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Thursday, March 7, 2013

The sequester's effects on NC and Macon County

So it has happened – the government has imposed on itself \$85 billion in across-the-board spending cuts.

Following is how the sequester will affect middle class jobs, and services for children, se-

niors, people with mental illness and men and women in uniform in North Carolina and Macon County.

North Carolina Impacts Teachers and Schools:

• North Carolina will lose ap-

proximately \$25.4 million in funding for primary and secondary education, putting around 350 teacher and aide jobs at risk. In addition about 38,000 fewer students will be served and approximately 80 fewer schools will re-

ceive funding.

Education for Children with Disabilities:

• In addition, North Carolina will lose approximately \$16.8 million in funds for about 200

• See SEQUESTER page 2

• Inside •

HS Sports	2
Wooldridge	4
Salzarulo	5
Investing at 4,118 Ft	6
Coach's Corner	7
Events	8
Spiritually Speaking	10
Classifieds	13
Police & Fire	14

Operation 'Something Bruin' nabs two from Macon County

In a four-year state and federal wildlife undercover operation spanning Georgia and North Carolina that ended last week, 80 wildlife violators and some 980 violations were documented.

Primary violations documented by 'Operation Something Bruin' stem from illegal bear hunting but include an array of state wildlife and game law charges. Some suspects could also face federal charges.

The four-year investigation, the largest of its kind in recent years, targeted poachers in North Carolina and Georgia, with work in some adjacent states.

"'Operation Something Bruin' documented hundreds of wildlife violations. Arrests stemming from the sting bring an immediate halt to those crimes and, we hope, will make would-be violators think twice before breaking the law," said Col. Dale

Caveny, law enforcement chief for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. "Our long-term goal is to deter illegal wildlife activities from taking place in the future and serve notice to everyone that wildlife officers are ever vigilant in the service of conservation and public safety."

Officers with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission infiltrated poaching circles to document violations including bear baiting; illegal taking of bears, deer and other wildlife; illegal use of dogs; illegal operation of bear pens in North Carolina; and, guiding hunts on national forest lands without the required permits.

'Operation Something Bruin' partners also included the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service.

"It was natural for us to participate in this operation, because we have a long history of cooperation with state wildlife agencies to protect game lands and management areas," said Steven F. Ruppert, special agent in charge, Southern Region, U.S. Forest Service. "Because we already have these existing collaborative rela-

• See BRUIN page 9



Ethan and Eliza Tate donated books to the Highlands School Media Center in honor of retired Great Beginnings Teacher, Jane Chalker. HS Media Specialist Carol Bowen is pictured with them.

Family donates books to school's media center

Recently the youngest and oldest members of the Tate family donated a bevy of books to the Highlands School Media Center.

Allison Tate's mother, Ann White Morton, donated the books when she retired from teaching. Her grandchildren, Ethan and Eliza made the presentation and donated the books in the name of retired Great Beginning teacher Jane Chalker.

Allison Tate is the wife of MC Commissioner Jim Tate and the director of the preschool at the Highlands United Methodist Church.

"Ms. Morton let me pick the ones I thought would be appropri-

ate and those we didn't already have," said Highlands School Media Specialist Carol Bowen. "In addition these are all new books with newer copyrights."

Bowen said when stocking books in the school library she has to consider the age of the book. Oftentimes people donate books that are used and are paperbacks which she can accept if they are in good shape.

If they are good shape, at the end of the school year she lets students have a book to take home for summer reading.

• See BOOKS page 9

Drastic cuts destined for school system

By Davin Eldridge

Facing yet another budget shortfall this fiscal year, the Macon County Board of Education is now considering an entire laundry list of possible reductions to its current expense budget, in order to finish out the academic year and start school again next fall.

Among the many items included in the list are the absorption of 11 teacher positions, the elimination of 25 teacher assistant positions as well as one county office staff position, the possible elimination of athletic programs and the possible closing of the Macon Early College and Union Academy facilities, among other items.

At their March 26 joint meeting with County Commissioners, Board of Education members stated their case.

"We're going to need some money to finish out the year," said Interim Superintendent Dr. Jim Duncan, getting down to brass tacks. "We can't tell you exactly how much that is because we're still moving people around."

Knowing the shortfall was eminent, a number of teachers who retired last year were re-

• See CUTS page 11

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• HIGHLANDS SCHOOL SPORTS •

Lady Highlanders fall to Habersham Central in opener

By Ryan Potts

The Highlands Lady Highlander soccer team opened their season Friday with a trip to Mt. Airy to face the Habersham Central Lady Raiders. The Lady Highlanders were originally slated to face 6A Habersham's JV squad, but a last minute change of plans found Highlands squaring off with the varsity Lady Raiders.

Despite the blustery conditions and the lack of practice time, the Lady Highlanders acquitted themselves well, especially considering the opposition. The Lady Raiders found the back of the net four times for a final of 4-0, but Highlands Coach Jeff Weller came away from the game feeling good about the performance of his team.

"For as little practice time as we have had, I thought the girls did a tremendous job," said Weller, "I was very proud of them, especially since it was very cold and very windy and we have only practiced indoors at this point."

The Lady Highlanders will play three road games this week as the season gets into full swing with a bang. Today, the Lady Highlanders will travel to Hiawasse, GA to face the Lady Indians of Towns County. Tomorrow, the Lady Highlanders will travel to Brevard to take on the Lady Blue Devils of Brevard High School. The first home soccer match is scheduled for Thursday, March 14th as Highlands will host the Lady Indians of Tallulah Falls.

... SEQUESTER continued from page 1

teachers, aides, and staff who help children with disabilities.

According to Macon County Schools Interim Superintendent Jim Duncan Special Education and Title 1 funding will be affected.

"We have not received any numbers from the state on our federal dollars, yet. The Special Ed and Title 1 have the most potential to be affected. These programs are usually "forward" funded meaning that no cuts would be immediate. But we are preparing for a little over a 5% reduction for next year - FY 2013-'14. The Title 1 funds will affect all schools except Franklin High School which doesn't receive Title 1 funds. However, federal cuts are sometimes hard to put together since the cuts are on the expected increases rather than the current funding," he said.

As expected, services offered by the Departments of Social and Health services will be hardest hit.

According to Jane Kimsey, director of Macon County's Department of Social Services, said there are numerous Dept. of Social Services mandated programs and services which are established by Federal Statute and are partially or fully federally funded which are at risk for cuts due to sequestration.

To combine the affect, the federal government's fiscal year ends in September and the county's fiscal year ends in June, so cuts could come in two parts which makes budgeting for the county and all its departments difficult.

"At this point we are uncertain about how sequestration will impact our DSS programs/services directly. I have requested funding impact information from our state office and will hopefully know soon," she said.

Meanwhile, according to the the White House report, the following DSS programs in NC and Macon County are in the cross-hairs.

Vaccines for Children:

- In North Carolina around 3,550 fewer children will receive vaccines for diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, whooping cough, influenza, and Hepatitis B due to reduced funding for vaccinations of about \$243,000.

Public Health:

- North Carolina will lose approximately \$911,000 in funds to help upgrade its ability to respond to public health threats including infectious diseases, natural disasters, and biological, chemical, nuclear, and radiological events. In addition, North Carolina will lose about \$1,980,000 in grants to help prevent and treat substance abuse, resulting in around 3700 fewer admissions

to substance abuse programs. And the North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services will lose about \$341,000 resulting in around 8,500 fewer HIV tests.

According to Jim Bruckner, Macon County Public Health Director it is difficult to make a determination at this time as to exactly how these cuts will impact the local public health department.

"We are in the middle of the state fiscal year (June 30, 2012 - July 1, 2013) and to say exactly where the state will cut based on federal projections and how much the local health department will have to absorb this fiscal year or next fiscal year (July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2014) is virtually impossible," he said. "To make things harder, this entire issue and the potential depth of these cuts is only compounded by the approach of the March 2013 expiration date of the Continuing Appropriations Resolution of 2013. We don't have any idea what deals can or will be made at the federal level to realign these cuts elsewhere in the federal budget which could be better or worse for public health."

From strictly a local public health perspective, Buckner said someone needs to support funding for the vaccines for children program, mental health and substance abuse services, communicable disease investigation and control, HIV and AIDs testing and treatment services, public health emergency response, and the women's, infants and children (WIC) program.

"Not funding these programs will have a long lasting affect and greater cost over time on all of us when we have to deal with the after effects," he said.

Additionally, he said the local impact of these cuts in funding are further compounded by the fact that several of the programs earmarked to be cut are mandated by law and local public health must provide them, which means another unfunded mandate from the state and federal government.

"This means that local governments will bear more of the cost of providing those services, e.g. communicable disease investigation and control, vaccinations for children, HIV testing, and public health emergency response," he said.

Work-Study Jobs:

- Around 1,150 fewer low income students in North Carolina would receive aid to help them finance the costs of college and around 890 fewer students will get work-study jobs that help them pay for college.

Head Start:

- Head Start and Early Head Start ser-

• See SEQUESTER page 3

... SEQUESTER continued from page 2

vices would be eliminated for approximately 1,500 children in North Carolina, reducing access to critical early education. **Job Search Assistance to Help those in North Carolina find Employment and Training:**

- North Carolina will lose about \$83,000 in funding for job search assistance, referral, and placement, meaning around 15,110 fewer people will get the help and skills they need to find employment.

Child Care:

- Up to 1,300 disadvantaged and vulnerable children could lose access to child care, which is also essential for working parents to hold down a job.

Protections for Clean Air and Clean Water:

- North Carolina would lose about \$3,606,000 in environmental funding to ensure clean water and air quality, as well as prevent pollution from pesticides and hazardous waste. In addition, North Carolina could lose another \$1,265,000 in grants for fish and wildlife protection.

According to Highlands Town Manager Bob Frye it's possible at least one of the town's scheduled capital improvement projects could be affected.

"At this time I don't see the sequester effecting our future plans. But it is possible that the money that we got through FEMA for the 6th Street culvert replacements could be affected, but at this time we haven't heard one way or the other," he said.

Other areas of the state will be affected by Military Readiness cuts than in Macon County.

Military Readiness

- In North Carolina, approximately 22,000 civilian Department of Defense employees would be furloughed, reducing gross pay by around \$117.5 million in total.

Army:

Base operation funding would be cut by about \$136 million in North Carolina.

Air Force:

Funding for Air Force operations in North Carolina would be cut by about \$5 million.

Navy:

Cancel aircraft depot maintenance in Cherry Point, NC.

Law Enforcement and Public Safety Funds for Crime Prevention and Prosecution:

- North Carolina will lose about \$401,000 in Justice Assistance Grants that

• See SEQUESTER page 5

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• LAUGHING AT LIFE •

Eight is enough (My last column)



Fred Wooldridge

After receiving reluctant approval from my wife, Maddy, who feared I might become bored, I turned in my retirement notice. The police chief handed it back and asked me to stick it out another year until he retired but my mind was made up.

The following spring, I opened the first ever rappelling school in Highlands. It was called Mountain Down Rappelling Adventures. Operating on a permit from the US Forest Service, I taught Highlanders, tourists and summer people how to safely rappel the cliffs around Highlands. Business was slow the first year but grew each year thereafter.

One sunny afternoon, Maddy and I were teaching a group of advanced rappellers at the "monkey nose" on Whiteside Mountain. It was our 13th year in business. As I assisted students off the edge, watched them descend and disappear from my sight, I thought about the awesome responsibility of my job. One mistake and my customer would be dead. There was never room for error, not even a small one. I became overwhelmed with it all. I thought, "I don't wanna do this anymore. Thirteen years is enough. I'm done." I had just turned 66 and was still blessed with good health but I had this uncomfortable eerie feeling something bad would happen soon. Besides, teaching the sport had become boring for me.

I received another reluctant approval from Maddy who was, once again, afraid I might get bored. We sold the business to our most capable instructor and, as it turned out, the transition was perfect.

Less than a week later I was writing silly stuff for the Highlands Newspaper. The owner of the paper, Kim Lewicki, knew me from when I wrote for The Highlander newspaper and she was the news editor there.

For me, it was yet another fun and rewarding job.

Actually, I've never had a job that wasn't rewarding. I'm truly blessed. Remember, it's not work if you love what you're doing.

But 425 columns plus an additional 30 for The Highlander newspaper is enough for me. I sat at my keyboard, staring at the blank monitor and thought, "I don't wanna do this anymore. Eight years is enough. I'm done." So I contacted Kim and resigned. She's calling it a sabbatical which is fine with me.

I'm bored with writing satire that's never funny for some folks and hilarious for others. And I'm tired of having to create something from nothing each week for over eight years. Actually, I may be bored with writing....period. Time will tell. Except for when critics show their ignorance by calling me names, I'll miss those more cultured critics who disagree with me.

So this will be my last column and, yes, I will celebrate....maybe even have a glass of wine. I don't know if I'll look back and regret the move but I have a long history of not looking back. I've always written to evoke emotion....sometimes strong emotion. Laughter, sorrow, shock and anger are my specialties. A woman once stopped me outside the Rec Park and said, "Last week you made me laugh. This week you made me cry." I thrived on comments like that. And when my critics blast me, I love that also.

But wait...you're not rid of me yet. Just for fun, Kim will print some of my old stuff and change the title of my column to "The Best of Fred." Look for it next week. It should be a hoot with lots of silly stuff.

For sure, I caused Kim and Jim Lewicki, the owners of this newspaper, a lot of grief with some of the columns I've written. Many people have insisted they fire me. Years ago, a few Highlands real estate brokers pulled ads when

• See WOOLDRIDGE page 14

It was 1989 and a beautiful winter morning at the Miami Beach Police Department. Later in the day, the temperature would rise to the upper '70s and the sun would shine brightly. Once again, I would be stuck in my office, the curse of getting promoted, and miss the beautiful outdoors I have always loved.

As usual, I began my division staff meeting promptly at 10 AM. When the meeting was over, I sat alone pondering the events and complaints from the meeting. I spun in my plush swivel chair to face the wraparound windows of my police department's third floor office. From my office, I could look straight down 11th St. and see the beautiful blue Atlantic Ocean three blocks away.

"I don't wanna do this anymore," I thought. "Twenty-eight years is more than enough. I'm done."

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• THE VIEW FROM HERE •

Is Medicare money being spent wisely?

More than a quarter of Medicare is spent on patients in their last year of life. One might argue that's because that's when people are the sickest, a statement which has a certain inherent charm.

Sure, most people, excepting those who are struck by lightning at the end doing a triathlon are sickest just before death. But another way to look at it is that the last year of life is when people are trying to die. Given the choice, most of us would prefer to die at home, surrounded by whatever loved ones we are fortunate enough to have, or in a hospice house, wrapped in the love of dedicated nurses. Few, I suspect, would opt to spend their final days attached to a ventilator, death delaying drugs being pumped into their veins, while they are poked and prodded by lab techs and curious interns.

People die despite our best efforts to prevent, or I should say, delay death.

There are several reasons, some understandable, some unsavory, why we routinely employ futile treatments in the final days of life.

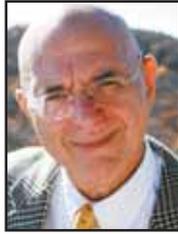
When I was practicing critical care medicine, I noticed it was often family members who had been least involved in the lives of a patient who were most adamant that death be delayed by every imaginable means.

The loving wife, or devoted daughter, who had been with, and cared for a patient was saddened by impending death, but accepted it as inevitable, and asked only for comfort during the final stage of life.

It was more likely the son who hadn't seen his Mom in years, who flew in from California, who indignantly demanded that every attempt be made to delay death. So guilt is definitely a factor. Unrealistic expectations are another.

Some families believe, or are led to believe, extraordinary means will actually lead to a prolongation of useful life. And depending on the circumstances, sometimes they do.

The terribly injured 20-year-old or the 70-year-old with a serious, life-threatening infection, may be given the gift of



Dr. Henry Salzarulo

Feedback is encouraged.

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years of life. But the 80-year-old with terminal cancer or the 90-year-old who suffered a catastrophic stroke are ill served with extraordinary care.

Doctors and hospitals are responsible for senseless treatment in many cases. We have little, if any, emotional investment, in the patient, in his suffering, or in her wishes. We are taught to fight death and disease with every tool in our arsenal. It is a bias that we hold throughout our careers.

We have little interest in the cost or efficacy of the treatment. If it's on the shelf, why not use it? There is, we reason, nothing to lose.

I once heard of an oncologist who hated cancer more than he loved people. Our medical system is structured to provide, rather than withhold, care.

There is income for doctors and revenue for hospitals. Each procedure is documented, coded, and billed. Every antibiotic, breathing treatment, and Band-Aid is recorded and billed, usually at several times its actual cost.

My own Mom who had been confined to a nursing home for several years after a stroke, and was suffering from an aggressive untreatable cancer, was subjected to a painful liver biopsy. The doctor persuaded my sister to consent to the procedure since Mom was unable to do so. She was dead before the results came back.

It doesn't matter if this was another doctor who hated cancer more than he loved people, or a doctor with a payment due on his Mercedes. What matters is that it was my Mom. It might one day be yours.

Doctors believe they might be the target of a malpractice suit by a grieving family if they don't provide every care possible. True or false, the belief is deeply held, and to move forward doctors must be indemnified against such claims.

The only way do accomplish this is through legislation that protects doctors who follow care guidelines from litigation. I'm talking about a decision to limit care; to ration care.

So, do we need "death panels?" In the

• See SALZARULO page 14

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... SEQUESTER continued from page 3

support law enforcement, prosecution and courts, crime prevention and education, corrections and community corrections, drug treatment and enforcement, and crime victim and witness initiatives.

Macon County Sheriff Robert Hollands said the sequester will not affect the Sheriff's Office and the \$401,000 reduction spread out statewide should only have a minimal effect on any agency.

"The Justice Assistance Grants are awarded based on criteria that include the county's crime rate and financial condition. Since Macon County has a low crime rate and the county's finances are very good we are not awarded any of those funds. In effect, the county is punished for doing a good job," he said.

STOP Violence Against Women Program:

• NC could lose up to \$205,000 in funds

that provide services to victims of domestic violence, resulting in up to 800 fewer victims being served.

Nutrition Assistance for Seniors:

• NC would lose about \$1,543,000 in funds that provide meals for seniors.

According to Sheila Southard, director of senior services for Macon County there are still a lot of unknowns in regards to the sequester.

"We have been told that we could lose 5.1% of the Home and Community Care Block Grant. We don't know if they are going to let each county decide where to make the cuts or if it will be earmarked for certain programs," she said. "Any dollars that we lose will affect the number of people that we can serve, right now we are waiting on direction from the Division of Aging and Adult Services."

— Kim Lewicki

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Keys to today's market

If you listen closely, you can hear a small but steady buzz growing within the real estate market, and that small noise is the sound of positive vibes as we head into the 2013 season.

While one may hear the phrase "Seller's Market" for the first time in many years, I wouldn't be so quick to proclaim that at this point. However, signs of optimism abound and there certainly has been a positive trend in recent months.

In order to complete a transaction during the current market, it is crucial for each side of the equation to understand each other. As is the key with any transaction, the buyer and the seller have



Terry Potts
Country Club Properties
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to agree upon the value of the object up for sale. In other words, the value that a house has is the price that someone is willing to pay for it.

In this day and time, many sellers are actually people who will become buyers immediately after the sale. Sellers want to take advantage of the low interest rates and low property values as well, and so it may be

in their best interest to examine offers carefully to calculate if there is a benefit to "selling low" in order to turn around and "buy low." Most sellers in this day and time aren't looking to make a fortune; instead, they are looking for relief from the stress of the last several years. Even sellers who aren't trying to get out from under a mortgage have still watched the news and heard from friends who have suffered because of the market volatility within the last few years. While the latest trends have these sellers encouraged, most people with a house on the market certainly are not going to risk losing an opportunity to sell based on what the market "might" do in the future.

As for sellers, working with an experienced Realtor can be critical in maintaining a smooth transaction. Experienced agents can help sellers get everything in order so as to ensure that there is nothing that can scare a potential buyer off or jeopardize a possible transaction. Today's buyers are very informed, and because of the economic issues in recent years, are a bit more demanding and more insistent on negotiating than they may have been in the past. News media stories about foreclosures, flipped houses and the housing market crash have influenced buyers to ask more questions and be more cautious with their purchases. The advice of a Realtor can be invaluable in helping streamline the transaction in a way that best satisfies the needs of both parties.

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A Season's End



Ryan Potts
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The last game of a season is always a tough one, unless of course you win your last game, but only a handful of teams in the state of North Carolina will do that. Unfortunately, that means that the last one is always a bitter pill to swallow. However, one thing I have discovered throughout the years is that, while the bitterness lingers through the cleaning of the locker room and the folding of the uniforms, by the end of the school year it is replaced by the best memories of the season. Gone are the bitter feelings of defeat and anger at the ineptitude of our officials (although this year may make that a bit more difficult) and replaced by the things that are important...the things that stand the test of time.

Memories in our mind are simply fragments and snapshots that our brain rebuilds into a frame. It's possible my brain focuses on the positive and rather the negative, and that's why my memories are built the way they are. Whatever the case, in 10 years, I'll be able to look back on this team and remember the effort and trust with which they played. I can smile at the thought of the teamwork that they displayed, and reminisce about the compliments that opposing coaches and fans alike paid to our

young team. And while it may be tempting for me, or any of our other coaches to take credit for that, the reality is that this is a really special group of kids.

Maybe it is because it is fresh in my mind, but the final 20 seconds of our last game really stands out for me. We had been down since the first quarter debacle, but in the fourth our senior caught fire, scoring 16 points and desperately trying to extend his career. He couldn't win it for us...we were too far behind, but we had the chance to cut it to single digits. Sure, it was a moral victory, and all season we told them not to settle for moral victories...but after everything that had gone on in that gym, a moral victory would have to do. With around 20 seconds left, our senior took a handoff, raised up and buried his final shot-cutting the lead to a symbolic nine. With time remaining, we fouled and then removed him for a much

deserved ovation, but Robbinsville made both of their free throws and pushed the lead back to 11.

Perhaps I'm being dramatic here, but I'm convinced that what happened next is exactly what makes this group of kids so special. As our PG sped down the floor, one of our sophomores ran with him. This sophomore had played the entire game, all 32 minutes, for the first time in his career. With time running out, there was a loose ball, and this sophomore chased it down, corralled it, and buried a shot at the buzzer. To me, those last few seconds personified this team...just as they had done all year, they played to the final buzzer, regardless of score. And just as they had done all year, they played for each other, and not themselves. Maybe it is truly possible for a season to end in both the worst and the best possible way.



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Annual 'Book Fair' begins March 7 at Highlands School

The Highlands School Scholastic Book Fair will be in the Media Center Thursday, March 7 through Friday, March 15.

The Book Fair will be open during school hours, 8 am to 3 pm and also from 5 to 6 on Thursday, March 7, before the PTO meeting.

Everyone is welcome to come and shop.

All proceeds benefit the Highlands School Media Center.

Advertising in Highlands Newspaper and online at
www.highlandsinfo.com WORKS!

For information, call 828-526-3228 or
email: highlandseditor@aol.com

• HIGHLANDS AREA UPCOMING EVENTS •

Ongoing

• Registration is now open for the 2013 summer Nature Day Camps at the Highlands Nature Center. Five different camps are being offered: "WOW! – a World of Wonder" (ages 4-6), "Amazing Animals" (ages 7-10), "NatureWorks" (ages 8-11), "Mountain Explorers" (ages 10-13), and "Junior Ecologists" (ages 11-14). Most camps are offered more than once during the summer, and sessions run from Tuesday to Friday each week. For complete schedules, costs, and other information, please call 828-526-2623 or visit the summer camps webpage at www.highlandsbiological.org.

Mon., Wed., Fri.

• Heart Healthy Exercise Class at the Rec Park. 8:30-9:30 a.m. \$20/month.

• Zumba at the Rec Park, 9:05a-10a. \$5 per class. First class free.

First Monday

• Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Auxiliary meets the first Monday of the month at 10 am. Everyone is welcome. For information call Volunteer Services at 526-1376

Mondays

• Mountain View Group of Alcoholics Anonymous will be held in the Faith and Fellowship Center of First Presbyterian Church. Enter via the entrance on 5th St. and proceed a few steps down to the library.

Tuesdays

• Highlands Rotary Club meets at noon at the Highlands Conference Center at noon.

• Closed AA Women's meeting, 5:30 p.m. at the Presbyterian Church at Fifth and Main streets.

Wednesdays

• The Highlands Mountaintop Rotary meets at 7:30 a.m. in the dining room at the H-C Hospital. Enter the hospital in the main or emergency entrance and follow the signs downstairs. Visitors are welcome. Meetings end at

8:30 am.

• Men's interdenominational Bible Study at 8:30 a.m. at First Baptist Church.

• The Homegrown Buds, a homeschool 4-H club, meets at noon at the Macon County Library on Siler Road in Franklin at 1 p.m.

• Mah Jong games will be held, open to the public, at the Albert Carlton Cashiers- Community Library at 1 p.m.

3rd Wednesday

• Movies at the Hudson Library. Recently released movies at 2 p.m. Free including popcorn. Bring your own soft drinks. 828-526-3031 for movie information.

1st Wednesday

• Movies at the Hudson Library. Children/Family movies at 3:30 p.m. Free including popcorn. Bring your own soft drinks. 828-526-3031 for movie information.

Wednesdays & Fridays

• Open AA meeting at noon at the Presbyterian Church at Fifth and Main streets.

Thursdays

• Al-Anon meeting, noon at the Episcopal Church on Main and Fifth streets.

• The Highlands Writers Group meets at 1 p.m. at the Hudson Library. Call Anne Doggett at 526 8009.

• Free dinner at the Cashiers Community Center from 5-7 p.m. Mostly organic, healthy food. Donations accepted. Call 743-5706 for more information. Volunteers needed!

Second Thursdays

• The regular meeting of Highlands Chapter #284, Order of The Eastern Star is held at 7:30 p.m..

Saturdays

• At Mountain Fresh Grocery, free wine tastings from 2-4 p.m.

• The Art Room, 45 East Main St. in Franklin is having free Make & Take Classes from 10am to 12:30. Come make a Card...Ages 15 and up please! Call Dianne 828-349-3777 or Robin 828-421-9891.

Every Third Saturday

• The Highlands Memorial Post #370 of the American Legion meets at the Shortoff Baptist Church. Breakfast is at 9 am. Meeting is at 10 a.m. All veterans are invite

Thurs., March 7-Friday, March 15

• Highlands School Scholastic Book Fair in the Media Center. The Book Fair will be open during school hours, 8 am to 3pm. The Book Fair will also be open from 5 to 6 on Thursday, March 7, before the PTO meeting. Everyone is welcome to come and shop. All proceeds benefit the Highlands School Media Center.

Thurs. March 7

• Taize at HUMC at 5:30p.

• Highlands' NC Democratic Party annual precinct organizational meeting is a 6 p.m. at the Highlands Civic Center. It's free and open to any registered Democrat residing in the precinct. Officers and delegates to the Macon County Convention on April 13 will be selected. Contact Karen Hawk at hwkncrw@earthlink.net or Faviola Olvera at 828-200-9717.

Friday, March 8

• At the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, pianist Alyona Aksyonova of Voronezh, Russia and cellist James Waldo of Shorewood, Minnesota. performing works by

Beethoven, Rachmaninoff, Liszt, and Chandler Carter, a North Carolina native, in a free concert open to the public at 5 p.m. Reception to follow. Donations will be accepted.

Saturday, March 9

• Macon County Beekeeping School. Learn the basics – hive construction, honeybee biology, colony management, handling bees and harvesting honey crops. Also pest management. To register contact Janet Hill at 828-369-9819 or janet28734@gmail.com

• The Highlands Chamber of Commerce Annual Chili Cook-off from 6:30-9:30pm at the Highlands Community Building. Music by Caribbean Cowboys. For you chili-lovers who would rather eat than cook, tickets will be sold at the door, \$20pp (doors open at 6:30pm) and children 12 and under get in FREE. Soft drinks, beer and wine will be served. If you would like to enter the event as a competitor and fire up your best chili recipe, bake your best batch of cornbread ever or perfect the family's secret salsa recipe, contact Jennifer Smathers by phone at (828)526-2112, email her at visitor@highlandschamber.org.

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a 5-mile moderate hike with elevation change of 400 ft. along Deep Creek in the Great Smoky Mtns. National Park, visiting Juney Whank Falls, crossing to Indian Creek and returning past Indian Creek Falls and Tom Branch Falls. Meet in Franklin at the BiLo parking area at 9:30 am, drive 80 miles round trip. Call leader Gail Lehman, 524-5298, for reservations.

Sun., Mar. 10

• The WCU Concert Choir will sing during the 11a worship service at First Presbyterian Church on Sunday. The group is directed by Dr. Michael Lancaster, Director of Choral Music at WCU. Dr. Lancaster also serves as Director of Worship/Music at the church. Everyone is cordially invited to attend this service. The church is located at the corner of Main and Fifth Streets. Handicap entrances are located on Church Street and on Fifth Street.

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a 3-mile moderate hike, with elevation change of 622 ft., from Wallace Gap to Rt. 64 W at Winding Stair Gap with a short car shuttle. First ¼ mile is steep, then a pleasant climb up over the ridge and a gradual descent to the highway. Meet in Franklin at Westgate Plaza at 2 p.m. Drive 25 miles round trip. Call leader Jean Hunnicutt, 524-5234, for reservations.

Tues., March 12

• Macon County Beekeeping School. Learn the basics – hive construction, honeybee biology, colony management, handling bees and harvesting honey crops. Also pest management. To register contact Janet Hill at 828-369-9819 or janet28734@gmail.com

Thurs., March 14

• The Rotary Club of Highlands and the Literacy Council of Highlands will join forces to benefit a mutual goal: Literacy. Literacy Rotary Bongoon Thursday, 6:30-8:30p at the Highlands Community Building.

• Franklin Community Blood Drive to be held at First Baptist Church of Franklin (69 Lotla Street; Franklin, NC) 12:30 pm – 5 pm. Please contact First Baptist Church of Franklin at (828) 369-9559 for more information or to schedule an appointment.



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... BRUIN continued from page 1

tionships, we were able to move seamlessly into this joint undercover operation, and keep it going for the necessary timeframes. We were all able to care for the land, its resources and serve the public. This was a win-win for everyone involved – except, of course, for the bad guys."

Officers began making arrests Tuesday, Feb. 19. Arrested from Macon County were Jack Lloyd Billingsley of Scaly Mountain, NC, and Albert Fred Russell of Franklin, NC. Several others from Tuckasegee, NC, Cherokee, NC, Rabun Gap, GA and elsewhere were also arrested.

... BOOKS from pge 1

However, Bowen said if someone wants to donate to library – which she welcomes – it is best to donate money because there is a school district collection policy for adding books to the Media Center that she must follow.

Currently, the new Common Core Standards focuses more on nonfiction reading for all students so she is purchasing more nonfiction this year for all reading levels.

– Kim Lewicki

Officials say the investigation will help safeguard wildlife by making poachers pay now, and making would-be violators think twice before breaking laws that conserve natural resources.



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Officials say fewer than 10% of all wildlife crimes are reported. They encourage citizens to help change that trend and protect the wildlife by reporting possible violations at 1-800-662-7137.

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

Two anchors in any storm



Pastor Gary Hewins
Community Bible Church

I have found few things to be consistently true in life. By this I mean the things that you can count on to be there and take place time and time again with a never diminishing effect. In an ever-changing world these "anchors" become hard to come by. There are two activities that never seem to get boring and they never stale. You would think they would grow dull but they never do. Maybe this isn't true for some, but for me personally, I have seen these two things always make one feel more alive, vital and inspired. This is true in those I observe as well. People keep doing these two activities throughout life once they understand the power available to them.

What is it that I am talking about? People who truly meditate on the word of God never quit doing so, they never grow tired of it, and they never think of stopping. Who reads the same book for 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 years? How is that possible? There is only one reason. The word of God is living and active and sharper than a double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joint and marrow. How else can you explain the enjoyment found in such a repetitive activity? (Heb 4:12)

True worship never grows old. People gather for decades to exalt, magnify and extol the name of the Lord. He inhabits the praise of His people and in His Presence is the fullness of joy. Most people do not like to eat at the same restaurant twice in the same month or see a movie more than once. Yet those who love Christ worship Him everyday. I find that compelling. Actually I find it astounding. Why can such activities never grow old? There is but one explanation, Christ is alive, relational and accessible. Why is it that people who don't believe in Christ come to faith-then their lives are changed-then they continue to read His word and worship Him as they change into a whole new person. The only explanation is that He is alive, dynamic and accessible.

As Easter approaches, get to a church. Run to a church. Run to a church that preaches the truth. It should in no way be boring. Experience the One who never grows old. Worship an eternal, never boring, God who longs to hear you sing, rejoice, and receive His infinite grace, mercy, goodness and identity. Get to a church. Get to a church and listen for His voice-calling you into something that transcends the violent, ever-churning, bickering, wasteful world that lures us into boredom, apathy and meaninglessness. If you oppose anything I have said—still go to a church and listen. There is new life awaiting you in Him and in His word. He is Risen! Get to church. Open His word—read, think, ask, reflect. Be still and know that He is God.

John 3:16

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

Proverbs 3:5

BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice, Pastor (706) 782-3965
Sundays: School – 10 a.m., Worship – 11
Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7
Wednesdays: Mid-week prayer meeting – 7 p.m.

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Sun.: Holy Communion - 9 a.m.; Adult Forum - 10:45 at Buck's
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Mon.: Bible Study & Supper at homes - 6 p.m.
Wed.: Men's Bible Study -8:30 a.m., First Baptist Church
Thurs.: Women's Prayer Group - 10 a.m., Whiteside Presbyterian
Church; Healing Service at noon

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11
Wednesdays -- 7 p.m.

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3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC
Senior Pastor Gary Hewins
Sun.: 9:30am: Sunday School
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10:45am: Worship Service

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

Rev. Bruce Walker • 526-2968
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II, (sanctuary), 10:30 am
Thursdays: Holy Eucharist, (chapel), 10 am
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor • 526-4153
Sun.: Worship 10:45 a.m.; School – 9:30 a.m.
Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 a.m., Prayer Meeting – 6:15 p.m.,
Choir – 5 p.m.

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Dr. Lee Bowman, Pastor • 526-3175
Sun.: Worship – 11 a.m.; Sun. 8:30a communion service June-
Labor Day; School – 9:30
Mondays: 8 a.m. – Men's Prayer Group & Breakfast
Wednesdays – Choir – 7

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

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Sunday School – 10 am, Worship Service – 11 am
Bible Study – 6 pm

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Sundays: Worship – 11

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson
670 N. 4th Street (next to the Highlands Civic Center)
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Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Pastor Paul Christy 526-3376
Sun: School 9:45a.; Worship 9:09 & 10:50.; Youth Group 5:30 p.
Wed: Supper; 6; 7:15 – children, youth, & adults studies; 6:15 –
Adult choir (nursery provided for Wed. p.m. activities)
Thurs:12:30 – Women's Bible Study (nursery)

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Sundays:10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church, 4224 Big Ridge
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Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg. – 7 p.m.

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290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Alfred Sizemore • 526-3212
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 10:45 a.m.; Worship – 6
p.m.

Wed: Adult Bible Study & Youth – 7 p.m.

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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Cashiers, Rev. Sam Forrester, 743-2122
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11

... CUTS continued from page 1

placed with interim instructors this spring semester. Whether they will be used during the 2013-2014 school year is still up in the air.

Macon County Schools Finance Director Angie Cook said the shortfall for this year has been the topic of discussion since the August when the board learned that the current year budget would be approximately \$550k short.

"This is due to us having to prepare and submit a balanced budget. We actually requested \$7.6 million last year from the county and received the \$6.9 million. In addition, we did know that we would have to appropriate our entire fund balance if we did not receive any additional funding," she said. "However, we did appropriate the entire fund balance and then in June the state gave a 1.2% increase to state employees, increased retirement and hospitalization rates creating additional expenditures that we were unaware of."

Duncan presented commissioners and board members with a list of proposed budget cuts amounting to approximately \$1,950,393. The list aims to lower the school system's current budget so that they would only ask for an \$83,125 increase from last year's funding allotment.

"I tried to zero out the budget and make enough cuts to where we didn't have to ask the county for any additional funds, but that just was not possible," said Duncan, stressing that it is the board's intention to ask for as little from the county as possible.

Duncan explained that "every penny" in the current general budget had been appropriated for the current year. He added that in order to continue current school operations through the fall, the school system is currently considering nixing expenditures but it will need to ask the county to add more than \$2 million to its annual allocation for the school system budget.

Regardless of this year's budgetary shortfalls facing the Board

of Education, County Manager Jack Horton said the county has always been committed to education, and that the relationship between the two entities has been one of "trust."

Since the state began issuing budget reversions in 2008 – which is where the state allocates money to the school system and then requests it back – Macon County has committed over \$80 million to the school system, with about \$34 million being allocated for general operating expenses and nearly \$46 million for capital outlay.

"Almost every dollar goes to education," said Horton. "That's a strong commitment."

Horton said for the 2012-'13 year Macon County allotted over \$12.3 million to the school system for current expenses, solid waste and debt services.

In fact, of the county's \$44.2 million operating budget for the current fiscal year, 28% of it was designated to the education system. Horton reported that roughly 50 cents per dollar paid in Macon County property taxes goes to the school system.

However with state mandated cuts increasing each year, the school system's fund balance has slowly diminished, even after the county contributed \$6.9 million to the school system last year.

Duncan said the quality of education may be directly affected if instructional staffing is not adequately funded. He said Macon County Public Schools are operating at the same staffing levels as the 2005- 2006 school year, but with significantly less funding — about 85% percent of the overall school system's budget.

"Regardless of what funds the school system is able to secure, we cannot continue operating with the staffing levels we currently have," said Duncan.

County commissioners are still committed to the school system but exact figures haven't been discussed.

"We have not been given a specific figure yet and do not know when we will receive one," explained County Commissioner Jim Tate. "Hopefully, the schools will make it without our help.

There are numerous reasons that the school system is facing a shortfall, including the fact that the state mandated a salary raise for all teachers this past year, but did not fund it. This leaves a gap that the school and county are forced to fill. Again, this is just another example of an unfunded mandate. I do foresee the county assisting if needed. I do not think that we have any other choice – we owe it to our kids."

Along with staffing positions, closing two schools would reduce an additional \$200,000. Both Union Academy and Macon Early College, schools which operate largely on grants, provided that the school board matches such funding with about \$100,000 per year, could see closings while students are redistributed throughout the school system.

"We don't want to get rid of schools like Macon Early College, but we have to look at everything in our budget that we are asking the county to fund," said Dr. Duncan. "This is the hardest thing I've had to do in my 44 years of school work."

But such facility closings are unlikely, he said.

"There are still several 'unknowns' with this scenario of which, most importantly, is the completion of the state's budget which will show us how much reversionary monies they are going to require to be returned to the state or if other unfunded mandates are passed along to us," said Tate of the cuts. "I foresee the county commissioners and the Board of Education working hand-in-hand to ensure that our schools are funded appropriately and that our students will continue to be offered a great education system. I, for one, have dedicated my un-earned support to our school system."

As far as the '13-'14 budget goes, Duncan said he has received notification that the school system's discretionary reversion will be \$1,096,500.

"This will be a total of \$5,178,654 that we have sent back to the state after they have issued our allotments since the 2008-2009 school year. This continues to put a strain on our local current

expense," he said.

As stated in the work session on Monday, February 25 the list of reductions is only a document to use a starting point. There have been no decisions made at this point as to what will be cut or to close any schools.

This was information given to the BOE to begin discussions on what needed to be looked at closely, and where funds are ex-

pected.

"Obviously, with continued reductions in state allotments and no reductions in personnel, we have come to a place where something has to be adjusted," said Duncan.

The Board of Education has until April 15 to submit a budget to the county. None of the proposed cuts have been set in stone.

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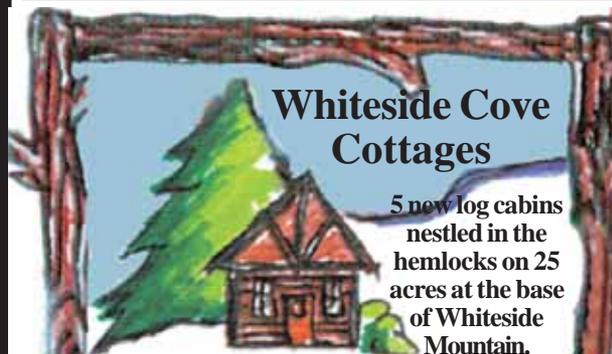
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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands PD log entries from Feb. 23. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor, or public officials have been used.

Sat., Feb. 23

• At 3:05 p.m., a burglary with forcible entry and criminal damage to property was reported at Paoletti Restaurant on Main Street where someone broke through the back door.

• At 5:11 p.m., criminal damage to property was reported at Main Street Pharmacy where someone opened two doors downstairs and damaged the rear entry door.

• At 6:30 p.m., a burglary with forced entry and larceny was reported at The Christmas Tree on Main Street where a person broke a window to enter the store where hand and power tools were stolen and damage to a window valued at \$200 was sustained.

• At 8:40 p.m., a burglary with forced entry and larceny from buildings was reported at Taylor Barnes Spa and Salon on NC 106 where someone broke into the business and stole \$72 in cash, a \$35 check, and damaged windows and doors to enter estimated at \$750.

• At 8:57 p.m., larceny from a building and burglary and a non-forced entry was reported at Highlands Decorating Center on NC 106 (underneath Taylor Barnes Spa and Salon) where someone broke a window to enter the building where \$582 in cash was stolen and \$3,400 in structural

damage was sustained.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. log entries from Feb. 21.

Feb. 21

• At 12:15 p.m., the dept. responded to an alarm at a residence on Country Club Drive which was set off due to a water flow problem.

• At 4:47 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to assist EMS with a medical call at a residence on Big Bearpen Rd. EMS transported.

Feb. 23

• At 5:55 p.m., the dept. responded to a life alert alarm from a residence on Club Circle. It was false.

Feb. 25

• At 4:01 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a business on Main Street. It was cancelled by the alarm company.

Feb. 26

• 1:30 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm set off by workers at a residence on Country Club Drive.

Feb. 27

• At 5:37 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to assist EMS with a medical call at a residence on NC 106. EMS transported.

Feb. 28

• At a little after midnight, the dept. was asked to provide mutual aid to Glenville-Cashiers FD on a structure fire, but the call was cancelled en route.

• At 9:11 a.m., the dept. assisted the fire marshal test the fire alarms at the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital.

• At 10:52 p.m., the dept. was asked to provide mutual aid on a structure fire, but the call was cancelled en route.

• At 11:59 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to assist EMS at Club House Drive where a 96-year-old man had fallen. EMS transported to the hospital.

March 2

• At 4:55 p.m., the dept. responded to Glen Falls where a woman had fallen on the trail. She was taken to Blue Valley Road and picked up by EMS.

March 3

• At 10:39 a.m., the dept. was called to a residence on Blue Valley Road to attend to a victim who apparently died of Carbon Monoxide poisoning.

• At 5:51 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at Chestnut Hill. It was cancelled.

• At 8:14 p.m., the dept. was called to assist Jackson County find a lost hiker. The call was cancelled.

March 4

• At 1:29 p.m., the dept. was called to assist a person who had fallen on Carolina Way. EMS transported to the hospital.

• At 4:05 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Brushy Face. EMS transported to the hospital.

... WOOLDRIDGE from page 4

she refused. Some merchants have pulled their ads from the paper because of what I wrote and again because she refused to fire me. Other people have threatened to sue. Always remember, you are best known by who your enemies are. Obviously I don't have a need for everyone to like me.

I've offered to quit the paper so many times I've lost count. Kim once said, "If I give in and fire you, then I no longer operate this newspaper. I would have given control to our critics and I'm not about to do that."

So here I am, resigning from the paper in good standing and not under pressure or duress. And ole Kim and Jim are still hangin' tough. What a great run it was. If you appreciate strong, brave women like Kim and Maddy, my li'l missus, then give Kim a hug when you see her and then place your ads with Highlands Newspaper. I'll hug the li'l missus for you.

So far, I've had a front row seat to life and it ain't over yet. I'm sure a new door will open soon. Oh, I almost forgot to ask. Are you writing this down?

... SALZARULO from page 5

absence of compassion and common sense, I believe rationing is necessary, not only for solvency of Medicare and the United States, but to protect protect patients from unnecessary, expensive, and abusive care. The problem is finding the will to risk the political fallout of such action.

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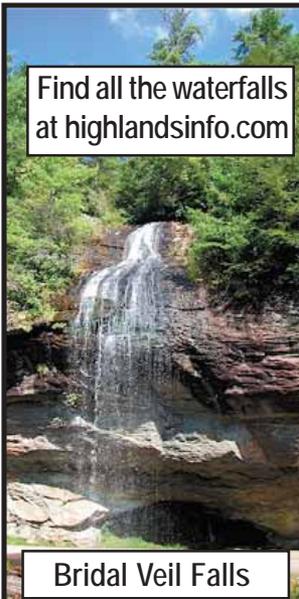


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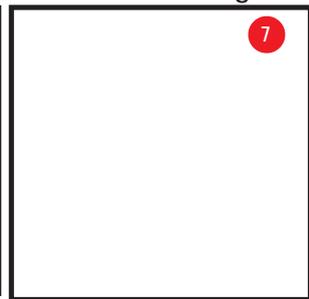
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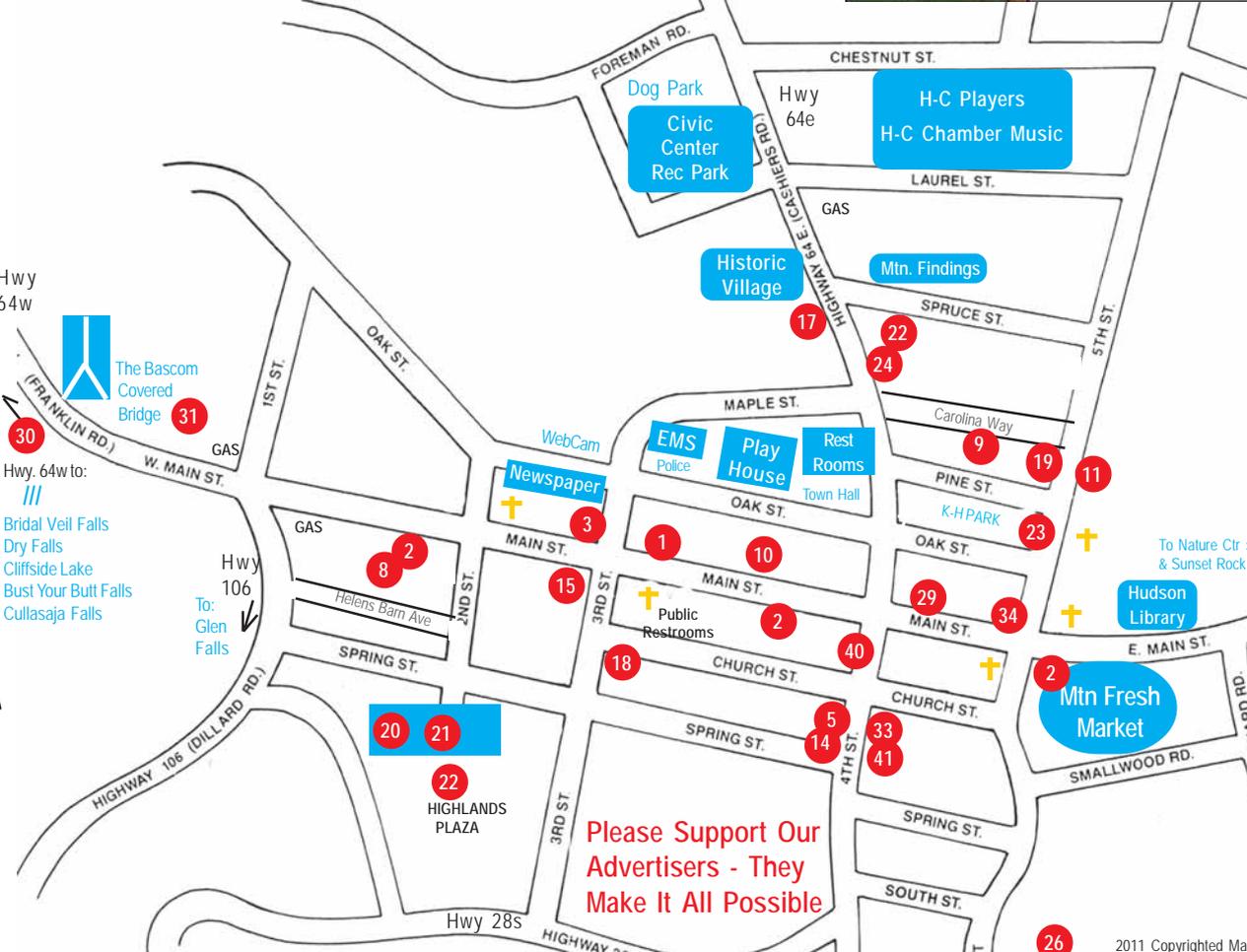
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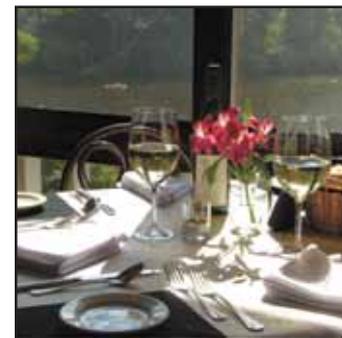
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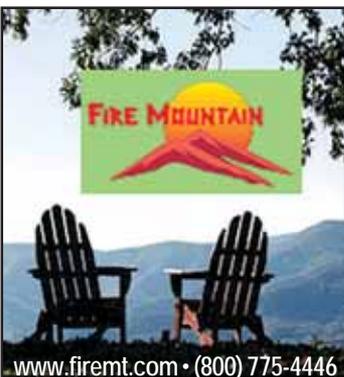
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