

Highlands Newspaper

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Thursday, April 4, 2019

Wishes and 'needs' discussed at Retreat

Each year it's called a retreat but like the mayor said, it's really a precursor to establishing the upcoming fiscal year's budget.

Last Thursday, the Town Board and town department

heads gathered in Coleman Hall at First Presbyterian Church to hear wish lists from department heads for FY 2019-'20 as well as the mid-year financial update from the town manager and treasurer.

No surprise ... Highlands is in good shape, in fact better than this time last year.

As of February 2019, property tax collections have increased

•See RETREAT page 9

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The MCAF auction & raffle is this Saturday

Macon County students are the lucky recipients of money raised

Highlands is a mecca for fundraisers and each benefits a worthy cause. But when fundraisers are off the mountain, they can go unnoticed. This Saturday there is a critical fundraiser taking place at Cartoogechaye Elementary School which will benefit all students in the Macon County School System.

Saturday, April 6 is the 32nd annual Academic Auction & Raffle that is sponsored by the Macon County Academic Foundation (MCAF) of which Highlands own high school math teacher Brian Aulisio is president. The foundation grants funds directly to Macon County public school teachers – those who the foundation believes know what works

•See MCAF page 16

MAMA is back at H-C Hospital



The Mountain Area Medical Airlift (MAMA) helicopter is once again flying across the mountains of western North Carolina directly to Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. The new helipad, adjacent to the hospital Emergency Department, reduces overall patient transport times by at least 20 minutes, and will keep local ambulance providers in service. During construction of the new helipad, EMS was being used to shuttle patients to Zachary Field on Buck Creek for airlift.

"We ushered in our new helipad with a very special blessing," said Jackie Medland, chief executive officer and chief nursing officer of Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. "It's truly humbling to think of all the lives that will be so positively impacted by efficient air transport. I'm also forever grateful for all of our team members who serve so tirelessly in the field, in the air and in our hospital."

H-2B visa changes cause labor shortage in Highlands

By Brittney Lofthouse

Seasonal spa and country club employers in Highlands and elsewhere are struggling to fill workforce requirements due to a change in the H-2B Visa Policy.

The H-2B visas allow foreign workers to come temporarily to the U.S. for non-agricultural services on a seasonal basis.

Created in the late 1980s, the program is designed to allow a certain number of foreign workers to come to the U.S. for temporary seasonal work each year when American workers are unavailable.

The Philippines accounted for 767 H-2B visas in fiscal year 2017, the most in Asia but less than 1 percent of the total given out worldwide, according to the State Department. However, the Trump administration issued a

•See H-B2 VISA page 8

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Budget initiatives and upcoming projects

This is the time of the year where I attend numerous meetings concerning budget initiatives and projects impacting the town. Here are some meeting highlights.

Two weeks ago, I traveled to Cherokee to attend the a regional transportation advisory committee meeting. On the agenda was the presentation of a new STIP priority list for road projects in the seven-county region of Western Carolina.

Last year NC 106 improvements from the Georgia State line to Main Street was high on this list. Public input coming from two meetings revealing the scope of the project made DOT decide not to proceed with the project. I thought the proposed design was over developed and should be cutback. Nevertheless, I publicly stated I would make sure the project as presented would be removed from the list. After attending this last TAC meeting, I can report it is officially and completely off the new priority list, aka, gone away.

I can also state that there are not other road improvement projects for the High-



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

lands Plateau. Other than repaving of existing roads, I don't see any changes coming to the plateau highways for the foreseeable future. It takes about a decade for a project to make the priority list and go through the funding process. Macon County has two projects on the list, but none on the Highlands Plateau.

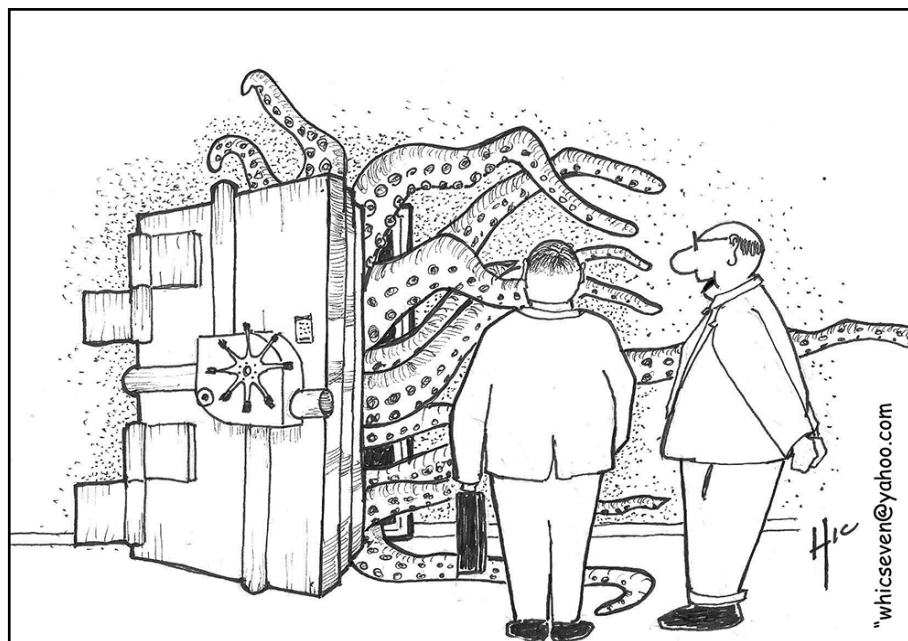
I will meet in Highlands with the NCDOT Division Engineer and the NCDOT Traffic Engineer next week about tractor trailer trucks on the Gorge Road. A plan to address this growing problem is under development. Curtailing tractor trailer trucks from the Gorge Road is possible. Will this plan eliminate all tractor trailer trucks on the Gorge Road? No, there will always be a few who think laws don't apply to them.

Last Thursday the Town Board held the annual Town Retreat at the Presbyterian Church Coleman Hall. We always appreciate the opportunity to meet in such a great location. At the opening, I observed we really don't retreat. I suggested we actually do an all-day budget workshop. Our big retreat expenses were coffee and pastries in the morning followed by box lunches.

The town board will hold a series of afternoon budget development meetings in April and May. Also, town board committees will be meeting concerning developing plans for a new fire station and for changing garbage pickup policies to enhance worker safety and to address the bear issue. Both initiatives have direct impact on the forthcoming budget.

Tomorrow I travel to Black Mountain to attend a regional mayor's meeting. The big topic will be impending legislation impacting towns and cities. In May the Town Manager and I will attend the NC League of Municipalities annual meeting in Hickory. A major topic will be municipal broadband networks. With Highlands only months away from constructing our fiber optic network, the town is on the leading edge of this movement. Many towns are four to five years away from getting to the point where we are now.

• HIC'S VIEW •



"Oh heavens no. These are the good loans. Do you want to see the bad loans?"

"whicseven@yahoo.com"

• LETTERS •

Live auction and raffle helps MC students

Dear Editor

As many of you know, the Macon County Academic Foundation holds an annual live auction and raffle event every spring to raise funds for classroom projects and educational experiences in our public schools. The 32nd Academic Auction will take place at Cartoogechaye Elementary School in Franklin on Saturday, April 6th, at 3:30 p.m.

•See LETTER page 11

• WEATHER •

	Friday 4/5		Saturday 4/6		Sunday 4/7	
	Daytime	Overnight	Daytime	Overnight	Daytime	Overnight
Temp	60 F	46 F	69 F	51 F	67 F	53 F
RealFeel	61 F	45 F	73 F	51 F	69 F	55 F
Winds	4 g 6	3 g 5	4 g 7	3 g 6	5 g 8	4 g 7
T-Storms	20%	4%	21%	24%	29%	37%
Rainfall	0.27	0	0	0	0.11	0.84
Snowfall	0	0	0	0	0	0

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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.



CULLASAJA CLUB With an open floor plan, gleaming hardwood floors, skylights, and vaulted ceilings, this single level cottage lives large. The kitchen boasts stainless steel appliances, granite countertops, desk space, and a large island. The vaulted living room has an bar, built-in bookcases, skylights, and opens to a covered front porch and a screened-in back deck. The large master bedroom suite also opens to the back porch and boasts his and her closets, dual vanities and a walk-in shower.

MLS# 90115 | Offered for \$625,000



APPLE MOUNTAIN Wonderful living space with a large, open kitchen, spa-cious halls, open deck, as well as a screened porch make this home great for entertaining. The roomy master suite includes two large walk-in closets and the guest rooms are generously sized. The house sits across from a park and is located in a private and quiet neighborhood. Also included is a second garage which could be used as a workshop or studio. Offered fully furnished and includes a full house generator and two water heaters.

MLS# 90450 | Offered for \$595,000

MIRRORMONT This mountain contemporary home has been remodeled and offers a wonderful open feel with cathedral ceiling and pecky cypress walls. The kitchen is brand new with stainless steel KitchenAid appliances, new cabinetry and granite countertops. The living room has the feel of living in a tree house with lots of glass and it opens to a private screened porch. The main level has a large den with a second fire-place plus the master suite which has access to two spacious bathrooms.

MLS# 89638 | Offered for \$575,000

HIGHLANDS FALLS CC This great villa is in pristine condition. The beautiful stone walkway and steps lead to an open floor plan with vaulted ceilings in the great room and kitchen. The kitchen has been updated as well as both bath-rooms. The great room opens to a covered deck. The master bedroom has a vaulted ceiling, a large walk-in closet and opens to the deck. Off the foyer are two guest bed-rooms with a shared bath.

MLS# 89625 | Offered for \$550,000



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• OBITUARIES •

Douglas Stacey Keener

Douglas Stacey Keener, 70, of Franklin, NC, passed away Tuesday, March 26, 2019. He was the son of Virgie Leo Keener of Highlands, NC and the late Henry Brownlow Keener. Mr. Keener was a US Army Veteran, serving two tours in Vietnam. He was a builder in the construction business. He loved the outdoors, fishing, gardening, wood working, and he liked to restore cars. Mr. Keener was of the Baptist faith.

In addition to his mother, he is survived by his wife, Beverly Keener, of Franklin, NC; daughter, Judy Keener (Dominic) of Franklin, NC; sons, Douglas Stacey Keener, Jr. (Lisa) of Franklin, NC and Jason Johnson of Highlands, NC; five granddaughters, four great-grandchildren; two sisters, Caroline Winn (Terry) of Georgia and Marylee Simmons (Randal) of Highlands, NC; half sisters, Melba Egan of Wilmington, Delaware and Olive Todd of High Point, NC; and a brother, Grady Keener (Bev) of Arizona.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held later in the spring.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to Four Seasons Hospice, 571 South Allen Road, Flat Rock, NC

Marguerite Lea Pierce Hooper

Mrs. Marguerite Lea Pierce Hooper, 96, passed away Friday, March 29, 2019. Mrs. Hooper was born August 11, 1922 in Kingsport, Tenn. to the late William Pierce and Ida Mae Peevler Pierce. She was a loving wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Mrs. Hooper was very involved in the community of Cashiers and always loved to cook and feed any one that came to her home. She attended Cashiers Church of God.



Survivors include her children, Geraldine McCall (Jimmy), John Henry Hooper (Ruth), Willa Mae Ammons, Louise Davis (Charlie), and Rachel Griffith (David) all of Cashiers, NC; 15 grandchildren; 36 great-grandchildren, and 59 great-great grandchildren; and a sister, Norma Mae Gaulden of Rock Hill, S.C.

Mrs. Hooper was preceded in death by her husband, Henry Richard Hooper; two children, Geneva Talley, and Charlie Hooper; two grandchildren; three sisters, Mary Pressley, Martha Pierce, and Nina Pierce; and two brothers, John Pierce and Charlie Pierce.

A Celebration of Life Service was held Sunday, March 31, 2019 at the Cashiers Church of God with the Rev. David Hall and Rev. Tim Pressley officiating.

In lieu of flowers donations can be made to the Double Springs Cemetery Fund, 8335 Cullowhee Mountain Rd. Cullowhee, NC 28723.

Online condolences can be left at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com. Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory served the Hooper family.

28731 or to Hospice House Foundation of WNC, 272 Maple Street, Franklin, NC 28734.

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



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Area middle schools hold first track meet of season at Rabun Gap-Nacoochee

By Brian O'Shea
Plateau Daily News

Four middle schools competed at a track meet on a cold and rainy Wednesday last week hosted by Tallulah Falls at Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School.

Highlands, Summit Charter, Rabun Gap, and Tallulah Falls boys and girls middle school teams hit the track, discus, shot put, high jump and more to a large crowd of supporters cheering on the athletes at the first meet of the season.

Highlands Head Coach Jake Page said it was the team's first meet and it was a learning experience.

"I thought all of our athletes did really well," said Page. "First meet for a lot of the kids, so a lot are still learning, but I was very proud of the way our athletes competed. They really gave it their all."

He added that Highlands had some top three finishes, including Connor Thorske who placed first in the high jump, with 5-00, a possible personal record, and Highlands relay teams all placed in the top 3.

Moving forward, Page said they're going to need to work on

exchanges to try and shave off some time in the relay department.

Summit Head Coach Gretchen Kapity said the athletes exceeded expectations, especially being the first meet of the season.

"I am pleased with how my kids did," said Kapity. "It was cold and rainy and miserable, but most persevered and did all of their races. We had a lot of kids get new PR's, which is great. I am especially proud of my hurdlers and jumpers who haven't gotten much practice. My two high jump girls haven't practiced since last year since we don't have a mat and they both got PR's and placed 2nd and 3rd."

She added she is proud of Summit's 6th graders who are new to the team this year and are working hard and putting in the effort to improve.

"The first conference meet is always a challenge because a lot of the kids haven't been on a real track and there is a learning curve," said Kapity. "Plus, the weather was not great. It is still sickness season, so we had a few athletes out as well."

Highlands Olivia Cole made

her rounds on both track and field competing in shot put, discus, and the 4x100 M relay. She earned a PR in discus with 50 ft. 7 in.

Summit Anna Nichols competed in the shot put, discus, and 400 M race, and also scored a PR in discus with 50 ft. 2 in.

"I think I did pretty good in the scheme of things," said Nichols. "I definitely did better than I thought I was going to do."

Summit Catelynn Couch said she had a couple first-time events on Wednesday and thinks she did well. After a strategy session with Cole, confidence was high minutes before Couch ran the 400 M.

"It's all good, I know I'm going to kill it," said Couch.

Highlands Finneaus Garner competed in hurdles, long jump, 400 M, and 100 M. He said hurdles were a little tricky, but said if you maintain your balance when you clip a hurdle, you're not necessarily going to fall.

"I thought I did really good," said Garner. "I didn't knock down every hurdle so I'm pretty happy about that."

The next middle school track meet is at 4 p.m. on April 9 at Rabun Gap.



Highlands, Summit Charter, Rabun Gap, and Tallulah Falls boys and girls middle school teams hit the track for first meet of the season.



Highlands James Earp competed in the high jump on Wednesday at Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School.



Highlands Conor Thorske competed in the long jump on Wednesday.

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• WORD MATTER •

On carnage in God's houses

In the aftermath of the horrific killing of fifty souls last month in two mosques in New Zealand, I found myself wondering anew why people who are driven to commit mass murder of others seem to do so based, at least in part, on how and where they choose to worship God. The irony doesn't escape me that the mosques where these incidents occurred were located in a city named Christchurch.

Somehow, I don't think my God, the "Thou shalt not kill" God, the one worshipped by Christians, Muslims and Jews, is at all good with this, no matter where the carnage happens. And it seems capable of happening everywhere.

In October 2018, a self-professed anti-Semite walked into a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and murdered eleven Jews during a worship service. A gunman entered a Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas in 2017 and killed twenty-six parishioners. Yet another murderer, in 2015, entered a predominantly black church in Charleston, South Carolina, and slaughtered nine worshipers. In that case, race was believed to be the catalyst, but still, the gunman chose an historic church in which to do his killing. Six people were gunned down in a Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin in 2012. Two more were shot-gunned to death in a Unitarian Church in Knoxville, Tennessee in 2008. Three were murdered at two Jewish Centers near Kansas City, Kansas in 2014. Six were slaughtered at an Islamic Center in Quebec City in 2017.

There's more, but you get the idea. Not that any place is appropriate for mass murder, but houses of worship have become a preferred venue for these cowards to do their twisted business.

What is there about religion, or houses of worship, and the people who attend services and activities involving them, that drives others to commit murder in the name of one or the other? Are they simply convenient? Or, is there something more going on?

I know these musings could easily devolve into a conversation about the ready availability of guns, but that issue has been and continues to be argued ad infinitum. My concern is that people exercising their First Amendment right to worship as and



Bud Katz

where they choose, appear to have targets on their backs precisely because of how and where they worship.

It's interesting to consider that in America the rights of individuals to keep and bear arms, codified through the 2nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, is now often found to be in direct conflict with the rights

of individuals to freely worship, as is guaranteed under the 1st Amendment of that same marvelous document.

Religion is both a delicate matter to discuss and a powerful force in the lives of the faithful. People of faith, at least those I know, are overwhelmingly mortified by behavior such as has happened in places specifically designed and built to bring souls together for the single purpose of worshipping God. It's frustrating for me when some actually assign to God a kind of responsibility for whatever happens.

"It's God's will," they say.

Sorry, but I can't agree with the sentiment.

No benevolent, loving, forgiving God decides to put a weapon in the hands of an angry, twisted individual for the sole purpose of slaughtering the very people who have assembled to worship him. To me, that notion is a dismissive and insulting paradox.

I must confess, though, that I've heard, with my own ears, people allegedly of faith who decry the belief system of others as something that should be eliminated. I've both heard and read of people who minimize the carnage of a mass shooting in a place of worship catering to the beliefs of those who don't necessarily share their own faith. This applies to race and national origin as well, but it's somehow more disconcerting to me when it's focused on religion.

I don't see an end to either gun violence in our society or religion-based acrimony and separatism. It seems both are part of who many of us are as Americans, and both contribute to how we're either conditioned or taught to believe and, in some cases, to behave. All we can do as individuals is follow that faith-based concept of treating others as we'd like to be treated.

And that might mean that if your religion in any way encourages you to hate or do harm to others, you might want to consider getting a new one.

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...H-2B VISA continued from page 1

ban on Filipino workers effective this year, drastically reducing the number of applicants seasonal employers can use.

The Department of Homeland Security and Department of State "are concerned about the high volume of trafficking victims

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from the Philippines who were originally issued H-2B visas and the potential that continued H-2B visa issuance may encourage or serve as an avenue for future human trafficking," it said.

The same ban was also imposed on Ethiopia and the Dominican Republic.

The H-2B visa program is a lottery/time-date system.

Companies must apply for the visas 120 days in advance. Richard Delany, President and Managing Director of Old Edwards Inn and Spa said they applied on time to the second, but due to policy changes, were not approved for the visas.

Delany said OEI applied for 30 applicants from Jamaica, Costa Rica and the Philippines at the earliest possible moment – January 1st just past midnight. He said he heard there were over 200,000 applications that day alone.

"It is killing us and many other hotels and golf clubs in North Carolina," said Delany. "All the top clubs in the area rely on these amazing workers for the season. With basically a negative unemployment rate right now we have nobody to fill the positions. Literally, nobody. Biltmore did not get theirs [visas] and neither did Grove Park Inn or Harrah's."

Under the H-2B program, it is mandated that employers must first try to hire American workers, or legal immigrants, at reasonable wages for their openings. If they aren't able to hire qualified U.S. workers, then employers can ask the Labor Department for permission to hire foreign guest workers.

Some minimum qualifications required of U.S. workers include training or the ability to be trained for the position they are applying; the ability to get to work and the ability to pass a drug test.

The number of available H-2B visas are capped each year – as much as 180,000 in the past but capped at 66,000 this year – broken into 33,000 allotments twice this fiscal year.

Changes to the policy under the Trump administration, paired with banning specific countries, has made it increasingly difficult for seasonal employers to find

help.

"The great thing about the H-2B program is it is seasonal (six months) so you do not have to carry their payroll in the winter when you are not as busy," said Delany. "The workers also take nothing from the welfare system as they do not have benefits in the U.S. or at work. Many are professionals who have no work in their home-country and they send all the money home. The great thing about the visa is they usually come back year after year to the same place, so you do not have to retrain them. In addition, they have to work hard and perform well or they cannot come back. So, it is sort of self-policing."

He said this program is perfect for communities that have seasonality of some kind like the beach, mountains, ski resorts, etc.

The largest change in the policy involves how workers who have previously been approved for visas are counted toward the cap.

In prior years, workers could return to the U.S. and not be counted toward that year's cap. However, the Trump Administration has changed that, and now even returning workers, are counted in the overall number of visas allotted annually, which drastically decreases the workforce.

Jason Macaulay, General Manager of the Highlands Falls Country Club, said that the ban on visas for workers from the Philippines has significantly hurt the club.

"We typically have about 12 workers who come year after year and because of the ban this year, we weren't able to have those individuals back," he said.

Macaulay said his staff grows from 20-25 in the winter to around 75 in the summer. He relies on visa workers to help staff the food and beverage needs at the club, which usually require about 20-25 people, 12 of which are typically on visas. While he plans to reapply for three of the visa spots he was not granted, even if he gets them, he will still be short.

Those against the H-2B program say without the program to fall back on, seasonal employers would have to raise the wages on seasonal jobs to entice Ameri-

cans to take them and that H-2B guest workers depress the wages of low-skilled and low-educated Americans – those who need a job the most.

But according to Macaulay, the visa program isn't about finding cheap labor or taking jobs away from Americans.

"I pay the visa workers the same as I would pay anyone because I am a firm believer in paying someone what they are worth," he said. "For the first two years I worked at the club I tried to only hire locally, but I just wasn't able to fill my staff, so I was forced to turn to the visa program."

Though the H-2B program is a great source of temporary labor, Brian Stiehler, golf course superintendent of Highlands Country Club said he is officially done relying on any part of the H-2B program in the future.

"I only ever relied on six H-2B staff members and I never let myself get too reliant on the program because every year it's a political issue. We all knew there was a chance of this happening at any time."

Stiehler said luckily, he has been able to hire local and was able to create a few more full-time jobs to replace those filled with the H-2B program.

Delany said he and other such institutions still rely on J1 Visa interns which are on an annual basis. OEI recruits those interns from hotel schools in the United Kingdom but also recruits heavily from Florida State, University of Central Florida, Appalachian State University and Auburn for the summer months.

"But the U.S. interns can only work about three months; four months top," he said. "In addition, the J1 interns are prohibited from being housekeepers or dishwashers whereas the H-2B visa is more of a manual labor visa so candidates can do anything," said Delany.

So, due to time limitations and work type, the J1 program can't offer a complete solution.

The number of H-2B visas allowed this year was 33,000 for the entire U.S. per 6-month period.

•See H-2B VISA page 10

...RETREAT continued from page 1

\$41,370.21 compared to February 2018. Sales tax revenue has increased \$34,276.30; Franchise Tax revenue is \$1,587.53 and the amount of General Fund revenues collected as of February 2019, is \$325,231.43 more compared to General Fund revenues collected as of February 2018.

Mayor Pat Taylor said healthy revenues are good since things “pop up like the water tank on Satulah, the water filter at the plant and damage from snow storms.”

As of Feb. 2019, budgeted revenue for all utility funds (the town's enterprise funds) are at the required 66.6% – water is at 68%; sewer is at 67%; sanitation is at 66% and electric is at 74%. “We anticipate meeting our budgeted revenue for all utility funds,” said Treasurer Rebecca Shuler, “and all the expenditures in those departments are below the 66.6%.”

Town Manager Josh Ward said after the reval, property values rose 6% in the town limits, 6.25% in the township – which means 46% of county tax proceeds comes from Highlands and Highlands Township.

Bear resistant toters were high on the agenda.

“We have to upgrade the way we collect garbage considering the problem we have with bears and what we expect our

sanitation workers to do,” said Mayor Taylor.

Two bear-resistant toters were presented – a 96-gallon commercial totor and a 64-gallon residential totor.

The suggestion is that by ordinance, commercial toters will be required of all businesses. Commercial toters will do away with shared dumpsters which are also illegally “shared” by citizens driving by who often leave trash on top or fail to latch after they throw trash inside.

This behavior entices bad behavior from the bears which currently have run of the town.

The town is proposing buying 350 commercial bear-resistant toters for about \$122,000. They will be available for purchase (\$349) or for lease. The details are yet to be worked out. The proposal was sent to the Public Works Committee.

The idea is to get rid of all dumpsters currently on the public right-of-way. “These are the dumpsters that are the problem,” said the mayor, “particularly on Oak Street.”

Residential bear-resistant toters were also discussed but buying 2,500 toters would cost the town \$800,000 at \$339 for a 64-gallon totor. Talk revolved around requiring residential toters as in the commer-

• See RETREAT page 19

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Property Maintenance



Carl Romberg
BIC Landmark Realty Group

Every March I have a check-up meeting with my financial planner to make sure my investments are performing as intended and to determine if any maintenance needs to occur. Real estate is sometimes our largest investment, or at least a substantial part of our overall portfolio. Since real estate is a physical asset, it should be inspected regularly.

As a Realtor showing properties or looking at potential listings, it amazes me how many times these assets are neglected, and serious devaluation occurs because of the neglect. Most times, paying small amounts to maintain a property are much cheaper than the large bills to repair the damage caused by the neglect. Think again, if you plan to pass the burden of repair on to a future buyer. It will probably cost you even more than having the repairs made before selling. Sellers will eventually lower the price to a point a buyer is willing to take on the repairs; or will issue the buyer a credit for the amount to have the repairs made after closing.

Home inspections are a very important part of the purchase and sale process. The North Carolina Real Estate Commission has a pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Home Inspections." In addition, the Listing Agreement has a section which addresses inspections and states: "Seller is advised to obtain a home inspection for the purpose

of evaluating the condition of the Property in order to enhance its marketability and to help reduce concerns of prospective buyers." The seller must either agree or not to obtain and pay for an inspection by a licensed NC Home Inspector. Most brokers I work with and know encourage the seller to have a property pre-inspected, but this seldom occurs because the seller doesn't want to spend \$500 to determine what issues are present and need to be corrected. However, once the property is under contract and inspected, the issues will be known and far too many times, the deal will fall through.

It is rare, but I have encountered homeowners who have their property inspected every 3-5 years, even though they are not planning to sell. They see the small expense worthwhile to keep their investment in the best condition possible. Also, by spreading out the different maintenance

items, when it is time to sell, they are not faced with an enormous expense to ready their property to be marketed.

If you don't want to spend the money to have your home inspected, I urge you to at least take the time to do a thorough inspection yourself. Look in the attic, basement and crawl space. Is there evidence of water intrusion, leaks or moisture problems? Examine the roof, gutters and water run-off. Is the roof in good condition or is there more moss than in the garden? Look under sinks for signs of plumbing leaks. Do your appliances operate properly? Do the decks or terraces need to be pressure washed; siding re-painted or stained? Has the HVAC system been serviced and filters changed? Is there evidence of rodents in the house? Has the chimney ever been cleaned? Does the house smell musty? And finally, those fogged windows that have been bugging you for years – have them replaced, or be ready to pay your buyer to have it done. These are just some of the items to check on.

Maybe it is worth the small expense to have a licensed inspector take a look and correct the issues before they cause further damage.

• Carl Romberg is a full-time Highlands resident and the Broker in Charge of Landmark Realty Group's Highlands Office located at 225 Main Street. Feel free to stop by and visit with him, or reach him at 678-936-9309 or carl@LandmarkRG.com



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...H-B2 VISA continued from page 8

"That is 660 per state to show you how inane this is," said Delany. "I heard Biltmore and the Grove Park Inn asked for 100 each to give you an idea of what a drop in the bucket 33,000 is. And then you have to throw in all the hotels and resorts and grocery stores on the coast that use the H-2B workers during the summer."

According to Breitbart, last week Republican leaders included the expansion of the H-2B visa worker program in their spending bill, allowing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to increase the number of imported foreign workers to roughly 100,000, so it's possible some com-

panies could reapply.

Meanwhile, according to the NewsMax, President Trump won approval to hire 64 foreign workers through the federal government's H-2B visa program for his Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach, Fla. He hired 69 workers through the same program last year.

PRINCESS PUDDIN'

• CATSPEAK •

Lil' Miss Mess With

Is that any name for a Princess? I realize that Dad has nicknames for the Royal Pooch, and sometimes Lord Banjo refers to me as Jelly Belly ... but Lil' Miss Mess With? Dad



Princess Puddin'

says this moniker stems from my habit of, well, "messaging with" things. I say I'm tidying up. In fact, I may be the Marie Kondo of cats. She believes in the "magic of tidying up," and I practice the "magic of messaging with."

I see it as my mission to remove unnecessary items from tabletops. One of my favorite positions for doing this is hanging over the arm of Dad's recliner and extending my pretty white paw towards his end table. From there, I can swipe coasters into the basket next to the chair. I can also knock the remote controls, envelopes, pens, and pencils into the basket. Honestly, if I didn't periodically clear off his table, it would be piled to the ceiling with "stuff."

Mum's downfall is her desk. It's seriously cluttered. Just imagine this: the keyboard on a shelf beneath the desktop; above it on the desk and to the left are notepads, a calculator, and a laptop; stacks of books and more paper are piled to the right; two pencil holders, a tape dispenser, sticky notepads, and paperweights lie beyond the desk calendar around the big monitor. And, that's not all. There are scraps of paper tucked all around with notes on them, a dish for my treats, a glass of water, a box of Kleenex, a lamp, a photo of one of her previous cats ... get the picture? It's a mess and needs "messaging with."

I'm partial to the left side of the desk and like to knock off the notepads, any loose pens or pencils, occasionally the calculator, and who knows what else. Sometimes I do all this while Mum is

sitting there; other times I do it at night so she can see my handiwork in the morning. The right side is best for perching on top of books but I don't "mess" with them.

Nibbling the corners of papers is another of my favorite pastimes, and Mum thoughtfully keeps loose papers lying between the laptop and the monitor, so I have corners available. She claims the papers are there so she can easily put her hands on them, not for my chewing pleasure. Mostly I stretch out on top of the papers, but every once in a while, the chewing urge strikes. The sure sign I've been hard at work nibbling is the confetti scattered beneath the desk.

Now, I don't often get to the bulletin board, but it too needs tidying up. I jump to the credenza and then to the top of the printer, and I stand up to reach the board. I knock the whiteboard markers and erasers to the floor and pull down the push-pinned notes. If I can't pull the note all the way off, I nibble the corners instead. Can you tell I have a thing about corners?

I wonder whether Marie Kondo's book, "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up," has a section on decluttering bulletin boards or whether she appreciates the art of corner chewing. Since Mum bought the book years ago and didn't follow the directions for "tidying up," I guess she'll have to rely on Lil' Miss Mess With to keep things straight.

• Princess Puddin' Penn resides in Georgia with her dad, her mom Kathy Manos Penn, and her canine brother Lord Banjo. Please send comments, compliments, and questions to inkpenn119@gmail.com. She appears in "Lord Banjo the Royal Pooch," a book that can be found on Amazon, at Books Unlimited in Franklin, and at Mountain Paws.

...LETTERS continued from page 2

The foundation grants funds directly to our public school teachers, whom we believe know what works best to educate their students. Year after year, businesses in and around Macon County generously donate goods and services to raise funds for these requests.

In 2018, a total of \$10,108 was granted by MCAF for 37 classroom projects and field trip experiences. Some notable requests include the following: \$400 towards student admission fees to Mt. Vernon Museum as part of a Highlands class field trip to Washington, D.C.; \$363 towards new science lab equipment at Macon Middle School; and \$261 towards the purchase of a butterfly observation kit for South Macon Elementary science classes.

On behalf of all public school teachers and students in Macon County, thank you for your continued support over the years, and we hope to see you on April 6th!

Brian Aulisio, MCAF President

•See LETTERS page 16

THE HIGHLANDS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER & THE BASCOM: A CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS PRESENT:

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*Caravaggio, "Boy with a Basket of Fruit", Uffizi Gallery, Courtesy of Ministry for Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

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2019 - Spring Home Improvement

Upgrading your floors? Five popular flooring choices

By Teresa Mears

When it comes time to renovate your home,

one of the biggest decisions you'll have to make is what type of flooring to use.

And for most homeowners it's not an easy decision.

You need to consider not just looks, but also practicality. How will the

floor feel on your feet, and how will you clean it? Will it stand up to pets, kids and spilled red wine? And what's your budget anyway?

"It's kind of a balancing act," says Olga Adler, an interior designer who operates Olga Adler Interiors in Westport, Connecticut, and Delray Beach, Florida. Tile, for example, is practical and durable, but "it's not very comfortable to walk on," she says, and it can be cold.

Hardwood flooring is very popular now, but it can be damaged by too much moisture and easily scratched by pets' nails. Engineered hardwood provides a similar look at a lower cost but can't be refinished as often.

Carpet and laminate are another less expensive option.

"A lot has to do with the climate," says Frederick Wilson, partner at Morgan-

te-Wilson Architects in suburban Chicago. Tile, since it's cold, is popular in warm climates such as Florida, Texas and Arizona. Carpet, which is warmer and softer, is often favored for bedrooms in colder climates.

A popular design trend is to use the same flooring throughout the entire house, or at least throughout the public areas. That makes the rooms look bigger and provides a unified look. But you wouldn't want to use hardwood or carpet in a bathroom or mudroom, where tile, vinyl or linoleum would be a better choice.

You also need to consider comfort. Carpet, laminate and cork are more comfortable to stand on than tile, for example, and they're also more comfortable to fall on – a potential concern for elderly people or families with toddlers.

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2019 - Spring Home Improvement

Hardwood falls in the middle on the comfort scale.

Tile will last forever under normal conditions, but carpet and laminate may need replacement in 10 years or less. Hardwood, properly maintained, can last for decades, but it may require more maintenance than other flooring options.

While most people choose hardwood, engineered hardwood, carpet, tile or laminate flooring for their homes, some homeowners opt for bamboo, linoleum, vinyl or concrete.

Hardwood

Pros: Hardwood is durable and attractive. If it's scratched it can be re-sanded and refinished many times. It will last the lifetime of the house if it doesn't get too wet.

Cons: Hardwood requires regular maintenance and can warp with moisture. It needs to be refinished periodically. It also needs a subfloor installed.

Engineered Hardwood

Pros: Less expensive than hardwood, engineered hardwood comes prefinished and is easier to install. It works better with heated floors and is less susceptible to moisture damage. Doesn't require a subfloor.

Cons: Can only be refinished a few times.

Carpet

Pros: Softer and warmer to walk on than most other materials. It's often less expensive than other flooring.

Cons: Can be easily stained by spills and wears out more quickly than other

• See FLOORS page 16

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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

NOTE

• Sign up now for summer camps at the Highlands Nature Center. Call 828-526-2602 or go online at highlandsbiological.org. Scholarships available.

• Sign up for the Highlands Historical Society's free Kelsey Kids summer day camp for children ages 8-11 set for Mon. - Fri., June 24-28. www.highlandshistory.com.

• Now taking teams for Spring League Softball through Friday, April 19th. If you are interested contact Lester Norris at 828-526-3556 or email at lester.norris@highlandsnc.org. Ongoing

• Movies at the Playhouse – NEW SCHEDULE – Fri. & Sat. 1, 4, and 7 p.m.; Sunday 1 and 4 p.m.; NO MOVIES MONDAY; Tues., Wed., and Thurs. 1, 4, 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 / \$2 off on Tuesdays.

• The Bascom is open Friday - Monday 10am - 5pm (Sundays 12pm - 5pm). The Bascom galleries and shops will be closed Tuesdays - Thursdays. Admin offices and The Dave Drake Studio Barn are open normal business hours. Visitors are welcome to enjoy the newly updated Story Walk Trail throughout the week.

Monday - Saturday

• At the Bascom, 10am - 5pm, Sunday 12pm - 5pm: Open Studio in The Dave Drake Studio Barn. For more information call 828-526-4949.

• At the Bascom, Art By Appointment private ceramic classes in The Dave Drake Studio Barn. For more information call 828-526-4949.

Monday - Friday

• At the Bascom, You Too Can Raku by appointment class in The Dave Drake Studio Barn. For more information call 828-526-4949.

First Mondays

• Shortoff Baptist Church non-denominational Men's Mtg at 7p.

Mondays

• At the Bascom, 10am - 1pm: Studio Alive drawing group, For more information call 828-526-4949.

• At the Rec Park, Dance2Fit classes with Tori Schmitt at 5:30pm.

Mon. & Thurs.

• The Joy Program at HUMC 11:30a to 1:30p. Includes a free lunch and a variety of programs and games. All seniors are welcome. For more info, call Tricia Smith at 828-338-8167.

Mon.-Wed.

• Hip Hop classes with Tori Schmitt 5:30-6:30.

Mon., Wed., Fri.

• Heart Healthy Exercise Class Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8:30am-9:30am.

• Step Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9a.

• Gentle Yoga at the Rec park at 9:15-10:30 a.m.. All levels welcome.

Mon., Wed., Thurs.

• Pickle Ball at the Recreation Department Gym 10:30am - 1pm

Tuesdays

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

• At the Bascom, 3pm - 5pm: Writers group. For more information call 828-

526-4949.

• The Humanist Discussion Group meets from 10:30-11:30 am in the Meeting Room at the back of the Hudson Library.

2nd and 4th Tuesdays

• OccupyWNC meets at the 7pm in the Sneak E. Squirrel Community Room (1314 Main St., Sylva. Visit www.occupy-wnc.org or call 828.331.1524

Third Tuesday

• The Macon County Poultry club meets to discuss topics related to raising backyard chickens. For more information please call 828-349-2046 or 828-369-3916.

• Highlands Area Indivisible Group meets at 5 pm in the Meeting Room at the back of the Hudson Library.

Tuesday and Thursdays

• At the Rec Park, Dance2Fit with Tori Schmitt at 7:30am.

• Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at 5:30. A combination class with many different styles of exercise at Rec Park.

Wednesdays

• Power Flow Yoga with Nalicia Allio a certified Yoga Instructor 12-1pm and 6:30-7:30pm.

First Wednesdays

• Family Movies at the Hudson Library at 3:30pm. Call 828-526-3031 for titles.

3rd Wednesdays

• Recently released movies at Hudson Library at 2pm. Call 828-526-3031 for titles.

Wed. & Fri.

• Duplicate Bridge 12-4pm at Rec Park.

Thursdays

• Storytime at Hudson Library, 10:40 am. Open to the public

• Kids Zone at Hudson Library, 3:30-5 pm. A different STEAM Program each week, with LEGO Club on the 4th Thursday.

• NAMI Support Group for individuals dealing with mental illness and the family members of individuals dealing with these challenges from 7 – 8:15pm at First United Methodist Church Out Reach Center on West Main Street in Franklin Call Donita for more info (828) 526-9510.

• Hip Hop classes with Tori Schmitt at 6:30-7:30 at the Rec Park.

2nd Thursdays

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

a.m.

3rd Thursdays

• Kidney Smart Classes in Franklin: from 4:30-6pm, Angel Medical Center, Video Conference Room, 3rd Floor, 120 Riverview St. Contact Majestic 828-369-9474

Fourth Thursday

• At the Hudson Library, Kids Zone LEGO Club. Intended primarily for kids in grades 1-5, LEGO Club allows creativity and STEM skills to develop together as kids enjoy making LEGO creations.

First Fridays

• The Bascom at Sotheby's series features different artists each month with a reception the first Friday of every month at Highlands Sotheby's International Realty from 4-5:30p at the corner of Main Street and Highway 64 across from The Old Edwards Inn. The public is invited to come meet the artist, view the exhibit and have some wine.

• At the Rec Park Pool. Movie Float-in Night - all ages First Friday night of every month. Pool opens at 6:30p and movie starts at 7 p.m. Call for movie title and prices. For any other information call 828-526-1595.

Fourth Friday

• Community Coffee with Mayor Pat Taylor at the Hudson Library in the Meeting Room from 11a until noon.

Friday - Monday

• At the Bascom, 10am - 5pm (Sundays 12pm - 5pm): Free Admission to exhibition spaces and SmArt Space for children. For more information call 828-526-4949.

Saturdays

• At The Bascom, Pottery Sale in the barn from 10a to 5p.

• The Bascom Knitters on the Terrace at The Bascom from 10 am until noon or downstairs in The Bascom Library room.

Sundays

• Live Music in OEI's Hummingbird Lounge 8 p.m. to close with Paul Jones.

Fri., April 5

• The Highlands Performing Arts Center and The Bascom, Center for the Visual Arts present Great Art on Screen featuring Caravaggio on Friday, April 5 at 5:30pm at the Performing Arts Center. Join your friends for an optional Dinner Discussion at 4118 Kitchen & Bar afterwards. Please call 4118 for reservations and please mention Great Art on Screen: 828.526.5002. Tickets (\$16) are available

Explore the inner workings of master Michelangelo at PAC/Bascom collaboration Friday, April 5

The Highlands Performing Arts Center and The Bascom, Center for the Visual Arts present Great Art on Screen featuring Caravaggio on Friday, April 5 at 5:30pm at the Performing Arts Center.

Take an immersive journey through the life, works and struggles of the Italian master Michelangelo Merisi di Caravaggio. Roberto Longhi, a Caravaggio expert, explores in the artist's masterpieces the echo of personal experiences and the expression of the human state, both physical and emotional.

These evocative moments – thanks to the use of light and cinematic techniques – allow viewers to go deep inside the mind and soul of Caravaggio, empathizing with his impulses and fears.

Join your friends for an optional Dinner Discussion at 4118 Kitchen & Bar afterwards. Please call 4118 for reservations and please mention Great Art on Screen: 828.526.5002. Tickets (\$16) are available online: www.highlandspac.org or at the door. Highlands Performing Arts Center, 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands NC

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

online: www.highlandspac.org or at the door. Highlands Performing Arts Center, 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands NC

• At the Rec Park, Float-in Movie Night at 7 p.m.

• The High Mountain Squares will host their "Traveling Through the USA Dance," Friday night at the First Presbyterian Church, East Church St, Highlands NC from 6:15-8:45 p.m. It will be in Coleman Hall. Mr Stan Russell from Greer, SC will be the caller. We dance Western Style Square Dancing, main/stream and plus levels. Everyone is welcome. For information call: 828-787-2324, 828-332-0001, 706-746-5426 or check us out on Facebook.

Sat., April 6

• Academic Auction, this Saturday at Cartoogechaye Elementary School. Don't miss it! For more information, please contact Brian Aulisio at brian.aulisio@macon.k12.nc.us

Sun., April 7

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 3.5-mile hike, elevation change 800 ft., to Tellico Valley via a trail on land acquired by the Mainspring Conservation Trust. Meet at Westgate Plaza in Franklin at 2 pm, drive 38 miles round trip. Call leader Jean Hunnicutt, 534-5234, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Sat., April 13

• The April 2019 meeting of the Western North Carolina Woodturners Club Inc. will be on Saturday starting at 10 a.m. at the Bascom in Highlands, NC. The Bascom is located at 323 Franklin Rd, Highlands, NC, just north of Downtown Highlands, NC (heading toward Franklin). Drive across the covered bridge into the parking lot, and come into the main entrance near the covered patio. There will be directions on how to get to the wood turning studio. Visitors are always welcome. The club meets in Highlands the second Saturday of every month between March and November. This month's presenter will be John Van Camp from the Brasstown Woodturners Guild.

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 5.5-mile hike, elevation change 600 ft., Rock Gap to Glassmine Gap on the Appalachian Trail, hiking south to Glassmine and down Long Branch to the Back Country parking area, perhaps seeing wildflowers along

the way. Meet at Westgate Plaza in Franklin at 9 am, drive 40 miles round trip. Call leader Gail Lehman, 524-5298 for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Sun., April 14

• The Nantahala Hiking Club take an easy 2-mile walk on the mostly level trails in the Highlands Botanical Gardens where the rare Oconee Belles may be in bloom and as well as other interesting plants on a walk around the lake. Meet at Bi-Lo in Franklin at 2 pm, drive 35 miles round trip, or call leader if coming from the Highlands or Cashiers area for meeting place. Leader is Mary Stone, 369-7352. Visitors are welcome.

Fri., April 19

• At the Rec Park, the last Senior Lunch of the season at noon.

Sat., April 20

• The town's annual Easter Egg Hunt will be Saturday at 11 am at the Res Dept. For ages 0-9 years old.

• The Highlands Chamber of Commerce is hosting its annual Plateau Pickup on Saturday. Volunteers are needed to help clean litter on the highways and roads leading to and around Highlands. Cleanup supplies and a "thank-you" tee-shirt will be provided for all volunteers. The event will start and end at Kelsey Hutchinson Park. Breakfast will be served at 8:30 a.m. and the pickup will begin at 9 a.m. Following the pickup, volunteers will be treated to a cook-out provided by Fresser's Courtyard Café. If you're interested in helping, please contact the Highlands Chamber at 828-526-2112 or visitor@highlandschamber.org

• Nantahala Hiking Club members and others celebrate Easter on the trail by bringing hard boiled eggs, fruit and goodies to hand out to the hikers on the Appalachian Trail. Meet at the Nantahala Clubhouse to pack the items before taking them out on the trail. Call Elena March, 369-8915, if you'd like to participate in this enjoyable (and appreciated) activity.

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 4.5-mile hike to High Falls and Rough Run Falls, elevation change 600 ft. This hike is about 3 miles north of Glenville and takes you into a box canyon with vertical walls 200' high and with an awesome view of the magnificent falls directly in front of you. This fall is on the West Fork of the Tuckaseegee River. Rough Run falls is on a side creek coming

into the Tuckaseegee. Meet at Cashiers Rec Park at 10 am, drive 22 miles round trip. Call leaders: Mike and Sue Kettles, 743-1079. Visitors welcome.

Fri.-Tues., April 26-30

• The Rec Park gym will be closed for gym floor screening and refinishing.

Fri.-Sun., April 26-28

• PAC Youth Theatre Spring play "Great Scenes from Shakespeare's Plays (with Combat) at the Performing Arts Center on Chestnut street at 7 p.m. and 3 p.m. on Sunday. For information about the play and the PAC Youth Theater Program, call Ms. Greenlee-Potts at (828) 526-9047 or email PACYouth.highlands@gmail.com.

Sat., April 27

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate-to-strenuous 8-mile hike, elevation change 1300 ft., on a new section of the NC Bartram Trail, starting from Hickory Knoll Road. Great views of Albert Mountain and the Little Tennessee River Valley can be seen hiking and returning from to the old bus on Double Top. Meet at Westgate Plaza in Franklin at 9 am, drive 15 miles round trip. Call leaders Bill and Sharon Van Horn, 369-1983, for reservations. Able visitors welcome.

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate-to-strenuous 7.5 mile hike on the Sweat Heifer/Kephart Prong in Smoky Mtns. Nat'l. Park, starting at Newfound Gap on the Appalachian Trail and descending on Sweat Heifer trail to return. Meet at Oconaluftee Visitor Center at 9 am, drive 30 miles round trip. Call leadee: Keith Patton, 456-8895. Hike is limited to 15 people.

Wed., May 1

Tickets for the 2019 Author's Tea on June 15 will go on sale Wednesday at the Highlands United Methodist Church. The Tea will feature local author Diane McPhail and her new book, "The Abolitionist's Daughter." The book will be available and also on sale May 1. The tickets will be \$25 and the book will be \$26.

Mon., May 6

• At the Rec Park, the Highlands School highschool Athletic Banquet at 6 p.m.

Tues., May 7

At the Rec Park, the Highlands School middle school Athletic Banquet at 6 p.m.



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...LETTERS continued from page 11

A Lament

Sing a song for sorrow
 Sing a song of grief
 Nothing's left tomorrow
 We gave it to the thief.

We gave him all he wanted
 He wanted all the trees
 Long will we be haunted
 We gave them with such ease.

We gave them up in silence
 We even turned our eyes
 We bargained with his violence
 And counted ourselves wise.

With little more to gain here
 The thief will move along
 But we who will remain here
 Can sing our sorry song.

The thief, in fact, who is he?
 The one who cut the trees?
 Or we who were too busy
 And willing to appease?

Alice Nelson
 Highlands

COREY JAMES GALLERY & Estate Consignments

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(828) 526-4818

On the corner of 3rd & Spring

...FLOORS continued from page 13

flooring. Can be a problem for people with allergies.

Tips: Looped pile is more durable than cut pile, Adler says, and a wool or wool-blend carpet will last much longer than synthetic materials.

Tile

Pros: Extremely durable, will last longer than the house, easy to clean, comes in a huge variety of styles, sizes and colors. You can even buy porcelain tile that looks like wood.

Cons: Grout is not easy to clean, sur-

face is hard to stand on for long periods, and anything dropped on tile breaks. Tile usually requires expert installation.

Tips: Darker tile shows less dirt, and minimizing grout lines cuts maintenance.

Laminate

Pros: Inexpensive, can be installed over existing floors, comes prefinished. It's softer on feet than tile if it is installed with proper backing.

Cons: Can't be refinished, can be destroyed by flooding or damaged by moisture.

...MCAF continued from page 1

best for their students. Grant monies are typically used to augment classroom and curriculum experiences.

In 2018, \$10,108 was granted by MCAF for 37 classroom projects and field trip experiences for Macon County students and that's up from the previous school year.

Some notable requests included \$400 towards student admission fees to Mt. Vernon Museum as part of a Highlands class field trip to Washington, D.C.; \$363 toward new science lab equipment at Macon Middle School; and \$261 toward the purchase of a butterfly observation kit for South Macon Elementary science classes.

The foundation considers grants submitted by teachers in all 11 schools in the Macon County School System.

During the 2017-'18 school year \$9,387.56 was allocated to nine schools in various amounts depending on the amount requested. Some schools didn't submit grants requests.

Cartoogechaye got \$199 to spiff up birdfeeders which for the last eight years have been erected around the building. The entire student body was able to watch birds and teachers used those moments for teaching standards related to the K-4 curriculum. Approximately 375 students were impacted.

South Macon Elementary received \$447 to purchase STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) activity bins impacting 22 students. The students have a block each Monday devoted to the STEM bins.

Also at South Macon Elementary, 102

students made good use of the \$261 granted for studying animal, insect and plant life cycles in a hands-on environment.

Teachers at Iotla Valley Elementary used \$354 to impact 65-80 students. They used the money to buy trade books associated with their Rooted in Reading program which are aligned with reading, writing, grammar and comprehensive lessons. They believe online resources are great but that hard copy pages of a book expose students to quality literature.

Monies (\$714) last year were also granted for a county-wide student art exhibition at the public libraries. The program was aimed at strengthening creative and critical thinking skills while engaging in visual art strategies and art-making techniques.

Franklin HS used \$315 to impact 25 students in an Adult Life Preparation Class specifically in the restaurant and hospitality sector by visiting different kinds of restaurants.

Year after year, businesses in and around Macon County donate goods and services which are auctioned or raffled off to raise funds for the MCAF grant process. The more money raised, the better off the students of Macon County will be.

The 32nd Academic Auction will take place at Cartoogechaye Elementary School in Franklin on Saturday, April 6th, at 3:30 p.m.

For more information, email brian.aulisio@macon.k12.nc.us

— Kim Lewicki

Annual 'Litter Pick-up' is Sat. April 20

On Saturday, April 20, the Highlands Chamber of Commerce is hosting its annual Plateau Pickup on Saturday. Volunteers are needed to help clean litter on the highways and roads leading to and around Highlands. Cleanup supplies and a "thank-you" tee-shirt will be provided for all volunteers. The event will start and end at Kelsey Hutchinson Park. Breakfast will be served at 8:30 a.m. and the pickup will begin at 9 a.m. Following the pickup, volunteers will be treated to a cook-out provided by Fresser's Courtyard Café. For more information, contact the Highlands Chamber at 828-526-2112 or visitor@highlandschamber.org or <mailto:visitor@highlandschamber.org>.

Highlands Mayor Taylor speaks at Annual Vietnam Veterans Day celebration



Mayor and Vietnam Veteran Patrick Taylor was one of several government officials to speak at the large crowd gathered Saturday at the Smoky Mountain Center for the Macon County Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Chapter 994 annual Vietnam Veterans Day celebration. Mayor Taylor spoke of embracing a sense of duty while serving in the military and today as "Mayor on Duty." Taylor stated that the sense of duty veterans adopts as they served in the military stays with them as they come home and become great citizens serving their community. Since 2009, the local chapter has had an annual event to recognize Vietnam Veterans for their service to our country. This year's event included a special recognition to Macon County's four prisoners of war Nat Henry (in memory) and Keith Hall, Tom Pyle and Dr. Thomas McNish (in honor). McNish was also the featured speaker. Following the ceremony at the section of WYah Road was dedicated to McNish.



At Saturday's Vietnam Veteran's celebration, a small table was set up in honor of POW/MIA's. It is set for one, one prisoner alone with a white tablecloth symbolizing purity of their intention to respond to their country's call to arms. On the table is a single red rose representing the family and friends who keep the faith while awaiting the return of the missing service members and a lit candle symbolizing a light of hope that lives in hearts to illuminate the way home for those missing. The table includes a bread plate with a slice of lemon representing the bitter fate they endured and salt to represent the family tears that were shed. A glass is inverted on the table to let us know that they cannot toast with us today. A Bible is also on the table to represent strength gained through faith to sustain the loss from our country founded as one nation under God. At the table is one empty chair to represent their absence. They are not here, they are not forsaken.



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Chipotle Pork Street Tacos

From The Spice & Tea Exchange

- 1 TBS Chipotle Pepper Powder
- 3 TBS Mexican Mole Spice Blend
- 1 TBS + 1 tsp Chile Lime Sea Salt

From the Grocer:

- 1/2 cup tomato paste
- 1 large white onion, sliced
- 1/2 cup beef stock
- 4 lbs Boston Butt pork roast or shoulder
- 6 tomatillos, husked, rinsed, dried and halved
- 1 jalapeno pepper, stemmed and halved
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro + extra garnish
- Zest and juice from 1 lime
- Small flour tortillas, warmed
- Sour cream for garnish



Preparation for Pork:

- Combine tomato paste, Chipotle Pepper Powder, Mexican Mole Spice Blend, and 1 TBS of Chile Lime Sea Salt.
- Place sliced onion in bottom of slower cooker with beef stock.
- Coat pork with tomato mixture and place in slow-cooker on top of onions.
- Cover and cook on low for 10-12 hours (or high for 7-8 hours)
- Transfer pork, onions and any liquid to a large bowl. Cover with aluminum foil and let rest for 15 minutes.
- Shred pork with two large forks and mix to incorporate with onions.

Preparation for Salsa:

- Preheat broiler on highest setting
- Place tomatillos, cut side down, 1/2 intact onion, jalapeno, and garlic on a baking sheet lined with aluminum foil and place under broiler. Roast until charred, 4-6 minutes. Remove from broiler and allow to fully cool.
- Combine charred vegetables with 1/2 cup cilantro, lime zest, lime juice and 1 tsp of Chile Lime Sea Salt in a food processor or blender and puree until somewhat smooth. Pour into a serving bowl.

Prepare taco:

- Fill each tortilla with shredded pork. followed by sour cream, salsa, and garnish with cilantro.

Yum!

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



A time for renewal

Curtis Fussell
Co-Pastor
First Presbyterian Church

The blooming of springtime has arrived! What a wondrous sight to see the flowering trees and daffodils. Even weeds are blooming - just to get a head start on making life difficult for us in the garden. The world is, as it were, coming to life again. The cold of winter passes away and the warmth of summer's life rebounds.

As the beauty of the world comes back in force, with green leaves and colors replacing the gray of winter, it affects us. We feel invigorated. We have dreams of going places for fun. We make plans that will take us outdoors. In this season we sense an opportunity for renewal.

Easter comes in springtime. If Easter came at another time of the year, it would seem out of place. How appropriate that Easter happens at spring time when life returns after the cold, dreary days of winter.

Spring time speaks of life coming out of death. Easter speaks the same words. Still, it's strange to think that to get to this new life at Easter, the new life we proclaim with the resurrection of Jesus, death comes first. How strange this truth of faith: the joy of Easter, the joy of Jesus' resurrection, can only come because of the sad despair of Jesus' death.

It points to a great mystery. In the beauty and joy of spring time, we can remember that life has its dark side. A shadow side resides in all things. But there resides also this: the presence of God to give us new life.

Even in spring time when all around us life is renewed and grows, with all its delights; there are problems to deal with. Sorrows we grieve and bear. Difficulties we must endure.

Yet, a promise of new life lifts us up beyond all those problems, sorrows, difficulties, and shadows: this promise that God is with us to give us new life. We have a life to live that is more than just to gravel over problems, sorrows and difficulties. God creates life and gives us life, refreshing us daily; if only we will take hold of the assurance that God stands with us in all things, leading us to new life.

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 THE SKY

Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999

Sundays: 10 a.m.: Worship

Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

Rector: Jim Murphy, 252-671-4011

464 US Hwy 64 east, Cashiers

9:30a Sunday School; 10:30a Worship Service.

Mon. 6p Bible Study & Supper in homes

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS

Pastor Brent Metcalf • 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: 7 p.m.

Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685

3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC • Sr. 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 U.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

Rev. W. Bentley Manning • 526-2968

Monday-Friday: Morning Prayer at 8:15a. Sundays: 8 am

Holy Eucharist Rite I; 9 am Sunday School; 10:30 am Holy

Eucharist Rite II. Childcare available at 10:30

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS

828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org

Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor

220 Main Street, Highlands

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 5p

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors

526-3175 • fpchighlands.org

Sun.: Adult Ed.: 9:30a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.

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

Wed.: Choir: 6p

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

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HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

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Johnson

Sunday: School 9:45a, Worship 11a & 7p, Bible Study 6p

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

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.: Bible Study 10a; Morning Worship 10:45a., Evening

Worship, 6p. Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Pastor Randy Lucas 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

Intercessory Prayer Ministry

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

Chaplain Margaret Howell • 2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741

LutheranChurchoftheHolyFamily.yolasite.com

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 Zane Talley

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.

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Father Casmir - 526-2418

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 Donald G. Bates • 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 a.m.

Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 6 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY

706.746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447, Pastor Gary Hewins

Worship: Sun. 9 a.m., with Holy Communion the 1st & 3rd

Sun.; Tues: Community Supper 5:30 followed by Bible Study.

THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

1448 Highway 107 South, Office: 743-2359 • Rev. Rob Wood

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

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

Thursday: Noon Healing Service with Eucharist.

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Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

...RETREAT continued from page 3

cial district and perhaps finding a smaller version for residents.

The toters in the residential district would take care of the bear problem in neighborhoods and would also save the backs of sanitation workers who make 1,250 stops each day they pick up an array of cans.

A uniformed bear-resistant can that could be rolled out and picked up by a mechanism on the garbage truck could alleviate the bear problem and decrease back injuries in the sanitation department.

Ordinances and uniformity in garbage receptacles is part of being a BearWise community. Meanwhile, the town's 40 bear-proof cans have been ordered and will be installed on sidewalks and in other public areas in about five weeks.

"We are advanced when it comes to dealing with bears," said the mayor, "but this has to be a comprehensive effort. We can set the standard for other communities. But there is no magic bullet. This will cost money."

The Public Works Committee was tasked with developing protocols and an ordinance to address bear/toter concerns in the business district. The residential issue will be addressed later.

A possible increase in the fire tax will likely help fund the renovations to the fire department building. Highlands has the lowest fire tax in the county. Residential units in the new building will be included for potential full-time, paid firefighters.

Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart said it's time the town move to full-time, 24-hour coverage using full-and part-time personnel as well as its volunteers.

"We are behind in staffing compared to Franklin and even Cashiers," he said. "I would like six people to cover a 24-hour

shift."

Franklin has six full-time and 5-6 part-time paid employees.

The department has been putting aside money for the past six years with the new building in mind. Thursday, the commissioners allocated that \$80,000 to get the engineering plans started.

It will cost \$2.5-\$3 million to build the new complex. The town will borrow the money and pay it back with the fire tax over an extended period of time.

Gearhart said cancer is a big deal in the firefighter world due to the chemicals used and breathing in the exhaust from the trucks. The new building will be properly vented for each bay.

The possibility of erecting radar signs around town was discussed but didn't go over very well. Various programmable flashing speed limit signs were discussed but no one liked the idea of them being planted around town.

"I don't like them period," said Commissioner Donnie Calloway.

"I'd be OK with one or two, but don't like the idea of them being all around town," said Commissioner Brian Stiehler.

"Talk about intrusive government... this is it," said Commissioner Amy Patterson.

In the end, they agreed to perhaps install one or two at highly used and dangerous intersections like Little Bear Pen. The idea was sent to the Public Safety Committee.

Money to fix the underdrain water filter at the water plant was allocated – \$160,000 – and then replacing the same part in the second filter for \$200,000 was considered before it, too, breaks. It is the filter being used while the other is being fixed. And finally, the installation of a third filter at the cost of \$1.5 million was discussed.

Public Works Director Lamar Nix also

laid out his paving plan for Satulah/Worley, Cullasaja Drive, Oak Lane and Hickory Hill. The total would be about \$600,000.

He also explained the costs of the Split Rail Water improvement project – \$876,000; and electric department capital needs.

MIS/GIS Director Matt Shuler requested \$124,000 for various additions including a vehicle, a ground penetrating radar system, and replacement components in the SCADA system at the sewer plant.

The Police Dept. requested a replacement vehicle, cruiser equipment and sound meters for \$82,000.

The Rec Dept. wants to replace/resurface the tennis courts, purchase two workout machines and replace the pool slide for a total of about \$150,000.

The only monies allocated Thursday were those to repair the underdrain filter at the water plant and to begin the engineering plans for the fire department building.

Everything else will be discussed during upcoming budget meetings. The first one is April 11.

"We have strong reserve funds and we have some real needs," said the mayor. "We clearly have some pressing items so if we need to cut into our reserves we will do it."

The town has \$4 million in the General Fund Reserve and \$4 million in the Enterprise Fund Reserve.

– Kim Lewicki

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from March 22. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

March 22

• At 11:06 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on US 64 near Mirror Lake Road.

• At 1 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident in the Post Office parking lot.

March 23

• At 12:45 p.m., officers were called about person being verbally aggressive at Cosper's Flowers in Highlands Plaza.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from March 24

March 24

• At 6:49 p.m., the dept. responded to a medical alarm at a residence on Hudson Road.

March 27

• At 12:40 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a resident on Morewood Circle.

• At 7:55 p.m., the dept. responded to a CO2 alarm at a residence on Whiteside Mountain Road.

• At 8:59 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance to a resident on Azalea Drive.

• At 9:21 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Falls Drive West.

March 28

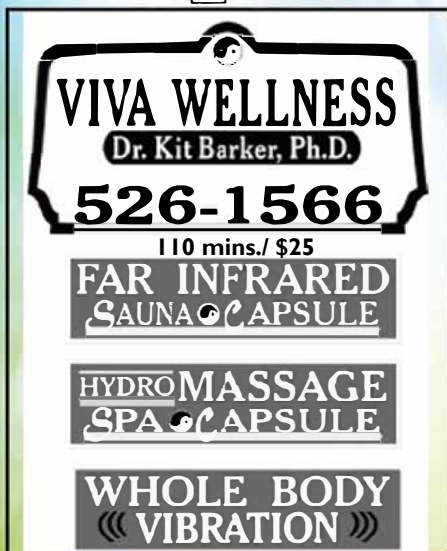
• At 10:10 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Myrtle Speed Road.

March 29

• At 2:41 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Bowery Road.

• At 1:47 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Lake Sequoyah and it stood by at the town ball field for the MAMA helicopter.

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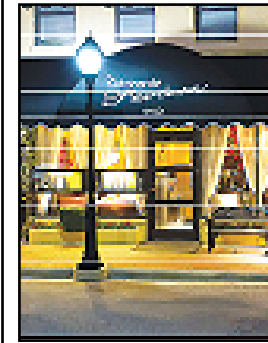
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