Candidates line up for 2014 elections

In preparation for the November 4, 2014 election, there will be a Primary Election on May 6. Republicans – incumbent Jim Tate and John Shearl will vie for MC Board of Commissioners District 50. Republicans – incumbent Ron Haven and Gary Shields will vie for Register of Deeds; and Democrats – incumbent Todd Raby, Nicki Tallent and Kenneth Blaine will vie for Register of Deeds; and Republicans – incumbent Sheriff Robby Holland and Bryan Carpenter will face off for Sheriff.

The official lineup follows:

NC State Senate
District 50
Jim Davis (REP)

Board of Commissioners
District 1
Jim Tate (REP)
John Shearl (REP)
Michael David “Bud” Rogers (DEM)

Highlander visit Cuba for cultural arts tour

Highlands citizens travel to Cuba with The Bascom's sponsored People-to-People cultural arts tour. (See story page 5.)

Testing changing for lower and upper classes

By Brittany Burns
During its February meeting, the Macon County Board of Education moved to lessen the test burden placed on students.

Board members unanimously voted to do away with several end-of-grade tests that were once mandated to measure teacher accountability. While the state tests were once required by law, school boards are now able to waive tests that are not used to measure student success.

Superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin said the flexibility allows the local district to have more control on which final exams to administer to students. Other than being a small portion of the student’s overall final grade, the tests identified to be waived were not used to measure student growth.

On the recently released state report card produced by the North Carolina Department of Education, final exams that were used to compare students across the state varied. Elementary and middle grade students were tracked using reading and math, while high school level students were measured using Math 1, English II, and Biology.

Baldwin suggested the board consider waiving final exams for fourth grade science and social studies, career and technical education courses in the middle grades, and English IV and World History for high school students.

The elementary and middle grade final exams constitute 20 percent of a student’s final grade and are currently only used to monitor teacher's performance.

At the high school level, Baldwin said English IV puts double pressure on students because senior level English students also complete a senior project. A final exam and a senior project may be a better way to measure teacher performance.

At the Thursday, Feb. 27 Town Board worksession, the prickly electric rate issue as it pertains to the upcoming 2014-’15 budget was discussed at length with commissioners now rethinking the issue all together.

During the “information only” all-day session, Town Manager Bob Frye said the town is about 55% into its budget year; revenues and expenditures are in line; property tax revenue is ahead compared to this time last year and he anticipates finishing the year within budget restraints.

Though his projections for next year are “very preliminary,” he said he expects water, sewer and garbage rates to stay the same. But once again, to offset Duke’s wholesale electric rate increase and to maintain the $200,000 to $400,000 return on investment in the Electric Enterprise Fund, electric rates would have to increase 3 ½% to 5% July 1, 2014.

Candidate challenge filed against Ron Haven

On Monday, March 3, a candidacy challenge against Incumbent candidate Commissioner Ron Haven District 2 was filed with the Macon County Board of Elections.

Republican Haven will face off against Republican Gary Shields in the May 6 primary.

Charles Nichols filed an affidavit challenging Haven’s residential address. Nichols alleges he is registered at one of his hotels, not his actual place of residence.

According to Interim Board of Elections Director Debbie George, Haven changed his residency April 2012 and so it is different than it was four years ago when he was first elected to the MC Board of Commissioners. She said her board is following the proceedings outlined in the NC General Statutes regarding candidate challenges and a hearing date has been set for Tuesday, March 11 at 10 a.m. in courtroom 4B at the MC Courthouse.

On Sept. 20, 1976, the MC Board of Commissioners adopted the resolution “Modification in the Structure of the Board of Commissioners of Macon County” whereby it was ruled...
“I know there is a lot of dissatisfaction and unrest in the community about the recent 22½% utility rate increase. But every year the town gets a rate increase from Duke. Duke raised our wholesale rates another 5% effective Jan. 1, 2014 which would translate to the 3½%-5% rate adjustment beginning July 1 of this year,” he said.

He said increasing the tax rate is the way many municipalities raise the money they need. In Highlands’ case, it would mean shifting the burden of the cash reserves and the fund balance from the electrical fund to general fund because the town still needs the money to provide services and fund capital needs. 

The question is, upon whose back is the fund propped up? ‘The answer is the full-time residents who pay heavily during the winter.

Selling the system isn’t an option according to Frye because Duke would never buy it at fair market value which it would have to do by State Statute. In any case, he said the idea that rates would be lower is a pipe dream.

“If we sell our system, it would have to be sold at fair market value which is $50 million. Duke isn’t going to give us anywhere near that and we can’t sell for a loss,” he said.

Frye said the board has to have a serious discussion about its electric rates. “This highlights part of the discussion you had at the Town Board meeting Thursday night and the need for us to stay on top of delinquent accounts. The more we have to write off, the greater the revenue gaps. How are we going to replace that revenue? With a fund balance appropriation or rate increase?”

Frye said the rates are structured so the town gets a return on its investment which enables it to be in the black while funding capital needs.

“The rate increase over the last couple of years was to return $400,000 to the electric fund and build it back up to $1 million. Anything over $1 million could then be transferred out of the electric fund to other departments for other things. However, this year we are only projecting a $200,000 return on investment because we have absorbed Duke’s rate increases to our wholesale rate without increasing our consumers’ rates,” he said.

Commissioner Brian Steihler was the first to broach the subject of a property tax rate increase; an idea that gained momentum before the discussion was over.

“What if the plan was to just break even on the electric fund? We could structure rates to follow the same rate increase that Duke levies on us to break even in the electric fund and then to generate the extra money to fund capital projects we could have a tax increase,” he said. “It seems like the electric rates are volatile, and this way would be less volatile for our consumers.”

He said in his mind, water, sewer and garbage rates are defendable – this is what it costs us to pick up your trash. But defending the electric rates is harder.

“We should consider making it up somewhere else,” he said.

At first, Commissioner Donnie Calloway was hesitant to talk taxes with the county’s reval coming up, but Frye said from the town’s standpoint the reval isn’t an issue.

“Overall property values have dropped. Currently, our tax rate is 13½ cents. One cent is equal to $84,000. To generate the same amount of revenue prior to the reval, the tax rate would go up, but people wouldn’t actually be paying any more than what they are paying now,” he said.

But he said when it comes to taxes, people will still perceive it as a tax increase even if they aren’t paying any more.

Commissioners voiced concern over putting the weight of increasing the electric fund return on the backs of the citizen who live here year-round.

“They are paying the bulk of electricity in the winter. A tax increase would spread it across the board,” said Steihler. “I can defend tax rates, our rates are low anyway. We need to bring in a certain amount of money, the question is do you raise taxes or try to profit off the electric fund?”

Commissioner Amy Patterson said another thing to remember is that ad valorem taxes can be taken off income taxes.

“I hear, don’t raise my electric rates, raise my tax rate because I can take them off my taxes. There are a lot of variables to consider — to find the balance between what we need as a municipality and what is good for our customers, she said.”

Commissioner Calloway said he agreed with Steihler. “We need to put this on a more level playing field so everyone pays across the board.”

There are 1,000 year-round electric consumers and 25,000 who come back beginning in May and most of them have turned their electricity way down while they are gone.

“Everyone knows we are buying at wholesale and hiking it up for the reserve,” said Commissioner John Dotson. “Electric is a moving target. We would better served to look at increasing the milage rate so it’s fair across the board. After all, our electric rate is based on what we need in the electric fund to keep it healthy.”

Frye said he and staff are very sensitive to the word profit.

“This is part of what has everyone upset. It’s not a profit. People perceive that we are making money off them anyway what it is costing us to provide the service. It’s a return on an investment,” he said.

Is it over and above what we are actually spending to buy electricity? Yes. But that money goes to other things. People need to get used to that mindset. We are not in the business to make money, we are in the business of providing services and this is the way we figured out to do it and keep stress off the general fund and the other utility funds.”

In the end, commissioners asked Frye to return with a cost comparison to see what it would take to shift some of the burden from the electric fund to the general fund.

However, Commissioner Patterson reminded the board that with the devaluation of property values the tax rate will have to increase to generate the same money it did prior to the reval which means to generate money for the general fund versus the electric fund, the rate would have to increase even further.

Commissioners agreed they wouldn’t shift the entire “return on investment” from the electric fund to the general fund, but perhaps enough to lessen the blow to fulltime residents.

Kim Lewicki
Concerned citizens turn the tide at Town Board meeting

Many times over the past several years citizens have claimed that some on the Town Board don’t listen to its citizens, but at the February Town Board meeting that claim was put to rest.

The issue was the rezoning of town properties from R1 and R2 to Government Institutional (GI) to reflect the uses of the properties – seemingly a non-controversial issue.

“The Town of Highlands owns multiple properties within the city limits that are used for utilities such as water & wastewater treatment, water distribution, the cemetery, communications and recreation,” said Planning Director Josh Ward. “Over the years, several of the properties have not been rezoned to reflect the uses of the properties. This is just about bringing consistency to the zoning map so the properties reflect their uses.”

But the rezoning of two properties, 7530874431 (Sequoyah Ridge Road – Vacant – 1.00 acre – Current Zoning R-2) and 7530872068 (Sequoyah Ridge Road – Vacant – 1.15 acre – Current Zoning R-2) caught the attention of adjacent landowners Ray Vito and Joan Martin who spoke during the public hearing portion of the meeting and said rezoning the vacant, residential lots along Big Creek would diminish their property values.

“I own property adjacent to one of these lots which were zoned R2 back in the ’40s. I don’t know how the town got them but I don’t see the necessity to rezone them. Doing so will affect my property values,” said Vito. He also said the rezoning of these lots just doesn’t seem necessary right now.

“Consistency on the zoning map is all well and good, but does it need to be done now? Why don’t you wait until you have a reason? If I wanted to rezone my property, I would have to come to you with a very specific, detailed plan. Wait until you have a plan,” he said.

One of the lots is adjacent to the access road to the weir and Town Manager Bob Frye said that the need to have consistency on the zoning map was the reason for the proposed rezoning. However Martin disagreed.

“The lot adjacent to ours isn’t really for accessing the weir; it’s beyond the lot on the road which is used to access the weir,” said Martin. “Our property abuts the weir, not the lot that you want to rezone.

But Frye said the property is already used institutionally, and rezoning it to reflect its use won’t affect adjoining property owners.

As to how the town got the residential property in the first place, Commissioner Amy Patterson said it was likely acquired in an exchange; all the town’s properties are owned free and clear without deed restrictions. But she asked the board if the town could perhaps sell the lots and use the money in a more public way. Frye said disposal of town property was a normal and legal transaction as long as it is sold at fair market value.

Also, if the town rezoned the lots G1 and then sold them, the new owners would have to come back to the board to get them rezoned residential.

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...TIDE continued from page 3

Public Service Administrator Lamar Nix said the only thing the town might use the lots for would be to hold sediment dredged from Big Creek. “Other than that there are no plans for the lots,” he said.

Commissioner Brian Stiehler said when the subject first came up, he didn’t see the different dynamics and concerns of citizens.

“Now I see this in a different light,” he said. “The town still owns this property abutting the lake; there is a need for consistency, but I think these two lots in the Webbmont area need to remain R2. If something comes up if we have to enlarge the plant, we can deal with that then. For now let’s leave them as R2. We still own it. We have use of the property, but this is a real issue for the homeowners. So I say leave it as R2.”

Commissioners Calloway and John Dotson agreed.

“I don’t have a problem with selling them and I doubt the town would use them as a dumping ground for silt removal simply due to lay of the land; it would end up back in the lake,” said Dotson.

In the end the board voted unanimously to rezone all the lots advertised to GI with the exception of the two vacant lots on Sequoyah Ridge.

– Kim Lewicki
The Bascom sponsors cultural art trip to Cuba

The Bascom Visual Arts Center sponsored a recent People-to-People cultural arts tour to Cuba. The trip, approved by the U.S. Treasury Department and the Cuban government, was lead by Sallie Taylor, the Bascom’s Director of Exhibitions. Twenty-six Highlanders made the week-long tour of Cuban art institutions and artists’ studios, during the week of February 3rd.

Participants stayed for five days in Havana and two days in Cienfuegos, including a nearby day trip to the historic Cuban city of Trinidad. Both Cienfuegos and Trinidad are UN World Heritage Centers. The daily itinerary for the group was full with visits to historic architectural sites, major museums, and artists’ studios. In addition, the group was treated to chamber music and orchestra concerts and dance performances.

As part of the People-to-People program, participants attended lectures and presentations by scholars from the University of Havana on Cuban culture, history, economics and politics. The group also visited the American Interests Section in Havana for a briefing by US State Department officials.

Tours of architectural sites, museums and artists’ studios were conducted by Cuban scholars and experts. Distant Horizons Tours organized the trip and are specialists in cultural trips to Cuba, leading tours for major universities such as Harvard, Yale and Stanford.

Join The Bascom for countless opportunities to explore and participate in art. Members receive discounts at events, lectures and for adult classes. Contact Membership Coordinator Pat Turnbull at 828-787-2898 or email her at pturnbull@thebascom.org for more information about becoming a member. The Bascom is open year-round, Monday through Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm, and Sunday, noon to 5 pm. Enjoy workshops, exhibitions, special events, quality programs and unique shopping throughout the year. For more information, to register for workshop offerings or for more details on all Bascom activities, visit www.TheBascom.org or call 828-526-4949.
PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that at the regular Board of Commissioners’ meeting of February 20, 2014, the Town Board voted to list all Town of Highlands Delinquent Accounts in the newspaper. The following accounts are over 90 days past due.

**Delinquent Accounts List**

**Utility Accounts**

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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**Business License Accounts**

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**Sewer Connection Agreement Accounts**

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<td>Williams &amp; Williams Inc</td>
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Payments may be made to: Town of Highlands, PO Box 460, Highlands, NC 28741 to bring accounts to a current status to avoid further collection processes.

Published this 6th day of March, 2014.

Town of Highlands

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...TESTING continued from page 1

project weighs heavily on students, he said.

High School World History is being identified because Baldwin said teachers across the state have put the course’s final exam on the chopping block due to concerns about the quality and substance of the material.

While other final exams could have also been waived, Baldwin urged the board to consider the state’s push to move teacher pay to a merit-based system, which would require some forms of tests.

“The General Assembly is indicating rather heavily that merit pay will be based on N.C. final exams, as well as the end-of-course and end-of-grade tests so we are hesitant to waive all of them.”

Board member Stephanie McCall made the motion to waive the test, noting that if it were up to her, she would do away with them all.

Read to Achieve

This year marks the first full year for the implantation of the state’s new Read-to-Achieve law. The new legislation requires local districts to retain students who are not able to pass end-of-grade reading tests at the end of third grade.

After an outcry from educators in North Carolina, the state has moved to allow local districts to use additional assessment tools when deciding if a child should repeat the third grade. Director of Elementary Education Carol Waldroop explained that it was predicted that 50 percent of third graders in the state would not be able to test

- See TESTING page 13
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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
THURSDAY: ROASTED MEATLOAF WITH MASHED POTATOES, GRAVY AND A LARGE SALAD $18.95 SERVES FOUR
FRIDAY: WILD CAUGHT FRIED SHRIMP, BAKED POTATOES, HUSH PUPPIES, AND COLESLAW $21.95 SERVES FOUR
SATURDAY: IN-HOUSE SMOKED BBQ, COLESLAW, APPLE & BACON BAKED BEANS, AND YEAST ROLLS $18.95 SERVES FOUR
MONDAY THROUGH THURSDAY: TWO WOOD FIRE PIZZAS, FOUR HAND-MADE BREAD STICKS WITH HOUSE TOMATO SAUCE, AND A HOUSE SALAD $19.99 SERVES FOUR

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...HAVEN continued from page 1

that “Members of the Board of Commissioners shall be nominated for each electoral district seat by the qualified voters of the county as a whole, and nominees for each seat shall reside within the district for which they are nominated.”

The burden of proof falls to Haven to show by a preponderance of the evidence that he is qualified to be a candidate for the office. Since the challenge is based upon a question of residency, the candidate must show all of the following:

An actual abandonment of the first domicile, coupled with an intent not to return to the first domicile; the acquisition of a new domicile by actual residence at another place; the intent of making the newer domicile a permanent domicile.

Nichols is also challenging Haven’s qualification as a voter in the precinct of South Franklin (Macon #2).

After the hearing, the Board must render a written decision within 20 business days after the challenge is filed and serve that written decision to both Haven and Nichols.

Nichols alleges that based upon reasonable suspicion and belief, Haven doesn’t meet the statutory qualifications for the office of MC Commissioner District 2, for residency.

He claims voter information records show Haven claimed residency as a qualified voter of District 2 at 433 E. Palmer Street, Franklin, but according to the MC Register of Deeds, this address is owned by Cartoogechaye Investments, LLC, with the physical address being 423 E. Palmer St. Franklin.

He alleges the MC Tax Dept. shows the address of 423 E. Palmer St., Franklin to be registered under the name of Cartoogechaye Investments, LLC and the address 433 E. Palmer St., Franklin, is the physical address of the Haven’s Motel office.

According to the NC Dept. of the Secretary of State’s office, Cartoogechaye Investments, LLC is a legally recognized Limited Liability Company, effective July 10, 2008. This date is prior to Haven’s first election to the County Commission representing District 2.

Furthermore, Haven is a registered agent for Cartoogechaye Investments, LLC, whose office address is 98-30 Mill Creek Road, Franklin. Haven is the manager of Cartoogechaye Investments, LLC. Maricella Haven is listed as a member. The business address for the two company officials is listed as 750 Mill Creek Road, Franklin.

In addition, within the telephone directory, Haven is listed to live at 750 Mill Creek Road, Franklin.

Nichols requested that the MC Board of Elections undertake a full and complete evidentiary hearing, including the issuance of subpoenas for documentary evidence and witness testimony and at the conclusion of which enter an Order and determination that Haven is not a qualified candidate for MC Board of Commission, District 2, in that he doesn’t meet the requirements of office.

He requested a copy of his driver’s licenses, any forwarding address forms filed with the US Postal Service from any prior domicile of Ron or Maricella Haven, copies of both Federal and State income tax returns from 2005 to current; copies of every address, both physical and PO boxes to where Ron and Maricella Haven receive mail; leases and deeds to all residential and vacant properties leased or owned by the Havens from 2005 to current; all insurance policies related to the Havens since 2005 including renters, homeowners, auto, life, health, dental, liability, etc.; utilities bills, bank accounts, phone bills, oil and gas bills, etc.

– Kim Lewicki
David began his trek to Highlands over 23 years ago from Mississippi when he chose to settle in Highlands and buy a restaurant. In 1996 he married Lori Burrell, a Highlands native, and together they owned and operated the Pizza Place on Main Street before selling and turning their attention to selling real estate.

Lori grew up in Highlands and really never left. She graduated from Highlands School, and then worked in retail and the restaurant business before marrying David.

David became a licensed real estate broker in 2005, and in 2008 he and Lori began Prestige Realty Group. Lori managed the office and her rental business while David focused primarily on the area foreclosure market becoming one of the area’s leading foreclosure specialists.

Now that the traditional market is returning, he believes partnering with Meadows Mountain Realty is coming at the ideal time. “Having traveled all over the Carolina mountains selling everything from ten thousand to 1.6 million dollar foreclosures has given me greater insight into the housing industry helping buyers to discern their overall needs and working with sellers to help maximize their assets”.

David is currently serving as President of the Highlands-Cashiers Board of Realtors.

They enjoy spending time with their Labrador retrievers, singing and leading worship at church, plus time with their nieces and nephew: Lori shares, “These mountains are home to me and I feel incredibly privileged to live here. We enjoy welcoming people to this area and sharing all that it has to offer.”
The ‘Psalms Project’

By Pastor Steve Kerhoulas
Christ Church of the Valley

The question is why ask people to take time out of their busy life and do this project? The simple answer is: When a Christian invests time in the Bible we hear God’s voice. In other words doing a project like this is going to help define and strengthen our relationship with God.

How the PSALM PROJECT works:
Each day you are asked to spend time reading the Psalms. There are 150 of them.

Why read Psalms? Martin Luther, the great theologian and pastor, said the Psalms “might well be called a little Bible. In it is comprehended most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the entire Bible.” Like what?

You will find topics such as the creation, judgment, and salvation. In it is the story of Israel, the Law, the Presence of God, the coming of the Messiah, warnings against ungodliness, and the tragic outcome of disobedience. The Psalms is a book that can be used in worship, spiritual discipline, and in developing theology.

A few tips on reading the Psalms. Read them prayerfully slow.

Ask yourself these questions:
* What is God saying to me personally from the text? What am I hearing? (You might want to use your journal and write things down.)
* Are there changes I need to make in light of what God is saying me?
* Is there something in the text that someone else needs to hear? Am I willing to share it?
* Something to consider:
  * Memorize impactful verses.
  * Connect with someone else who is doing the Psalms Project and talk about your experiences. Bring your journal along.
  * If stumped or need help ask for help.
  * Invite a friend to join the Project.

The Psalms are the most quoted book in the New Testament. They flow out of the personal experiences of those who wrote them. The Psalms is a banquet table filled with insights and benefits for those who read them. ENJOY!

Concert to benefit Haiti mission

*If stumped or need help ask for help.
* Are there changes I need to make in light of what God is saying me?
* Are there changes I need to make in light of what God is saying me?

Since 2007, Macon County children have experienced improvement in key health indicators, including insurance coverage, dental care, teen pregnancy, child deaths and even high school graduation rates. These gains are at odds with what’s expected during economic downturns when health outcomes typically worsen.

“Poverty causes increased financial and emotional strains on families that often result in poorer health outcomes for children,” said Laila A. Bell, director of research and support local communities can be powerful tools to safeguard our children’s health during tough economic times.” NC Child’s 2013 Child Health County Data Card for Macon County finds between 2007 and 2012:

- Medicaid enrollment increased by 25.4 percent and Health Choice enrollment increased by 15.2 percent, which is consistent with statewide data showing a 30 percent decline in uninsured children;
- Medicaid-eligible children who received dental care increased by 32.4 percent for children 1-5 and 20.5 percent for children 6-14;
- North Carolina’s teen pregnancy rate continued to improve, dropping 43 percent to 19.7 per 1,000 girls ages 15-17. The teen pregnancy rate was 15.7 per 1,000 girls in Macon County;
- Statewide, child fatalities continued to decline, falling 22 percent to 58.6 per 100,000 children under age 18. Macon County had 2 child deaths in 2012;
- The graduation rate improved by 11.2 percent.

“It’s no coincidence that Macon County experienced a significant decline in its teen pregnancy rate and increase in its graduation rate over the past several years,” said Bell. “Both of these indicators have been targeted by well-funded state efforts. This improvement should give us hope that we can make progress on big problems when we’re willing to put resources behind data-driven solutions.”

While typically associated with academic achievement, the graduation rate is also a key health indicator. Education is associated with better earning potential and higher income which enables purchase of better housing in safer neighborhoods, healthier food, health insurance coverage and more timely medical care. Studies have linked high school dropout to higher rates of substance use, psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems.

NC Child’s findings for Macon County were not all positive, however. Key economic indicators in Macon County have worsened as a result of the recession and subsequent budget cuts. Specifically, the unemployment rate in Macon County increased from 4.1 percent to 10.7 percent from 2007 to 2012, and the median household income declined 16.2 percent to $36,438. In 2011, the most recent year for which data are available, 30.6 percent of children in Macon County were living in households that struggled to meet their basic nutritional needs.

“Statewide, one in four children are growing up in poverty. Food insecurity is a very serious byproduct of poverty that’s making its presence felt in Macon County,” stated Bell. “No child should ever go to bed hungry, but unfortunately, that’s what’s happening to children across the county.”

With the elimination of the state Earned Income Tax Credit and significant cuts to unemployment benefits, there is concern that many families could find their economic situation worsening during a slow economic recovery. What’s clear is that the impacts of public policy decisions are playing out in communities across the state.

“We know that parents and communities are working hard to grow healthy children, but they cannot do it alone,” said Bell. “Advocates, providers, community and business leaders, state and federal governments must collaborate to strengthen investments in prevention programs and promote focused public policies that promote child well-being.”

To download a copy of your county data card, visit: http://www.nccchild.org/sites/default/files/Macon.pdf

About the Report Card
For 19 years, the North Carolina Child Health Report Card has monitored the health and safety of children and youth in our state. The report compiles more than 40 indicators of child health and safety into one easy-to-read document that helps policymakers, health professionals, the media, and concerned citizens track children’s health outcomes, identify emerging trends, and plan future investments. The report card presents data for the most current year available, usually 2012, and a comparison year, or benchmark, usually 2007.
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Highlands PD log entries from Jan. 21. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor, or public officials have been used.

Jan. 31
• At 8:30 a.m., officers responded to a call about power saws and hand tools being stolen from a residence on US 64 west.

Feb. 6
• At 11 a.m., a wallet containing credit cards, drivers license, medical cards, insurance cards and a check book was reported lost somewhere in downtown Highlands.

Feb. 8
• At 11 a.m., a resident at Pine Brook Condominiums on N. 5th Street reported a noise violation.

Feb. 24
• At 9 p.m., Stacy Lee Arrowood, 40, of Highlands and Alto, GA, was arrested on three outstanding warrants from Union, GA, Towns County, GA and Jackson County, NC. He is being held in the Macon County Jail on a secured bond of $11,500.
• At 1:40 p.m., officers investigated a case about someone forging a name on checks and credit cards of a resident on Hummingbird Lane.

Harlem Ambassadors coming to Highlands

If you are suffering through the doldrums of winter or experiencing a severe case of cabin fever, Mountaintop Rotary has just the answer with an evening of family fun.

After an absence of several years, the Harlem Ambassadors will return to Highlands Saturday, March 15 for a one-night only appearance to dazzle and amaze with their unique brand of basketball skills.

They will play a team of Hometown Heroes, which will feature local public officials, athletes and others at the Highlands School Gym. The show starts at 7 p.m. In addition to plenty of slam dunks, high jinks and the like, there will also be pizza, hot dogs, and drinks available from the concession stand, operated this year by Dr. John Baumrucker and members of his Bolivian Mission Team. Proceeds will go to support the mission.

Advance tickets for the evening of fun are $10 for adults and $7 for students and seniors, and are available at Stanberry Insurance in Wright Square, The Highlander Newspaper on Fifth Street, Meadows Mountain Realty’s Highlands Falls office on US 64 East, and Wells Fargo Investments on South Street. Tickets at the door will be $12 for adults and $9 for students and seniors. Kids under four are free. Advance tickets are also available from any member of the club.

Ladé Majic as the “queen of the show, she played in more shows than any woman in history and competes against male players on a nightly basis.

While Rotary organizers already have a number of members of the Highlands Hometown Heroes team, there is still room for more.

“The Ambassadors can really get up and down the court, so we are going to need a lot of players for the hometown team,” said Bill Zoellner, incoming president of Mountaintop Rotary and chairman of the event. “The main thing is to find players who have a good sense of humor and can take a joke.”

Anyone interested in playing can call him at 787-2323 or Gene Borino at Stanberry Insurance at 526-8939.

The night of fun will also feature a raffle for the basketball used in the game (to be awarded at half time), and team souvenirs will be on sale.

...TESTING from page 6

proficient on the end-of-grade test by the end of this year, causing half of the state’s third graders to be held back.

In 2012, the state General Assembly passed a law requiring third graders to read on grade level before being promoted to fourth grade in 2014. If they are retained, students must attend free summer reading camps; if parents do not enroll their child in the camp, then the child is automatically held back. By the summer camp’s end, third graders who fail would be kept in third grade but given additional assistance with the possibility of grade promotion mid-year. Those who pass are promoted to fourth grade.

With such a high percentage of students testing below proficient, the state saw the need to allow alternative testing measures already in place such as Startts and Dibbles.

“Now, if a child is retained, being able to use alternative assessments in addition to the end-of-grade tests will be based on him or her truly needing intervention and not because they performed poorly on one single test,” said Superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin.

While the basics of the law still stand, Waldroop said that Macon County can now use alternative testing measures in place such as Startts and Dibles.

“Third graders can complete a portfolio if they don’t pass the EOG test in June,” explained Waldroop. “A successfully completed portfolio can take the place of Summer Reading Camp and can allow a student to move on to fourth grade. Since the state has agreed that the reading passages on the test are difficult and written on a 4th/5th grade reading level it has approved other alternatives.”
Coalition kicks off Kelsey-Hutchinson Park fundraising effort

The Founders Park Coalition, which last month won approval from the Town of Highlands to move forward with the first phase of its plans to develop Kelsey-Hutchinson Park, is now kicking off a major fund raising campaign.

The group hopes to raise $430,000 to make major improvements to the park, which has remained largely undeveloped since it was purchased back in 2006. The goal is to get the total amount needed to finish all phases of the park as it has been designed to this point. Hopefully, some of that cost will be covered through donated labor and materials from local firms, along with volunteer labor.

“We want to raise the entire amount required to complete the park, not just what is needed for the initial phase, which focuses mainly on building day-use facilities and landscaping,” said Nick Bazan, chairman of the coalition. “While we don’t have approval yet for the other phases, we don’t want to have to come back to people over and over to ask for money for each additional phase.”

Bazan said the crucial thing right now is to raise at least enough money for construction of the first phase so the park can be improved this spring.

The coalition already has commitments from its members for approximately $30,000 in financial pledges or donated labor, and donations from a few individuals have begun to trickle in.

The coalition is composed of both Rotary Clubs, the Laurel Garden Club, the Mountain Garden Club, the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, the Highlands Plateau Greenway, the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society, the Highlands Historical Society, the Highlands Chamber of Commerce and the Highlands Biological Station.

The group hopes to follow a design developed by local landscape architect Hank Ross, of Ross Landscape Architecture of Highlands. This includes picnic tables, walkways, benches, lighting, and landscaping.

To make a donation make a check payable to either Founders Park or Kelsey-Hutchinson Park and mail it to P.O. Box 1703, Highlands, NC 28741. Anyone interested in donating time, equipment, or labor should call Nick Bazan at (828) 371-2653 or e-mail him at nicholas.bazan@gmail.com.

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SALES PERSON NEEDED FOR BUSY RETAIL STORE must have experience and be able to work weekends and holidays, computer skills a plus all applicants must be able to do all physical aspects of the job. Be motivated and have a good attitude. Send all resumes to Highlands@dutchmansdesigns.com. (st. 2/27)

J&J LAWN AND LANDSCAPING in Highlands is hiring full-time for deli and dishwashing positions. Contact Don at 828-526-2400.

CAREER OPPORTUNITY AT TJ BAILEY IN HIGHLANDS Retail, Online Sales and Multi-media Marketing positions available. Come grow with us. - full or part-time. 828-526-2262 or resume store@TJBmens.com (st. 2/13)

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Coalition kicks off Kelsey-Hutchinson Park fundraising effort

The Founders Park Coalition, which last month won approval from the Town of Highlands to move forward with the first phase of its plans to develop Kelsey-Hutchinson Park, is now kicking off a major fund raising campaign.

The group hopes to raise $430,000 to make major improvements to the park, which has remained largely undeveloped since it was purchased back in 2006. The goal is to get the total amount needed to finish all phases of the park as it has been designed to this point. Hopefully, some of that cost will be covered through donated labor and materials from local firms, along with volunteer labor.

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The Founders Park Coalition, which last month won approval from the Town of Highlands to move forward with the first phase of its plans to develop Kelsey-Hutchinson Park, is now kicking off a major fund raising campaign.

The group hopes to raise $430,000 to make major improvements to the park, which has remained largely undeveloped since it was purchased back in 2006. The goal is to get the total amount needed to finish all phases of the park as it has been designed to this point. Hopefully, some of that cost will be covered through donated labor and materials from local firms, along with volunteer labor.

“We want to raise the entire amount required to complete the park, not just what is needed for the initial phase, which focuses mainly on building day-use facilities and landscaping,” said Nick Bazan, chairman of the coalition. “While we don’t have approval yet for the other phases, we don’t want to have to come back to people over and over to ask for money for each additional phase.”

Bazan said the crucial thing right now is to raise at least enough money for construction of the first phase so the park can be improved this spring.

The coalition already has commitments from its members for approximately $30,000 in financial pledges or donated labor, and donations from a few individuals have begun to trickle in.

The coalition is composed of both Rotary Clubs, the Laurel Garden Club, the Mountain Garden Club, the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, the Highlands Plateau Greenway, the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society, the Highlands Historical Society, the Highlands Chamber of Commerce and the Highlands Biological Station.

The group hopes to follow a design developed by local landscape architect Hank Ross, of Ross Landscape Architecture of Highlands. This includes picnic tables, walkways, benches, lighting, and landscaping.

To make a donation make a check payable to either Founders Park or Kelsey-Hutchinson Park and mail it to P.O. Box 1703, Highlands, NC 28741. Anyone interested in donating time, equipment, or labor should call Nick Bazan at (828) 371-2653 or e-mail him at nicholas.bazan@gmail.com.
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