

Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 11, Number 6

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Thurs., Feb. 6, 2014

Town Board moves to restructure the ABC Board

At a Special Called Town Board meeting, Wed., Jan. 29, commissioners accepted a letter of resignation from one ABC Board member, removed another and expanded the board from three members to five members.

"The Town Board doesn't want to manage the ABC Board or the operations of the ABC Store – by statute that is not our charge," said Mayor Patrick Taylor. "But the Town Board's responsibility is to appoint qualified members who

will in turn oversee the finances, operations and policies of the ABC Store. In recent weeks the Town Board and the general public have been made aware of major problems with the ABC Board that if left uncorrected could have

a very negative impact on the successful operation of the ABC Store."

Taylor went on to say that the Town Board had been hopeful that the ABC Board could

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Changing the face of Highlands

Several projects in the works will soon change the face of Highlands – and in a good way.

At the last Town Board meeting, commissioners OK'd the Founders Park Coalition's request to begin fundraising so phase 1 of Kelsey-Hutchinson Park can become a reality.

"This is the best way communities work. It isn't them or us it's US," said Commissioner Amy Patterson. "So the government does its part, the community does its part and when its willing to put up this much effort to make sure the town knows what's going on, I think we should support that."

Basically, the group wants to develop structures in the main park area that will facilitate day-use.

Depending on funding, initial construction projects could include: walkways through the park, trellises and arbors, picnic tables, benches, an interactive

•See FACE page 6

A Winter Oasis at Highlands CC



By Photographer Cynthia Strain

Filing for May Primary begins next week

Notice is hereby given that Filing Notice of Candidacy for the 2014 Primary Elections will begin at noon on Monday, February 10, 2014 and will end noon Friday, February 28, 2014 in accordance with G.S. 163-106(c).

The seats that are open for filing at the Macon County Board of Elections office are:

Sheriff: One (1) seat open, filing fee for this office is \$638.88.

Register of Deeds: One (1)

seat open, filing fee for this office is \$411.83

Clerk of Superior Court: One (1) seat open, filing fee for this office is \$834.00

County Commissioner District 1: One (1) seat open, filing fee for this office is \$98.65

County Commissioner District 2: Two (2) seats open, filing fee for this office is \$98.65

NC Senate, District 50: One (1) seat open, filing fee for this of-

fice is \$207.00

NC House of Representatives, District 120: One (1) seat open, filing fee for this office is \$207.00

Contenders will go against Sheriff Robert Holland, Register of Deeds Todd Raby, Clerk of Superior Court Vic Perry, District One County Commissioner Jim Tate, District 2 County Commissioner Ronnie Beale and Ron

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H-C Hospital joins Mission Health

On Friday, Jan. 31, officials with Highlands-Cashiers Hospital (HCH) and Mission Health completed the legal process required to bring HCH on as a full member of Mission Health. This action follows approval of the arrangement by the HCH and Foundation Boards of Directors as well as Mission Health's Board of Directors during their respective meetings on Jan. 23.

"This is an exciting time for our hospital and the community we serve," said Charlie Sheehan, Chair of the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Board of Directors. "When we began this initiative, our Board wanted to partner with an organization that would maintain local governance, enhance our focus on quality patient care, facilitate physician recruitment and retention, improve the hospital's financial viability and expand our community's access to a broader spectrum of health services. I could not be more pleased with how our relationship with Mission Health – one of the nation's Top 15 Health Systems – has developed. I believe the results will be exceptional for our hospital, and more importantly for our community."

"I'm so pleased to welcome this important community

•See MISSION page 9

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• LETTERS •

Were there co-conspirators within the Macon County Finance Dept.?

Dear Editor,

The alleged embezzlement of around \$50,000 from Macon County taxpayers by a county employee highlights incompetency within the county's "award winning" Finance Department. The allegations in Judge Letts' search warrant for the Macon County Board of Elections (BOE) office lay out the damning details.

The alleged embezzler wrote at least 29 "check requests" between July 2013 and mid-January 2014 with insufficient documentation and no or forged signature authorizations. Without hesitation Finance's accounts payable (A/P) issued checks totaling around \$50,000 to sham vendors. The checks were given to the embezzler who allegedly pocketed the money.

Macon County, with over 400 employees and a budget of nearly \$60 million annually, has a Finance Department using purchase order (PO) and payment procedures appropriate for a "mom and pop" shop. Why would the county's Finance Department process any "check requests" except in very limited and carefully controlled circumstances? To handle 29 "check requests" from one employee over a short period is astounding. Especially since many didn't meet authorization requirements, involved "vendors" who weren't vetted, receipt of services wasn't verified, and checks weren't mailed to the vendors.

Was there a co-conspirator within the Finance Department? Will any Finance Department employees be disciplined for failure to follow procedures? Are there any written procedures?

"Check requests" are ripe for fraud and at least one employee figured that out. How many other undetected embezzlements have occurred, or are occurring, within Macon County government?

The county manager must hire an independent forensic auditor, or an auditor from the Office of the State Auditor, to thoroughly review all aspects of Macon County's Finance Department. The forensic auditor must assure everyone that

no other illegal activities have occurred or are occurring, and assure that all purchasing procedures in the Finance Department are brought up to 21st century standards.

Until a forensic audit is completed, corrective actions are implemented, and a public report is issued to county residents answering all questions raised, residents should have no confidence that the county's Finance Department is protecting taxpayers' money.

Vic Drummond
Franklin, NC

The facts about the ABC Store

Dear Editor,

It seems that there is only one side of the story getting out concerning the ABC Store woes.

In response to the letter entitled "Don't Kill the Messenger" in the Jan. 30 edition of Highlands Newspaper, the blame for the loss of funds being given

to benefactors of ABC store is the fault of employees and benefits. This is just not true.

First: ABC board brought in two consultants (Mike Myrick and Sara Brewer) for suggestions of saving money for store. The benefit policies were mentioned to which the two consultants stated that the ABC store policies should mirror Town of Highlands policies. Guess what, they are the same. Years of service equals hours of vacation and sick leave. That policy has been at the ABC store for the past 20 plus years. So I do not think that is the problem. I believe quite of few businesses offer benefit packages, banks, construction companies, telephone, retail, post office, etc.

Second: Wanting to cut employees pay 25% is enormous especially since the employee pay is not the source for the loss of funds to benefactors of ABC store. I am not sure you will find many (if any) employees that would be happy about a 25% pay cut anywhere in the USA.

Third: To answer the question about all parts of benefit package being true. I

guess the gentleman was referring to the part about an employee taking 4 months of time off in a year and being paid for that time. No, that statement was not true.

To earn that much vacation and sick leave, an employee would have to be employed for 15 or more years. The only time an employee can take sick leave is for Dr. or dentists appointments, at home sick or in hospital. I am not positive but in the 30 plus years the ABC store has been in operation you will probably not find abuse of sick leave or vacation time earned. I know of one employee that used sick leave earned (God rest his Soul).

Fourth: The benefactors of ABC store are still receiving funds, maybe not as much as four or five years ago. So let's look back to see what has changed at ABC store in the last 5 years. Employee benefit package has not changed, same number of employees, store moved. Oh wait that may be the problem. The store moved from a Town owned building paying \$1 per year rent to a bigger, nicer, better location store and paying \$40 - 80,000 per year rent. Maybe that is where the extra funds to benefactors is going and not the fault of ABC Store employees.

Last: It was mentioned that ABC store benefits might be part of problem of funding State Retirement system. I truly do not believe 4 employees of Highlands ABC have hurt the State Retirement system. That problem is more than likely in Raleigh, NC.

Skip Keener
Highlands

About the Scaly Mountain name change

Dear Editor,

I would like to address issues stated in last week's article regarding the proposed name change of the Scaly Mountain Community. This small group was organized and formed without notice to the local residents/property owners in Scaly Mountain. Mr. Futral and Mr. Coram said that notices were sent to people in King Mountain, Rocky Knob, and Highlands Gap, however they were not sent to their associations, but only to a select few living in these communities. No notices were placed in mailboxes, or placed in the public areas stating a meeting place or anything about this self-organized group. And none of the

•See LETTERS page 8

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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Toll Free FAX: 866-212-8913 • (828) 526-3228

Email: HighlandsEditor@aol.com

Publisher/Editor – Kim Lewicki; Reporter: Brittany Burns

Copy Editor – Glenda Bell; Digital Media - Jim Lewicki

Locally owned and operated Kim & Jim Lewicki

Adobe PDF version at www.HighlandsInfo.com

265 Oak St.; P.O. Box 2703, Highlands, N.C., 28741

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• OBITUARY •

Dennis Herman Matthews

Dennis Herman Matthews was greeted by a smiling Jesus on Thursday, January 23rd. He died during heart surgery and joins his wife of 59 years, Julie. Dennis was born October 1, 1930 in Philadelphia; however, he spent most of his adult life in Jacksonville and also Highlands, NC.

Dennis began his career as a co-op student at Georgia Tech and graduated in 1954 with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering (he was a member of the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity and the Army ROTC). He began attending First United Methodist Church in Jacksonville where he married his wife Julie Hawes of Tallahassee. He served in the US Army as a Second Lieutenant in the Signal Corps and was stationed at Fort Monmouth, NJ and later at Fort Gordon in Augusta, GA. Dennis began his career with Florida Machine & Foundry in 1954 after starting there as a co-op student while attending Georgia Tech. He returned to Jacksonville in 1957 and began a long career, initially with the foundry and also with FLECO, retiring in 1995 with Balderson, a division of Caterpillar. Dennis traveled extensively to Europe, Latin America, and South America where he developed his love for foreign languages, which he used to skillfully communicate with other cultures around the world.

Dennis lived a life of precision and passion serving God through many years of volunteer work in the community; including public schools, Boy Scouts, Habitat, mission work in Bolivia, and at First United Methodist Church in Jacksonville and Highlands United Methodist Church in Highlands, NC.

His love language was a four letter word: W-O-R-K. Never more evident than at First United Methodist Church, where Dennis served for more than 50 years, holding various leadership positions at both churches.

His passion for music spanned a lifetime, beginning with assembly in the first grade, the Glee Club at Georgia Tech, and as a member of the choirs at both churches. He shared his talents by performing at weddings, funerals, and parties by delighting everyone with his beautiful baritone voice. He was still singing solos at the age of 83 and he now joins the heavenly choir. Dennis was a man of deep faith and integrity. He provided an example of how



to live a life of honor to his children, grandchildren, and friends.

Survivors include: his sister Iris Kern (Al), of Ocean Ridge, FL; sister-in-law, Ola Hawes Joyce (Jim) of Tallahassee, FL; and four children: David Thomas Matthews (Meg) of Roswell, GA; twin daughters: Lucie Matthews Patton (Chuck) of Winston-Salem, NC and Leslie Matthews Kiely (Neil) of Mountain Lakes, NJ; and

Jefferson Hawes Matthews (Betsy) of Jacksonville; and the proud grandfather of seven grandchildren: Catherine Matthews Isbill (Jonathan) and Lindsay Russell Matthews of Atlanta; Cameron Matthews Kiely and Reed Hampton Kiely of Mountain Lakes, NJ and Spencer Robert Kiely of NYC; Charles Collett Patton and Baker VanBuren Patton of Chapel Hill, NC; and many nieces and nephews.

A memorial service was held in celebration of the outstanding life that Dennis lived on Tuesday, January 28th at First United Methodist Church in Jacksonville. Memorial gifts to honor Dennis' love and commitment to his church can be made to First United Methodist Church, 225 E. Duval St., Jacksonville, FL 32202, (904) 356-5618. Please sign the guestbook at Jacksonville.com.

Alvin Crowe, Jr.



Alvin Crowe, Jr., 78, of Franklin, died Friday, January 31, 2014. Born in Macon County, he was the son of the late Alvin Calvin Crowe, Sr. and Pearl Reed Crowe. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a brother, Morris Crowe and a sister, Doris Crowe Picklesimer. Alvin was a member of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church; he was a retired painter and he loved Nascar, going to the beach and camping.

He is survived by his wife of 36 years,

• See OBITUARIES page 9



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fountain for kids, a monument plaza to the town's founders, drinking fountain(s), a picnic pavilion, a permanent performance pavilion/bandstand, walkway lighting, plantings and landscaping throughout.

Though formal fundraising is only now just beginning, about \$30,000 has already been pledged in money and in-kind work. To participate, send donations to Highlands Land Trust, PO Box 1703, Highlands, NC 28741 and put "Founders Park" in the memo line.

Donning its Appearance Commission hat for the first time since the Appearance Commission was dissolved and the Planning Board took on its duties, the Planning Board considered the look and design of three new projects – Cyprus Restaurant's new Main Street façade, the First Presbyterian Church's Memorial Garden and Old Edwards Inn's exterior additions to its new property – 200 Main.

Cyprus International Restaurant

Cyprus Restaurant is moving to the old Oak Street Café location on Main Street and erecting a free standing deck over the Extreme Threads building next door which can then be accessed from a staircase in the alley next to Extreme Threads or from inside the restaurant proper. Obviously this will allow for outdoor seating.

The only aspect of the project the Planning Board considered was the new deck and the new parking arrangement off Oak Street. Nothing is changing on the old Oak Street building façade.

Owner Nick Figel said after 11 ½ years on NC 106 he is excited about becoming part of downtown Highlands and contributing to the energy of the district.

Since parking on Main Street is always an issue, Figel will be demolishing the outside deck on the back of the building which was accessed from Oak Street and replacing it with grass pavers for parking.

All members were impressed with the design which includes a vertical copper sign spelling out the name C-Y-P-R-U-S and an edgy, upscale deck which includes a wall of copper on the side of the restaurant adjacent to the deck.

Though metal is allowed for signage, it isn't on the list of approved materials for exteriors.

Figel explained that copper is part of Cyprus's theme and its peasant food preparation and said the patina of the copper will evolve over time and will have a "warm" quality which compliments the restaurant's color scheme.

Planning Director Josh Ward said allowing copper on a wall would mean changing the Unified Development Code which – including a public hearing, etc., -- would take 90-120 days to finalize.

Since Figel's next step is the Zoning Board of Adjustment where he will apply for a Special Use Permit, member Tony Potts asked if he could request a variance for the copper.

Ward said the Zoning Board can't vary from the town's code, and without the copper Figel can still make use of the property – which is the only reason a variance might be issued.

The board unanimously approved the appearance of the project and went on record saying it wanted the Town Board to consider allowing the copper wall and recommended the Town Board review the request.

First Presbyterian Church Memorial Garden

Landscape Architect Hank Ross presented the plans for the Presbyterian church's new Memorial Garden on the corner of Fifth and Church streets.

The property is currently a wood and shrub triangle that houses the Kelsey Rock under which is a time capsule.

The garden is being developed as a burial place for cremains but also as a public green space which will include a Celtic cross, a pond-less water feature, a monument, and lots of greenery.

There will be space for 90 cremains boxes which will be set along the back of the garden.

The board approved the design unanimously.

OEI's 200 Main pool

The Old Edwards Hospitality Group has purchased High Mountain Lodge on the corner of 2nd and Main streets and is currently renovating the structure including a new metal roof.

Last Monday the Planning Board considered the landscape plan which will include two terraces on the Main Street side of the motel, a small privacy deck at the entrance of the Honeymoon Suite facing 2nd Street and a swimming pool on the Oak Street side.

The pool will be situated where the boulder outcrops now exist along Oak Street. Including terraces around the pool the total square footage will be 5,000 sq. ft. The pool itself will be 1,300 sq. ft. and will be surrounded by a 48" high railing.

The terraces on the Main Street side will be situated around a water feature and will provide 1,700 sq. ft. of public space for guests.

The board unanimously approved the plans.

Members of the Planning Board were also asked to consider extending the restricted parking regulations in the

...FACE continued from page 6



View of Cyprus deck over Xtreme Threads on Main Street.



View of Memorial Garden from Fifth Street.

...PRIMARY continued from page 1

Haven, NC Senate District 50, Jim Davis and NC House of Representatives District 120, Roger West.

As per email queries, all incumbents intend to file for the Primary Elections.

The first day for Absentee Voting by mail for the 2014 Primary Election begins Monday, March 17 at 8 a.m. and ends Tuesday April 29 at 5 p.m. The last day to return Absentee ballots by hand are Tuesday, May 6 at 5 p.m. (If mailed must be post marked by May 6th.)

The deadline for Primary Registration is Friday, April 11 at 5 p.m.

The first day of One-Stop Voting is Thursday, April 24 at 8 a.m. and ends Saturday, May 3 at 1 p.m.

The county's second one-stop voting location has been identified as the Highlands Civic Center and will hopefully be ready for May's primary. One-Stop Voting is also at the Macon County Courthouse.

The second location will give High-

lands residents and people who are working in Highlands, easier access to one-stop voting. "Because it's so hard for people living in Highlands and people who may live in Franklin and work in Highlands to get to the courthouse for one-stop voting, this second location will help get more people to the polls," said Luke Bateman, chairman of the Board of Elections.

Highlands is the largest precinct in the county, but despite the numbers of eligible voters, the one-stop voting numbers have been historically low, causing the polls on election day to be overwhelmed with voters causing a back up and long wait times.

Tuesday, May 6 is Primary Election Day. Polls are open 6:30a-7:30p.

For additional information you may contact the Macon County Board of Elections at 5 West Main Street, Franklin, NC 28734 or by calling 828-349-2034

—Kim Lewicki

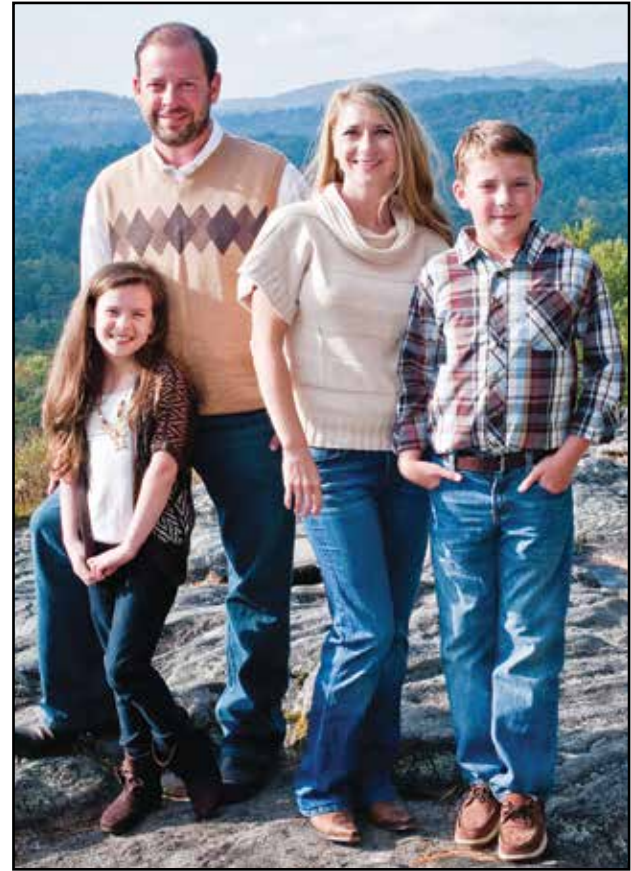
downtown district through December

They unanimously agreed to recommend the extension to the Town Board, but at a later date want to reconsider the real estate firms exemption from the restrictions.

It also plans on re-looking at the town's approved list of materials for exteriors.

— Kim Lewicki

Macon County Commissioner **Jim Tate** announces his bid for Re-Election!



Jim, Allison, Ethan and Eliza

"Commissioner Tate has a proven record of working hard for Macon County. Through common sense leadership, Jim has supported our schools, our county employees, our sheriff's department and our recreation enhancements. He did so while keeping our tax rates the lowest in the state of North Carolina. I will proudly vote to keep Jim Tate our Commissioner."

— Kyle Garner, Franklin, N.C.

The following residents are proud to support the re-election campaign of Macon County Commissioner Jim Tate:

Brandon & Jessica Peek
Karl & Janet Gillespie
Kevin & Beth Corbin
Craig Hambrick
Kyle & Lauren Garner
Jimmy & Katie Deal
Brian Bateman
Bill & Patti Harrell
Richard & Francis Harrell
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Ben & Jean Swafford
Robin Jenkins
Derek & Irena Taylor
Richard & Melissa Delany
Billy & Sherry Vanhook
Eric Moberg
John & Mandy Underwood
Susan Duncan
Tony & Terri Potts
James (Popcorn) & Leesa Manley
Lenny Jordan

Join the Tate for Commissioner campaign and add your name to the list!
Call Commissioner Tate at 828-371-0773 or email him at jamesptate@aol.com.

Paid for by Tate for Commissioner

...LETTERS continued from page 2

local families were notified of this group organizing, and have not been involved in their procedures. They say this group is comprised of business owners, but there were several businesses that were not notified or included in this group.

With regard to "downtown Scaly Mountain," there is not, nor has there ever been a "town." We are a crossroads

community. When they state there has been a decline in the area with businesses closing, there have also been others to open, like the Highlands Aerial Park, Mountain Laurel Rest Bed and Breakfast, The Vineyard at 37 High Holly and Annie's Café, all opening in 2013. None of these owners were present at this meeting. In all, two have closed, and four have opened, all without the help of this

organization and all in the community of Scaly Mountain.

Mr. Coram points out that Bartram has a historical basis, but maybe he is unaware that there is controversy over whether William Bartram actually ever hiked through our area.

Mr. Coram states he wants to "sketch out a viable future for the community". "If we don't respect our past, it's hard to build a future."

With regard to getting membership dues and members, who will be included

in this membership? To date there are between 438 signatures opposing the name change. No one is opposed to progress in our community as witnessed by our support of the businesses we currently have. The opposition is when a small group comprised of 11 people, vote to change this community, and think they can do so without respecting the opinions of ALL of the people that make Scaly Mountain what it is.

Pat Leaptrot
Scaly Mountain

• THANK YOU •

Our pizza 'party' was a success!

I just wanted to thank all the people who worked, and bought and hopefully enjoyed the pizzas. We made 78 pizzas and ate three, selling 75. We grossed \$2,800 and had about \$400 in costs, including 5 more pizza pans which will be used for years.

The \$2,600 profit in Bolivia is equivalent to one month's budget at the foster home, two airline flights to Bolivia, half a house, two ecological above ground toilets, 6 months of private school for 6 of our boys, or medicines and other material for the jail for a year. In other words, a very

successful project. Thank you all once again. Steve and Michelle Hott will be going to Montero from March 9 to the 18th, and the larger group will be there from May 15 to June 30 if anyone is wanting to come or get more information. You can call me at 526-3605 or email at rucker@dnet.net. The cost for the trip is about \$2,000 which includes transportation and R&B in Bolivia.

Dr. John Baumrucker
Highlands

Thanks for a 'New' Bookworm

Dear Editor,

My latest hero has almost single handedly set up our new used bookstore in Highlands,

It is a sight to behold. Wonderful light, shelving full of nice books and helpful volunteers to serve you.

If you have never met Delaine Mehder you need to do so. She took on the job of moving the Bookworm from its former location to its new one at Falls on Main. across from the Hudson Library.

As some of you know, the Bookworm profits go straight to the library, and the library board voted to make this move. Delaine took on this mammoth job with

almost no help. Imagine setting up a bookstore all by yourself with an occasional helping hand.

I never once heard her complain or wish she could quit. I wish I could be so kind and energetic.

So, do go buy books at the Bookworm. The prices are good, the selection is as varied as any you could find, and the service is helpful.

And if you see Delaine, tell her thank you. A million thank yous wouldn't be enough

Glenda Bell
Highlands

The Bookworm has moved and is now open!

We have relocated to 555 E. Main Street in the "Falls on Main" shopping area across the street from the Hudson Library. The move makes us more visible to the community and its visitors and shoppers. We are continuing to offer a large inventory of all types of books, movies, CDs etc. and to count on the community for your generous contribution of these items. Dedicated volunteers staff the Bookworm and we are always looking for more. If interested please contact Delaine Mehder at 828-482-0326. Volunteers are needed for

morning and afternoon hours.

We also need volunteers to work as substitutes. You can be a year round or summer resident. Our winter hours will remain Tuesday through Saturday from 10-4. Drop by during these hours to bring your donations of gently used books or to find new ones. What can be more relaxing than curling up in front of the fire with a good book during a cold, winter day? Please stop in for a visit and we will help you find one! And remember all proceeds go to the Hudson Library.



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...MISSION continued from page 1

institution to our Mission Health family,” said Ronald A. Paulus, MD, MBA, President and CEO, Mission Health. “Their dedication to their community and the patients they serve through an unwavering focus on quality mirrors Mission Health’s BIG (GER) Aim: To get each patient to the desired outcome, first without harm, also without waste and with an exceptional experience for the patient and family. I look forward to what the future will hold for our extended Mission family. It is critical that local, not-for-profit health care remains available for all western North Carolina residents.”

Under the structured terms of the definitive agreement the local community and HCH Board of Directors will maintain a strong voice in the strategic direction of the Hospital. The HCH Board of Directors will consist of twelve members – nine local and three Mission representatives. HCH CEO, Craig James, becomes an employee of Mission Health while all other employees remain HCH staff members. The HCH Foundation will remain a separate entity, under local ownership and control, and will continue to be responsible for providing financial support for the Hospital’s capital and operational needs. “All Foundation assets and contributions will be stewarded by the HCH Foundation to benefit the patients and communities served by Highlands-Cashiers Hospital,” said Earle Mauldin, Chair of the HCH Foundation.

“I want to thank our Board’s negotiations committee for their dedicated work in the joint planning process that resulted in our definitive partnership agreement,” said James. “We are gaining the benefits of partnering with one of the nation’s top 15 Health Systems that is devoted exclusively to serving the health care needs in western North Carolina in a community-owned, not-for-profit model. This new partnership will provide HCH critically important advantages for ensuring the future of local health care services for our area. We also look forward to working together in strengthening our

position to navigate the changes in health care coming our way from both the state and federal level.”

Sheehan expressed to both the Hospital and the Foundation Boards his appreciation for their support, vision and willingness to embrace major structural change in the interest of maintaining and improving the quality of health care services offered to our communities.

About H-C Hospital

Highlands-Cashiers Hospital (HCH) is a not-for-profit community hospital serving Highlands, Cashiers and the surrounding NC mountain communities. HCH offers diagnostic, surgical and acute patient care through onsite professional services or provides a referral to other regional health care systems. Emergency care is physician-staffed 24/7. HCH has 24 beds for acute care services and 80 beds in the Eckerd Living Center, a skilled nursing facility.

About Mission Health

Mission Health, based in Asheville, N.C., is the state’s sixth-largest health system and the region’s only not-for-profit, independent community hospital system governed and managed exclusively in western North Carolina. Mission Health was recognized as one of the nation’s Top 15 Health Systems in 2012 and 2013 by Thomson Reuters and Truven Health Analytics, respectively. Mission Health is one of only two medium-sized health systems to receive this recognition in 2012 and 2013, and the only health system in North Carolina to achieve that distinction.

...ABC BOARD from page 1

resolve its internal problems and move forward in a cooperative manner; but given recent events, it has become apparent that that is not possible.

“We didn’t want to become involved with these controversies but we have a duty to make sure the ABC system functions properly. This meeting today isn’t being held to solve internal problems with the ABC system – that has to be done by a functioning ABC Board,” he said. “Nevertheless, we are here to help reorganize the ABC Board so it can function in the best interest of the Highlands community.”

• See ABC BOARD page 11

THE MET: Live in HD at the Highlands PAC

Saturday, February 8

Renée Fleming sings her first Live in HD performance of one of her signature roles, the title character in Dvořák’s sumptuously melodic *Rusalka*. The story of the opera, which is about a water spirit’s tragic romance with a human prince, is drawn from several folktale sources including Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Little Mermaid.” Star conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin leads a cast that also includes Piotr Beczala as the handsome Prince Rusalka yearns to love; Dolara Zajick as the cackling swamp witch Ježibaba; Emily Magee as the Foreign Princess, Rusalka’s rival; and John Relyea as Rusalka’s father, the Water Sprite. Fleming won the Met’s National Council Auditions 25 years ago

singing the forlorn mermaid’s famous aria “Song to the Moon” and has sung the role of Rusalka more than any other artist in Met history.

“Renée Fleming, a superstar by any measure and now the work’s most visible proponent, took the lead role. Ms. Fleming has a long association with “*Rusalka*” having performed “Song to the Moon,” a show-stopping first-act aria, in her first Met appearance, a National Council Auditions concert in 1988. Portraying a water nymph who gives up a life of enchantment to pursue mortal love with a handsome prince, Ms. Fleming sang with tonal splendor and commendable ease.” — The New York Times

“As the Rusalka, soprano Renée Fleming looked and

sounded ethereal, her cool, silvery voice ideally suited to the role of a creature longing for a human soul. Even in the second act, when her character is made mute by a magic spell, Fleming movingly portrayed the miserable outsider. Of course, she sings, too – ravishingly in the opera’s most famous aria, “Song to the Moon,” in which the Rusalka laments her loneliness.” —New York Post

Pre-Opera Discussion begins at 12:30 pm lead by Beverly Pittman and the MET Opera Live in HD begins at 12:55pm. Tickets are \$24 and are available online: www.highlandspac.org or by Calling 828.526.9047.

Due to the generosity of PAC Opera Guild Underwriters, students are FREE.

...OBITUARIES from page 3

Joyce Queen Crowe; six children, Robert Alvin Crowe of Arlington, TX, Ronnie Alan Crowe of Franklin, Kenneth Marvin Crowe of Highlands, Cheryl Crowe Jenkins of Franklin, Brian David Crowe of Atlanta, GA and Kayla Crowe McClain of Otto; three brothers, Joe Crowe of Nassau, VA, Wayne Crowe and Merlin Crowe both of Highlands; two aunts, Pauline Partain and Ruby Prince both of Atkins, SC; 13 grandchildren; five great grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held at 2 p.m. Tuesday, February 4, at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church. Rev. Eddie Stillwell, Rev. Bill Faulkner and Rev. Frank Rodriguez officiated. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Pallbearers were Robert Crowe, Kenneth Crowe, Brian Crowe, Eddie Miller, Tony Elkins, Jason Woodard, Michael Bradley, Josh McClain, and Kale Stincell.

Memorial donations can be made to the Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, “Senior Fund,” 142 Pleasant Hill Church Rd. Franklin, NC 28734.

Macon Funeral Home was in charge of the arrangements.

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

Choose to turn your life around



Pastor Lee W. Bowman

First Presbyterian Church of Highlands

One way of looking at the gospel story—following the spectacular claim of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ that we have just celebrated at Christmastide, and echoed in the season of Epiphany which proclaims that the Incarnation is a gift to all humankind—is to understand it as a lens through which to look at the choices that face us—given this new reality that God is on the loose. Mark, for example, considers this 'in-breaking' of God so important that he repeats it at the end of his gospel. When Jesus dies on the cross, the temple curtain—the boundary that separated the Holy of Holies from the worshipping congregation, a place so sacred that the high priest could only enter once a year on the Day of Atonement—is similarly ripped apart. And just so we won't miss the way Mark bookends his gospel with this message, he uses the same Greek word to signify the torn temple curtain that he did to talk about the torn apart heavens. God, according to Mark, is on the loose, breaking down all kinds of barriers—even and perhaps most particularly the ones we construct with our religion.

During the time in which Mark wrote, one of the most important choices that people faced was how to deal with the Roman occupying forces. Some people chose the path of resisting the Romans. They believed that the in-breaking of God would eventually take the form of throwing off the Roman domination. Others were more sobered by the dominance of the Romans and consequently more measured in their response to that occupation. They chose the way of accommodation, trying to live alongside the Romans, hoping that God would vindicate their efforts in the future. At that point Israel might return to be as she once had been, governed under her own laws and religious practices.

But Mark presents a third way in which Jesus embodies God's boundary-breaking, transformative message to Israel and to all humankind. Jesus isn't interested in returning to business as usual before the Roman occupation. Nor is he a zealot who is going to lead the charge to throw off this foreign power. He is instead the one who is willing to go to any lengths to break down barriers—especially religious

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 11

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP • John 3:16

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Wed.: Men's Bible Study -8:30 a.m., First Baptist Church
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Thursdays: Holy Eucharist, (chapel), 10 am
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Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 a.m., Prayer Meeting – 6:15
p.m., Choir – 5 p.m.
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Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.
HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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Thurs: 12:30 – Women's Bible Study (nursery)
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Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg. – 7 p.m.
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p.m.
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...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING continued from page 10

barriers—that separate people from one another.

Jesus calls people to repent, literally to turn their lives around, to let go of the baggage that weighs them down. His call to repentance doesn't have the edge of judgment or fear that John the Baptist had evoked before him but is instead characterized by a voice from God—You are my beloved. The call to repentance from Jesus is not an 'ought' or a 'should' but a gift to be claimed. It is, in short, a second chance, a singular opportunity to find abundant life.

Mark was a good enough student of human nature to know that the people to whom he wrote in the 1st century were just as much in exile as the Israelites had

been 5 centuries earlier. His was a message that resonated then, even as it does now, to people who are weighed down by their disappointments, anxiety, guilt, depression and regret.

One of the best cinematic illustrations of what I'm talking about appeared in the 1986 film entitled *The Mission*. It is the story of 18th century Spanish Jesuits who try to protect a remote South American Indian tribe—the Guaraní—who are in danger of falling under the rule of the pro-slavery Portuguese. In the film Robert DeNiro plays Rodrigo Mendoza, a Spanish army officer turned slave hunter, who is converted by a Jesuit priest, Fr. Gabriel (played by Jeremy Irons). In addition to his remorse

at having traded in human flesh, Mendoza has also killed his own brother in a jealous rage because of a woman they both loved. As a result he is tormented by his past and racked with guilt, and eventually goes to the Jesuit mission among the Guaraní Indians, seeking to escape his past and find the life of repentance.

As Mendoza tries to turn his life around, there is one particularly poignant scene in which he scales a sheer cliff—think scaling the face of Whiteside Mountain—up to the village of the Guaraní Indians. He carries on his back a huge and weighty pack that signifies his penance for his former life—filled with armor, helmets, rusted swords and gold trinkets. The size and unwieldiness of the pack threaten

to pull him over backwards to a sure death. In what looks at first like an aggressive gesture, one of the Guaraní leaders, whose people Mendoza wronged when he was a slaver, approaches him with knife bared. But rather than attack Mendoza, the man cuts the pack from his back, showing him that the new life he seeks cannot be found of his own accord, using the trappings of his former existence.

It is, finally, something that can only be done for him and for only one reason—he is a beloved and forgiven child of God.

As we move further into this New Year, carrying our own anxieties and regrets from the past, scaling the cliff of an exile of our own making, it's an important reminder that we don't have to live our lives that way.

...ABC BOARD continued from 9

The board unanimously accepted a letter of resignation from long-standing ABC Board member Georgia Sanders.

Both Mayor Taylor and Commissioner Brian Stiehler thanked her for her many years of service.

"She has served the interests of Highlands and the community for almost 30 years," said Taylor.

Next the board unanimously adopted a resolution removing Jack Calloway from the ABC Board effective immediately.

"To both Jack and Georgia this isn't anything personal, we've just gotten to the point where if we don't make a change the board can't operate efficiently," said Commissioner Stiehler. "Both are great people and have a lot to offer and have offered to the community. We appreciate their service but at this time we need to go in another direction."

Mayor Taylor said he met with Calloway personally and expressed the concerns that are outlined in the resolution.

"I had a second meeting with him and Town Manager Bob Frye and Mr. Calloway was unwilling to step down and so we have to move forward with this resolution today," he said.

• See ABC BOARD page 14

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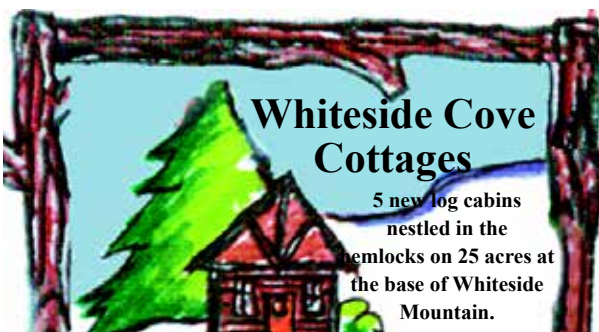
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Lucy said she's never pruned it, but says she will this year because it's literally taking over the porch where she and Olin spend much of their time throughout the year. Lucy says all she's ever done is water the plant, but plant lovers will say it is thriving because it feels like part of the family!

Photo by Kim Lewicki

• FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands PD log entries from Jan. 10. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor, or public officials have been used.

Jan. 10

• At 4 p.m., officers received a call about a larceny at a residence on Happoldt Drive where a flat screen TV valued at \$500 was missing.

Jan. 22

• At 11 p.m., an incident of trespassing was reported at

The Lost Hiker on Carolina Way.

• At 3:45 p.m., Ezequiel Lopez Para, 40, of Highlands, was arrested for driving with a license revoked after a DWI and covering a license plate with a tinted cover. He was held at the Macon County Detention Center on a \$1,000 secured bond. His court date is March 5, 2014.

Jan. 23

• At 5:59 p.m., a resident at Pinebrook Condominiums called police about a noise violation complaint.

Jan. 25

• At 11:30 a.m., officers investigated a theft of a John Boat valued at \$900 from a residence on Munger Road.

Jan. 26

• At 1:28 p.m., officers responded to a call about someone possessing drug paraphernalia and drugs with the intent to sell or deliver on Hicks Road.

Jan. 28

• At 11:24 a.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on US 64 west.

• At 11:18 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on US. 64 west.

• At 1 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on NC 28 south.

• At 1 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on NC 28 south.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. log entries from Jan. 28

Jan 28

• At 11:26 a.m., the dept. responded to a vehicle accident on South Old Walhalla Road. There were no injuries only traffic control.

• At 4:19 p.m., the dept. responded to a vehicle accident on US 64 west. There were no injuries only traffic control.

Jan. 30

• At 5:15 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers Fire Dept. on a structure fire on Pine Creek Road.

• At 10:18 a.m., the dept. responded to a vehicle accident on US 64 east near Highlands Lawn & Garden. There was a minor injury. EMS transported.

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...ABC BOARD continued from page 11

According to the resolution, cause for his removal from the ABC Board was due to conduct including vulgar and profane language in the presence of other ABC Board members during official meetings despite repeated requests by ABC Board members to refrain from the use of foul language; due to ABC Board members who have stated publicly that due to Calloway's actions it is difficult to work on the board and that employees have sought redress from the Highlands Town Board rather than the ABC Board itself; that his behavior has made other

board members afraid to convene and attend ABC Board meetings and it is that fear that cripples the ABC Board's ability to function properly.

In conclusion, the resolution reads "Without Calloway's removal, the ABC Board will cease to function in the manner required by the laws of the State of North Carolina."

Expanding the board from three to five members with three-year staggered terms is allowed by statute and the ABC Commission which oversees the state's ABC Boards.

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"The procedure is very simple," said Town Attorney JK Coward. If the Town Board decides it wants to do this it can simply appoint two more members."

"A five-member board brings a better perspective and consensus than a three-member board. I suspect there were times when having a three-member board it got down to a two against one situation in some cases which added to tension," said Mayor Taylor. "I think having a broader base will really help the board function properly."

Eric Pierson who sat on the ABC Board prior to being elected to the Town Board, said he agreed with Taylor.

"There were issues that came down to 2-1 and it's tough. You want to have unanimous decisions but it didn't always work out that way. It did cause conflict. I think expanding the board will give a greater overview and hopefully get some of this stuff worked out," he said.

Appointed to the ABC Board is Tom Clark, who is taking over for Jack Calloway

and whose term ends Aug., 17, 2015; John Underwood, who is taking over for Georgia Sanders and whose term ends Aug., 17, 2016; Harry Bears, whose term ends Aug. 17, 2017; and Thomas Craig whose term ends Aug. 17, 2017. Brenda Pierson is retaining her seat on the board.

Commissioner Amy Patterson reminded the board of the unofficial policy to try to put different people on boards so the town doesn't just "recycle" people. Craig and Underwood both serve on other boards.

Calloway, Pierson and Mayor Taylor agreed saying they all know of people who want to serve but who have other obligations right now.

They agreed that as the current members come off, new people will be considered.

Commissioners said Calloway's removal from ABC Board doesn't affect his standing on other boards. He was recently reappointed to the Scholarship Committee.

- Kim Lewicki

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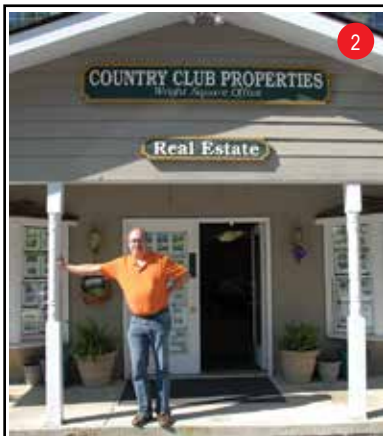
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