

Highlands Newspaper

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

Thurs., Feb. 15, 2018

HB90 heading to Governor's desk

Puts brakes on HB13 unfunded mandated decreasing K-3 class sizes for 2018-'19

Macon County Republican and House of Representative member Kevin Corbin argued in favor of legislation on Tues-

day morning in Raleigh to provide local school districts in the state more flexibility when it comes to classroom sizes.

The House scheduled the final vote Tuesday for the education legislation – dubbed House Bill 90

• See HB90 page 6

• INSIDE THIS ISSUE •

Mayor on Duty.....	2	Investing at 4118 ft.	8
Weather.....	2	Spiritually Speaking.....	10
Dining.....	4	Service Directory.....	12
Obituary.....	5	Police & Fire.....	13
HS Sports.....	7	Classifieds.....	14

HS senior athletes recognized for school career of participation



At Friday night's home game Highlands School senior basketball players and cheerleaders were honored with their parents. From left are Demitrius Schmitt, Chandler Stolzhus, Maddison Lloyd, Trinity Dendy, Kim Fera, Deysi Diaz, and Ana Gonzalez.

Photo by Kedra McCall

Principals submit wish lists to Board of Ed

Highlands asks for stage lighting; new front entrance

The Macon County Board of Education met in Franklin last Thursday for the first of several meetings focused on crafting the 2018-'19 school year budget. Principals from across the district were in attendance to pitch their cases for capital improvements to their school facilities as well as additional personnel heading into the next school year.

Macon County Schools Superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin presented members of the Board of Education with a complete list of capital outlay requests for the entire district. Each school principal submitted a "wish list" of needs and wants to the central office which totaled \$12,446,239 for the entire district. The bulk of that comes in at \$8 million

• See WISH LISTS page 9

NC families got nearly \$97 MM from Airbnb in 2017

The state gained \$14.5 million in tax revenue from Airbnb – up 88 percent from 2016's \$7.7 million.

According to Airbnb, North Carolina families are reaping the economic benefits of home sharing and to prove it Airbnb released new data on the income its host community earned during 2017 – income used to help to pay mortgages, rent and other monthly bills.

Between January and De-

cember 2017, residents of North Carolina made \$96.8 million by sharing their homes with tourists, beach goers, solar eclipse viewers, and college families.

With Airbnb and VRBO cutting into the local real estate vacation rental market, Realtors and even town administrators wondered if the state and county are

getting their due.

In Macon County there is a 3% occupancy tax which every lodging facility must levy and turn into the county.

Macon County Finance Director Lori Hall said the county reports occupancy tax collections to the NC Department of Revenue on an annual basis, but

payments per establishment aren't included. The general process for Macon County occupancy tax collections is that the facilities collect the occupancy tax, they remit it monthly to the county, the county retains an 8% administrative fee and then the county disburses the net funds to the chambers on a

• See AIRBNB page 13

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Government doesn't always have to 'fix' everything

As I have said before, I practice managing by wandering around (MBWA). Last week I was driving around downtown and turned onto Church Street from 4th and headed toward the Methodist Church.

Several years ago this area was the site of a constant dumpster war among merchants. A large dumpster was located on church property. Folks did not secure it, and the bears routinely had a feast and trashed the area. There was a lot of finger pointing and frustration.

Finally, Reverend Christy stepped in and asked the town to remove the dumpster from church property. There was no other place to relocate the dumpster, so merchants had to come up with another solution. And they did.

The Pizza Place built its own bear-resistant trash totter holder. The shopping center on Main Street developed a series of bear resistant bins for their merchants to secure and store garbage totters. Each bin has the store labeled on the secured doors. My follow-up feedback indicates that the system has worked well.

What impressed me so much was how



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

nice and organized the area looks now. There is no garbage scattered on the ground. The new addition to the Methodist church upgrades the appearance of the entire area.

I came away from my wandering thinking sometimes folks tend to believe government should solve their problems, when in fact neighbors working together may have better solutions. I took the Town Manager over to see the Church Street area. He, too, was impressed with the trash system and the appearance.

So, where else could such a system be implemented downtown? Such a system might just be a big component to solving the "bears in the garbage" problem and also stopping illegal garbage dumping by human animals, too. I will continue to wander, explore and talk with folks about ideas.

The February Highlands Town Board meeting will be tonight at 7pm at the Highlands Community Building next to the ball field. The board will hear some timely updates on such items as the broadband initiative and review several planning items. The committee that was appointed to study and review the town Christmas Tree issue in the park will provide some options for the board to consider.

It is unfortunate that the current tree has not fared very well. Where the tree was located contained substantial rock that did not help it adjust to relocation. Also, we planted it late in the year during the severe drought, and even constant watering by rec-

•See MAYOR page 7

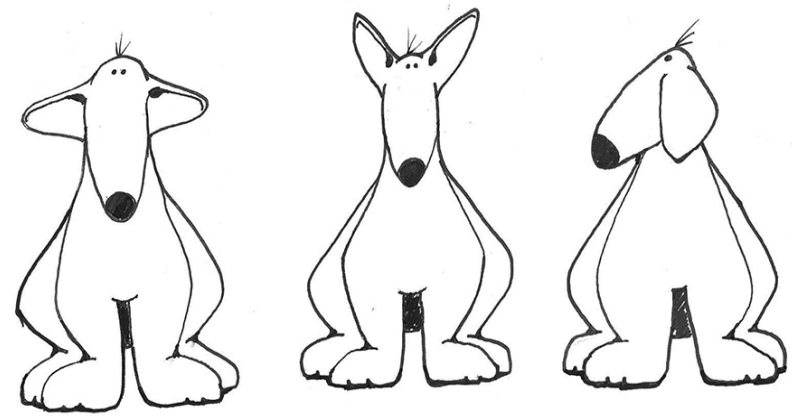
reation department staff couldn't make up for the lack of rain.

I want to again thank Brian Cabe of Wildwood Natives for his generous donation of our current Christmas tree. It was a beautiful tree when it arrived at the park. Hopefully, our next effort will have better

results. The goal is for a planting decision to be made soon so the project can be completed before spring. Winter and fall are the best times of the year to relocate a large tree.

Everyone is welcome tonight.

• HIC'S VIEW



How dogs secretly communicate

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Hic

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.

• WEATHER •

	Friday 2/16		Saturday 2/17		Sunday 2/18	
	Daytime	Overnight	Daytime	Overnight	Daytime	Overnight
Temp ○	60 F	41 F	45 F	36 F	52 F	34 F
RealFeel® ○	57 F	45 F	44 F	35 F	54 F	33 F
Winds ○	8 g 12	5 g 8	5 g 7	4 g 7	6 g 9	4 g 6
T-Storms ○	20%	20%	20%	9%	0%	1%
Rainfall ○	0.04	0.05	0.12	0.22	0	0.07
Snowfall ○	0	0	0	0	0	0

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• EULOGY •

Ivan Wycliffe Haynes

Feb. 20, 1971 – Jan. 10, 2018



A strong and handsome, beautiful boy. God gave him different tools. Not good or bad, just different. Ivan was special.

Ivan loved motorcycles and fearlessly racing them through the woods. Trail or no trail. He was very good at it and won championships but you wouldn't know as he didn't talk about 'em.

He liked being alone in the woods for hours clearing and making trails and exploring and just chilling (his word).

He was good at math in school and liked to share his knowledge with like-minded students. He told me that teaching calculus at the university was his favorite job.

Not fashionable and really not tasteful, he wore what was handy.

Quiet and apart, not aloof. He was in Mensa and was an introvert like most Mensans. I doubt that he ever went to a meeting.

He liked to fish alone in his little boat with his dog and maybe with his Dad or a pal and maybe a worm or two.

Focused. For a while he was learning how to play the guitar. He played Malaguena for me over the phone. I was impressed and pleased. It's playing in my background right now.

He liked his old blue truck and his bike.

OK with simple food. Whatever he had in front of him was fine. I wish I knew more about his diet. Now I wish I knew more about Ivan. He taught me that dry cereal was OK as a supper selection.

He could be a good friend, but was not much of a people person. I do believe he was happiest when he was alone.

He gave it up one cold and passionate night on his motorcycle.

He was loved and will be missed.

There's a patch of sunlight shining on my window. It's shining through a branch with leaves moving in the wind. For a moment it looked like Ivan. I think he was smiling. Maybe that means he's OK. I hope so.

I just wanted you to know him a little better and know that he was loved.

— Uncle RB Haynes and parents
Wycliffe Eskrigge Haynes and Marie Hunt Haynes

Come see how the new tax law will affect you!

Highlands Mountaintop Rotary announces a presentation by Carol L. King on the new tax law and how it will affect you on Monday, February 19 at the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation. from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Refreshments and snacks will be provided. Everyone is invited.

• OBITUARY •

Kathlyn 'Kay' Watson Holiday



Kathlyn (Kay) Watson Holiday passed away suddenly but peacefully at her home in Village of Golf, FL on February 2, 2018.

Preceded in death in 1999 by her husband of over 50 years, Harry, and her five siblings, Rita, Rosie, Dot, Marian and Walt, she leaves behind three children and their spouses, Ede (Terry Adamson), Hap (Angela) and Beau (Paula), and six grandchildren, Rachael, Collin, Kate, Elizabeth, Erin, and Ede, as well as Terry Morgan Adamson and his family. Raised in Brownwood, TX, she lived and raised her family in Middletown, OH until retiring with her husband to Highlands, NC and southern Florida in 1985.

Having lost her own mother at age five, she lived life with never ending optimism and belief in the power of positive thinking. Her strength and resilience were examples to us all.

A loving wife and mother, we remember the flash of her green eyes and her red hair that never turned grey. We will miss her mischievous sense of humor, her love of tennis and coffee, her beauty and her charm, and her passion for life. She taught us to help who and where we can and that family is the most important thing there is.

In remembrance of her, please donate generously to the charity of your choice. She had 96 glorious years and will be missed by all that knew her.

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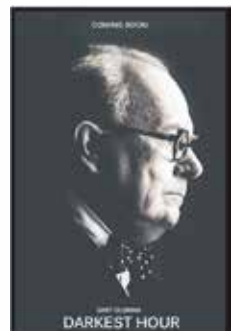
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...HB90 continued from page 1

-- which also pledges to pay for preschool for all at-risk 4-year-olds by 2020. The legislation passed 104-12.

Leaders in the Macon County School system, as well as Rep. Corbin were among those speaking out against HB13's impending legislation mandating K-3 class sizes be

reduced next school year - from 20 students per class to 17. Corbin argued that without more funding, districts would be forced to cut art, music and PE teachers or increase fourth grade classrooms.

HB90 now head to the Governor's desk for approval. It replaces the temporary

HB13 bill which was set to expire June 30 putting the brakes on mandating smaller class-sizes for K-3 beginning in the 2018-'19 school year.

HB90 also mandates class sizes be decreased but gradually by the 2021-'22 school year. It also includes \$61 million to pay for art and PE teachers; and boosts funding for Pre-K, eliminating the waiting list.

"House Bill 90 does tremendous things for education in North Carolina," said Rep. Kevin Corbin. "We allow local districts to have the flexibility they need and as a state we are investing in art, PE and our pre-school classes."

School districts have been pleading for state lawmakers to delay changes mandated by HB13 that would require them to lower average K-3 class sizes from 20 students per room to roughly 17 students starting this July.

Across the state school officials said they don't have the thousands of extra classrooms needed and might have to fire art, music and physical education teachers to help come up with the money to hire additional K-3 teachers.

Though happy to have a reprieve, Highlands School principal Brian Jetter

•See HB90 page 7

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...HB90 continued from page 6

said the current and HB90 stipulations are still worrisome.

In 2018-'19 district-wide average for K-3 has to be 19 students per grade or 23 for individual classes; in 2019-'20 K-3 district-wide average is 18 per grade or 22 for individual classes; 2020-'21 K-3 district-wide average is 18 per grade or 21 for individual classes.

He used the following kindergarten scenario which could be duplicated for first through third grades.

"If I had to have one additional classroom, I would have to move the Title I/AG teacher who works with a few students at a time as a pullout teacher. Not sure where I would move her, though.

"If I needed more than one more classroom, I would have to then look at the special program classes (EC, ESL) which tend to have smaller numbers of students at a time than we have now in small classrooms and move them somewhere else. However, I do not know where that would be.

"We know of 18 local students that will likely show up for the first day of kindergarten next year – March 13 is kindergarten orientation so we will know more then. If we were to get a couple more kindergarten students during the year that would put us over 21 kindergarten students, so we would have to immediately add an additional kindergarten

class, even if it is in the middle of the year."

Under the proposed HB90 bill announced last Thursday, class sizes in kindergarten through third grade will remain unchanged for the 2018-'19 school year before being gradually lowered to the new averages for the 2021-'22 school year.

The bill also provides \$61.4 million a year for school districts to pay for arts and PE teachers. Other items of the bill expand eligibility in a new state program that provides debit cards worth \$9,000 for families of students with disabilities to pay for education expenses.

"On behalf of the superintendents and other school leaders in our membership, we are pleased that this new legislation provides a reasonable timeline for reducing class sizes in kindergarten through third grade, which is priority of the General Assembly, while simultaneously ensuring adequate funding and support for continuing vitally important instruction in art, music, physical education and world languages," said Katherine Joyce, Executive Director of the North Carolina Association of School Administrators. "We are especially appreciative that Senate and House leaders were willing to work with us in developing this new legislation to ensure that school districts across the state have a viable solution to concerns they have previously expressed about the existing

•See HB90 page 8

• HIGHLANDS SCHOOL SPORTS •

BB Conference Tournament begins

with Kedra McCall



This week high school basketball played Rosman, Blue Ridge, and Nantahala.

The JV girls was the only team who beat Rosman. Later in the week they played Blue Ridge at home. Both varsity girls and boys finished the night with a win for their senior night on last Friday.

Although JV boys did not beat Blue Ridge on Friday, they beat them on Monday for their first game in the conference tournament. Now they

play on Thursday in Nantahala against Hiwassee Dam. JV girls will also play on Thursday in Nantahala. JV girls did not play Blue Ridge because Blue Ridge doesn't have a JV team.

The varsity boys also played Nantahala this week and won resulting in a co-championship in their conference. Along with the varsity girls, they are co-champions with Hiwassee Dam. The conference tournament has now started. If the varsity boys and girls win their first game of the tournament on Tuesday, they will proceed to games on Thursday night for tournament championships.



The Highlands Rec Dept. basketball league teams – considered seed teams for Highlands School – were honored Senior Night last Friday at Highlands School.

– Photo by Kedra McCall



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— John Muir

It's hard to believe that I've been around Highlands and Cashiers now for 25 years as a husband, Father, friend, hiker, dog-lover, fly fisherman, and real estate broker. I was thinking about what actually drew me here in the first place, and wondering if you might be having similar feelings.

Perhaps not unlike you, I feel a need to spend more time outside and in nature, walking the trail, fishing the stream, or maybe hitting a small white ball down a large green field. And yet all-around, life pulls us to inside environs, not to mention the hours of "screen life" we consume on a smartphone, TV, or laptop. And don't get me started with the kids, who are "pulled inside" even more. Add to this, the miles and hours we spend in traffic, driving to sporting events, children's activities, and commuting to work or airports (I'm having a flashback to those 8AM flights at

Hartsfield).

Has someone ever said to you "get some fresh air?" They may really be telling you to "get lost" and for good reasons. Science confirms the health benefits of being in nature: Vitamin D is essential to a healthy immune system; being outside prevents "Computer Vision Syndrome" and Nearsightedness; poor sleep patterns are attributed to spending too much time inside away from natural light and early morning exposure to sunlight improves sleep cycles; it's believed that when dirt and sand comes in contact with bare skin it causes intense anti-inflammatory and energizing effects to the body. Sitting around the house has been called "the smoking of our generation" and leads to back pain and a whole host of psychological disorders. And lastly, being in nature boosts serotonin and promotes improved attention spans, empathy, emotional stability, and love (yesterday was Valentine's Day so I had to throw that in).

If any of these feelings resonate with you, I'm inviting you to Highlands and Cashiers right now. Contact that friend who's offered their cabin or mountain home to



Pat Gleeson, Owner, BIC White Oak Realty Group
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you for a weekend. Call the Old Edwards Inn and ask about their Winter specials. The Park on Main Hotel aka "Bark on Main" takes dogs. Stop for a minute, smell the coffee, and Come on Up! But what does any of this have to do with Real Estate investment in Highlands, NC? In a word, EVERYTHING!

Clients scour Zillow or Realtor.com and call us about kitchens, bathrooms, and the size of the Master...all great questions. When we eventually visit the property the conversation with the client shifts to: "What about the outside space and outdoor living areas?" Being on the deck with a fire going (in the middle of summer); morning coffee on the porch; and sleeping with the windows open suddenly become priorities. Hark, the beginning of understanding.

...HB90 continued from page 7

law on class sizes."

There was bipartisan support for the education portions of the bill that include more funding for pre-kindergarten programs and phasing in the K-3 class-size changes that school districts said they couldn't implement this fall.

It's truly a great time to invest in Highlands and Cashiers, and the 2018 market is off to a hot start. What's selling you ask? It's the promise of an enhanced lifestyle, changed lives, togetherness, stillness, natural beauty, and a pause from busy-ness. We encourage you to book that trip, enlist the services of a professional Real Estate broker, and turn life "inside-out."

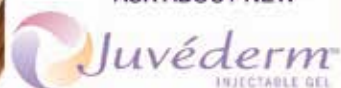
A final thought. My wife Bee and our friend Susie deVillie ask me all the time, "Are you shining some light today?" I know this much. In order to shine light toward others, I must first let plenty of light in, so I head out. Hope to see you on a trout stream!

• Pat and Deborah "Bee" Gleeson are owners and brokers of White Oak Realty Group located in downtown Highlands on 4th Street across from the Old Edwards Inn. White Oak Realty Group founded in 2009, is one of the leading boutique brokerage firms on the Highlands-Cashiers plateau. You may reach the Gleesons and Susie deVillie at 828-526-8118.

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With HB90 heading to the Governor's desk, it is uncertain if he will sign it or veto it because of noneducation-related provisions in the bill.

One concern is that HB90 also makes changes to the state elections board that would change the elections board to nine members, including one member not affiliated with a political party.

The bill would also take \$58 million that energy companies building a pipeline through Eastern North Carolina are expected to give state government as part of a deal Gov. Cooper negotiated, for distribution to school districts in the eight counties the pipeline would run through. While there is less objection to this provision of the bill, it being included at all in the class-size legislation caused frustration with Democrats.

HB90 still includes the deal Cooper negotiated for the eight counties, but the \$58 million will go to the eight counties the pipeline will go through to be used at their discretion.

...WISH LISTS continued from page 1

for complete renovations and rebuilds at Franklin High School.

The next step in the process is for the Board of Education to take the requests, item by item, and prioritize the list.

The Macon County Board of Commissioners allocate funding for capital improvements within the school system and the amount provided to the school district has varied from year-to-year. Based on need and the requests, commissioners historically provide \$300,000 to \$500,000 annually, above the operating budget, earmarked for capital improvements.

Capital improvements at Highlands School totaled \$37,515. The majority of the request for Highlands School was for \$30,000 for new stage lighting, something the school has requested in previous years. Another \$7,515 was requested for a new front entrance door, something Board of Education member Stephanie McCall said was greatly needed due to safety concerns.

Highlands also had a \$12,400 request for new bookshelves for the school's media center, a request that has been made to the board of education in the past.

Across the district, the capital outlay requests included \$618,874 to continue the

5-year replacement program for computers and other technology needs for the entire district. Macon County Schools also had a request of \$181,8997 for new vehicles, including activity buses and central office cars, to help employees who regularly commute from Franklin to Highlands.

In addition to capital needs, Dr. Baldwin said there are requests for additional personnel for schools across the district. Dr. Baldwin pointed out that the majority of the requests by district principals were not for historically new positions, but rather to bring staffing levels back to where they were before cuts and attrition reduced staffing in schools all across the district.

To meet the staff needs of each school, Macon County Schools would need an additional 10 positions. Two additional personnel were requested at Franklin High School, one at Macon Middle, one at Mountain View Intermediate, two at South Macon Elementary, and one teacher and two part-time becoming full-time at Union Academy.

All of the requests were presented to commissioners in the first phase of the school board budget process and will now be prioritized by the Board of Education.



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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

Love keeps us going



Pastor Curtis Fussell
First Presbyterian Church

We've had plenty of cold days this winter. Of course, it should be cold in winter; particularly in Highlands! Still, the experience of cold weather reminds us what season it is. Maybe this experience of cold weather is one reason we celebrate the warmth of love in February. February is known as the "love month" because of Valentine's Day.

I don't think it's too far-fetched to say it is the warmth of love that keeps us going. I think it is right to say that it is love for living, love for ourselves, love for someone in our lives, love for some desired future, that keeps us from becoming frozen and stuck in life. The warmth, power, and joy of love keeps us going.

I know of course that the word "love" can become all too trite. We say we love our cars, we love a movie, we love to cook, we love the beach, we love the mountains. The word "love" can become an overused word. When that happens, the word love loses its power to express a deep, abiding source for living, for being alive.

We can even overuse the words "God loves you," notably when used in a frivolous manner. Yet, that word of love is still a good word. It is just the right word when life feels frozen and stuck. Saying that word can un-thaw even the hardest, coldest heart.

You see, God loves, and God's love never fails. I think we often overlook how enormous that word is. We set fences around it as though, "Well, only if you deserve God's love, or only if you are the right kind of person to receive God's love." Of course, that kind of fencing of God's love only highlights how we do not love as God loves.

Remember this: though you hear nothing, God is speaking the word of love to you. Though you see nothing, God is acting in loving ways to you. Though you fall, God is there to pick you up, because God loves you.

Yes, "love" is still a good word. I pray you will warm up to it. Use the word often in the right time and the right way. Remember above all this good news: "God so loved..." It is the source of living an abundant life, even on the coldest of days.

Wednesday Lenten Lunch & Worship at HUMC

Wednesdays Feb. 14-March 21

Join HUMC for a weekly soup/sandwich lunch and brief worship message in the Faith and Fellowship Center - each Wednesday during Lent at noon. Everyone invited. Donations accepted.

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

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Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

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www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685

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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 U.

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

Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Prayer Mtg 6:15 pm; Ch. 5p

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Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

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Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.

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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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Worship/Communion: 10:30

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Highlands School Kindergarten Registration is Tuesday, March 13

On Tuesday, March 13, Kindergarten registration for Highlands School's 2018-2019 school year will begin – for parents – at 10am in the school's media center. Children who reach the age of five on or before August 31, 2018 are eligible for admission into the Class of 2031.

A Macon County school bus will pick up eligible students from the Gordon Center at the Methodist Church and the Highlands Community Child Development Center and take them to school to meet their parents. Children not currently enrolled at either learning facility may meet at the Highlands Community Child Development Center, located at 89 Church St, to catch the bus. PTO will provide complimentary lunch for all students and their parents in the school cafeteria. Registration packets can be picked up at Highlands School or at Highlands Community Child Development Center. Call the school office at (828) 526-2147 for more information.

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

The Highlands Police log entries from Feb. 2. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Feb. 2

• At 9 a.m., officers received a report of a shoplifting incident at the Farmers Market when someone tried to leave with without paying for an energy drink.

Feb. 4

• At 8:15 a.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on US 64 west.

• At 10:05 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on Little Bearpen Road.

• At 4:51 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on Big Bearpen Road.

Feb. 5

• At 3:04 p.m., officers were called about violation of a city ordinance on Picklesimer Road.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. log from Feb. 8. Feb. 8

• At noon the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Lower Brushy Face.

• The dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Cobb Road.

...AIRBNB continued from page 1

monthly basis.

By law, the chambers can only spend the money on tourist related advertising and activities.

Airbnb says it collects and remits hotel, occupancy and tourist taxes on behalf of its hosts and guests in more than 360 jurisdictions and communities globally. Since its first agreements were enacted in 2014, Airbnb has remitted over \$510 million in tax revenue around the world.

VRBO (Vacation Rentals by Owner) claim they, too, levy and turn in the required room tax money to each entity but said those figures are only available through an audit.

Airbnb recently released details on the tax revenue collected and remitted to the government of North Carolina on behalf of its host community.

During 2017, the state gained \$14.5 million in tax revenue from Airbnb -- an increase of 88 percent from 2016.

To date -- that is, since the home sharing platform began collecting and remitting taxes on behalf of its North Carolina host and guest community in August 2015 -- Airbnb has remitted \$24.4 million in tax revenue to the state of North Carolina.

"Home sharing through Airbnb continues to be a unique and flexible way for North Carolina families to make more money, pay their bills, and support their communities," said Will Burns, Public Policy Director for Airbnb in North Carolina. "We look forward to 2018 being another successful year of giving residents in all corners of the state an economic boost, travelers more affordable accommodations, and neighborhood businesses more foot traffic."

Airbnb stays in North Carolina during 2017 revealed:

• A total of 778,000 Airbnb guest arrivals occurred across the state.

• Approximately 11,400 North Carolina families hosted at least one Airbnb guest.

• The typical host shared their home 47 nights and earned \$6,800 in additional income.

• Sixty-three percent of Airbnb hosts in North Carolina are women.

Almost every Real Estate company in Highlands and Cashiers has a Vacation Rental component and Highlands Mayor Pat Taylor says he's been approached about the blossoming industry.

In his January 18th Mayor on Duty column, Mayor Pat Taylor discussed the Airbnb market in Highlands -- basically considering local regulation of the industry, whether occupancy tax is being collected properly, and what is the impact on the local housing market

He said some believe Airbnb has hurt Highlands' narrow affordable housing market because instead of leasing an accommodation for \$1,500/month to local working people, short-term renting through Airbnb nets double what renting the long-term would be.

But then some Realtors see Airbnb as positive for Highlands because Airbnb units have to be maintained at a very high level, since customers can write critical reviews on the Internet that will hurt the owners' bottom line.

Mayor Taylor said Bed and Breakfast proprietors worry about equity when it comes to tax collections, fire and health codes saying that Bed and Breakfasts have to pass food health inspections just like hotels that serve food.

Of course, as a rule, Airbnb's don't serve food, though a kitchen or kitchenette area are usually available for renters to use at their discretion.

Jeannie Chambers of Chambers Realty & Vacation Rentals says Airbnb is the new kid on the block.

"Although the American part of the company has been around since 2008, Airbnb is just now really starting to sink in to all the small communities in America, and some communities are trying to keep them at bay," she said.

So what's the difference between Airbnb or VRBO listing your property as a vacation rental as opposed to a licensed Realtor and/or property manager?

"The main difference is the attention your property has when it's not rented," said Chambers. "Who will collect the money? Who will clean it when the renter has vacated. Who checks for damages? Who will let the pest control, cleaners, plumbers, HVAC, carpet cleaners, in the property? Who arranges for landscaping, and checks after local storms to be sure of no damage?"

When renting your property through Airbnb and VRBO those tasks fall to the property owner.

In the end Mayor Taylor said Airbnb falls under short-term vacation rentals which the community has done for years with area Realtors as the portal and he's not sure what the town's role would be concerning regulation.

— Kim Lewicki

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LOST DOG Izzie is a brown and white Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, 8 years old, about 22 lbs, missing since Jan 30 and last seen near Cullasaja Exxon on Highlands Road. She is slender in build, wearing an orange collar, timid and hesitant to approach people, thought to be traveling near roads, as opposed to through woods. Please watch for her and look in sheltered areas around your home and nearby unoccupied homes. Call 828-318-2873 with any info or sightings.

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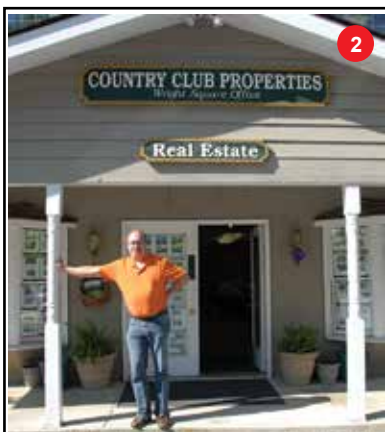


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