

Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

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Thurs., Feb. 1, 2018

At TB: Sunset Rock, Duke, employee parking, Christmas Tree & webcam

There were a couple of items not on the agenda last Thursday night that elicited a lot of discussion: the condition of the Sunset Rock Road and Duke Coal Ash Recovery costs.

A lot was said also about ex-

tending employee parking restrictions and what to do about the town's "Charlie Brown" Christmas Tree.

Sunset Rock Road

Commissioner Amy Patterson, who walks Sunset Rock Road

often, said the erosion along the .7-mile road has made it impassable for low clearance vehicles and even dangerous for those with high clearance and four-wheel drive.

• See SUNSET page 7

Wilson named 'Fireman of the Year' for the second time



For the second time in his decades-long career with the Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept., Roger Lee Wilson was named "Fireman of the Year" by his co-workers. Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart said he can always count on Roger Lee to be at almost every call and of course at every Tuesday night meeting at the firehouse – a feat recognized for the 28th time Saturday night at the department's annual award banquet.

Photo by Kim Lewicki

Flu outbreak worse than the Swine Flu epidemic of 2009

On Mon., Jan. 29, only 88% of students were at Highlands School ... down from 93% on Fri., Jan. 26

At last week's Macon County Board of Health meeting, Clinical Services Director, Jennifer Garrett, updated the board on the flu epidemic.

As reported, this year's new flu referred to as A(H2N2) rather than the more common A(H1N1) or Influenza B, is affecting everyone young and old and it is widespread across the country.

To make matters worse, the vaccine effectiveness is lower

• See FLU page 5

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Help name the newest member of the Highlands Police Dept.



This is the newest K9 officer at the Highlands Police Dept. – an 8-week-old Malinois who will be on site and begin training in a few weeks.

At the Jan. 25 Town Board meeting, Police Chief Bill Harrell asked the community to help name her.

The dept. would like Zoe, Xena or Eve. Whichever name gets the most votes will become hers. Please contact HPD at 828-526-9431, Mon.-Sat., 8 a.m. - 6 p.m. to cast a one-time vote per person.

Area law enforcement growing beards for cancer

To help fight cancer, law enforcement personnel from across Western North Carolina will start looking a little "woolly" and "casual" beginning Feb. 4.

Officers from the Highlands, Franklin and Sylva police departments, and the Macon, Jackson, Swain and Cherokee county sher-

iff offices are joining forces to raise money for Cancer Care of Western North Carolina, which offers outpatient cancer treatment for residents of Western North Carolina.

Studies show that there is a direct correlation between the

• See BEARDS page 6

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Mulling over issues discussed at the Town Board meeting

I'm writing this piece on Saturday afternoon while it is raining. I just clicked on the town website and clicked on the new street cam to see what was going on downtown. The parking spaces on Main Street appeared to be full.

The situation downtown is why the Town Board voted Thursday night to extend the ban on employee parking in the main business areas. Before Thursday, employees could park on Main Street from January to April. For about two years town staff, commissioners and business owners have noticed that parking continues to be mostly full throughout the year, not just in the tourist season. I think the board took the appropriate action Thursday night.

The businesses with large numbers of employees, like Mountain Fresh, Reeves, the Ugly Dog and OEI already require their employees to abide by the employee parking rules throughout the year. Chief Harrell reminded the board and audience that police enforcement is complaint-driven. This enforcement policy will remain in effect, and everyone hopes employees and businesses will voluntarily abide by the or-



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

dinance, especially as we transition toward the peak tourist season.

The Town Board also addressed two other issues at the last meeting. The policy on accepting a private road to be taken over and maintained by the town was officially adopted and added to the existing Highlands Utility Manual.

The board also had a good discussion concerning the town Christmas Tree. Hank Ross and Jim Tate will meet with the parks

and recreation committee to devise a plan for planting a larger tree in the park. Commissioner Dotson led the discussion on acquiring a much larger tree. The plan calls for a decision at the February meeting, so the relocation and planting can occur at the optimal time of the year.

Kevin O'Donnell of Nova Energy gave us an update on the Duke coal ash fee schedule that will go into place starting February. The fees could have been worse, but commissioners and I are still not happy with the outcome. We have directed Kevin to continue advocating for reduced recovery costs so our customers will not be exposed to exorbitant fees. He will report back to us later in the year.

There are several items that continue to be under review but may be ready for board review at the February meeting. A proposed dog ordinance has been developed by a committee that I appointed. It has also undergone legal review by outside specialists in such matters. The committee will look it

over one more time before it goes to the full board.

The staff has also been revising a utility pole attachment policy. A draft had been presented to the board at a previous meeting. It may also be ready for board approval at the February meeting.

Last Saturday I attended the Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony of the Highlands Fire and Rescue Department. On behalf of the town, I expressed our deep appreciation to all the firefighters who keep our community safe.

• LETTERS •

Dear Editor,

The roads coming into Highlands are covered with trash. Civic-minded citizens have picked up trash each year ... for years.

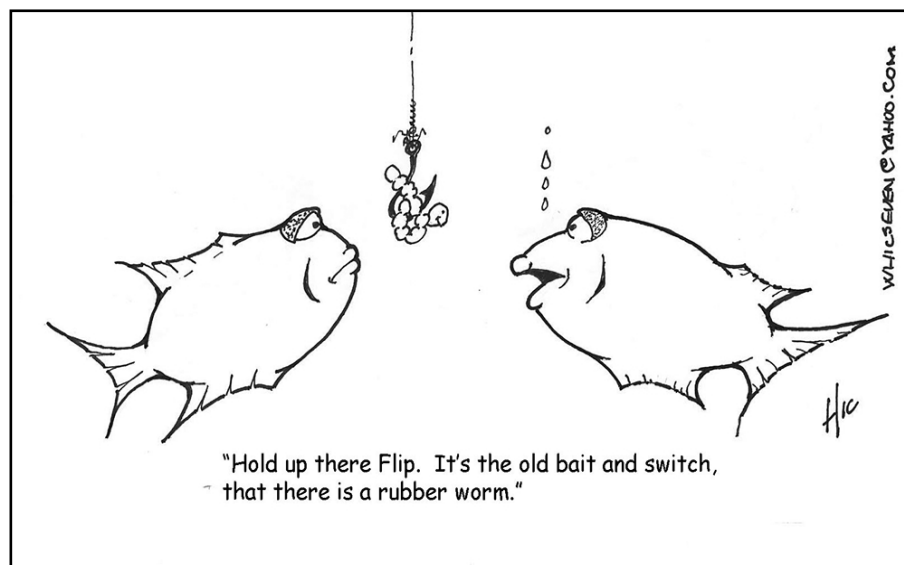
Recently, there was a bag of garbage in the ditch on the side of the Franklin Road for more than a week. Contractors and workers drove to Highlands for jobs and paychecks but no one stopped to pick up the trash or the beer cans and fast food wrappers.

Highlands can do something to solve this problem, if we just will.

Richard Melvin
Highlands

•See LETTERS page 3

• HIC'S VIEW



• WEATHER •

	Friday 2/2		Saturday 2/3		Sunday 2/4	
	Daytime	Overnight	Daytime	Overnight	Daytime	Overnight
Temp	33 F	10 F	37 F	25 F	37 F	27 F
RealFeel	31 F	19 F	36 F	13 F	35 F	27 F
Winds	7 g 10	4 g 7	5 g 7	3 g 5	3 g 7	5 g 7
T-Storms	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	2%
Rainfall	0	0	0	0	0.71	0
Snowfall	0	0	0	0.3	0	0

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Highlands Newspaper

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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.

• OBITUARIES •

Gregg 'Carson' Watts

Gregg "Carson" Watts, infant son of Ethan Nathaniel Watts and Adrienne Olivia Gibson, passed away on Sunday, January 21, 2018.

In addition to his parents, Carson is survived by grandparents, Sonya Watts of Franklin, Lori Rogers (Mark) of Highlands; great grandparents, Kathey Watts of Franklin, Sue Lewis of Sylva, Dickie and Joyce Gibson of Franklin and Bill Watts of Clayton, GA; great-great grandmothers, Rose Mary Kimsey and Kathryn Angel both of Franklin; uncles, Brett Gibson (Kacie Peck) of Franklin, Colton Gibson of Franklin; David Rogers of Highlands, Ayden Watts of Franklin and Logan Watts of Franklin; cousin, Benson Gibson of Franklin and several great aunts, uncles and cousins. He was preceded in death by his grandfather, Gregg Gibson and great-great grandparents, Bill Kimsey and Neal and Ollie Lewis.

Private services will be held.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to Iotla Baptist Church, Playground Fund 1537 Iotla Church Road, Franklin, NC 28734.

Macon Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements. Online condolences can be made at www.maconfuneralhome.com.

Louise Combs

Louise Combs, 91, of Highlands passed away Wednesday, January 24, 2018 at Fidelia Eckerd Living Center.

Louise was born to Horace McKinley and Marietta (Davis) Smiley on October 3, 1926 in Andrews, NC. She was a native of Andrews, NC, but had made Highlands her home for the past 36 years. She retired as a lab technician at Highlands Cashiers Hospital and was a member of the Episcopal Church in Highlands. She was preceded in death by her husband, B. A. "Smiley" Combs; her parents; two brothers, Jack Smiley and Ralph Smiley; a sister, Nell Smiley Firner and a godchild, Eli West.



Surviving is one daughter, Anne Louise Gradis (David) of Greenville, NC; two granddaughters, Melanie Gradis Hamilton (John) of Indiana and Melissa Gradis (John) of Maryland; one godchild, Towanna Roberts (Mike) of Andrews, NC and her best friend of 36 years, who was like a sister, Pearle Lambert of Highlands and eight great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Online condolences may be made at bryantgrantfuneralhome.com. Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the Combs family.

...LETTERS continued from page 3

New view of Highlands is great

Dear Editor,

I miss Highlands so much when away, now I can watch a bit of the activity! The new webcam view at www.highlandsinfo.com is a great idea! I can't wait for the next snow fall on Main Street.

Sally Thorne

A solution to illegal dumping

Dear Editor,

I read the article in the Jan. 18 edition about illegal dumping at the dump stations in Macon County. It's easy to understand the problem is going to continue to occur in a county where there are so many VRBO and AirBNB and other vacation rental units. People will leave their temporary home for the weekend, and not realize the dump is closed before they get there, and are faced with the choice of leaving it there within feet of the dumpsters, or take the trash all the way back home in their car.

Why not add an after-hours dumpster outside the gates? It may add some additional expense due to needing to be collected separately, but will probably be vastly less expensive than the legal and medical costs for someone getting stuck by a needle moving the illegally dumped trash from the gate to the inside when they start their shift.

Tom Herbert
Highlands, NC

•See LETTERS page 5

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• MILESTONES •

Zachary retires from HF&R



At their annual awards banquet Saturday night, Jan. 27, the Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. honored Jody Zachary, who retired after 20 years of service. With him is Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart.

Photo by Kim Lewicki

...LETTERS from page 3

New webcam adds new dimension

Dear Editor,

The new webcam at www.highlandsinfo.com is fantastic! Great view of Main Street.

I always check your weather info to see what is happening and now I have a 12" X 17" view.

Jim Rogers

Quiet, please

Dear Editor,

Most respectfully, I would like to remind everyone who attends the excellent LIVE in HD Simulcast performances from the Metropolitan Opera, which are shown at the PAC on Saturdays, that they are not in their living rooms in their pajamas and bathrobes with their feet up on the coffee table eating popcorn and potato chips and simultaneously chatting with friends and/or family.

As attractive as this seems, it is not so attractive to the people who go to actually hear the music, hear the singers and to view the performance.

As for the people who cannot resist checking their email or whatever it is they are checking during the performance, they may not be aware of how bright a cell phone screen is, especially in a darkened room.

I would also advocate for the old-fashioned courtesies that used to be observed at such events, namely, if you are late to the beginning of the show, you will not be admitted into the arena in the middle of an Act, but must wait in the lobby until either between Acts or until the intermission. A better alternative is to arrive on time. The frequent opening and closing of the lobby door, suddenly flooding the darkened room with light and late arrivers fumbling around trying to find seats is annoying, forgive me for saying so.

I also don't think food should be allowed in the actual arena, at least not noisy food. People trying to quietly extract a peppermint from a cellophane wrapper, for example, or eating Fritos or potato chips out of a cellophane bag, well you can imagine. You are waiting to hear the famous aria sung acappella by a renowned artist and, just as they reach high C, the person behind you tears open their Frito bag and begins crunching away. I'm sorry, call me picky. Maybe my hearing is over-sensitive. Snacks, which are sold in the lobby, should stay in the lobby while being consumed, or not sold at all.

The PAC and its executive director do such a beautiful job of bringing these, and other, performances to us. As we are so lucky to have these cultural gifts made available, I say let's show some respect both to our neighbors who are attending these performances and to the incredible artists up on the screen.

**Alice Nelson
Highlands**

...FLU continued from page 1

against A(H2N2) than against A(H1N1) or Influenza B.

In addition, reports are circulating concerning the adenovirus virus that looks like flu, feels like flu; even puts patients into the hospital like flu can.

At this time, only the U.S. military is authorized to vaccinate against the two major strains of adenovirus.

Mission Health is elevating its restrictions because of an increase in reported influenza-like illness throughout North Carolina. Effective immediately, only partners and immediate family members over the age of 12 will be permitted in patient care areas.

The number of reported influenza-like illness cases as a percentage of ambulatory visits has continued to increase statewide and is now approaching 7%, which activates the system's Visitor Restriction Policy.

"Our Visitor Restriction Policy protects both our patients and team members by decreasing the risk of spread of influenza throughout the community," said William R. Hathaway, MD, Chief Medical Officer. "This flu season is now more intense than any since the Swine Flu epidemic of 2009. It is better for friends and family to call loved ones rather than visit them in the hospital. Implementation of this policy is critical to the health of our community."

Visitor restrictions will remain until reported flu-like activity decreases.

This precaution is being implemented at Mission Hospital and its member hospitals in the western North Carolina region, which includes Angel Medical Center in Franklin and Highlands-Cashiers Hospital in Highlands, CarePartners in Asheville, McDowell Hospital in Marion, Transylvania Regional Hospital in Brevard, and Blue Ridge Regional Hospital in Spruce Pine.

• See FLU page 6



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...BEARDS continued from page 1

daily stress of law enforcement work and suicide, sleeplessness and cancer – namely Hodgkin's lymphoma and brain cancer – particularly after 30 years of service – that directly affects up to 21.7 million people per year.

"The Macon County Sheriff's Office Auxiliary and several of the wives of officers approached me with the idea for this fundraiser and I think this is an opportunity for

the men and women of law enforcement to support a great cause," said Macon County Sheriff Robert Holland. "We all have stories we could tell how cancer has affected our own families. Our MCSO family lost one of our own members, Administrative Officer Linda Moody to cancer. We want to do our part to help make a difference for those who may be dealing with cancer or may be doing so in the future."

Officers will pay a fee to be allowed to grow a beard for the month of February in honor of World Cancer Day. 100% of the funds raised will benefit the Cancer Care Center's Lovelight program, which provides financial assistance to patients in need of help with food, transportation, utilities, and other expenses.

Typically, department policies require officers to be clean shaven while in uniform. **•See BEARDS page 13**

..FLU continued from page 5

As of Jan. 13, 2018, 42 flu deaths have been reported in North Carolina since Oct. 1, 2017.

Ten of those were during the week of Jan. 7, 2018 to Jan. 13, 2018.

Typical peak is late November through March.

The health department doesn't have

statistics on the number of cases in Macon County specifically because influenza isn't a reportable condition in North Carolina.

However, the Macon County Public Health Department has been proactive in its fight against it.

It had 23 off site flu shot clinics that targeted school teachers, nursing homes, shut-ins, senior services, general population clinics, employees of Macon County Public Health Dept., and Macon County employees.

So far 330 high dosages for those 65 and older have been given; 1,075 regular flu with the preservative., 352 preservative free flu shots, for a total of 1,757 flu vaccines.

According to the health department, the exposure of flu to illness is 1-4 days with an average of two days.

People with the flu are most contagious in the first three to four days after the illness begins. However, some people are contagious one day before symptoms develop and up to five to seven days after becoming sick.

Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others with the flu virus for an even longer time.

Since the flu is a contagious respiratory

illness that can be mild or severe and can sometimes lead to death, health officials say to: stay away from people who are sick; stay home from school or work if you get sick; cover your cough, wash your hands often, go to the physician quickly if you think you have been exposed to the flu or have the flu.

Antiviral treatment with Tamiflu, Relenza, Inavir or Peramivir, which is given via IV – should begin as early as possible upon symptom onset, ideally within 48 hours.

Experts believe the flu is spread mainly by droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk as the droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby.

Others believe a person can get the flu from touching a surface or object that has the flu virus on it and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Flu symptoms are a 100-degree or higher fever or feeling feverish but not everyone with the flu has a fever; a cough and/or sore throat; a runny or stuffy nose; headaches and/or body aches; chills; fatigue; nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea – which is most common in children.

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• HS SPORTS •

with Kedra McCall

Teams continue to play hard

The highschool basketball teams played Swain and Hiwassee Dam this week. JV girls did not play Swain, but no team could beat them.

JV boys lost 64-28. The varsity girls lost 49-48 and the varsity boys lost 78-61.

They also played Hiwassee Dam. JV girls lost 47-17 and JV boys lost 55-29. Varsity girls lost 43-34 and varsity boys pulled out a 64-39 win. Their next home game will be on February 6th against Nantahalla starting at 6 pm.

Middle school played Tallulah Falls and Eagle Ridge this week. Girls lost to Tallulah Falls but the boys won. Only the boys played Eagle Ridge and they won. They have no more home games but they will play again on February 3rd if they win Tri-State tourney games.

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...SUNSET continued from page 1

Back in the '90s, the Town Board agreed to keep the road smooth so "every-one, regardless of their vehicle could drive up the road."

But she said because of the erosion, it doesn't make sense to continually fill the deep knee-high ruts with gravel that relatively quickly and consistently washes down the road, through the growth and on to the Nature Center property.

"This is impacting the environment below and beyond the road. Somehow we need to figure this out," she said. "As Lamar has told me many times, gravel on granite doesn't hold. What we are doing isn't working."

She suggested closing the road to vehicles (except for utility trucks) and making it a pedestrian-only roadway.

Commissioners agreed to decide after Town Engineer Lamar Nix and the Public Works Committee consider options.

Duke Coal Ash Recovery

Kevin O'Donnell with Nova Energy, who is the town's liaison with Duke Energy, said that until the NC Utilities Commission makes its final ruling, the town must charge its customers fees to help Duke recoup money it paid out in 2015, 2016,

2017 and what it expects to dish out in 2018 for coal ash clean-up. Highlands' portion is \$191,472.

Until and unless the NC Utilities Commission disallows a portion it is demanding, Duke's wholesale customers – like Highlands – must pay the full amount.

However, O'Donnell, who has testified against Duke, is hoping the NC Utilities Commission will disallow 75% to 50% of Duke's claim.

Until then, Highlands must pay what Duke demands. However, even if the NC Utilities Commission rules against Duke, the case will likely linger in court for years and all the while Duke's customers – retail and wholesale – must pay.

So, through December 2018, Highlands' 2,361 residential customers will each see an increase of about \$4.05 per month in their utility bill beginning immediately. Its 451 commercial customers will see an increase of about \$14.05 monthly.

"Duke is passing the cost of its coal ash cleanup on to us," said O'Donnell. "If it doesn't get exactly what it wants, it will litigate it all the way to the Supreme Court."

Employee Parking Restrictions

During the Public Comment period

of the Jan. 25 Town Board meeting, Kilwin's owner Jerry Moore requested that the town extend employee parking restrictions in the business district year-round.

"It makes sense as more and more shops stay open year-round, especially on weekends," he said. "It's also hard to mentally transfer from parking to no parking and it would make enforcement easier in the long run."

Mayor Pat Taylor said that the companies in town that employ large numbers of people – namely OEI, Reeves, Mountain Fresh Grocery and the Ugly Dog Public House – already require their employees to adhere to restricted parking all year.

Though commissioners discussed phasing in the requirement, in the end, they agreed to implement the "no employee parking in the business district" beginning April 1 forever more.

"We need to implement it now because it's a problem now," they said.

There will a grace period until the end of April, but after that complaint-driven tickets will be issued.

Christmas Tree

"We need to consider getting another live Christmas Tree that looks like a Christmas Tree that we can maintain and groom

– something we can be proud of," said Commissioner John Dotson, kicking off the discussion. "Either have a cut tree of substantial size each year or plant a bigger tree. What we have now is a disgrace to the town; it's an embarrassment."

The current 20-ft. tree was donated but soon after it was planted the severe drought hampered its growth substantially.

As it turns out, the embankment where the tree now resides, isn't conducive to its growth either due to the underlying granite. So, a larger tree would have to be planted somewhere else in the park – possibly near the white pine stand along the western edge of the park along the alley.

Mayor Taylor said someone has offered to donate a larger live tree – the board just has to decide on its placement.

Commissioner agreed to go for a larger, live tree but the Rec Committee will discuss particulars with Jim Tate and Hank Ross who oversaw the plantings in the park.

Webcam

MIS/GIS Director Matt Shuler announced that the town's webcams on Main Street and Big Bear Pen looking at White-side were live and on the town's website. Also, that links are available for the asking,

– Kim Lewicki



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Honoring their own for service



At the Highlands Fire & Rescue Awards Banquet Saturday night, seven members were given certificates and/or awards. From left: Gary Ammons for perfect meeting attendance; Jason Tardo for only missing two meetings; Lenny Metrick for 20 years of service, Roger Lee Wilson with his 28th perfect meeting attendance award; center is Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart; Jody Zachary retired after 20 years; John Crowe for 15 years of service and Eric Pierson for 20 years of service.

Photo by Kim Lewicki

A Sad Brightness: Recovering our Home w/God

The great Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann, described the season of Lent as a "sad brightness." In his book, Great Lent,

Schmemmann says that the climate of Lent reminds us of the sadness of our exile, the waste we have made of our lives. However, Lent also offers the brightness of God's presence and forgiveness, the joy of the recovered desire for God and the peace of the recovered home.

Please consider joining us at the Church of the Incarnation for this five-part Lenten series as we explore the foundations of Christian spirituality as we prepare for the brightness

of Easter, Wednesday, February 21 through March 21. Our new rector, the Rev. Bentley Manning, will lead us through the topics of Baptism, Scripture, Eucharist, Prayer, and Ministry. These will be one-hour long, weekly mid-day programs on Wednesdays throughout Lent, with a light lunch beginning at noon.

The fee is \$10. Sign-up outside the church office, or email incarnation@incarnationwnc.org.



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Oh, Crystal Ball: Are We There Yet?

Other real estate markets have bottomed out and have been rising for years. Unlike these markets, our area has lagged behind and has yet to respond positively, until now. Happily, the numbers on the Highlands/Cashiers Multiple Listing Service (HCMLS) show an upward trajectory over the last four years in this market, both in categories of Units and Volume sold:

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Unit	+5.52%	+11.28%	+7.91%	+8.82%
Volume	+19.54%	+7.73%	+18.70 %	+2.33%

In 2018, my crystal ball predicts based on the number of buyers actively looking at homes this January that this could be the year that our market bottoms out, that inventory will start to tighten up and prices will start to rise with the reduced inventory.

This prognostication is supported by the numbers on the HCMLS for January 2018. Unit sales are up a whopping 47.37% and volume is



Jody Lovell
Highlands Sotheby's
828-526-4104

up 44.81% so far this year! Again, with any market, there are tranches that have fewer buyers. The air is thin when you get over two million dollars, but we have had success finding the buyers who want true luxury in this market.

The moral of this story is that if you are a buyer, don't wait until spring to shop as the current inventory is being purchased, and you might be disappointed with the leftovers. Buckle your seatbelts, 2018 is going to be a great ride for real estate on The Highlands/Cashiers Plateau!!

Jody and Wood Lovell own Highlands Sotheby's International Realty, the top producing firm in Highlands for four years in a row. With three offices across the Plateau, one at the corner of Main Street and Highway 64 in downtown Highlands, one at the gate of Cullasaja Club and one in Cashiers across from Cornucopia, our 30 brokers can attend to all of your real estate needs. Call today at 828.526.4104 or 828.526.8300 to make an appointment.

Chamber of Commerce accepting grant requests for advertising funds

The Highlands Chamber of Commerce is accepting grant requests for advertising funds for local events that are scheduled to occur before June 30, 2018.

The ads must be placed in markets 50-plus miles from Highlands and the deadline for submissions is Friday, February 23, 2018.

Funding is contingent upon approval.

Please contact Bob Kieltyka at president@highlandschamber.org or 828-526-5841 for the grant application or for more information.

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING. •

Life and Death Are Unpredictable

Dr. Mark Ford
First Baptist Church
Highlands

In the last month and a half, I have learned the unpredictable nature of life and death in a poignant way. It has gone beyond ministerial platitudes and theological surmising of what we call theodicy – the branch of theology that defends God’s goodness and justice in the face of evil and suffering. The things I have experienced are not unique in any sense. But when such moments come in a bundle, it is a bit overwhelming and can challenge one’s balance in faith. To be specific, on December 7, 2017, I conducted the funeral for my father whom I admired most in this life among men. The same day I was informed that I have cancer, and action would be required to stave off its growth and morbidity. The week prior I was informed by my sister, my friend and confidant, that she had liver cancer. She is at home in Franklin with hospice as we write this – she is literally at death’s door and I wait anxiously for that dreaded call between visits.

I have thought a great deal about the frailty of life because of these events, especially in light of texts from God’s Word. It was wise Solomon who said, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die...a time to mourn and a time to dance” (Eccl. 3). Solomon was simply saying that the rhythms of our existence contain both the bad and the good. We all know this but seek to put them out of mind until we are confronted by the sufferings and trials of life. We try to hold on to the good of life and those events that bring joy, while pushing away the inevitable times of death, loss and sufferings of all kinds – this is just human nature. Sometimes we go so far as to presume upon our existence and fail to account for the shortness of life in terms of eternity, and in terms of our own agendas. I Peter 1:24 tells us “All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall off.” In Luke 12:13-34 Jesus tells of the rich man who aspired to build bigger barns to hold his recent blessings of grain and settle down to a life of ease. But the Lord responded by telling him he was being foolish to presume about life and the future, for he would die that night. Jesus would then tell his disciples about the frailty of life, and that God is in control – not us.

Now hear me well, I am NOT trying to throw cold water on our existence in this life. This life and this world are abundant in legitimate pleasures and joys every day! In this part of the world and at this time, we are blessed with a multitude of reasons to find joy in living and rea-

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

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Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Pastor Randy Lucas 526-3376
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Wed: Supper: 5:15; youth, & adults activities: 6; Handbell rehearsal, 6:15; Choir Rehearsal 7. (nursery provided); 7pm
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•HEALTHYLIFESTYLE CONCEPTS•

Venison Stew with Portabella Mushrooms

This hearty stew is a nutritious and delicious way to make good use of the venison or grass-fed beef that you may find in your freezer this winter. You can start it on the stove top and then transfer to a slow cooker, which will allow all the delicious flavors of the onions, mushrooms and red wine to saturate the carrots and meat. As part of a grain-free, low carbohydrate Paleo meal, serve up the stew on a bed of sautéed greens and riced cauliflower instead of with bread, pasta or potatoes. Believe it or not, left-overs are even more delicious!

Ingredients

2 lbs cubed venison, or grass-fed beef
1 tsp sea salt
½ tsp pepper
½ tsp thyme
¼ cup organic unrefined coconut oil or organic butter
2 TBS organic butter
4 cups quartered baby Portabella mushrooms
2 TBS organic unrefined coconut oil or organic butter
1 large yellow onion – chopped
2 cloves of garlic – pressed or minced
2-3 organic carrots – washed, peeled and chopped in half moons
½ cup red wine
3 cups hormone -free beef bone broth – either make your own or it is available frozen at Whole Foods
½ tsp dried rosemary
1 bay leaf



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Sea salt and fresh ground pepper, to taste

Directions

1) Combine salt, pepper and thyme in small bowl. Add cubed meat and toss to coat.

2) Preheat stainless steel stock pot on medium heat, add coconut oil or butter, when melted add cubed meat, allowing each side to sear and brown, remove and place the meat in a covered bowl.

3) Add 2 TBS butter to stock pot on medium-low,

when melted add mushrooms and sauté until fully cooked and softened, then remove and cover.

4) Add 2 TBS coconut oil or butter to stock pot on medium-low, melt and add chopped onion, cooking until they become translucent. Add pressed or minced garlic, stir well and add chopped carrots. Cover for a few minutes, then stir and cover again until softened, then remove from pot and cover.

5) Then add the red wine to the hot stock pot, stirring to deglaze (unstick the cooked-on flavors off the bottom).

6) Return the cooked meat, mushrooms, onions and carrots to the stock pot and mix well. Add the beef broth, rosemary, and bay leaf, stir and bring to a low simmer.

7) Cook on low for at least 2-3 hours to allow all the delicious flavors to peak. Taste and add sea salt and pepper if needed, and remember to remove the bay leaf before serving.

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

The Highlands Police log entries from Jan. 9. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Jan. 9

• At 3 p.m., officers were called about someone using a credit card owned by someone else without permission at the Shell station.

Jan. 10

• At 4 p.m., officers received a call about someone taking and using a phone without permission at a residence on Main Street.

Jan. 17

• At 11:04 a.m., officers received a call about a breaking and entering and larceny from a residence on Cullasaja Drive where close to \$25,000 in jewelry was taken

Jan. 19

• At 1:18 p.m., officers received a call about a breaking and entering at a residence on Chowan Drive where someone entered the residence and turned on the water which damaged pipes.

Jan. 23

• At 9:20 p.m., officers were called about an alleged physical domestic assault on a 46-year-old female at a resi-

dence on Cullasaja Drive

Jan. 24

• At noon, officers received a call about a motor vehicle theft and larceny where a vehicle was taken without permission from a residence on US 64 west where cash was taken, too.

Jan. 26

• At 6:30 a.m., officers were called about "someone at the door" of a residence on US 64 west.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. log from Jan. 24.

Jan. 24

• At 11:27 a.m., the dept. was called to the NC 106/ Turtle Pond area to investigate smoke.

Jan. 25

• At 12:56 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance on Holly Tree Lane.

• At 9:27 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Flat Mountain Road.

Jan. 29

• At 8:58 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on US 64 west.

...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING continued from page 10

sons to go on living. I dare say, God has been good to most of us if not all in some measurable way. As the old song says, "Count your blessings, name them one by one." God gives the sun to the evil and the good, and the rain upon the righteous and unrighteous (Mt. 5:45). But I believe the Bible insists throughout that we acknowledge that life and death are unpredictable, as well as those things we presume to hold on to without limits or bounds.

My point, and my renewed revelation in this trial-filled time is that we live our lives accepting and enjoying the good things of God but hold them lightly given the inevitability of death and loss along the way. It was Solomon who once again surmised after seeing the vanity of most of our existence and the unpredictability of life, "That

when all is said and done, worship God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of mankind" (Eccl. 12:13). My message is this to all reading this article. By all means, enjoy life and love family and friends and neighbors. Do so because we are told that old things will pass away, and all things will be made new. There is a better day coming, when pain, death and sorrow will give way to eternal and seamless joys (Rev. 21:7). But hold all things in this life lightly. "Only one life will soon be pass, and only what's done for Christ will last." A good life is not measured by the absence of suffering. Sufferings and loss are inevitable. Rather, a good life is measured by our relationship to God through Christ, trust in Him in the good and bad, and obedience to His word, regardless of what life brings us.

...BEARDS continued from page 6

form. Growing facial hair is a perk that will help the departments raise money for the cancer center.

A fundraising campaign, WNC Law Enforcement Now Shave February, was launched on Youcaring.com so the public can "sponsor" officers by donating in their name for the event.

The public will then be invited to vote on the best beard for each department via the department's Facebook pages. The officer with the most votes and the officer with the most money raised will be the winners.

Female officers are not being left out of the challenge.

• See BEARDS page 14

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Wednesdays Feb. 14-March 21

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• CLASSIFIEDS •

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...BEARDS continued from page 13

They will have the opportunity to pay to wear the "casual" uniform for the month of February, another perk that will help raise money for the cancer center.

"We each know someone who has been touched by cancer, whether it be a family member or a friend," said Highlands Police Chief Bill Harrell. "This fundraiser is an excellent way that we as law enforcement officers can come together to raise money for families touched by the disease right here in our own community."

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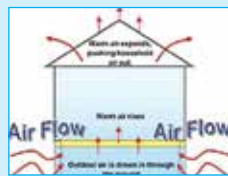
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