

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Oct. 10, 2024

1/4 cent sales tax option on Nov. ballot

By Kristin Fox

At the September regular meeting of the Macon County Board of Education, school officials voted unanimously to pass a resolution supporting Chap-

ter 105, Article 46 of the North Carolina General Statutes, a one-quarter cent local option sales and use tax on this November's upcoming general election ballot.

The resolution states that

“the board endorses and supports in the strongest terms possible” the passage of the tax increase. It also encourages all qualified voters of Macon

• See SALESTAX page 22

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Noel Buras, J.J. Rodriguez and Larry Bienvue with First Baptist church members and MC Sheriff officers who gathered to begin the distribution of truckloads of supplies the Buras party brought to Highlands from New Orleans last Thursday.

– Photo by Anna Claire Ramey

Gratitude comes full circle to the benefit of Highlands and elsewhere

By Kim Lewicki

Sometimes coming full circle is a bad thing, but sometimes it's a good thing and when you add “paying it forward” that circle of good expands exponentially.

Since last Thursday, collaboration spearheaded by Anna Claire Ramey, First Baptist

Church member and In Patient and ER, RN Care Manager at HC Hospital, set in motion a series of events whose effects are being felt far and wide.

On Saturday, Sept. 28, Ramey got a call from Noel Buras from New Orleans, LA, who with his family made Highlands home

while recovering from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

“They came up after Katrina, put their kids in Highlands School and stayed until they graduated and then returned to New Orleans,” said Ramey. “He said, Highlands took them in and

• See GRATITUDE page 17

Highlands moves to help

By Kim Lewicki

Though miniscule in comparison, if you've ever tried to herd cats, or a couple dozen middle school kids, or coach a school team while organizing volunteers, snacks, transportation and more, then you might of an inkling of what the rescue teams dispersed across Western North Carolina are up against while accomplishing their daunting mission.

Every natural disaster requires mind-boggling organization and non-stop, mental and physical stamina and acumen between federal, state, county and municipal departments while ensuring survivors are rescued, clothed, fed, cleaned, and funds – temporary and long-term – are dispersed. That in itself takes mountains of paperwork performed by scores of people both online in person.

To accomplish all that, Governor Roy Cooper said it is taking “the integration of our US armed forces with our National Guard and with our FEMA forces who are here on the ground, with our state emergency management and state and local law enforcement officers.”

FEMA Administrator Deanne

Criswell said FEMA has brought in nearly 3,400 federal responders from across the different departments and agencies to North Carolina. That is on top of the 1,500 personnel from the Department of Defense and the 1,700 from the National Guard.”

And still that's not enough, because it takes a village, in this case a country – regardless of political affiliation – to come together in various capacities to help after a disaster.

Here in Highlands – churches, nonprofits, sports teams, performers, event planners – have put in place and continue to devise ways to extend help to those people in the towns and cities in Western North Carolina devastated by Hurricane Helene.

Charlotte Muir with the Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation, Leslie Manning with Pisgah Legal and TJ Smith with the International Friendship Center got with community members to work on a plan to sustain and further support the affected.

“At the Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation, we have been

• See HELP page 4

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• MAYOR ON DUTY •

I am thankful for so many things...

I am thankful for many things, even amid the tragedy and disaster of Helene. Let me express my gratitude to this community. I will never be able to fully thank everyone for their support in the recovery after the storm. People didn't respond to the needs of their neighbors, friends, and community because of expected approbations and expressions of gratitude; they gave their support because they are good, decent human beings who love people and their community.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

I am thankful for our town and county staffs and officials. No one had to ask anyone to work beyond normal hours; every worker knew their duty was to work until the job was done. County Commission Chairman Gary Shields and County Manager Derek Roland were at Town Hall early in the week offering help. County Commissioner John Shearl worked to get the transfer station to accept residential and commercial storm debris free of charge. County emergency management director Warren Cabe was in constant contact with the Highlands' staff to support our re-

covery efforts. The governor and his staff were proactive in marshaling state resources. The governor personally called mayors, including myself, throughout WNC to determine critical needs in impacted communities. Our legislative delegations, Representative Gillespie and Senator Corbin, played important roles in marshaling resources and support for the region well beyond district boundaries.

While government entities were focused on restoring infrastructure, I am thankful for actions taken by critical support services such as the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. Their staff made sure medical access was secure during this disaster. The police, sheriff, fire, and EMT departments remained open and functioned in a great coordinated effort, along with NCDOT.

I am also thankful for all the nonprofit and faith-based organizations who stepped forward to make sure local needs were met. In the coming weeks and months, these organizations will also be committed to helping communities that will face tremendous recovery challenges. One does not have to ask or motivate these organizations to respond to tragic events; it is in their organizational DNA to do so.

I am also so thankful for the business community's response in Highlands. They, too, are committed community institutions. Town Hall was flooded with business owners offering to help get Highlands back on its feet. These fine folks were not concerned about money or profits; they simply were concerned about our residents, visitors, and workers. If I or a staff member asked for assistance from a business, it came forth without conditions or delay.

I am also thankful for residents who showed great endurance and patience during this state of emergency. Almost everyone creatively adjusted to the power outages, communication failures, and road closures. We can all learn from this event in preparing for the next storm. I felt sorry for our stranded visitors. They, too, showed endurance and understanding in adjusting their plans. I hope they will come back under better circumstances.

So, let's all be thankful and grateful for how everyone responded to this emergency. We should be proud of our work. To paraphrase Churchill, "It was our finest hour." This finest hour will continue to be so as we provide support to our fellow Western North Carolinians.

• SNAPSHOT •

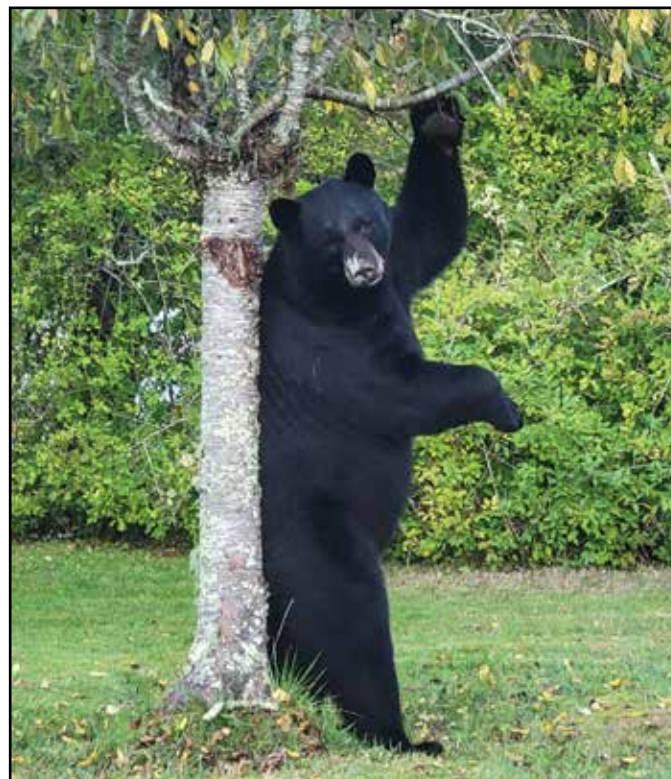






Photo by Angie Jenkins

This is my best side

When this fellow realized he was being photographed, he struck a pose.

Do you have a heartfelt, funny, interesting, or beautiful photo you would like to share in our new "Snapshot" section? Email it to highlandseditor@aol.com or text it to 828-200-1371, with a brief description and a name. No anonymous photos will be accepted.

• WEATHER •

Thu, 10-Oct	Fri, 11-Oct	Sat, 12-Oct	Sun, 13-Oct
 68°F 37°F	 67°F 39°F	 72°F 42°F	 71°F 46°F
Sunny and pleasant	Plenty of sunshine	Sunny and pleasant	Sunny and pleasant
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...HELP continued from page 1

working diligently to address critical needs and connect organizations with necessary resources. However, the road to recovery is long, and our work is far from over," said Muir. "There are still families displaced. Local businesses have suffered tremendous losses, and many residents are facing uncertainty about the future.

"I urge our community to continue coming together as we move forward. There are numerous ways you can contribute, whether through volunteering, donating to local relief funds, or supporting businesses that have been affected. We are also positioned to be a strong support for our neighbors throughout WNC facing major devastation," she said.

And to that end ...

Highlands School is accepting gently used winter clothes and backpacks for students K-8 at a school near Boone. Donations can be taken to Highlands School through October.

Oct. 10-12, Mountain Findings is pledging 100% of sales to fight food insecurity through Manna due to Hurricane Helene.

On Sat., Oct. 12 at 8pm at the High Dive in Highlands, Highlands Harmony will be performing for MANNA whose facility in Asheville was destroyed. A \$10 donation will help MANNA Foodbank restock so it can serve those in need.

On Sun., Oct. 13, donations of water, Gatorade, canned food (with pop-tops) and baby formula for Helene victims are being accepted at the Community Bible Church.

On Sat., Oct. 19, the Highlands and Macon middle school swim teams are teaming up for an end-of-season swim meet at 3 pm at the Franklin Health and Fitness Center to help some of the middle school swim teams in Asheville hurting badly after Helene. Donations of non-

• See HELP page 15

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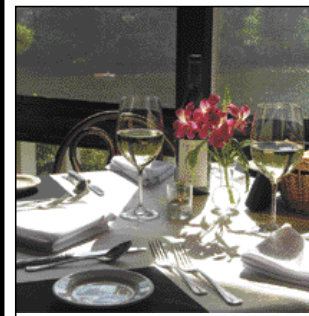


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• LETTERS •

We need honest leadership

Dear Editor:

As someone who was born in 1944, I have lived through decades of change, struggle, and progress in our country. I remember, sometimes through family history, when our nation overcame the century's greatest challenges: the aftermath of World War II, the fight for equal rights, and our growing awareness of the danger to the well-being of our planet. We learned that leadership matters — honest leadership.

We are seeing now what division, fear, and disregard for truth can do. It breaks my heart to think of the loss we will face as a nation if we abandon honest leadership now. For instance, the loss of trust in our institutions, the loss of trust in and adherence to the rule of law and our common commitment to the democratic values that have made America the most successful societal experiment in the world.

Imagine a country where our personal freedoms will be replaced by the values imposed by ideologues, where the enlightenment of science will be ignored and where our sacred vote is manipulated and diminished, if not eliminated entirely. This is the America the ideologues have in mind for all of us. They have written it all down in their manifesto, Project 2025, a plan so far reaching that every aspect of our private lives will be subject to it.

And while Project 2025 proposes to eliminate or greatly diminish most, if not all, governmental provisions for the protection and well-being of our citizens, it will raise personal income taxes on those same workers by nearly \$6,000 a year. We might ask ourselves where that money is going if not for the common good.

Mase Lucas
Scaly Mountain

Disaster relief available or not?

Dear Editor,

Project 2025, the 900+ page blueprint for a Republican administration, will be in force if Trump becomes President. It recommends the elimination of the National Weather Service (NWS) and a major breakdown of its parent founded in 1970, the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA).

If The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 document recommendations were in place today, we in North Carolina would be in a much larger world of hurt. The 4-5 pages of changes listed in this document would unfortunately make what we're presently going through look like a piece of cake. Thomas F. Gilman who wrote this Project 2025 section on eliminating disaster services says "The NOAA (which includes the National Weather Service) should be broken up and downsized."

The 400+ Republicans who completed this document agreed to the recommendations. How many of them know what we're experiencing today in North Carolina, the South-east?

Trump said these exact words in Florida in support of Project 2025. "The Heritage Foundation would lay the groundwork and detail plans for exactly how our MAGA movement will do it." And they did. When you read those crucial five pages of Project 2025 you will see how disaster assistance will be torn apart.

Craig Fugate, former FEMA administrator tells us, "Project 2025 doesn't exactly call for the elimination of the National Weather Service (NWS). It places restrictions on it. These restrictions include (1) determining the amount and type of research allowed by the government, (2) limiting the access of information forecasters have to predict how to prepare for disasters, (3) doing away with the centers that concentrate on specific climate issues such as The National Hurricane Center.

The downsizing and breaking up of the NOAA and NWS would eliminate storm updating and tracking information currently provided, do away with federal funding of flood insurance, cut FEMA benefits and eliminate jobs of people who help us deal with disasters."

Amy Sherman, a PolitiFact checker said "These are the facts. Project 2025 undermines NOAA and the National Weather Service services to the public."

These weather people are not politicians trying to get elected. These are people who are trying to keep us safe. Knowledge is our connection. People who are trained and know how to help us are our salvation in these critical times.

On September 26, the Biden-Harris Administration declared a federal emergency in North Carolina and directed FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Administration) to coordinate disaster relief for us. Governor Cooper reports that as of September 30, 57,000 North Carolinians have applied for relief and funds are starting to be distributed.

Please Pass This On: To find disaster relief, to apply for disaster relief, to find a local shelter or to volunteer to help, contact <https://www.disasterassistance.gov>.

Shirley Cunningham,
Highlands

The Republicans are waging a war on voting

Dear Editor,

Voting is the foundation of our democracy, but lately, this right is under attack by the Republican Party. Across the U.S., Republicans are passing laws that make it harder to vote, especially for marginalized communities, young people, and people of color. From stricter voter ID laws to reducing early voting, the goal is clear: they're trying to limit who can vote. With 4 weeks left before the election, they are running roughshod over state voting laws in an effort to suppress votes.

Recently, Republicans have unabashedly pushed to change Nebraska's Electoral College system, moving away from splitting votes by district to a winner-takes-all system. This is being openly described as a means to weaken the voices of diverse voters in areas like Omaha, aiming to make it harder for Democrats to win. Fortunately, this change was stopped by a Republican lawmaker, Mike McDonnell.

A few weeks ago in Georgia, the decision to hand-count ballots has sparked serious concerns. While it might seem like a way to ensure accuracy, the reality is that it will cause delays, especially in densely populated areas where marginalized communities live. The time-consuming nature

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As you may have heard (and probably experienced), Hurricane Helene was a force to deal with. Meteorologists estimate over 40 trillion gallons of water fell across North Carolina and other places in the Appalachian Mountains!

We had some issues here with power and phones, but thanks to the dedicated teams of electrical linemen, and many members of the Highlands community, all roads are open and water, power and phones are currently restored.

The community really came together during this weather event and we were able to recover from this several days faster than anticipated, which is just another great reason to live here!

The Town Hall, Recreation Park, and several other establishments opened up during the storm despite limited resources, and were able to help ensure people had access to things that they needed.

Neighbors cut out roads, driveways, and removed trees from houses to lend a



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helping hand. When people get together to help, things get done for the common good!

Now that we have rebounded in our local area, it is time to help others that are mobilizing to help the devastated areas to the east of us like Rosman, Brevard, Asheville, Marion, Spruce Pine, Burnsville, Boone, Banner Elk, Newland and others, too numerous to mention. These places were devastated by this storm and will require months and possibly years of effort to recover from this disaster.

Please do what you can and lives will be saved, I know that Highlands and the surrounding area will go above and beyond to give assistance and to help out neighbors, near and far.

Highlands is an investment in a way of life! We are so blessed to live here, and it is my hope that we can continue to be a shining light in the Appalachians during this trying time.

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Million dollar views minutes from downtown Highlands in VZ Top. Upper level unit with one-level living Two bedrooms, two updated baths, an open kitchen with breakfast bar, living room with a wood burning fireplace, and custom built-ins. Offered at \$530,000 mls # 104136



Located in the wonderful Highgate community just beyond Highlands Country Club, this 4 bedroom 5 bath is located on one level with a level usable lot. The living areas are open and spacious with heavy beams and walls of French doors that open onto a covered porch with fireplace. There are 5 additional fireplaces in the living and bedroom areas. The primary bedroom has 2 accessible baths and additional den. The lower level has a game room, garage, and huge basement storage areas. This is one of the most reasonably priced homes in the Highgate area and a do not miss. Offered at \$2,899,000. mls#104513



Own a truly unique Highlands Cabin! Located less than 3 miles from Main Street and having over 19 acres of usable land, this true log cabin was added to an existing farmhouse, barn, meadow, views off the upper tier. A blank canvas to improve to your personal taste and have a family heirloom for another chapter. 4 bedrooms, stone fireplaces, retro kitchen, fantastic sleeping porch. This property has endless possibilities! Offered at \$3,575,000. mls #103398



Cabe Place. Freshly renovated with real wood doors and shiplap, this 3 bedroom, 2 bath has good rental history and is a nice getaway, or for year-round living. Recently renovated kitchen, and baths. Custom fire pit and masonry pizza oven. A very nice home just waiting for you! Offered at \$925,000. mls #103899



All you need are clothes and a toothbrush to move into this completely furnished home. Two bedrooms, two baths on a secluded hill in town. Gas fireplace for those chilly nights. Full kitchen, nice covered and open deck to enjoy. Covered carport and ample parking. All for only \$615,000. mls #104652



This authentic Highlands Charmer is located close to town on all paved roads. Home sits level to entry and has a side yard with a firepit, view of Mirror Lake The cottage has a kitchen/dining room, primary bedroom and bath on the main level with porch. The terrace level has a living room that opens to the side yard, 2 bedrooms and a bath. This one is a grandfathered Short-Term Rental. Ready to use. Furnishings negotiable. Offered at \$749,999. mls #104017



Need a great storage building for cars or an office with a half bath and storage? This lower-level storage condo is just what the doctor ordered. Will hold several cars. Offered at \$300,000. mls #103900



Highlands Cove at Old Edwards Club This lovely condo features easy access directly Off of Highlands Cove Drive and is close to the clubhouse, swimming, tennis courts, and Golf course. Three bedrooms, three baths, all on the main level, Coffered High ceilings, move in condition. Lovely decks and porches to enjoy the cool summer air. Furnishings are negotiable. Offered at \$899,000. mls #105964



Located close to town, this cottage features 2 bedrooms and 3 baths. One car garage could be converted to a family room. 3 levels that house a living-room/kitchen/dining on main, bedroom and bath on 2nd level. Primary bedroom, bath, den and full bath. A patio-deck overlooking rushing water of the Cullasaja River overflow from Mirror Lake. Offered at \$499,000. mls #103969



A must see! This home is only 1 1/2 miles from the center of Highlands. Move-in ready with all furnishings included and lots of updates. Expansive deck with long range views. The main level has primary bedroom and bath with double vanities and walk in shower. Lower level has two more bedrooms and a bath with a soaking tub. Offered at \$1,175,000. mls #104361



Move-in condition, off Buck Creek Road on Western Rhodes Road. 3 bedrooms, plus additional flex spaces. Multiple fireplaces. Open Great Room concept with custom kitchen, plank wood floors, stone fireplace in the Covered porch with hot tub spa. Masters on main and upper floors, plus guestrooms Offered at \$1,895,000. mls #100481



One-of-a-kind mountain cottage minutes from downtown Highlands. Home is bordered by its own majestic waterfall. Enter across the rocking chair front porch the open-concept kitchen/dining/living room area. Updated kitchen, an original stone fireplace, beautiful wood floors, and vaulted ceilings. Two bedrooms and a shared bath flank one side of this open living space and a spacious master suite and screen porch flank the other. Also a cute guest cottage with a bath and kitchenette. Great vacation rental. Offered at \$1,985,000. mls #10451



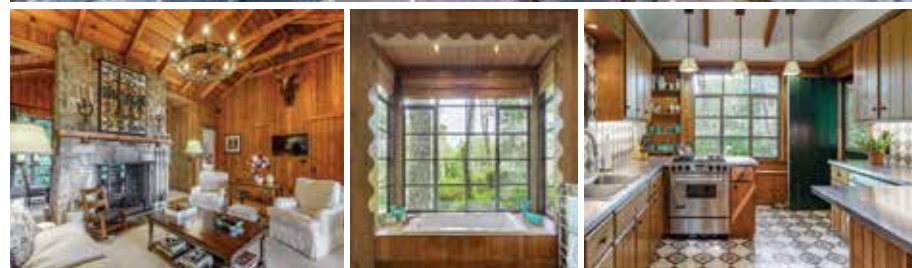
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...LETTERS continued from page 7

of hand-counting can increase the chances of human error and disproportionately affect voters in densely populated areas, often home to marginalized and minority communities, by creating logistical bottlenecks and delays. Any perception of bias in choosing which ballots to count could undermine fairness and transparency. In 2020, Trump and his colleagues illegally asked Georgia Board of Elections to find more votes to give him the win.

And, in North Carolina, the RNC and state Republicans challenged the use of a valid state approved student ID for voting. In this case a judge saw fit to block this attempt. We are all well familiar with the constant re-drawing district lines to dilute the voting power of certain groups.

Also, in North Carolina, the RNC filed a new lawsuit against the North Carolina State Election Board alleging officials are legally permitting overseas voters who don't reside in the state to participate in its elections. The complaint takes issue with how the board is applying North Carolina Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act (UMOVA) which allows for military members and US citizens living abroad to vote in state and federal elections.

At the national level, House Speaker Mike Johnson, backed by the former

President, recently attempted to tie a voter suppression measure to the 2025 budget through a stopgap spending bill. Specifically, the bill included a provision that would require states to demand proof of citizenship when registering to vote which aimed to disenfranchise a significant portion of the population, particularly women (who may have changed names upon marriage), minorities, and low-income individuals, who may not have easy access to documentation such as passports or birth certificates. Fortunately, it could not get the votes from either party to push it through.

These efforts aren't about making the voting process secure—they're about holding onto power by limiting access to voting. Rather than winning elections fairly, it seems Republicans are resorting to voter suppression. We must protect the right to vote for everyone. Voting should be a simple and accessible right, not something only available to certain groups. Every citizen deserves to have their voice heard. No matter who you are voting for in the upcoming election, please make sure you are still registered and do vote and make your voice count!

Lyn de la Houssaye
 Highlands

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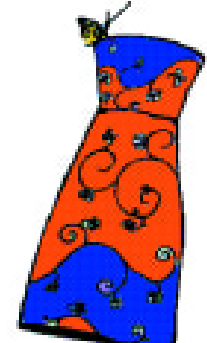


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WHAT IS THE TRUTH ABOUT IMMIGRATION?

- MYTH 1:** The Biden administration has opened our borders letting in millions of undocumented migrants.
- TRUTH:** The rate of undocumented immigrants crossing our border has plummeted since 2020. Illegal or undocumented immigrants are only a fraction of the people coming into the U.S. The vast majority are documented, have gone through our system and are entirely legal. Over 17,000 agents are currently protecting our border.
- MYTH 2:** Undocumented immigrants are a drain on our health care and social services.
- TRUTH:** Access to public services for undocumented immigrants is restricted, and many contribute economically without receiving benefits. Documented immigrants often don't even qualify for government benefits.
- MYTH 3:** Immigrants don't contribute to Social Security or Medicare.
- TRUTH:** Documented immigrants overall pay the same taxes as citizens; in recent years undocumented immigrants have paid nearly \$12 billion annually in state and local taxes.
- MYTH 4:** Violent crime is soaring "through the roof" due to an influx of illegal immigrants.
- TRUTH:** Research consistently shows that undocumented immigrants are less likely to commit violent crimes than U.S. citizens. Immigrants, whether legal or undocumented, have proved less likely than US-born citizens to commit crimes. According to Reuters, crime rates in border towns are lower than those in other cities.
- MYTH 5:** Illegal immigrants are stealing our jobs.
- TRUTH:** Immigrants are in fact taking jobs that US-born citizens are less willing to do, such as farm work, domestic help and childcare, and they create jobs by starting small businesses. Immigrants contribute substantially to the good of our country's economy and wellbeing.

A bipartisan bill introduced into Congress by the Biden administration would have added 20,000 border patrol agents, built hundreds of miles of fence, added greater high tech surveillance equipment and increased the number of immigration judges to expedite processing. The bill passed the Senate with bipartisan support; however it was killed in the House because former President Trump needed to campaign on the immigration crisis rather than solve it. President Biden has taken decisive steps to strengthen the US border security. Vice President Harris, if elected, will sign this bill into law.

Paid For By Indivisible Highlands

• HIGHLANDS EVENTS •

Thurs.-Sun. Oct. 10-12

- Mountain Findings is pledging 100% of sales to fight food insecurity due to Hurricane Helene.

Thurs., Oct. 10

- Pisgah Legal Services' 14th Annual Justice Forum. Reception 5:30pm; Forum 7pm. Tickets to the reception are \$125/person and include food and drink. Advance registration is required at www.pisgahlegal.org/justiceforum. In Highlands, the free livestreaming of the event will be at PAC. Questions? Email Leslie@pisgah-legal.org

- OEI's The Orchard Sessions with Erick Baker. Light bites, a cash bar 6-8 p.m. \$40. Book Online: <https://www.simpletix.com/e/erick-baker-orchard-sessions-at-the-farm-tickets-149415>.

Fri., Oct. 11

- Friday Night Live music on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – The Foxfire Boys

- OEI's Chef Dinners at The Farm. GREAT BRITAIN CELEBRITY CHEF PHIL VICKERY. Book Online at OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners

Sat., Oct. 12

- Highlands Heritage Jamboree with traditional music, BBQ & Moonshine at KH Founders Park 4:30-7:30p featuring Nu Blue.

- At the High Dive at 8pm, Highlands Harmony will be performing for MANNA. A \$10 donation will help MANNA Food-bank restock so it can serve those in need.

Sun., Oct. 13

- Donations of water, Gatorade, canned food (with pop-tops) and baby formula for Helene victims are being accepted at the Community Bible Church.

Oct. 16-26

- At PAC, Mountain Theatre Company presents The Burnt Park Boys. For tickets go to boxoffice@mountaintheatre.com.

Fri., Oct 18

- At Hudson Library in Highlands, Arts & Crafts of Bhutan with Dennis Desmond at 4 p.m. sponsored by the Arts Council of Macon County. **Sat., Oct. 19**

- Highlands and Macon middle school swim teams are teaming up for an end-of-season swim meet at 3 pm at the Franklin Health and Fitness Center to help some of the middle school swim teams in Asheville hurting badly after Helene. Donations of non-perishable food, hygiene products, medical supplies, blankets, blowup mattresses, clothing, card games, books, and pet supplies can be taken to the Highlands Rec Park Pool and the Franklin Health and Fitness Center.

Sat., Oct. 19

- At Hudson Library in Highlands, Arts & Crafts of Bhutan with Lama Yeshe Palmo, a retired Buddhist nun now residing in Otto, Tales of the Thangkas, Part 1. Sponsored by the Arts Council of Macon County.

- At 3 pm, the Cashiers Historical Society will host New York Times bestselling author Anne Byrn at the Albert Carlton - Cashiers Community Library. Reservations not required. To learn more about the event, please contact CHS at (828) 743-7710 or at info@cashiershistoricalsociety.org.

Tues., Oct. 22

- HCH's Dinner with Doc - Surgical services options at HCH such as general surgery, hand surgery and colonoscopies - James Osborne, MD, 6-7p in Whiteside Cafeteria. For more information, call 828-526-1345. Attendance is limited to 50 people. A buffet-style dinner will be provided.

Thurs., Oct. 24

- Highlands Parks and Recreation will have a Halloween Spooktacular Event on Thursday night from 5:30-7:30pm. The event will include pumpkin decorating, face painting, apple bobbing and other games geared to ages 5-10, but everyone is welcome.

- Bingo for Wreaths Across America 6:30-8:30p at the Community Building.

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...HELP continued from page 4

perishable food, hygiene products, medical supplies, blankets, blowup mattresses, clothing, card games, books, and pet supplies can be taken to the Highlands Rec Park Pool and the Franklin Health and Fitness Center.

Proceeds from the Erick Baker Orchard Session at OEI's The Farm were donated to the Highlands Emergency Council and MANNA FoodBank in Asheville.

In addition, Old Edwards Inn has donations boxes set up at Half-Mile Farm and also the Inn's front desk in town for soaps, shampoo and toiletries as well as canned goods and non-perishable food supplies which will be taken to Asheville and local food banks and towns in need.

Art Highlands Gallery artists are giving percentages of their sales to the recovery efforts. The Stubborn Bull restaurant will have their art on display for diners to enjoy and consider purchasing.

High Country Wine + Provisions is donating a portion of

all October and November sales at both High Country Wines and Davis Family Vineyards to disaster relief efforts in Western North Carolina.

During One Wicker Cheese Company's "A Taste of NC" event Oct. 24, 25% of all ticket proceeds and 10% of in-store sales will go directly toward WNC cheesemakers impacted by Hurricane Helene. To purchase tickets www.onewickcheese.com.

HCA Healthcare is contributing \$1 million – \$250,000 to the United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County to help with immediate natural disaster response and long-term support for flood victims; \$250,000 to the American Red Cross of North Carolina to help support its shelter locations; and an additional \$500,000 will be donated to other community partners that provide direct support for hurricane-related issues.

And because businesses across Western NC have been affected, Brookings in Highlands and Cashiers is accepting mon-

etary donations through the end of 2024 for the fly-fishing community whose businesses have been destroyed and disabled due to Helene.

The funds will be dispersed for long-term recovery. To make a donation, call the Highlands store at 828-482-9444 or the Cashiers store at 828-743-3768.

Highlands Events, presenter of Highlands Food & Wine festival set for Nov. 10-13, will be donating \$125 for every ticket to the Sunday, Nov. 10 "Shot at Redemption" event purchased from Oct. 11 through Nov. 10. Highlands Festivals, Inc. will donate the funds directly to: BeLoved Asheville, Equal Plates Project, Highlands Emergency Council, Highlands Food Pantry, and Southern Smoke Foundation. In addition, those who aren't attending the event can donate at www.highlandsfoodandwine.com; 100% of these donations will go directly to the funds.

The Rotary clubs have a donation site set up in the old Bank of America building at Carolina

• See HELP page 16

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...HELP continued from page 15

Way and Fourth Street drive thru lane. Open daily 2-4pm for donations. The needs across the region change rapidly. To see the list of most needed items please go to <https://mtrgives.org/disaster-relief-donation>. The clubs have sent trucks to Marshall and Arden this past week. For more information contact Cathy Connolly Hudson at 919-259-1027.

With the Nov. 5 election looming, the North Carolina State Election Board has initiated measures to help eligible voters in the affected areas cast their ballot either in-person or by mail.

In addition, the state board will help county boards of elections in Western North Carolina administer this election under extraordinarily difficult conditions.

Early voting is still set to begin Thurs., Oct. 17 in all 100 counties. Early voting may look different than expected in some of the 13 hardest hit counties, but it will go on.

State Board of Election officials said they will continue to work with emergency

management officials, the county boards of elections, and the U.S. Postal Service to ensure robust voting options for absentee and Election Day voting.

“We will move forward, adapt to the circumstances these counties and voters face, and ensure every eligible voter is able to cast their ballot in a safe and secure manner,” they said.

Macon County Sheriff Brent Holbrooks echoes what law enforcement organizations across the region feel -- that their offices recognize that their strength lies not just in law enforcement, but in the spirit of NC’s extraordinary communities.

“As we continue to navigate the recovery process, we remain deeply thankful for our community’s support and resilience. We are not just a sheriff’s office, we are part of a larger family. The partnerships we build, rooted in gratitude and compassion will forever strengthen the bonds that keep our community thriving.”



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...GRATITUDE continued from page 1

took care of them after Katrina and he wanted to repay the favor by taking care of Highlands – and beyond.”

On Thursday, Oct. 3, Buras, his son-in-law Highlander and Highlands School graduate J.J. Rodriguez and co-worker and friend Larry Bienvenu, pulled up to the First Baptist Church in Highlands with three truckloads of supplies which included six pallets of water, a pallet of Gatorade, a pallet of sodas, a box truck of food -- canned goods, chips, crackers, and much more -- and a trailer holding a 100-gallon fuel tank of gasoline and empty five-gallon jugs.

A “free store” has been set up in the church for Highlanders in need, particularly those who went without power or water for more than a week – it’s open Monday-Friday, 9a to 4:30p, but a good amount of the supplies have gone to areas hardest hit by Hurricane Helene.

“Noel brought endless amounts of supplies and because he felt so much support after Katrina and also because he has been through hurricanes and knows the needs, he just wanted to give back,” said Ramey. “He has such a giving spirit. Even though he doesn’t live here anymore, he has come full circle.”

Buras’s plan was to first see to Highlands’ needs and then to offer what he had for relief ef-

forts elsewhere. Consequently, relief efforts by the MC Sheriff’s Office, the Rotaries in town and churches have taken Buras’s extra supplies to the small towns around and north of Asheville – Canton, Candler, Marshall, Burnsville, and Glen Alpine – who don’t have resources but are in dire need and are suffering terribly.

Also last Thursday, the owners of Kilwin’s here in Highlands, Ashley and Landon Clark, sent a truck up from Greenville, SC, loaded with food, diapers, baby wipes, water, feminine hygiene products, bathroom products and

more. Those supplies are also fueling relief efforts beyond Highlands.

Derek Taylor, owner of Highlands Decorating Center, supplied a truck so the Rotaries could cart extra water brought by Buras to Marshall.

This past Friday, Highlands United Methodist Church members and members of the Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. filled a truck with extra supplies left by Buras and headed for Spruce Pine which is now a distribution spot for Glen Alpine, Burnsville, Marshall and beyond.



Thanks to donations made by Buras and the Clarks, distribution to those in need beyond Highlands took on a life of its own. this past Friday with supplies destined for Spruce Pine.

— Photo by Kim Lewicki

Through the help of Buras and Clark – as well as the donations made by Highlanders – a circle of help and hope has extended far beyond Highlands.

“We have a great community

that rallies around each other, and I have been beyond speechless at how we have rallied for the communities surrounding us, too,” said Ramey.

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SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING

The mysterious power of love



Pastor Mark Ford
First Baptist Church
Highlands

Let me begin this submission with quoting two Scriptures which drive its message. "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8) and "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13).

The first text refers to the source of the mysterious, Divine love that permeates our world when allowed to effulgently radiate through God's people and at times manifested in the darkest of places and times in conspicuous ways.

The second text speaks of the sacrifice that is demanded of genuine love. I was privy to witness both facets of this powerful love during this past week after the great storm called Helene.

First, one would have to be extremely hardened not to have witnessed and experienced the presence of love in so many places as people in Highlands reached out to others in need and hurt.

I was reminded of the familiar story of the Good Samaritan. What distinguished him from the others who passed by the wounded, half-dead man on the road was his compassion. What motivated him to help was a deep, seated love and pity – the translation of "compassion." "When he saw him, he had compassion" (Lk. 10:33).

I saw this love, felt this love, as I witnessed the endeavors of God's people at work – and this is as it should be (1 John 4). Love in God's people radiating outward to others. But I also acknowledge this love among others regardless of creed or persuasion.

I saw a great deal of sympathy, empathy, pity, and care for the strangers around us who needed help in their time of crisis and great loss.

I witnessed that God had pricked the hearts of many people who may have never darkened the doors of a church, much less be a believer. I explain this as nothing other than the powerful, mysterious love of God raising up may souls to do His work of mercy and grace.

As believers we are motivated by the fact that God first loved us in the gift of His Son Jesus Christ, and therefore we are to love God and others, starting with the household of faith. We are motivated to love and have compassion because God's love abides in us.

As for the unbelievers, I hope they realize that the compassion and empathy they felt and motivated them to give was the mysterious, powerful love of God for people, and He used them to help. In other words, the storm Helene gave us floods and destruction, but God countered with showers of His presence and manifest effulgent expressions of love in believers and unbelievers that could only be attributed to God, "who is love" – one of several of His Divine attributes.

Second, the sacrifice demanded of genuine, God-like

• See **SPIRITUALLY** page 22

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Sept. 23. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Sept. 23

• At 3:44 p.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on Main Street near 3rd Street.

• At 3:45 p.m., officers received a report of exploitation of a disabled elder and obtaining property by false pretenses when almost \$20,000 was taken from a bank account and withdrawn from an ATM.

Sept. 24

• At 8:40 a.m., officers responded to a 1-vehicle accident on Old Walhalla Road.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Sept. 24.

Sept. 24

• The dept. investigated the cause of smoke on Oak Street

• The dept. responded to a call of a power line down on N. Cobb Road.

• The dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Buck Creek.

• The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Satulah Road.

Sept. 25

• The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Leonard Road.

• The dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

• The dept. responded to a call of a power line down on Hospital Drive.

• The dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Satulah Falls Lane.

• The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Old Walhalla Road.

Sept. 26

• The dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

• The dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Old Walhalla Road.

• The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Dog Mountain Road.

Sept. 27

• The dept. responded to a call of a power line down on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

• The dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Clubhouse Trail.

• The dept. responded to a call of trees down with vehicles blocked on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

• The dept. responded to a call of power lines down on US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

• The dept. responded to a call of a tree on house at Highlands Mountain Club.

• The dept. participated in a swift water rescue off Shortoff Road.

Sept. 26

• The dept. responded to a call of a tree on house at a residence on Smallwood Ave.

Sept. 28

• The dept. provided public assistance at

a location on Oak Street.

• The dept. responded to a call of a power pole on fire on Wilson Road.

Sept. 29

• The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Laurelwood Lane.

• The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Turtle Pond Road.

• The dept. responded to a call of a mud slide at a location on Split Rail Row.

• The dept. responded to a call of a mud slide at a location on Bowery Road.

Sept., 30

• The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Whiteside Mountain Road.

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

• The dept. responded to fire alarm at a location on Spring Street.

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

Oct. 1

• The dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers FD on a structure fire at a residence on Round Hill Road.

• The dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Spring Street.

• The dept. responded to the call of a gas leak at a residence on Harbison Orchard Road.

• The dept. provided traffic control at Highlands Falls Country Club.

• The dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Valentine Lane.

• The dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

• The dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

Oct. 2

• The dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Spring Street.

• The dept. provided public assistance to unlock a vehicle on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

• The dept. was called to investigate a possible land slide on Riverwalk Drive.

Oct. 4

• The dept. was called to investigate a miscellaneous fire a Memorial Park and US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

• The dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Harbison Orchard Road.

Oct. 5

• The dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Morewood Circle,

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

• The dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Worley Road.

• The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cherokee Drive.

• The dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Morewood Circle.

Oct. 6

• The dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Log Cabin Lane.

• The dept. was first-responders to a residence on Shadow Creek Lane.



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...SALES TAX continued from page 1

County to vote “for” the referendum in the upcoming election.

The board passed the resolution after a motion made by Board Member Diedre Breeden and seconded by Board Member Stephanie Laseter.

According to the Macon County School System Attorney John Henning, the board cannot spend any resources or tax payers’ money of any kind to promote the referendum, but it can educate the voters on the benefits of passing such a referendum.

“The board itself has its own rights of speech rights,” said Henning. “You are doing this in an appropriate fashion. This is your opportunity as a board to say this is our official position on passage of the referendum -- we do highly recommend it and here is why. You are speaking as a board and you as a board have speech rights,” he added.

The resolution states that it is “the mission of the Macon County Board of Education to inspire and empower students to meet high academic standards, demonstrate responsible citizenship, and prepare for and lead successful, fulfilling, and ethical lives.”

It further states that “in order to succeed in this mission, Macon County Schools depends heavily on the support of the Macon County Board of Commissioners, our families, school staff, and the broader community for assistance of all kinds, including conveyance of our shared values, support for academic endeavors and athletic excellence, and the financial resources necessary to move the academic program forward.”

At their March regular meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted a “Resolution Calling a Special Advisory Referendum for the Levy of a One-Quarter Cent County Sales and Use Tax,” pursuant to Chapter 105, Article 46 of the North Carolina General Statutes. The statute requires that some of the tax revenues be spent on supporting public education.

“The passage of the referendum provides an advantage to the education community because a portion is required to be spent on educational purposes,” said Henning.

The resolution cites unprecedented funding challenges as the reason such a tax increase is necessary. One challenge the school system is facing is the end of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds provided to school systems in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, state funds provided by the General Assembly have not kept pace with increasing operational costs of Macon County Schools, including rising expenses for good, services, and employees. According to the school system, these operational costs cannot be further cut without serious detriment to the educational program.

If the tax increase passes, the money generated would help the county fund several ongoing capital projects in the school system including the Highlands School addition, the Nantahala School’s sewer treatment plant, the Macon Middle School track and the

Highlands soccer field.

In addition, there is now a serious need for a new East Franklin Elementary School which is overcrowded and can’t be expanded anymore to accommodate the growth.

If approved, the quarter-cent sales tax would apply to anyone, residents as well as visitors, purchasing goods in Macon County. The tax would apply to all items other than unprepared food and gas. The quarter-cent sales tax is estimated to generate about \$2.4 million for the county annually.

When the Macon County Board of Commissioners began the budget process for fiscal year 2024-2025, they agreed to put the quarter-cent sales tax referendum on the ballot. In May commissioners voted to expand how the money could be spent if the referendum passes in the upcoming election. Commissioners voted unanimously to approve changing the referendum for the quarter-cent sales tax to allow for use of revenues in both capital and operational needs in the school system.

Henning reminded the board that referendum is an advisory referendum on whether or not the county should consider a quarter-cent sales tax; it is non-binding so it will need further action from the county if it passes in the November general election.

In the recent past, a similar referendum was on the ballot for consideration, but was voted down.

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 18

love is nothing less than a spirit of sacrifice – even to the point of vicarious suffering. I witnessed people giving money from a few dollars to thousands. I witnessed people donating time and energy to provide, process, and distribute food, water and goods desperately needed by our friends to the east. Our church processed – received, packaged, sent out – over 20,000 pounds of these items with the help of the sheriff’s department,

fire department, police department and numerous other entities in delivery to other points closer to the crisis. I saw people serve here, and people go to the places of destruction to be of help.

I witnessed our church and others sending thousands of dollars to Samaritan Purse to bring immediate help. What I saw and witnessed was the sacrifices that love demands when souls need us. What I saw was God at work,

for God is love. My prayer is that the dear souls that receive these desperately needed items and receive on-hands assistance will experience the mysterious power of the love of God, regardless of where it came from. And my prayer is that all of us, touched by this mysterious power of love to sacrifice and give will give God all the praise – for God is love. And we had the joy of experiencing its mysterious power and presence.

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