

Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 12, Number 43

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

Thurs., Oct. 29, 2015

Appearance Commission OKs HUMC with conditions

The Highlands United Methodist Church has been jumping through the required hoops to make its expansion possible since September 2009 when it was granted permission to change its zoning from B3 to B1 conditional.

Since that time, adjoining property bordered by Spring and 3rd streets has been acquired; Church Street Alley has been re-configured, funds have been raised and now the time for expansion has come.

At this week's Planning Board meeting, members of the church and its Architect Garland Reynolds presented plans for a new Fellowship/Education Center that will be added to the backside of the church property spanning the

Church Street Alley spur and the Wellspring property.

The four remaining cottages on the Wellspring property will be removed to make room for the 10,455 sq. ft. expansion which will

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Four running for Highlands TB will be on the ballot 11/3

As political races go, Tuesday's election probably won't be a nail biter ... only one candidate signed up to run against the incumbents.

Michael "Bud" Rogers is vying for one of the seats on the Highlands Town Board currently held by John Dotson, Eric Pierson and Brian Stiehler.

Candidate Rogers has opted out of participating in the candidate Q & A, so the answers from Dotson, Pierson and Stiehler will serve as a reminder of why they want to continue to serve, what they feel they have accomplished over the last four years and will offer insight into what they hope for the future.

John Dotson

1. Why do you want to run for office again?

I enjoy working for the taxpayers and the stakeholders of Highlands. I believe the town has run more smoothly in the last few years than at any time in recent memory. I would like to continue the trend of a well-run government that is responsive to the taxpayers, holding on to what we all hold dear

about Highlands, yet moving progressively into the 21st century.

2. What has happened over the last four years that you are proud of; what are you disappointed in.

I am most proud of how we have been able to remain fiscally conscious and responsible to the taxpayers. I find it hard to pinpoint anything that I am specifically disappointed with.

3. If elected, what do you hope to accomplish as a Town Board Commissioner over the next four years.

I would like for us to continue to refine and develop our internal policies and our Town ordinances which affect the taxpayers.

4. Do you have an opinion concerning Highlands' relationship with Duke - Highlands' wholesale electricity provider? Would you ever consider changing anything about the current arrangement?

I think each one of us has an opinion about the relationship between Duke Power and the Town

•See BALLOT page 6



Incumbent Eric Pierson



Incumbent Brian Stiehler



Incumbent John Dotson



Michael "Bud" Rogers

Highlands School hits 100% graduation rate in '13-'14

Recognized by NC State Superintendent

Last year, North Carolina Public Education made history with a record high of 85.6 percent of students across the state graduating high school. This newest graduation rate means North Carolina has improved the state's annual graduation from 68.3 percent in 2006 to 85.6 percent in 2014.

"The high school graduation rate is one of the most important indicators of school success," said June Atkinson, North Carolina State Superintendent. "This rate reflects our ability to keep students engaged in school and learning so they can successfully advance to college and careers."

•See GRADUATION page 20

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Maintaining a 'creative' community

As mayor I read weekly bulletins from the North Carolina League of Municipalities and the National League of Municipalities. I just read a section from the National League called CitiesSpeak. Trevor Langan posted an article called, "How to Make a City Creative." Much of his material was borrowed from Richard Florida's 2012 book, The Rise of the Creative Class.



Mayor Pat Taylor

sector and the creative sector. While about 60% of our economy is driven by the delivery of goods and services, about 40% is composed of this new class of creative workers. The digital technology is exponentially expanding this sector dedicated to innovation and creativity.

Cities are retooling to attract this creative class. Both writers point out there are specific characteristics of the emerging creative cities and towns. These communities have a common core area, or an anchor district. In these areas are public parks, including dog parks, visual and performing art centers, live music performances, farmers markets, coffee shops, restaurants and bars, unique shops, recreation facilities, green ways and cultural/social institutions. In addition, many of the towns are in beautiful, natural settings that inspire outdoor activities. These places are sometimes described as urban oases in scenic rural settings. Sound familiar?

These creative communities have an openness and tolerance for differences so that innovative ideas can flourish and flow. Many "creatives" have a strong commitment the environment. Most of these new workers operate from home, or in small groups that are connected via digital media to larger audiences throughout the world.

Now what these writers describe seems in many ways where Highlands already is, or is evolving toward. Yes, we will always be a resort and retirement community, but as we develop the infrastructure, especially the digital network, I see us attracting more folks from this emerging creative community. These "millennial" types are potential permanent residents that could infuse our community and economy with new creative energy and financial resources.

Old Boomers, like myself, may be able

• See MAYOR page 11

• LETTERS •

Highlands Fire & Rescue is the best

Dear Editor

A good friend and I recently went on a challenging hike in an area not well marked or maintained. One thing led to another and a bad decision or two and we were in trouble. While our lives were not in imminent danger, we needed help to safely get out of the difficult situation. Reluctantly we finally gave in and called for the Highlands Fire & Rescue. Several top-notch fire and rescue members came to our aid. They hiked a good distance to provide the required relief.

I am most appreciative for their help. Our community is very fortunate to have these dedicated and professional gentlemen assisting all of us. Hats off to Ryan Gearhart, Hunter Leffler, Eric Pierson, David Leffler, Eric Fielding, Gary Ammons, Seth Schmitt, Taylor Parrish, and Robbie Forrester. We are lucky to have these gentlemen working for our safety.

James Riddle
Highlands

Lucky all the way around

Dear Editor,

Thank you so very much for writing the article about "Lucky" the rescued hound dog.

Last Saturday our dog LG dug out of his fenced yard. When he came home he was exhausted. A little while later we noticed a trail of blood on the floor. After thoroughly examining him we realized his paws were swollen and nails were worn down to the quick. We had NO idea where he had gone or what happened to him until we read the article in the Highlands paper last week entitled "Lucky the hound dog saved by a Good Samaritan."

We are pleased to report that after sleeping for two days LG is fully recovered and digging out again.

To say we are grateful to Joe Doolan is an understatement. If he had not been persistent, diligent, and hadn't followed his gut and heart, LG would not have made it home.

Our thanks also goes out to Dr. Amy Patterson who took the time out of her day off to go into the office to make sure this lucky dog was okay.

Needless to say we feel as though we are the lucky ones to have our Little Guy back at home.

Thank you again and again to everybody!

Lisa Wilker
Debbie Grossman

We must all fight against invasive plants

Dear Editor,

The Coalition to Fight Nonnative Invasive Plants is grateful to you for printing comprehensive articles on the threats that Japanese Knotweed, Oriental Bittersweet, and Kudzu pose to our beautiful, biodiverse mountain environment. However, we would like to clarify our intended methods to combat these threats.

Our first line of attack is not herbicides; rather it is education. Every resident of the Highlands Plateau needs to understand the terrible damage that these and several other nonnative invasive plants can do to our environment and become aware of the ways that they may be contributing to this problem. Most of us have plants in our gardens that are not native to the Southern Appalachians. However, a small number of these nonnative

plants have become highly invasive and destructive in our mountain environment. Because these plants are out of their original locale, their native control mechanisms, such as competing vegetation, disease, insects, animals, and weather patterns, do not exist here. Consequently these plants can take over the landscape crowding out

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Highlands Newspaper

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Locally owned and operated by

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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Letter Policy:

We reserve the right to reject or edit letters-to-the-editor. No anonymous letters will be accepted. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands Newspaper.



• OBITUARY •

Rev. Alton Dendy

Rev. Alton Dendy, 77, of Highlands, went home to be with the Lord on Sunday, October 25, 2015.

Born in Macon County, he was the son of the late Joseph Ellison Dendy and Delcie Gibson Dendy.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by brothers and sisters, Hazel McClure, Josephine Houston, Alec Dendy, Harold Dendy, Ernest Dendy and Gene Dendy. Alton was a graduate of Fruitland Bible College and minister of the gospel for over 50 years, serving as pastor beginning at Elijah Bible Baptist Church; Liberty Baptist; Pine Grove; Mashburn Branch; Pleasant Hill; Pine Grove; Newman Chapel ;Bethel (GA) ; Liberty (GA); Faith; Sugarfork and Walnut Creek. Alton was also a devoted husband, loving father and grandfather.

He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Ruth McCall Dendy; one son, Michael Dendy of Highlands; two daughters, Darlene Dendy of Cary, NC and Lisa Rhodarmer (Derek) of Cary, NC; four grandchildren, Kelley Dendy, Jennifer Tallent, Landon Tal-



lent and William Rhodarmer; three great grandchildren, Trinity Dendy, Aiden Dendy and Blaine Dendy and many nieces and nephews.

Funeral Service held at Wednesday, October 28 at Pine Grove Baptist Church. Rev. Greg Rogers, Rev. Davis Hooper, Rev. Steve Reeves and Rev. Jim Carver officiated. Burial was held at Mt. Moriah Cemetery.

Pallbearers were Michael Dendy, Kelly Dendy, Shane Dendy, Landon Tallent, Justin Kelley, Harold Crisp, Clyde McCall, Bill Rhodarmer and William Rhodarmer.

Honorary Pallbearers were Walnut Creek Baptist Church Members and Area Ministers.

Memorial donations can be made to Gideon's International, PO Box 372, Franklin, NC 28744 or Angel Hospice, 170 Church Street, Franklin, NC 28734.

Macon Funeral Home was in charge of the arrangements.

Online condolences can be made at maconfuneralhome.com

...LETTERS continued from page 2

native plants that feed and shelter our wildlife. These plants do not support the insect populations that are essential to feed baby birds and their seeds have very low nutritional value for our wildlife. Highlands is surrounded by the Nantahala National Forest and many of the attractions that draw tourists and new residents to this area are within this forest. Kudzu can completely smother the forest edge; Oriental Bittersweet chokes trees to death; and Japanese Knotweed can crowd out all other vegetation, forming vast areas of impenetrable growth. Not only does this damage the health and beauty of the forest, the necessary eradication costs taxpayer dollars. These plants are escaping from our gardens and our outdoor decorations when wind, water, animal fur, and droppings carry seed for miles to start a new colony. Some of these plants travel by root systems or the ability of a tiny fragment to generate a new plant.

The Coalition has created a list of nonnative invasives that need to be controlled or eliminated from this area. In the order of their potential danger to the environment, they are: Japanese Knotweed, Oriental Bittersweet, Kudzu, English Ivy, Multiflora Rose, Burning Bush, Privet, Japanese Honeysuckle, Chinese Silvergrass, Five Leaf Akebia, Japanese Spirea, and non-native Bamboo. Most environmental and conservation organizations are begging homeowners not to plant these invasives and to destroy those that are already on their property.

The Coalition will employ several methods to educate the public. In the planning stages are newspaper articles, lectures, workshops for landscapers and nurseries, a library display, and outreach to children with afterschool and summer programs. We will offer information on identifying these plants and the best methods to control or eradicate them (including herbicides as a last resort). We will also provide lists of native plants as attractive substitutes for the nonnatives removed from the landscape. Members of the Coalition are The Land Stewards, Highland Biological Station, Highlands Cashiers Land Trust, Highlands Plateau Audubon Society, and the Greenway. Our newest member is the Town of Highlands. Below is a statement by Commissioner Brian Stiehler, who will serve Town Representative on the Coalition at the request of Mayor Taylor.

•See LETTERS page 11



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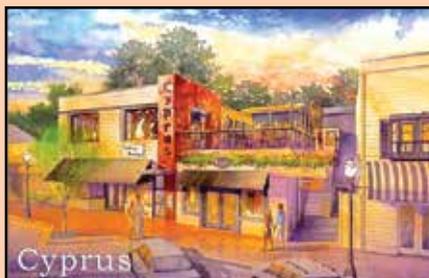
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...BALLOT continued from page 1

of Highlands. To say the least, I am disappointed that Duke is choosing to pursue a remedy which affects their customers, based on their poor maintenance, management or disaster recovery skills and planning. I would consider all options with regards to the electrical utility supply for Highlands.

5. Over the last four years, the Town Board appears to be more committed to children and families than ever before. Do you feel this is important for Highlands and if so why? What steps would you take to continue this trend?

At times I think Highlands has lost touch with its residents, both year-round and seasonal. I think the past few years have seen a resurgence of focus towards the taxpayers themselves. This of course, affects families, children and our young adults as they look to the local job market and make decisions for their future.

Eric Pierson

1. Why do you want to run for office again?

I am running for office again because I care for this Town. I have served many years on various town boards because I truly strive to be a part of Highlands and do what I can to preserve Highlands' character and help guide the town in a positive way.

2. What has happened over the last four years that you are proud of; what are you disappointed in.

I am proud that the Town Board, as a whole, has come together and taken great strides to focus budgeting taxpayer monies toward upgrades to our utilities and properties that do nothing but benefit our citizens. I don't know that I am particularly 'disappointed' in anything over the last four years. In this position, there are always more that you would like to do or have done, but there are limitations; only so much money, only so many resources to utilize, etc..., but

you work hard to accomplish what you can that helps or accomplishes the most for the whole community.

3. If elected, what do you hope to accomplish as a Town Board Commissioner over the next four years.

If elected to another term, I hope to continue progressing forward to maintain, upgrade and improve our infrastructure. I will be working to progress the future of our Fire Department to grow and adapt to the ever increasing burdens and hardships it is facing. I will be a strong factor in pushing the town to do what we can to improve upon the placement of technology throughout the town for the betterment of all who reside in and visit Highlands.

4. Do you have an opinion concerning Highlands' relationship with Duke – Highlands' wholesale electricity provider? Would you ever consider changing anything about the current arrangement?

Sure I have an opinion; it just can't be printed. This is a subject where you would love to do one thing or another, but the truth is, a town (especially one as small in size as ours) is extremely hard pressed to do much about what Duke is imposing upon us, other than be truthful and upfront with our citizens. Our hands are tied, to an extent, without enormously expensive litigation. Of course I would consider changing our current arrangement if it would benefit our citizens.

5. Over the last four years, the Town Board appears to be more committed to children and families than ever before. Do you feel this is important for Highlands and if so why? What steps would you take to continue this trend?

I do think the Town has tried to be more committed to our children and families. Definitely this is important, because our children are the future of this town. We, as a town, have been graciously given some absolutely beneficial donations over the last couple years from citizens in the community that are invaluable to our children and the community as a whole. Angela and Art Williams have been especially giving with the donation of the pool, ice rink, upgrades to school fields and the park to name a few. Without these donations, the Town would be hard pressed to come up with taxpayer dollars to fund such endeavors. We are fortunate enough to have many residents in town that have also contributed to these and other projects. All our benefactors are such a huge part of why Highlands is so great. We as a Town Board, are tasked to accept the donations, and bear the responsibility of upkeep, maintaining and expanding them for future generations to enjoy while continuing to work with these giving residents to provide direction as to the needs of the town, its residents and, especially, our children and continue improving Highlands and expounding upon such a unique community.

Brian Stiehler

1. Why do you want to run for office again?

I am running again because I love Highlands, I love the people here and this is my home. I want to be a part of it. We have a lot of tough decisions coming down the road and we need level headed, common sense, smart decision making commissioners, willing to make good decisions, those that are often criticized. I feel I have the experience and time needed to continue the role I have been in these last 4 years. I've enjoyed it and it's an honor to serve the citizens of Highlands and hope I am able to continue and

• See BALLOT page 7

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...BALLOT continued from page 6

I ask for your support.

2. What has happened over the last four years that you are proud of; what are you disappointed in.

I am proud of many things that we did these past 4 years. First, I am proud of my service on the Recreation committee. From the hiring of Lester Norris (Director of Recreation), to the indoor pool, ball field renovations and cooperative effort with the Founders Park Coalition, we did a lot of things that benefit Highlands. We upgraded many facilities and implemented several new programs. We continue to be aggressive and our staff continues to be creative with different forms of programming. Second, four years on the Finance Committee allowed me to see another perspective of town governance and I am very proud of the job we did making tough decisions at times to create a balanced budget. We have an excellent and dynamic staff and I feel the board and staff is a cohesive group with the same goals in mind. Mayor Taylor does a great job facilitating these discussions and asking important questions. It is an exciting time in Highlands. On recreation, I am far from perfect. I wish I was, but I am not. There are many times I look back on decisions and I know I would do things differently had I thought about it from another perspective. There have been decisions that I've lost sleep over. It isn't easy and a commissioner can't simply abstain from voting because it is uncomfortable. I take the job very serious and know my decisions have the ability to alter lives in multiple ways. I remember a zoning issue where we allowed for further encroachment; that specifically was difficult. Either way I voted, I knew someone would be negatively impacted. The free utility issue to several non-profits; what I thought was a good idea to support the arts in Highlands, was the wrong decision at the time. I still would like to do something and hope one day we will be able to do something to support those organizations that benefit all of us. However, the taxpayer is what is most important. Those types of decisions reinforced what I already knew...that the taxpayer comes first. Third, utility increases is another hard decision. I wish we could absorb those increases in the town budget more than anyone. I am always thinking of a retired person on a fixed income where all of their costs are rising around them and income remains the same. Or, one of our business owners struggling to make ends meet in a seasonal environment because of rent that is through the roof. I know those electric increases take away money from the bottom line.

3. If elected, what do you hope to accomplish as a Town Board Commissioner over the next four years.

There are a number of issues facing Highlands and I am up to the challenge and we need people capable of making hard, smart decisions. Broadband Internet is critical for economic development and something I am behind 100%. We are a tourism-based economy, dependent on our merchants. Those folks contribute so much to the town and fund a good portion of the budget through sales tax. However, good high-speed options improves the quality of life for everyone and benefits small business. Another challenge is sales tax. As Mayor Taylor is constantly reporting, the state of NC is considering ways to redistribute sales tax. This could impact us in a fairly large way, requiring us to consider ways to cover the potential budget shortfall. The town needs to stay abreast of what is going on in Raleigh and react accordingly. I am afraid this is a sign of the times. Most states are in financial distress and their way of han-

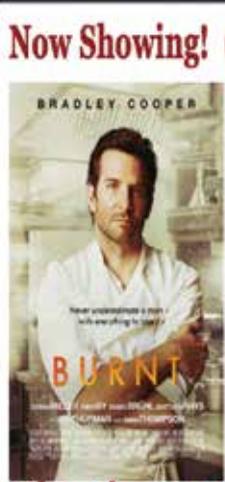
dling this, is to pass off those issues to municipal and county government. Another big challenge in the next several years will be electric rates. Not only are we looking at potential increases from the Duke Power Coal Ash spill, but annual increases are a given. We bought power for so long for so cheap that we not only passed those saving on to our citizens, it was also a major income source for the town that allowed us to fund projects. Again, as I said in a previous question, every time this comes up, I think about the retired citizen on a fixed income, with cost of living increases all around but their income never changes or the small business with astronomical rent just trying to survive in a seasonal environment. Regardless the issue, I am empathetic of our citizens concerns and will do everything I can to benefit the people. In the next four years I want to continue to fight for and represent the citizens of Highlands, continue to fund raise for the Scholarship fund, work towards offering Broadband access and continue increasing the offering and enhancement of facilities in our recreation department

4. Do you have an opinion concerning Highlands' relationship with Duke - Highlands' wholesale electricity provider? Would you ever consider changing anything about the current arrangement?

This is a difficult issue with no easy answer. Turning our electric system over to Duke, or selling it, isn't something that can be done because quite frankly, Duke Power doesn't want it. Historically, rural communities like Highlands got into the power business because private enterprise didn't find it feasible. Basically, if we wanted power for our residents, we had to provide it. Today, our electric crew is comprised of employees who are dedicated to the job and put me at ease during storms. I know, whenever there is an issue, Yogi and

• See BALLOT page 9

Highlands' Playhouse



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Every day from 11:00am - close

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Authentic Neapolitan and NY deck oven pizzas made from scratch. Pasta bowls, daily specials and weeknight dinner specials.

See our website for more info.

Soup & Salad Bar

Mon-Sat 11:00am - close

Fresh salads, homemade dressings, soups, chili and more.

\$9.99 each (dine in) or \$9.99 a pound (to go)

Weekday Lunch Special

Monday - Friday 11am to 2pm

Pizza, pasta, soup and salad bar
Continuous fresh pizza from our pizza ovens, pastas, fresh breads from our bakery, plus the entire soup and salad bar... *\$9.99 each (dine in) or \$9.99 a pound (to go)*

SUNDAY SOUTHERN BRUNCH BAR

Every Sunday from 11am - 3pm

Skillet fried chicken, country angus steak, skillet corn, biscuits & preserves, mashed potatoes, veggies, cobbler, plus the entire soup & salad bar.

\$11.99 (dine in) or \$9.99 a pound (to go)

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A large selection of take-away items fully prepared, ready to take home including grilled pork loins, homemade mac & cheese, mashed potatoes, herb-rubbed chicken, made-in-house bbq, chicken salad deli salads & much more!

DINNER TO GO

A different full dinner every night.
Serves four serving Monday through Saturday from 4:30 until we sell out -
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Monday: choose either:

Four chicken and four cheese enchiladas, refried beans, monterey rice, homemade tortilla chips, salsa, shredded lettuce, tomatoes, sour cream.

Or...

24 buffalo wings or 2 lbs chicken tenders and hand cut fries.

\$20.95 serves four.

Tuesday: Made in-house Italian sausage lasagna and a large house salad.

\$20.95 serves four

Wednesday: Chicken or steak pot pie and a large salad.

\$20.95 serves four

Thursday: Roasted meatloaf with mashed potatoes, gravy and a large salad.

\$20.95 serves four

Friday: Wild caught fried shrimp, baked potatoes, hush puppies & coleslaw.

\$23.95 serves four

Saturday: In-house smoked bbq, coleslaw, apple and bacon-baked beans, and yeast rolls.

\$20.95 serves four

Weeknight Pizza Special:

Monday through Thursday 4:30 to close
16 inch New York style pizza with up to 5 toppings or baked pasta with either italian sausage or chicken. Both come with garlic bread and salad.

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SPECIALTY CHEESES

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...BALLOT continued from page 7

crew are there, usually in less than 15 minutes. They are that good! Duke Power, on the other hand, isn't as responsive and at times may not have a truck within a hundred miles of here. So me personally, I love the customer service I receive as a Town of Highlands Electric Customer. I also like that I can talk to a friendly voice at town hall rather than a 800 number. As a commissioner, I don't see any changes coming to the current situation in regards to who we buy from or who maintains the system. We explored the possibility of refurbishing the hydro-electric plant but again, high start up costs and 10 years time to recoup the expense makes me question that project. Let's not forget about the host of other concerns that arise with it, not to mention, would it generate enough power that we could sell credits back to Duke Power and pass that on to our customers? We employ an energy consultant who I feel does an adequate job representing the town. However, I have spoken to other Energy Consultants with specific ideas the town could employ and I think that is something we should listen to. As for the Coal Ash clean up, I fully support and voted in favor of the Town's current stance by not signing the confidentiality agreement that would basically agree to settling on a figure. Why any town would sign such a thing is mind boggling. Let's let that play out in courts and hope it falls in our favor.

5. Over the last four years, the Town Board appears to be more committed to children and families than ever before. Do you feel this is important for Highlands and if so why? What steps would you take to continue this trend?

Yes. As the recreation committee, Commissioner Patterson and I have focused on this for the past 4 years. We've done good things and we have more ideas that I hope come to fruition in the future, but it takes time given the Recreation Department isn't an income producer. An indoor pool has created a new dynamic for town residents thanks to the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Williams and Old Edwards Inn. In addition to the pool, our gymnasium and ball field were recently updated and rebuilt to meet the needs of the many

great leagues and teams that play there. The weight room in the Civic Center was renovated due to the generosity and hard work of Derek Taylor and a few great Rotarians. Families, young people and all citizens for that matter, are enjoying the benefits and the better quality of life. Strategic planning is such an important part of what we do as a Board, and the needs of the town are endless from infrastructure to recreation to public safety. We have many projects that are needs and many that are wants. As commissioners, we prioritize those projects and for me personally, the needs of the community come first. There are certain things we have to do. For example, our superb Town Engineer, Lamar Nix, made several water system improvements and rebuilt a retaining wall on 3rd Street. Water lines that freeze due to a shallow depth or a wall leaning because roots and ground water push on it are two good examples of projects we have to do. Road paving and upkeep are projects we have to do. Thanks to the generosity of residents and businesses, we've been able to do the recreation projects I discussed above, from donations. The Founders Park did a phenomenal job raising money for the park and the result is beautiful. We are blessed to have a perfect venue for performances, farmers markets; and all of that happened because a group of people who love this community used their professional talents and ability to make it happen. We have problems that many towns would love to have. I think it is great that parking is a controversial topic. Many towns only wish for that traffic; some of which are very close to us. In the end, it is government's job to provide services that private enterprise is not willing or able to provide. While it is really important to support recreation, events and other things going on around town, I feel that we should not lose sight on what our mission is. We will always invest in the Rec Department but residents need to understand that is the one department that always operates in the red, meaning it loses money, as most every recreation department does. It is a balancing act and if elected for a second term, I am committed to finding ways to improve our recreation department in a financially responsible way.

Early One-Stop Voting is in progress at the Highlands Civic Center at 600 N 4th Street through Saturday, Oct. 31.

You can vote Monday – Friday 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. until 1 p.m.

On Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3, the polls at the Civic Center open at 6:30 a.m. and close at 7:30 p.m.

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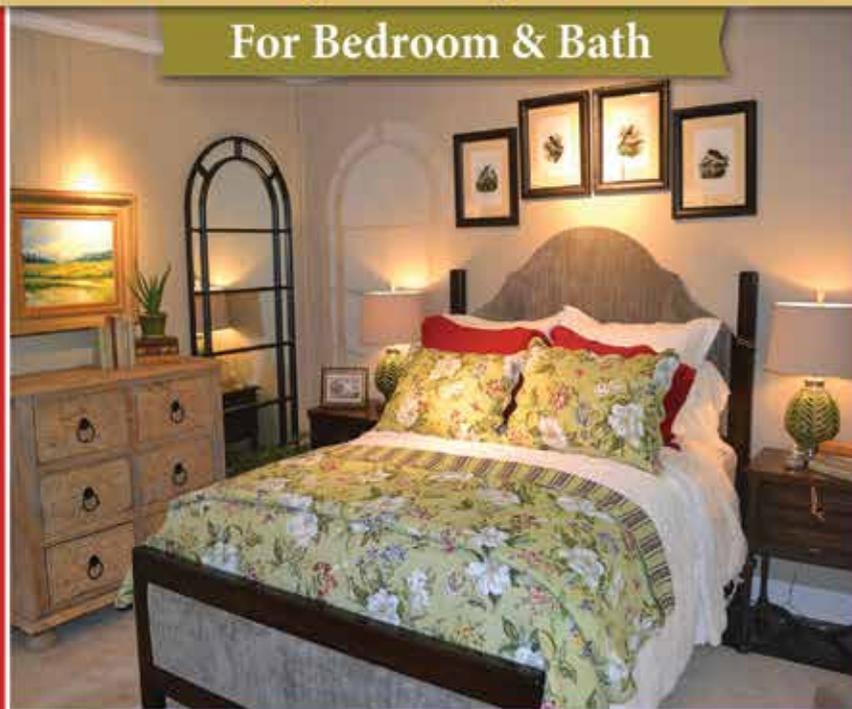
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County Health Dept. to take over Macon County Animal Control

Move expected to streamline operations

Over the last year, dozens of residents have come before the Macon County Board of Commissioners with complaints regarding either dangerous animals or direct complaints about the county's animal control department.

From not having phone calls returned to lengthy periods of time between action involving dangerous dogs, residents have expressed a wide array of concerns to commissioners. Those concerns may have found a solution as of November 1, as Macon County Animal Control will be transferred to the control of the county health department.

Pending approval from Highlands commissioners, as well as Franklin aldermen, the county's animal control department will soon be under the control of Dr. Jimmy Villiard a licensed veterinarian and public health employee.

Macon County Commissioners unanimously voted to approve the move last Tuesday during the October board meeting. County Manager Derek Roland expressed benefits of the change to the board.

"In my opinion, the current structure which houses animal control directly under the county manager's office creates an extra step in communication between the animal

control department and public health," said Roland. "To give an example, when I receive an animal control related complaint from a citizen, approximately 95% of the time I am working with the health department to get this complaint resolved. As aforementioned, it is the health director who must make determination on bite reports, rabies, and vicious animals. Thus, when a complaint related to any of these issues is received by me, I cannot be a problem solver, only a coordinator making sure animal control and public health are communicating. This extra layer in my opinion, results in a degradation of both efficiency and effectiveness."

Only three counties out of 82 in the state have animal control under the county manager's office; 64% of counties utilize their health department or sheriff's departments to manage animal control, according to a North Carolina Association of County Commission study completed in 2009.

Roland said that by having the health department manage animal control, no additional funding will be needed and the existing animal control staff will be utilized with a reclassification of duties.

• See **ANIMAL** page 14

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...LETTERS continued from page 3

“The issue is not one with a simple solution and involves areas of state right-of-way, private property and town owned property. The Town of Highlands is in the process of addressing Knotweed and other species in a number of areas where they are known to be growing. With the help of a licensed North Carolina pesticide applicator, we have treated several areas and will continue in the spring when growth resumes. We look forward to helping the coalition in the responsible treatment and eradication of nonnative invasive plants. Education is a key component and we need to be sure those selling such plants are aware of the potential to alter the natural environment we all appreciate and love in Highlands. It is critical the buyers of such

plants as Oriental Bittersweet understand the consequences of their choice of décor. With no noxious weed laws in place, it is possible to purchase many of these plants and decorations made of their seeds and twigs from local merchants.” Commissioner Stiehler emphasizes that this is a statement of what has been done and his personal opinion about what needs to be done.

The Coalition hopes that we can enlist everyone in this effort to save our beautiful mountain landscape for our pleasure, the health of native plants and animals, and for future generations.

Barbara Landwehr
Coalition to Fight Nonnative Invasive Plants

...MAYOR continued from page 2

to say we once were the advance guard, but we aren't card carrying members of this new group. Nevertheless, as the great poet laureate of the sixties, Bob Dylan once sang, “the times they are a changing.” While it is hard to predict the future, decisions made now can strategically position Highlands to embrace, rather than react to future circumstances bearing huge economic and lifestyle changes.

Stay tuned. Or rather, stay connected.

One important note: A few years ago the Macon County Board of Elections made the investment to have early voting

in the Highlands Precinct. It costs money to operate an early voting site. For the upcoming municipal election on Tuesday, November 3, folks can vote early today and on Friday from 9 to 4 at the Highlands Recreation Center. Saturday voting is from 9 to 1. I join Debbie George, Director of the Macon County Board of Elections, in urging folks to come out and take advantage of this opportunity to vote early. If voting early is not possible, please vote on Tuesday, Election Day. The more we vote here on the plateau, the more our voices are heard throughout the county.



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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

NOTICE

Beginning Mon., Nov. 2

• The Crisis Intervention Program

known as CIP will be administered by Macon County DSS. Applications will begin on Monday, November 2nd beginning at 8 am. You must be in a LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY/CRISIS. Applications will be taken for households needing assistance for their immediate heating needs and to alleviate their heating crisis. Eligible households must meet all criteria for heating assistance which includes; income limits which is less than 150% of the federal poverty levels. The target population is at least someone in the household is 60 or older, or be approved disabled, or have a household with a child five (5) years of age or under AND be in a life threatening emergency. Also there must be one US Citizen in the household and a resident of Macon County. The Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) will provide payment to the vendors for eligible households. Also, required to be eligible, you must have 10% or less LP gas, 15 inches or less of Fuel Oil/Kerosene or a Disconnect Notice from Duke or Haywood Electric Company or natural gas provider. If you have a disconnect notice you must bring the notice with you at time of application. Those that use wood as a heat source must have less than 1 cord of wood. The Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) is to resolve the immediate life threatening crisis. Only minimum deliveries of

100 lbs. of propane, 100 gallons of fuel oil/kerosene, or 1 cord of wood or a disconnect notice with the minimum amount to resolve the crisis will be approved. For more information, please contact Macon County DSS at 828-349-2124. Application will be taken Monday – Friday from 8am – 4 pm as long as funds are available at Macon County DSS located at 1832 Lakeside Drive, Franklin NC. For all other households the CIP program opens up December 1st and must meet the stated guidelines.

Ongoing

• Highlands Hurricanes Swim Team is open to all levels of swimmers ages 6-18. To sign up contact Coach Steve Hott at 828-421-2121.

• Anyone interested in taking Adult, Child and Infant First Aid/CPR/AED certification class needs to contact the Highlands Recreation Department and get on the list for the class. You will learn how to respond to first aid, cardiac and breathing emergencies. Upon completion attendees receive certification from the American Red Cross. Please pre register we need a minimum of 6 for the class and a maximum class size of 16. Once we have enough signed up for a class we will schedule the class.

Mon.-Sat.

• Nantahala Tennis Club meets at 9a.m to noon each day. All visitors welcome.

Mon. Thurs., Fri., Sat., Sun.

• Movies at the Playhouse: 2, 5 & 8 p.m. Call 526-2685 for weekly movie.

Mondays

• Shortoff Baptist Church hosts a non-denominational Men's Meeting the first Monday night of each month at 7 pm and all men are invited to attend.

• The Humanist Discussion Group meets every Monday morning from 9:30 to 10:30 in the Meeting Room in the back of Hudson Library. All are welcomed

Mon. & Wed.

• Zumba with Mary K. Barbour at the Rec Park from noon to 1p. For more information, call 828.342.2498.

Mon., Wed., Fri.

• Heart Healthy Exercise Class 8:30am-9:30am at the Rec Park.

• Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9a.

First Tuesdays

• The monthly family support group for those with family members, friends, or loved ones living with the challenge of mental illness meets the first Tuesday of each month, 7p.m. at Memorial United Methodist Church, 4668 Old Murphy Road, Franklin. This group is sponsored by the local affiliate of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness). For info call 828 369-7385.

Tuesdays

• FREE Community Table Dinner at the Community Bldg. at 6p.

• The Beyond the Walls Book discussion group meets every Tuesday at 4 PM at The Ugly Dog Public House. Each week we read a short story and then discuss its insights for our lives and spiritual wisdom.

2nd and 4th Tuesdays

• OccupyWNC meets at the Jackson County Justice Center. For more information, visit www.occupywnc.org or call 828.331.1524

Tuesday and Thursdays

• Zumba with Connie at the Rec Park 8a. \$5.

• Pickle ball is played from 9:30-11a in the gym at the Rec Park.

Wednesdays

• Donation Based Meditation Wednesday nights w Christopher Baxter at 6:30. Getting a little chilly for outside classes :) held at The Wellness Place. 468 Dillard Road Highlands 8285269698

1st Wednesdays

• Family Movies at the Hudson Library at 3:15pm. Call 828-526-3031 for titles.

2nd Wednesdays

• General Audience Movies at Hudson Library at 2pm. Call 828-526-3031 for titles.

Thursdays

• Storytimes with Miss Deanna at Hudson Library 10:40 am. Open to the public.

• Weight Watchers support group meets every Thursday at 6pm at the Cashiers Community Center. Questions? Call Lisa 828-506-3555.

• NAMI Support Group for individuals dealing with mental illness: depression, bipolar, schizophrenia, etc. and the family members of individuals dealing with these challenges from

7 – 8:15 pm. Call Donita for more info (828) 526-9510.

2nd Thursdays

• Sapphire Valley Needlepoint Guild meets at the Highlands Rec Park at 10 a.m.

3rd Thursdays

• Kidney Smart Classes in Franklin: Every 3rd Thursday of month, 4:30pm-6pm, Angel Medical Center, Video Conference Room, 3rd Floor, 120 Riverview Street, Contact Majestic 828-369-9474

• Kidney Smart Classes in Sylva: Every 3rd Thursday of month, 7:30am-9am, DaVita Sylva Dialysis Center, 655 Asheville Highway, Contact Sue 828-631-0430

Fridays

• 99ers Bridge at the Rec Park 9a to noon.

Last Fri. of each month

• Community Coffee with Mayor Pat Taylor from 11a to noon at The Hudson Library.

Fridays and Saturdays:

• The Highlands Historical Museum is open every Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.. On display is a Botanical History of the Highlands Plateau, a gallery of local photographs by George Masa, and presentations of Mary Lapham's TB Sanatorium, the Moccasin War of 1885, Abraham Lincoln's alleged origins, Joe Webb's tools, and books and DVDs about Highlands history. For more information, email highlandshistory@nctv.com.

Saturdays

• Highlands Marketplace in K-H Founders Park on Pine Street from 9a to 2p.

• At the Rec Park, MMA Fitness Class is being offered Saturdays at 1:30pm with Moses Machida. NHB Pankration, Muay Thai, Boxing and BJJ combined into an hour long fast paced interactive class. The class combines plyometric, strength training, MMA techniques, explosive cardio and self-defense into one class. • At MountainTop Wine Shoppe on Main Street, free wine tasting from 1-3 p.m.

Thurs., Oct 29

• Highlands-Cashiers Hospital will be sponsoring a community health screening for the residents of the Cashiers, Glenville, and Sapphire communities on Thursday at the Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library located at 249 Frank Allen Road. Men requesting a PSA check will need to bring a physician's order for this screening. Complimentary flu shots will be available at the screening. Appointments are limited so please call Sheraldean Norris at (828) 526-1498 for your appointment.

• Highlands Parks and Recreation will have a Halloween Spooktacular Event on Thursday night from 6-8pm. The event will include pumpkin decorating, apple bobbing and other games geared to ages 5-12, but everyone is welcome. Wear your spookiest costume or come as you are.

Fri., Oct. 30



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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

• The Performing Arts Center's Live in HD Series presents the MET Opera: Tannhauser by Wagner on Saturday at noon. The pre-opera discussion lead by Beverly Wickman will begin at 11:30am. For Tickets or more information go to: highlandspac.org or call: 828.526.9047 Highlands Performing Arts Center 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands

• The High Mountain Squares will host its annual "Halloween Dance" bring your funniest face, Friday night to the Macon County Community Building, Early rounds at 6:30, square dancing 7-9 PM. The Ace McGee from Anderson, SC will be the caller with Mike McDonald and Debbie McClain doing rounds and lines. All styles.

Sat., Oct. 31

• Highlands annual trick-or-treating celebration downtown from 6-8 p.m. Main Street will be closed to traffic at 5:30p. Hot dog and hamburgers grilled in front of the Presbyterian Church and Music in the street in front of Town Square.

Fri., Oct 30

• At the Highlands Playhouse, The Rocky Horror Picture Show. at 10:30p. \$10.

Nov. 1-21

• Macon County Youth Boys basketball

registration at the Highlands Recreation Park, Macon County Community Building or on-line at maconcountyboysbasketball.com.

Tues. & Wed., Nov. 3-4

• The Highlands Emergency Council will be accepting applications for fuel assistance on Tuesday and Wednesday from 10am to 2pm at the office on Poplar Street (next to Wilson Gas). Proof of income is required. No applications will be accepted after these dates. Applications must be filled out in person, no applications will be taken over the phone.

Tues., Nov. 3

• Polls open at the Highlands Civic Center at 6:30 a.m., and close at 7 p.m.

• At the Bistro on Main, Prime - Not Your Mother's Health Talk, 5:30-7p. Free fun evening for women that includes health information, dinner and more! To register visit mission-health.org/HCHprime. Register as if you are purchasing something from the "store" option.

• At The Highlands Playhouse, the movie "Oklahoma" at 7 p.m. \$10 for adults and children are free. For tickets call 828-526-2695.

Nov. 4

• Kayak Roll Clinic will be held Wednesday, November 4th from 6:00-8:00 at the Highlands Pool Complex. Bring a friend and kayak if you have one and enjoy the clinic. Some boats will

be available.

Thurs., Nov. 5

• Rotary Bingo at the Community Building next to the ballfield. Proceeds will go to the Bolivia Mission.

Thurs. - Sun., Nov. 5-8

• Highlands 9th Annual Culinary Weekend

at local restaurants, shops and inns.

Sat., Nov. 7

• The Christmas Tree - Highlands Original Christmas Shop, 357 Main Street, hosts a book signing about wine with "Saucy Sister" Beverly Wichman beginning 11AM. Free Champagne. (828) 526-3687.

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...ANIMAL continued from page 10

John Hook, who has served as animal control's director will be shifted to lead animal control officer for the department.

Board of Health Director Jim Bruckner noted that Villiard will begin to work full-time at the county's current animal

shelter and will assume director duties in addition to his already assigned tasks within the health department. After the transition is complete, Villiard will be at the animal shelter office part-time.

...HUMC continued from page 1



The Spring Street side of the addition.

include the addition to the existing sanctuary and the new Fellowship Hall/Education wing.

According to Reynolds the expansion will do very little damage to the natural elements on the site and it will stay very green. "We are only touching what has already been developed in some fashion in the past," he said.

With their Appearance Commission hats on (the Planning Board is also the Appearance Commission) members were asked to look at the aesthetics of the addition to see if it blended with the immediate community and the church itself.

Reynolds said the site is challenging due to its topography and the change in grade from Main Street to Spring Street, water features and environmentally sensitive elements.

"We tried to make the additions compatible with the existing building while optimizing use of the land," said Reynolds. "We

are using materials to match the existing building materials while trying to still make it look like a church."

Given the drastic change in elevation, members of the board praised the job done to create the space needed for the various activities within the church, but they felt the exterior façade, particularly from the Spring Street side was lacking.

"You have done a great job creating the functional space but it needs some facial changes," said Dennis DeWolf. "I understand you had a great amount of space to cover."

Chairman Thomas Craig said the Spring Street façade is an important part of the addition, particularly since there will be nothing to block its view from Spring Street.

"This will be the third large addition to a historic church in Highlands. The others

• See HUMC page 21

OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, October 31 | 1:30-4:30pm
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Come see me!

This beautiful home will captivate your heart and soul! It has a lush, tranquil setting on a series of ponds and lakes with a small waterfall. Originally built in 1949; remodeled in 2001 and 2012. This luxurious home is all on one level with easy access to entire yard. The name of the home is "Spellbound," which says it all! MLS# 82148. Offered for \$1,395,000. DIRECTIONS: From Highlands head toward Cashiers approximately 2 miles. Turn left on Flat Mountain Road. Home is on the right just past Cheney Lane.



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The Highlands Performing Arts Center and the Highlands Playhouse to present Anniversary Movies

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Have you ever seen these movies on the big screen? Most likely not, but your chance to view these iconic films the way they were meant to be seen "on the big screen" is coming to Highlands.

The Highlands Playhouse is making this opportunity become a reality.

The Highlands Performing Arts Center has the connection and the contract with By-Experience to present these films. And since The Highlands Playhouse is known for its first-run movies they have the equipment to screen them.

Two films will be presented at the Highlands Playhouse utilizing their equipment - Oklahoma and



Fantasia.

Come view these films the way they were meant to be seen...On the BIG SCREEN.

Oklahoma will be screened on Tuesday, November 3rd at 7pm. Fantasia will be screened on Tuesday, November 10th at 7pm.

Tickets may be purchased for Oklahoma and Fantasia by calling



828.526.2695 or by going to the Highlands Playhouse box office. Tickets are \$10 for adults and children are free with an adult.

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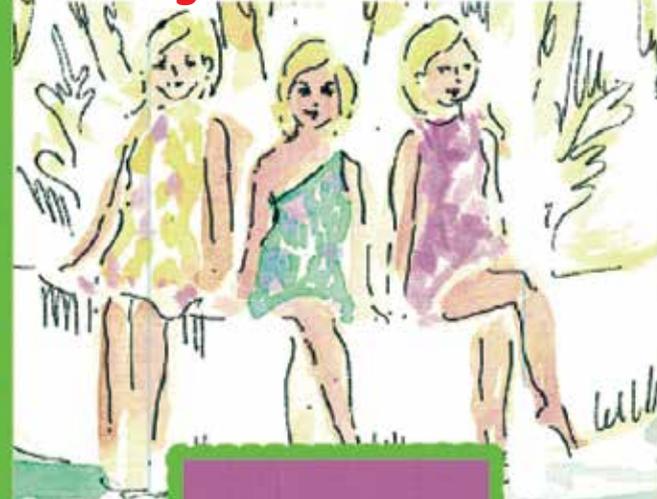
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Real Estate in the 'off season'

Soon the last of the colorful leaves will turn brown and drop to the ground, the temperatures will fall below

freezing, and the final wave of seasonal residents will flee to warmer climates. Some stores and restaurants will shorten their working

hours and days as the amount of daylight decreases, and Highlands will gear down for what we call the "off season." So, why would any-

one want to come here and look at real estate now?

If you've never experienced it, the winter has its own special charm. Gone are the crowds and activity of summer, replaced by peaceful winter quiet and a slower lifestyle. Many of us look forward to this time with a sigh of relief after the frantic pace of the season.

We have time to take care of neglected chores and to visit with our friends and neighbors....and we have more quality time for Buyers and Sellers.

Having grown up here, I remember when "the season" was basically from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Through the years it has expanded to include all except the coldest winter months. Highlands doesn't "close down" like it used to. If you drive down Main Street during Thanksgiving week, you could easily be fooled into thinking it was the 4th of July from all the cars. The winter holidays have become popular times for nearby city dwellers to come to the mountains to experience an authentic storybook setting—to walk through deep pine woods, breathe crisp, clean air, cuddle up to cozy fires, and maybe watch the magic of snowflakes blanketing the landscape. It just feels more like the holidays here.

But back to why someone might want to seriously consider purchasing real estate here in the off-season. Usually prices are at their lowest of the year, so they could be in store for a great buy. That same property might have a higher price tag in the Spring. There's not as much competition for sought-after properties, so there's more time to make a decision without feeling rushed. Realtors aren't juggling as many people, so they have ample time to concentrate on the needs of their prospects. It's much easier to



Betty Holt
Berkshire Hathaway
Home Services Meadows
Mountain Realty

see view potential from properties with the leaves off the trees. Winter is the best time to show land. And the old saying of, "If you like it in the winter, you'll adore it in the summer" holds true. Even though there are not as many people who make it up here in the winter, the ones who do are generally serious Buyers.

While you're not looking at real estate, you can enjoy some of the other great features of Highlands in the winter. You could take a class at The Bascom, which is open year-round, or eat a gourmet meal or a reasonably priced lunch at one of several restaurants that are open. You could stay at one of our fine hotels at bargain off-season rates and shop for end-of-the-season sales in one of our lovely shops. If the weather cooperates, you could toboggan down the run at Scaly of go zipping 'round the mountains at Highlands Canopy Tours. Soon you'll be able to ice skate at the new rink going up at Pine Street Park. You can even enjoy a swim at the Rec Park's new covered pool or reserve it for your own pool party. The gnats and yellow jackets are all sleeping so you can hike to your heart's content on our many forested trails. Or you might just want to hang out at Buck's Coffee Shop, curl up with a cup of hot cocoa and your favorite book and breathe in the peace.

• *Betty Holt is a Highlands native with over 30 years' experience in this market. She loves to help people find their dream home in these mountains and works diligently to that end. She can be reached at Berkshire Hathaway Home Services Meadows Mountain Realty, 2334 Cashiers Road, Highlands, N.C. 828-526-4101 and Betty@MeadowsMtnRealty.com.*

• REAL ESTATE SNAPSHOTS •



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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

• REAL ESTATE SNAPSHOTS •



Barbara Landwehr and Mercedes Heller of the Laurel Garden Club's Land Stewards and Ran Shaffner receive two Paul Green Multimedia Awards at the North Carolina Society of Historians Award Banquet in Mooresville, N.C.

Locals awarded by NC Society of Historians

The North Carolina Society of Historians held its 74TH Annual Awards Banquet October 17 in Mooresville, N.C., at the Hilton Garden Inn. Awards were presented in several categories relating to local, regional or statewide historical people, events, or places.

The Society honored representatives from Highlands with two Paul Green Multimedia Awards. It cited a DVD, written by Ran Shaffner in collaboration with the Land Stewards of the Highlands Plateau and produced by Time Capsule Video, entitled "A Botanical History of the Highlands Plateau."

The judges praised "the spectacular pictures of the flora gracing the Highlands Plateau" and "vintage photographs of important people connected with the recording of the flora as well as its protection." They also commended the "many dedicated people currently making an effort to educate the public and raise awareness about how important protecting the land is to Highlands."

The video is a seven-minute summary of the botanical history of the environment surrounding Highlands from its creation 300 million years ago until the present, including the work of the land stewards to protect and preserve native plants and discourage invasive species. The DVD was generated to accompany an exhibit that is now on display at the Highlands Historical Society.

A second Multimedia Award was presented to the Laurel Garden Club of Highlands, N.C., for the accompanying pamphlet: "A Botanical History of the Highlands Plateau: In the Footsteps of the Ancients." The collective comments of the judges commended the pamphlet for presenting "a wealth of history regarding the Highlands Plateau, how the Cherokees viewed the world, the early settlers of the area, what threats to the environment have taken place over the years, the Botanical Garden that was created in 1962, and the Land Stewards, which is the Conservation Arm of the Laurel Garden Club." The goal of the pamphlet, as the judges conceived it, was "education and preservation so that future generations could enjoy the rare, rich beauty that is the Highlands Plateau."

The North Carolina Society of Historians was established in December 1941 for the purpose of collecting, preserving, and perpetuating North Carolina's rich history and recognizing those persons who fulfill the society's objectives. Information about the Society can be found at www.ncsocietyofhistorians.org

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...GRADUATION

continued from page 1

Macon County High Schools did exceptionally well last school year compared to the state average. Macon County Schools Superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin informed members of the board of education Monday night that Atkinson sent letters of recognition to both Nantahala and Highlands High Schools for achieving a graduation rate of 100 percent; Franklin High School, graduated 96.2 percent of students.

“You have done an outstanding job of collaboration with students, parents, and other members of the community to make sure nearly every student in your school earns a high school diploma and is prepared for the future,” Atkinson wrote in letters to each school principal.

This is a first for Highlands School.

“We are proud of the fact that 100% of our Seniors met the state requirements for graduation,” said Principal Brian Jetter. “It is a testament to the seniors’ hard work, and our teachers’ ability to motivate our seniors to work hard.”

Based on numbers collected on the federal level, about 8 in 10 public high school students in the country are graduating with a diploma. Beginning with the class of 2011, federal regulations required each state to calculate graduation rates using a method known as the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR).

For the class of 2013, the national graduation reach 81 percent, with racially and ethnically disadvantaged student groups remaining substantially lower. Looking at the class of 2013, the most updated graduation rates available from the United States Department of Education, North Carolina remains in the top in terms of graduating students with 83 percent, which is even higher than the national average.

Preliminary data released this week by the U.S. Department of Education shows that states continue to increase high school graduation rates and narrow the gap for traditionally underserved students, including low-income students, minority students, students with disabilities and English learners.

North Carolina’s graduation rate sits higher than the Southeastern states such as Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina.

Tennessee, Virginia and Kentucky all rank within three points higher than

Middle School Volleyball

Kedra McCall, Marilyn Valerio, Morgan Olvera, Savannah Shaheen, Tessa Wisniewski, Brooklyn Houston, Carmen Gomez, Hadley Templeton, Joana Jimenez Reyes. Managers: Ava Schmitt and Reese Schmitt. Coaches Angela Sanchez and Jaime Dooley.



Middle School Soccer

Ethan Tate, Skylar Hames, Olivia Lewis, Ryan Talbert, Gracie Forrester, Taj Roman, Sayla Roman, Jaden Hames, Dillon Schmitt, Jonathan Miller, Pablo Jimenez, Chela Green, William Creswell, Garrison Chalker, Sean Fitzpatrick, and Managers, Liam Hames and Maddie Coen. Coach Selwyn Chalker



• HIGHLANDS SCHOOL FALL SPORTS 2015 •



2015 Lady Highlander Varsity Volleyball

Whitney Billingsley, Courtney Henry, McKayla Hensley, Erica Barnes, Megan Vinson, Madison Dalton, Madison Lloyd and Tiffany Preda. Analyse Crook, Trinity Dendy, Alley Preda, Brooke Rehmeier and Alexis Healey are JV but also play Varsity.



2015 Lady Highlander JV Volleyball

Analyse Crook, Trinity Dendy, Kim Feria, Bri Jenkins, Alley Preda, Brooke Rehmeier, Taylor Welch, Tristan Castro, Alexis Healey, Hannah Holt, Katy Munoz, Katie McCall and Abby Olvera.

High School Girls Golf

Amber Reese, Alexa Reese and Coach Barbara Reese.



...GRADUATION continued from page 20

North Carolina's rate. The District of Columbia (62%), Oregon (69%), and New Mexico (70%) have the lowest rates in the country.

The U.S. Department of Education's report is an important first look at preliminary graduation rates reported by states for the 2013-'14 school year. The National Center for Education Statistics is expected to release final graduation rate data – including the nation's newest graduation rate – in coming months. The nation has posted record graduation rates for the last two years, with the highest rate ever of 81 percent announced in March and improvement across all student subgroups.

As North Carolina is experiencing the highest graduation rate since the figure

has been tracked, the rest of the nation has also seen an increase each year since ACGR has been tracked.

The hard work of America's educators, families, communities and students is paying off, particularly after several years of intense work by educators transitioning to new, higher standards. This is a vital step toward readiness for success in college and careers for every student in this country," U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said. "While these gains are promising, we know that we have a long way to go in improving educational opportunities for every student – no matter their zip code – for the sake of our young people and our nation's economic strength."

...HUMC continued from page 14

look like part of the original church but this is a contemporary building compared to the church. It has a totally different architectural look. It needs to look older. We want this to be successful for the church and for Highlands," he said.

Basically, members felt the two-story vertical planes of the addition facing Spring Street were too strong – they lack relief, shadows and dimension which would soften the look and make it look less severe, they said.

"Most two-story blank buildings in Highlands aren't attractive. What can you do to break up the large spaces to keep them in scale with the original building?" he asked. "Right now it's too bland, too unadorned."

After much back and forth discussion, in the end the board recommended elements be added to the Spring Street side. The interior of the lower level will be finished at a later date, but there is a recessed glass door-

way on the exterior facing Spring. To soften the sides of the building, a covered walkway was suggested spanning two entrances – one on the right-hand wing extending from the main building to the entrance to the lower level. In addition, the board suggested overhangs of some kind from the roof and "eyebrows" above the windows.

"But don't limit it to that," said DeWolf. "Keep playing with it. It needs more dimension."

Since the property is now zoned conditional use, final plans must be OK'd by the Town Board. Next the church will go to the Town Board with the Appearance Commission's recommendations incorporated into the new plan. With the Town Board's approval, the church will need the final OK from the Zoning Board which will issue the Special Use Permit for new construction.

– Kim Lewicki

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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



Perry Welch, left and Jenny King.

Four Seasons WNC volunteers honored at Red Carpet event

Four Seasons Compassion for Life held its annual Volunteer Awards Night on Friday, August 21, at Blue Ridge Community College in Flat Rock. The theme was red carpet and the red carpet was literally rolled out for the nearly one hundred volunteers who attended the evening's festivities. Attendees were greeted with a huge "thank you" and then strolled down the red carpet as their pictures were taken by staff posing as paparazzi. Throughout the evening, awards were given for years of service, most hours, most hats worn and for volunteers who were nominated by fellow volunteers and staff for exhibiting the values of Four Seasons – compassion, balance, respect, integrity, teamwork, excellence and resilience.

Several volunteers from the WNC

branch in Highlands were honored. Jenny King of Highlands received the award for Most Hours Served in the WNC region, which covers Jackson, Macon and Swain counties. Most Hats Worn Award went to Laura McBane, of Whittier, in recognition of the many different arenas that she serves Four Seasons as a volunteer. Perry Welch, of Franklin, received the Compassion Award for his work utilizing music in assisted living facilities.

Four Seasons would like to congratulate these volunteers and others who took home awards that evening, as well as thank each and every volunteer who serves with Four Seasons in carrying out its mission of "co-creating the care experience" for the patients and families that it is honored to serve.



Members of the Chamber of Commerce and business partners joined Clinton O'Brien of Highlands BBQ company at a ribbon cutting last week. From left are Tony Potts, Bob Kieltyka, Derrick (Pit Master), Clinton O'Brien, Bill Futral, Jennifer Cunningham.

• BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NEWS •



Mountain Garden Club members Wanda Cooper, President Midge Rothermel, Caroline Cook, Mary Lou Bilbro, and Becky Schilling with Smokey Bear and Greg Brooks of the Nantahala Ranger District.

Smokey the Bear gets a new outfit

Smokey Bear shakes hands with hundreds of students each year in Highlands, Franklin and surrounding communities.

He teaches them how to prevent wildfires, a life-saving message here in the midst of the 260,000 acres that make up the Nantahala Ranger District of the U.S. Forest Service.

So when Smokey needed new clothes, the Mountain Garden Club of Highlands helped make that happen, paying half the cost.

“The new suit is awesome!” said Tyson Stager of the Nantahala Ranger District.

Designed to keep Smokey cool, the new suit makes it easier for Smokey to visit classrooms. Somehow even his fur looks better.

Smokey visits several schools, including Cartoogechaye, Iotla, Nantahala, South Macon, and Highlands.

“We’ve worked with Smokey since 2010,” said Dr. Becky Schilling of the Moun-

tain Garden Club. “It is electrifying to see how children respond to him, how eager they are to help protect the forest.”

It’s a timely message.

“We’re coming into our fire season now, when all the leaves are down,” said Greg Brooks, District Fire Management Officer for the Nantahala Ranger District.

Brooks and Stager know firsthand how devastating wildfires can be. They spent this summer fighting wildfires in Florida, Montana, Oregon, and the Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina.

Now they’re here, working to keep our forests safe, which includes bringing Smokey to you.

In Highlands on December 5, look for Smokey atop a new USFS fire engine in the Olde Mountain Christmas Parade.

When you see him, shout out: “Only you can prevent wildfires!” You’ll make his day.



Children learning about seeds in the Kids in Nature Program. This project at the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is one of the grants the Laurel Garden Club awarded this year.

Laurel Garden Club awards \$15,405 in grants this year

The Laurel Garden Club is pleased to announce the awarding of grants to three non-profit organizations in Highlands in 2015. Among those funded are the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, Friends of Founders Park, and the Peggy Crosby Center.

The grant of \$2,905 given to the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust will be used to teach youth awareness of their surroundings through the Kids in Nature Program, which stresses recognition and conservation of natural resources and the need to protect those resources for future generations. In 2016, a focus will include the effects of non-native invasive plants on the environment. The Land Trust works in collaboration with youth organizations in the community including Literacy Council, Highlands Recreation Department Summer Camp, Summit Charter School, Boys and Girls Club, Cashiers Rec Camp, church youth groups, and other youth programs.

The membership also approved a grant in the amount of \$5,000 to the Friends of Founders Park to help landscape Phase II of the Kelsey-Hutchinson Park. As with Phase I, Phase II will be landscaped with native plants and trees.

Earlier this year, the Club awarded \$7,500 to the Peggy Crosby Center for its landscaping project, which is underway. The Peggy Crosby Center provides affordable office space to organizations that provide community services such as the Literacy Council of Highlands, The Center for Life Enrichment, the Highlands Cashiers Land Trust and the International Friendship Center.

These grants bring the total donations to the community to more than \$15,405 in 2015. The Laurel Garden Club was able to provide funding for these and other grants in great part from its very successful Kitchen Tours, which are held every other year in August. Proceeds from the sale of the Club’s cookbook, Celebrate Highlands, also contributed funding for grants before it went out of print. To date, the Club has provided more than \$119,000 in grants to the Highlands community. The purpose of the Laurel Garden Club is to aid in the protection and conservation of our natural resources and to encourage civic beauty. The three grants awarded meet those criteria and the Club is pleased to provide its support.

Rotary Bingo benefits the Gordon Center for Children

On Thursday, September 3, the Rotary Club of Highlands partnered with the Gordon Center for Children to sponsor Bingo. All net proceeds benefit the Gordon Center.



• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

Accepting blame

By Paul Christy
Pastor, Highlands United Methodist Church

I am often amazed at how human nature takes over when put in a stressful situation. And I guess in particular the idea of shifting the blame and the idea of self-preservation.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is found in the very first book, the Book of Genesis. I know that you know that Genesis is where we get the great stories you learned in Sunday School. Remember the story of Creation, the story of Noah's Ark, and the story of Abraham and Isaac, but there is also a story about Adam and Eve I want to spend a little bit of time talking about this week. Because in this story I think I can find myself very often and maybe you can too.

God created this beautiful place and gave it to Adam and Eve, and if you remember your Sunday School training, God also gave them dominion over all creation in the Garden of Eden. Yet there was a bit of a catch. God asked them not to eat of the tree of knowledge, the tree in the middle of the garden. They had everything in the garden, everything, and it was just that one tree they were asked not to eat from.

Life was good for a while and then something amazing happened. That one tree became the focus of their lives, and temptation came into their lives. The story from Genesis says that the serpent came to the woman and said, "Why don't you try to eat the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden because I know God said "don't do it," but that is just because God wants to keep you in the dark. If you eat from that tree, you will be just like God. You will not die, your eyes will be opened."

So the woman, Eve, and the man, Adam, try the forbidden fruit and they both discover they are naked. But they didn't die, so maybe God was pulling the wool over their eyes and they felt all right about eating from the tree.

That was until God came to visit with them. I love how the writer of Genesis says that God came down in the garden in the "cool of the evening" and was trying to find Adam and Eve and they were hiding because they knew they had done something they were not supposed to.

God calls and Adam says, I heard you but I was afraid because I was naked. God says, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree I asked you not to eat from?"

Now comes the part of the story I love because it is human nature to preserve oneself. Adam says, "God, the woman made me do it."

God turns to Eve and she says, "The serpent made me do it." You see what we have here is deflecting of blame. How many times in your life and in my life do we try to deflect blame? How many times do we think if we are honest and tell the truth that people will not like us? How many times do we put blame on others just so we will look good?

My challenge for us this week is really pretty simple. If we mess up, own up to it and in doing so, we might just find some peace. I know that is a message I need to hear over and over again because I can deflect blame with the best of them. And just for the record, I know I will mess up this week and I hope I will have the courage and presence to accept my actions and not deflect blame but accept blame. Wouldn't it be great if we all gave that a shot?

Proverbs 3:5

BLUEVALLEY 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

CHAPEL OF SKY VALLEY

Sky Valley, GA • 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.: 8:30a Traditional (Quiet) 1928 Prayer Book Service;

9:30a Sunday School; 10:30a Family Service w/ Music

Mon.: Bible Study & Supper at homes - 6 p.m.

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS

Pastor Steve Kerhoulas • 743-5470

Sun. 10:45am, S.S 9:30am. Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.

Tues. Guys study 8am, Gals 10am.

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.

1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7p.m.

Wednesdays - Supper at 6 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: Child. 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: Holy Eucharist (chapel) at 8 a.m.

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

828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org

Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor

220 Main Street, Highlands NC 28741

Sun.: Worship 10:45 am; Sun.: Bible Study 9:30 am

Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Prayer Mtg 6:15 pm;

Choir 5 pm

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors

526-3175 • fpchighlands.org

Sun.: Worship: 8:30a and 11 a.m.; School: 9:30

Mondays: 8 a.m.: Men's Prayer Group & Breakfast

Wednesdays: Choir: 5:30p

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd) • Rev. Carson Gibson

Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

Bible Study: 6 pm

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• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm; Dinner - Wed. 6pm

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, 6p.

Wednesday: Bible Study, 6:30p; Prayer Mtg., 7:30p.

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Pastor Paul Christy 526-3376

Sun: School 9:45a.; Worship 9:09, 10:50.; Youth 5:30 p.

Wed: Supper: 5:15; youth, & adults activities: 6; Handbell

rehearsal, 6:15; Choir Rehearsal 7. (nursery provided);

7pm Interscholar Prayer Ministry

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

Chaplain Margaret Howell • 2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741

Sun: 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

at St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church, Franklin

828-524-9463

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church

Sun: 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.

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Mass: Sun: 11 a.m.; Sat. at 4p

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby

Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11 a.m. & 7

Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Jerry David Hall • 526-3212

Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 7

THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

1448 Highway 107 South, Office: 743-2359

Rev. Douglas E. Remer

Oct-May: Sunday Services: Rite I, 8a Rite II, 10:30

June-Sept: Sunday Services: Rite I, 8a, Rite II, 9:15 & 11a

Nursery available for Rite II services

Sept 6-Oct 25- Informal Evening Eucharist-5:30 p.m.

Thursday: Noon Healing Service with Eucharist.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

85 Sierra Drive • 828-524-6777

Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

The Highlands Police log entries from Sept. 30. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Sept. 30

• At 2:30 a.m., officers received a call about cyber bullying at Highlands School where someone was sending obscene and harassing messages to a minor via a social network chat.

Oct. 2

• At 11:20 a.m., officers were notified about a strange chemical odor in the Shear Elevations building on Spring Street.

Oct. 4

• At 1 p.m., officers received a report of statutory rape of a person under 13 at the victims residence on Poplar Street by having sexual intercourse and by touching genitalia of the victims.

Oct. 5

• At 4:30 p.m., officers received a call about vandalism at a residence on Webbmont where a lock was broken on a chain barricade.

Oct. 6

• At 4:30 p.m., officers received a call about criminal damage to property where a mailbox was removed from a residence on Horse Cove Road.

Oct. 8

• At 8:50 a.m., officers received a call about larceny of \$257 from Cardinal Cleaners.

• At 1:45 a.m., officers took a woman into custody for involuntary commitment when she threatened to harm herself in Highlands Plaza.

• At 3:10 p.m., a resident on Foreman Road called about a bear in an unlocked vehicle.

• At 3:30 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident in High-

lands Plaza.

Oct. 9

• At 11:45 a.m., officers received a call about a man exposing himself in a parking space on Main Street in the presence of a woman.

• At 2:30 p.m., officers received a report of vandalism at a residence on Cullasaja Drive where a mailbox was damaged.

Oct. 10

• At 12:05 p.m., officers received a call about copper pipe pried out of the ground and taken from a home on Brooks Road.

Oct. 11

• At 4 p.m., officers were notified about a breaking and entering with larceny at a home on Bowery Road where two blankets valued at \$100 were taken.

Oct. 12

• At 9:53 a.m., officers received a call about \$3 cookies being stolen from Subway in Highlands Plaza.

Oct. 13

• At 9:44 a.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on US 64 west near Webbmont.

• At 11:46 a.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on US 64 west near Third Street.

Oct. 15

• At 11:30 a.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on NC 28.

• At 4:15 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on Spring Street.

Oct. 16

• At 8:30 a.m., a patron at Highlands Inn reported \$8,500 in jewelry taken from her hotel room.

• At 3:48 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on US 64 west near Second Street.

• At 6:06 p.m., Michael Trevor Reese, 23, of Highlands, was arrested

for failure to appear in court.

Oct. 17

• At 10:30 a.m., officers received a noise complaint from a resident on Chowan Road where construction work was being done outside allowed hours.

Oct. 18

• At 11:50 a.m., officers were notified about a person refusing to give a vehicle back to the owner upon request.

Oct. 20

• At 5:03 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on US west near NC 106.

Oct. 22

• At 3:30 p.m., officers received a call about two dogs left in a vehicle in the sun on Main Street.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. log from Oct. 20.

Oct. 20

• At 11:45 a.m., the dept. conducted a search in the Shortoff Mountain area for two hikers who were found and were OK.

Oct. 21

• At 11:44 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 west near Goldmine.

• At 9:27 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Sagee Drive.

Oct. 22

• At 8:04 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Webbmont Road.

• At 8:48 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Clubhouse Trail.

• At 12:42 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence at VZ-Top.

Oct. 23

• At 8:26 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Hideaway Trail.

• At 10:52 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Clubhouse Trail.

• At 5:32 p.m., the dept. responded to a brush fire on Oak Road.

Oct. 24

• At 8:25 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a resident on

Whiteside Mountain Road.

Oct. 25

• At 3:28 p.m., the dept. responded to motor vehicle accident at US 64 west and Walden Way.

• At 6:49 p.m., the dept. responded to a brush fire at a residence on Sequoyah Drive.

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The Performing Arts Center's Live in HD Series presents the MET Opera: Tannhauser by Wagner on Saturday, Oct. 31 at noon. The pre-opera discussion lead by Beverly Wickman will begin at 11:30 am. The following Saturday, Nov. 7 at 1pm the National Theatre of London will present Hamlet starring Benedict Cumberbatch. For Tickets or more information log onto: highlandspac.org or call: 828.526.9047 Highlands Performing Arts Center 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands

TOWN OF HIGHLANDS JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS SANITATION DEPARTMENT: SANITATION EQUIPMENT OPERATOR

Performs intermediate semiskilled work operating a vehicle in the collection and proper disposal of household and business refuse. Work is performed under the regular supervision of the Sanitation Superintendent. This is a full time position with benefits package. A full job description and requirements are available at the Town Hall or on our website.

Applications and questionnaires are available at Town Hall or on-line at <http://www.highlandsc.org>. Criminal background checks and pre-employment drug screenings are required. Deadline for application and questionnaire is Friday, November 6, 2015 at 4:30PM. The Town of Highlands is an Equal Opportunity Employer. (10/29)

TOWN OF HIGHLANDS JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS BROADBAND DEPARTMENT: LEAD TECHNICIAN/INSTALLER

Responsible for the initial installation, connection and maintenance of broadband equipment to subscribers; serves as on-call technician; installation of fiber optic cabling on poles; will be cross-trained in wireless and fiber installations. Must be able to climb towers, operate a bucket truck, splice and terminate fiber cabling, troubleshoot fiber optic cabling, and have basic network knowledge. Work is performed under the regular supervision of the Information Technologies Director. This is a full time position with benefits package. A full job description and requirements are available at the Town Hall or on our website.

Applications and questionnaires are available at Town Hall or on-line at <http://www.highlandsc.org>. Criminal background checks and pre-employment drug screenings are required. Deadline for application and questionnaire is Friday, November 6, 2015 at 4:30PM. The Town of Highlands is an Equal Opportunity Employer. (10/29)

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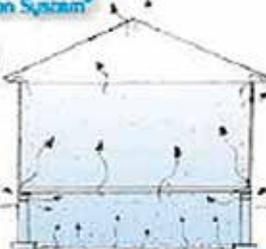
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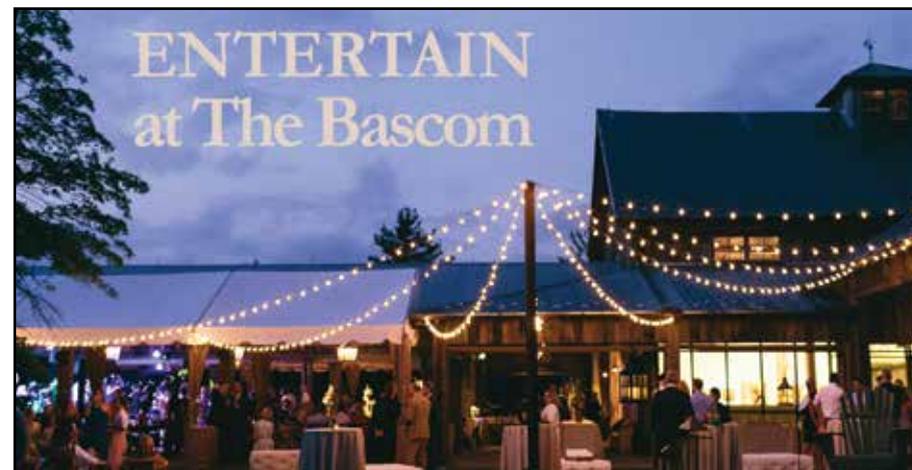
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• See CLASSIFIEDS page 30

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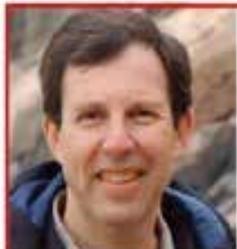
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