi; **Isabel Leonard** as her passionate sister Dorabella; **Danielle de Niese** as the sisters' feisty maid, Despina; **Matthew Polenzani** as Ferrando; **Rodion Pogosssov** in his company role debut as Guglielmo; and **Maurizio Muraro** in his first Met performances as the cynical Don Alfonso. The April 26 matinee will be transmitted live as part of the Met's *Live in HD* series, which now reaches more than 1,950 movie theaters in 64 countries around the world. The Highlands PAC pre-opera discussion lead by Beverly Pittman begins at 12:30pm and the MET Opera begins at 12:55pm. Ticket are \$24 adults and students are free and are available online: highlandspac.org or by calling: 828.526.9047 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands

April is Public Health Month

Walk Highlands with Mayor Pat Taylor and Commissioner Jim Tate

Statewide, April marks the time when all Health Departments across the State celebrate Public Health Month by disseminating information about the role of Public Health in their communities.

Macon County Health Director Jim Bruckner commented "Many of the activities the health department does on a daily basis often go unnoticed. Most people don't realize that Public Health infuses itself into many aspects of our day-to-day life by way of our State's General Statutes." In each county, you will find that Public Health is:

- Identifying and working to reduce the greatest health risks;
- Detecting, investigating and preventing the spread of communicable diseases, like whooping cough, measles, and tuberculosis;
- Inspecting restaurants and other institutions that provide food or lodging to ensure food is safe to eat and facilities are clean and sanitary;
- Helping families plan for and have the healthiest pregnancies possible, so that all our children are born healthy;
- Helping residents learn how to improve and protect their health and the health of their families.

Macon County Public Health will be celebrating Public Health Month with a variety of activities. The health department's Healthy Carolinians coalition will sponsor a new community-wide walking program called "Leading the Way to Wellness". This walking program will feature local elected officials as leaders of fitness walks that will be happening on a regular basis throughout our community.

In Highlands, a kick-off event will be held Saturday, April 26th at 11 a.m. at Highlands Town Hall. The event will feature a registration for the upcoming walks, free pedometers, a group walk in downtown Highlands, and the chance for door prizes. After the event, residents are invited to join Mayor Patrick Taylor and Commissioner Jim Tate in group fitness walks throughout the Town of Highlands during the coming weeks.

North Georgia Children's Chorus at HUMC Sun., April 27 at 3p



Plan to come hear these 16 talented youngsters ranging in age from 6 to 16 as they visit Highlands United Methodist Church on Sunday, April 27th. They will be singing twice that day at the 10:50 a.m. service and at 3p. The concert is free. This year's concert is entitled *Spring Fling 2014* and includes spring songs, humorous ditties, inspiring sacred melodies, rousing spirituals, and other selections from the best children's choral literature. For more information please call the Church Office at 828-526-3376.

...FORUM continued from page 10

Costco come in here so we can go and buy things that are affordable. I also want to see countywide water and sewer. We should expand it out and get the water cleaned up. I have been trying to push for a state park. This park needs to be a state park and it will be a park like no other park. It would bring the right people here and it would funnel them in throughout road system. In the Highlands area, I have been

talking about putting in a rain forest up there. As far as the water goes we need to get the water cleaned up. I want to go after that money on the state and federal level. We have killed the Cullasaja River, it is a dead and it is a shame. I don't want local money, I want to go to the federal level to get money for that.

If You Want Commissioners Who Keep Right On Spending Through Good Times and Bad, You Can Keep Them!

The last TWO years Macon County's budget has increased by OVER 15%



Jim Tate

- **JIM TATE (R)** supported **BOTH** budget increases, along with the \$3.3 million Parker Meadows project, and every other spending or borrowing item before commissioners.
- Commissioner **JIM TATE (R)** has consistently voted with **RONNIE BEALE (D)** and **KEVIN CORBIN (R)** on their spending spree.

Another Choice?

JOHN SHEARL (R), a self-proclaimed fiscal conservative, is running against **JIM TATE** in the Republican Primary. **JOHN SHEARL** has indicated he will not vote to continue these spendthrift policies.



John Shearl

"As appointed commissioner and then as an elected commissioner, (to my knowledge) my opponent has not voted against any spending measures since his time as a county commissioner. The budget has increased and county borrowing has continued on the back of the taxpayers when a lot of our citizens are struggling to pay their own bills. **I completely disagree with this philosophy.**"

John Shearl - The Macon County News - March 20, 2014

Commissioners **HAVEN (R)** and **HIGDON (R)** have consistently voted **AGAINST** excessive spending and support John Shearl's candidacy.

Will Your Property Taxes Go Up?

- Over half the money Macon County spends in the general fund comes from property taxes.
- The County's "piggy bank" is nearly empty. How will Beale, Tate, and Corbin continue to support their spending habit without raising property taxes?
- **It is VERY IMPORTANT that Republican and Unaffiliated (Independent) voters turn out for the May 6 primary.** This election will have a **HUGE** impact on the direction Macon County takes in the future.

To Spend or Not to Spend - It's YOUR Choice!

Paid for by FreedomWorks, and not authorized by any candidate.
"Lower taxes, Less Government, and More Freedom"

...EVENTS continued from page 13

• The annual Owl Prowl in cooperation with the Highlands Nature Center starts at 7:30 pm. Donations to the Carolina Raptor Rehab Center will be appreciated but not required. Bring a flashlight and plan to stay after dark as we hunt for owls in the area. If questions, call Michelle at 828-743-9670.

Sat., June 14

Audubon's weekly bird spotting trip. Bring binoculars if you have them, good walking shoes, a water bottle, and wet weather gear. Back by popular demand, an outing to Lonesome Valley in Sapphire, with Romney Bathurst leading. This is a beautiful wooded canyon being sensitively developed by the Jennings family with conservation interests high on the priority list. Carpool from the parking area of the new Cashiers Rec. Center at 7:30 AM

sharp. Questions, call Michelle at 828-743-9670.

• Highlands School Graduation at 7p in the new gym.

Through June 15

• At The Bascom Out of the Ordinary, which runs through June 15. The show includes pieces by eight internationally recognized artists who use worn and often discarded materials as the building blocks of their creations. To register, call 828-526-4949.

Wed., June 18

• The Highlands Health Screening will take place at Blue Ridge School on Wednesday. Those wishing to take advantage of either screening **MUST** register by calling (828) 526-1435 or visiting the Hospital's website at www.highlandscashiershospital.org.

...WILLIAMS continued from page 1

"We presented to them a list of needs the town has and they came back and said they were interested in making a donation to the town for two projects – one, to cover the new pool so it can be used year-round; not just a bubble, but an actual structure with a removeable walls and roof," said the Mayor. "Also, they offered to replace the gym floor and bleachers at the Rec Park which is a project the town was already budgeting for FY-2014-'15."

It is estimated to cost up to \$750,000 to build the structure for the year-round pool and the high estimate for the gym floor and bleachers is \$290,000. If bids come in lower, the remainder money would go to paving the track at Highlands School and refurbishing its softball field.

"I personally think this is a very generous offer and an opportunity," said the Mayor. "This is a value-added opportunity to enhance our recreational offerings. We might attract another group of people; bring people to the Rec Park who may not otherwise participate at the Rec Park. To me this is a community investment."

After a long discussion of pros and cons while weighing comments from the audience, the board agreed unanimously to accept the offer in principle while continuing to study the operational costs. "I agree; this is something we do not want to pass up," said Commissioner Brian Stiehler.

Initially, Commissioner Amy Patterson spoke against accepting the offer to fund the year-round pool on the grounds that it would add another \$60,000 to \$120,000 in operational costs to the Rec Park budget – a budget that consistently runs in the red.

"This is not a done deal. We have to look at what it would cost to operate this. It will significantly increase operating costs. So, I think we need to have a cost benefit discussion. Who would this benefit?" she asked. "It's not that it's not a hugely generous donation but if that is all they are donating and we have to maintain it and pay for heating and staffing, this will add a significant cost to our recreation budget. I'm not saying good or bad, I'm just saying we have to think about this. Everything I've ever heard is that an indoor pool is a money pit. It's common knowledge I haven't been for a year-round pool in the past, so, I wondered if it was given to us would that make a difference? But we still have a significant operating cost. Do we get enough benefit to put in a \$120,000 in the budget for this? We don't have that huge of population all year-round. Who is this benefiting?"

Commissioner John Dotson said it was an extraordinarily generous offer but he, too, was concerned about operating costs.

"I've always been for a year-round pool, but the operational costs are prohibitive and so it was asinine to think about it. I agree with Amy, we certainly need to look at costs going forward. If it comes anywhere near \$120,000 to operate – and I suspect it would come in on the higher side rather than the lower side – we need to take a long hard look at fees. The pool will have to pay its own way," he said.

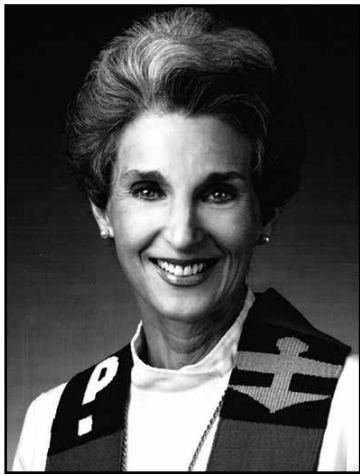
With talk of this offer in the wind, the

• See WILLIAMS page 18

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

We are evidence of the risen Christ



By Rev. Lee Bowman
First Presbyterian Church of Highlands

Methodist pastor Kristen Grant tells a story from her kindergarten days about one of her favorite activities. It was called "What's in the box?" and the idea was that the teacher cut a hand-sized hole in a box and placed a mystery object inside. The kids could reach in the box, even smell it or shake it. But they couldn't open it. Each of the children would take a turn and then share with the others what they discovered. "It's kind of fuzzy," one of the children might offer. "Is it a teddy bear?" someone would respond. "It feels like a ball but it's pointy on the side." "Is it a football?"

Grant's teacher was trying to show her kindergartners how to explore the world, how to ask questions of the phenomena that were in front of them, how to put together clues and patiently hold back wild guesses, waiting for the right conclusion to emerge. Not an easy task for a five-year-old. And frankly not a whole lot easier for Jesus' disciples.

On that first Easter, when Jesus appeared to his disciples after having died the Friday before, Jesus used a teaching style with them that was similar to the one used by Grant's kindergarten teacher. But the disciples were not such willing pupils. For starters, they were scared witless. For another, they were pretty sure they already had a handle on what they are seeing. One explanation, of course, was that Jesus didn't really die at all, he just seemed to. The early church wrestled with that claim for over 100 years. But as much as the disciples wanted to believe that, they knew it wasn't true because they had been there and had seen Jesus hanging for what seemed like an eternity on that cross.

The only other possibility they could come up with was that this one in front of them was a ghost, and ghosts are, generally speaking, not good news. Such a realization was cold comfort at best.

But Jesus had a third possibility for the disciples. This was not night-of-the-living-dead stuff, he told them. Nor was it corporate hallucination. It was resurrection. Jesus didn't explain resurrection but instead invited them to

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 19

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP • John 3:16

BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH
Rev. Oliver Rice, Pastor (706) 782-3965
Sundays: School: 10 a.m., Worship: 11
Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7
Wednesdays: Mid-week prayer meeting: 7 p.m.

BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH
828-269-3546
Rev. Jamie Passmore, Pastor
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11
GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS
Non-Denominational-Contemporary Worship
242 Hwy 107N, 1/4 miles from Crossroads in Cashiers
www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter: 828-743-9814
Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm
Catered dinner - Wed. 6pm
CHAPEL OF SKY VALLEY
Sky Valley, GA
Church: 706-746-2999
Sundays: 10 a.m.: Worship
Holy Communion 1st Sunday of the month
Wednesdays: 9 a.m. Healing and Prayer w/Holy Communion

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH
Rector: Jim Murphy, 252-671-4011
464 US Hwy 64 east, Cashiers
Sun.: Christian Education, 9 a.m. (Bucks in Cashiers)
Family Worship with music and Communion, 10:30 a.m.
Mon.: Bible Study & Supper at homes - 6 p.m.
Wed.: Men's Bible Study - 8:30 a.m., First Baptist Church

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS
Pastor Steve Kerhoulas
Sun. 10:45am, S.S. 9:30am. Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.
Tue. Guys study 8am, Gals 10am.

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Jim Kinard
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11
Wednesdays - 7 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685
3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC
Senior Pastor Gary Hewins
Sun.: 9:30am: Sunday School
10:30am: Middle & High School; 10:45am: Children's Program.,
10:45am: Worship Service
Wed.: 5pm Dinner (\$7 adult, \$2 child), 6pm CBC University

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION
Rev. Bruce Walker • 526-2968
Sundays: Education and choir rehearsal, 9 am, Holy Eucharist Rite II, (sanctuary), 10:30
Wednesday: 10 a.m., Morning Prayer
Thursdays: Holy Eucharist, (chapel), 10 am

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS
www.fbchighlands.org
Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor
220 Main Street, Highlands NC 28741
828-526-4153
Sun.: Worship 10:45 am; Sun.: Bible Study 9:30 am
Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Prayer Meeting 6:15 pm; Choir 5 pm

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Dr. Lee Bowman, Pastor • 526-3175
Sun.: Worship: 11 a.m.; School: 9:30
Mondays: 8 a.m.: Men's Prayer Group & Breakfast
Wednesdays: Choir: 7

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH
Hwy 107N. • Glenville, Nc • 743-2729
Pastor Nathan Johnson
Sunday: School 9:45a, Worship 11a & 7p
Bible Study 6p
Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD
Randy Reed, Pastor
828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street
Sundays: Worship: 11

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Dan Robinson
670 N. 4th Street (next to the Highlands Civic Center)
Sun.: Morning Worship 10:45 a., Evening Worship, 6:30 p.
Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Pastor Paul Christy 526-3376
Sun: School 9:45a.; Worship 9:09 & 10:50.; Youth 5:30 p.
Wed: Supper; 6; 7:15: children, youth, & adults studies; 6:15: Adult choir (nursery provided)
Thurs: 12:30: Women's Bible Study (nursery)

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA
Chaplain Margaret Howell
2152 Dillard Road: 526-9741
Sundays: Sunday School and Adult discussion group 9:30 a.m.; Worship/Communion: 10:30

HEALING SERVICE on the 5th Sunday of the month.

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH
8 miles south of Highlands on N.C. 28 S in Satolah
Pastor Troy Nicholson, (828) 526-8425
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11
Choir: 6 p.m.
Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.: 7 p.m.

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE
St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church, Franklin
828-369-9270 or 828-293-5197

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH
743-2583
Independent Bible Church
Sundays: 10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church, 4224 Big Ridge Road (4.5 miles from NC 107)
Weds: Bible Study 6:30 p.m.; Youth Group 6 p.m.

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS CATHOLIC CHURCH
Parish office: 526-2418
Mass: Sun: 10:30 a.m.; Thurs & Fri.: 9 a.; Sat., 4p

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH
Rev. Dwight Loggins
Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11 a.m. & 7
Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD
290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Alfred Sizemore • 526-3212
Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.
Wed: Adult Bible Study & Youth: 7 p.m.

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11
Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 7

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP
85 Sierra Drive • 828-524-6777
Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.
Child Care - 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Religious Education - 11 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
Youth 8th - 12th grade meets 2nd Sundays 5 - 7:30 p.m.

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers
Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

• BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NEWS •

Bolivia Mission Fundraiser Drive

By Dr. John Baumrucker

None of us is going to live forever. There I have said it, but here is what I mean. The Bolivian Mission was begun in 1998 and it is flourishing in Montero and the surrounding areas of the lowlands in Bolivia. We have donated over one million dollars of medical equipment and continue to support the hospitals and clinics there. Our foster home is full of young boys who have a chance in life having begun life as children of prostitutes. Now several are ready to begin university studies for which the mission will pay. Two, I hope, will be exchange students this year so they can become more fluent in English. The good we have done, with your generous support has been phenomenal! But, several of my friends have said, "What will happen to the mission when you are gone?" A good question.

Our board has several members that surely will carry on the objects of the mission when I no longer can and there are many people who have gone to Bolivia with the mission, averaging about 40 per year, that surely will pick up the ball and run

with it, but will they have the time and the determination that Joanna and I have given over the life of the mission? I don't know, but the mission needs to continue long after we are gone. I hope, eventually, that the boys who "graduate" from our foster home will carry on the tradition, but even they will need help.

That is why I am writing to you at this time. I had a heart attack in Bolivia in 2004 and by the grace of God, I had a miraculous survival. The story of that event, written in Spanish (another miracle) by me was circulated in over 30 churches to over 15,000 people. Two years ago I was nearly drowned with three other fishing buddies in a flash flood. The point is, no one knows what is going to happen in the future. Our Highlands Bolivian Mission board created an endowment fund last year and we intend to put assets in it every year and use only the interest to support the mission. We already have an education fund, which is only used for the boy's education and this was funded by the sale of the pens they make. We have over \$17,000 in that fund today. I am asking you, and it is not easy for me



to do so, but I would like you to consider making a donation to the endowment fund or leaving the mission something in your will. This can be as easy as making a codicil to your will that would not require you to make any other changes. We all have our favorite charities, schools and churches, civic organizations and the arts, but this donation will help real people to become important leaders in this small, poor country which has unlimited potential if people like our boys are allowed to become the kind of men I think they can be.

I would be happy to talk to you about this fund at any time to answer questions. I hope you will have the opportunity to meet two of our boys at the Bolivian Auction to

be held at Wildcat Cliffs Country Club on Monday, August 11, 2014 and see what fine young men we are helping to produce. At any rate, please put this date on your calendar and you will be getting more information in the summer. Joanna and I will be in Bolivia from May 15 to July 1 and this will be our first adventure in the winter in this tropical area. They say it even gets into the 40's at night. We are used to rain and 90's to 104 degrees! Pray for us. I know it works, and God bless you.

Highlands Boliva Mission
209 Hospital Drive
Suite 304
Highlands, NC 28741



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Dramatized by Thomas Hischak

Little Women



Sponsored by a Grant from the Community Foundation Western North Carolina

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Highlands & Cashiers

April 24, 25, 26, & 27
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Sunday Matinee: 2:30

Directed by
Dr. Ronnie Spilton

Special Guest Appearance:
Dean Zuch

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Trees are Budding and Birds are Singing...

What a glorious time of year in Highlands and Cashiers! The long and dreadful winter is behind us and you can feel the excitement and energy in the air. The warmth of the sun allows warm days and the slight chill at night is just perfect ... or so I think!

Many summer residents have returned and I want to welcome you back. Some of you may have decided to list your home due to health reasons or lifestyle changes. This can be an emotional time ... many mountain memories were made here over the years. But the maintenance, taxes and insurance no longer make sense if you won't

be using your second home but a few times a year.

At Pat Allen Realty Group we are sympathetic to your needs and passionate about what we do. Our goal is to sell your home for the best price in the least time possible. We don't overprice to secure your listing and know the importance of a good marketing strategy and great photos for MLS and hundreds of websites in which we participate. What buyers see online determines whether they contact us about your listing or move on to the next.

Timing is also important and this is the perfect time to list your home or property! There's something about spring that renews



**Pat Allen
Owner
Pat Allen Realty
Group**

buyers' interest in purchasing a home in Highlands or Cashiers. Restaurants have re-opened, shops are filled with new merchandise, hiking trails beckon those so inclined and waterfalls

rage from spring showers.

If you are thinking of selling your home or property we offer a free market analysis and welcome the opportunity to

work for you. Contact Pat Allen Realty Group at 828-526-8784, or email us at pat.f.allen@gmail.com. Visit us on the web at patallenrealtygroup.com.

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...RUMORS continued from 1

employees only involves the consolidation of administration staff.

"This means higher level administrators and behind-the-scenes administration staff," she said. "Consolidating duties will improve cost efficiency throughout the Western North Carolina system and it's something healthcare systems across the country are doing in an effort to reduce costs."

However, these changes are not on the front lines and not being considered where patient care is concerned. "We are here for the long-term," she said.

Many of the high-end employees in the Mission Health system are taking on more duties, including H-C Hospital President and CEO Craig James.

As announced last week in Highlands Newspaper, James will become vice president for Mission's western region. He will retain his H-C Hospital president role, a post that he has held since June 1, 2010, and will become the interim leader of Transylvania Regional Hospital until a full-time leader is found. In addition, Franklin's Angel Medical Center President and CEO Jim Bross will report to James.

"This transition is ongoing but will be beneficial to all the rural communities in the Mission Health system," said Taylor. "There is a plan in place which is unfolding as we speak and we intend to be transparent about all of it. Once everything is done

• See RUMORS page 18



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From Main St., take Hwy. 106 (The Dillard Road) 1.8 miles just past the Glen Falls sign, turn right on Mt. Laurel Dr., go 3 tenths of a mile turn left on Moonlight. The entrance is on the right.

www.highlandsnchomesites.com

Contact (onsite owner) or your broker for plats, prices & a guided tour.

828-508-9952.

...WILLIAMS continued from 14

Rec Park Committee (made up of Commissioners Patterson and Brian Stiehler) gave permission for the pool to be outfitted with proper footing and wiring for an enclosure – should the town take the offer – so nothing will have to be retrofitted down the line.

Town Manager Bob Frye said after the new pool shuts down after this Labor Day, it will take six to eight months to build the structure which theoretically would open Memorial Day weekend of 2015 and so talk of operational costs was somewhat premature. Cost to operate the year-round pool would be in the 2015-'16 budget.

Frye played Devil's advocate saying a year-round pool would increase Rec Park operating expenses particularly concerning staffing but also said there are various entities in the area that might want to co-op with the Rec Park to offset expenses. Namely, the schools, the hospital for water aerobics, as well as the Cashiers Rec Park which doesn't have a pool.

On the other hand he said at this point – a year and a half out – staff has no way of knowing how many people would use the pool, how many lifeguards to hire or what the most popular time to use it would be. He said a detailed operational

plan is essential.

Tammy Lowe said she pays \$600 a month for a single membership to swim in Franklin and she would much rather give her money to Highlands.

Lila Howland said compared to the Cashiers Rec Park the Highlands Rec Park comes up short and she and Richard Delany, president and managing director of OEI, said more and more Highlanders are going to Cashiers to use that Rec Park.

"Cashiers Rec Park puts ours to shame," said Howland. "This generous offer shouldn't be dismissed just because we are afraid we can't afford it. I think we can find the money for it. What we can't afford is to lose people who are willing to pay money to other towns to use their facilities. Don't let this run through your fingers."

Delany said he understood the town's concerns about operating expenses but said commissioners were making this harder than it had to be. For one thing, OEI even offered to help with operation costs for the first year until the town can secure funding through memberships or other means.

"First of all I'm surprised to hear the \$120,000 figure. The other thing is you already operate a pool three months so you know what the operating expenses are; just know what the chemicals cost you – just

multiple it out. You won't use any more chemicals in the wintertime. You roughly know what the heat is, just extend it out. The heat from the pool generates the heat for the structure. So you don't have to worry about that."

He said swimming is like biking was 15 years ago – more baby-boomers are getting older looking for low-impact aerobic exercises.

"I'm not saying the pool will be packed next June, but I guarantee in the next three or four years you are going to see more and more people swimming for health reasons. Kids learning to swim, the high school, the hospital, Cashiers getting involved. And that revenue could mitigate the operating costs. The Highlands Rec Park needs something. You are getting a brand new pool, a new gym floor, give it some revitalization and people will come."

Mayor Taylor said he was going to take a broad view on the subject.

"I hear the concern about what it would cost and I think we will have to be very creative in dealing with some of those issues. But I also know that when we had our survey about what people wanted at their Rec Park, they said they wanted a pool they could use all year-round. I hear that today very clearly. The town has always said it couldn't afford the capital expense. Now we have that problem solved. I think we have a real opportunity here to move forward

with this project. We have to discuss and figure out the operational expenses, but on the other hand, to miss this opportunity for the town, the young people, the older people, would be a mistake. I know it might cost, but it an added-value and a quality of life issue for the community. It's pretty evident this is something people want."

He said as to operating costs, staffing, etc. the board couldn't solve those issues Thursday night, in two weeks, or in three months.

"This will be an ongoing process. But I bring it back to this: we have a generous offer and they would like a response – do we want to accept this or do we not?"

Due to charitable donation rules and regulations, the Williams need an answer by May 15. Thursday night the offer was accepted in principal and budgetary issues concerning a year-round pool will be discussed at the Thursday, April 24 budget meeting from 3-5 p.m. at the Community Building.

The offer affects the 2014-'15 budget if the town can shift money set for the gym floor instead to the stage area which is going to be enclosed for exercise classes.

– Kim Lewicki

• See story on the Williams' donation to Founders Park on page 5.

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...RUMORS continued from 17

and in place, it will be easier to explain."

She said over the next six weeks, system consolidation and organizational changes will continue which will increase efficiency – but this will not affect nor is it directed to patient care.

"Our rural communities have a unique set of challenges, and we are committed to serving each community with a local focus," said Jill Hoggard Green, PhD, RN, Mission Health's Chief Operating Officer and President, Mission Hospital and Mission Medical Associates. "By working together and borrowing on the established strengths of Mission Health, we are building local capacity to recruit, retain and build access to primary care services. Refining and expanding our services as we move toward a population health model – where one of those important populations is the rural part of our service area – is critical to providing the best care to every patient."

Taylor said changes mostly involve the consolidation of the business offices, IT, and quality control throughout the Mission Health system.

"However, this won't affect many of

H-C Hospital employees simply because we don't have as many employees as other hospitals in the system.

Taylor said she expects everything to be in place by June.

About Mission Health

Mission Health has seven Centers of Excellence: Cancer, Heart, Mission Children's Hospital, Neurosciences, Orthopedics, Trauma and Women's Health. Mission Hospital, in Asheville, is the system's flagship hospital and is licensed for 730 beds. It is the regional referral center for tertiary and quaternary care. It also includes Mission Children's Hospital. Other Mission Health member hospitals include Angel Medical Center in Franklin, Blue Ridge Regional Hospital in Spruce Pine, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital in Highlands, McDowell Hospital in Marion and Transylvania Regional Hospital in Brevard. It has 10,600 employees and 2,000 volunteers who are dedicated to improving the health and wellness of the people of western NC.

– Kim Lewicki

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

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

April 3

• At 1:20 p.m., a person banned from entering the Citgo gas station on Main Street entered the store as a trespasser.

April 4

• At 3:36 p.m., an incident of road rage was reported on US 64 west.

April 5

• At 12:30 p.m., a purse was reported missing by a woman who had been shopping.

April 12

• At 2:37 a.m., Beth Ann Kimsey, 21, of Franklin, was arrested for DWI when stopped on Main Street.

April 14

• A little past midnight, a noise violation was reported at the Asian House on Helen's Barn Ave.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. log entries from April 14.

April 14

• At 5:53 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Lower Brushy Face Road.

• At 12:48 p.m. and at 1:52 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Bobby Jones Road.

April 17

• At 9:27 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Satulah Falls Lane.

April 18

• At 2:05 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers on a structure fire on Mill Creek Road.

• At 8:52 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm on Oak Street.

• At 2:12 p.m., the dept. was first responders to Highlands Plaza.

April 19

• At 2:55 p.m., the dept. responded to a medical alarm at a residence on Primrose Lane.

• At 12:16 p.m., the dept. responded to a vehicle accident on NC 28 South There was one injury.

April 20

• A little past midnight, the dept. responded to a CO2 alarm at a residence on Hickory Knot Road.

April 21

• At 3:43 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to Scaly Mountain FD for a brush fire on Hale Ridge Road.

April 23

• At 3:55 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm on Main Street.

...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING continued from page 15

discover it for themselves. Look at my hands, Jesus told his disciples. They were the hands that had washed the disciples' feet and broken bread for them. They had scooped up a child and healed a blind man's eyes and restored a dead girl to life again. They were the hands that reached out in love to touch the untouchable.

Look at my feet, Jesus said. They were the feet that had walked countless miles, taking the good news of God's love to people who were starving for it. As the disciples looked at Jesus' hands and feet, they wanted to believe it was really their master. Luke describes them this way—While in their joy, they were disbelieving. Sound familiar? Isn't that where so many of us are after the pomp and ceremony of Easter have passed—wanting desperately to jump into this gospel glory with both feet but somehow holding back?

And in that, maybe the disciples are like us. Maybe they just didn't take time to read the scriptures. Or maybe if they did, they were distracted about how their kids were doing in school or whether they were going to be downsized out of a job or whether their spouse really loved them anymore.

So Jesus began to talk to them. He began to tell them that if they could read scripture with new eyes and hear it with new ears, if they could recognize in those stories the relentless love of God that refused to let them go, then they would begin to understand the evidence in front of them in a new way. Jesus knew that life happens—Lord, how he knew it—but he also knew that what we do with the pain and fear that come our way makes all the difference. It's what identifies us as his followers—not our knowledge of the fine points of theology, not where and how often we come to church, not

the size of our pledge. But how we live our lives and treat each another—even when the going gets tough.

Look at my hands and feet, Jesus said to the disciples. In other words, look at this body of evidence in front of you so that you can be my witnesses. You don't have to be expert witnesses. Just tell the truth about what you have experienced. And tell it with your life because no one can be led to believe in a resurrected Lord through argument or explanation. The truth has to be lived. It has to be touched. It has to be experienced.

Several years ago there was a newspaper account of a tragic accident at a private school in Pasadena, California. You may remember it. A 16-year old student at that school, who apparently had not had his driver license long, lost control of his vehicle and actually drove into a group of pedestrians, killing a mother and her three year old daughter and injuring six others. This would be a freak tragedy like many others we have heard about—but for this twist. The principal of the school saw Howard Karesh, the husband and father of the two who were killed, doubled over in grief beside his dead wife and daughter. But then he saw Karesh stand up and walk across the street to comfort the driver of the SUV, whose life was also now forever changed. It was a witness, whether Karesh knew it or not, whether he was even conscious of it or not, to the power of God—not to make the bad things go away but to pull some goodness out of even the darkest, bleakest places of our lives.

What Jesus knew was that when the world looked for evidence of the risen Christ, they would look first of all at those of us who bear his name. In the final analysis, the body of evidence is us.

Watch for Fred Wooldridge's sometimes controversial column 'The Fredster' starting May 8 and only in the free Highlands Newspaper.

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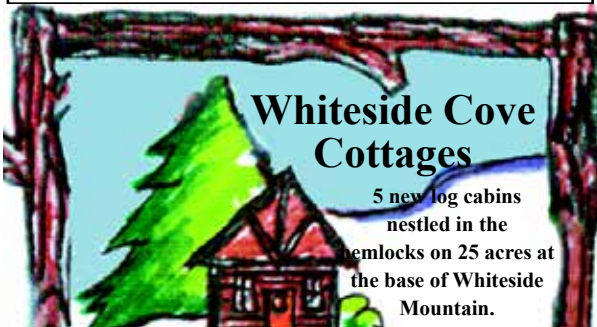
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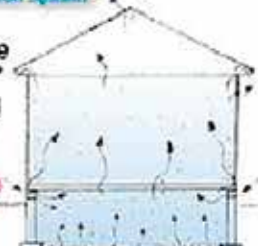
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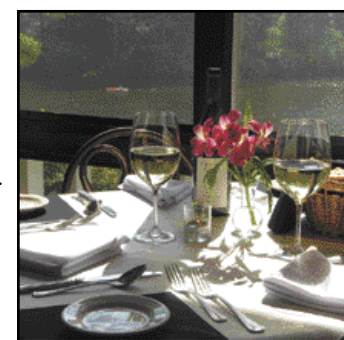
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