

# Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., April 11, 2024

## MC Schools report card ... not great

*Highlands School's grade is up from last year; Jackson County schools also noted*

**Brittney Lofthouse**

During the March meeting of the Macon County Board of Education, Macon County

Schools CTE Director Colleen Strickland presented the board with details regarding the district's testing and accountability data for

the 2022-2023 school year that was released in September.

The data released by the  
• See **REPORT CARD** page 22



## Future of Highlands Playhouse uncertain

**By Kim Lewicki**

At the March 7 Town Board retreat, a representative from Moseley Architects presented a "Playhouse Re-use Study" outlining what must be done to bring the building up to code and make it safe for habitation.

The building is owned by the town, so only a nonprofit could call the building home, and though

there is talk of converting it into Town Board chambers, before anything can happen it's in dire need of repair.

Repairs and additions have been ad hoc over the years, so to bring the building up to code in every regard, the price tag is hefty - \$2,575,000 at \$504 per sq. ft. for the main building and \$450,000 or \$225 per sq. ft. for the for-

mer scene shop and storage metal building.

The architect went over every inch of the building inside and out pointing out deficiencies, mechanical, electrical, plumbing and exterior and interior problems.

Conditions that need to be addressed include exterior siding, trim, roof repairs or replacement,

• See **PLAYHOUSE** page 13

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## Community support halts sale of historic Pine Grove School property

**By Brittney Lofthouse**

Dozens of Macon County residents poured into the Macon County Courthouse on Tuesday night, urging county commissioners to reconsider an offer from a private citizen to purchase a piece of Macon County history, the old Pine Grove School.

The Pine Grove School has a rich history dating back to the early 1900s when it was built to replace an older schoolhouse that had burned down. It served as a vital educational center until its closure in 1949. The building then continued to serve as a polling place and eventually fell into disrepair by the early 2000s.

Families who still live in the Sugarfork area of the county were represented during the meeting, with Marci Holland speaking on behalf of four generations of families whose families date back to the origin of the two-room school's construction. Holland urged commissioners to reject the

\$100,000 offer to purchase the property a developer in Florida had made, and to not consider any additional offers while members of the community work to organize and form a nonprofit to again maintain and preserve the property.

The initial offer to purchase the property, located at 38 Peeks Creek Road, for \$100,000 was presented during the March meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners. However, at the request of the commissioners, the offer was tabled pending public input. A public hearing was scheduled for the April meeting of the board to further discuss the matter. Just prior to Tuesday night's meeting, the offer to purchase the property was withdrawn, however members of the community still spoke during the scheduled public hearing to express their support in preserving the building and "the history

• See **PINE GROVE** page 19

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### A new way to deal with STRs?

I get a lot of information from folks on an array of topics, such as electric vehicles, solar energy, water and sewer, and, you guessed it, short-term rentals. I ponder the information I receive, and some of it inspires me to think creatively.

One of my friends sent me an article from the New York Times (November 10, 2023) about an innovative trend concerning short-term rentals. It seems this industry has been concerned that in the future the country will face a national crisis in not having enough short-term rental units. My worry has been about not having enough workforce housing and long-term rentals.

It appears Airbnb is taking the lead in solving this perceived supply crisis. They developed a creative model that harkens back to the post-Second World War period when returning GIs had no new housing to begin a civilian life and family. Levittown was the solution, a designed and planned suburban community.



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

Today, we have many iterations of Levittown, high-end communities such as Seranbe, just outside of Atlanta, and all the senior communities like Dale Webb.

Airbnb said why not build a short-term rental town that mimics a real, permanent community and addresses the STR supply problem? It happened, and an example of this is Hochatown, which is located within the Choctaw Nation, a rural area of Oklahoma.

Hochatown has a permanent population of about 200 residents, but it swells to 50,000 STR folks on weekends! Put another way, Hochatown routinely grows to about the size of the current Levittown, PA. At one time prior to the pandemic, the unincorporated Hochatown had about 400 cabins to rent, but not anymore. Now, Hochatown is an official, full-service municipality.

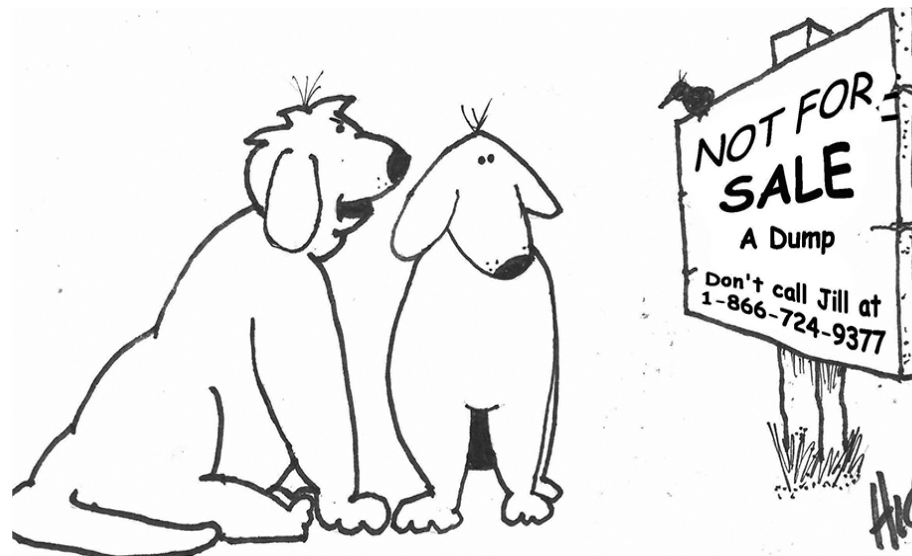
The article points out that Hochatown was originally a Choctaw settlement until they were driven out, and white settlers moved in to do logging and make moonshine. Sound familiar? The town of Hochatown was relocated in the 1960s when the Corps of Engineers built a dam and flooded the original site. Today, Airbnb has transformed that little overlooked community into a thriving economic boomtown. The dam and water are critical elements of that boom, and doubly so today, as STR rentals must have hot tubs, pools, and other amenities.

Being in the Choctaw Nation has its financial advantages. The Choctaw Nation is building a 238-million-dollar resort and casino. It's a win-win for both the Choctaws and Airbnb.

Believe it or not, Hochatown makes over a million dollars a month in sales taxes. Poor little Highlands will make about 1.6 million in sales tax for the entire year! What would be the benefits and costs for Highlands to realize such spectacular revenues? Think of the property taxes for Macon County. The current 12 million dollars in county sales taxes would soar to amazing levels driven by weekend visitors. Could such a development be a win-win for Macon or any county in Western North Carolina? That would be the \$64,000 question.





• See MAYOR page 4

## • HIC'S VIEW •



"Yup, a seller's market"

## • WEATHER •

Thu, 11-Apr	Fri, 12-Apr	Sat, 13-Apr	Sun, 14-Apr
			
62°F 42°F	56°F 37°F	62°F 45°F	72°F 49°F
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### Highlands Newspaper

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## • INK PENN •

### Don't miss out on an author's back list

**T**his week's reading included earlier books by two authors whose later books I enjoyed. The first is part of a cozy mystery series. The second is a standalone novel. Both are set in England, but they're different genres.

#### **Death of a Cozy Writer** **by G. M. Maillet**

I read Maillet's Max Tudor cozy mysteries eons ago and had a hankering to check out her St. Just series. The Max Tudor series features an Anglican priest as the main character. Detective Chief Inspector Arthur St. Just is the likeable main character in Book I—"Death of a Cozy Writer." This 2008 entry in the series won the Agatha Award for Best First Novel and was nominated for many other awards, including the Macavity and the Anthony.

Set at a house party in a manor house in the English countryside, the mystery involves family intrigue that stretches over forty years until, of course, it ends in murder. That a cozy mystery author is a central character made my day. I may write cozy mysteries, but I've yet to be involved in a real-life murder mystery and hope I never am. Imagining murders is enough for me.

The author includes a helpful cast of characters in the front, and it was reading her Max Tudor mysteries that inspired me to include one in my books, too. It's a feature that my readers often comment on. The fifth book in the St. Just series comes out later this year, and I plan to read the next several so I'm ready.

#### **Ghosted** **by Rosie Walsh**

Billed variously as romantic suspense,



**Kathy Manos Penn**

sisters fiction, and women's friendship fiction, this love story is a page-turner. Sarah and Eddie meet, spend a week together, and fall instantly in love. She's visiting England from her home in California, and he's off on a vacation with a friend. They plan to connect when he returns from his week away—but he ghosts her.

Therein lies the mystery. Is Eddie like every other man who's ghosted a woman? How can that be when he expressed his undying love for Sarah? She can't believe he ghosted her and worries that something awful has happened to him. He's disappeared from social media and disconnected his phone. She does everything she can to locate him before returning heartbroken to California.

This alternately heartbreaking and heartwarming love story-cum-mystery kept me guessing until the very end. If I hadn't already read Walsh's second book, "The Love of My Life," I'd be off to get it. It was that 2022 book that sent me in search of "Ghosted," and I honestly can't say that one is better than the other. My hope is that Walsh will soon release a third book.

Meanwhile, I've got the St. Just and Max Tudor mysteries to keep me busy, not to mention all the other books on my TBR list. Can there ever be too many?

Award-winning author Kathy Manos Penn is a Georgia resident. Find her cozy mysteries at Franklin Office Supply & Gifts, and on Amazon. Contact her at [inkpenn119@gmail.com](mailto:inkpenn119@gmail.com), and follow her on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/](https://www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/).

### ...MAYOR continued from page 2

Well, more like the 64-million-dollar question.

So, I will continue to follow this new STR concept. It could take the pressure off the many small American towns, like Highlands, that have been in the crosshairs of the short-term rental phenomenon. Or the opposite might happen. For unincorporated communities, heads up, there could be an opportunity for tremendous economic development. Such mammoth pop-up communities, while generating economic growth, might create major challenges for towns, counties, and states

in providing services.

North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee are promoting the creation of more casinos for regional economic development. Could Airbnb and VRBO create these new, planned communities as huge revenue makers around these casinos? Time will tell. Now, only if the states can solve the growing workforce housing problem, we all will be in a better place.

I will share my ideas about how to fund workforce housing later. Stay tuned.



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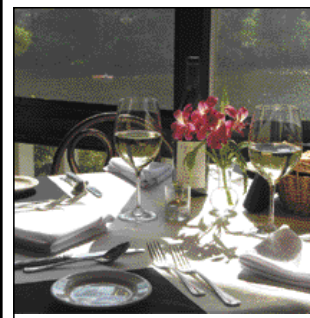
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# • OBITUARY •

## Christopher Mullen



Christopher James Mullen left this life on March 31, 2024. He was born on September 14, 1973, in Oklahoma City, OK. He was the second of three children born to Vicki Dobbins Mullen and James Mullen. He was the only boy in a family of girls and the glue that held that chaos together. From day one, Chris was the best friend of his sisters, Deborah Mullen and Karen Twer. He was his Grandpa Tom's favorite fishing buddy and his Grandma Louise's joy. As a teen, Chris gained two more sisters, April Chester and Alicia Chester, and a bonus mom, Janet Chester.

Home for Chris was North Carolina, where the love of his life, Christy Nix Weller, was a dream come true and gave him the best years of his life. The love between Chris and Christy was such an honor for the rest of us to witness. Chris loved his life in Highlands with Christy and her kids.

He was immensely proud of Colin Weller and always excited to share news of his accomplishments. Emma Weller had a full-time job keeping Chris in line and on his toes, and he absolutely loved every minute of it. He never tried to be their dad, but in his heart, they definitely were his kids. Chris loved being a part of Christy's family. The love and support of Jim and Virginia Nix meant so much to him, as did Debbie and Mike Wilson's.

As an uncle, Chris gave three adoring boys so much love. He was the first visitor in line at the

hospital when each of his nephews were born. To Ethan Burton, Colin Burton, and Miles Twer, he was a friend, a teacher, a superhero. To his brothers-in-law, Andy Twer and Mark Egge, he was always kind and instantly accepting.

Chris loved his family, first and foremost, with such a deep love that even he had a hard time saying it. He fought so hard to stay. He wanted more time to love us all in person.

Chris will be missed by so many. He was an incredible, big hearted, generous, funny and clever man we all love so much. A life so full of love truly is a life well lived. A celebration of Chris' life will be a small affair with laughter, stories and love—the way he would have wanted it.

Goodbye, Chris, and thank you. May the waters be gentle and the fish plentiful.

In lieu of flowers, donations to help with medical expenses would be appreciated. Checks payable to Christy Weller may be deposited with First Bank in Highlands, NC.

# • LETTER •

## Thanks to the 'brave' people

Dear Editor,

There are some brave people in Highlands and not for the reasons you may think.

Anyone who opens a neighborhood business without the backing of a major donor is brave. Highlands is a small community with less business in winter than in "the season."

And yet there are those who believe the citizens and visitors to our town deserve places to buy necessities. And we who live and visit here are the beneficiaries.

For instance we have only one drugstore in Highlands. It has been open for decades serving us with everything from pharmacy needs which are life or death prescriptions to lotions, pain relievers, bandaids, baby products, vitamins, school supplies and hundreds of personal care items. They even provide walkers and walking sticks, covid and flu shots and makeup.

The brave part is competing with the huge drugstores like CVS and Walgreens — insurance giants like United Healthcare and Humana. The big guys get government benefits from the drug companies, but our little brick and mortar stores have to pay more for some popular drugs than they do. And the repayment is not enough to cover the medicine. In other words our druggist, Sherry Sims, loses money on some prescriptions. She fills our prescriptions but sometimes has to pay the insurer to do so. The large drug empires give kickbacks to the big pharmacies.

Speaking of bravery here, there are other brave people who have opened small grocery stores with everything we need to cook — or the take-out places who we need as much as they need us. Need things for your kitchen? Flowers and plants? Business products, or a place to dine out? They are all here even when there is not a crowd of shoppers — and all owned and managed by local people who brave the odds and take care of us year-round.

Living up here for years has led me to take so much for granted. Park in one place and do all errands on foot. Get recognized by people at the post office. Walk in to a copy place and get copies for less than doing it at home. Greet and be greeted by those you don't even know. It is all so pleasant and so easy to forget the sacrifices some make to make this life up here work so well. Highlands is an unselfish, loving community of locals and transplants who don't realize how lucky we are and how brave others must be to give us this life.

Glenda Bell  
Highlands

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## • INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft •

### Return on home improvements

Recently, I was asked what home improvements bring the most return for the dollar invested. I did a bit of research and found some national results, as well as the improvements that bring the least amount of return. Comparing those results with my experience I have come up with a list that I feel is more suited to this market, which is quite different from most urban markets.



Carl Romberg  
Landmark Realty

It is said that the front yard, living room and kitchen are viewed within the first couple of minutes and will determine if the buyer is interested in continuing to look at the photos online or the rest of the house if it is an in-person showing. Also, when in person, the smell will have as much of an impact, especially with mold as common as it is here. Taking those items into mind helped me come up with my list.

1. Mold removal and crawlspace encapsulation. This is high on every buyer's list and well worth the money it costs. Depending on the type of mold, it can be unhealthy for home inhabitants as well as deteriorate

the structure of the house if left unattended for years. Costs vary depending on the extent of mold, size of the crawlspace and company used but it can also cut on utility costs.

2. Front yard landscaping. This is the very first impression for guests. Trimming back trees and shrubs, removal and replacement of dead plants, refreshing the lawn and mulching beds set the stage for your home.

Beyond the plants pay attention to the hardscape including the driveway, walkways, and retaining walls.

3. The front entry and door. Make sure paint is fresh and if the door is a cheap box store purchase, out of style, doesn't operate well, or all of the above; replace it with a nice wood or wood and glass door with new hardware.

4. Remove popcorn or stippled ceilings. The cost will vary depending on what type of ceiling you have, if it has been painted or not and if there is any damage, but it is one item that no buyer wants to deal with and you might as well enjoy the improvement yourself.

5. Remove outdated wallpaper, wallpaper borders and repaint any bold colors to something more neutral. This is probably the least expensive of improvements and can make the biggest difference.

6. Change out dated, damaged or fixtures that are not working property including light switches and plates; vent covers; light fixtures; door and cabinet hardware; faucets; and curtain hardware. These don't have to be over the top or expensive but can make a huge difference in your home feeling up to date.

7. If your appliances were white and are now yellowed, or one of those 1970s' colors (yes, we still see those), then it's time to update them. Again, you don't have to buy the highest end appliances, but something that is functional, more efficient and up to date will work.

8. Outdoor spaces are still very popular, so an improvement to a porch or deck; or adding a terrace or fire pit. It is said that an outdoor kitchen will add \$6,000 to the sales price of a house. That is great, unless it costs \$15,000 to put it in. Personally, I have found the roll-down vinyl shades to not only extend the usage of a porch, but make it much easier to deal with pollen and rain storms and well worth the investment.

9. Regarding kitchens and baths, it

• See INVESTING page 15

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# Spring Home Improvement 2024

## 14 Home Maintenance Projects to Add to Your Spring To-Do List

*Get your home ready for the warmer months with these tasks and tips for indoor and outdoor spaces.*

Welcome warm weather with these essential spring home maintenance tasks. With upgrades for both interiors and exteriors, these home improvement projects, including cleaning gutters, pressure-washing patios, and repairing windows, will keep your home in top shape and prepare it for hosting guests during warmer months. Complete each task yourself or hire a pro to help check things off your to-do list.

### Check Railings, Fences, and Walkway

Winter weather can be hard on driveways, railings, and fences. Check for loose railings around the house, but particularly those at stairs, which might have provided a bit more support than usual during slippery winter weather. Pay special attention to railings secured in concrete, which can crack and expand in freezing conditions. Similarly, evaluate driveways and sidewalks for any cracks and unevenness that could be tripping hazards. Also, look over fences to see if any

repairs are necessary from things like snow-blower impacts or a long season of wind blowing on old materials.

### Update Windows

Adding weather stripping, repainting, and fixing cracked glass will all help make sure your windows look good and protect your home from the summer heat. If you're ready for an overhaul, spring is a good time to invest in new energy-efficient windows. Indoors, try switching out window treatments for something that provides more energy savings to the home, like honeycomb shades (cellular shades) that block solar heating but still allow for natural light.

### Clear the Roof and Gutters

"Inspect the roof for any piles of leaves or debris that may build up on the roof," say Rooster and Travis, the team behind ATL Handyman. "Leaves tend to hold moisture, which is bad for your roof; simply blowing them away with a leaf blower can save you money on leaks and repairs." While you're up there, check the gutters: look for blockages, disconnected sections, holes, or other damage that might deter their effectiveness during heavy rain.

### Start Kitchen Renovation Projects

If you're considering a kitchen remodel, Jeff Koenig, owner of LaBonte Construction, says this is the best time to get started. In the spring and summer, people spend more time outside their home. "It's less intrusive on their lifestyle to have their kitchen unavailable when they're going out to eat or cooking on the grill," Koenig says.

### Update Exterior Lighting

Days might be getting longer, but outdoor lighting is more important than ever as you start taking activities outside. Check existing outdoor light fixtures around the house and yard (don't forget the garage) and replace any burned-out bulbs or solar lights that no longer hold a charge. Make sure motion-sensing lights are functioning, too. Consider adding lights to pathways and drop-offs, like front steps or landscape perimeter, for maximum safety when it's dark. You can also enhance curb appeal by updating existing fixtures with a new style.

### Refresh Exterior Paint and Stain

Whether touching up your deck or giving the whole house a new look, spring is a great time for painting and staining projects.

"The weather is usually warming up, but not yet reaching those hot summer temps, giving homeowners optimal conditions to complete a paint or stain project outside," says Erin Bovenzi, associate brand manager for Valspar. "Another advantage to painting in the spring is that trees and shrubbery are just starting to bloom, which lessens the possibilities of landscaping and foliage being in the way of our exterior projects." Bovenzi also notes that spring is when more homeowners start putting their houses on the market again, and a good-looking exterior can help increase the value of the home.

The 9 Best Deck Stains of 2024 to Protect and Revive Your Deck

### Service the Air Conditioner

Air conditioners work hard in the summer—and so do AC technicians. Koenig recommends beating the busy time by having your air conditioner serviced early, rather than later when service rates are higher and wait times are longer. A full AC tune-up includes cleaning condenser coils, checking coolant, replacing air filters and faulty parts, and more. For window AC units, this how-to guide will help you do a good DIY seasonal cleaning.

### Prep Outdoor Irrigation

Spring means it's time to turn outdoor water back on and take a close look at systems that use it, say the pair at ATL Handyman. Replace or repair leaky, cracked hoses and spigots, and be sure to check sprinklers and irrigation systems. "Water freezes over the winter and it's best to check for any water leaks or any pipes that may have burst," say Rooster and Travis. Test that auto timers and scheduling systems are working—and then look that all sprinkler heads are up, undamaged, and functioning properly.

### Set a Post-Spring Cleaning Schedule

Spring cleaning includes a number of small home maintenance activities around the house, and it's a great opportunity to make sure everything is in good order. Lela Burris of Organized-ish recommends keeping that momentum going all year by setting a cleaning routine as the last step of your spring cleaning process. "Basic cleaning tasks like dusting, sweeping, and decluttering should be added to the schedule weekly, and less frequent tasks like cleaning

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the refrigerator or wiping baseboards can be put on a rotating biweekly or monthly schedule,” says Burris. She also suggests starting spring cleaning in the primary bedroom. “It gives you a relaxing place to crash after a long day of working on other spaces,” she says. “It also motivates you to keep going with the rest of the home.”

#### Fix Damaged Screens

Screens on windows and doors keep bugs and debris outside, so that you can open your home to fresh air. But they easily fall victim to pet claws, weakening due to tension over time, and even some hungry insects. Get ready for that first warm spring day by looking over your screens and making repairs or replacements as needed. Spring is also a great time to enhance outdoor entertaining by installing porch screens.

#### Power-Wash Surfaces

A thorough pressure washing will have the exterior of your home renewed for the season. It's a fast way to get rid of salt and grime that builds up over the winter months. Many surfaces, including driveways, concrete pavers, decks, and siding, can be power-washed.

#### Install or Update Ceiling Fans

Ceiling fan installations are a common springtime request for ATLHandyman. Fans offer a quick and easy style update that also prepares a space to combat heat in the coming months. Plus, fans also contribute to a home's energy savings by producing a windchill effect that can help people feel cooler than the actual temperature. If you already have one, make sure the fan is turning the right direction.

#### Tackle Outdoor Landscaping

Caring for your yard and garden is definitely a year-round activity, but there's some particular finesse to reviving landscaping after cold, wet months. Between pruning, planting, and fertilizing, there are a number of tasks to ready the yard. This spring gardening checklist is organized from early- to late- spring, so you won't miss a beat. While you're outside, be sure to remove debris around the AC unit so it can run most effectively and efficiently.

#### Address the Mailbox

Koenig says a common springtime complaint is that street-adjacent mailboxes get pretty beat up (or entirely knocked down) during snow collection and removal. Landscaping around the area might be damaged as well. Once the snow piles are gone, check to make sure your mailbox is upright, sturdy, and the door can open and close easily. If it's a lost cause, try building a custom mailbox.

**Note:** Need help with projects? Check out our Service Directory on pages 20 and 21.



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# Spring Home Improvement 2024



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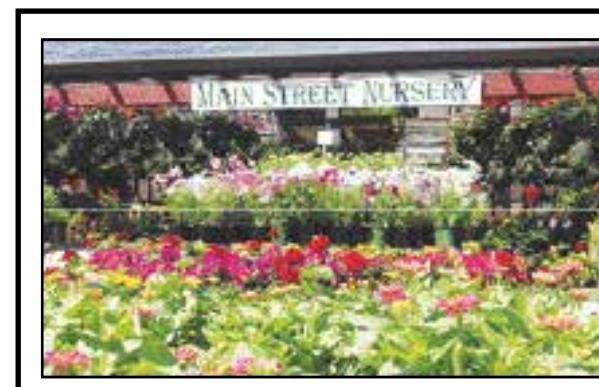
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## How to Pick Plants That Will Thrive in Your Climate



Hardiness zones can help you decide which plants will thrive in your climate.

StatePoint) When choosing what kind of plants to put down in your yard, you likely focus on the what and the where. After all, a beautiful plant in a prime location enhances curb appeal and even bragging rights.

You may pay less attention though to understanding your plant hardiness zone and all the ramifications that come with it. To help ensure your plants don't just survive, but thrive, the experts at lawn care equipment manufacturer Exmark are sharing the following insights about plant hardiness:

### What is Plant Hardiness?

The secret to growing healthier plants is called plant hardiness. Plant hardiness is the ability of a plant to survive adverse growing conditions such as drought, flooding, heat and cold. Ever watched with frustration as a late-season temperature dip leaves your beautiful buds with a serious case of frostbite? That's why plant hardiness zones were developed.

American farming contributes billions of dollars to the gross national product every year, which is one reason why the USDA has long monitored weather data. If determining when the average final frost may occur for every region in the country is worth billions, what could that same knowledge mean for your garden? Well, choosing plants with hardiness levels appropriate to specific planting zones gives you the best chance of gardening and landscaping success.

### What is My Growing Zone?

The United States is divided into 13 zones. Zones 1-6 being the coldest, and 7-13 the warmest. Zone 1 averages -60 degrees F while zone 13 never drops below 70 degrees F. A general guideline is to plant anything designated for your zone or lower, but never higher. Know what zone you live in, and be sure to always check the tag on the back of the plant or seed pack before planting anything.



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# Home Improvement 2024

## Perennials Versus Annuals

There's a reason you see palm trees in Miami, not Minnetonka, Minn. In the case of perennials, it's not about when the first frost is, but how cold it gets, and whether that plant can survive and thrive through winter.

Plant hardiness zones are less important however when it comes to annuals. Because these plants are only meant to last the length of one growing season; waiting until after the average first frost date will save you from having to re-plant. Know that even if your plant survives the frost, it may never match the photo you saw advertised at the nursery.

## Planting Zone Rule of Thumb

Plant hardiness zone maps are, well, all over the map. Consider the number assigned to your zip code as a starting point. You may live right at the break between one zone and the other. Remember that it's better to guess too low,

than too high. In the South, the heat can put real stress on a plant not made for it. Your particular geography can also affect your hardiness zone, like if you live on a hill or in a valley.

For more insights, check out the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map, and watch "Find Your Plant Hardiness Zone," a recent episode of "Backyard Smart," an original series from lawn care equipment manufacturer, Exmark. To watch the video, visit Backyard Life, which is part of a unique multimedia destination with a focus on helping homeowners improve their outdoor living spaces. There you can also download additional tips and view other Exmark Original Series videos.

Understanding what plants will thrive in your climate is essential to having a healthy lawn and garden. Fortunately, free resources abound to help you garden and landscape successfully.

## ...PLAYHOUSE from page 1

and repairs to the ceramic steps leading up to the building.

He said the existing decks on the Oak Street side and the parking lot side between the theatre and the scene shop must be reworked because both include obstructions and they – like the rest of the building aren't ADA compliant.

In the auditorium, the floor and subfloor, pit, and crawl space should be demolished and replaced with a new level slab throughout.

Interior finishes need to be removed and replaced with interior sheathing, and spray foam insulation.

The ceiling is a series of different materials and has holes so it needs to be demolished and replaced.

Existing supply water and drain piping is exposed, undersized, uninsulated with missing commercial code elements – everything is currently residential grade.

As to mechanical aspects, he said all systems should be replaced with new equipment that provides required ventilation concealed by the new construction.

Since none of the electrical elements are in code, all wiring and conduit should be concealed and electric panels need to be relocated and replaced.

He suggested LED lighting, new egress and emergency lights, a new fire alarm and fire detection system, and a sprinkler system.

Evidently, the existing 1931 structure appears to be original but as such doesn't meet current building codes. For instance, he said the foundation, which is sitting on rocks, isn't "attached."

"Though the change in occupancy may not cause or require the existing structure to be repaired or upgraded it is still recommended that voluntary upgrades be made to preserve the building," he said.

The commissioners were quiet throughout the presentation, but once over, Commissioner Jeff Weller said since the metal building scene shop wasn't part of the historical structure, he wouldn't consider investing any money into its restoration.

It's likely the restoration of the Playhouse will be discussed during the 2024-'25 budget process. The first budget worksession is Thursday, April 11 at 3 p.m. at the Rec Park.



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# Spring Home Improvement

## 6 Home Improvement Trends to Watch in 2024

By Aly J. Yale

For many homeowners, 2024 will be the year of home improvement. With mortgage rates sitting well above 6%, most aren't willing to enter the housing market – which would mean essentially swapping their sub-4% mortgage rates for much higher ones.

Instead, renovating their existing homes will make more sense – allowing them to hold onto those low rates while making their properties more comfortable, livable and convenient.

Are you thinking of updating your home this year? Here are the six home improvement trends you should have on your radar.

### Biophilic Design

Biophilic design – which incorporates elements of nature into a home's decor — has been a growing trend in recent years, and 2024 will likely be no different.

"We expect to see one of the top interior design trends in 2024 to be a marked increase in biophilic design," says Greg Roth, senior interior designer at CarbonShack Design in Los Angeles. "The recent uptick in interior design elements that connect us to nature – either visually, physically or referentially – will grow stronger as home furnishings brand, manufacturers and designers continue to embrace the importance of environmental stewardship."

Some examples Roth says to look out for: nature-inspired patterns, skylights that let in more sunlight and bi-fold doors that "dissolve barriers between the inside and outside."

### Goodbye Grays

Gray tones have been a hot decor hue for years now, but it seems the color's days are numbered.

"The biggest trend I'm seeing is grays going away," says Matt Boden, owner of Fresh Coat Painters in Tampa, Florida. Instead, Boden says, he's getting more requests for vivid colors – like yellows and blues.

"With so much going on in the world, blue provides a calming influence," says Mitchell Parker, senior editor at home design platform Houzz. Parker says that neutral colors – like beiges, creamy off-whites and rich browns are getting popular, too.

"By far the most talked-about trend happening now is the move away from cool grays and stark whites," he says. "We first predicted this infusion in the kitchen, but the look is beginning to dominate throughout the home to offer a calmer, more welcoming environment."

### ADUs and In-Law Suites

Adding space for in-laws, grown children or even nannies is going to be a big priority in 2024, as few homeowners will look to buy bigger houses, choosing to expand their existing one instead.

There are many options for adding this space – in-

cluding accessory dwelling units (ADUs), guest houses or even garage apartments. In 2023, interest in garage apartments surged 43%, according to The Plan Collection, a housing plan development company.

"The most popular remodeling project I see is to create a separate space for in-laws or au pairs or adult children who are returning home after college," says Christa Kenin, a real estate agent with Douglass Elliman in New Canaan, Connecticut. "This space features a bedroom and bathroom and is separate from the main living area, sometimes with a separate entrance."

### Fluted Cabinets

If you're thinking of giving your kitchen or bathroom a facelift, Parker says fluted wood cabinets – which feature vertical molding, reminiscent of Greek columns – may be worth consideration.

According to Parker, fluted details have been big at design shows over the last year and can make a bold statement under kitchen island countertops, on bathroom vanities and even as part of dining room furniture. "It adds visual texture and interest," he says.

### All the Office Space

According to U.S. Census Bureau data, just over a quarter of Americans are still working remotely – at least for part of the week. For this group, having a well-appointed home office (or even several) will be key this year.

"With more people still working from home, we continue to see high demand for office spaces – meaning multiple spaces and on different floors," Kenin says.

Kenin is currently selling a home with just that – three home offices across three floors. The first office is on the main floor and offers French-door views of the family room next door. The others are housed in built-out attic and basement spaces.

"Buyers are responding very favorably to these options," Kenin says. "Parents with young kids imagine using the office on the main level when needing to keep an eye on their children while working, and then appreciate the quieter options for conference calls and Zooms."

### Small Porches and Decks

Homeowners are increasingly looking to add outdoor areas for gathering and relaxing. According to Parker, searches on Houzz for "small screened-in porch ideas" are up over 500%, while searches for "small backyard patio" and "small front porch" have increased as well.

"A focus on outdoor space remains," Kenin says. "Outdoor spaces with multiple lounging and dining areas are in demand – plus spaces for outdoor recreation."

Parker recommends turning unused side yards or entry areas into small decks or patios, while homeowners with more space can add larger decks further removed from the house to "enjoy a more secluded retreat."



# • BIZ/ORG NEWS •



From left: Mark Chmar, President Dave O'Harra, Billy Love.

## Rotary hears about The Bascom

Last week at the Rotary Club of Highlands weekly lunch meeting, the club was honored to host Billy Love, the Deputy Executive Director of the Bascom, A Center for the Visual Arts. As of this summer, Billy will mark 10 years as a part of the Bascom. He shared with the club all the upcoming events as well as talking about the center's outreach and classes, the pottery barn, and the numerous exhibitions planned for this season. The Bascom is open and free to the public with much to see, enjoy, and opportunities to learn. For a schedule of events and exhibitions, visit their website [www.bascom.org](http://www.bascom.org) or call 828-526-4949.

## ...INVESTING continued from page 8

has been found that luxury baths or kitchens specific to an owner's taste don't usually increase the value by the same amount that they cost. If you are going to be in the house for a long time, that can be fine. However, if you are planning to sell soon, it is best to keep things simple. I did find that typically a house advertised with soapstone countertops increased the value by 3%; and that beverage centers are more popular than wine coolers, but I question if that is the case here!

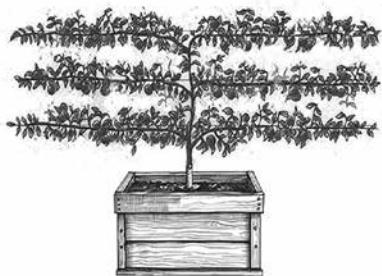
10. Finally, maintenance as an item. It isn't worth doing any of the improvements above if you don't maintain your home. Replace the HVAC if old and inefficient. Repair rotten wood and keep the paint and stain fresh. Fix any roof leaks or replace the roof and clean the gutters. A well-maintained home can be more desirable than one with a new kitchen, especially if it isn't to a buyer's taste.

I don't think that any of these items have huge costs associated with them and that you should be able to at least get your cost out of them when you decide to sell. It should be noted that these are all going to vary from house to house depending on the location, price range, type of house (cabin vs. estate home), etc. Take your time to do research and feel free to call on a Realtor for professional advice if you

have questions.

• *Carl Romberg is the Broker-in-Charge of Landmark Realty Group's Highlands Office and a Resort and Second Home Property Specialist (RSPS). Stop by his office on Main Street to say hello or reach him at 678-936-9309 or [carl@landmarkerg.com](mailto:carl@landmarkerg.com).*

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# • HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

**For more information about Rec Park activities, call Lester Norris or Janice Mathis at 828-526-3556.**

## **Mon.-Fri.**

• Pickle Ball will be played inside the Recreation Center Mon.-Fri., 10am-1pm for the winter.

## **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-3:30p and Fri., 11a-1:30p. Public Swim Mon.- Thurs. 3:30-7p; Sat. 11a-6p and Sun. 1-6p. For info, call 828-526-1595.

## **MEETINGS ALL WEEK**

• 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., on Monday at 5:30 p.m. and on Wednesday & Fridays @ 12:00 noon. Open in person meetings are held in Cashiers @ the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library, 249 Frank Allen Rd. on Sunday at 5:00 pm, on Tuesday @ 7:00 pm, on Friday at 5:00 pm and on Saturday at 9:00 am. Cashiers Open ZOOM Meetings are on Wednesday @ 700 pm. ZOOM ROOM 921 817 2966 PASSWORD CVG2020. For more information please visit our website

www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of A.A. 24/7 call our HELP Line 828 349-4357.

## **Mountain Findings Hours**

**April & May:** Fri. and Sat. 10a to 1p. **June:**

Thurs.-Sat., 10a to 1p.

## **Mon.-Fri.**

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

## **Mon-Wed-Fri**

• 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.

## **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

• Indivisible Highlands from 5:15-6:15pm at the Hudson Library Meeting Room.

## **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 6:30-7:30pm. 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.

## **2nd & 4th Wed.**

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

• 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

## **2nd & 4th Thursdays**

• Hudson Library is hosting a new program for dementia caregivers. On the second and fourth Thursday of each month, you are invited to join the Dementia Caregivers Support Group, a welcoming group of people that understand what you are going through. They come together to offer each other support, resources, and a listening ear. Modera-



# HIGHLANDS

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For more information: [highlandschamber.org](http://highlandschamber.org) or 828-526-5841  
[visithighlandsn.org](http://visithighlandsn.org)



# • HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

tors Chris and Fred ensure that the group is a safe place for judgement-free discussion. The next meeting of the Dementia Caregivers Support Group is February 22 at 10:15 AM at Hudson Library. For more information about the group, contact Chris at 772-473-1088.

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

## Saturdays

- Story Ballet - a gentle ballet & creative movement class for Children 3-4. The flow of class follows a story or theme that changes each month, engaging imaginations! Saturday 5:30-6:30pm. 828-421-6720

- Adult Ballet - crafted for beginners, but mindfully taught for all levels. Ballet is an excellent way to move, grow stronger, improve balance, flexibility and coordination while having fun. 6:30-7:30pm. 828-421-6720.

## 2nd Saturdays

- The Western North Carolina Woodturners Club meets in Highlands at The Basement 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](mailto:ncpost370@gmail.com) for more information or just join us at 9 AM on the 3rd Saturday of the month.

## Sundays

- 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., April 11

- "Survival Tricks of the Trail" is presented by award-winning author and survivor, Mark Warren at MC Public Library on Siler Road at 6pm. He reached national as a nature educator and wilderness athlete. Mark teaches nature classes and primitive survival skills at the nationally renowned wilderness school in southern Appalachia, Medicine Bow. Come join us to have a few tricks and a fun time. All are welcome to attend and open to the general public. A free raffle will be given at the program.

- The MC Public Library hosts a free Hip-Hop Dance Class for children and young families Thursday at 3:30 p.m., with dance teacher and lifelong dancer Emily Hlgdon. The class is geared to youth age six-twelve; adults are encouraged to participate with their children. This event is a Library and Arts Council partnership. Details at 828-524-3600.

## Fri. April 12

- Great Art on Screen - Titian, the empire of color, at PAC at 5:30 p.m. For tickets visit [www.HighlandsPerformingArts.com](http://www.HighlandsPerformingArts.com)

## Sat., April 13

- Plateau Pickup 8:30a-noon. Meet in K-H Founders Park on Pine Street for a light breakfast and lunch will be provided after. Participants receive a free t-shirt. To participate send an email to [events@highlandschamber.org](mailto:events@highlandschamber.org).

## April 15-19

- The Town of Highlands will conduct its annual white goods pickup. During this week, the town will come to a residence and pick up any used appliances such as washing machines, stoves, or other appliances. Please call Town Hall at (828) 526 - 2118 for more information. The town will recycle the metal of these defunct machines. Money from the recycling effort will help defray some of the program's costs.

## Thurs., April 18

- OEI's The Orchard Sessions with Mike Kinnebrew at The Farm. Indie folk fueled by soulful inspiration. Light bites, a cash bar 6-8 p.m. \$40. Book Online: <https://www.simpletix.com/e/mike-kinnebrew-orchard-sessions-at-the-far-tickets-149347>

## Fri., April 19

- Senior Lunch will be Friday at noon at the Rec Dept in the Meeting Room. For any other information call Lester Norris or Janice Mathis at 828-526-3556.

## Sun. April 21

- Volunteers needed for Cashiers Litter Clean Up from 1-4 p.m. Sunday. f available, email Bob Lewis at [Bob@BobLewisManagement.com](mailto:Bob@BobLewisManagement.com) or call 404-219-1785.

## Fri.-Sun., April 26-28

- PAC Educational Theatre presents Oliver. Opening Night Gala 6p, show at 7p; Sat, a 7 p.m. and Sun., 3 p.m. For tickets go to [www.highlandperformingarts.com](http://www.highlandperformingarts.com).

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# • BIZ/ORG NEWS •

## The purpose of the Bible

- John 20:31

**Michael D. Matlock**  
Rector  
Christ Anglican Church

During this Easter season, let's get back to the basics by exploring the Bible in fresh ways. Have you ever asked yourself what is the purpose of the Bible? St. John's Gospel at least tells us what its purpose is.

In the Gospel of John, Chapter 20, verses 30-31, we read: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may life in his name."

The Bible sets out to give the good news: that when we place our trust in Christ alone, surrender our lives to him, and follow him, we will have life, and have life to the fullest. Let's look at three of the "basics" about the Bible.

First, the Bible informs about the nature of Jesus. Very simply, the Gospels show us the humanity of Jesus—the real man who shared our living and dying human nature. The apostle Paul, in his New Testament books, supplies additional theological truth about Jesus—that Jesus is truly the Christ, the Son of God. The early Church fathers—taking the Gospels and Paul's theology into consideration—insisted on the inseparability of the two natures of Jesus of Nazareth, the human and divine. The risen Jesus is the crucified Jesus, and his glory means the whole significance of the cross is ratified by God himself. We may not understand how Jesus can be both human and divine, and we must accept it is true, because the Bible tells us it is true.

Second, the Bible informs us about believing in Jesus. In the Gospel of John, in Chapter 21, Jesus tells Peter to "follow me." This following is how Peter shows he believes in Jesus, and in the "following" Peter obeys Jesus. Following implies trust, and trust implies trustworthiness. Once again, we might not understand everything about Jesus, but we must follow this Jesus of Nazareth if we believe in him, because that is what the Bible, God's Word, tells us to do.

Third, the Bible informs us that by believing and following Jesus we will have life. Folks, this means we get to have eternal life, and eternal life starts in the here and now, not after we die. The good news or gospel is that God loves us as we are right now. His redemptive love is so complete that it tenderly embraces us, and while we are being held in God's embrace, we then desire him so much to remain in that embrace that we allow him to transform us, and then we—being so transformed—simply no longer desire to go back to life as we once knew it. God does not love us if we change; God loves so that we are able to change. And God's love is an extravagant love so freely given that when received by us it causes a change in us that sets us totally free—free to have "life in his name."

If you can accept what you may not fully understand

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 22

## Proverbs 3:5

## • PLACES TO WORSHIP •

## John 3:16

### BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice. Pastor (828) 421-1315

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. Aryn Williams-Reubel. Pastor 828-743-5298

Sundays: School at 9:30 Worship 10:30

Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

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464 Hwy 64E. Cashiers. NC 28717

CAC@christanglicancashiers.org & 828-743-1701

Sundays: 9:30 am Adult Christian Formation;

10:30 am Holy Eucharist Worship

Wednesdays: 6 pm Bible Study, Prayer, Potluck

Thursdays: 11:30 am Healing Eucharist

### CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY. CASHIERS

Pastor Jacob Tedder jacob@cashiers.church • 743-5470

www.cashiers.church

Sun. 10:45am; Wed. 5:15 pm supper and teaching.

Contact Ellen@cashiers.church for add'l programming

### 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

Sundays: Service 10:45am, Children's 10:30am

Wednesdays: Youth 5:30-7pm; Women's Bible Study: Mondays

4:30pm, Tuesdays 10am; Men's Bible Study: Wednesdays &

Thursdays 7am @ Zookeeper Bistro

### COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY

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am in Sanctuary, Wed: Healing Eucharist 12 pm in Chapel, Morn-

ing Prayer: Mon-Thurs 8:30 am in Chapel

### 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; Women's 10:30 am

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Emily Wilmarth, pastor

828-526-3175 • fpchighlands.org

Sun.: Adult Ed.: 10 a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.

Tues: Men's Group 10 a.m. Wed: Bell Choir 4 p.m.. Choir: 6p

### GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

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Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

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### HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

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Pastor Jeremy Queen

Sunday: Worship 11a & 6p. Sun. School 5 p.m.

Wed. Worship 7p.

### HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Randy Reed. Pastor 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street

Wed. Bible Study: 6 p.m.; Sundays: Worship: 11

### HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road

Highlandscentralbaptist.org • 828-526-0774

The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily

sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.

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### HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Pastor Zane Talley

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11. Choir: 6 p.m.

Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.: 7 p.m.

### MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

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4224 Big Ridge Road (4.5 miles from NC 107)

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Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone — 526-2418

Tues. - 9:30am; Thurs. - 9:30am; Sun. - 11am

### SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby

Sundays: School—10 a.m.; Worship—11 a.m. & 7

Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

### SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212

Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

### SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.

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

### ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

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### THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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### UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

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### WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am



# • POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

**Highlands Police entries from April 1. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.**

## April 1

• At 5 p.m., officers responded to a report of wire fraud and swindling when someone withdrew money (\$701) without permission.

## ...PINE GROVE continued from page 1

The photo of the Pine Grove School that ran in the April 4 edition was wrong. This is the correct picture of the historic Pine Grove School at 38 Peaks Creek Road. We regret the error and are happy to set the record straight.

Photo courtesy of Don Twardowski



lessons she still has to teach the children of Macon County,” as community resident and History teacher Julie Tastinger stated.

County Attorney Eric Ridenour provided the board with background on how the county came to take possession of the building in 2021 after the nonprofit who had managed it for close to 20 years disbanded.

In 2003, the Macon County Preservation Society took ownership of the building and formed the Pine Grove School Restoration Society to restore it. The restoration efforts were successful, and the renovated building opened its doors as a neighborhood center in 2006.

The reopening of the Pine Grove School was celebrated with an open house, attended by former students, neighbors, and friends. The building has since as a gathering place for the community, hosting various events and activities. The restoration society disbanded in 2021, which returned the property to Macon County, and the property continues to be used as a voting precinct.

The public hearing also included comments to commissioners regarding the importance of preserving the building in honor of the community members who lost their lives during the Peek's Creek disaster of 2004. This September will mark

• At 8:45 p.m., Sarah Anne Rutter, 29, of Highlands, was arrested for driving without a license when she was stopped on Oak Street near The Bascom. She was issued a \$1,000 secured bond. Her trial date is June 5.

## April 4

• At 10:48 p.m., Hernan Gustavo Villota Jaramillo, 50, of Cashiers, was arrested for DUI, consuming from an open container and speeding when he was stopped on N.

4th Street. He was issued a written promise. His trial date is May 22.

**The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from April 4.**

## April 4

• At 10:05 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Thornhill Drive.

• At 5:14 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Lucerne Drive.

• At 4:31 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a Highlands Plaza.

## April 5

• At 8:17 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Sweetwater Farm Road.

## April 6

• At 1:18 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Catawba Trail.

## April 8

• At 12:31 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to Satolah Fire & Rescue for an incident on Glade Road.

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• See CLASSIFIEDS page 22

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## ...CLASSIFIED continued from page 21

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## ...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING continued from page 18

about the nature of Jesus, and if you can believe and follow this Jesus of Nazareth without knowing every detail in advance, then right there in

the loving embrace of God, whose arms are nailed open on the cross so they can receive you, you will find real life, the kind of life that

makes you "full." And may God bless you as you become an Easter person!

## ...REPORT CARD continued from page 1

North Carolina Department of Instruction provided "report cards" for each school within Macon County. Each school was assigned a letter grade as well as a category identifying whether or not the school met expectations set since the last report was released.

Every district and charter school receives an A-F letter grade based on 80 percent of the school's achievement score (calculated using a composite method based on the sum of points earned by a school on all of the indicators measured for that school), and 20 percent on students' academic growth (compares the actual performance of the school's students to their expected performance based on a statewide statistical model). The letter grades are computed on a 15-point scale (85-100=A; 70-84=B; etc.).

No schools in Macon County earned an "A" grade and just two, Highlands and Macon Early College, received a B. For Highlands, that is a grade higher than the previous year when the school received a "C" and for MEC, this year's "B" is a letter grade below the "A" that was earned last year.

According to NC State Superintendent Catherine Truitt the grading system isn't an accurate depiction of student achievement,

"The A-F school performance grades that schools received for 2021-'22 and in 2022-'23 were affected by the formula used to determine those grades because student performance on the state tests far outweighs the credit schools earn for the progress students make on the same tests from one year to the

next. Eighty percent of the grade is for the percentage of tests earning a score of at least grade-level proficient; 20 percent is for growth, measured by a statistical model that compares each student's predicted test score, based on past performance, against his or her actual result."

The current grades of NC Schools are attributed to learning loss caused by the COVID19 pandemic, with the NCDPI stating that schools continue to deal with student learning loss, although some improvements were reported.

Cartoogechaye Elementary, East Franklin Elementary, Franklin High School, Iotla Valley Elementary, Macon Middle School, and South Macon Elementary each earned a "C" on the state report card this year while Mountain View Intermediate School and Nantahala School both received a "D" grade. The district's virtual school, Macon Virtual Academy, received an "F" grade for the second year in a row.

With the exception of Franklin High School that went from a "B" last year to a "C" this year and Iotla Valley School which improved from a "D" to a "C," the other four schools to earn a "C" grade received the same letter grade last year.

The annual report cards also include information regarding performance growth within each school and according to Strickland, around 70% of schools in North Carolina were identified as "meeting growth" expecta-

tions. A school's growth score is an indication of the progress students have made over the previous year. North Carolina uses EVASS, a value-added growth model, to produce a composite index growth value for each school.

The standard expectation is roughly equivalent to a year's worth of expected growth. If a school does not have a growth score, only the school achievement score is used to calculate the school performance grade. In addition to contributing 20% to the overall school performance grade, the school growth score is assigned a label to indicate the degree to which a school's growth has met expectations based on previous and expected performance. These labels are Exceeded Growth, Met Growth, and Growth Not Met.

For Macon County, no schools were identified as "exceeded growth" and 8 out of 10 schools in the district were labeled as "met growth," an improvement of the 7 out of 10 schools the year prior. According to the report, neither Mountain View Intermediate nor Nantahala met growth expectations.

Area Jackson County schools scores for 2022-'23 are as follows:

Summit Charter - C, met growth; Blue Ridge Early College - D, met growth; Blue Ridge School - C, exceeded growth.

For detailed information on Macon and Jackson counties school results go to: [www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability](http://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability)



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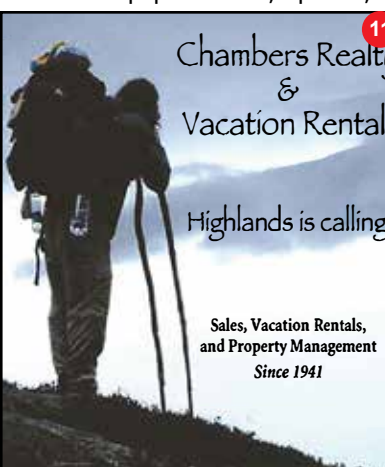
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