

Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 20, Number 44 Real-Time News, Weather & WebCams: HighlandsInfo.com Thurs., Nov. 9, 2023

Highlands and WNC under state of emergency due to drought conditions

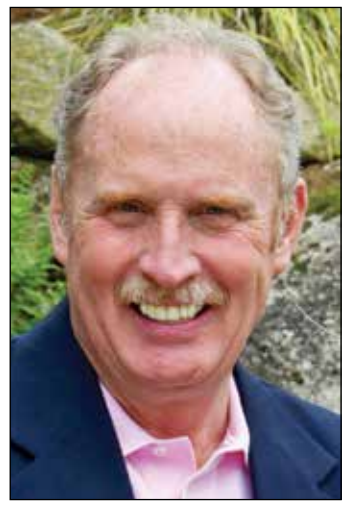
By Brittney Lofthouse
A state of emergency has been declared in western North Carolina as wildfires fueled by

drought conditions engulf hundreds of acres, destroys structures, and poses a threat to dozens of homes.

The North Carolina Forest Service has issued a burn ban for 14 counties in the western part of

• See **EMERGENCY** page 14

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John Dotson



Brian Stiehler



Jeff Weller

Voters pick round of commissioners

Of Highlands 1,013 registered voters, only 420 turned out to vote for the candidates vying for the three open seats on the Town Board.

Sadly, 593 citizens - more than half of those registered to vote - didn't cast a ballot.

Incumbent Commissioner Brian Stiehler got the highest number of votes at 285 and now embarks on his fourth, 4-year term.

On election day, 97 people voted for him; 185 voted early and 3 voted absentee.

"It's an honor to be one of the three selected out of a great group of qualified candidates," said Stiehler. "I'm excited to be able to serve another term on the Town Board. There is a lot of work to be done and I look forward to continuing to work with my fellow board members on the issues facing the town."

Next up was newcomer Jeff Weller who got 255 votes - 103 cast on election day, 149 cast early and 3 voted absentee.

"I want to thank all of my supporters and the voters for entrusting me to be one your Town of Highlands Commissioners," said Weller. "I am very excited to represent the Town of Highlands as a commissioner and look forward to getting started."

• See **VOTERS** page 17

Summit Charter School receives unanimous approval for \$2.5 million loan for expansion

By Brittney Lofthouse

In a unanimous decision, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners gave its approval to Summit Charter School's request for a \$2.5 million loan to facilitate the expansion of the school last month. The loan will address cash flow needs during construction as the school works towards its fundraising goal of \$6.5 million for the expansion project.

Commissioner Tom Stribling proposed the motion to approve the letter of intent, seconded by Commissioner John Smith. Chairman Mark Letson abstained from voting due to a conflict of interest, as he also serves on Summit's board of trustees. The final vote resulted in a 4-0 approval.

Following this initial step, Summit will collaborate with Jackson County officials to finalize the terms of the loan agreement. The terms must receive approval

from the Jackson County Board of Commissioners, the Summit Charter School Foundation Board, and the Summit Charter School Trustee Board before the loan can be executed.

The loan, with an amount of up to \$2.5 million, will have a 36-month payback timeline, including monthly payments. The interest rate will be determined based on Jackson County's actual return on investments, currently set at 5.5 percent.

Summit Charter School will bear all costs related to the loan and is expected to commit to these costs in writing. The loan will be secured by a promissory note and a deed of trust, with the property earmarked for the high school's construction serving as collateral.

The funds are expected to be available to Summit Charter

• See **CHARTER** page 7

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Fires, drought and election results

Western Carolina is in a severe drought that could continue for some time. Early in the week town made a Stage 1 Water Use Reduction declaration. On Tuesday, it was upgraded to a mandatory Stage 2. Citizens are being asked to reduce unnecessary water use by 10% from what their last month's bill reported. No outdoor watering of impervious surfaces is permitted. Irrigation of lawns can be done from 8 pm to 8 am and no more than a half inch of water per week.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

Given the several active fires in the area, the town has also issued an emergency declaration that bans all outdoor burning. The Highlands Police Department will strictly enforce this ban.

These two declarations and recommendations are posted on the town website at Highlandsc.org and also on pages 12 and 13 of this issue.

Organizers of this weekend's Highlands Food and Wine Festival have been notified so our visitors will be aware of the situation. Signs are posted in town also.

Highlands Newspaper

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Letter Policy:

There is a 500-word limit. We reserve the right to reject or edit letters-to-the-editor. No anonymous letters will be accepted. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands Newspaper.

The Highlands fire district is consequently very dry. Fire Chief Gearhart is very concerned and has crews on high alert. There are currently several large forest fires active in Western Carolina, and last week, there was a brush fire in the Cashiers fire district and one in the Highlands fire district.

The brush fire in the Highlands area was caused by a flare-up of coals and ashes from an outdoor burn pile that was supposedly extinguished two weeks ago.

High winds caused the flare-up of the smoldering coals and the resulting fire.

Last year, there were five fires in the district caused by improper disposal of fireplace ashes and coals from inside the home. If these ashes are to be disposed of outside, be sure to place them in a metal can and fill the can with water to ensure the coals are completely out. In the five fires caused by indoor fireplace ashes, this simple procedure was not followed.

We all have to conserve water and practice strict fire prevention procedures during this drought emergency. Please report any suspected outside burning activities to 911. Our police and fire departments will respond.

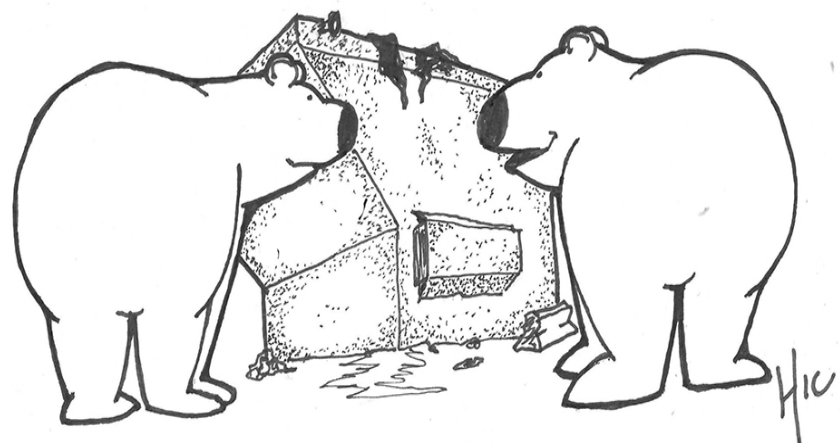
Congratulations to the five candidates who ran for the three open seats on the Town Board. It was a good election. We should all appreciate those folks who are willing to serve as elected officials whether they win or not. Believe me, from experience, an election campaign is a hard process to go through.

I also want to thank the voters who took the time to cast their ballots. Voting is a responsibility of citizenship. For those who didn't make the effort to vote, I have a message on this approaching Veterans Day.

Veterans who were once GIs serving this country did it in the spirit of protecting our nation and our freedoms. They served in part so citizens could go to the polls and vote for whomever they believed was the best candidate. What I value about the voting process is that no one is holding a gun at a voter's head demanding they vote for a candidate. A voter can cast a ballot and never tell anyone who they voted for. That freedom





• See **MAYOR** page 7

• HIC'S VIEW •



"Yummy what luck, the best part of last nights wedding."

• WEATHER •

Thu, 9-Nov	Fri, 10-Nov	Sat, 11-Nov	Sun, 12-Nov
			
67°F 50°F	56°F 45°F	55 °F 37°F	51°F 35°F
Partly sunny and mild	Cloudy, a little rain; cooler	Times of clouds and sun	A morning shower in spots
RealFeel® High: 69° Low: 50°	RealFeel® High: 55° Low: 50°	RealFeel® High: 59° Low: 47°	RealFeel® High: 52° Low: 38°

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All books are mysteries at heart

Tom Lake
by Ann Patchett

I've delayed writing a review of this amazing book because I've found it difficult to find words to describe it. Engrossing, moving, a story I haven't stopped thinking about since I finished the book a week ago - none of that quite captures how I feel about this book.

It's the tale of a family living on their Michigan cherry farm during the pandemic. The two younger adult daughters have returned to the farm their parents run and are sleeping in their childhood rooms. One is still a college student taking classes long distance. Another is a would-be actor worried her career opportunities may be passing her by. The eldest, who never left, will one day take on the family farm.

Lara, their mother, was once an actor who was renowned for her portrayal of Emily in *Our Town*. She embodied Emily, especially when she played the role at Tom Lake, a regional theater in Michigan.

The daughters turn their confinement together into an opportunity to learn the full story of their mother's romance with a famous actor. Do we ever think of our parents as having romantic lives? Or do we see them merely as parents? In this book, the girls delve into the romance, perhaps learning more than they bargained for. At the same time, Lara and her husband reflect on their life together.

I'm fond of saying that all books are



Kathy Manos Penn

mysteries at heart. This magical book unveils the mystery behind relationships. As one review says, it "enfold[s] the nature of storytelling, the evolving dynamics of a family, and the complex interaction between destiny and choice."

I highly recommend this latest Ann Patchett masterpiece. Don't just put it on your TBR list. Put it on

your "must-read now" list. Can you hear me saying in my command voice, "Get thee to the nearest bookshop and start reading it today?"

**The Curse of Braeburn Castle:
A Scottish Castle Murder Mystery**
by Karen Baugh Menuhin

Now, for a murder mystery. This is the third book in Karen Menuhin's Heathcliff Lennox series, and I found it every bit as entertaining as the first two. Lennox, who detests the first name his mother saddled him with, served as a pilot in WWI. He's 30ish, good looking, and a trifle shy and awkward with the ladies.

As do many amateur sleuths, he stumbles into a murder investigation in Book One and runs afoul of the law. In this installment, he's developed an uneasy relationship with the Scotland Yard inspector from the first adventure and been called into help.

Enter a team of archaeologists, a ghost, a castle, and a murder, of course, and you have the perfect ingredients for a murder or two or three. You never know.

His adorable pets—Mr. Fogg the dog and the kitten, Mr. Tubbs—accompany him everywhere and add a delightful dimension to his personality.

Read this cozy mystery for the atmospheric Scottish island setting, the well plotted mystery, and characters you'll grow to love. I'm adding "Death in Damascus," Book Four in the series, to my TBR list, and I'm happy to report there are eleven books in the series.

There you have it, two mysteries. One about the choices we make in life and how they shape us, the other about a dashing WWI veteran and his sleuthing adventure on a remote Scottish island. Both are entertaining in their own ways.

Award-winning author Kathy Manos Penn is a Georgia resident. Find her cozy mysteries at *Shakespeare & Co.* in Highlands, *Franklin Office Supply & Gifts*, and on *Amazon*. Contact her at inkpenn119@gmail.com, and follow her on Facebook, www.facebook.com/KathyManosPenn.Author/.

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RENDERING

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HIGHLANDS

MLS# 103257 | \$1,500,000 | 3BR / 3BA

This exceptional home combines taste, functionality, and a natural setting in Highlands Falls Country Club that backs up to national forest land. The heart of this remarkable home is the great room, which boasts a vaulted ceiling with rustic beams and illuminated by skylights, creating an airy, inviting ambiance. Golf cart storage, a workshop area, and so much more. Membership to HFCC is by approval.

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...CHARTER continued from page 1

School by January 2024, contingent upon the completion of the letter of intent conditions. The agreement includes a provision requiring Summit to use its available funds for the project before accessing county funds to ensure property investment before the loan is secured.

The letter of intent is not a formal commitment, and all necessary conditions and additional requirements must be met before the final disbursement of funds. County Manager Don Adams clarified that the loan funds would be sourced from the general fund to avoid impacting sales taxes designated for public schools.

In August 2023, Summit Charter School initiated construction on the new high school building on their campus due to a surge in enrollment. The school has experienced a 28% growth in enrollment since 2019, resulting in the exhaustion of their current facility's capacity. The budget for the expansion project is set at \$6.5 million.

Summit Charter School aims to finance the entire construction cost through private donations, foundation grants, and corporate support. A capital campaign launched in August 2023 has already raised \$4.8 million, with a target of \$6.5 million by August 2024. Of the raised amount, \$2.8 million is available in hand, with \$2 million pledged. Fundraising efforts are led by the Summit Charter School Foundation, a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to securing private funding for the school.

A recent state law, North Carolina House Bill 219/SL 2023-107, has enabled public funding for charter school

buildings in North Carolina for the first time, allowing counties to allocate capital funds to charter schools.

The requested funding will finance the construction of a new 15,000-square-foot high school building on Summit Charter School's 33-acre campus in Cashiers. The new facility will feature classrooms, a science lab, a learning kitchen, individualized education rooms, an outdoor courtyard, administrative offices, and a large commons area.

This expansion will allow Summit Charter School to transform its existing high school building into a middle school, with the addition of a pavilion for middle school activities. By doing so, additional classroom space will become available for lower grades.

For the 2023-24 school year, Summit currently enrolls 300 students, with 8 of the 13 grades operating at full capacity. The school has seen a significant increase in middle school enrollment over the past two years.

The construction of the new high school building will accommodate current and future enrollment growth at Summit Charter School, in line with the expanding population of Jackson County.

Summit Charter School, a tuition-free and non-profit public charter school in North Carolina, was initially authorized by the State Board of Education on March 15, 1997. Summit Charter School is now taking advantage of that legal change and asking for a \$2.5 million loan from the Jackson County Commission.

• LETTER •

A vote for Donald Trump is a vote for the end of democracy

Dear Editor,

I'm writing in response to Col. Showalter's letter-to-the-editor entitled "Excoriating Veterans Who Back Trump" in the November 2 issue. In that letter, Col. Showalter explains that he supports Trump because of various accomplishments that he claims Trump achieved.

What he doesn't mention is that it has been proven, without a shadow of a doubt, that Donald Trump tried everything he could think of to overturn the results of an election that he knew was free and fair. These are facts, not opinions. It is a fact that the election of Biden was a free and fair election. It is a fact that Trump tried numerous illegal and unconstitutional means to overturn that election. Supporters of Trump refuse to admit these facts, but facts they are, supported by an overwhelming preponderance of evidence.

...MAYOR continued from page 2

doesn't happen everywhere in the world.

So, when a person is negligent in casting a vote, they also send a message to all those veterans, a statement of not caring. On this Veterans Day, we honor those who did care; they cared about this country and served.

In trying to overturn a free and fair election so that he could retain his power, Trump has proven that he has no respect for the Constitution or for the most fundamental principles of democracy. So, as far as I'm concerned, Trump could have the most wonderful policies in the world and the longest list of achievements, and I would never vote for him — because I am positive that if elected president, he will not support and defend the Constitution.

A vote for Donald Trump is a vote for the end of democracy, and the refusal of Trump supporters to face that fact is putting us all in terrible danger.

Emily Wright
Highlands

I look forward to working with our newly elected commissioners, Brian Stiehler, John Dotson, and Jeff Weller. Working with Amy Patterson and Eric Pierson, the board will have a full agenda to cover in the coming year.



THANK YOU!

For your unwavering support!

It is my honor to continue serving the citizens of Highlands.

I remain dedicated to improving and preserving our community for today and future generations.

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'Wreaths Across America Day' is Sat. Dec. 16

Wreaths across America Day is on Saturday, Dec. 16 beginning at noon from the Rec Park from where volunteers will be shuttled to and from before and after placing wreaths.

Wreaths can be sponsored for \$17 and order forms can be printed from the Facebook page at <https://bit.ly/donatehighlandswaa2023>. Forms are also available at Highlands United Methodist Church, Highlands Rec Park or Highlands Decorating Center. You can also sponsor online at [https://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/.../167634/Overview/...](https://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/.../167634/Overview/)

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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



From left: Dave O'Harra, President, Rotary Club of Highlands; Tate Wilson, Speaker and Tracy Franklin, Rotarian and Host.

Tate Wilson tells Rotary about her RYLA experience

Highlands School 10th-grader Tate Wilson described her 2023 Rotary Youth Leadership Academy experience with contagious enthusiasm. "I've never been with so many teens in one place with so little judgement and so much acceptance."

Designed as a way for teenagers to learn about themselves and their leadership qualities, RYLA offered a mixture of team building exercises, hikes, guided communication, a dance/not a dance... even a little karaoke. "We spent time talking

to each other and learned to cooperate, trust each other and built respect for everyone in the group," said Wilson. "I was so sad on that last day. But I was happy to be sad because I learned so much about myself."

The 2024 Rotary Youth Leadership Academy will be held April 5-7, 2024 at Camp Oak Hill in Oxford, NC. Students interested in participating must be sponsored by a local Rotary Club and must register by February 15, 2024. For more info contact Tracy Franklin, tracy.stribling@gmail.com

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• INVESTING AT 4,118 FT. •

What is a Legacy Home?

The definition of a legacy home is a place of refuge and solitude, a haven shared with family and friends and a cherished place for creating memories. In this post-Covid era of urbanites looking for restful escapes, our beloved Highlands/Cashiers Plateau is brimming with extraordinary residences that qualify for this category of estates. If you seek a legacy home, perhaps the following features will guide your search.

A legacy home is a home large enough to accommodate extended family and guests, with features, furnishings, and décor reflecting the taste and ambitions of the owner. Some retreats are just large enough to accommodate the owners on personal getaways. But legacy homes serve as private retreats prepared to pamper and entertain.

Different factors to consider when dreaming about your legacy home are climate, terrain, lifestyle and the relative proximity to big city amenities. Most vacation home buyers choose locations within two hundred miles of their principal residence. But it is actually time rather than distance that allows homeowners to venture further with access to airports. This area enjoys access to many different airports within a two-hour drive.

A legacy home is a reward and a refuge for many families and a diversion from their hectic routines to pursue constructive hobbies, enjoy nature and spend quality time together. Many families that we sell homes to bring their children on weekends to remove them from some of the harmful temptations in today's world. The home itself becomes a family mem-



Jody Lovell
Highlands and Cashiers
Sotheby's International Realty
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ber: a silent guardian of treasures, secrets and memories. As Mr. Carson said on Downton Abbey: "The business of life is the acquisition of memories. In the end, that is all there is." Thus, the goal is to make as many happy memories as possible. With a legacy home in the right area with an array of surrounding recreational pursuits, it will provide a lifestyle like a five-star resort with the security of ownership and

belonging.

Congratulations to those of you who have already found your legacy home!! To those of you who are still searching, enjoy the journey, for your legacy home awaits you as a resting place for all your striving and hard work. As the tax revaluations prove, a legacy home can also be an enduring lifestyle investment that can be enjoyed more than a bank account. Inventory has increased in 2023, and prepared buyers were the beneficiaries of finding their legacy home. Buyers, be prepared to step up when your search results in finding a home with a personality match to protect and nurture your family for years to come. This area continues to be a safe haven from the sizzling summers and the uncertainties of city living.

• *Jody and Wood Lovell are the owners of Highlands/Cashiers Sotheby's International, the luxury leader on the Plateau since 2001. With over thirty brokers in three locations across the Plateau, they can help you with all your real estate needs. Selling close to one billion dollars of properties in the last forty-eight months alone, their track record proves that they are closers!! Call them at 828.526.4104 or 828.526.8300 or email Jody at jody.lovell@sir.com.*

Sign ups for MC Youth Boys and Girls basketball is through Nov. 12

Macon County Youth Boys and Girls basketball registration is under way and will go through November 12th. You must register on-line for boys at www.maconcountyboysbasketball.com and for Girls at www.maconcountygirlsbasketball.com.

For any other information call Lester Norris or Janice Mathis at 828-526-3556.

THE TRUTH MATTERS

CLAIM "There are between 275 - 400 Short-Term Rentals in Highlands according to recent estimates."

TRUTH **Highlands Town Manager reports between 275 - 280 STR's in Highlands.**

CLAIM "In the past 5 years, Highlands School has had a significant decline in enrollment, the most in Macon County."

TRUTH **Vacation homes have been available for rent in Highlands for generations, and have become more popular over the last ten years or so. Since 2013 enrollment at our high school has increased by 91 students.**

CLAIM "Residents have been displaced and young families cannot afford to live in Highlands."

TRUTH **Our local childcare facilities, Highlands Community Child Center and Gordon Center, are at capacity with record waitlists.**

• HIGHLANDS EVENTS •

NEW POOL SCHEDULE

• Lap Swim: Mon.-Fri., 6-9:45a, and Sat., 10a-11p - 6 lanes.
Water Aerobics: 18 yrs plus, Mon.-Fri. 10-11am with Karen Chambers. Adult Swim: 18 years old+, Mon.-Thurs 11a-1:30p; Public Swim Mon. thru Thurs. 3:30-7p; Sat. 11a-6p and Sun. 1-6p. For info, call 828-526-1595.

Mon.-Fri.

• Nantahala Tennis plays at the Highlands Rec Park 9a-1p.

Mon-Wed, Fri-Sun

• Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9am at the Rec Park.

• Heart Healthy Exercise Class at the Rec Park 8:30-9:30am. The cost for the class is \$25 a month. The class is led

by Cathy Hodgson. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

• Alcoholics Anonymous: "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. program of recovery. Highlands Mountain View Group holds open meetings

in Highlands at the First Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 PM and Wednesday and Friday at noon. The Cashiers Valley Group holds open meetings at the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library Monday at 8:30 AM, Tuesday at 7 PM, Friday and Sunday at 5 PM, and Saturday at 9 AM. For more information, please visit www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of AA 24/7 at 828-349-4357

Second Mondays

• The local chapter of PEO, an off-campus sorority founded in the 1800s that provides grants and loans to women with financial need who want to return to school or further their education meets at 10 a.m. More meeting places call president Paula McDonald at 706-372-3004

1st Tuesdays

• Indivisible Highlands from 5-6:30pm at the Hudson Library.

2nd Tuesdays

• Highlands Writers Group meets on alternate Tuesday afternoons at 3pm. Writers still uncomfortable with in-person gatherings may participate via Zoom meetings. For more information contact Bud Katz at either 828-526-3190 or at budandlynn@me.com

Tuesdays

• Strength Training at the Rec Park 8:15-9:15 am. Aim for strong, lean muscles using light weights, body weight, and high repetition to shape and tone. Learn proper form and range of motion to safely target all muscle groups for a metabolic boost and feel great.

• At Hudson Library, Nature Kids on selected Tuesday mornings, For more info call the Hudson Library at 828-526-3031

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Workshop for Writers – Tuesdays from 5-6:30 PM. Facilitated by Sam Renken, this group has a simple mission: to foster and provide consistent community for local writers thereby giving writers of all ages and genres the opportunity to write, read, revise, and present their work to the group.

• ESL classes are held at the Presbyterian Church in Highlands from 5:30-6:30pm. No registration required – just show up and participate. Questions? call 828-526 – 0863 or email info@maconncliteracy.org

Wednesdays

• Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health topics, held on the first Wednesday of each month at 11 AM. This series is aimed particularly at older adults and will focus on mental health topics of particular interest to them, but all ages are welcome to attend. The November 1 program is Dementia: A Deeper Understanding. Reservations are required for this free event. To register, stop by the library or call 828-526-3031.

Wed. thru Nov. 22

• The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts Invites You to "Wine Wednesdays" – A New Holiday Tradition. The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts is delighted to introduce "Wine Wednesdays," This festive holiday offering will occur each Wednesday leading up to Thanksgiving, from 3:30 to 5 pm. "Wine Wednesdays" offer a unique opportunity for visitors to explore The Shop and Studio Barn, all while enjoying a glass of wine and browsing the work of local and regional artists.

1st Wednesdays

• Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health topics, held on the first Wednesday of each month at 11 AM. This series is aimed particularly at older adults and will focus on mental health topics of particular interest to them, but all ages are welcome to attend.

2nd & 4th Wed.

Digital Navigators will be at the Hudson Library at 1PM - 3PM of each month through Thanksgiving to help patrons with their tech needs. Bring a smartphone, laptop, or other digital device to receive free assistance and support. No appointments are re-



The Town of Highlands Declares Stage 2 Mandatory Water Reductions

Due to the prolonged drought conditions and the lack of measurable rainfall in the extended forecast, effective November 7, 2023, the Town of Highlands has declared a Stage 2 Mandatory Water Reduction. According to the Town of Highlands Water Shortage Response Plan (WSRP), Stage 2 is triggered when Big Creek drops below 1400 gpm flowing over the weir.

In Stage 2, Mandatory Reductions I and II, all customers are expected to reduce their water use by 10% in comparison to their previous month's water bill. In addition to continuing to encourage all voluntary reduction actions, the following restrictions apply: irrigation is limited to a half inch per week between 8 PM and 8 AM; outdoor use of drinking water for washing impervious surfaces is prohibited; and all testing and training purposes requiring drinking water (e.g. fire protection) will be limited.

Customers are encouraged to wash only full loads in clothes washers and dishwashers; do not leave faucets running while shaving or rinsing dishes; refrain from filling swimming or wading pools; use spring-loaded nozzles on garden hoses; and identify and repair all water leaks.

Penalties.

The provisions of the water shortage response plan will be enforced by the Town of Highlands utility department and police personnel.

(a) Any violation of the provisions of this division shall constitute a misdemeanor.

(b) Any violation of this provisions of this division shall also and independently subject the offender to a civil penalty of fifty dollars (\$50) per violation, pursuant to G.S. section 160A-175.

Any future updates to the conditions of the water reduction declaration will be provided to the media and posted on the Town's website at highlandscnc.org.

• HIGHLANDS EVENTS •

quired - all are welcome.

Wednesdays

• Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health topics, held on the first Wednesday of each month at 11 AM. This series is aimed particularly at older adults and will focus on mental health topics of particular interest to them, but all ages are welcome to attend.

Mon-Fri

• Water Aerobics at the Rec Pool. 18 years plus 10-11 am. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

• Pickle Ball inside and outside at the Rec Park. 10am-1pm, everyone is welcome so come out and enjoy a game of Pickle Ball.

Mon., Tues., Thurs.

• The Food Pantry behind the Methodist Church on Spring Street is open from 10a-6p.

• Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at the Rec Park at 5:30. A combination class with different types of exercise. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information

Thurs-Sat. thru October

• Highlands Historical Society Museum at 320 N. 4th Street is open 10a to 4p.

• Mountain Findings Thrift Store on Spruce Street is open 10a-1p through October.

Thursdays

• Kickboxing 8:15-9:15 am. at the Rec Park. An exhilarating and fun mix of martial arts for a calorie-burning workout. Learn the proper form and technique to execute jabs, hooks, uppercuts, and front and side roundhouse kicks in a non-contact setting. No martial arts background necessary Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more info.

• At Hudson Library, Family Storytime continues throughout the year on Thursday mornings at 10:40 AM.

• At Hudson Library, Kids Zone at 3:30 pm with a wide va-

riety of STEAM, nature, and craft activities. For more information about any of these summer activities, contact Hudson Library at 828-526-3031.

2nd Saturdays

• The Western North Carolina Woodturners Club meets in Highlands at The Bascom at 10 a.m. thru Nov.

3rd Saturdays

• The American Legion Post 370 meets at the First Methodist Church at 315 Main St. in their community room/909 chapel. We serve breakfast at 9 AM and hold our monthly meeting at 10 AM. We invite ALL veterans to attend - email ncpost370@gmail.com for more information or just join us at 9 AM on the 3rd Saturday of the month.

Sundays

• Church in the Wildwood Hymn Sing Sundays 7-8 p.m. through Sept. 3. 828-506-0125.

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Sunday Service: 10 AM Sunday Morning. Stick around for visitation and coffee hour immediately after service. (Coffee hour is replaced by potluck dinner the 1st Sunday of each month).

Thurs.-Sun., Nov. 9-12

• The 7th Annual Highlands Food & Wine Festival featuring the Grand Tasting, Truckin', the Main Event, A Generous Pour and A Shot at Redemption. For more information and to buy tickets go to <https://highlands-foodandwine.com>.

Fri., Nov 10-26

• At Acorn's Trunk Shows Pop-Up 10a-5p.

Fri., Nov. 10

• Garrison Keillor, Tonight! at PAC-HPAC at 7:30 p.m. \$80 per person. Call 828-526-9060 for tickets or go online at h-cmu-sicfestival.org.

Nov. 16-19

• At PAC, the Highlands-Cashiers Players present "Parallel Lives" 7:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., Sundays. For tickets go to highlandsp Performingarts.com

Thurs., Nov 30

• At The Bascom, ceramic artist talk with Christine Kosiba from 4-5 p.m. Free.

Fri.- Sun., Dec. 1-3

• Half-Mile Farm is thrilled to welcome Rebecca Lang, author of Y'all Come Over and Judge on the Food Network's Chopped Junior for a weekend of Southern Foodie fun. Hosted events are for Half-Mile Farm guests only. To attend this complimentary event at Half-Mile Farm Dec. 1-3 book your stay today.

Dec. 8-24

• "Home of the Holidays" at Mountain Theatre Company now in residence at the Performing Arts Center on Chestnut Street. Tickets go to www.mountaintheatre.com

Sat. Dec. 16

• Wreaths across America Day is Saturday The ceremony will be at 12 noon at Highlands Rec. Park, 600 North 4th Street.

Volunteers are needed to place wreaths. Volunteers will be shuttled to and from Highlands Cemetery afterwards.

Sat.-Sun., May 11-12

• The 4th annual Bear Shadow will be held again at Winfield Farm in Scaly Mountain. Ticket prices, talent lineup and times are yet to be announced. Stay tuned.



Proclamation of a Municipal State of Emergency

- Section 1.** Pursuant to County Ordinance 31.05 and Chapter 166A of the General Statutes and Article 36A Chapter 14 of the General Statutes, and the implementation of a burning ban by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services NC Forest Service dated November 5, 2023, I have determined that a State of Emergency as defined in County Ordinance 31.05 exists in the Town of Highlands.
- Section 2.** I, therefore, proclaim the existence of a State of Emergency in the Town of Highlands.
- Section 3.** I hereby order all Town law enforcement officers, employees, and all other emergency management personnel subject to my control to cooperate in the enforcement and implementation of the provisions necessary to address and abate the emergency.
- Section 4.** Outdoor burning is banned in the Town of Highlands including burning within 100 feet of an occupied dwelling, burning of leaves, branches and other plant material; until this proclamation is terminated.
- Section 5.** In the event movement of person from areas deemed to be hazardous is necessary, further proclamations concerning such evacuations will be issued as needed.
- Section 6.** This proclamation shall become effective immediately.

Proclaimed this the 6th day of November, 2023 at 9:00am.


Patrick Taylor, Mayor

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of The Town of Highlands, North Carolina to be affixed this 6th day of November, 2023.


Gilberta B. Shaheen, Town Clerk



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...EMERGENCY continued from page 1

the state due to hazardous forest fire conditions, which will remain in effect until further notice.

Severe drought conditions and higher-than-normal temperatures in Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky have led to multiple forest fires in those states, too. The North Carolina Forest Service issued the burn ban to reduce the risk of fires starting and spreading quickly.

A wildfire in Cherokee County, deemed the Collett Ridge Fire, has been burning since October 23 and has grown from the initial 75 acres when first reported to 2,919 acres as of Tuesday morning, with the fire being 0 percent contained. There are currently 112 total personnel fighting the fire with two 20-person hand crews, nine engines, one water tender, two helicopters, one air attack platform and additional overhead personnel. At this point, no structures are threatened and no injuries are reported.

On Monday, the fire continued to grow, mainly to the southwest and southeast along the ridgeline, multiple aircraft were used to slow the progression of the fire. Very Large Air Tankers (VLATs) dropped 12,000 gallons of retardant on the southwestern corner and a helicopter was used to perform water drops on the southeastern corner. By slowing the fire spread, this provides firefighters time to establish containment lines.

The fire is burning is very steep, forested, and remote terrain making it very

difficult to access directly, therefore crews must utilize indirect lines that the fire will grow to. These containment lines can be natural like a creek or man-made such as a road, a handline (which firefighters dig into the ground) or a dozer line which creates a break in fuels, holding the fire to that area.

Smoke and Air Quality: The inversion layer, which causes the smoke to settle into the valley, is expected to lift by mid-day, improving visibility and air quality in the river valley. Per the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality Cherokee, Clay and Macon counties may experience Code Red air quality conditions, defined as air that is unhealthy for anyone to breathe. Residents should consider limiting prolonged or heavy exertion outdoors in these areas. Anyone sensitive to air pollution, including children, older adults and people with asthma, should avoid outdoor exertion. Air quality information available at airquality.climate.ncsu.edu/

Structure and brush fire calls are higher than usual due to weather conditions.

The drought conditions attributed to at least two house fires in Franklin, Nov. 3 and 4.

On Friday, Nov. 3 the Austin McConnell family of four survived but lost their home to fire.

Early Saturday morning the Welch family fell victim to tragedy. A fire at their home quickly burned out of control and

• See EMERGENCY page 16



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...EMERGENCY continued from page 14

claimed the life of the mother and a child.

Valerie Welch, 26, and her four-year-old daughter, Luna Welch died as a result.

The fire broke out at around 1:30 a.m. on Saturday, leaving the local community and the Welch family in shock.

Valerie was a stylist at Creative Concepts in Highlands which is also mourning her passing.

"She was a truly kind and caring soul who lit up a room with her bright and calming smile," said

owner of Creative Concepts Lacy Vilardo. "She was always willing to learn and eager to share her barbering knowledge with any of us who wanted to learn! A piece of our salon family will be greatly missed!"

Valerie's husband, Forrest Welch, and their two-year-old son, Silas, survived the fire. In light of their loss, Macon County Sheriff Brent Holbrooks is appealing for donations to support them with essential items such as clothing, shoes, and household necessities.

Donations can be dropped off at the Macon County Sheriff's Office at 1820 Lakeside Drive or the Franklin Fire Department. The family lost everything in the fire and is in urgent need of assistance.

In addition to the State of Emergency issued for the far 14 Western counties, the North Carolina Forest Service has issued a burn ban prohibiting open burning within 100 feet of a dwelling. This ban came into effect on Nov. 6 and will remain in place until significant rainfall improves conditions.

Mayor Pat Taylor also issued a state of emergency proclamation prohibiting burning within 100 feet of an occupied dwelling, including the burning of leaves, branches and other plant material.

Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart is urging citizens to blow all leaves and yard debris away from houses to prevent a wildfire from getting too close to a residence.

On Tuesday afternoon Mayor Taylor issued a Stage 2 Mandatory Water Reduction Declaration due to the extreme drought conditions. That is up from a previous Stage 1.

All water users are required to reduce their water consumption 10% less than the previous month's water bill to conserve resources.

Big Creek, Highlands water source dropped below 1,400 gpm flowing over the wier which triggered the Stage 2 reduction.

For more details on the burning ban and water reduction declaration, please visit highland-snc.org. Any updates related to the water reduction declaration will be provided to the media and posted on the Town's website.

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Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust Stakeholder Notification/Public Notice of Application for Renewal of Accreditation

The land trust accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is pleased to announce it is applying for renewal of accreditation. A public comment period is now open.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review

of each applicant's policies and programs. Successful accreditation attests that this third-party has evaluated the operations of a land trust and concluded that the organization has the processes and financial resources to provide for the long-term stewardship of conserved properties. The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust was initially accredited in 2012 and successfully renewed that accreditation status in 2018.

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed,

written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards see <http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices>.

To learn more about the

accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org, or email your comment to info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments, 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

Comments on Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust's application

for renewal of accreditation will be most useful by December 9, 2023.

Since 1909, Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust has been conserving valuable land resources for the benefit of all generations. To learn more visit www.hicashl.org or contact info@hcltnc.org or 828-526-1111. Together we are saving the places we all love... and need.

...VOTERS continued from page 1

Third up, was incumbent John "Buz" Dotson who got 235 votes and now embarks on his fifth, 4-year term.

On election day 69 people voted for him; 163 voted early and 3 voted absentee.

"I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported me through their contributions and their vote of confidence during my campaign," said Dotson. "I am honored to have the opportunity to continue to serve as commissioner and will strive to ensure future growth improves and preserves the uniqueness of Highlands."

Rachel Wilson and Kay Craig were also vying for a seat.

Wilson got 173 votes with 75 on election day, 98 through

early voting and 0 absentee.

Craig got 144 votes with 59 cast on election day, 85 early ballots and 0 absentee.

"It was a wonderful field of candidates and Highlands is in good hands," said Wilson. "I feel honored to have been a part of this election and am looking forward to serving Highlands in other capacities. This has been an amazing experience, and I am grateful for the support and encouragement I received from so many."

Early voting accounted for more than half of the ballots cast – 265 – and there were three absentee ballots cast for a total of 268.

There were 6 votes cast in the Write-in column.

- Kim Lewicki

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Sept. 21. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Sept. 21

• At 9:40 a.m., officers responded to a report of someone obtaining property under false pretenses when someone requested a charge back of \$46 under false pretenses at The Ugly Dog Public House.

Oct. 2

• At 10:51 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on Mirror Lake Road.

Oct. 25

• At 6 p.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident at Mirror Lake Road and US 64 west.

From HF&R Chief Ryan Gearhart:

Now that the cool weather has arrived, as well as drought conditions, please have your fireplace chimney cleaned before using.

Also, please blow all leaves and yard debris away from your houses to prevent a wildfire from getting to close to your residence in the event of a fire.

...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING from 18

that day was to get water. She had found something more important than water. She runs into the village towards the people she had spent most of her life trying to avoid. She was desperate to communicate who she had met. She ran towards her greatest fear because she had experienced a love that was greater than her fear. It is truly an astonishing story.

Before this conversation, this Samaritan woman was fragile, broken, and even callused from all the pain in her life. After her conversation with Jesus, she viewed herself instead of through the filter of her past, through the filter of God's perfect love. She had been blessed with a new sense of identity.

I do not know your story or your past, but I believe Jesus showed up in this lady's life when

Nov. 1

• At 9:30 p.m., officers responded to a report of a larceny of items valued at \$380 from a fully furnished rental home on Picklesimer Road.

Nov. 2

• At 12:45 p.m., officers responded to a report of harassing phone calls to a woman at Hudson Library about sexual misconduct with a juvenile.

Nov. 3

• At 12:15 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on N. 4th Street.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Oct. 31.

Oct. 31

• At 8:23 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Clubhouse Trail.

• At 4:16 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on The Hemlocks.

• At 8:09 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

Nov. 2

• At 3:31 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid battling a brush fire in Cashiers.

• At 4:33 p.m., the dept. responded to a brush fire on Wilson Gap Road.

Nov. 3

• At 10:45 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Hemlock Woods.

• At 11:24 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on East view Way.

• At 12:13 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on S. 4th Street.

• At 10:42 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Carolina Way.

Nov. 4

• At 6:59 a.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at a residence on Brush Face Road.

Nov. 5

• At 8:28 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Crescent Trail.

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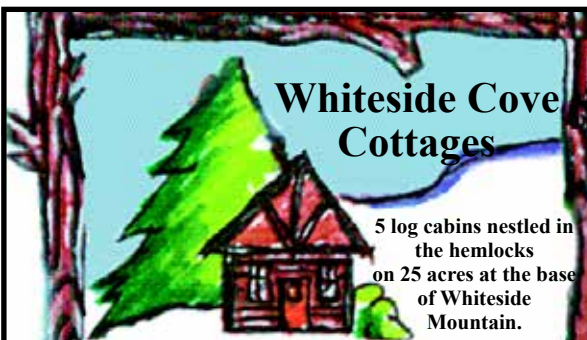
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TL&LC names Ben Crenshaw and Kay Neslage as 2022 - 2023 Volunteers of the Year for their heartfelt service

The Literacy & Learning Center was saddened to learn that beloved "reading dog," Ben Crenshaw Neslage, passed earlier this year. Thanks to former board member Kay Neslage, Ben became a favorite for the youth programs. Kay and Ben Crenshaw would come for regular visits with the children as they took turns reading to him. His gentle demeanor coaxed even the most reading-averse to join in as Ben lis-



Ben and Kay with TL&LC children.

tened patiently. It didn't hurt that as he did, he received legions of love from the group.

Ben was technically a "listening dog," certified for Visitation

Pet Therapy, which includes reading and listening, by Therapy Pet Pals of Texas, Inc. Their mission is to enhance the lives of the elderly and ill through pet therapy.

Huff is recognized a 3rd time

By Osborne Oakley

On November 4th, William C. Huff, traveled back to Columbus, GA, his home, to be inducted, along with 14 others, into the "Georgia Military Veteran's Hall of Fame, Class of 2023." This is in recognition of his many years of service honoring military veterans.

While this is indeed a high honor, what makes this so unique is that this is the third such recognition he received in just a six-month period. In April, the National Infantry Association elected him as a board member, the only Marine to ever serve in this position. This organization has 12,000 members with the mission to preserve the rich history of the United States Infantry dating back to 1775. Then in May, Bill was invited to join the Order of Saint Maurice, who is the Patron Saint of the Infantry.

Bill began his military service in college in the Officer Training PLC program. Upon completion he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant. After graduation from the University of Georgia in 1966, he received orders for Vietnam and was assigned to the 3rd Marine Division.



William C. Huff

During his combat tour he was promoted to Captain, earned the Navy Commendation Medal w/v, and two Vietnam Service stars. He was cited "for his skill and courage...and upholding the finest tradition of the Marine Corps". For this, he is authorized to wear the Combat "V". The 3rd Marine Division, his unit, was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation, one of only eight presented in Vietnam. Bill proudly wears that medal as well.

Following his return to the states, he entered the financial world as a stockbroker in Colum-

bus. Bill readily admits he had trouble adjusting and suffered from bouts of PTSD. He credits his good friend, Jack Collins, for helping him learn to cope. Jack invited Bill to join him in his business and together they formed Collins and Huff, Interior Design.

Bills passion and devotion to serving veterans is apparent through his involvement with many organizations such as the National Infantry Museum where he is Director Emeritus, Chairman of the Student Veterans Resource Center at UGA, Co-Chairman of the Military Affiliated Student Advisory Committee at Columbus State University, member of the American Legion Post 370 in Highlands, his 2nd home, where he is Co-Chairman of the Plateau Warrior Support Team, an organization of "Veterans Helping Veterans."

These 3 recognition awards give credibility to the Marine's code of "Semper Paratus," always faithful.

Bill is married to Maudie. They have three children, Maggie, Will and Martin.

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