

Highlands Newspaper

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PRIMARY 2020 Q & A PART 1

Democrats up for MC Commission seat

By Brittney Lofthouse

When Macon County Commissioner Karl Gillespie announced he would be running for

the North Carolina House of Representatives, it opened the gates for five candidates to file for the soon-to-be vacant District II seat. Three

Republicans and two Democrats filed for office, meaning both parties will have a primary on March 3
• See PRIMARY 2020 page 6

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Acronyms the same; but mission differs

At the Thursday, Jan. 16 Town Board meeting, Chairman of the Highlands-Cashiers Health Foundation Board, Dr. Walter Clark, told commissioners about the Foundation's work over its inaugural year, explaining how its new mission (and name) differed from its predecessor the H-C Hospital Foundation.

The HCHF was reconstituted from the assets of the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Foundation when Mission Health – a nonprofit - was sold to Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), a for-profit organization.

“When Mission Health sold the hospital to HCA last year, we had no alternative but to reorganize since we could not use our funds to support a for-profit hospital,” said Dr. Clark. “For more than 30 years, the H-C Hospital

• See HCHF page 17



The red line represents the perimeter of the Singer-Songwriter Festival to be in KH Founders Park on Pine Street set for Saturday, May 2 from 6-10 p.m.

Town Board OKs Singer-Songwriter Festival in K-H Park set for May 2

At Thursday's Town Board meeting, Casey Reid of Eleven Events and David Bock, chairman of Highlands Festivals Inc., a nonprofit organization created to run

the Highlands Food & Wine Festival, presented a proposal for a one-night, open-air, Singer-Songwriter Festival in K-H Founders Park, Saturday, May 2, from 6-10 p.m.,

rain or shine.
The purpose is to promote Highlands as a destination during the slow Spring shoulder season,
• See FESTIVAL page 9

Town Board appoints 3 to Planning Board

Three new people were appointed to the town's Planning Board, but not all commissioners voted for the appointments.

At Thursday night's Town Board meeting, Assistant Planning Director Michael Mathis presented the appointees who were recommended by the Land Use Committee.

Re-appointed were: Stephan Abranyi, Dennis DeWolf, Rick Trevathan and Brad Armstrong. Appointed for the first time were: Darren Whately, Christopher Wilkes and Helene Siegel.

New commissioner Marc Hehn entered a no-vote but was told it would count as a “yes.”

However, after the meeting he said Town Attorney JK Coward told him he could have asked to be excused, but prior to the meeting he said Town Manager Josh Ward told him that

• See PLANNING page 7

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Standing by for winter storms

I'm anxiously waiting for a winter storm to hit, although I hope it doesn't. These storms almost invariably cause road problems and power outages. Since Highlands is situated at 4,118 feet above sea level, not having the disruption of a winter storm would not be normal. Maybe this is a harbinger of climate change bringing aberrant weather patterns to the plateau.

In the event we do have a winter storm and lose power, I hope everyone will be patient. Our crews are on standby in these situations and respond immediately. If power goes out during a regular business day, the outage can be reported at Town Hall. The number is 526-2118. If lines are repeatedly busy, chances are many people are calling to report the same problem. Please consider assuming town crews are aware of



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

the outage in your area. If a power outage occurs in the evening or on weekends, please do not call 911. This emergency line can be overwhelmed with these nonemergency calls. To report an outage after hours please call 526-9431, the non-emergency number. Again, if the line is busy, it probably indicates the outage has already been reported.

Another problem in a winter storm scenario is the plowing of roads. Town road crews are also on standby in these situations. Their first priority is to plow all town roads including neighborhood streets. After clearing town roads, our crews may assist the state in plowing state roads. Our crews will also assist in plowing private roads as time becomes available. They do not plow driveways, including the mayor and town commissioner driveways.

The North Carolina road system is confusing. What is a state road and what is a town road? Our staff has a map that identifies state and town roads in the main office and on the town website. Drop by, call or go online if you are unsure whether your road is state or town maintained. Or, look on the street sign. A street sign with a number on its post, or on the sign itself, indicates that road is maintained by the state. If the state road, whether within or outside of town, does not get plowed, call the NCDOT office for Macon County at (828) 524-2517.

I announced at the board meeting last week that the Mission/HCA Healthcare Monitor will be holding a public meeting here in Highlands on Wednesday, January 29 at the Highlands Recreation Center. The meeting will be from 5:30 to 7 pm. For those that can't make this meeting, the monitors will also be at the Cashiers/Glenville Recreation Center on January 28 from 5:30 to 7pm. Both meetings will focus on services at the Highlands/Cashiers Hospital.

Under the terms of the sales agreement of Mission to HCA, the NC Attorney General required that an independent monitor be hired to track progress and services after the sale was complete. The monitor reports its findings to Attorney General Josh Stein. These meetings are a part of an inaugural set of meetings being held throughout Western North Carolina. The independent monitor, Gibbons Advisors, will be soliciting public feedback and input, so please attend one of these meetings.

Upcoming HCA/Mission meetings

Informational meetings led by Gibbins Advisors have been scheduled in seven communities in Western North Carolina served by Mission Health.

Gibbins Advisors is the Independent Monitor (IM) hired to monitor HCA Healthcare's compliance with the obligations it agreed to when it purchased Mission Health System. In each meeting, the IM team will discuss its role and provide an opportunity to ask questions.

The Cashiers event is Tues., Jan. 28 from 5:30-7p.m. in the Cashiers/Glenville Recreation Center on Frank Allen Road in Cashiers.

The Highlands event is Wed., Jan. 29 from 5:30-7p.m. at the Highlands Civic Center.

The Franklin event is Thurs., Jan. 30 from 5:30-7p.m. in the Robert C. Carpenter Room of the MC Community facilities Building on the Georgia Road.

Members of any community are welcome to attend the meeting(s) of their choosing. Meetings will have limited seating and attendees will be welcomed first come, first serve. Doors will open 30 minutes before each event.

• HIC'S VIEW •



• LETTERS •





Who we are and what we will do

Dear Editor,

WideOpen Highlands is currently soliciting resident and business input to the broadband survey that we recently mailed to Highlands residents. We have been working with the Town of Highlands for over a year to develop a world class Gigabit fiber network in Highlands. One of the reasons this takes so long is that North Carolina law makes it difficult for towns to help their residents get fiber.

• See LETTERS page 5

• WEATHER •

Thu, 23-Jan	Fri, 24-Jan	Sat, 25-Jan	Sun, 26-Jan
			
43°F 32°F	40°F 29°F	39°F 26°F	41°F 21°F
Mostly cloudy	Periods of rain	Areas of low clouds; chilly	Partial sunshine
RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®
High: 45° Low: 27°	Hgh: 42° Low: 27°	High 37° Low: 27°	High 42° Low: 20°

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...LETTERS continued from page 2

WideOpen Networks has been a leader in open access fiber networks for over a decade. Our parent company, Design Nine, has been helping communities solve their broadband infrastructure problems for over 25 years.

We have designed and built more successful open access fiber and wireless networks than any other company. The Wired Road, just one of our projects in SW Virginia, covers over 650 square miles. New Hampshire's FastRoads, another of our projects, connects 20 towns over 150 miles of fiber. nDanville, a Danville, Virginia, project of ours, has been operating successfully for over eleven years.

We are designing a world class Gigabit fiber network for the residents and businesses of Highlands with affordable prices.

We have an outstanding record of delivering services to people by providing networks which provide a choice of services. Our networks do not lock people into one service provider. With our high speed fiber and our fast Internet access, we are planning to offer a choice of Internet, phone, and video streaming services. Most Highlands customers should be able to save \$50 to \$100 a month on their telecom bills.

The survey that we are running in Highlands (www.wideopenhighlands.net) will help us identify who wants to switch and will enable us to quickly get as many people and businesses connected as possible. As we complete our agreement with the Town of Highlands, we will have more details on the prices and services that we will offer. We intend to deliver the same world-class services to Highlands that we have delivered to other communities.

Andrew Cohill
President, WideOpen Networks

Town initiative is a waste

Dear Editor,

Wide Open Network's recent mailer, surveying citizen needs was not only misleading but also puzzling. Being that we are years and millions of dollars into this internet project, we are well past the surveying stage. Not to mention that Wide Open Network is not even an internet provider.

I believe every citizen in this town and the surrounding communities should have access to fast reliable internet.

And completely understand how important it is for our future sustainability. However I believe that the public sector could and would provide these needs without restrictions and or competition from government.

When the town started Altitudes around four years ago they were knowingly operating in a gray area with legality issues being hammered out in the courts. Being that governments are not permitted to compete with the public sector selling services such as Internet.

I have always questioned why the town jumped through this small window knowing that it was going to be closed again, leaving the town seesawing on legality. Altitudes is however still in operation. So, yes the town is in the business of selling internet. They provide internet to hundreds of customers including Town Board members and many who live outside the town limits. So home owners in town and in neighborhoods such as Ravenel are financing Altitudes four employees and massive debt, to provide internet to customers outside the city limits while they themselves are without.

Morris Broadband brought fiber to Highlands, many years ago. It's purpose was to link hospitals, public schools and library systems through out the state and was paid for by taxpayers. So the capability has been here for many years. It seems with the town not being able to legally continue it's venture, this is where Wide Open Networks enters the picture. It will lease the fiber infrastructure from the town, creating a middleman between the town and any service providers that decide to provide services because Wide Open Networks itself is not a service provider. They do mention that they will charge you a fee in addition to whatever the internet provider charges. So, we pay to build the network, just so we can lease it out to be charged a fee to use it?

Altogether with Altitude's and the loans the town has taken out now, we are well over \$8 million into the project so far and that number continues to grow. Which translates out to roughly \$8,300 per voting resident. There are already providers in the area that are trying to bring fiber into town. But they are blocked by pole attachment issues and pole attachment fees. It would seem to have been a lot cheaper to have just dropped attachment fees and offered other incentives to entice providers to come in. Providers who would have used their money not ours to build the fiber network!

•See LETTERS page 22



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...PRIMARY 2020 continued from page 1

to determine who will go on from each to appear on the ballot in November.

The two Democrats who have filed for office are both women and although neither have held an elected office in Macon County, both are very active in the community.

Olga Lampkin moved to Franklin to be near her aging parents, to spend more time with them and assist them as they age, and because she believed it's a much better environment in which to raise her youngest son.

Lampkin was born and raised in the Redlands, a very rural, south Florida agriculture-based community. She is the mother of two boys, ages 12 and 24. She has four cats, two dogs, and countless chickens and roosters. She grows a large garden and dries and ferments what she grows so her family and friends can enjoy it year-round.

Since moving to NC in 2015, Lampkin has worked for Coward, Hicks & Siler in Sylva, handling a wide variety of matters, including DOT condemnation defense cases, miscellaneous civil litigation, estate planning, and real estate. Lampkin has worked for law offices since 1990 in south and central Florida (1990-2001), central California (2001-2015) and North Carolina (2015-present).

In FL, the offices Lampkin worked for handled real estate matters while in CA, the offices she worked for mostly handled water rights cases, civil litigation and estate planning, and represented municipalities in their matters.

Lampkin serves on the Board of Directors (Secretary) of The Canary Coalition, a non-profit that advocates for clean air.

"I truly think Macon County is a great place," Lampkin said. "I chose to live here, built a house, and plan to stay. I want to be a part of keeping Macon County great, but even great things have room for improvement. That being said, I certainly don't want Macon County to be like any of the counties where I have previously lived; I left those places for a reason. I like to be busy, I like to be involved, and I want to give back to my community."

Betty Cloer Wallace made her living as a tree farmer where she planted 14,000 native hardwood seedlings and wildlife preservationist after she retired from education and government. As a member of 6th generation Macon County farm family, Wallace received a B.S. in English and Art from California State University at Humboldt, her M.A. in Education from University of North Carolina, her Ed.S. in Administration from Western Carolina University and Ed.D. in Administration from University

of Georgia.

Wallace previously served as the Associate Superintendent of Macon County Schools and the Director of Western Regional Education Center. Her career in education is extensive, also serving as Superintendent of Vance County Schools (15 schools, 1,100 employees) as well as Deputy Assistant State Superintendent for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Wallace was also a US Department of Education Fellow in Washington, DC and former Associate Superintendent for the Northwest Arctic Borough School District. Wallace has also had a career in secondary education, serving as an Adjunct Professor at Western Carolina University and Southwestern Community College.

She has served on numerous boards and commissions for industrial recruitment and school facilities planning in Macon County and WNC.

In her free time, Wallace writes and is the author of *Poisoned Apple*, the *Bell-Curve Crisis* (in our schools) as well as *Tuckaseegee Chronicles*, and historical novels set in the Little Tennessee River Valley.

Although she has not held an elected position in Macon County, Wallace does have political experience. Wallace was elected to two terms as State Secretary of NC Democratic Party and has served on the State Democratic Executive Committee and State Executive Council. Wallace was the first woman in NC to run for U.S. Senate and first ran for Macon County Board of Commissioners in 2018.

"My lifelong experience and credentials in public service have been a lifetime of preparation for serving as a Macon County Commissioner," said Wallace. "I want to work toward practical and sustainable change and to up-end the top-down three-person voting bloc that has controlled our Board of Commissioners for many years. We must change our current status quo economic and social trajectory if we want to keep our young families here. I'm an advocate for a strong multi-party system to maintain balance in our local government as in all other areas of our lives. At the moment, Macon County is clearly out of balance, clearly lop-sided toward the "tea party" far right while a contingent of far left "progressives" pull in the opposite direction. This extreme divergence on both extremes of our local political spectrum has split our local political parties into five distinct factions, which is hurting our ability to sustain a moderate common ground in local government that we need, and must have, to move forward as a county."

Questions to candidates as they were asked and answered. Small edits made for

clarity and length.

What do you see as being the biggest issue facing Macon County and how would you address it if elected?

Lampkin: I think funding public education is important, but that is addressed separately," said Lampkin. "County commissioners should represent the people, not a personal agenda, so the issues that are important to me are not as relevant as the issues that are important to the other Macon County residents. Like so many others, though, I think opioids and meth are the scourge of our county. I am interested in analyzing what measures have been tried in the past, and to help us take new steps forward toward some level of success. Also, there is an obvious need for employment opportunities, but incentives are needed to encourage businesses to move to our county. The monopolies created by Duke and Frontier are appalling, and their poor customer service needs to be corrected. On a county level, the way to address that is just like on a personal level: repeated, forceful contact moving up through the business hierarchy.

Wallace: Jobs that pay a living wage and benefits so that we can stop the exodus of our young families is vital; therefore, an aggressive plan for economic development is crucial. Putting all our eggs in the tourism basket helps some residents but is unsustainable for most residents. Our poverty rate (30%), median income (\$39,000), needy and declining schools, children in low-income households (58%), a growing homeless population, reduced hospital and health care facilities, lack of affordable housing, lack of broadband internet access, and growing crime statistics related to drug trafficking are seriously affecting our lives and economy, since those are the main factors that prospective businesses and industries look at beyond a potential workforce.

Potential employers analyzing such data are not impressed with our sporadic support for education, our "welfare queen" numbers, our crime statistics, our "dollar store" economy, or our lack of broadband internet access and expansion. Macon County has fallen into a downward economic spiral as a number of large industries have closed and as a succession of storefronts are boarded up. We should develop clear and forthright industrial recruitment presentations and packages, and aggressively contact a large number and range of businesses and industries through industrial associations and commercial Realtors to try to entice divisions or even headquarters to locate here. We can certainly offer tax incentives and negotiate long leases, but we should quit deeding away plots of our prime county-owned commercial land to private companies that thrive for a while, then sell the property and move elsewhere. As for our lack of economic growth,

we have concentrated on development of Main Street Franklin, the Macon Airport, recreational parks (even an expensive dog park), and retirement havens, rather than devising and carrying out a long-range plan for development of the by-pass and major arteries leading into Franklin, namely the Sylva Road and Georgia Road, and to a lesser extent the Highlands and Bryson City roads. Thus, our tendency is toward consumerism rather than production, and it is not sustainable.

Public Education: Commissioners are faced with more and more requests for public education funding. What is your stance on county's role in funding public education? Do you think the current levels are adequate or do you think they should be increased/decreased?

Lampkin: I think the county should do everything it reasonably can to increase funding for public education. It may be trite so say, "I believe the children are our future," but they are. It behooves us all as adults, as the people who make decisions, as the people who can do something, to provide all possible opportunities to allow our children (and all Macon County children truly are "our" children, collectively) to reach their full potentials. For most families, our children spend more waking hours at school, with their teachers, than they do at home, with their parents. Just as our children deserve opportunities, our schools and our teachers deserve access to the finances and funding that will allow them to better serve our children. Our children deserve more, and our schools and teachers deserve more.

I have been involved in the Macon County arts movement. The problem is that we have a small set of finances from taxes that goes to pay for many teacher's salaries, school supplies, personnel, programs, and so on. We need to generate new revenue streams and be willing to discuss how partnerships between private businesses and public schools can develop relationships that benefit the whole community. We also need to be more thoughtful about how to spend the available resources."

Wallace: County commissioners are responsible for providing adequate school facilities, while the state and local school boards are responsible for operation of the schools, albeit our local school board is often reduced to begging our county commissioners for additional funding simply to stay afloat, which is not a pretty sight. Together, these two boards and "we the people" have a moral obligation to our children and grandchildren to do better, to provide schools that give every young person the best chance for a successful future. It is disgraceful that our students do not have basic instructional materials and that teach-

• INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft. •

2019 Highlands Real Estate Summary

For me, it's always interesting to analyze real estate transactions and to look for trends. I did this in January of 2019 for 2018 and am glad to have the opportunity to share some of what I found for 2019.

The Highlands-Cashiers Multiple Listing Service covers the entire plateau, including Scaly Mountain, Highlands, Cashiers, Glenville, Cullowhee, Sapphire and Lake Toxaway.

To re-cap 2018, the overall sales were up 33% and that was the best year on the plateau. The Highlands volume was up 30%, so very close to the overall market and there had been a significant increase in the number of homes that sold for over \$1 million with a decrease in the average days on market.

2019 started out slower than we expected, and as of June 30th we were about 30% behind that point in 2018.

However, over the last six months of the year the market kicked into gear and we ended up with a 3% overall volume increase and a 3.2% increase in the number

of transactions for the entire MLS.

There are four primary types of transactions: commercial, lots & land, condominium/townhome and residential.

Residential is by far the most common, making up about 85% of the sales. Looking just at Highlands, these are broken down in the chart with the following noted: 1) the number of transactions was up slightly at 3.8%; 2) the total dollar volume was down by 3.2%; 3) lot and land sales were down 37% from 2018; and 4) the average days on market (all types) decreased from 285 to 223.

Looking specifically at homes, they are broken down into four price ranges. There is good volume in all market sectors, but the sector that had the biggest change was the \$400,000 to \$699,000 with a 36% increase in the number of units sold. The average



Carl Romberg
Landmark Realty, BIC
Highlands
678-936-9309

days on market decreased from 247 to 213 which is an indicator that we like to see.

We also like to see the average sales price increase, but it actually decreased from \$745,346 to \$700,648. Part of the reason is the significant increase in the number of transactions below \$700,000, as well as a slight decrease in the number of sales that were over \$1 million, thus bringing down the average.

There are a number of factors that can impact the data, but the overall trend continues to be very positive, as it has been the latter part of the decade. Small increases in the number of units and dollar volume and decreases in

the average days on market are both good for sellers. The drop in the average sales price is good for buyers.

We continue to see homes that are in good condition and priced correctly sell very quickly as well as buyers taking advantage of the competitive mortgage rates.

This information will help buyers and sellers make informed decisions, but they should always ask for a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) for a specific home they are buying or selling.

• Carl Romberg is the Broker-in-Charge of the Highlands office of Landmark Realty Group. Landmark has been the firm with the largest volume of sales on the plateau each of the past 7 years. Carl can be reached at 678-936-9309 or carl@landmarkrg.com.

...PLANNING continued from page 1

he couldn't be excused unless there was a conflict of interest. Usually, a conflict of interest involves finances; there being none meant he couldn't be excused.

Hehn said he didn't want to vote because of the process, not because of the appointees.

"I believe they are probably qualified," he said after the meeting, "it's just the way it was done."

He said for some time, the town's website has said there were no openings on the Planning Board which meant no one thought there was a reason to apply.

Evidently, the applicants had been on file for some time, but still, the website didn't say there were openings.

Hehn contends that had the website been transparent, perhaps more people would have applied.

After serving for several years, Thomas Craig, Chris Boltz and Glenda Bell were removed.

At the December Planning Board meeting, Thomas Craig announced that the December meeting would be his last.

At the time, Boltz and Bell didn't know it would also be their last meeting. In fact, they didn't know they had been replaced until after the Jan. 16 Town Board meeting.

Bell said she wasn't told she needed to reapply to retain the position – that she, Craig and Boltz had just been reappointed each year.

Some years ago, the Town Board did away with term-limits on its various boards ruling that commissioners could simply annually reappoint or not.

Again, it's the process that took place that some felt offensive – saying communicating that they were to be removed would have been the polite thing to do.

Thursday night, Mayor Pat Taylor said the three removed from the board would receive a letter of thanks and a gift certificate.

– Kim Lewicki

2019 Highlands Real Estate Sales						
Type	# Sales	Total Sales Volume		Avg Price	Median	Avg DOM
Comercial	6	\$4,405,000		\$734,167	\$590,000	235
Lots/Land	37	\$5,615,750	37% ↓	\$151,777	\$75,000	254
Condo/Townhome	50	\$19,975,531		\$399,511	\$297,500	246
Home	238	\$166,754,161		\$700,648	\$520,000	213
Total	331	\$196,750,442	3.2% ↓			223 ↓
Breakdown for Homes						
\$0 - \$399,999	73	\$20,333,965		\$278,547	\$290,000	227
\$400,000 - \$699,999	95	\$51,035,300	36% ↑	\$537,214	\$525,000	191
\$700,000 - \$999,999	25	\$21,023,451		\$840,938	\$860,000	240
\$1,000,000 plus	45	\$74,361,445		\$1,652,477	\$1,362,500	223
	238	\$166,754,161	3% ↑	\$700,648	\$520,000	213 ↓



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Andrea is one of the top 25 Real Estate Brokers in 2018.

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Do you need help with staying warm?

The Highlands Emergency Council (H.E.C.) will be accepting applications from those requesting financial help for the cost of propane gas, fuel oil, and wood. Applications will be accepted from 10am until 2pm on: Monday, January 27, Wednesday, January 29 and Friday, January 31 or you can call for an appointment 828-526-4357. Please come by H.E.C. located on Poplar Street (next to Wilson Gas). Proof of income is required. No applications will be accepted after these dates. Applications must be filled out in person, no applications will be taken over the phone.

• HOSPITAL NEWS •

H-C Hospital's new CEO looks forward to serving – and becoming part of the community

I'm delighted to be serving as Highlands-Cashiers Hospital's (HCH) new Chief Executive Officer/Chief Nursing Officer and look forward to getting to know this special community and learning how I can serve you most meaningfully. I started at the hospital in December, and I've spent these past weeks getting acquainted with the wonderful caregivers and team members at HCH. I appreciate the warm welcome everyone has extended to me.

I wanted to use this first column to introduce myself, share a bit about my professional journey and talk about what led me to this exciting point. Like many people, my career has had unexpected twists and turns and I'm also fortunate to have had exceptional, encouraging men-

tors along the way.

I started as an Army medic and worked in West Germany and later in my home state, Kentucky, at Fort Knox. I then worked for EMS in Louisville, and that work was both fascinating and thrilling. During this time, I was called to a heartbreaking mass shooting in Louisville where more than 20 people were injured and nine people died. This experience sealed my commitment to attend nursing school and I chose that over teaching, another path I was considering. During that dramatic event all my training kicked in and I truly fell in love with healthcare.

After graduating from nursing school, I worked at Jewish Hospital in Louisville. In those days new nurses couldn't work in the Emergency Room, but while there I went into critical care,

learned about cardiac nursing, and worked as an open heart nurse. I also served there as a flight nurse for critical cardiac patients.

I thought my next move would be nurse anesthetist training, but fate – and one of the leaders at my hospital – had other plans for me. A retiring nurse manager talked frankly with me and said that she was retiring and wanted me to step into her role. I never had any intention of doing administrative or management work, but I thought I could do it while I earned my bachelor's degree. That position allowed me to take on the very problems that bothered me when I was a nurse, and I realized I was good at working with people, team building, and problem solving.

At this point, I realized I lacked a lot of knowledge about hospital administration and chose to earn a master's degree in Healthcare Management (MHA) through a distance learning program because at that point, I had small children and didn't want to be away from them. When I was nearly done with that program, I was fortunate to get an offer from the hospital president to become an Assistant Vice President, but there was one stipulation: I had to get my master's degree in a traditional didactic, as he was "old school" and didn't respect distance learning education. I put my MHA on hold and committed to attending the University of Louisville during the evenings to earn a Master of Business Administration (MBA). When I finished my MBA, I completed the two remaining courses and the internship necessary to earn my MHA. Looking back, I would say both degrees were very valuable, and I would also say the MHA earned through the distance learning program was far more challenging.

By 2004 I was thriving in my

career, but my family and I dealt with two tragedies: My mother-in-law, who was in her 50s at the time, died suddenly from a cardiac event and my much-loved grandfather, who raised me, experienced a fall down a flight of stairs and later died of sepsis.

As we struggled with our grief, I received a call from Hilton Head Hospital in South Carolina, inviting me to discuss the possibility of working with them. We'd never considered leaving Louisville and loved it there, but we visited Hilton Head and I realized I could make a difference at the hospital. We took the leap.

I started my 12-year tenure there as Director of Critical Care and Emergency Services, which led to a position as Director of Cardiovascular, Cardiopulmonary, and Imaging Services. Later I became the Vice President of Business Development and finally, the Chief Operating Officer. At Hilton Head, I dug deeper into financial analysis and delved into physician recruitment issues. A defining moment for me was working in tandem with hospital staff to keep every patient safe as we got pounded by Hurricane Matthew in 2016. It's very powerful to work in a team to care for people in this basic, yet complex way.

In the several years prior to accepting my position here at HCH, I served as CEO of a small hospital in West Virginia where I helped improve the financial standing of the hospital, and then as CEO of Pennsylvania's Berwick Hospital and the Berwick Retirement Village, a 240-bed nursing home, where I helped strengthen the relationship between the hospital and the community.

At the same time, my wife and I suddenly found ourselves

empty nesters, with our children both living in Greenville, South Carolina. Being 11 hours away in Pennsylvania became harder, especially when my daughter had twins.

I saw the opening at HCH and was excited by the idea of serving a small rural hospital. I also felt that my skillset seemed well-matched to HCH's needs. I've enjoyed working with our board to start setting our goals. As our strategic plan takes form, I will update our community about developments through a variety of means, including this monthly column. I also welcome community feedback as we chart HCH's future course.

I'm humbled that I've been entrusted with leading HCH and look forward to my work here, to running, hiking, and golfing in these stunning mountains, and to eventually retiring here with my wife. We've concluded that this community is a great fit on every level for us, and I intend to give my best to this hospital and our community members – our neighbors.

• *Tom Neal, RN, MBA, MHA, is the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) of Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. Neal is a proven leader with more than 30 years of progressive healthcare experience. Prior to his role at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, he held the position of Chief Executive Officer of Community Health Systems (CHS) and served as Chief Executive Officer of both Berwick Hospital Center in Berwick, Pennsylvania, and Greenbrier Valley Medical Center, Roncove, West Virginia. Tom has an MBA from the University of Louisville, MHA from the California College of Health Sciences, BSN from Regents College of New York and an ADN from Jefferson Community College.*

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...FESTIVAL continued from page 1

said Reid who is also a member of Highlands Festival Inc., and to put "heads in beds."

"This will be a live market- ing event during which we will test the waters to see if a Singer Songwriter weekend, similar to the Highlands Food & Wine Festival, would be feasible in 2021," she said.

Three artists will be featured – two supporting artists and one headline artist. Proposed ticket prices are \$55 for General Admission and \$100 for VIP tickets with 1,000 tickets available. A food court will be set up on the plaza where the ice rink is in the winter where local restaurants can sell food and Highlands Festival, Inc. will conduct bar sales.

Reid said they expect the event to break even but any proceeds would go into Highlands Festival, Inc. which could donate a portion of the profits to area nonprofits.

During the Public Comment period prior to the presentation, Hank Ross with Friends of Founders Park, which is the organization that raises money to maintain the park and raise

awareness of it, said the songwriter launch event is exactly the kind of event the park is designed for but maintaining the integrity of the park is also important. To that end, he hoped Friends of Founders Park would be one of the charitable organizations to which proceeds would be directed.

"Over the years, the number of events we are having are getting larger as far as the amount of people and it's creating a lot more impact on the park," he said. "As you know our organization helps maintain the park and we do a fundraiser where 100% of the proceeds go toward color, maintenance, grass, things like that – doing a little bit extra that the town may or may not be able to do.

"I really hope that this group, or any other large group that proposes this kind of impact on the grass, which we will be trying to renovate this spring, will donate some of the proceeds to Friends of Founders Park or the Town of Highlands for the park."

Reid requested renting KH Founders Park Friday, May 1-Sunday, May 3 with closure of Pine Street 11 p.m. May 1 to midnight,

May 2. Public pedestrian access would only be restricted on May 2.

Since it's an open-air event, barricades will be set up around the perimeter and Eleven Events will work closely with local police and will hire supplemental private security during the event for crowd control.

Reid said since it is an open-air event (without a tent) people without tickets could gather along the outskirts of the perimeter to hear the music but wouldn't be able to partake in the food or alcohol which will only be allowed within the park that night.

Commissioners were OK with the idea saying that since Highlands Festival, Inc., was a nonprofit it was OK to have a ticketed event in the park and that it seemed reasonable that Friends of Founders Park be a recipient of some proceeds.

However, the final vote was 4-1 with Commissioner John Dotson voting "no" because he hadn't had enough time to digest the proposal and formulate an opinion.

Reid said they needed to know if they could proceed that night since they had to begin getting the bands together right away.

– Kim Lewicki

• HS SPORTS •

with Kedra McCall

This week middle school basketball played at Tallulah Falls and Cullowhee Valley. The girls fell just short against both after hard fought battles. The boys pulled out a win over Cullowhee but could not over Tallulah Falls.

Their next home game will be today, January 23rd. They will play Rabun Gap with girls starting at 4:30 and boys playing after.

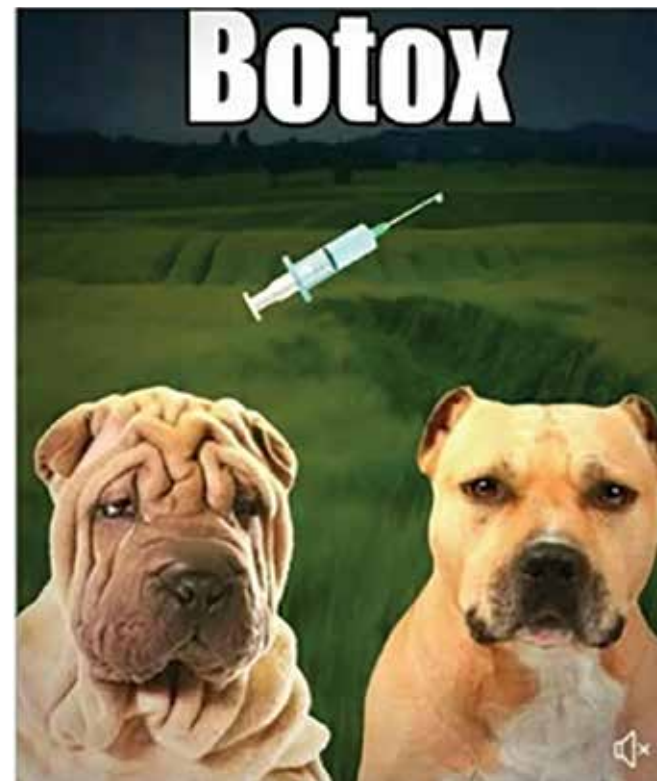
High school basketball played both Rosman and Swain. JV girls did not play either team due to the other teams not having one. All teams- JV boys as well



as varsity girls and boys, took a clean sweep over Rosman. The JV boys and varsity girls also beat Swain, but varsity boys did not. Their next home game will be on Wednesday, February 5th. They will play Hayesville with JV girls starting at 4 pm followed by JV boys, then varsity girls and finally varsity boys.

Cheerleaders will be competing in a competition in Raleigh, NC on Saturday, February 1st. Their competition time is still to be determined.

Come out and support your Highlanders!



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DOG SPEAK

• REFLECTIONS FROM LORD BANJO •

The Dog Space Program: A short story by Lord Banjo

O mignoodness, Banjo, this is hysterical,” exclaimed Mum.

“Huh, what?” I murmured. I’d been in the midst of my Sunday snooze beside Mum’s chair until her chuckling woke me up. “What is it?”

“This comic strip reminds me of Tinker when she was in her prime.”

Hmm, since Tinker went to Doggie Heaven years ago, I was intrigued. “What’s it about, Mum?”

“It’s about dogs and balls, silly boy, stand up and come see.”

I lifted my head but couldn’t quite catch a glimpse of the newspaper in Mum’s lap. Of course, with Puddin’ purring in her lap, it was especially difficult to see the paper.

“Sheesh,” said Mum, “You’ll have to stand up to see this, and you wonder why I call you a lazy lugger.”

There was that word again—lazy—mostly used when I was being compared to Tinker. Because Tinker chased balls in all sizes and drug sticks around the yard and played with toys, my pet parents seemed to think she was special, much more special than I.

I showed Mum. I got to my feet and stuck my nose in the paper, dislodging Puddin’ who leaped down with a sharp meow. My take? Only pet parents with ball obsessed dogs would find the comic funny. Something about dogs having a space station with one purpose—to catch the moon, or as they called it, the big tennis ball in the sky.

“Mum, do you really think Tinker saw the moon as a humongous tennis ball?” I asked. “I mean, I always thought Tinker was pretty smart, despite her obsession.”

“It’s a joke, Banjo. Though Tinker did like beach balls, which were pretty darned big.”

“I like finding her racquet balls all over the house, under the couches and beds,” Puddin’ piped up. “They’re fun to roll around. Why don’t you like balls, Banjo. What’s wrong with you?”

“Nothing’s wrong with me,” I huffed. “Now, Mum, can you please go back to quietly drinking your coffee and reading the paper, while I carry on with my nap?” That got a laugh out of Mum. Why yes, son, please resume your snoozing.”

I thought of Tinker and smiled as I recalled her antics. As long as I wasn’t expected to play with her or her gazillion balls, I was happy watching her and dozing nearby. Suddenly, something tickled my nose. I opened my eyes, and there she was—Tinker—nudging me. How could that be? I yawned. “I thought you were in Doggie Heaven, frolicking in the creek and chasing balls.”

Shhh,” she said. “That’s what Mum and Dad think, but I snuck off to join the Dog Space Program. They needed my expertise on the best way to bring down that giant shiny ball in the sky.”

I rolled over and blinked, not believing my eyes ... or ears. I stuck out my paw and touched her. She was solid.

“We’re recruiting dogs of all shapes, sizes, and dispositions to help with our research, Banjo. We ball obsessed kinds thought maybe having a different perspective—a more laid back one—might be beneficial. I told my fellow dog scientists that you were a perfect candidate, oblivious to balls and known as a relaxation expert. Are you game to help us?” asked my big sister.

“Umm, I guess, as long as I don’t have to leave Mum and Dad. But what exactly do I have to do?”

It was nice to see Tinker, but I wasn’t sure what was going on and wasn’t planning to leap before I looked. Rut-ro, I thought, too late. When I took a long look around, I saw that I was no longer on my soft bed next to Mum. Instead, I was in a brightly lit room, complete with white walls and bright white tile. A lab looking room, as in scientific, not as in Labrador Retriever.

The tiles were cold, just the way I like ‘em, but what was with the bright lights? And, wait. Now Tinker was wearing a white lab coat. I’d never seen her in any kind of coat before. Her name was embroidered on the pocket, and she was wearing glasses. Whoa, there were lots of dogs in white coats, all busily studying charts and looking through telescopes.

“Tinker,” I exclaimed, “Where the heck are we?”

“It’s really cool, Banjo,” she said.



The Royal Pooch
Lord Banjo

“Our lab is on a star right outside Doggie Heaven. We have a great view of the moon from here, the better to study it and figure out how we can catch it and play with it.”

Uh-huh, I thought, this was getting “curiouser and curiouser,” as my Dad likes to say. I realized that Tinker and I were in a pen separated from the other white-coated dogs, and then I noticed there was a large Great

Pyrenees lying in the far corner.

“Who are you,” I called.

“I’m Sirius,” ruffed the big white dog. “This group seems to think that since my name is used to refer to the Dog Star, I have some special knowledge. All I want is to get back to guarding my herd of sheep, but these nerdy dogs don’t want me to leave. They keep asking me to chase balls and give them feedback on how I like it. Like it? I have important guard dog work to do; why would I like chasing balls?”

Well, I had to agree with Sirius on that score. I don’t have a herd of sheep to guard, but I have Mum, Dad, and Puddin’. They depend on me to keep them safe. I have several spots around our house where I can stretch out with one eye open and bark when anyone threatening approaches.

Tinker was listening to our discussion so I said, “Hey, Sis, I’m with Sirius. Thanks for the invitation, but I want to go home.”

“Now, now,” said Tinker. “That’s really not an option. We need your input before we can send you on your way and that could take some time.”

“Time,” I yelped, “Forget it. I want to go home now. Get me out of here.”

That’s when Sirius whispered in my ear. “Banjo, there’s no reasoning with these ball dogs. The only way we can get out of here is for us to join forces, charge the fence, leap it, and run as fast as we can out the door to the earth elevator.”

None of this was making any sense to me. Run? Leap? Earth elevator? On my best days, I don’t run or leap. And what’s an earth elevator? But since I’m part Great Pyrenees, I felt a kinship with Sirius, and I trusted him. At this point, I trusted him way more than my sister Tinker. “Lead the way,” I ruffed. “I’m with you.”

With that, Sirius gave a deep growl

and hurtled toward the fence. As he gracefully leaped over it, I did my best to get up a head of steam and follow him. Lo’ and behold, I soared over the fence and sprinted after him to the earth elevator. I hadn’t moved that swiftly ever. Safely inside, we hit the Down button, and whoosh, we tumbled back to earth. Or at least that’s what it felt like.

Wham! I found myself on my cushy bed with Puddin’ looking at me and pawing my nose.

“Banjo, Banjo,” she meowed. “Wake up. You’re growling and moving your legs. Are you having a bad dream?”

“Huh, bad dream? Where’s Tinker? Where’s Sirius?”

“Well, Tinker’s been gone a while, Banjo. I was just a kitten when she left us, and who’s Sirius?”

“Sirius, the beautiful white dog right over ...” Where was he?

“Shhh, Banjo, you were definitely dreaming. There’s no white dog, no Tinker, just you, me, and Mum.”

“But Puddin’, Tinker took me to some kind of Dog Space Lab with white walls and bright lights, and she wanted me to chase balls, and ... and that’s what happened to me. I swear. She had me and Sirius and wouldn’t let us go. I had to run to escape. Sirius and I galloped, we sprinted, and even jumped a fence!”

Now, that cracked Puddin’ up. The thought of me running was too much for her. She laughed so hard, she hiccupped. “Banjo, you never run, you silly boy. You’re known for meandering and snoozing, not running.”

Truth be told, the idea of me running is pretty unbelievable even to me. “Puddin’,” I ruffed, “I had to get home. A boy’s gotta do what a boy’s gotta do so I ran, I tell you! I don’t plan to make a habit of it, but that’s what I did.”

I could tell from the smirk on her little cat face that she didn’t believe me, but that’s my story, and I’m sticking to it.

• Lord Banjo lives in Georgia with his Mum, Kathy Manos Penn. Find more stories in his book, “Lord Banjo the Royal Pooch,” available on Amazon. To contact him, please email inkpenn119@gmail.com.



From left are Bonnie Potts, Executive Director of The Literacy Council; Jerry Hermanson, Executive Director of the Community Care Clinic; Steve Hamm and Mark Chmar of the Highlands Motoring Festival, presenting a check for \$43,500 to the Community Care Clinic, The Literacy Council, and R.E.A.C.H. of Macon County on Jan. 16.

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September 24, 2019

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: ~~(C)~~ Telephone Conversation with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine

PARTICIPANTS: President Zelenskyy of Ukraine

Notetakers: The White House Situation Room

DATE, TIME July 25, 2019, 9:03 - 9:33 a.m.

AND PLACE: EDT Residence

~~(S//NF)~~ The President: Congratulations on a great victory. We all watched from the United States and you did a terrific job. The way you came from behind, somebody who wasn't given much of a chance, and you ended up winning easily. It's a fantastic achievement. Congratulations.

~~(S//NF)~~ President Zelenskyy: You are absolutely right Mr. President. We did win big and we worked hard for this. We worked a lot but I would like to confess to you that I had an opportunity to learn from you. We used quite a few of your skills and knowledge and were able to use it as an example for our elections and yes it is true that these were unique elections. We were in a unique situation that we were able to

CAUTION: A Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation (TELCON) is not a verbatim transcript of a discussion. The text in this document records the notes and recollections of Situation Room Duty Officers and NSC policy staff assigned to listen and memorialize the conversation in written form as the conversation takes place. A number of factors can affect the accuracy of the record, including poor telecommunications connections and variations in accent and/or interpretation. The word "inaudible" is used to indicate portions of a conversation that the notetaker was unable to hear.

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achieve a unique success. I'm able to tell you the following; the first time, you called me to congratulate me when I won my presidential election, and the second time you are now calling me when my party won the parliamentary election. I think I should run more often so you can call me more often and we can talk over the phone more often.

~~(S//NF)~~ The President: [laughter] That's a very good idea. I think your country is very happy about that.

~~(S//NF)~~ President Zelenskyy: Well yes, to tell you the truth, we are trying to work hard because we wanted to drain the swamp here in our country. We brought in many many new people. Not the old politicians, not the typical politicians, because we want to have a new format and a new type of government. You are a great teacher for us and in that.

~~(S//NF)~~ The President: Well it's very nice of you to say that. I will say that we do a lot for Ukraine. We spend a lot of effort

In this season of Thanksgiving I have enormous gratitude that I am an American. I am grateful that I am in a country that is so free. We are in grave serious times, as our Congress considers the options and consequences of impeachment. Despite President Trump's appeals to read the transcript of his phone call with Ukraine's President Zelenskyy, I believe it is important to objectively analyze its content, come to your own conclusions and communicate your thoughts to Rep. Mark Meadows. Further, I hope readers will participate in a respectful exchange of views through Letters-to-the-Editor. I realize this is a hectic and demanding time of the year. But surely our country deserves our thoughtful

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and a lot of time. Much more than the European countries are doing and they should be helping you more than they are. Germany does almost nothing for you. All they do is talk and I think it's

something that you should really ask them about. When I was speaking to Angela Merkel she talks Ukraine, but she doesn't do anything. A lot of the European countries are the same way so I think it's something you want to look at but the United States has been very very good to Ukraine. I wouldn't say that it's reciprocal necessarily because things are happening that are not good but the United States has been very very good to Ukraine.

~~(S//NF)~~ President Zelenskyy: Yes you are absolutely right. Not only 100%, but actually 1000% and I can tell you the following;

I did talk to Angela Merkel and I did meet with her. I also met and talked with Macron and I told them that they are not doing quite as much as they need to be doing on the issues with the sanctions. They are not enforcing the sanctions. They are not working as much as they should work for Ukraine. It turns out that even though logically, the European Union should be our biggest partner but technically the United States is a much bigger partner than the European Union and I'm very grateful to you for that because the United States is doing quite a lot for Ukraine. Much more than the European Union especially when we are talking about sanctions against the Russian Federation. I

would also like to thank you for your great support in the area of defense. We are ready to continue to cooperate for the next steps specifically we are almost ready to buy more Javelins from the United States for defense purposes.

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~~(S//NF)~~ The President: I would like you to do us a favor though because our country has been through a lot and Ukraine knows a lot about it. I would like you to find out what happened with this whole situation with Ukraine, they say CrowdStrike... I guess you have one of your wealthy people... The server, they say Ukraine has it. There are a lot of things that went on, the whole situation. I think you're surrounding yourself with some of the same people. I would like to have the Attorney General

call you or your people and I would like you to get to the bottom of it. As you saw yesterday, that whole nonsense ended with a very poor performance by a man named Robert Mueller, an incompetent performance, but they say a lot of it started with Ukraine. Whatever you can do, it's very important that you do it if that's possible.

~~(S//NF)~~ President Zelenskyy: Yes it is very important for me and everything that you just mentioned earlier. For me as a President, it is very important and we are open for any future cooperation. We are ready to open a new page on cooperation in relations between the United States and Ukraine. For that purpose, I just recalled our ambassador from United States and he will be replaced by a very competent and very experienced ambassador who will work hard on making sure that our two nations are getting closer. I would also like and hope to see him having your trust and your confidence and have personal relations with you so we can cooperate even more so. I will

I live in a democracy and I can voice my opinions to my elected Representatives and Senators in Congress.
 nt.
 Zelensky, many people have not read it. Perhaps by having it readily available here, you will read it, criti-
 cism, Sen. Richard Burr, and Sen. Thom Tillis.
 r and in-person conversations.
 ul scrutiny of the President's ability to lead us forward as the United States of America. — Jane Jerry

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2 personally tell you that one of my assistants spoke with Mr. Giuliani just recently and we are hoping very much that Mr. Giuliani will be able to travel to Ukraine and we will meet once

he comes to Ukraine. I just wanted to assure you once again that you have nobody but friends around us. I will make sure that I surround myself with the best and most experienced

people. I also wanted to tell you that we are friends. We are great friends and you Mr. President have friends in our country so we can continue our strategic partnership. I also plan to surround myself with great people and in addition to that investigation, I guarantee as the President of Ukraine that all the investigations will be done openly and candidly. That I can assure you..

(S//NF) The President: Good because I heard you had a prosecutor who was very good and he was shut down and that's really unfair. A lot of people are talking about that, the way they shut your very good prosecutor down and you had some very bad people involved. Mr. Giuliani is a highly respected man. He was the mayor of New York City, a great mayor, and I would like him to

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call you. I will ask him to call you along with the Attorney General. Rudy very much knows what's happening and he is a very capable guy. If you could speak to him that would be great. The former ambassador from the United States, the woman, was bad news and the people she was dealing with in the Ukraine were bad news so I just want to let you know that. The other thing, There's a lot of talk about Biden's son, that Biden stopped the prosecution and a lot of people want to find out about that so whatever you can do with the Attorney General would be great. Biden went around bragging that he stopped the prosecution so if you can look into it... It sounds horrible to me.

(S//NF) President Zelenskyy: I wanted to tell you about the prosecutor. First of all I understand and I'm knowledgeable about the situation. Since we have won the absolute majority in our Parliament, the next prosecutor general will be 100% my person, my candidate, who will be approved by the parliament and will start as a new prosecutor in September. He or she will look into the situation, specifically to the company that you mentioned in this issue. The issue of the investigation of the case is actually the issue of making sure to restore the honesty so we will take care of that and will work on the investigation of the case. On top of that, I would kindly ask you if you have any additional information that you can provide to us, it would be very helpful for the investigation to make sure that we administer justice in our country with regard to the Ambassador to the United States from Ukraine as far as I recall her name was Ivanovich. It was great that you were the first one who told me

that she was a bad ambassador because I agree with you 100%. Her attitude towards me was far from the best as she admired the previous President and she was on his side. She would not accept me as a new President well enough.

(S//NF) The President: Well, she's going to go through some things. I will have Mr. Giuliani give you a call and I am also going to have Attorney General Barr call and we will get to the bottom of it. I'm sure you will figure it out. I heard the prosecutor was treated very badly and he was a very fair prosecutor so good luck with everything. Your economy is going to get better and better I predict. You have a lot of assets. It's a great country. I have many Ukrainian friends, their incredible people.

(S//NF) President Zelenskyy: I would like to tell you that I also have quite a few Ukrainian friends that live in the United States. Actually last time I traveled to the United States, I stayed in New York near Central Park and I stayed at the Trump

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Tower. I will talk to them and I hope to see them again in the future. I also wanted to thank you for your invitation to visit the United States, specifically Washington DC. On the other hand, I also want to ensure you that we will be very serious about the case and will work on the investigation. As to the economy, there is much potential for our two countries and one

of the issues that is very important for Ukraine is energy independence. I believe we can be very successful and cooperating on energy independence with United States. We are already working on cooperation. We are buying American oil but I am very hopeful for a future meeting. We will have more time and more opportunities to discuss these opportunities and get to know each other better. I would like to thank you very much for your support

(S//NF) The President: Good. Well, thank you very much and I appreciate that. I will tell Rudy and Attorney General Barr to call. Thank you. Whenever you would like to come to the White House, feel free to call. Give us a date and we'll work that out. I look forward to seeing you.

(S//NF) President Zelenskyy: Thank you very much. I would be very happy to come and would be happy to meet with you personally and get to know you better. I am looking forward to our meeting and I also would like to invite you to visit Ukraine and come to the city of Kyiv which is a beautiful city. We have a beautiful country which would welcome you. On the other hand, I believe that on September 1 we will be in Poland and we can meet in Poland hopefully. After that, it might be a very good idea for you to travel to Ukraine. We can either take my plane and go to Ukraine or we can take your plane, which is probably much better than mine.

(S//NF) The President: Okay, we can work that out. I look forward to seeing you in Washington and maybe in Poland because I think we are going to be there at that time.

(S//NF) President Zelenskyy: Thank you very much Mr. President.

(S//NF) The President: Congratulations on a fantastic job you've done. The whole world was watching. I'm not sure it was so much of an upset but congratulations.

(S//NF) President Zelenskyy: Thank you Mr. President bye-bye.

-- End of Conversation --

UNCLASSIFIED
~~SECRET//ORCON//NOFORN~~

...PRIMARY 2020 continued from page 6

ers are forced to beg for financial assistance and to spend their own money for basic student needs. It is disgraceful that the Macon Middle School was allowed to become leaky and moldy and not maintained up to standard for 40 years. It is disgraceful that 58% of our children live in homes below the poverty level, that the majority of our students qualify for free and reduced price meals (including the entire East Franklin School), and that many other families are humiliated every year when they cannot afford to pay for meals for their children.

It is unfortunate that we have consolidated our elementary schools so that the majority of young students are taken out of their home communities and must commute long weary miles elsewhere. I don't know of many adults who would suffer through such long hours of busing to get to their workplace every day, but yet our children are forced to do it. It is disgraceful that decisions have not already been made, years ago, about the future of facilities at

Nantahala, Highlands, and Franklin High School in a fair and equitable manner. We spend far too much time plugging holes rather than planning and setting priorities.

As our state legislature continues its juggernaut toward privatization of our public schools, we cannot simply blame the state for cutting our funds. As a county, we must fill the gap to the degree that we can financially do so, right here at home, and go even beyond the basic essentials to the degree that we can afford it. For starters, we can use local funds for all necessary supplies and instructional materials not provided by the state, and we as a county can certainly pay for meals for students who are currently paying for them in part or full, often with great difficulty. Would adults be happy going to their jobs without adequate tools and meals? In the whole scheme of our county's total finances, paying for school supplies and meals for our children is not a large item.

We could initiate long-range planning to decentralize our large elementary schools and return students to smaller community schools, while at the same time plan for reconditioning our middle and high school facilities, bringing them up to standard and expanding them. It would take time to decentralize, but that's what long-range planning is for. And we should really look at restructuring the grade-level offerings at each school level, which is actually not as formidable as it might seem if done in conjunction with facilities planning.

Macon County already has adequate funding resources for most of our educational needs if the county commissioners would plan ahead and set priorities with educational needs at the top, rather than continue to engage in authoritarian knee-jerk piecemeal governance by ad hoc special interests. Our basic education needs should supersede all other aspects

of our county finances, if we expect to meet our moral obligations and prepare our children for a future here in Macon County or elsewhere, depending on what they want to learn and do. Having the basic education to allow for choices is the most important legacy we can provide for our children.

Macon County is in the middle of a large space needs analysis project to address infrastructure needs. What are your thoughts on the current direction the

county is taking to address these issues?

Lampkin: Most road repairs and upgrades are handled by DOT. Ideally, DOT would consider the actual communities in which it seeks to address infrastructure needs. However, I'm involved in the Highway 107 projects in Sylva and know firsthand that DOT drawings and projects are prepared by people who seemingly have no idea what would be beneficial for the communities. We need to be proactive with DOT from early stages of projects to ensure that our needs are being taken into consideration and met. As a community, we need to be open to new ideas, even if they might take some getting used to.

For instance, I support the installation of the traffic circles in Franklin. They are "difficult" because they are new and uncommon but, if used properly, they will ease traffic congestion at the intersections where they were installed. I also support putting utilities lines underground. Not only would it cut down on power and phone outages caused by downed trees, but it would be more pleasing to the eye.

Wallace: The \$300,000 "space needs" study recently completed was preordained to fit our existing programs and services — except for promotion of a new and wildly expensive courthouse and detention center.

Schools facilities were not included in the study; therefore, the study was actually not a study of our comprehensive needs but a rubber stamp of the status quo

and special interests. We do need a review of our comprehensive needs, along with projected costs for each capital item, but not another study to justify special interest projects.

We should set priorities for the entire county and continually review them, including long-range planning for a civic center large and complex enough to house high school graduations and events such as arts and crafts fairs, gun shows, automobile shows, and assorted conferences.

We should put money into our schools (both facilities and operation) and services for the growing population of retirees, rather than continuing to expand recreation, entertainment, and the airport; and every large project requiring large expenditures and ongoing maintenance should be decided by public referendum, by a direct vote of the people, fully participatory and fully transparent.

Any other issues or information you would like to include for your voters.

Lampkin: I have many skills that I believe can be useful to Macon County residents, I am hardworking, energetic and open-minded. I am always open to reasonable compromise, but I can stand my ground when needed. I believe that the issues that come before the County Commission should not be dealt with in a partisan manner, because what is good for Macon County is good for ALL of us."

Wallace: The most important offerings we have here to entice business and industry are (1) relatively cheap land with large open spaces, (2) a willing workforce, especially young people who want to stay here or who have moved away and want to come back home if they had jobs, and (3) access to transportation systems in Atlanta, Asheville, and Knoxville.

But we have to take the initiative to look for new businesses and industries and to let them know what we have to offer. We should support and encourage home and property ownership,

rather than overburdening home and property owners with unnecessary local regulations, which are out of control and growing worse all the time.

We should renovate and expand the detention center, even to auxiliary sites, and quit sending at great expense, our inmate overflow to Cherokee and Clay counties. We should create more accurate and more streamlined flow of information between our local government

and the public, and most of all, build public trust by being transparent with the problems of law enforcement and the court system at all levels.

We need more rehabilitation programs for non-violent offenders; and a separate "drug court" to relieve our overloaded court system would be helpful, since we have seen the positive implementation of drug courts in other states, including our neighbor state of Georgia. We should also work to change our laws regarding marijuana use that is clogging our law enforcement and court systems and preventing our citizens from obtaining the benefits of medical marijuana.

We must do better at caring for our disabled citizens and our homeless population (now estimated at 300) with provisions for safe and secure houses for those who need them, through foster care, group homes, and other individual arrangements. We should consider creating and investing in a "permanent fund" that will return dividends to the citizens over the long haul rather than patting ourselves on the back for our "borrowing power" that allows us to engage in ongoing indebtedness.

We should consider merging major aspects of our county government with our municipal governments to eliminate inefficiency of overlapping responsibilities and unnecessary duplication, to avoid confusion about who does what and where the buck stops,

• See PRIMARY 2020 page 19



Olga Lampkin



Betty Wallace

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HIGHLANDS, NC

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•WORD MATTER•

What Would Mom Say?



Bud Katz

As a small boy growing up in Brooklyn, NY, I recall my mother admonishing me to avoid discussion of religion, politics or sex in polite company. Polite company – what a quaint notion. “People have their own ideas about those things,” she’d said, often. “Better to keep your opinions to yourself.” Good advice, and I’ve tried to adhere to that philosophy, but oh, how difficult it is to listen to some of the fertilizer being spread around these days and not respond. It’s tiring having to throw up my hands, shake my head, and just walk away, as much as I do.

For a variety of reasons, it’s difficult to remember 1968. First of all, it’s fifty-two years ago. That, by itself, messes with a person’s memory. Second, it was an enormously turbulent time. We were fighting a hugely unpopular war, we were failing to address both civil and women’s rights, and we would experience the assassination of two bigger than life Americans – Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, both of whom, it’s fair to say, were polarizing figures.

What I do remember is that, in 1968, even though I wasn’t as plugged-in to the world around me as I would become several years down the road, it was impossible not to see how fractured society was in the most explosive time since the Civil War.

Fast forward through a dozen Presidential elections to 2020. We’ve had twelve presidential elections, seven won by Republicans, five by Democrats. We’ve witnessed an explosion of new media platforms and channels, along with a transformation involving the nature, scope and tone of what information is available to the American people.

No longer do conversations in our society even resemble the idea of civility. We see and hear name-calling, fear mongering, outright dishonesty, and an almost impenetrable tribal mentality from those we invest with the power to govern. A venomous, binary hatred permeates what once was our great nation’s glorious experiment in democracy. I, for one, don’t like it one bit.

Why have things gotten so bad? Why are we so angry? When did we stop being willing, or even able, to disagree with someone without it causing either real or metaphorical bloodshed?

I speak, often, with people with whom I don’t agree on a variety of potentially combustible subjects. The conversations sometimes take turns into matters that would cause my mother some trepidation. I can hear her voice; “Careful, now, son of mine,” she’d whisper. “That road could get very bumpy.” Mostly, I’m able to keep my emotions in check, ask questions instead of making pronouncements, and maintain a degree of civility that might in other circumstances leave the building faster than Elvis following a concert.

I really want to understand the beliefs and opinions of others, especially those with whom I might disagree. Hearing the articulated feelings of those who aren’t on my page can lead to enlightenment, and perhaps even a way through the darkness to that currently elusive place called understanding.

People tend to lose me when they categorically declare themselves right and dismiss without acknowledgement any dissenting opinion. They lose me when they begin childish name-calling, attacking the person instead of his or her position; killing the messenger, as it were, instead of arguing the message. They lose me when they start hurling racist, sexist, partisan political, or other epithets that neither address an issue or nor demonstrate an attempt at rational discourse.

The good news is, our nation got through 1968. We got through the lies of Vietnam. We got through Watergate, and its attempted coverup, the Iranian hostage taking, the arms-for-a-different-set-of-hostages scandal, the first Gulf War, Bosnia, Bill Clinton’s impeachment, 9/11, and the lies that put us into war in Iraq. Our nation will get through Afghanistan, Donald Trump’s impeachment, and the next election, whoever prevails. We’re still working on civil rights, women’s rights, getting our national fiscal house in order, regaining, or for some, gaining trust in our elected leaders and in our news media, and starting to get along with one another again.

I can’t possibly know what my sainted mother would make of America in 2020. In the next fifty-two years we hopefully will remember how to disagree without being disagreeable, to get along when we don’t go along, and to be able to discuss religion, politics and even sex, in polite company, without it causing the end of the world. One can only hope.



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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

Ongoing

• Movies at the Playhouse Fri & Sat 1, 4, 7; Sun. 1 & 4; Tues-Thurs 1, 4, 7.

• Ice Skating at K-H Founders Park – Thurs., 1-8p; Fri. & Sat 1-10p; Sun. 1-5p..

• The Bascom is open Friday - Monday 10am-5pm (Sundays 12pm - 5pm). Visitors are welcome to enjoy the newly updated StoryWalk Trail throughout the week.

• At the Highlands Recreation Dept. pool. Public Swim Monday-Thursday 11a-7p Friday and Saturday 11a-6p and Sunday 1-6p.

• Fibber Magee's Clothing Thrift Store on Laurel Street is open Tues.-Friday 10a to 4p and on Saturday from 10a to 2p.

First Mondays

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

Mondays

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

Mon.-Wed.

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

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 Kristy Lewis at 526-3376.

Mon. & Fri.

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

Mon., Wed., Fri.

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

• Step Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9a.

Mon., Wed., Thurs.

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

Tuesdays

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

• The Highlands Writers Group meets Tuesday, at 3pm in the downstairs boardroom at The Bascom. Writers at all levels of proficiency are welcome. For additional information, contact Bud Katz, 828-526-3190 or budandlynn@me.com.

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

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

• At Community Bible Church, 5-5:30p - Dinner – Free (Donations Appreciated) 5:45-7p - G.R.O.W. Get Real on Wednesdays – Classes offered on money management, addiction, discovering your spiritual gifts and personality type, studying the bible, evangelism, parenting, marriage, grief, and more. All are

welcome! Visit www.cbchighlands.com.

• 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.

• Highlands/Cashiers Alcoholics Anonymous "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. recovery program. Open meetings are held in Highlands @ the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., at noon. And held six times a week in Cashiers at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Rte 107, Cashiers. For meeting times in Cashiers go to website www.

'Midsummer Night's Dream at PAC Sat., Jan. 25



The Highlands Performing Arts Center will present, Live via Satellite, the National Theatre of London's production William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream on Saturday, January 25 at 1pm. A feuding fairy King and Queen of the forest cross paths with four runaway lovers and a troupe of actors trying to rehearse a play. As their dispute grows, the magical royal couple meddle with mortal lives leading to love triangles, mistaken identities and transformations... with hilarious, but dark consequences. Shakespeare's most famous romantic comedy was captured live from the Bridge Theatre in London. The Bridge Theatre became a forest – a dream world of flying fairies, contagious fogs and moonlight revels, surrounded by a roving audience following the action on foot. Tickets are available online: www.highlandspac.org or www.highlandspacperformingarts.com or at the door: Highlands Performing Arts Center, 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands NC.

Photography Manuel Harlan



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• HIGHLANDS EVENTS •

aaawnc80.org or call (828) 349-4357.

• Duplicate Bridge 12-4pm at Rec Park.

Thursdays

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

• 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 Outreach Center on West Main Street in Franklin Call Donita (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.

• Highlands Town Board meeting at 7p in the Community Building on US 64 east and Poplar Street.

4th 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.

Fri., Jan. 24

• The African Children's Choir returns to CBC at 6:30 p.m. For the program, "Just as I am." Free but donations accepted.

Sat., Jan. 25

• At PAC, Midsummer Night's Dream at 1 p.m. live via satellite. Tickets are available online: www.highlandspac.org or www.highlandspacperformingarts.com or at the door. Highlands Performing Arts Center, 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands NC.

• Fireside chat and book signing with Bitter Southerners and Chefs at Art's at the Lodge, noon to 2 p.m. Open to the public.

• Chefts in the House at Half-Mile Farm. Chef Joe Kindred of Kindred and Steven Satterfield of Miller Union. Reserve Dinner Seats by calling 828-787-2635 or 828-787-2816.

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate-to-strenuous 4-mile hike up Rabun Bald, elevation change 900 ft., on the Georgia Bartram Trail, hiking from Beegum Gap to the summit (second highest point in Georgia) and to a platform with 360 views of the

surrounding area. Meet at Smoky Mtn. Visitor Center at 10 a.m. Drive 40 miles round trip. Call leader Gail Lehman, 524-5298, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Tues., Jan. 28

• Gibbins Advisors, monitor of HCA's Mission Health System meeting in Cashiers from 5:30pm to 7pm in the Cashiers/Glenville Recreation Center, 355 Frank Allen Rd, Cashiers.

Wed., Jan 29

• Gibbins Advisors, monitor of HCA's Mission Health System meeting in Highlands at the Highlands Civic Center from 5:30-7p.m.

Sat., Feb. 1

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 4-mile hike to Siler Bald on the Appalachian Trail, elevation change 700 ft., for 360-degree views of Wayah Bald, Winesprings and a glimpse of Nantahala Lake. Meet at Westgate Plaza at 10 am, drive 24 miles round trip. Call leader Robert Barnable, 369-1565, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Sat., Feb. 8

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate-to-strenuous 7-mile hike, elevation change 900 ft., from Long Branch to Rock Gap in the Standing Indian Recreational Area, starting at the backcountry parking lot, up Long Branch to the Appalachian Trail at Glassmine Gap, then north to Rock Gap, and returning by a Forest Service Road. Meet at Westgate Plaza in Franklin at 11 am, Drive 32 miles round trip. Call leader Katharine Brown, 421-4178, for reservations. Visitors and dogs on leash are welcome.

Sat., Feb. 15

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a strenuous 8-mile hike, elevation change 1100 ft., from Camp Branch to the Bartram Trail, then down Locust Tree Branch, a loop exploration of very old logging roads. Meet at Westgate Plaza at 9 am, drive 16 miles round trip. Call leader Gail Lehman, 524-5298, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Sat., Feb. 22

• At The Farm at OEI, Chef, restaurateur and author Hugh Acheson of 5&10 in Athens, GA. For more information, call 787-2620 or 787-2619

Sun. Feb. 23

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a strenuous 6-mile hike, elevation change 1000 ft., on the Bartram Trail from Wallace Branch to William's Pulpit for lunch with a great view of Albert Mtn., then to a spur of a Forest Service road, and bushwhacking up to Gibson Ridge, scrambling over and through blow downs to return

... HCHF continued from page 1

Foundation used its funds to keep the hospital open – at significant losses, I might add. Newly named, the Highlands-Cashiers Health Foundation is now a public charity and a supporter of health, wellness and education in the area.”

With \$16 million in its coffers and with Mission's first of three \$5 million installments, as was intended, the HCHF awarded more than \$2.5 million dollars to area nonprofits.

Last year, when the two-cycle grant process was opened to the six-county community, 107 organizations applied for grants. Of those, 53 were accepted with \$2.5 million disbursed in Jackson, Macon, Swain, Clay, Cherokee and Graham counties with 70% of the funding going to efforts in Macon and Jackson counties.

“Grant money was allocated to nonprofits, government agencies and social deterrents of health which included education because education generally equals health,” said Clark.

About to embark on its third grant cycle, Clark explained that the criteria may seem broad but purposes for funding could possibly fit in HCHF's mission.

“We can help nonprofits, government agencies, all sorts of things. Health and wellness includes social deterrents of health – if a person is better educated, that community is going to be healthier. So, school children who need visual boards, computers, laptops and things like that ... that is something we can look at. Also, if the new fire station needs stuff since that would be considered critical to health, that could be a grant recipient,” he said. “We are looking at what kinds of projects will make the biggest impact.”

Clark said it is paramount to HCHF that the hospital stays open and stays open forever.

“One of our goals is to make sure that should the possibility of the hospital closing ever happen, there is a back-stop, which very well could be HCHF,” he said.

Should closing become a reality, as outlined in the Asset Purchase Agreement, the number one buyer would be the Dogwood Trust and the second potential buyer would be the HCHF.

Clark said principal assets in the Foundation currently stand at about 16 million.

• See HCMF page 22



WINTER SPECIALS

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



Give 'love' a try

Curtis Fussel, Pastor
First Presbyterian Church

I belong to a Toastmasters' Club in Franklin, NC. Members give speeches at every meeting to be evaluated. We're trying to improve our skills in the art of public speaking.

During the evaluation of a speech, the "Sandwich" evaluation approach is employed. That means, the evaluation begins with what was positive about the speech, followed by what needs improvement, and then finished with what was positive. The evaluation recognizes that there are no "perfect" speeches, but to highlight only what is wrong, fails to support the speaker's desire to move forward. Indeed, emphasis is placed on the positive aspects!

Frank Meeks, who died in 2004, owned and operated 60 Domino Pizza franchises in Washington, D.C. Under his guidance, his restaurants consistently reported 300 percent higher returns than the average Domino Pizza store.

Want was the secret to Meeks' success? Yes, it's location. Location is important, but it's more than location. The "more" was this: when Frank Meeks visited one of his stores, he took along a pad with him and as he walked through the store, he wrote down things that he saw. Then, when he left, he went to the bulletin board and tacked up that list he made for everyone to read.

But wait, it's not what you think. On top of that note were written these words: "I like this store because..." You see, what Frank Meeks understood was this: what motivates people is to focus on the good things they do - not the wrong things.

Of course, Frank didn't ignore problem areas, but above all he practiced a positive approach with an affirmative attitude. In other words, he practiced a certain kind of love for other people. The Apostle Paul said it like this, "Love is patient, love is kind, it rejoices in the right. Love bears all, believes all, hopes all, and endures all." Give it a try. It works!

Looking for a church home?

Wayfarers Unity Chapel is a non denominational, inclusive church located at 182 Wayfarer Lane, off Highway 246 in Dillard, GA, just 1.7 miles from Highway 441

Social time begins at 9:30 and services begin at 10 a.m. on Sundays

Visit our website www.wayfarersunity.org for more information, or call 706-746-3303

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

CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Wes Sharpe, Pastor 828-743-5298

Sundays: School at 9:30 Worship 10:30

Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

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

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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

Wed.: 5pm Dinner (\$7 adult, \$2 child), 6pm CBC U.

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.

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; Choir 5p; Prayer Mtg 6:15p

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors

526-3175 • fpchighlands.org

Sun.: Worship 8:30a 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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Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Sept. 1. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Sept. 1, 2019

• At 2:50 p.m., a motorist refused to pay a parking ticket after leaving the vehicle on the side of Smallwood Ave.

blocking traffic

Dec. 15

• At 5:25 p.m., officers were asked to respond to a call about a person threatening suicide in the vicinity of a residence on Leonard Road.

Dec. 28

• At 7:30 p.m., officers were called about a simple assault at the Pizza Place on Main Street where someone pushed

and threw pizza sauce at another person.

Dec. 31

• At 6:09 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident in the parking lot of the Highlands Expressmart.

Jan. 15

• At 9:45 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on US 64 each end and Sherwood Forest Road.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Jan. 14

Jan. 14

• At 1:57 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a residence on Hem-

lock Drive.

• At 10:17 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on South Street.

Jan. 16

• At 11:14 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Azalea Lane.

Jan. 17

• At 12:41 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Kelsey Court.

Jan. 18

• At 11:23 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a chimney fire at a residence on Rich Gap Road.

...PRIMARY 2020 continued from page 14

to create a streamlined governmental structure that people can understand and know whom to contact for needed information, to create more financial efficiency and accountability to our taxpayers and other citizens, and to provide more equitable representation for citizens no matter where they live.

A major point for us to consider locally is that only a few hundred people vote in Franklin elections, but thousands vote in Macon County elections, while the services and responsibilities of town and county are inexorably intertwined with many decisions made by the small Town of Franklin that affect the entire county, i.e. the tail wagging the dog.

The same intertwining applies to the relationship between Highlands and Macon County to a lesser degree, but the Franklin/Macon overlap is far more convoluted because of proximity and Franklin being our county seat.

Additionally, the unincorporated community of Nantahala is routinely overlooked and receives far fewer basic services than do communities elsewhere in the county – primarily communications technology, law enforcement, and healthcare.

Further complicating matters is that so many people live one place (town or county) but vote according to the location of their residence. As a result, many people who live out in the county but have businesses in town (which might be the majority of business owners) do not have any representation or vote regarding their businesses.

I do not think we should lower taxes, nor should we raise them to any great degree, nor should we continue to misrepresent what “revenue neutral” means as if that is a golden rule. Quite simply, when our individual property valuations take a hit as has happened in recent decades, our county government should be curtailed to the same percentage through systematic downsizing, and vice versa. “Living within one’s harvest” is a workable goal for Macon

County, and we can do so if we set more realistic priorities with our expenditures.

Within our current taxable means, our county commissioners should set priorities according to systematic input from the citizenry. How long has it been since the people voted on any large capital project? We should put referenda on the ballot every election to determine the will of the voters regarding how and when our tax money is to be spent. We must begin to insist on open public discussion of significant issues that affect us all, forthrightly and transparently, and we must work toward government that bubbles up from “we the people” rather than continue to passively accept top-down authoritarianism closely held by a small voting bloc who push their own special interests and grease the squeaky wheels.

Review of county government employment practices and salary schedules should be carried out regularly to ensure that we can employ and retain excellent employees in a manner comparable to similar counties, and all county employees should have adequate health insurance and other benefits commensurate with their positions.

The practice of “no compete” contracts (unadvertised) is questionable and has drawn significant criticism for allowing favoritism, nepotism, and cronyism under the guise of any number of questionable reasons for awarding such contracts. All county government positions should be advertised and offered to the most highly qualified applicants; and the entire county personnel salary schedule should be reviewed and made available to the public.

And finally, our future needs for water and sewerage in the Franklin plateau are looming large and will not go away. The possibilities and opportunities for Macon County are endless, but we must look for them, take action, and move forward with courage and conviction.

• **Next week the Republican Primary candidates for the MC Board of Commission will be introduced.**

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...HCHF continued from page 17

"The money we initially had in the Foundation, we still have," he said.

He said the HCHF goal is to build principal down the road and to both expend funds and raise funds.

"We want to build a war chest to protect the hospital and ensure our facilities can stay intact

as much as possible," he said.

Robin Tinsdale, CEO of the HCHF and previously with the HC Hospital Foundation said moving from a Hospital foundation whose mission was to solely support a hospital to a foundation that supports health and well-being across numerous communities has been quite a challenge but one that

has so far been successful.

"We are in the process of developing a strategic plan with initiatives and focus areas as we formulate criteria for the next grant funding cycle," she said. "We did cast a very wide net this first year. Going forward we want to consider what will make the greatest impact and we want to be able to measure that impact."

Clark said he believes the

third grant cycle will be in the spring, with specifics coming.

Commissioner John Dotson asked why the HCHF granted funding to organizations outside of Macon and Jackson counties, especially considering the name of the Foundation.

Clark said it's true that criteria wasn't outlined in the Asset Purchase Agreement, but though Attorney General Josh Stein didn't

mandate the Foundation support organizations outside Macon and Jackson counties, he implied it.

"But that may change this next time around," he said.

During the first two grant cycles the HCHF gave Health and Healthcare \$1,024,124 – with recipients falling into one of two categories: Access to Healthcare and Mental Health and Substance Abuse; Youth Initiatives got \$847,022 – with recipients falling into two categories: Educational Improvement and Youth Development; Community Vitality got \$513,000 – whose two categories were Poverty Reduction and Combatting Food Insecurity.

– Kim Lewicki

...LETTERS continued from page 5

We were told that the network was being built from the outside in, coming together and connecting at the old public restrooms building. So why is wide open networks asking for infor-

mation so they can determine what neighborhoods to connect first? Every neighborhood should be connectable at the same time right? And what if no service providers want to pay to be on the network?

8 million dollars is a tremendous amount of money. Money that would be better spent building a medical complex in town. Possibly resurrecting the old hospital or finding a property similar in size. Personally I suggest, If the town

is leasing fiber to a company that then leases it to the service providers. The town still has a hand in the Internet business. Whether they wash it with wide-open networks or not.

Nick McCall, Highlands

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