

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Feb. 20, 2014

Winter weather affects school calendar; sports

Due to 'snow days' there will be school March 28, April 11 and June 13

Rescheduling games due to winter weather is one obstacle Macon County Schools must deal with. Other ways schools, teachers and students are impacted

include reaching curriculum milestones, testing and cancelled teacher workdays.

According to Highlands School Athletic Director Brett

Lamb, the Valentine's Day Senior Night home game at Highlands School vs. Blue Ridge Feb. 14 was postponed due to winter weather and rescheduled for Tuesday, Feb.

18. This also means the conference tournament dates will change. Those dates will be announced once the Athletic Direc-

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Highlands in the storm

While Mother Nature spent three days depositing a foot of snow across the Highlands Plateau before it moved northeast causing havoc, most Highlanders hunkered down in front of fireplaces, curled up with a good book or had TV marathons.

State of Emergency calls were sent out from the town and county requesting residents to stay indoors and off the roads and not to expect garbage pickup!

But as one day off from work and kids home from school turned into three days, followed by the weekend, mothers were willing to offer their children to the lowest bidder.

When the snow finally stopped Friday (though it did snow again Friday night) and the sun came out for good on Saturday people were found sledding, building snowmen and enjoying winter time out of doors.

All things considered, Highlands fared very well during the storm better than during the recent Polar Vortex where there

Fun in the snow after the storm



During the storm that started in earnest the night of Tuesday, Feb. 11 and continued through the weekend dumping 12 inches of snow across the plateau, schools were closed as were shops and many businesses but as soon as the skies cleared and the snow stopped families who had been holed up in their homes for days hit Monkey Hill and the slopes at Scaly for some much needed outdoor recreation. Shown here, little girls with their little snowmen on Saturday in Scaly.

Photo by Jim Lewicki

•See STORM page 11

NCACC focuses on HHS issues for the year

By Davin Eldridge

County Commissioner and first vice president of the NC Assoc. of County Commissioners (NCACC) Ronnie Beale met with 46 other representatives from North Carolina local governments at the NCACC Health and Human Services steering committee meeting in January.

It is one of the association's seven steering committees – health and human services, agriculture, environment, general government, justice and public safety, public education and taxation and finance. Meetings are open to county commissioners and county staff who have specific concerns or interests to express.

The Health and Human Services Committee, which Macon County Social Services Director Jane Kimsey attended, discussed legislation currently proposed in Raleigh that may impact health and human service issues.

With state spending at \$20.6 billion and revenue growth still slightly below recovery, the NCACC said it remains steadfast on its health and human services goals – ensuring adequate mental health funding, pushing for an

Parker Meadows park to be funded in 1 yr.

By Brittany Burns

A deal two years in the making is finally a go. Tuesday night Macon County Commissioners voted 3-2 to develop the Parker Meadows rec complex all at one time.

During the county's mid-year work session last month, Macon

County Finance Director Lori Hall offered insight into the county's debt ratio and the impact it has on the annual budget. Recently, Macon County Recreation Director Seth Adams requested that commissioners consider developing the new rec complex all at one time, as opposed in various stages

as previously planned. While Adams cited significant financial savings for the project if done in one sweep, Hall updated commissioners on the county's current debt burden and the need to decrease it in coming years.

•See REC PARK page 4

•See NCACC page 3

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •



Highlands Mayor Pat Taylor

life, but these folks step forward for duty without hesitation. God bless them all.

At the February 20th Town board meeting there will be two public hearings. The first hearing is for changes to articles 3 and 4 of the Unified Development Ordinance concerning the Zoning Board. These changes are mandated by the state. The second hearing is to rezone all town owned properties to GI, Government/Institutional. These changes are being made for consistent zoning on all town owned properties. The town has no plans to change the current use of any property being rezoned.

There are additional items on the

agenda, such as the write off of delinquent utility bills. The town has by law only three years to collect on delinquent accounts. Many times folks simply leave town without paying, and the town loses contact with the responsible party. The board will also address delinquent sewer connection fees, and a DOT project agreement for truck turnaround areas. Ironically, the only turnaround will be located on US 64 just outside Franklin. At the beginning of this project a turnaround for Highlands was studied, but a suitable location was never identified.

See you on Thursday, February 20, at the Community Building on Poplar Street. The meeting starts at 7p.m.

planned for North Carolina. Oh goody; just another platform from which to pitch the global warming theory

Now I'm sure that North Carolina farmers are going to be thrilled by the idea that some 90-day wonder bureaucrat is going to visit their farms and tell them what to do about a lack of rain one year and too much rain the next year. The assumption is that farmers don't know that weather is variable from year to year. I'm sure my grandfather would have been tickled pink to discover that it rains a lot some years and not others. Who would have guessed?

This reminds me of a small one-man business we have here in Macon County when he was asked by the federal government to work on some stuff for them, presumably military, bureaucrats paid him several visits to advise him of how to do his work. He had to have a clean room, secure safe, special boxes for shipping, special labels and they gave him a 174 page manual on how to do his job, in addition to another 120 page manual on shipping labels alone. You can bet your sweet bippy that he finally told them what they could do with their job. What would normally be a 2-3 hour job would have taken hours just on paperwork and his monthly earnings would have only been a few hundred bucks.

Back to President Obama's planned Climate Hubs. You can also bet your sweet bippy that what starts out as a small program in a few states will eventually grow into a monster and in short time the new bureaucracy will follow the "peanut principle" and create enough forms and paperwork that they will need to hire thousands more government workers just to do the paperwork and farmers will have to obey the rules they make for them.

We've all seen the result of government meddling in the hog industry. Just look how your bacon prices have doubled and you get 10- or 12-ounce packages instead of the usual 16 ounces. Government probably doesn't think you ought to be eating pork anyway and besides, you can go on food stamps if food prices keep going up.

As is usual, there are those who delight in having big government regulate things, as long as it is the other guy who gets regulated.

I think it was President Reagan who jokingly said "if it moves, regulate it, if it makes a profit, tax it."

Bob Wilson Franklin

• LETTERS •

Save us from government

Dear Editor,

I really can't think of many things the government has done that worked very well for long.

Listening to a proposal by President

Obama the other day that would form a new government bureaucracy to tell farmers how to deal with global warming and on the surface, this sounds like a great idea. He named it "Climate Hubs" and one is

LETTERS-TO-THE EDITOR-POLICY

We reserve the right to reject or edit submissions.

NO ANONYMOUS LETTERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands Newspaper. Please EMAIL letters by Sunday at 5 p.m. There is a 500-word limit without prior approval.

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Sallie and I had just arrived at Miami International Airport from Cuba where we had been on a People to People art and cultural visit. I was ready to get back to Highlands and resume my duties as mayor with a renewed appreciation for our free and democratic institutions.

We turned on our cellphones that had been out of service in Cuba and got a message our flight to Atlanta had been cancelled. We both thought it would be no problem to book another flight. Then we learned of the winter weather warning. Over the next few days we attempted to fly into Atlanta.

I was concerned about the situation in Highlands, so I called the Town Manager to let him know we were marooned in Miami. He assured me the town electrical and road crews, the police and first responders were prepared for action. He also confirmed he was in constant contact with mayor pro tem Donnie Calloway who was acting as mayor while I was away.

We decided to rent a car in Miami and drive to Atlanta, pick up our car at the airport and drive to Highlands. We spent most of last Thursday driving on I-75. All I can say is our seasonal Florida residents have to love Highlands to drive that far.

After this adventure, I will be paranoid about leaving Highlands for the next four years. Fear will seize me as soon as I leave town that a state of emergency will appear out of the blue, and I will be hopelessly stuck some place where I can't return. Even though I felt helpless as the mayor who wanted to be on duty but couldn't be, the town was in good hands with our professional staff on duty.

Let me give a special salute to all the town workers who stepped forward to insure Highlanders received the best service possible given the weather conditions. Similar to military personnel, these folks put their own safety at risk to make sure we are all secure. Just one unforeseen accident can result in critical injury or loss of

• OBITUARIES •

Rev. John David Scheyer

Rev. John David Scheyer, 85, of Franklin, died on February 7, 2014.

Born in Philadelphia, PA, he was the son of the late Dr. Fredrick Scheyer and Synette Swensen Scheyer. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife Fia B. Scheyer. David received his Master of Divinity from Berkeley; was a US Marine serving during the Korean War; member of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship; volunteer at REACH and he loved to hike and sail.

He is survived by three step children,



David Cefkin (Mia) of Franklin, Suzie Della Penta (George) of Cheektowaga, NY and Beverly Calobrace of Tamarac, FL; eight grandchildren; five great grandchildren and was the brother of Warren Scheyer of Seattle, WA.

A Memorial Service will be held at 1 p.m. Saturday, February 22nd at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. Walter Bennett will officiate.

Memorial donations can be made to REACH of Macon County, PO Box 228, Franklin, NC 28744.

Macon Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.

Jacqueline 'Jackie' Raby Norman

Jacqueline "Jackie" Raby Norman of Ypsilanti, MI formerly of Franklin died Saturday, February 8, 2014. Born in Macon County, she was the daughter of the late Charles Donald and Bedell Parrish Raby. She loved to read, play the piano, embroidery and loved to send and receive cards. She was a member of Faith Baptist Church.

Ms. Norman is survived by five daughters, Gloria Owenby and husband Mitchell of Franklin, Kathy Parker and husband Neal of Franklin, Elaine Vaughn and husband Clayton of Heflin, AL, Jan Cabe and husband Terry of Franklin, and Lisa Steele and husband Darryl of Ypsilanti, MI; one son, Kevin Long and wife Sandra of Linwood, NC; four sisters, Barbara Williams of Franklin, Carol Estes and husband Larry of Frank-



lin, Linda Lacy of Ellenton, FL and Donna Setser of Candler, NC; two brothers, Al Raby and wife Jean of Franklin and Clark Raby of Pompano Beach, FL; ten grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by a sister, Little Helen Raby.

Funeral services were held Monday, February 17, 2014 at Oak Grove Baptist Church with

Rev. Jim Dusek officiating. Burial followed in the church cemetery. Pallbearers were Stacey Owenby, Zachary Kirkland, Chris Estes, Jamie Estes, Nick Morgan, Patrick Cabe and Randall Vaughn.

In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be made to Oak Grove Cemetery Fund, c/o Evelyn Hughes, 190 Dean Drive, Franklin, NC 28734.

• See OBITUARIES page 10

...LETTERS continued from page 2

Thank you for the online paper & the weather and webcam pages

Dear Editor,

Please let me tell you how grateful this reader is for the online Highlands Newspaper and especially the Webcams I use almost every day to keep tabs on Highlands while away for two or three months during the winter. It is such a beneficial service to be able to read anytime about whatever is going on in Highlands, but the Webcams and weather statistics are truly addictive! Many thanks to the local advertisers who support the

Highlands Newspaper in print as well as online, to your husband, Jim Lewicki, for some amazing photos to remind all of us why Highlands is so magical, and for the well written, well rounded news items you and your staff present in each and every issue of the free Highlands Newspaper. I for one am a grateful recipient of such largesse and provide many of the daily "hits" on the website. Gratefully,

Marcia Davis
Atlanta, GA

Bosnia Mission Fundraiser Dinner

Sunday, February 23 at noon

Join us at the Methodist Church for a fundraiser dinner to help build a barn for a family in Bosnia. The family gets a barn and receives a pregnant cow. The cow not only supplies nutrition and use for the family but also provides the family with an income source from milk and cheese

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• HIGHLANDS DINING •

...REC PARK from page 1

Macon County's debt load for the 2015 year sits just under \$5 million at \$4,949,815. Hall presented commissioners with a detailed graph of what the debt will look like over the next 15 years as current debt obligations are paid off.

From 2015 and 2016, if current debt obligations remain the same, Macon County's general fund debt balance is expected to decrease by about \$800,000 to \$4,176,468. The debt load is expected to drop below the \$4 million mark between 2017 and 2018. By 2031, Macon County's total debt could be reduced to as low \$104,778.

The figures Hall presented account for the county's existing debt obligations and do not factor in additional projects. Depending on which avenue the county decided to take regarding Parker Meadows, the debt fund could increase considerably at once, or be broken up to increase the debt a little with each phase.

The project, which has a price tag of \$3 million, will have a 10 percent contingency budget built in. Hall informed commissioners Tuesday night that she did not recommend funding the entire project out of the fund balance. While the fund balance sits at more than 30 percent of the county's general fund when the state only recommends it be at eight percent, Hall said taking the entire balance out of the fund balance could adversely influence the county's credit rating.

Adams presented commissioners with four plans to consider when deciding how to develop the property. While the preliminary proposal was required by the state, the other three proposals were all up for consideration by commissioners.

The preliminary proposal designed to comply with county's obligation to receive the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant, includes two adult ball fields with dugouts, soccer field, playground, shelter with bathrooms, a 60-space parking area, 2,200-ft. walking trail and renovations to the existing clubhouse on the property. The price tag to meet the PARTF grant requirements is \$623,315. With the PARTF grant totaling \$500,000, the county will be obligated to pay \$123,315.

Adams presented the county with three additional options, each of which builds on the current plans and significantly increase the up-front cost. Although the

• See REC PARK page 6

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...WEATHER continued from page 1

tors within the conference are notified of the new game times.

So far, this school year Highlands School has missed seven days, had four delays, and had one early dismissal.

Nantahala School has missed eight days and had four delays.

According to Macon County Schools Superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin, Franklin area schools have lost 58 hours of instruction, Highlands has missed 57, Nantahala 65.

“Due to the loss of this amount of instructional time, the Macon County School system has converted the teacher workdays scheduled on March 28, April 11, and June 13 to instructional days. Therefore, school will be in session on those days. In the event that we should miss any additional full days of school, we would make the day up through Saturday School or over Spring Break.”

Baldwin said snow days equate to breaks in instruction and obviously have a negative impact on the classroom.

“Our teachers definitely face some challenges in regaining the focus of our students and reviewing the curriculum before they can move on,” he said. “We had three weather delays in January that caused us to lose seven hours of instructional time. We were not able to make any of that lost time up, so our students were at a disadvantage when they took the first semester EOCs.”

Highlands School Principal Brian Jetter agreed.

“Missing days, and having late-starts always impacts testing and curriculum coverage because the secret to getting students to learn what the state has directed us to teach is ‘time on task.’ For the most part, the more time a child spends focused on learning a task, the better they learn the task. Any time that is lost inevitably impacts learning,” he said.

Nantahala Principal James Bryan said January began with bitter cold which forced him to close one day and delay the following two days.

“This was time that could not be replaced as testing went on as scheduled. This would not be as big of a concern if it were a new semester, unfortunately it was the first week back after Christmas break. High school teachers needed to push their reviews back a week before administering the EOC test. If Macon County had a local calendar, our semester would have ended in December. January would be the beginning of a new semester and any days missed would not affect EOC testing or reviewing,” he said.

Legislation Session Law 2012-145, Senate Bill 187, Section 7A.11 which per-

tains to school calendars and went into effect for the 2013-14 school year, has created another obstacle for Macon County Schools.

Under the new calendar law, the fall semester ends in January after students return from Christmas break and that’s when students take End-of-Course (EOC) tests.

North Carolina public schools must now start no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26 and end no later than the Friday closest to June 11.

Schools in the western North Carolina traditionally have more inclement weather than in other areas of the state and in years past have been able to operate under a local calendar or get a calendar waiver.

However, as per the new law, being eligible for a weather waiver is more difficult. Now all schools within a district must be closed at least eight full days per year during any four of the last 10 years due to severe weather conditions, energy shortages, power failures, or other emergency situations, to be eligible for a weather waiver calendar.

If a weather-related calendar waiver is approved, the start date can be no earlier than the Monday closest to August 19. Furthermore, all schools within the district must be closed all day for purposes of determining eligibility for a weather-related waive. Delayed starts or early dismissals of two or more hours no longer apply.

Baldwin, like every Macon County Schools Superintendent before him said having the ability to set the calendar locally would give the district greater flexibility in scheduling.

“We could more easily build snow days into the calendar, and end our first semester at Christmas,” he said.

Principal Jetter said the state’s “one size fits all” approach to educating children does those children a disservice.

“I think the state should let individual school districts find ways to reach achievement goals in ways that they (the districts, parents, communities, and schools) find is best for them. Then the state can measure our success. If we do, indeed, meet achievement goals, then it should not prescribe to us the way we do that. Even General Patton said to ... let people know what you want, and then, let them surprise you as to how they achieved the goal.”

Principal Bryan said another concern involves high school students who are taking college courses or wish to graduate early.

“The current public school calendar does not allow seniors to graduate in December and move on to college in January,” he said.

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...REC PARK continued from page 4

overall price tag is more with each phase, Adams says the county will save money over time. Adams explained various ways the project costs could be reduced, with the most significant being

the cost of lights. If the project is completed at one time versus in phases, the county could save around \$256,000 in lighting costs alone.

Option one:

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This option includes all of the features in the county's current obligation, but adds an extra access road to the parking lot, a central building with bathrooms, concessions stands, and scoring and lighting for two fields. Option one is the least expensive upgrade and according to Adams, will provide the county with a more user-friendly complex. This option is expected to cost around \$1,104,815, with the county paying \$604,815 after deducting the PARTF grant funds.

Option two:

The second option is designed to create a facility and parking spaces to accommodate large baseball and softball tournaments. This proposal would expand on the first option by adding two additional adult fields complete with dugouts, 7,000 square feet of multi-use courts, and a 200-space parking area. This option is projected to cost the county \$1,248,815, after deducting the PARTF funds.

Option three:

This option will have it all. It is proposed to be the complete project and a final design option. Adams said that this is believed to be the best option to provide Macon County residents with a facility capable of having a significant economic impact on the community. This option includes

every feature in the first two options, and will add three 220' youth ballfields, one 150' youth ballfield, a central building with bathrooms, concessions, scoring, two parking areas, and completion of an access road and construction of a new maintenance building. The total price tag for the complete facility is estimated to be \$2,989,315, and after the \$500,000 PARTF grant, will cost the county \$2,489,315.

At the request of Commissioner Paul Higdon, Adams presented the board with a cost analysis for operational expenses to maintain the park when and if fully completed. Last year's operating budget for the recreational department was \$624,107, with the addition of the park, Adams believes his budget will be increased by \$166,160 a year for a total of \$790,267.

The bulk of the operational expenses would be in additional personnel. Adams said he would need two full-time employees and a half part-time employees which would cost an additional \$101,960 a year. Other costs include electricity totaling \$25,000 and maintenance costs estimated to be about \$17,000.

Although the project got the majority of the board's votes, there was opposition. Higdon, who has been publicly against the

project since being elected to the board of commissioners, said he will continue his opposition in the project because he doesn't believe it is the right time considering the economy has yet to bounce back from the recession. Higdon stated he would continue to vote no on measures involving the park because he ran for office on the premise of keeping government small, and the recreational facility calls for more county employees, which is ultimately increasing the size of government.

Commission Chair Kevin Corbin was adamant Tuesday night that neither he, nor the rest of the board, would be in favor of any measure that would increase taxes and place an undue burden on the taxpayers of Macon County. Corbin stated that the project can be completed within the existing budget and will prove to be an economic advantage in the long run.

"Right now we have money sitting in the fund balance that is generating next to nothing in interest," said Corbin. "I think my tax dollars, the county's tax dollars that we already have, would be better spent on a project like that where we know we will see an economic benefit."

Commissioner Haven, who voted with Higdon against the project, said he supports providing a recreation park in the county for the youth, but if the project cannot be paid for without having to get a loan from the bank, then he could not support it. Haven believes it is not the right time to increase the county's debt load through financing the project.

On a motion made by Commissioner Jim Tate and seconded by Commissioner Ronnie Beale, commissioners voted to develop the project at one time by paying \$1 million out of the fund balance and financing the rest of the project over a 10-year loan at an estimated interest rate of 2.4 percent.

Adams noted that the loan for the project will have to be approved by the Local Government Commission, giving construction on the recreational facility a June start date. If all things go as planned, the park would be ready for residents to enjoy by the middle of next summer.

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TUESDAY: MADE IN-HOUSE ITALIAN SAUSAGE LASAGNA AND A LARGE HOUSE SALAD **\$18.95 SERVES FOUR**

WEDNESDAY: CHICKEN OR STEAK POT PIE AND A LARGE SALAD **\$18.95 SERVES FOUR**

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...NCACC continued from page 1

increased state budget for local psychological bed funding and preserving federal block grants and state financial aid to counties for county-administered programs while opposing unfunded workload mandates.

“More than 30 pieces of [health and human services] legislation are currently of interest to the NCACC, which will impact each and every county differently as the new year goes forward,” said NCACC Executive Director David Thompson. “We had a great health and human services session at Coates Auditorium, and all of the members got a clear idea of which [proposed] bills need to be focused on, and what needs to be focused on so they can better act at the county level.”

According to the NCACC website, it supports county, regional and state collaboration to improve agency automation and simplify programs, to streamline administration and to improve client interaction.

The [NCACC] opposes earmarking of block grant funds, and supports increased funding for mandated services, provided the increases do not require additional county expenditures.

Counties must be actively engaged in setting health and human services policy and program requirements. Programs should be flexible and recognize the state’s changing demographics.

It believes Health and human services programs should encourage responsible behavior and should be targeted to those citizens least able to care for themselves. They should encourage families to be responsible supporters of their children and help individuals find sustainable, long-term employment.

NCACC steering committees meets quarterly to study emerging county-related issues and make recommendations on specific policies to its Board of Directors, which in-turn lobby state lawmakers for local interests.

The General Assembly considers the NCACC official voice of all 100 counties throughout the state by the General Assembly.

The NCACC believes the state should take the lead in financing, implementing, maintaining, and supporting statewide automated systems; automation efforts undertaken by the State should connect and integrate with county automation initiatives.

‘Community Coffee’ with Mayor Taylor

The Hudson Library would like to announce the beginning of a monthly program in collaboration with the Town of Highlands Mayor, Patrick Taylor.

Community Coffee, will be held on the last Friday of each month from 11am-noon, in the Hudson Library Meeting Room. This month’s date is: Friday, February 28.

This collaboration fulfills an accessibility mission for the Town and a community mission of the Library as a gathering place for sharing information.

The mayor will be reviewing the issues presented at the Thursday, Feb. 27 Town Board Retreat .



The Bookworm has reopened its doors

The Bookworm has reopened in its new space at 555 E. Main Street in the “Falls on Main” shopping area across from the Hudson Library. If you come by on Friday, Feb. 21st or Saturday, Feb. 22nd, there not only will be books, CD’s, DVD’s, and even puzzles from which to choose, but also hot drinks and cookies. Remember too, if you have books to donate, we accept donations during our business hours, 10-4, Tuesday through Saturday. So stop by, have a snack as you search for that special book to read on these chilly winter nights. All proceeds benefit the Hudson Library. The all-volunteer staff is always looking for additional people, so if interested, please contact Delaine Mehder at 828-482-0326.

HCP’s crew for ‘Weekend Comedy’

When a play is well directed and staged, it flows seamlessly; and the audience watches the story unfold as if by magic. The crew of Highlands Cashiers Players’ upcoming production, “Weekend Comedy” knows how to make the magic happen.

Director, Rick Siegel chose this play because he had the experience and vision to see it come to life on stage. Siegel not only directs but acts in “Weekend Comedy”. This means he has to understand his character both intimately and objectively. It also means, according to Siegel, that both the Assistant Director and Stage Manager have had to take up any slack that he may have left by being on stage. These crew members are always vital to any production, but even more so in “Weekend Comedy.”

Siegel’s right hand, Assistant Director Bonnie Earman, began her association with Highlands Cashiers Players in the play, “Stepping Out.” She “caught the theater bug” and advanced her talents and theater knowledge by studying under the tutelage of Collin Wilcox Paxton at The Instant Theater. Earman undertook the challenge of live improv and has since gone on to become a well known stage presence in

Highlands as well as a board member of Highlands Cashiers Players . She will be directing the spring play, “Mama Won’t Fly.”

In “Weekend Comedy” the director has needed to leave all facets of back stage organization to the stage manager, Helene Siegel. As Stage Manager, she is responsible for costume changes, set changes, prop management and all aspects of what goes on behind the stage. Siegel is in constant communication with the light and sound booth, the actors and her crew. Thanks to her skills, Helene Siegel has been responsible for many Highlands Cashiers Players productions. Recently she was seen on stage in “Love, Loss and What I Wore” where she proved that her talents are not limited to behind the scenes.

“Weekend Comedy,” a play by Jeanne & Sam Bobrick, is the funny and often telling tale of a couple in their late 40s or early 50s and a couple in their mid- to-late 20s who have accidentally rented the same cottage for a three-day weekend. It opens at Highlands PAC on February 20. For ticket information call 828-526-8084.



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2014 Real Estate Sales-to-Date Data Suggests Blue Skies for Investors

Halfway into a fiscal quarter is always a good time to take stock and review market data. I feel the early part of this year in particular is a critical data snapshot as the figures will reveal to us not only indicators for the season to come, but will also speak to the overall continued market recovery in our area. Therefore, I was eager to get a barometer reading on the market and did some research to see what the 2014 sales-to-date activity tells us.

I was most pleased by what I saw.

To date in 2014, there have been 45 closings in the Highlands-Cashiers market: 21 residential sales, 17 land sales, 6 town-house/condo sales, and 1 commercial sale.

First, the purchase prices and property locations were across all price points and market areas. This suggests that investors are not favoring one area over another, nor are they focused in a certain

price range. Further, entry-level properties sold, as well as luxury properties. I like this broad range of sale types and prices as it signals organic and healthy market activity/continued recovery.

Second, take note of the land sales. In an earlier column I predicted that land sales would pick up considerable steam this year, and the return of building would ensue. I am delighted to see these land sales figures, especially so early in the year. This indicates to me that my reading of the tea leaves is most likely on track, and that we will continue to see momentum increase around land buys and interest in new home construction as we head into the second quarter.

Finally, I have an interesting data point



Susie deVillie
Broker-in-Charge
White Oak Realty

to share that may be the most telling of all. As you know, last week we had significant snow fall in the area, making many roads impassable for days. Typically, winter brings a slowing of the pace of activity, and when winter weather comes, (again, typically) activity all but stops. Not so last week! In fact, right after the storms hit, I had requests from buyers to see property. During the week, I worked with multiple sets of buyers and also accompanied several showings of my listings. Each of the buyers I showed shared the same sentiment: we are serious about investing – right now – regardless of the weather.

In addition, when I scan our page views (on all of our online marketing outlets), I see a significant uptick in our first time visitors, return visitors, and time visitors spent viewing listings. Therefore, investors are shopping both onsite and online

– indicating that showing appointments will rise sharply in the coming weeks, with sales to follow.

While I still consider the market overall as a Buyer's market, I believe the early data indicates we will see a shift in the Highlands-Cashiers market to become more of a Seller's market in 2014. Timing often is everything. I definitely see blue skies for investors this year, yet the window for the great deal is narrowing.

• Susie deVillie, ME, ABR, SFR, is Owner/Broker-in-Charge of White Oak Realty Group. Her areas of expertise include real estate investments, niche marketing, social media, and strategic property positioning. An expert in entrepreneurship and anthropology, Susie applies her acumen in human behavior toward negotiating and advocating on behalf of her clients. White Oak Realty Group's sales office is located at 125 South Fourth Street in the heart of the retail district in Highlands. For more information, visit WhiteOakRG.com or call (828) 526-8118.

• HS SPORTS •

Basketball seniors honored with parents at last home game of the regular season



Due to weather, the Valentine's Day Senior Game and the last home game of the season against Blue Ridge was postponed to Tuesday, Feb. 18. Both teams beat Blue Ridge. The girls held the game all night beating Blue Ridge 69-46, but the boys won at the last second 61-59. Both teams advance to the conference tournament playing the first game against Nantahala at Blue Ridge. The girls play at 3:30p and the boys at 5p. Pictured from left are seniors Tyler Munger with his parents, Emily Shuler with her parents, Rebekah Parks with her parents and Emily Gabbard with her parents.

Photo by Lisa Osteen

Gun Show

February 22 & 23

Saturday: 9am - 5pm

Sunday: 9am - 4pm

Franklin Community Building
1288 Ga Hwy - 441 South
Franklin, North Carolina

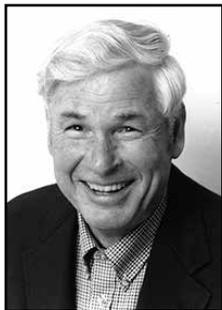
Admission:

\$8

<http://gemcapitolshows.com>

...OBITUARIES from page 3

John Robert Schiffl



John Robert Schiffl, age 80, of Highlands, NC, died at his residence, Saturday, February 15, 2014. He was born in Palm Beach County, Florida, the son of the late Oswald Felix Schiffl and Regina Sur Schiffl. He was past Chairman of the Board at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, and was on the Foundation Board at the hospital for many years, a past member of Highlands Rotary Club, and past President of Highlands Chamber of Commerce. John was a US Army Veteran serving during the Korean War.

His father, who was a decorated Army Doctor in World War I, and practiced medicine in Highlands, commissioned Joe Webb to build a log cabin on Webbmont in the 1920s, where the family still resides. John was raised in Clewiston, FL, and Highlands, NC. His mother taught school in Highlands for many years.

He was Captain of his High School football team and went to Duke University on a football scholarship. He was drafted into the Army during the Korean War and finished his college education at Georgia Tech. There he met his wife, Marlene, who was the secretary for the Dean of Students. After graduation he worked for his father-in-law Olen Nabors and subsequently, Yancey Brothers in Atlanta, GA. He moved his family to Highlands in 1972, where he has lived since. His career included Frank Cook Real Estate, General Manager of Wildcat Cliffs Country Club, owner of the Galax Theater and John Schiffl Real Estate.

John was very instrumental in the establishment of the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital and was dedicated to its growth and development for the past 25 years. John will be remembered for his passion for the people of Highlands and his family.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Marlene Nabors Schiffl; daughter, Anna Marie Herz and husband Patrick of Highlands, NC, and their children, Lucy Herz and Ezra Herz; son, John Robert Schiffl, Jr and his children, Olen, Bevan and Adam Schiffl of Highlands, NC; son Samuel Matthew Schiffl of Nashville, TN and his children Eli and Chandler Schiffl; brother, Richard Schiffl of Gainesville, FL. He was preceded in death by a brother, Nicholas Schiffl.

Memorial services will be held Thursday, February 20, 2014 at 11 am at Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church with Father Tien Duong officiating. Burial will be in Highlands Memorial Park Cemetery. The family will receive friends after the service.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, 190 Hospital Drive, Highlands, NC 28741.

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Online condolences may be at www.bryantgrant-funeralhome.com.

Proverbs 3:5

PLACES TO WORSHIP

John 3:16

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

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Rev. Jamie Passmore, Pastor
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Catered dinner - Wed. 6pm

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Sundays: 10 a.m. - Worship
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Wednesdays: 9 a.m. Healing and Prayer w/Holy Communion

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH
Rector: Jim Murphy, 252-671-4011
464 US Hwy 64 east, Cashiers
Sun.: Christian Education, 9 a.m. (Bucks in Cashiers) Family
Worship with music and Communion, 10:30 a.m.
Mon.: Bible Study & Supper at homes - 6 p.m.
Wed.: Men's Bible Study -8:30 a.m., First Baptist Church

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS
Pastor Steve Kerhoulas
Sun. 10:45am, S.S 9:30am. Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.
Tue. Guys study 8am, Gals 10am.

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Jim Kinard
Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11
Wednesdays - 7 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
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3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC
Senior Pastor Gary Hewins
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10:30am: Middle & High School; 10:45am: Children's Program.,
10: 45am: Worship Service
Wed.: 5pm Dinner (\$7 adult, \$2 child), 6pm CBC University

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION
Rev. Bruce Walker • 526-2968
Sundays: Education and choir rehearsal, 9 am, Holy Eucharist Rite II, (sanctuary), 10:30
Wednesday: 10 a.m., Morning Prayer
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.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Dr. Lee Bowman, Pastor • 526-3175
Sun.: Worship - 11 a.m.; School - 9:30
Mondays: 8 a.m. - Men's Prayer Group & Breakfast
Wednesdays - Choir - 7

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH
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HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD
Randy Reed, Pastor
828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street
Sundays: Worship - 11

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Dan Robinson
670 N. 4th Street (next to the Highlands Civic Center)
Sunday: Morning Worship 10:45 a., Evening Worship, 6:30 p.
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 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)

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH - ELCA
Chaplain Margaret Howell
2152 Dillard Road - 526-9741
Sundays: Sunday School and Adult discussion group 9:30 a.m.;
Worship/Communion - 10:30

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

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Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11 a.m. & 7
Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg. - 7 p.m.

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290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Alfred Sizemore • 526-3212
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Wed: Adult Bible Study & Youth - 7 p.m.

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH
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Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11
Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study - 7

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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers
Sunday School - 10 am, Worship Service - 11 am

• FEBRUARY'S WINTER STORM •



...STORM continued from 1

were frozen pipes and some power outages.

"Things went as well as they could. We had no reports of power outages and folks took the declaration of the state of emergency at face value and stayed indoors so we had very little in the way of traffic accidents. The street department put in some long hours to get the roads clear and they did an excellent job," said Town Manager Bob Frye.

Public Service Administrator Lamar Nix echoed Frye's comments saying the town was very fortunate during the storm but it took Street Department employees working 70-75 hours last week, including the weekend to get the job done.

"We had no power or water issues at all," said Nix. "That enabled those crews to assist the Street Department with the task of snow and ice removal and in particular equipment repairs in the shop. There are many details in snow removal, one of which is the constant repair of the



Above, this night shot of Madison's Restaurant was taken at the height of the storm, 8 p.m. Wednesday. Upper left: Monkey Hill Thursday afternoon. Bottom: taken Saturday, snow covered canoes on Mirror Lake little girl with snowmen at Scaly.

Photos by Jim Lewicki



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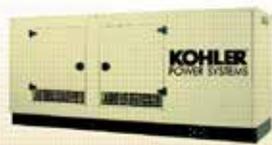
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• See STORM page 14

For more shots go to <http://www.highlandsinfo.com/WeatherArchives.htm>



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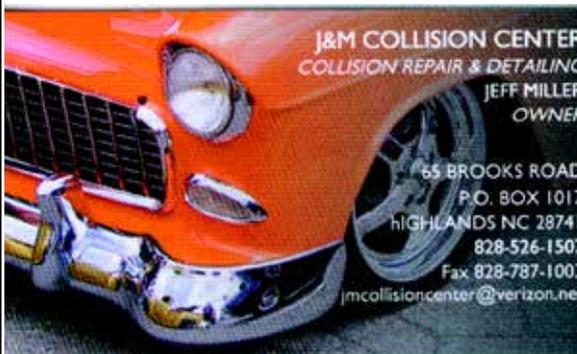


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• FIRE REPORTS •

The Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. log entries from Feb. 11

Feb. 11

• A little after midnight, the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Crescent Trail. EMS transported to the hospital.

• At 10:11 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a vehicle accident on US 64 east at Eastover Drive but it was unfounded.

• At 11:49 a.m., the dept. responded to a call about a possible chimney fire at a residence on NC 106.

Feb. 12

• **At 1:51 p.m., officers provided assistance to a resident on Oak Street.**

Feb. 13

• At 12:11 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a vehicle accident on NC 28 south of Cook Road. There were no injuries.

• At 4:05 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Old Orchard Road. EMS transported to

the hospital.

Feb. 14

• At 4:45 p.m., the dept. provided assistance to a resident on Oak Street.

• At 11:31 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Shortoff Lane.

• At 5:24 p.m., the dept. provided traffic control on NC 106.

Feb. 15

• At 5:13 p.m., the dept. responded to a medical alarm at a residence on Harbison Orchard Lane.

• At 9 a.m., the dept. provided medical assistance at a residence on Webbmont Road.

• At 12:44 p.m., the dept. responded to a call at a residence on Brooks Road.

Feb. 16

• At 3:19 p.m., the dept. responded to a possible chimney fire at a residence on Crescent Trail.

Feb. 17

• At 2:19 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Hideaway Trail.

...WEATHER from page 5

The state's "one size fits all calendar" affects teachers, too, he said.

"Having a local calendar would allow days for staff development on designated workdays. As a result of this year's weather, Macon County has converted three workdays to instructional days which in turn has eliminated three opportunities to host any workshops or training. If training were crucial, the teacher would have to travel to Franklin after school (1 hour each way) or miss class instructional time to attend. The 'Raleigh' calendar restrains local counties from adding more workday flexibility."

Superintendent Baldwin said so far the year-end testing schedule won't be impacted to a large degree but the last day of school might change.

"By law, our last school day can be no later than the Friday closest to June 11 and the testing schedule must be confined to the last five school days for semester courses," he said. "Our last school day is scheduled to be on June 12, but that may be moved to June 13 to make up a day lost to inclement weather."

— Kim Lewicki

Changes to 2013-'14 school calendar

All remaining teacher workdays are now instructional days. These instructional days will be full days with no early dismissals.

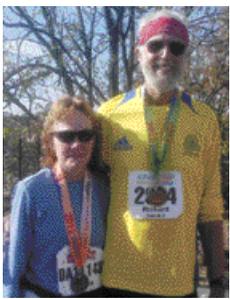
Workdays that are now instructional days are as:

- Friday, March 28
- Friday, April 11
- Friday, June 13

If inclement weather continues days will be made up during Spring Break or possible Saturday school.

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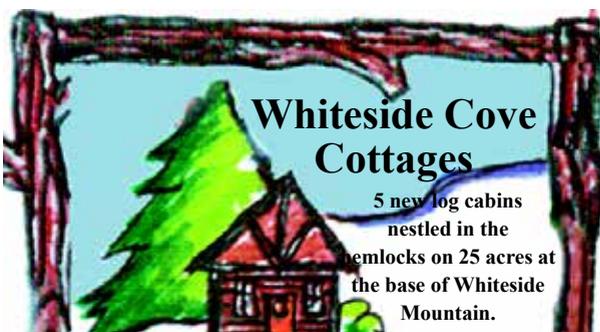
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...STORM continued from page 11

equipment. Snow removal is brutal on trucks, tractors, plows, spreaders, and cutting blades. We were able to utilize all six trucks which were equipped with plows/spreaders, the motor grader, backhoes, and other tractors with minimal down time.”

As the week progressed and the snow kept coming businesses that stayed open Wednesday, closed Thursday and some that were closed Wednesday opened Thursday with abbreviated hours.

President and Managing Director of Old Edwards Hospitality Group Richard Delaney said OEI had a few cancellations during the storm but not many.

At 8 p.m., Wednesday night, during the height of the storm, patrons were seen eating at Madison's Restaurant. (See photo on page 11.)

“We then had a few more cancellations

for dinner and rooms for the weekend but we had a good waiting list so we re-booked them quickly,” said Delaney. “Both Madison's and the hotel were full Friday and Saturday and almost full Sunday because of the long President's Day weekend.”

There is sure to be another snow event, but with February coming to an end, so too might prolonged storms and frigid temperatures. Even during this most recent storm, temperatures hovered in the 20s – warm compared to the Polar Vortex in January where temperatures were negative 9 degrees.

To keep up with the weather on the Highlands Plateau visit Highlands Newspaper's weather station at <http://www.highlandsinfo.com/wx.htm>.

– Kim Lewicki

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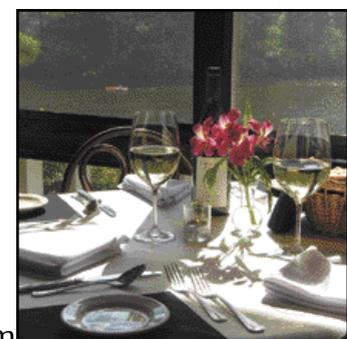
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