Highlands Newspaper

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Plan finalized for HS soccer field and pre-K

By Kristin Fox

At the May regular meeting of the Macon County Board of Education, school officials were given an update on the Highlands School Pre-K program.

With the school year now concluded, Highlands School will begin moving forward to ready classrooms in the elementary wing for its future Pre-K program. While the hope was to have the program available for students in the Fall of 2025, realistically it will be the next year before Pre-K students will actually attend Highlands School. It will take several months for the required work and inspections to be completed before the school will be ready to of-

• See PLAN page 11

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From left: President of MLIA Mike King, first $100,000 donor to the dredging cause Lou Pollack, NC Representative Karl Gillespie, Mayor Pat Taylor, NC Senator Kevin Corbin, and Riversand's John Bryant on the shore of Mirror Lake with dredging barge in the in the distance. Photo by Kim Lewicki

Legislators see how funds are dredging Mirror Lake

By Kim Lewicki

The late Buck Trott is looking down and smiling right now.

As far back as 28 years ago, as a member of the Mirror Lake Improvement Association (MILA) and then as Mayor of Highlands, Trott tried to get funding to dredge Mirror Lake estimated to cost about $2 million at the time. Local funds weren't forthcoming and when his contacts in Washington, DC fell through, he imported

• See MIRROR LAKE page 17

DOGE cuts and tariffs continue to hit home

Mountain Theatre Company needs financial aid

By Kim Lewicki

The first week of May sweeping cuts hit the National Endowment for the Arts after the Trump administration began cutting funding and calling for the elimination of the agency.

It's all part of Trump's and Musk's DOGE plan to trim the federal budget to offset the money it won't have at its disposal due to the extension of the tax breaks to the country's wealthiest citizens and corporations which are set to sunset the end of December 2025.

The closure of the Department of Education; cutting funding to food banks and funding for school breakfasts and lunches; cutting public library funding, cutting grants that non-profits were

• See THEATRE page 5

Crew from Young's Tree Removal Service. at the LZ. Photo by Jeff Weller

Saving the habitat one dead tree at a time

By Kim Lewicki

Bob and Cathy Fisher own Long View Falls – a 10+ acre tract off NC 28 south – that due to natural wear and tear and storm damage over the years was in dire need of a clean-up.

How do you clear a 10-acre tract of downed dead and downed live trees, damaged rhododendron and laurels and numerous dead hemlocks? It's usually a job for multiple trackhoes, trucks and manpower and requires trekking about the property.

But the Fishers decided to go another route.

"Looking at options without running trackhoes in there to pull out all the logs and trees

• See HABITAT page 9

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• The Plateau's Position •

•Mayor on Duty•

Memorial Day festivities and more

Highlands Mayor Patrick Taylor

On this Memorial Day weekend, Highlands was alive and doing well. On Saturday morning, downtown was full, and many community events were underway. The American Legion was giving away poppies in front of the Methodist Church to commemorate Memorial Day. Just down the block, the volunteers of the upcoming Highlands Motoring Festival were holding their Saturday mini-car show in front of Town Square.

If that were not enough, the Farmers Market was in full swing at Founders Park while the Annual Plant Sale by the Highlands Garden Club was at the ball field.

Graduation was also underway at the Highlands School on Saturday morning. I was gratified to read in the newspaper that almost all graduates plan on continuing their education beyond the secondary level. Graduating from high school is a great start, and certainly a better life-choice alternative than being a high school dropout. Our school provides graduates with a wonderful foundation to acquire advanced skills, whether at a four-year college, a community college, or a vocational college. We need young people to go into critical fields such as healthcare, automotive, electrical, construction, heavy equipment, and computing. Employers on the Highlands Plateau are always ready to hire young people with basic training and entry-level skills. New graduates should not be apprehensive about starting a new career due to their lack of experience; knowledge and experience come with being on the job.

My advice to the new graduates is something a former colleague used to tell students. Tim Mescon was the Dean of the Coles Business College when I was at Kennesaw State University. He always emphasized that over 50% of being a good and successful employee was to show up for work on time every day. Any other issues can be addressed while one is on the job. Sometimes, the simplest and obvious advice is the most critical information to know and practice. It is like my motto for the last 12 years, "Mayor on Duty" it is my job and my responsibility.

Last week, I had the honor of having Senator Kevin Corbin and Representative Karl Gillespie visit with me and others at the Mirror Lake dredging site. John Bryant of River Sand Dredging gave us a very informative update on the project. The first dredging phase, which the Mirror Lake Improvement Association is financing, will continue throughout the summer. Mike King of the Improvement Association stated he hoped more private funds could be raised to do even more than what was planned for Phase 1. State funds will be used for the dredging in subsequent phases. From my conversations with our legislative representatives this weekend, I can report they were impressed by the involvement and contributions of private citizens.

In addition to the Mirror Lake project, several other major projects will be underway this summer. The Dog Mountain water project is another that is about to get underway. This week, we experienced another delay due to the bid process. Our public works director was scheduled to open the bids from the contractors, but unfortunately, only one bid was submitted. When this occurs, state law mandates a two-week rebidding process. After the two-week period, if only one bid has been

• See MAYOR page 19

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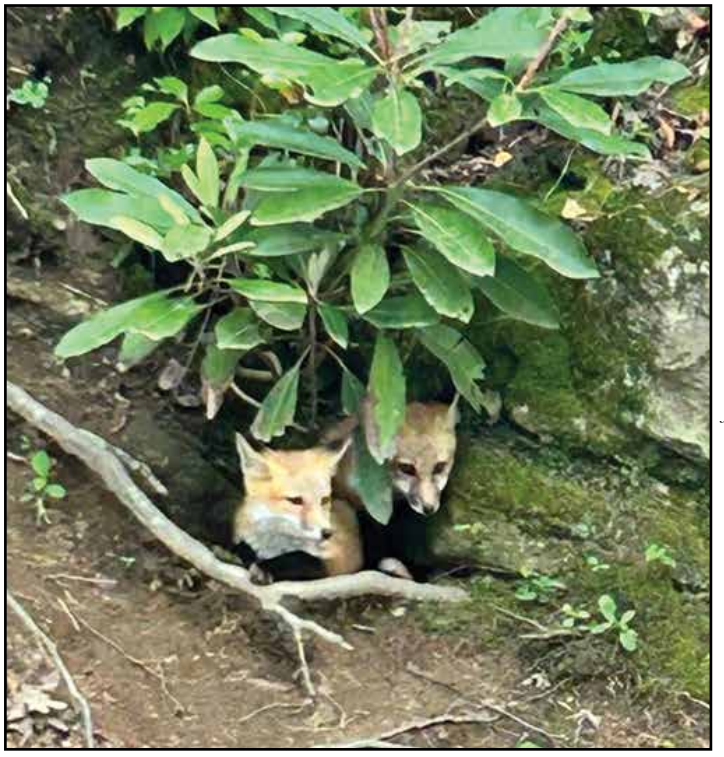

A REAL fox hole in Scaly!

Do you have a heartfelt, funny, interesting, or beautiful photo you would like to share in our "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.

Photo by Bob and Nancy Mills

•Weather•

Thu, 29-May	Fri, 30-May	Sat, 31-May	Sun, 1-Jun
72°F 55°F	67°F 47°F	68°F 49°F	66°F 47°F
A thunderstorm in spots	Some sun with a few showers	Breezy; an afternoon t-storm	A stray afternoon t-storm
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High: 75° Low: 54°	High: 74° Low: 55°	High: 70° Low: 47°	High: 70° Low: 56°

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What's in A Name?

"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." ~ William Shakespeare

Do you ever wonder how towns got their names? I do.

The Highlands-Cashiers MLS covers a wide area. Let's see how some of them got their names.

Highlands, NC- Samuel Kelsey and Clinton Hutchinson named Highlands because of its high elevation. They planned to put Highlands on the map as a summer resort, showcasing its natural beauty and cooler temperatures.

Jeannie Chambers
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Before that, it may have been referred to as Onteeo rah by the Cherokee, meaning "hills of the sky."

Highlands was the highest incorporated town east of the Mississippi until 1981, when Beech Mountain was incorporated. Beech Mountain has Mt. Mitchell at 6.684' and Highlands town limits, in its 6.2 sq. miles, has an average of 4118' with the downtown area about 3855'. Highlands is just plain Highlands.

Social media will school you and sometimes police those who say, "The Highlands," saying, "It's JUST Highlands!" I think it's funny and a little charming. I have a very good friend who always adds THE to Highlands just for devilment and I love her for it.

Another misnomer that seems to irk some people is when Highlands is combined with all the surrounding areas and simply called, The Plateau. Yes, Highlands IS a plateau, but it's a plateau on its own. Thank you, Wikipedia, for the argument but referring our MLS area as The Plateau was started as a marketing tool sometime in the early 2000s, it's a very good marketing tool I may add, but we shouldn't let AI overview and Wikipedia change the geography of our mountains.

Cashiers, NC- This unincorporated town was called Cashiers Valley until 1881. I'm not sure why the change and I'm not even entirely sure why it was named Cashiers. There are at least two theories. 1) Jonathan Zachary chose the name Cashiers after he became the postmaster in 1839. Barak Norton (the first white settler in Whiteside Cove, and my late husband's, ancestor) along with John Zachary were responsible for the town's economics. Norton had been around almost two decades and held a land claim including a gold mine. The Zachary family came in the 1830s and had land grants of almost 900 acres. Postmaster Zachary chose Cashiers as the name because it was the main business district. 2) Another story comes from the James McKinney family who moved to the area fulltime in the 1830s, but even before that, they'd bring their cattle and horses from Oconee, SC to graze in the summer while they were here. James had a horse named CASH, presumably because he'd paid a good bit for it. One fall, when it was time to go back down the mountain, he couldn't find Cash anywhere. The horse had a mind of its own, I guess. When they came back in the spring there stood Cash alive and well. From then on out they called it Cashiers Valley. I'm not saying one is wrong and one is right but seems like if #1 was right, we'd be pronouncing the town cash-SHEARS, the way it's spelled. But if #2 is correct, Cash's sounds pretty good- pronounced CASH erz.

Glenville, NC -- was named in 1891 by Postmaster Elisha Hedden. At one time Glenville was the largest town in Jackson County until it was destroyed by flood in1941 to make way for the power dam.

Sapphire, NC -- The name came from the discovery of sapphires in the 1800s and it became a mining town, then later a spot for summer visitors.

Toxaway, NC -- In 1896, J.F. Hayes named this place The Toxaway Land Company, later shortened to Toxaway. to develop resorts. Toxaway comes from the Cherokee word

ta hey wey which means place of thunder and place of red birds.

Otto, NC -- This place was NOT named after the Ottoman Empire. Otto was a popular name in 1800s and when Postmaster Isaac Bradley was asked to choose a name in 1882, that's what they got. (ref. Two centuries of Otto history/ 1789-1999 by Ralph Henson.)

Scaly Mountain, NC -- is an unincorporated town in the Flats Township of Macon County. It's also an enigma. At the time of this printing, I cannot find any reference for Scaly's name origin. I know there are people buried at least as early as the late 1800s, about the time everything started developing. So, Scaly is just Scaly until I can find out any different. If you're reading this and know of the origin of the name, please let the editor know at Highlandseditor@aol.com.

Last words. My late father-in-law, Tony Chambers, used the word hamlet to describe Highlands. Hamlet: a small settlement, smaller than a village, from the French word hamel translates to HOME. Enough said.

...THEATRE continued from page 1

already granted as well as cutting funding to US Dept. of Housing and Urban Planning is being felt at the local level in Macon and Jackson counties.

DOGE has come after the NEA and it is seriously affecting Highlands Mountain Theatre Company (MTC) which is still grappling to recover from the cancellation of The Burnt Part Boys production last fall due to the aftermath of Hurricane Helene in WNC and areas south.

"The cancellation of a show didn't just mean loss of ticket sales — it impacted bar revenue, advertising returns, and forward-looking marketing investments. The cumulative financial loss from this single production exceeded $170,000," said Executive Artistic Director of MTC Scott Daniel.

Daniel said that revenue from fall and winter shows, along with early ticket sales during the first half of the year, is critical to funding its upcoming summer productions.

"Losing that financial momentum has had a ripple effect on our ability to plan and invest in future seasons," he said.

And now the dissolution of NEA has compounded matters.

"As a primary funding source for theater projects and regional theatres like ours, the loss of the NEA significantly disrupts our ability to plan future high-quality programming," said Daniel. "Our preparation for programming was specifically aimed at securing grants from national, regional and state organizations subsidized by the NEA. However, with the NEA now dissolved, organizations like ours — despite being fully qualified and with applications in the pipeline — are no longer eligible for these critical funding opportunities."

Daniel said the tariffs are also taking a toll but to fully understand the implication it's important to understand what MTC must navigate on a "good" day.

"While our 2025 season shows were selected in May 2024 and budgets approved in October 2024, we began hiring key artistic and technical contractors early 2025. Designers and directors collaborated to finalize show concepts in early spring, and construction of costumes, sets, and properties is happening now, just weeks before our double-bill season opening.

"You might be thinking, 'How is a small theatre in southern Appalachia affected by tariffs?'" he asked. "To save on consumable spending, our designers and builders, based in North Carolina, Florida, Seattle and New York, use materials sourced directly from vendors. The materials we rely on — many sourced internationally — are significantly affected by the fluctuating tariffs."

Daniel said he brought many of his direct source relationships gained as an executive in the cruise line entertainment industry to his new role at MTC when he joined in 2021, which was a huge benefit to the company and one of the ways he was able to increase the quality of productions so quickly after the COVID shutdown.

"For example, most textiles/fabrics are imported from India and China. The lace used to make the actors wigs, along with lighting, video and sound equipment — including replacement parts — is primarily manufactured in China. A lighting motor sensor that cost $80 in May 2024 now costs $150. While we accounted for inflation during the planning of our 2025 budget, we could not anticipate the impact of sudden tariff increases. Wood prices are up 17% compared to last year, and aluminum costs have increased by $16 per ton. An aluminum truss system, a featured scenic element in all of our shows this season, priced in November 2024, rose by $1,300 before we could purchase it in April 2025, the same can be said for many other items we couldn't purchase or store until the last 60 days."

Then there are the artists to consider, he said.

"Each artist – whether cast, crew, or creative – represents an investment of roughly $1,100 per week. This includes their travel, housing while under contract, and fair compensation for their work. Thanks to long-standing relationships with generous local housing partners, we're able to secure competitive rates and reliable accommodations that help make this possible.

"However, even while hiring local professional artists based nearby in Asheville and Greenville, we still provide housing for between 70 and 80 artists over a 22-week season each year. It's a significant logistical and financial undertaking — one we've proudly managed year after year to uphold the high standards of our productions and care for the people who bring them to life," he said.

But this year, due to DOGE cuts and

• See THEATRE page 10

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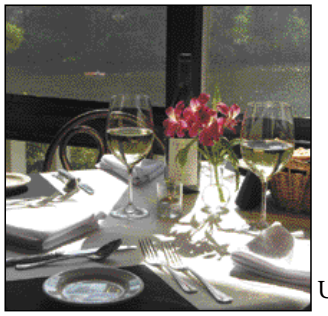

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• Obituary •

Lissy McKay Parker

Lissy Parker was called home by the Lord on Tuesday, May 20, surrounded by her family and the mountain beauty she loved so much. A native of Hattiesburg, MS, she graduated from Oak Grove High School in 1972 and The University of Southern Mississippi in 1976. She worked as an accountant at Deloach and Company in Atlanta, where she met her husband and best friend of 42 years, Billy Parker.

Lissy and Billy shared a love for exploring the back roads of western North Carolina and for restoring and bringing her special charm to homes in the Highlands/Cashiers area to enhance the beauty of the plateau. Lissy created a welcoming home and garden in Cashiers, overlooking Old Bald Mountain. It became a reflection of Lissy's thoughtful eye and appreciation for well-crafted, beautiful spaces. One of her favorite date nights was to enjoy her famous karaoke, champagne golf cart rides at a neighboring golf course and girls' camp.

Through her blog, LissyParker.com, she wrote about interior design, gardens, antiques, renovations, food, and dogs — sharing not to build a brand, but to offer ideas and joy. Her voice was kind, observant, and generous, and she took genuine pleasure in the creativity and success of others.

Known for her warm spirit and positive outlook, "Positive Lissy" had a gift for seeing and sharing beauty in everyday life. She was an encourager, someone who had a God-given sense for sharing the right words with others at just the right time.

Lissy was a member of The Junior League of Atlanta, the Habersham Garden Club, Cherokee Town and Country Club in Atlanta, Mountaintop in Cashiers, The Country Club of Sapphire Valley in Sapphire, NC, and Community Bible Church in Highlands, NC.

She will be deeply missed by her family, friends, and her dogs, Janie and Gracie.

Lissy is survived by her husband, William Robert (Billy) Parker of Cashiers, NC; her son, Alastair Wakefield Parker; her grandson, Easton Wakefield Parker, both of Clayton, NC; and her brother, David Edward McKay of Hattiesburg, MS.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held Saturday, June 14, 2025, in Highlands, NC at 3 PM at Community Bible Church.

Memorial donations may be made to Fishes & Loaves Food Pantry, P.O. Box 865, Cashiers, NC 28717.

Online condolences can be left at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome@gmail.com Bryant-Grant Funeral Home & Crematory is honored to serve the Parker family.

Dear Highlands Community...

I am Mirror Lake, and for more than half a century, I've been neglected and ignored. I've survived uncontrolled construction runoff, hurricanes, pollutants from unknown sources, and unregulated water release. As a designated North Carolina Trout Stream, it breaks my heart that I can no longer shelter trout in my waters – my streambed has become too shallow and too warm. I remember when families used to paddle through my bays and channels, but now they lie choked by sediment and deadfall.

I need your help... and now is the time.

This year, there is hope. A dedicated group of my neighbors have begun the crucial work of dredging my waters – a chance to restore me to health. Through the summer months, they will work to remove years of accumulated sediment, giving me back my depth and clarity. I know there will be some disruption – unusual sounds and activity along my shores – but please understand that this temporary disturbance is my chance at renewal.

Remember me as I once was: a haven for trout, a playground for paddlers, a peaceful retreat for all who visited my shores. With your support, I can be that place again.

But I cannot do this alone. The Mirror Lake Improvement Association (MLIA) has established a Dredging Fund to support this vital work. If you value my presence in our community, if you remember the joy I once brought, or if you dream of the beauty I can be again, please consider contributing. Your generous donation will help secure my future for generations to come.

To help restore my waters, please contact Pat Gleeson at 828.782.0472.

During the project, you'll notice changes:

- Dredging equipment along my shores
- Varying water levels as the work progresses
- Construction sounds during working hours
- Some areas' traffic will be temporarily restricted for safety

But imagine what I can become again – clear, deep, healthy waters teeming with life. A restored Mirror Lake, ready to serve as your community treasure once more.

Thank you for hearing my voice. Thank you for caring. Thank you for helping me become whole again.

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• Ink Penn •

British mysteries at their best

Kathy Manos Penn

Regular readers of my column know that, for me, British mysteries are the pièce de resistance. In this week's selections I traveled to modern-day Cornwall and back in time to WWII London.

"Death in Cornwall" by G. M. Malliet

Malliet is the author of three mystery series, two set in England, and a third set in Virginia. "Death in Cornwall" continues her award-winning St. Just series. Wikipedia says it best. The St. Just mysteries follow "DCI St. Just on a series of cases, all of which involve writers of mystery novels and other genres."

The fictional village of Maidsfell combines all of the ingredients required for a delicious cozy mystery—rival restaurant owners, locals who have a love/hate relationship with tourists, a local lord, and beautiful scenery. Add DCI St. Just on holiday with his fiancée, and you have the cherry on top.

As a mystery writer, I was, of course, intrigued by the notion that no matter where St. Just goes, murder follows him—even on vacation. In any cozy mystery, readers can count on the main character being a murder magnet, be he or she an amateur sleuth or a member of the constabulary.

If you haven't yet discovered this series, I suggest you start with "Death of a Cozy Writer," which takes place in a Cambridgeshire manor house. I predict you won't be able to resist immediately picking up "Death of a Lit Chick," a mystery involving all manner of writers.

"A Beacon in the Night" by David Lewis

Book 2 in The Secret Churchill Files is every bit the page turner its predecessor was. I'd no sooner started reading it than I learned that "A Jewel in the Crown," the first in the series had won an Edgar Award for Best First Novel by an American.

Caitrin Colline, a Welsh coalminer's daughter, returns as the main character and is soon joined in her exploits by her former partner, Lord Marlton, Hector Neville-Percy. As he did in Book 1, Lewis draws on historical happenings to bring his WWII tale to life. The first book had the hiding of the Crown Jewels as its basis. Book 2 describes the Baedeker Raids conducted by the Luftwaffe—in which they bombed British cities beyond London.

As do many works of fiction, this one requires a willing suspension of disbelief. Why? Because in it, Caitrine belongs to an all-female counterespionage unit whose members are as skilled and effective as their male counterparts—often more so. You'll likely smile as I did when she encounters Ian Fleming along the way.

Read it for the mystery, the spirited dialogue, and the characters with hidden depths. I hope the author has more tales to tell and that his series will develop into a lengthy one.

Happy reading.

• *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, and follow her on Facebook, www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/.*

Mystery Car of the Week

Name the country of origin of this 1927 Rolls Royce.

Highlands Motoring Festival
June 12-14

...PLAN from page 11

"I felt like it was our job to bring the best information we could on how to proceed with that. That is our intent. We are not trying to push this proposal but we don't have the money to complete the project. We trust that you will make the right decision," said Breedlove.

"We can only kick the can down the road so far and at some point, we need to make a decision," he added. "It is time to give direction to the people of Highlands on which way we want to go with this project."

...FISHER continued from page 1

piece by piece, which would have torn that place to shreds, to be as environmentally sensitive as possible, Bob and Cathy decided to use a helicopter to lift the debris out," said architect Jeff Weller who has worked with the Fishers on several projects.

Manpower and brawn was supplied by Young Tree Service who used 10 men to physically scour the parcel and over the course of three days collected, bundled and strapped limbs, brush and trees to ready them for extraction by the helicopter.

By Friday, May 16 there were enough bundles ranging from 2,000 to 5,500 pounds to begin the extraction process, so the helicopter – a one-man, workhorse with great lifting capacity that is typically used to fight forest fires – moved in. Nothing over 6,000 pounds could be lifted so numerous bundles were assembled.

After bundling the trees and brush for removal, crew members hooked them to the line to be hauled away.

A line was lowered to the extraction points and a two-man crew on the ground strapped a bundle, gave the signal and had 15 seconds to scamper out of the way while the bundle was lifted and then dropped to where trucks could be filled and the debris carted away.

The extracted debris was dropped onto a flat spot which was the original house site when the property was owned by the USFS. For days after, the debris was loaded into dump trucks and hauled away using the asphalt driveway to the previous homesite which further protected the environment.

"Mid-day, while the pilot broke for lunch so the copter could cool down and be refueled at the landing zone set up at Roger Lee Wilson's pasture off Rich Gap Road, the guys on the ground continued to work, strapping more bundles to be ready for the copter's return," said Weller. "By the end of the day Friday, the copter had made 135 pulls."

Every minute to minute and a half, strapped logs and bundles were hooked to the line from the helicopter, which was 200 feet up to be above the tree line, and carted to the homesite where the pilot pressed a button and released the load.

"Once the bundles were hooked to the strap they had 15 seconds to get away before going back to strap and hook up another bundle," said Weller. "By the time it was over, the guys on the ground were exhausted but there were no injuries and everyone was safe."

The property wasn't cleared, only dead and damaged trees were taken.

"No live trees were removed, only those that were either dead and down or dead and still standing, or live but newly downed and leaning on other trees. They took a total of 30 trees but all the naturally decaying stuff was left – the trees that had been taken over by nature with moss covering them. That sort of thing. They would have fallen apart if we tried to remove them anyway," Weller said.

The project cost upward of $65,000 but the Fishers and Weller said it was worth it. Doing it any other way would have torn up the property and it would have been years before it healed, they said.

"It was all about being environmentally sensitive," said Weller. "I think it was unique that the Fishers spent the money to do it that way. It would have cost half that amount if they didn't care about being environmentally sensitive."

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...THEATRE continued from page 5

tariffs, MTC is facing huge financial pressures forcing the elimination of five contract positions from each of its four Main Stage productions in the 2025 season.

"This includes 20 skilled professionals — carpenters, electricians, painters, and delivery crew — whose contributions are essential to every production. While I'm confident our small but mighty full-time staff will absorb these responsibilities seamlessly, and that audiences won't see the difference on stage, the impact behind the scenes is deeply felt. These are not just roles; they're people, colleagues, and artists who help make our work possible," he said.

In addition, since the previous Highlands Playhouse entity, now MTC, relocated to the Performing Arts Center (PAC) in 2023, MTC has shouldered increased operating expenses — most notably, rent for performances, rehearsals, storage and administrative space, because MTC is NOT PAC, it is a lessee.

The PAC presents concerts, live-on-screen airings, the PAC Educational Theatre that recently presented Matilda and other special events. MTC rents space at PAC and presents 4-5 live performances summer through fall.

"Though both organizations have done their best to differentiate themselves and their business models from each other, this confusion has unfortunately contributed to a decline in annual support for MTC," said Daniel.

Though PAC could also benefit from donations right now, PAC donations do not go to MTC.

In addition, the misconception that the Highlands area of WNC is inaccessible due to the storms last fall persists, so market uncertainty remains high.

"I recently met with Senator Kevin Corbin to explore ways to help people 'Rediscover Western North Carolina,' and I'm excited to join his task force for this particular project," said Daniel.

Meanwhile, happily at least the rights for MTC's 2026 season are already secured. The season will feature Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning shows. "It will be a season that invites reflection, marking both the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks and the 250th birthday of the United States with a lineup that celebrates the 'Resilience of the American spirit,' that our community will love," Daniel said.

To become a sponsor or to donate to MTC go to https://www.mountaintheatre.com/support. This year's contributions could make all the difference.

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NORTH CAROLINA

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Highlands Volunteer Fair

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Thursday, June 12
11am - 2pm

Highlands Community Building
869 North 4th Street

Light refreshments will be served.

This event is hosted by the
Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC.

For more information:
highlandschamber.org
828-526-5841

visithighlandsnc.com

...PLAN continued from page 1

fer the program.

By the end of the week, Highlands school staff will have vacated the classrooms for Vannoy Construction to begin work to recreate the rooms for Pre-K. Updates for the classrooms will include adding a bathroom as well as other modifications required by the state.

The date for the final space, materials and equipment inspection is still to be determined because it can't be set until a childcare consultant from the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) inspects and gives the final approval of the classrooms.

The tentative timeline involves the county conducting its final inspection of the work completed by Vannoy Construction between August 5 – 7, with a temporary certification of occupancy obtained by August 8. The final inspection by the childcare consultants from NCDHHS will take place after August 8, followed by the final punch list completed by the county.

However, while the classrooms will be ready, there will not be any funding for Pre-K students at Highlands School in time for Fall 2025.

According to Mickey Noe, MC Schools Chief Academic Officer, once the project gets to a certain point, the process is really slow. It takes several months to get your final certifications and some of the paperwork you cannot submit until the final inspection is completed.

"To get NC Pre-K funding by January is pretty much impossible because all those place holders will already be utilized," said Noe. "We have to go before several boards for approval and the Pre-K funding will not kick in until we have our final inspection. We won't have any applications to be processed by this fall; on its own that process takes months to complete, so whatever we decide to do, the funding for Pre-K will not occur until fall of 2026."

Highlands School soccer field update

At the May meeting, the school board accepted a design proposal for the Highlands School soccer field at a cost of $75,400 from AstroTurf Corporation. The proposal is for the conversion of the current natural grass to synthetic turf on the approximately 70,000-foot soccer field.

The proposal starts with a project initiation including a kickoff meeting with the school system to identify the needs of the field. This will be followed by a investigation into the existing conditions of the field as well as obtaining all necessary permits.

The design will be completed in three phases -- schematic design, design development (permit documents) and construction documents.

The schematic design phase will include a layout of the synthetic turf field and drainage system to establish the context of the project.

After this is approved by the school board and commissioners, the next step will be to proceed with design development. The design development package will include plans for existing conditions, layout, site grading and drainage, erosion and sediment control, stormwater management compliance, field sections and construction details.

Upon approval of the design development documents, the project will then proceed with the final construction documents. The construction documents will include the final plans and technical specifications required for the project.

The school board presented the design proposal to the MC Board of Commissioners for their consideration as a stand-alone project at the budget workshop last week. In addition, the school board included the Highlands School soccer field as a capital outlay project for the commissioners' consideration in the 2025-2026 budget. The project is estimated to cost $1.5 million.

The Highlands School soccer field was discussed during the school board's presentation at last Thursday's budget workshop with the county commissioners. However, there was no action taken on the AstroTurf design proposal.

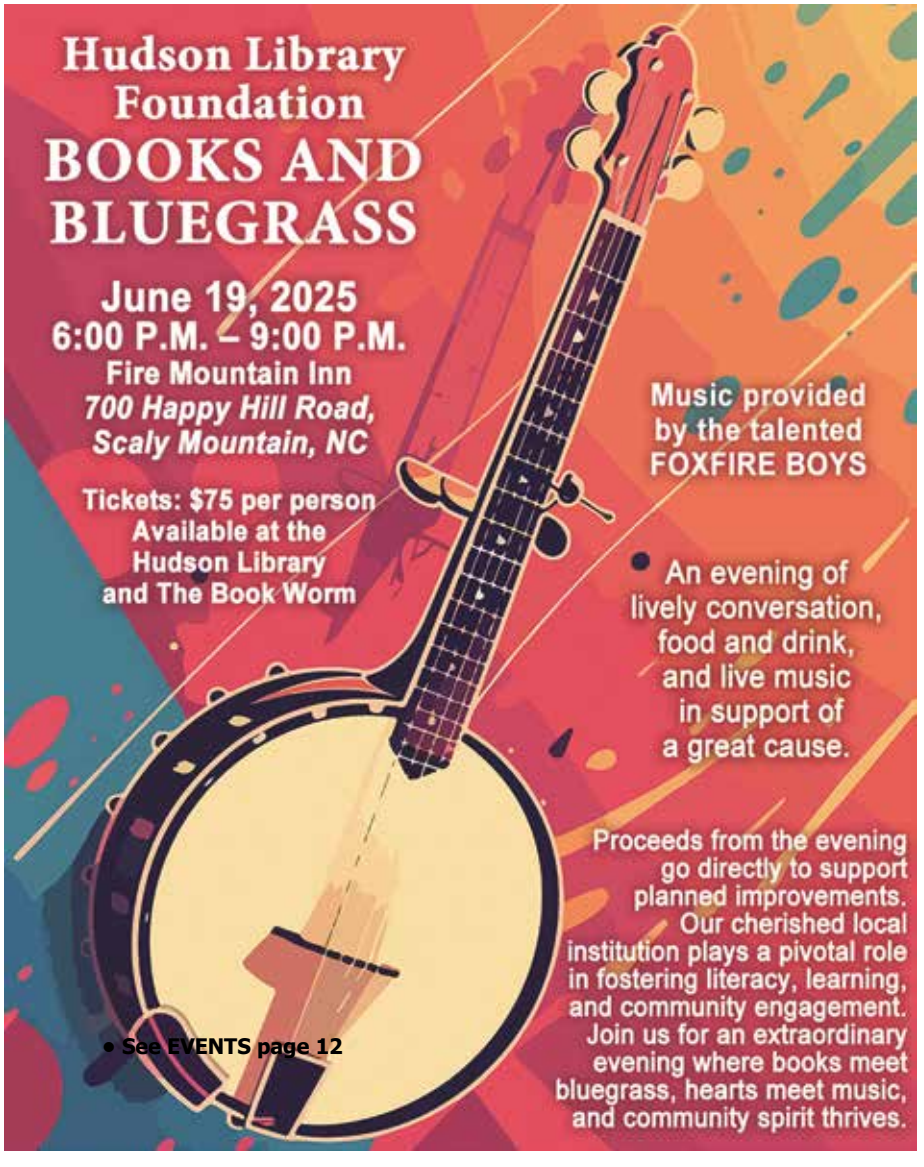
"I am sure the people who are in charge of this would like to have an answer," said Commissioner Gary Shields. "As a liaison to the school board, I think they passed the proposal on to us and would like to have an answer as soon as possible. I think if we don't do the design study we will always wonder.

"I would like for us to let the people with the knowledge come up with a design," he added. "While I have a lot of reservations about the project, I think we need to consider the design phase. And if we aren't going to do the design phase, then I would like for the discussion to end; we need to get in or get out and move on. It is in our court now.

"We are going to beat this horse to death and still not come up with a design," said Shields. "We are wearing out the people on this board, the school board and the people of Highlands. We need to put closure on this project or develop a plan to move on."

School Board Chairman Jim Breedlove said the community likes where the soccer field is located and wanted to pursue the first option to make that the soccer field a turf field.

• See PLAN page 8



• See EVENTS page 12

HS Class of 2025 Graduation – May 24

From left: MCS Superintendent Josh Lynch, BOE Chairman Jim Breedlove, BOE Highlands Hilary Wilkes, HS Principal Sarah Holbrooks, Asst. Principal Alyssa Dubois, Gina Billingsley, and Rev. Paul Christy.

Salutatorian Max Deppe.

Junior Marshals: Jaylin Raby, Cayden Pierson, Hunter Conner, Claire Sherwood, Claire Worley and Anne Elizabeth Woods.

Superintendent Josh Lynch presented diplomas to Class Mascots Reyna Pioquinto and Brantley McCall.

Photos by Kim Lewicki

The Commencement Address was given by Gina Billingsley.

Valedictorian Rea Miller.

Class of 2025 Graduates

Brianna Leigh Bowden, Caleb Michael Burrell, Yasmin Mendoza Cortez, Emily Rose Craig, Andrew Reyes Cuevas, Walter Maxwell Deppe, Katie Jane Earp, Carson Edward Forrester, Ophelia Rose Contreras Garcia, Finneaus Mapp Garner, Karen Yussleiby Gomez de Dios, Gabriela Joliam Diaz Martinez, Rea Dawn Miller, Kasen Samuel Mitchell, Natalia Calderon Molina, Dayne Mercer O'Quinn, Shirly Beth Diaz Ovando, Brooklynn Avanna Petrone, Hendy Rios Ruiz, Mallory Jane Shriver, Seth Devon Turner, Hailey Chase Wardwell, Seth Wyatt Wilson, Aislynn Russell Wyatt Luck, Callie Elizabeth Zachary

Hailey Chase Wardwell remembers her mother Tina.

• LETTERS •

DOGE cuts are hurting those in need

Dear Editor,

For 15 years, on the third Thursday of each month, I have driven to Franklin to attend a board meeting for REACH of Macon County. I have been blessed to have never experienced domestic or sexual abuse like those cared for by REACH but also humbled and honored to do my part to help families in distress.

In the early years, we shored up our financials and were able to build a new, safe and expanded shelter. Later, we absorbed clients in Jackson County when their facility was shuttered and continue to do so today. Our social workers have passion and a strong work ethic but sadly, despite our efforts to increase pay and benefits, turnover is high. The work covering a 24-hour shelter can be draining.

Our social workers meet clients in a 90-year-old farmhouse. Roman Roofing is kind enough to donate the patch work to keep us dry but the rooms are small and privacy is not a possibility. Nor is space to provide needed medical care for our clients.

But our community cares! Donors stepped up when we built a new shelter and they were ready to do so again. During the past few years, MHK Architects designed a new facility free of charge. We were hoping to start construction on a new Victim Advocacy Center this Fall. Sadly, our plans will have to be put on a shelf.

Organizations like REACH receive a sizable amount of funding from federal and state governments. Yes, we all feel the government is huge so there is bound to be waste. But reckless slashing like we are seeing today to grants that non-profits were already granted and to critical programs like HUD, are inhumane.

At our last board meeting, we learned that 15 Macon County families that include 21 children will face homelessness without continued funding. Those numbers will go up as the year progresses. They can live in their car or return to their abuser. One thing they will not do is have time to contact their congressman. We will continue to do our best to protect our neighbors by delaying our project but I don't know how long our funds will last and I wonder how other non-profits, without the benefit of a recent capital campaign, are handling the recent draconian cuts.

One final note, in the 15 years I have been on the board, REACH has helped about 540 clients each year. 15% either live or work in Highlands. Clients are across all socio-economic circles. They are your friend, store clerk, nurse or teacher.

Cindy Trevathan
Highlands

Ps. If you are experiencing domestic abuse or a sexual assault, please visit our website or call our hotline at 828-369-5544

Hunger in our country, state, county, town

Dear Editor

Saturday a small, but dedicated, group of resistors gathered on the corner of Dilliard Road and Main Street, here in Highlands, NC. We engaged in a silent protest in response to recent cuts in SNAP and Medicaid benefits in the Big Beautiful Bill passed by the House of Representatives. We posted lots of signage with statistics of what those cuts would look like in both North Carolina and Macon County. Otherwise, we sat silently holding empty bowls, symbolizing the hunger of our fellow citizens.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, serves over 500,000 households in North Carolina, or over 1,600,000 people. These households, which are experiencing food insecurity and high food prices, represent over 10% of all households in our state. In rural areas, which include Macon County, it is as high as 16%, or one out of six.

Of the 500,000 households receiving food assistance, 80% are working families, 50% have children in the household, 36% are homes with older adults and 45% include people with disabilities. These are not people sitting in their basement playing video games contrary to some congressional opinions. And more than likely you will know some of them.

With the poverty level being defined as a single person earning less than $15,650/year or a family of four making less than $32,150/yr, how can we expect these people to afford the rising costs of housing, transportation, clothing and food? Why do we find it necessary to demean those who most need assistance to support their most basic needs?

Saturday, as I sat silently with an empty bowl in my hands I couldn't help but think about what it symbolized. My heart hurt thinking about what we were representing, and I found myself in tears. Even as

• See LETTERS page 19

Rabun Gap held its 122nd Commencement Ceremony for the largest class yet – Class of 2025 on May 18

Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School celebrated a historic moment on Sunday, May 18, as it graduated the largest class in its 122-year history. Among the graduates honored during the school's Commencement Ceremony were nine Highlands and Cashiers residents — Cameron Abrayni of Highlands; and Oliver Dyer, Savanna Jones, Anthony Qemali, Katherine Scribner, Rocco Toogood, and Sonya Tretiakov, all of Cashiers.

The diverse Class of 2025 represented 24 countries and eight U.S. states. All members were accepted into four-year colleges and universities, including 20 institutions ranked among U.S. News & World Report's Top 50. A remarkable 98% of the class earned merit-based scholarships, and more than 35 students will continue their athletic careers at the collegiate level.

Cameron Abrayni of Highlands receives his diploma from Head of School Jeff Miles

Savanna Jones of Cashiers, NC, accepts the Crystal Eagle Award. This award is Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School's highest honor for graduating seniors, and celebrates those students who have contributed to the Rabun Gap community in leadership and service.

Anthony Qemali of Cashiers was named Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School's Valedictorian for the Class of 2025 during Commencement on Sunday. May 18. Pictured with Head of School Jeff Miles.

Rev. Emily Wilmarth, senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Highlands, NC, delivered the Baccalaureate address

Oliver Dyer of Cashiers receives his diploma from Head of School Jeff Miles.

From left are graduates Rocco Toogood of Cashiers, Ilet Southerland of Franklin, Anthony Qemali of Cashiers, and Oliver Dyer of Cashiers.

Memorial Day Weekend Festivities in Highlands

HHS opening celebration included art on the fly and music.

In the Ruffed Grouse Tavern it was all about good food, good music and libations!

This Memorial Day Weekend was Highlands 150th!

Saturday's Farmers Market offered fresh produce, baked goods and arts & crafts.

Anne Newhouse brought the ghost of Elizabeth Wright Prince alive with a tour of the Prince House at the HHS campus.

The band "Mo Money" from Charlotte kept the crowd dancing through the night.

Photos by Jim and Kim Lewicki

Lee Lyons brought the ghost of Helen Cabe Wright alive at the Highlands Historical Society's opening celebration.

The garden club annual plant sale began at 9a but was sold out by 10a! Early bird gets the worm!

The crew at Landmark Realty on Main Street offered "grilled food, cold drinks and good company."

...MIRROR LAKE continued from page 1

grass-eating carp that were supposed to rid the lake of the grass taking over the Mill Creek portion particularly along Cullasaja Drive. Unfortunately, the job proved to be too much for the carp.

There were numerous logistical problems back then, too. Dredged material couldn't sit on the banks, nor could it be taken elsewhere due to environmental concerns, so the idea of bringing Mirror Lake back to its former glory slowly died … until now.

Enter Pat Gleeson and an energized MILA who raised $500,000 and after formulating a plan and entering into a contract with Riversand Dredging, the first of three dredging phases began.

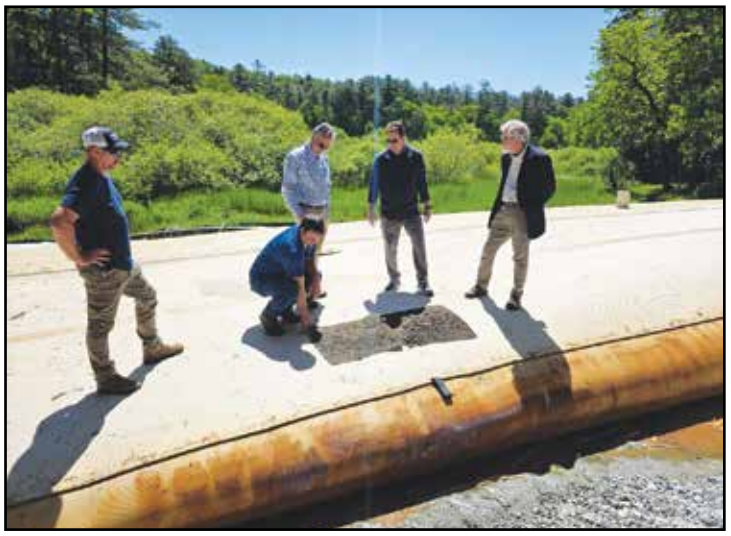
With grassroots funding the kickoff, Trott's son-in-law, Mayor Pat Taylor, was able to bend the ear of local NC legislators, namely Senator Kevin Corbin and Representative Karl Gillespie who procured a $5 million grant to make sure phases 2 and 3 are completed.

On Friday, Sen. Corbin, Rep. Gillespie, Mayor Taylor, members of MILA – Mike King and Tom Roberson, and MILA's first $100,000 donor Lou Pollack gathered with Riversand's manager, John Bryant to see how the first phase of the project was progressing.

"This is one part of a 3-part coordinated effort, and we appreciate you representing the plateau, the Town of Highlands and all of Western North Carolina and making sure we get a good share of the funds that we deserve here in this part of the state," said Mayor Taylor.

Corbin and Gillespie said they were glad to be a part of the project.

"Thanks for making the request, it was a good request, and made sense to do it," said Corbin. "Also, the huge community outpouring of funding was something Rep. Gillespie and I were able to tell the folks at the state. There is money available for these kinds of projects, it's there for the asking, and we thought it should come back to the western part of the state for cleanup situations like this. We are glad to see the work getting done."



Now dewatered, John Bryant sliced open the bag to show how dry the sediment is. Rep. Gillespie, Sen. Corbin and Mayor Taylor look on.

Photo by Kim Lewicki

Gillespie said this is a great example of how government is supposed to work.

"This was a grassroots effort and without that this project would never have happened," he said. "So, I think the real credit goes to those who saw this, had the initiative to put the time and effort into it, start the fundraising and get their local leaders involved. That's what kicked off the process. Without all that, this would never have happened."

Bryant with Riversand said he's been doing this for 25 years and began meeting with MILA more than five years ago and said the conversations always start out the same – how are we going to pay for a project like this? Will the state or feds have money for this?

"In all my years doing this, we have asked that question over and over, but this is the first time somebody has come through with providing the funds and the state stepping up," he said. "I have all the documentation from Buck Trott's days, but he couldn't get it

• See MIRROR LAKE page 22

The bag has been dewatering for over a week and is now ready to be sliced open. The dried sediment will be scooped out and trucked to a deposit site in Scaly Mountain. A new bag is rolled up and ready to replace it.

Photo by Kim Lewicki

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Spiritually Speaking

It just makes sense

Pastor Mark Ford
First Baptist Church
Highlands

Common Sense is defined as the ability to make sound judgments and decisions without specialized knowledge and having understanding regarding logical and obvious matters which are understood universally.

Spiritual sense is the ability to perceive and understand spiritual truths which are extraneous to historical or physical contexts. It is the ability to discern truth and absolutes rooted in the Divine, the will of our Creator.

Two weeks ago, I witnessed the absence of both common sense and spiritual sense among a group of people at a Fontana Regional Library meeting at the Cashiers Library.

The auditorium was packed to overflow on May 13th with two ideological views of life confronting each other over the welfare of our children and their access to reprehensible reading materials. It was a tragic reminder of the depth of depravity that still operates in our communities. The proverbial "left" spewed non-sensical and non-spiritual defenses and declarations in support of allowing the inclusion and access of pornographic, ideological "woke" materials to our children. Two of the books – among many – that were brought to our attention by concerned citizens for decency in our libraries were This Book is Gay and It's Perfectly Normal. These publications unnecessarily expose children to sexual information, pictures, and pornographic illustrations that are harmful to their development into adulthood and God-given, biologically assigned gender. They are not fit for adults to read and consult, much less young minds in their critical years of training and maturing.

Let it be clear – mine is not a call for the proverbial "book burning" or removal, but a call to place them in the adult section away from young hands and hearts. I will confess as a Christian and Pastor that the prurient nature of such books has no place in an institution that should promote learning and not lust, nor the distortion of common sense and spiritual truth. What I witnessed at the meeting is what sociologists call "motivated reasoning," which is a cognitive bias where people actively look for information and interpret it in a way that confirms their pre-existing beliefs – even if it contradicts objective evidence! It leads to a resistance to information that objectively and clearly challenges their beliefs.

The absence of common sense was evident in arguments that promoted DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) over the obvious, well-established needs of young children which have been our guide for much of history. The cognitive dissonance and selective reasonings were palpable. Father Jason Barone of Our Lady of the Moun-

• See SPIRITUALLY page 19

• Places to Worship •

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

CHAPEL OF THE SKY
Sky Valley. GA • 706-746-2999
Sundays: 10 a.m. Worship; Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH
The Rev'd Dr. Michael Matlock, Rector
464 U.S. Hwy. 64E, Cashiers, NC
CAC@christanglicancashiers.org • 828-743-1701
Sunday: Adult Christian Ed, 9:15a; Holy Eucharist, 10:30a;
Fellowship 11:45a;Wed: Bible Study/Contemplative Prayer, 5p

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY. CASHIERS
Pastor Jacob Tedder • Jacob@cashiers.church • 743-5470
www.cashiers.church
Sun. 10:45a;Wed Study5:15p supper and childcare.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH
283 Spring Street - Sunday Service: 10:30 a.m.
Testimony meeting: 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Jim Kinard
Sundays: School:10 a.m.;Worship:11a.m.
1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7.p.m.
Wednesdays –Supper at 6 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685
3645 Cashiers Rd. Highlands. NC • Sr. Pastor Gary Hewins
Sun: Service 10:45am, Children's 10:30am
Wed.: Youth 5:30-7pm;Women's Bible Study: Mon. 4:30pm, Tues.
10am; Men's Bible Study: Wed. & Thurs. 7am @ Zookeeper Bistro

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY
706. 746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447
Pastor Steve Kerhoulas
Worship: Sun. 10:30 a.m. Holy Communion 2nd Sunday

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION
Rev. W. Bentley Manning, Rector • 526-2968
5th and Main streets • www.incarnationwnc.org
Sunday: Rite I, spoken, 8 am in Chapel, Rite II with Choir 10:30
am in Sanctuary, Wed: Healing Eucharist 12 pm in Chapel,
Morning 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
Rev. Emily Wilmarth, pastor, Rev. Kelley Connelly Asso. Pastor
828-526-3175 • fpchighlands.org
Sun.:Adult Ed.: 10a;Worship 11a.;Tues: Men's Group 10a;
Wed: Bell Choir 4p. Chancel Choir:5:30p

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH
(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)
Sunday School:10 am. Worship Service:11 am

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Non-Denominational-Contemporary Worship
242 Hwy 107N. 1/4 miles from Crossroads in Cashiers
www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814
Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm; Dinner - Wed. 6pm

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH
Hwy 107N. • Glenville. NC • 743-2729 • Nathan Johnson
Sunday: School 9:45a. Worship 11a & 7p. Bible Study 6p
Wed. Kidsquest 6p.;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
The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily
sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.
Sunday Worship is at 9a. Wednesday Worship is 6:30p

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376
In-Person and live-streamed Worship Services
909a Bluegrass and 11a Traditional
www.highlandsmethodist.org

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA
2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741
Rev. Ken Langsdrof
Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.
Visit our website: Holy Family Lutheran Highlands NC

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH
8 miles south of Highlands on N.C. 28 S in Satolah
Pastor Zane Talley
Sundays: School:10 a.m.;Worship:11. Choir:6 p.m.
Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.:7 p.m.

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE
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• Fire Reports •

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from May 21.

May 21

• At 4:20 a.m., the dept. responded to a fires alarm at a residence on Crescent Trail.

• At 8:13 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Clear Creek Road.

• At 1:15 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to location on S. 2nd Street.

• At 4:05 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Turtle Pond Road.

• At 5:27 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Pierson Drive.

• At 8:34 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Mack Wilson Drive.

May 22

• At 12:19 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

May 23

• At 3:53 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Kenner Road.

May 24

• At 5:20 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

May 25

• At 3:50 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Foreman Road.

• At 9:54 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Clearview Lane.

May 26

• At 4:30 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Oak Street.

• At 12:29 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cullasaja Club Drive.

• At 1:29 p.m., the dept. directed traffic on Main Street.

...LETTERS continued from page 14

I write this, I am deeply saddened to think about all the children who are undernourished, or poorly nourished, in our state, in our country, and in our world. And I think about our national leaders who would cut funding for food assistance. Is it possible they have never known hunger?

With proposed cuts to SNAP of $300,000,000,000 (billion) over the next 10 years is it time to regard those leaders with the contempt they deserve and remember them by voting them out of the office? The simplest form of resistance is to vote. Please keep that in mind the next opportunity you get.

Margaret Pickett
Highlands

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 18

tains Catholic Church said it succinctly in expressing his disdain for this type of literature to the Fontana board – "Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart in commenting on pornography and obscenity, said in 1964, 'I know it when I see it.'"

Common sense has always told us that children are not ready for exposure to these types of materials and information. They are not ready to drive, nor to drink at such an early age, or watch X-rated movies – neither are they ready to consume such lascivious material without doing damage to their young minds. It is just plain common sense. It was sadly missing in this meeting from the persuasions of many I heard that evening. It was a revelation of the decadence that has overtaken our nation as we drown in post-modern nihilism and post-enlightenment thinking.

But it is the obvious void of spiritual sense that burdens my heart the most. The vitriol toward Christian values and convictions, and lack of respect for the Truth of God's Word (Romans 1; I Corinthians 6; et al) made it painfully clear to me that those of today's progressivism – a term co-opted by the LGBTQIA community – have no spiritual moorings for their persuasions, much less that which is sensical. They are rejecting the "plausibility structure" of Judeo-Christian values that have guided Western civilization for hundreds of years. Their only anchor for "truth" was their own narcissistic self-actualized convictions. God is not in their picture. He is no longer deemed reasonable or plausible, and thus no longer part of their belief systems. Chaos can only ensue.

As a minister of the Gospel, I have no ill-will toward any group. I pray for our community and nation. But I will continue to declare the love of God for lost souls and His desire to return us to our traditional, Biblical sense of values and the righteousness that lifts up a nation (Proverbs 14:34). "God, restore our common sense! Grant us spiritual sense!"

...MAYOR continued from page 2

submitted, the contract can then be awarded to the one bidder. So, if the board approves, the projected start-time will be this fall.

Finally, new utility poles on US 64 from Highlands Falls County Club to Maple Street will be installed throughout the summer. These new poles will carry the lines for a new third circuit for the town's electric grid. Delays are expected on US 64 when crews are at work. The crews are on an 8-day work schedule, followed by a 6-day off period. The contractor follows this plan because he has to bring workers from distant places. Due to travel distances, returning home each night is not feasible, and they have to stay in area motels during their 8-day work schedule.

I hope you had an enjoyable Memorial Day Weekend, and as always, I will continue to be your Mayor On Duty.

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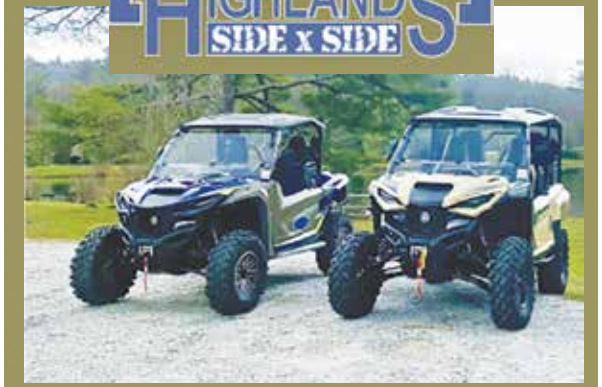

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POOL SCHEDULE

• Lap Swim: Mon.-Fri. 6am-9:45am, and Saturday 10am-11pm - 6 lanes. Water Aerobics: 18 y+ Mon.-Fri. 10-11am with Karen Chambers. Adult Swim: 18y+ Mon.-Thurs. 11am-3:30pm, Friday 11am-1:30pm. Public Swim: Mon. thru Fri.. 11a-7pm, Saturday 11am-6pm and Sunday 1-6pm

PICKLE BALL

• At the Recreation Dept. every Monday - Friday 10am-1pm indoors for the winter (notice the days and time has changed),

MOVIES

• No Movies at the Martin Lipscomb Performing Arts Center at PAC on Chestnut Street thru May.

MOUNTAIN FINDINGS

• Open: 10 am - 1 pm, May 29-31. 452 Spruce Street. www.mountainfindings.org

SATURDAY MARKET

• Farmers Market in KH Founders Park on Pine Street from 8a-12:30p rain or shine.

ALL WEEK

• Alcoholics Anonymous: "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. program of recovery. Highlands Mountain View Group holds open meetings in Highlands at the First Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 PM and Wednesday and Friday at noon. Women's Group 5:30, Tuesdays. The Cashiers Valley Group holds open meetings at the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library Tuesday at 7 PM, Friday and Sunday at 5 PM, and Saturday at 9 AM. For more info, visit www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of AA 24/7 at 828-349-4357.

Sundays through August

• Church in the Wildwood, on Horse Cove Road. Old Fashioned Hymn Sing 7-8 p.m.

Thurs., May 29

• At The Bascom, Artist Demonstration with Eck McCanless. 4 p.

• Live on Screen at the Martin Lipscomb Theatre at PAC at 5 p.m., GAOS's Perugino: Eternal Renaissance. Box office@highlandsperformingarts.com. 828-526-9047.

• At PAC's main stage, Ballet Memphis at 7 p.m. Box office@highlandsperformingarts.com. 526-9047.

• Nicole Atkins Salon Series: A unique evening with singer-songwriter Nicole Atkins in the intimate setting of Highlander Mountain House.

Fri., May 30

• At Highlands Mercantile on Main, OBAGI Open House 10a to 3p. Call 828-482-1112 to secure your appointnment. 322 Main St.

Sat., May 31

• Live on Screen at the Martin Lipscomb Theatre at PAC at 1 p.m., the Met's Il Barbiere di Siviglia. Box office@highlandsperformingarts.com. 828-526-9047.

Sun., June 1

• At PAC, Glory Crampton & 3 Tenors at 4p. Box office@highlandsperformingarts.com. 828-526-9047.

Sat. June 7

• At First Presbyterian Church on Main Street, Singing the Faith with Hymnologist, the Rev. Dr. Michael Hawn. A fun, interactive, educational hymn sing 3:30pm in Coleman Hall.

• The Pop-Up Pipers at Highlands United Methodist Church 4:30-5p

• At the Outpost Inn, meet the maker of Methodical Coffee.

Tues., June 10

• Hudson Library in Highlands is hosting a community blood drive with the American Red Cross on Tuesday June 10 from 10a to 3p at the library.

Thurs.-Sun., June 12-15

• Highlands Motoring Festival on the streets and in the park on Pine Street.

Thurs., June 12

• Volunteer Fair. Looking to give back? Find the perfect volunteering opportunity at our annual Volunteer Fair, where local organizations share ways to make a difference. For more info, go to highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-2112.

• At PAC, Mountain Theatre presents The Marvelous Wonderettes at 7:30 p.m. For tickets go to boxoffice@mountaintheatre.com. 828.526.2695

Fri., June 13

• At PAC, Mountain Theatre presents Forever Plaid at 7:30 p.m. For tickets go to boxoffice@mountaintheatre.com. 828.526.2695

Sun., June 15

• At The Ruffed Grouse, Father's Day brunch specials.

• At PAC, Mountain Theatre presents The Marvelous Wonderettes at 2 p.m. For tickets go to boxoffice@mountaintheatre.com. 828.526.2695

Tues., June 17

• At the Ruffed Grouse, Guest Chef Dinner Chef Adam Fehrenbacher joins Chef Adam Bresnahan at The Ruffed Grouse for a one-night-only throwback menu that's equal parts elevated and comforting: think pork belly caviar, crawfish hushpuppies, and duck & frog leg gumbo. Tickets ($90+) are now available via Resy.

Thurs., June 19

• At Fire Mountain Inn in Scaly Mountain, at 700 Happy Hill Road, a Books and Bluegrass event. Tickets are $75 per person and include live music, food and drink. Tickets are available at the Hudson Library in Highlands or at the Book Worm in Highlands. Music is provided by the Foxfire Boys. Proceeds go to planned improvements to Hudson Library which include an expanded outdoor space.

• Live on Screen at the Martin Lipscomb Theatre at PAC at 5 p.m., GAOS's Florence & The Uffizi Gallery. Box office@highlandsperformingarts.com. 828-526-9047.

Sat., June 21

• At First Presbyterian Church on Main Street, Coro Vocati Choral Concert at 5pm.

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...MIRROR LAKE continued from page 17

done but these guys came through. It's impressive what's been put together from the community, the legislators and the town," he said.

So far in phase one, which is removing the sediment islands on both sides of the bridge, two bags of sediment have been filled. The bags sit on the only flat spot along Cullasaja Drive where Mill Creek feeds into the lake, which at this point, is now a marsh.

"This is the best spot for the bags and is the only space we have to use right now. It's low impact and will take a bit more time due to the size of the bag that fits here, but we aren't impeding traffic, people can still recreate on the lake and wildlife isn't being disturbed," said Bryant. "There is a lot of sediment though, so there will be hundreds of loads during, phase 1 and even more as we move on down and through the lake."

Bryant estimates, pending weather, that phase one will be completed sometime in July.

A barge sitting in the lake dredges the sediment and pipes it into the bag which expands to about six-feet high and is initially 90% water and 10% sediment. The piped-in sediment is met with a state-approved polymer which binds the sediment in all its formations – small and light, to larger and heavier – so during the de-watering process which takes about a week per bag, only clean, clear water returns to the lake. Bryant said the state sets the correct polymer dosage to make sure there is no environmental impact.

Since the second bag was full and dewatered, Bryant cut a patch to show how dry the sediment was and to show its makeup. The heavier sediment was at one end of the bag and the lighter, more organic sediment ended up at the other end of the bag.

The single-use bag was ready to be cut open, the sediment scooped out and transferred to trucks to be carted away.

MILA president Mike King said he hopes the community can continue to raise money to keep Riversand in the water and keep the dredging going.

"This is expensive," said King. "But I hope there is no lull between the private money and the government funds they graciously provided to us so we can hopefully restore the lake to the extent that people want to see it and keep it that way."

To help restore Mirror Lake, contact Pat Gleeson at 828-782-0472.

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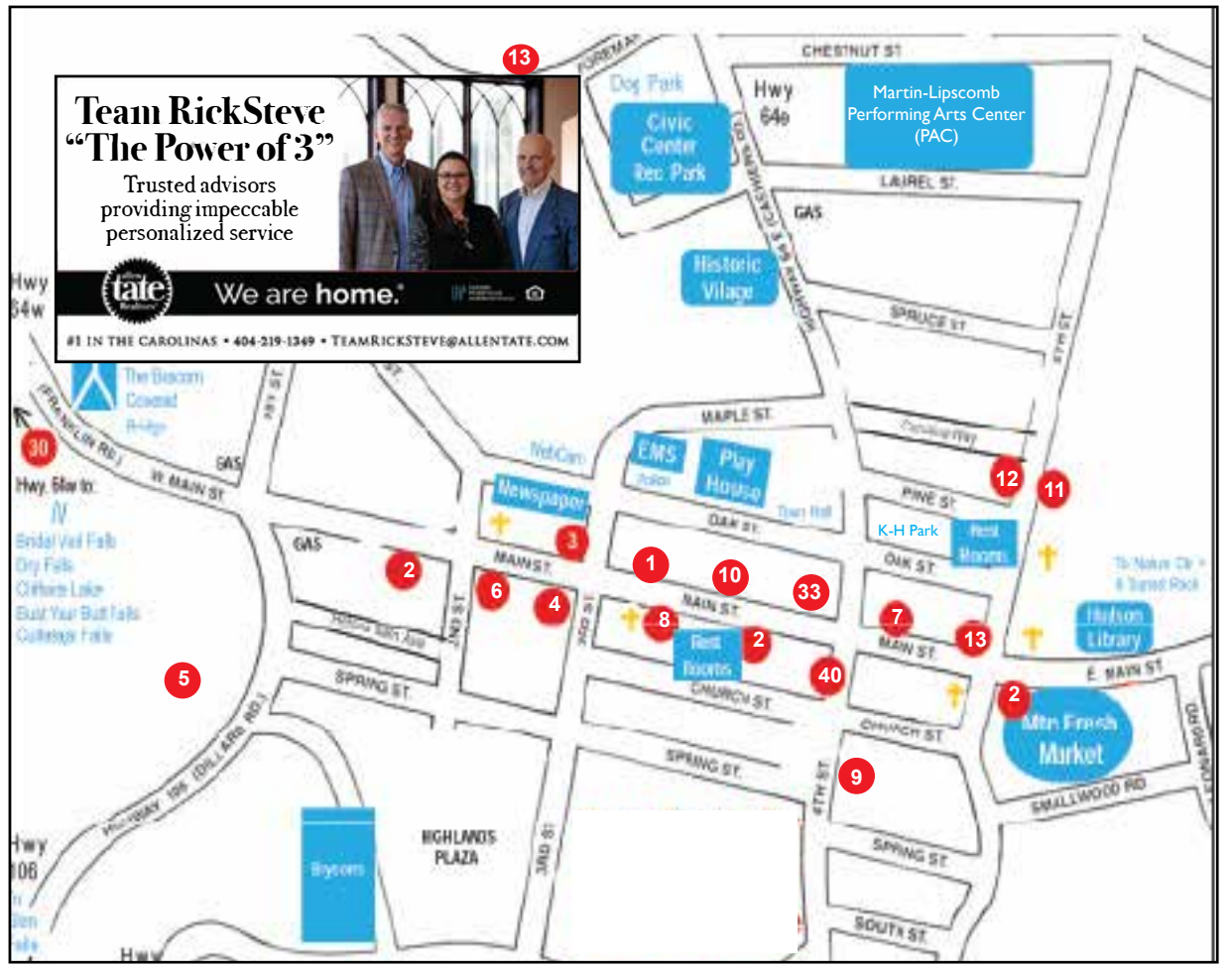

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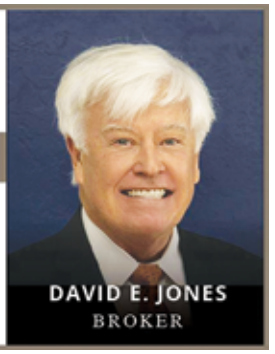

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