Highlands Community Building gets much needed TLC and attention

A community building in which to hold social activities and charity events was envisioned for Highlands as early as 1931 with the proposed site on the Dillard Road. But it wasn’t until 1969 when the Rotary and the Jaycees got involved that the plan came to fruition. •See BUILDING page 11

HCLT now protects 100 properties

By Julie Schott

Last year was an outstanding year for land protection on the plateau! Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust (HCLT) was able to conserve six new places. This brings the total HCLT conserved properties to date to 3,230 acres in 100 places!

Chances are you already know about and enjoy some of the places that your Land Trust owns and protects such as Satulah Mountain Preserves; Ravenel Park, home of Sunset and Sunrise Rocks; McKinney Meadow and The Kelsey Trail to name a few.

Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust protected properties range from the upper Nantahala River to the mountains overlooking Sylva to the rim of Pantertown Valley in the Chattooga River. We protect streams, forests, wetlands and rock outcrops. Most of our properties are not open to the public, • See HCLT page 5

Highlands Middle and High School cheerleading teams take first at Asheville

By Brian O’Shea

The intensity was high at the Spirit Xpress Regional cheer competition when dozens of teams gathered at AC Reynolds High School in Asheville on Saturday. Highlands Middle and High School teams performed and both walked away with first-place trophies in their divisions.

Head Coach Kristen Huneycutt said both teams did well and earned the win. “They did great,” said •See CHEERLEADING page 6

Macon County commission reps line out NCACC Legislative Goals

Recently, Jim Tate, Ronnie Beale and Derek Roland from Macon County joined voting delegates from counties throughout the state to determine the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners’ (NCACC) legislative priorities for the 2019-2020 biennium session of the North Carolina General Assembly. Governor Roy Cooper delivered keynote remarks and thanked county commissioners for their commitment to public service.

“From broadband expansion and capital needs in the school system to accessing mental health services, all counties in North Carolina are facing challenges similar to those that we are experiencing in Macon County. •See GOALS page 17
Most of my week has been spent dealing with the North Carolina Department of Transportation. I will provide updates on projects this week and next week.

Monday morning Town Manager Josh Ward told me the DOT engineer in charge of repaving Main Street, US 64 and NC 28 called late Friday to let us know the project had been postponed. The five million dollars for the project was diverted to hurricane disaster relief in the eastern part of the state. Consecutive hurricanes beginning with Matthew caused serious road and bridge problems that DOT continues to address. The repaving funds will be put back in the forthcoming budget so the badly needed resurfacing of these major highways running through Highlands will now start in April of 2020.

I attended the meeting of the Southwestern Regional Planning Commission’s Transportation Advisory Committee on Monday night. I am a member of this committee that prioritizes new road projects for this region. The committee is a part of a statewide DOT program known as the State Transportation Improvement Program, aka STIP. Proposed projects are placed on several priority lists and are assigned points from regional committees like the one I’m on and by state DOT officials. A project moves up or down the list for funding based on points received. The total process can take 10 years for a project to move forward to completion.

Appearing on the STIP 5.0 priority list that we reviewed was the NC 106 project which was presented to the public last summer. DOT recently announced this project would probably never be funded. Nevertheless, it did appear at the bottom of the STIP with a black line drawn right through the middle. It has been lined out and will not appear on the next priority list. It’s dead.

With that said, I still believe some modest improvements should be made to NC 106. One will be the replacement of the bridge below Scaly Mountain that is scheduled to move forward.

Some emergency pull-offs like the ones on the Gorge Road could also be done. There are several unpaved spaces that could be paved as pull-offs. There are several tight curves and intersections that could be modified to improve truck and school bus operations.

In Highlands I believe a well-designed sidewalk running to Main Street would be an improvement. A sidewalk system for all of our major corridors is needed, especially since there is an increasing number of people walking on the shoulders of these major highways. The limited sight distance on the curve at the Arnold Road intersection could also be improved.

But the improvements I suggest would not occur overnight. They require initiative and community support. They would have to be placed on a priority list and that in itself would take time.

While there are Macon County road improvements still on the STIP Priority List, none are now within the Highlands Plateau. I don’t see any major projects here, at least during my tenure as mayor.

Next week I will provide a briefing of yesterday’s meeting with DOT concerning tractor-trailer trucks on the Gorge Road.
CULLASAJA CLUB  Located on the 17th fairway, this great four bedroom, four bath home is move-in ready. The main floor has a large, open kitchen, plus a dining and living room space with cathedral ceiling and stone fireplace. Also on the main level is a large master suite with a private screened-in porch, additional guest room with full bath, and a laundry room. More guest bedrooms/baths on both upper and lower levels.  

MLS# 89188  |  Offered for $479,000

SHELBY PLACE  Exceptionally well maintained, charming in-town 3BR/3BA home located less than a mile from Main Street. Open living/dining area with fireplace. Granite counters in kitchen with stainless steel appliances. Two bedrooms on the main level and master suite on upper level. Large deck surrounded by a canopy of trees for outdoor dining. Clubhouse and tennis court amenities.  

MLS# 89855  |  Offered for $479,000

BUCK CREEK  Nestled next to the national forest, this home is located on Pan-ther Mountain. Enjoy the peace and quiet while sitting out on the back deck enjoying the long range mountain view. You will fall in love with the coziness, charm, and privacy this home has to offer. The home has an updated floor plan, neutral colors, a whole house generator, and towel warmers are just a few of the upgrades. 2.95 acres. Don’t miss this one!  

MLS# 89224  |  Offered for $459,000

COLD SPRINGS  This wonderful home is great for a couple or an extended family. The main level features a space to relax in front of a roaring fire plus a large spot for gathering with family. The kitchen is large and open with plenty of counter-top space for multiple cooks! The master boasts a fireplace, a walk-through closet and a large bath with double vanities. Also boasts a wine storage closet and sauna. Great neighborhood amenities include a lake, tennis court, stable and paddock.  

MLS# 89105  |  Offered for $450,000

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These are our newest protected properties:

The Hartman’s gave their portion of Sunset Rock, expanding the HCLT owned Ravenel Park and protecting a larger portion of this Highland’s treasure.

Sassafras Gap Farm is a 22 acre property donated by Stell Huie on the edge of Blue Valley that has a stunning view of Satulah Mountain and buffers Nantahala National Forest.

Castor Meadows is a small old farm in the Gleneville community donated by John Berteau with rare habitats including beaver wetland and early successional habitat.

Dendy Orchard Knob is a small conservation easement donated by Ken Nimmons buffering Nantahala National Forest in the Turtle Pond community.

Cedar Hill is a 44-acre conservation easement on the eastern side of Rock Mountain in Cashiers, overlooking Sapphire Valley. It protects rare species and habitats, and adds to other HCLT protected lands in the area.

High Knob is a 150 acre conservation easement donated by Patrick Horan and Noel Thurner near Caney Fork and protected in partnership with the Open Space Institute. It protects a climate-resilient landscape that provides critical habitat for plants and animals as climatic changes happen and connects to a large swath of other protected lands in the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. Several rare and endangered species call this property home.

To learn how you can preserve your family land or to find out how you can become a member, contact Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust at 828-526-1111 or info.hitrust@earthlink.net. We are a nationally accredited, 501 c3 non-profit organization that depends on the support of our members and grantors to conserve new places and care for the properties we have. Together we are saving the places we all love and need.

These views are protected by HC Land Trust. This is Sunset Rock, Black Rock and Sagee.
...CHEERLEADING continued from page 1

Huneycutt. “All of the stunts hit.”

Middle School won 1st place Middle School Non-Tumble and received a bid to the US Finals. High School won 1st place in Medium Varsity Non-Tumble with a bid to the US Finals. Huneycutt said adding tumbling to the routine includes stunts like back-flips.

The Middle School team performed first. Things were running smoothly, until a slight mishap occurred with the hand-off of a sign, but the girls kept the show running and carried on with smiles on their faces.

“I was really nervous at the start, but really excited,” said 6th-grader Katie Earp. “I was happy with the outcome of it (performance), it was really awesome.”

6th-grader Lathea Watts said it was exhilarating taking the stage. “It felt really cool,” said Watts. “I was really excited and just felt like I could do anything. If we make a mistake, we rolled with it and forgot about it. It happens.”

Huneycutt said some last-minute changes were made to the routine and the girls had a limited amount of time to practice before the competition.

“This team has gone through some recent changes and all of the members have worked very hard to be successful,” she said.

8th-grader Ashlynn Wilson said competing was her favorite part of cheering. Once she took the stage in Asheville, she said she was thinking about her counts and where she needed to go.

“I think we did pretty good,” said Wilson. “All of our stunts hit. There are still some things that we need to work on but overall, we did good and we were loud!”

The High School team performed and nailed their stunt sequence in the middle of the routine, the most difficult part said Huneycutt.

“It requires a lot of focus and perfect timing,” she said. “The girls were more confident during this competition and it showed in their emotions and performance.”

Sophomore Zaia Rodriguez-Denardis said competitions get everyone’s adrenaline pumping when they see hundreds of fans cheering them on when they take the floor.

“Right before we went on the floor at the competition, the nerves were everywhere,” said Rodriguez-Denardis. “In my head I always think this is just two minutes where I will own the floor. I’m always thinking about how it will feel after I win. And to this day it hasn’t disappointed.”

All routines consist of a mix of dance, stunts, and jumps. Rodriguez-Denardis said keeping spirits high while performing physically demanding stunts can be a challenge. “The hardest part of our cheer routine by far, is the fact that after we’re lifting girls into the air, we have to race to do jumps and flips,” she said. “All the meanwhile keeping smiles on our faces and keeping the spirits high.”

Both Highlands cheerleading teams next compete at the Spring Classic in Asheville on April 26.
I’ve been told Chinese is a very difficult language to learn. I know barely enough to order food from a restaurant menu and not be subjected to the kind of look I often give English-speaking folks who really butcher the language. Since I don’t plan to visit China anytime soon I probably don’t need to learn the language, but I have to wonder if Chinese is as difficult for someone to learn than American-style English.

The genesis of this meandering line of thought surfaced while I was listening to a 1972 song written by Ray Stevens. The song, Dead Skunk in the Middle of the Road, is unimportant and is, frankly, not the greatest example of American music. What is relevant is that I learned – thank you, Google – I apparently have been mispronouncing the name of the artist, Loudon Wainright III, for nearly half a century. I got the Wainright part right, but the Loudon … not so much. Glad I never bumped into him, or Loudon the first or second. I don’t believe there’s a Loudon at all, but who speak Chinese fluently.

For the record, there are two distinct Chinese languages: Mandarin and Cantonese. They contain seven dialects: Jin, Wu, Gan, Xiang, Min, Hakka, Yue, Ping, and Huizhou. Don’t get me started on correct pronunciation. Huizhou, for example, is correctly pronounced WE-zoo. I have no earthly idea what it looks like when written. American English contains no fewer than 24 dialects. Think about that.

I often hear people lament the fact that other people in America don’t speak English. It would be nice if they did, but one thing I do know is that learning a new language as an adult is way harder than learning it as a child, at home and in school.

Many, no, most Americans aren’t as fluent in English as they believe they are. I often find myself, and I have a B.A. in English linguistic nuances such as this one to someone from China who speaks no English at all, but who speak Chinese fluently.

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Many, no, most Americans aren’t as fluent in English as they believe they are. I often find myself, and I have a B.A. in English, unable to get something on paper without alerting the spell/grammar checker on my word processor to at least a few typically minor flaws. Imagine being an adult with a moderate education who comes to the U.S. and is expected to speak English immediately upon arrival. As the Queen herself might say, that ain’t easy.

Depending on your perspective it can be either frustrating or rewarding to attempt assisting a non-English speaker who needs help. Over the years I’ve found myself on both sides of this situation. Thankfully, I’ve managed to make myself understood or have been able to understand the person with whom I was interacting. Patience, it is said, is a virtue in such circumstances.

Speaking of cough drops, if you’re in any way a word person, consider, and remember, we’re talking about American-style English now, how many different ways there are to pronounce the four letters, ough. There’s cough, rough, through, thorough, dough, bough, thought … you get the idea. Now imagine how difficult it would be to explain American English linguistic nuances such as this one to someone from China who speaks no English.
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Winter fun in Highlands is on

Highlands ice skating rink at K-H Founders Park on Pine Street is open Thursdays 1-8 p.m., Friday and Saturday 1-10 p.m. and Sundays 1-5 p.m. - weather permitting through March 3rd. The cost is $5 and includes skates. Coffee, hot chocolate and water are available for $1.

– Photo by Brian O’Shea
**HS Sports**

**Some wins ... some losses**

This week high school basketball played Rosman, Swain, and Hiwassee Dam.

Both JV girls and varsity girls beat Rosman soundly. JV boys also beat Rosman but the varsity boys didn’t quite get it.

The teams then played Swain where JV boys, varsity girls and boys won. The JV girls did not play because Swain does not have a JV girls’ team. They took a clean, 3-game sweep over Swain.

Finally, they played Hiwassee Dam for a conference game.

The only team to win was the JV boys. The rest came very close but couldn’t quite finish on top.

Their next home game will be Friday, February 1st. They will play a conference game against Blue Ridge starting at 5 pm with no JV girls. This will be their senior night so come out and show the seniors as well as all Highlanders your love and support.

Middle school basketball played both Cullowhee and Tallulah Falls. Neither girls nor boys could pull out a win over either team. They will not have any more home games this season. Their Tri-State tournament has begun so go and support them as they wrap up their season.

---

**Movies at the Playhouse**

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When homebuyers begin their research, they want to see all their available options! In many cases, they will include both new construction and existing homes in their search; but is a new construction home really the house of their dreams?

According to a recent survey by Zillow, of the 38% of total buyers that added new construction to their list, only 11% ultimately purchased a newly constructed home!

They added that 71% of these buyers are repeat buyers who are financially secure, with 45% using the money from the sale of their previous homes to make a purchase.

So, then why did most of the buyers surveyed choose not to purchase a new home?

1) Location - Buyers could not find new construction in the desired neighborhood, and some felt that new construction is not established (e.g., landscaping, community, neighbors).

2) Timing - Buyers face the end of a lease or sale of their current property and could not wait for a house to be built.

3) Price - Some buyers felt that new construction base prices were deceiving. Adding upgrades and HOA fees no longer made the home fit in their price range.

4) Appeal - For some buyers, new construction homes are too “cookie cutter,” and models are limited. Others feel that the charm and uniqueness of an existing home trumps one that’s never been lived in.

Bottom line...Not all buyers are looking for a newly built house! There are many buyers looking for “the charm and uniqueness” of an existing home. If you are considering selling your house, don’t wait!

• Lynn Kimball has 44 years of real estate experience, with 34 years serving the Highlands Cashiers area. She has gained Emeritus Status with the National Association of Realtors and is currently serving as Vice President for the Highlands Cashiers Board of Realtors. Whether you are interested in searching properties or comprehensive information about our area, you are invited to visit her user friendly website at www.signature-properties-nc.com. BHHS Meadows Mountain Realty has three locations, on Main Street downtown Highlands, on HWY 107 South in Downtown Cashiers or visit Lynn at the Cashiers Road location across from Highlands Falls Country Club. Lynn Kimball may be reached at 828-421-8193 or by email at Lynn@MeadowsMtnRealty.com.

Internships are available through SEARCH program

Project SEARCH will hold an information session at Mission Hospital, 1 Hospital Drive, Room 5205, in Asheville at 6 pm. The program offers a one-year internship for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Its goal is to help the students, ages 18 to 30, achieve their goals of securing meaningful, competitive employment. Speakers will include Tim Blekicki, Mission Health Project SEARCH instructor, and the job coach, as well as current and past interns, and program partners. There’s a Q&A at the end for parents and students. For questions, please contact Tim Blekicki at tblekicki@arcnc.org or 828-254-4771 or visit https://arcnc.org/project-search-asheville.
While still in the talking stages, the Jaycees took it upon themselves to build a new community building at the north end of the ball park on Poplar Street.

Designed by Jim Fox to hold 120 people, construction began by the Jaycees after they raised enough money to get started.

After many fundraising events like the first Monte Carlo charity event, an annual Jaycees golf tournament, and even an ox-roast festival, the Highlands Community Building was completed in 1979.

For their efforts, the Jaycees won the state’s “best project” award.

Jaycees is a leadership training and civic organization for people between the ages of 18 and 40 and is a branch of Junior Chamber International.

Over the years, many a party has been held in the building, as well as rotary meetings, school functions and dances, and for more than a decade, town meetings have been held there.

In 2018, the town decided to invest in the building and make some much needed improvements.

The town’s FY 2018-19 budget included $50,000 for the Community Building – $19,000 was allotted for interior painting, $19,000 for flooring, and $12,000 for new sign.

Gone is the parquet dance floor and the stained carpet that covered the rest of the floor. Now new engineered flooring covers the expanse making for a clean and streamlined look.

The inside has been painted an off-white all the way up and through the rafters.

•See BUILDING page 17
**NOTE**

- The Rec Park is now taking teams for the Spring Men’s League Basketball league through February 1st. For any other information contact Lester Norris or Maxine Ramey at 828-526-3556.

**Ongoing**

- Movies at the Playhouse – NEW SCHEDULE – Fri. & Sat. 1, 4, and 7 p.m.; Sunday 1 and 4 p.m; NO MOVIES MONDAY; Tues., Wed., and Thurs. 1, 4, 7 p.m. Tickets are $10 / $2 off on Tuesdays.

**Winter Pool schedule**

- Lap Swim: Monday-Friday 6-10a. 6 lanes and Monday-Thursday 3:30-7p. 1-2 lanes (shared Pool) and Saturday 10-11a 2 or 3 lanes.
- Adult Swim: 18 years plus Monday-Friday 11:30-1:30p no lap lanes and Saturday 10-11a shared with lap swim. Available Equipment: water weights, adult pool noodles, fins, water jog belt & kickboards.
- Public Swim: Monday-Thursday 3:20-7p Saturday 11am-6pm, Sunday 1-6pmand Sunday 1-6p.
- Water Aerobics: 18 years plus Monday-Friday 10:15-11a.
- Aqua Dance and Fitness: Monday 5:30-6:30p.
- Baby and Me class: Ages 6 month-3 years Friday 5:30-6p.
- Movie Night: all ages First Friday night of every month. Pool opens at 6:30 and movie starts at 7p. Call for movie title and prices
- Pool Parties: available Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings 6-8p. Call the pool at 828-526-1595 if you have any questions concerning the pool.

**Harry Potter Family Day/Night at Hudson and Cashiers libraries Thurs., Feb. 7**

If you’re a Muggle who wants to learn your way around Diagon Alley, or you’ve ever been considered for a position in the Ministry of Magic, visit the Highlands’ Hudson Library or the Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library for Harry Potter Family Day/Night Thursday, February 7.

In Highlands, The Bascom, will help host an unforgettable Harry Potter Kids Zone event. The fun kicks off at 3:30 PM on Thursday.

At Harry Potter Kids Zone, the wonder of J.K. Rowling’s unforgettable stories will be explored and, most excitingly, the next generation of readers will be introduced to the unparalleled magic of Harry Potter. At Hudson Library, young wizards, witches and Muggles will be treated to an afternoon of magical games, readings from favorite Harry Potter books, and Harry Potter art projects! It all begins when the Sorting Hat decides who will be in which house.

This is a first Harry Potter Book Night for Cashiers and it’s set for 5-7 p.m. Thursday. It will be an event-filled night full of the wondrous magic J.K. Rowling so expertly created in her books.

Cashiers participants, who are encouraged to arrive dressed as their favorite Potterverse character, will discover a party in full swing, complete with snacks, games, crafts, readings and trivia challenges. At the core of the event is a deep appreciation for the Harry Potter books, which have a rabid fanbase that stretches around the world, and even a few realms beyond.

As Hermione Granger says in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, “When in doubt, go to the library!” But there’s no doubt about this: Harry Potter Book Day/Night celebrations at area libraries will be magical, bookish fun for the entire family!

- The Bascom has gone to winter hours. We will be open Friday - Monday 10am -5pm (Sundays 12pm - 5pm). The Bascom galleries and shops will be closed Tuesdays - Thursdays. Admin offices and The Dave Drake Studio Barn are open normal business hours. Visitors are welcome to enjoy the newly updated Story Walk Trail throughout the week.
- Monday - Saturday
  - At the Bascom, 10am - 5pm, Sunday 12pm - 5pm: Open Studio in The Dave Drake Studio Barn. For more information call 828-526-4949.
  - At the Bascom, Art By Appointment, private ceramic classes in The Dave Drake Studio Barn. For more information call 828-526-4949.
- Monday - Friday
  - At the Bascom, You Too Can Raku by appointment class in The Dave Drake Studio Barn. For more information call 828-526-4949.
- First Mondays
  - Shortoff Baptist Church non-denominational Men’s Mtg at 7p.
- Mondays
  - At the Bascom, 10am - 1pm: Studio Alive drawing group, For more information call 828-338-8167.
- Mon.-Thurs.
  - The Joy Program at HUMC 11:30a to 1:30p. Includes a free lunch and a variety of programs and games. All seniors are welcome. For more info, call Tricia Smith at 828-338-8167.
  - Mon. & Thurs.
  - The Humanist Discussion Group meets from 10:30-11:30a in The Dave Drake Studio Barn. For more information call 828-526-4949.
  - Mon.-Wed.
  - Hip Hop classes with Tori Schmitt 5:30-6:30.
  - Gentle Yoga at the Rec park at 7pm in the Sneak E. Squirrel Community Room (1314 Main St., Sylva. Visit www.occupywnc.org or call 828.331.1524
  - Wed. & Fri.
  - Duplicate Bridge 12-4pm at Rec Park.
  - First Wednesdays
    - Family Movies at the Hudson Library at 3:30pm. Call 828-526-3031 for titles.
  - 3rd Wednesdays
    - Recently released movies at Hudson Library at 2pm. Call 828-526-3031 for titles.
  - Mon.-Wed.
  - Heart Healthy Exercise Class Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8:30am-9:30am.
  - Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9a.
  - Storytime with Miss Deanna at Hudson Library 10:40 am. Open to the public.
  - NAMI Support Group for individuals dealing with mental illness and the family members of individuals dealing with these challenges from 7 – 8:15pm at First United Methodist Church Outreach Center on West Main Street in Franklin Call Donita Schmitt at 6:30-7:30 at the Rec Park.
  - Thursdays
    - Storytime with Miss Deanna at Hudson Library 10:40 am. Open to the public.
**Highlands Area Events**

2nd Thursdays
- Sapphire Valley Needlepoint Guild meets at the Highlands Rec Park at 10 a.m.

3rd Thursdays
- Highlands Area Indivisible group meets at 5 p.m. at the Highlands Hudson Library.
- Kidney Smart Classes in Franklin: from 4:30-6pm, Angel Medical Center, Video Conference Room, 3rd Floor, 120 Riverview St. Contact Majestic 828-369-9474.

1st and 3rd Thursdays
- Indivisible Highlands, a non-partisan activist group meets at the Hudson Library at 5p. For Info call 770-823-0601.

Fourth Thursday
- At the Hudson Library, Kids Zone LEGO Club. Intended primarily for kids in grades 1-5, LEGO Club allows creativity and STEM skills to develop together as kids enjoy making LEGO creations.

First Fridays
- Movie Night- all ages First Friday night of every month. Pool opens at 6:30 and movie starts at 7 p.m. Call for movie title and prices. For any other information call 828-526-1595.

Friday - Monday
- At the Bascom, 10am - 5pm (Sundays 12pm - 5pm): Free Admission to exhibition spaces and SmArt Space for children. For more information call 828-526-4949.

Saturdays
- At The Bascom, Pottery Sale in the barn from 10a to 5p.
- Scrabble at Hudson Library from 1-4 p.m. Bring board if possible. All are welcome. 727-871-8298.
- The Bascom Knitters on the Terrace at The Bascom from 10 am until noon or downstairs in The Bascom Library room.
- At the Bascom, 10am - 12pm: Community Knitters group. For more information call 828-526-4949.

Sundays
- Live Music in OEl’s Hummingbird Lounge 8 p.m. to close with Paul Jones.
- Fri., Feb. 1

- The High Mountain Squares will host their “Super Bowl Dance,” Friday night at the Robert C Carpenter Community Building, GA Road (441 South), Franklin, NC from 6:15 to 8:45 PM. Marty Northrup from Charlotte, NC will be the caller. We dance Western Style Square Dancing, main/stream and plus levels. Everyone is welcome. For information call: 828-787-2324, 828-332-0001, 706-746-5426.

Sat., Feb. 2
- At PAC, Bizet’s Carmen, Live via Satellite featuring the Metropolitan Opera (NYC) at 12:55 with a pre-opera discussion 30 minutes prior. Tickets are available online: www.highlandspac.org, at the door or by calling: 828.526.9047. Highlands Performing Arts Center, 507 Chestnut Street.
- Wed., Feb. 6
- Some concerned citizens will hold a discussion about the anomalies of the recent California fires at the Macon County Public Library at 7:30 pm in Franklin. Preceding the discussion will be a visual presentation along with a conference call interview of a survivor of the Paradise Fire. We are hoping to form a local research group. Contact Ruth Bishop at 800-736-3351.

Thurs., Feb. 7
- Harry Potter Family Night at the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library from 5-7 p.m. Participants, who are encouraged to arrive dressed as their favorite Potterverse character, will discover a party in full swing, complete with snacks, games, crafts, readings and trivia challenges. At the core of the event is a deep appreciation for the Harry Potter books, which have a rabid fanbase that stretches around the world, and even a few realms beyond.

Sat. Feb. 9
- The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate-to-strenuous hike at Coweeza Hydrological Lab on the Ridge Trail to Dyke Gap, elevation change 950 ft., with good views of Albert Mtn., returning down Cunningham Branch to Shope Fork and Coweeza office complex. Meet at Westgate Plaza in Franklin at 9am, drive 16 miles round trip. Call Leader Gail Lehman, 524-5298, for reservations.Visitors welcome.
- Democratic meeting in The Hudson Library Meeting Room from 5-7 pm. Appetizers and Wine. A back-room political meeting to create a Democrat Manifesto (For what do we stand? And to formulate the principles from which all policies would come)

Wed., Feb. 13
- Project SEARCH will hold an information session night at Mission Hospital, 1 Hospital Drive, Room 5205, in Asheville, on at 6 pm. Project SEARCH is a partnership between Mission Health, The Arc of North Carolina, A-B Tech, NC Vocational Rehabilitation, Vaya Health and the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities. The program offers a one-year internship for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Its goal is to help the students, who range in age from 18 to 30, achieve their goal of securing meaningful, competitive employment. This session is a one-hour introduction and determination of candidacy appropriateness. Speakers will include Tim Blekicki, Mission Health Project SEARCH instructor, and the job coach, as well as current and past interns, and representatives of program partners. There’s a Q&A at the end for parents and students. For questions, please contact Tim Blekicki at tblekicki@arcnc.org or 828-254-4771 or visit https://arcnc.org/project-search-asheville.

**See EVENTS page 14**
EVENTS continued from page 13

Fri., Feb. 15
• Senior Dinner at 12 noon at The Highlands Recreation Department. For any other information contact Lester Norris or Maxine Ramey at 828-526-3556.

Sat., Feb. 16
• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 3-mile hike with some ups and downs along the way to Yellow Branch Falls, one of the most scenic falls in western SC, 60 ft. high with dark rocky ledges over which the water falls (some say) like icing on a chocolate cake. Meet at Cashiers Rec Park at 10am, drive 50 miles round trip. Call leaders Mike and Sue Kettles, 743-1079, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Sat., Feb. 23
• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate-to-strenuous 9.2-mile hike, elevation change 800 ft., on the Cataloochee Divide in the Smoky Mtn. Nat’l. Park to the Appalachian Highland Science Learning Center, with beautiful views along the way. Meet at Waynesville Ingles at 9 am, drive 30 miles round trip (100 miles from Franklin) Hike is limited to 15. Call leader Keith Patton, 456-8895, for reservations.

Sat., Feb. 24
• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 4.5-mile hike in the Smoky Mtn. Nat’l Park, elevation change 500 ft., along Deep Creek (with two waterfalls along the way), then cross over to Sunkota Ridge, and return to Deep Creek. Meet at Dillsboro Huddle House at 10am, drive 40 miles round trip. Call leader Jody Burtner, 828-788-2985, for reservations. Visitors welcome.
Mum may have to cease reading me excerpts from the newspaper because some of the stories are quite disturbing. I mean I’ve heard people say that reading the paper is plain ol’ depressing, but this latest story has got me bummed.

Have you heard that people worry about robots taking over the world a la the Terminator movies? I’m sure you’ve read articles about robots doing folks out of their jobs, right? Well, this story is about robots doing us animals out of our jobs. That’s right, and it’s not things like heavy lifting, guarding the house, sniffing for bombs or drugs, pulling wagons, fetching balls, or digging holes. We animals might stand for that — well all except maybe the ball fetching and hole digging.

It’s much worse, and it’s bad for dogs and cats. There’s some weird technology called animatronics. It refers to using robots to emulate people and animals. Technically, a human-like robot is an android, but an animatronic dog or cat? That is beyond the pale.

Companies have developed robotic dogs and cats to provide emotional support to humans. I’ve already told you what I think about mascots, humans who dress up to look like animals, but robots? How can a robotic cat provide emotional support?

You’ll have to find a video to get the full impact of this atrocity, but a robotic cat purrs and meows. If you pet its face, it will nuzzle your hand and even raise its paw to wash its face. They say it will roll over on its back for a belly rub, but I don’t believe it. The company bills them as therapy robots that can provide comfort to the elderly. Are they serious?

You know, Puddin’ can be a pain, especially when she takes over my dog beds, but I still love her. I know I’m not the one who scoops her pan, but how hard can that be? Well, yes Mum has to clean the cat hair off the couch and the bedspread too, but still. And then, there’s the occasional hairball. No matter, I’m not buying it. A robot cat won’t move back and forth between Mum and Dad’s laps to share the love, and I can’t see it leaping and playing with cat toys. Nope, no way we’re letting any robots in the Royal Abode.

As for robot dogs, Mum and I watched a video of a Companion Pup by Hasbro. It opens its mouth and barks and turns its cute golden head, but it doesn’t roll over, lie beneath your desk, lick your face, or any of those critical touchy-feely things. I do more, so much more than this silly robot does. Can you take it for a walk? Nope. Can you train it to come, sit, stay or shake? Don’t think so.

Apparently, some pet parents think it’s inconvenient to take us dogs for walks, and they don’t want to use those little plastic bags for you know what. I do understand that if a person isn’t very mobile, we dogs can be a problem. So, less able folks should get special dispensation to have robot dogs. For that matter, they should go for the robot cat, since it does way more than any of the robot dogs we’ve seen.

Let it be known that Lord Banjo is mightily displeased with the idea of robotic cats and dogs and forbids any further mention of them. Should a robotic animal appear in the Kingdom, rather than “off with their heads,” it will be “out with the batteries.”

Lord Banjo is a Georgia resident. Find similar stories in his book, “Lord Banjo the Royal Pooch,” available locally at the Mountain Paws in Highlands, Books Unlimited in Franklin, and on Amazon. Contact him at inkpenn119@gmail.com.

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**Old City Chili**

**TSTE ingredients:**
- Sweet Onion Sugar
- Steakhouse Spice Blend
- Matanzas Chili Spice Blend

**From the Grocer:**
- 1 lb lean ground beef
- 1 lb ground sirloin
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 large bell pepper, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 of a 15 can of black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 of a 15.5 can of kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 - 29 oz can tomato sauce
- 1 - 28 oz can whole peeled tomatoes
- 1 - 6 oz can of tomato paste
- 2 TBS minced garlic
- Chopped scallions (optional topping)
- Shredded Cheese (optional topping)
- Sour Cream (optional topping)

**Preparation:**
- Add ground beef, ground sirloin, onion, and bell pepper to a 6 qt pan.
- Add about 45 twists of Steakhouse Spice Blend and then brown meat over medium heat, stirring occasionally until evenly browned. Drain.
- Add black beans, kidney beans, tomato sauce, tomatoes (squeeze in your hand before adding, to break into pieces) tomato paste, garlic, Sweet Onion Sugar, and Matanzas Chili Spice Blend.
- Simmer uncovered for about 30-45 minutes, stirring occasionally
- Top chili with cheese, sour cream and scallions. Enjoy!

**Jalapeno Poppers**

**TSTE ingredients:**
- 1 oz Bleu Cheese Powder
- 2 TBS Habanero Sugar

**From Grocer:**
- 8 oz Sour cream
- 12 Jalapenos
- 12 oz Package of bacon, slices cut in half

**Preparation:**
- Preheat oven to 400.
- Mix Bleu Cheese Powder with 2 TBS of water to a creamy consistency and then mix with cream cheese.
- Scoop cheese mixture into halved jalapenos.
- Wrap jalapenos with a halved slice of bacon and place on pan. Sprinkle with Habanero Sugar.
- Bake for 30 minutes, or until bacon is crisp and brown.

**Corn Bacon Dip**

**TSTE ingredients:**
- Bacon Smoked Sea Salt

**From the Grocer:**
- 1 cup cooked corn
- 1 garlic clove, pressed
- 1 - 8 oz package of cream cheese at room temperature
- Cooked, chopped bacon (garnish)
- Chopped, chives (garnish)
- Chips

**Preparation:**
- Place all ingredients in food processor and blend until smooth. Refrigerate for an hour. Garnish with bacon and chives. Serve with chips!
Bob and Vicki Thompson of Jasper, GA (both 92 years old) celebrated 70 years of marriage on January 22, 2019.

They met at a roller-skating rink in Jacksonville, FL on Dec. 22, 1948 and were married on January 22 1949. They have lived since then in Florida and Georgia. Vicki was born and raised in Highlands and is the daughter of the late Florence Henderson and the late Claude Calloway. Vicki’s mother died suddenly when she was around 7 and she likes to say that the whole town helped raise her and her two brothers Scott and W.C. She is also a half-sister to Highlands Commissioner Donnie Calloway and his brothers Joe, C.L and Ronnie Calloway.

She lived with her grandparents Deck and Dessie Henderson on Pine Creek in Jackson County. She later worked for Fred and Inez Moll who had leased and were running the Pierson Inn when they invited her to move with them to Jacksonville. From that time on she only came back to visit her relatives but never forgot her roots or her family.

Congratulations Vicki and Bob…70 years together is quite an accomplishment in today’s world.
...GOALS continued from page 1

This conference gives all North Carolina counties the opportunity to come together as one voice and make our challenges known to the North Carolina General Assembly.” Ronnie Beale, Vice Chairman, Macon County Board of Commissioners.

Kevin Austin, NCACC President Elect and Yadkin County Commissioner presided over the two-day Legislative Goals Conference, which was held January 10-11. Macon County sent Ronnie Beale to serve as a voting delegate to the conference to debate, amend, offer new proposals and cast votes on the Association’s guiding principles and legislative priorities, which guide advocacy efforts at the General Assembly.

The conference is the final step in a comprehensive process, which gives each county a voice in shaping NCACC’s legislative agenda. NCACC President Elect Austin explained this inclusive approach. “Our process offers an opportunity for all our counties to participate. These goals come from counties all across the state and have been vetted by their boards before they come to the Association. It’s a grassroots effort, which involves all 100 counties,” President Elect Austin said.

“As we all know, the availability of broadband internet has been discussed here in Macon County for quite some time now. It was interesting to see how many other rural counties across the state are facing similar issues with respect to broadband availability. I was very pleased to see that the expansion of broadband to unserved and underserved areas emerge as the top legislative goal for FY 19-20.” Jim Tate, Chairman, Macon County Board of Commissioners.

Below is the list of NCACC’s top five legislative goals for 2019-2020 as determined at the Legislative Goals Conference; visit www.ncacc.org/legislativegoals to access the full list of goals for the biennium.

NCACC’s Top Five Priority Goals for 2019-2020

1) Seek legislation, funding, and other efforts to expand digital infrastructure/broadband capability to the unserved and under-served areas and residents of the state.

2) Seek additional revenue sources, including a statewide bond and lottery proceeds, to equitably address statewide public school and community college capital challenges.

3) Support efforts to preserve and expand the existing local revenue base of counties and authorize local option revenue sources already given to any other jurisdiction to all counties. Oppose efforts to divert to the state, fees or taxes currently allocated to the counties or to erode existing county revenue streams.

4) Support provision of state resources to ensure county ability to provide essential public health, behavioral health and social services, with specific consideration to the challenges of incarcerated persons, the continued county role in behavioral health governance, and programs addressing substance use disorder, throughout Medicaid transformation.

5) Seek legislation to repeal the statutory authority under N.C. Gen. Stat. 115C-431(c) that allows a local school board to file suit against a county board of commissioners over appropriations to the local board of education’s capital outlay fund.

Editors: Print quality photos may be downloaded for use at: https://ncacc.smugmug.com/NCACC-2019-Legislative-Goals-Con

Photo should be credited as follows: Photo courtesy Chris Baucom/NCACC.

About the NCACC: The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) is the official voice of all 100 counties on issues being considered by the General Assembly, Congress and federal and state agencies. The Association provides expertise to counties in the areas of advocacy, research, risk management and education and leadership training.

...BUILDING from pg 11

But like with any older building, one repair often leads to another.

The night after the contractors took up the old flooring revealing the concrete slab it rained … hard. When the installers came in the next day there was water pooled from the fireplace on the front wall all the way back to the center of the room.

“They dried it all up and were able to put the flooring down, but they said we needed to look at the structure because something wasn’t right and they didn’t want it to happen again,” said Town Manager Josh Ward.

As it turned out, the whole front of the right side of the building (the side closest to the ball park) behind a huge rhododendron was rotten

“I hated to lose that rhododendron because it was so big, but because of its size, when it rained behind it stayed really moist. We actually found a big piece of siding behind there had just fallen off.”

Contractors determined that’s where a lot of the water was getting in as well as around the flashing at the top of the chimney.

An inspection of the entire exterior revealed more rot on the backside of the building behind the kitchen.

So, the Town Board OK’d a bud...


Proverbs 3:5

**Blue Valley Baptist Church**  
Rev. Oliver Rice, Pastor (706) 782-3965  
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.

**Buck Creek Baptist Church**  
828-269-3546 • Rev. Jamie Passmore, Pastor  
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.

**Chapel of the Sky**  
Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999  
Sundays: 10 a.m.; Worship

**Christ Anglican Church**  
Rector: Jim Murphy, 252-671-4011  
464 US Hwy 64 east, Cashiers  
9:30a Sunday School; 10:30a Worship Service.  
Mon. 6p Bible Study & Supper in homes

**Christ Church of the Valley, Cashiers**  
Pastor Brent Metcalf • 743-5470  
Sun. 10:45am, SS 9:30am. Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.  
Tues. Guys study 8am, Gals 10am.

**Clear Creek Baptist Church**  
Pastor Jim Kinard  
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.  
1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7 p.m.  
Wednesdays – Supper at 6 p.m.

**Community Bible Church**  
www.cbcbigbluff.com • 526-4685  
3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC • Sr. Pastor Gary Hewins  
Sun.: 9:30am: Sunday School 10:30am: Middle & High School;  
10:45am: Child. Program, 10:45am: Worship Service  
Wed.: 5pm Dinner ($7 adult, $2 child), 6pm CBC U.

**Episcopal Church of the Incarnation**  
Rev. W. Bentley Metcalf • 743-2968  
Monday-Friday: Morning Prayer at 8:15a. Sundays: 8 am  
Holy Eucharist Rite I; 9 am Sunday School; 10:30am Holy Eucharist Rite II. Childcare available at 10:30

**First Baptist Church Highlands**  
828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org  
Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor  
220 Main Street, Highlands  
Sun.: Worship: 10:45 am; Sun.: Bible Study: 9:30 am  
Wed.: Men’s Bible Study: 8:30 am; Prayer Mtg: 6:15 pm; Choir 5p

**First Presbyterian Church**  
Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors  
526-3175 • fpchighlands.org  
Sun.: Adult Ed.: 9:30a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.  
Mondays: Men’s Prayer Group & Breakfast 8 a.m.  
Wed.: Choir: 6p

**Goldmine Baptist Church**  
(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)  
Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

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

**Hamburg Baptist Church**  
Hwy 107N. • Glenville, NC • 743-2729 • Pr. Nathan Johnson  
Sunday: School: 9:45a; Worship 11a & 7p, Bible Study 6p  
Wed. Kidsquest 6p; Worship 7p.

**Highlands Assembly of God**  
Randy Reed, Pastor 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street  
Sundays: Worship: 11 a.m.

**Highlands Central Baptist Church**  
Pastor Dan Robinson  
670 N. 4th Street (next to the Highlands Civic Center)  
Sun.: Bible Study 10a; Morning Worship 10:45a., Evening Worship, 6p. Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.m.

**Highlands United Methodist Church**  
Pastor Randy Lucas 526-3376  
Sun.: School: 9:45a; Worship: 9:09; 10:50; Youth 5:30 p.  
Wed.: Supper: 5:15; youth; adults activities: 6; Handbell rehearsal, 6:15; Choir Rehearsal 7. (nursery provided); 7pm  
Intercessory Prayer Ministry

**Holy Family Lutheran Church: ELCA**  
Chaplain Margaret Howell • 2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741  
LutheranChurchoftheHolyFamily.yolasite.com  
Sun.: School and Adult discussion group 9:30 a.m.;  
Worship/Communion: 10:30

**Healing Service** on the 5th Sunday of the month.

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

**Mountain Synagogue**  
at St. Cyprian’s Episcopal Church, Franklin • 828-524-9463

**Mountain Bible Church**  
743-2583 • Independent Bible Church  
Sun: 10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church, 4224 Big Ridge Road (4.5 miles from NC 107)  
Wed: Bible Study 6:30 p.m.; Youth Group 6 p.m.

**Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church**  
Rev. Father Casimir – 526-2418  
Mass: Sun: 11 a.m.; Sat. at 4p

**Scaly Mountain Baptist Church**  
Rev. Marty Kelby  
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11 a.m. & 7 p.m.  
Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg: 7 p.m.

**Scaly Mountain Church of God**  
290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212  
Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

**Shortoff Baptist Church**  
Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer  
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.  
Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 6 p.m.

**Community Bible Church of Sky Valley**  
706.746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447, Pastor Gary Hewins  
Worship: Sun. 9 a.m., with Holy Communion the 1st & 3rd Sun.; Tues: Community Supper 5:30 followed by Bible Study.

**The Church of the Good Shepherd**  
1448 Highway 107 South, Office: 743-2359 • Rev. Rob Wood  
June-Sept: Sunday Services: Rite I, 8a, Rite II, 9:15 & 11a  
Nursery available for Rite II services  
Sept 6-Oct 25-Informal Evening Eucharist-5:30 p.m.  
Thursday: Noon Healing Service with Eucharist.

**Unitarian Universalist Fellowship**  
85 Sierra Drive, Franklin • uufranklin.org  
Sunday Worship • 11 a.m.

**Whiteside Presbyterian Church**  
Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers  
Sundays: Community Supper 5:30 followed by Bible Study.


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**SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING**

**Of Dancing Penguins and Flying Nannies**

In my life as an itinerant preacher, my family and I have had the opportunity to live in a variety of communities and to walk alongside a number of really neat folks. Since our move from Kansas to Oz (for my metaphor-challenged friends, that’s Salisbury to Highlands), my wife Kathy and I, now empty-nesters, have been able to enjoy many of the cool things and people that make this such a special place.

One thing I’m enjoying about our Highlands years is the ability to experience Sunday morning worship, then take a short stroll to the Highlands Playhouse to catch a first-run movie. It’s a pretty cool perk of life in our little mountain town. This past Sunday, Kathy and I decided to follow up our Sunday worship with the 1pm showing of “Mary Poppins Returns”.

It’s a delightful, fun and adventure-filled journey into a child-like world of imagination, a world of magic balloons, dancing penguins and wise-cracking umbrellas, a world complete with majestic music and fast-paced choreography. Be open to the cinematic invitation to suspend your disbelief, allow yourself to inhabit the alternative universe of the big screen, and “Mary Poppins Returns” can awaken the dormant inner-child within.

Though fully immersed in the imaginative world on the big screen before me, my grown-up self stirred long enough to appreciate the value of taking time to remember and experience the value of imagination again. The adult side of me is well aware that my vocation requires me to think and speak of serious things, and I often tend to spend a good bit of time in my own head. Though I don’t claim to be a great thinker, I do spend a great deal of time in thought. And quite frankly, sometimes the weight of the gospel message lies heavy on this preacher’s heart and mind.

But Sunday I was reminded that every now and then, even the most serious among us can benefit from seeing a nanny floating down from the sky holding onto a runaway kite, or marvel as pictures on a vane come to life, or watch balloons carry a sea of children and adults into the air, or...
...BUILDING continued from page 17

get amendment of $31,000 for rot repair which included new siding.

“We re-sided and basically reconstructed the front and back and got rid of the rot and then re-sided the back and came around the side to match,” said Ward.

Not long after that, Recreation Director Lester Nix saw water stains appearing on the newly painted ceiling and every now and then when it rained, there would be a drip here, a drip there.

Consequently, the roof was inspected and there were multiple places where the shingles were completely worn out.

“They were 20-year shingles but there is no telling how long they have been there … no one seems to know … but clearly longer than 20 years,” said Ward.

The Town Board OK’d another budget amendment for $21,500 to repair and re-shingle the roof.

This time 30-year shingles are being installed, and the clouded skylights that stopped letting light in long ago, were framed over to make sure new leaks don’t initiate there.

As part of the roof job, the peak where the plywood came together was without a roof-line vent so that was also fixed.

Shingles also covered the vertical front north side of the building but will be replaced with siding matching the rest of the building … for now.

The shingles were removed unnecessarily and may be replaced – as originally designed – at a later date, said Ward.

The front door, which has always been fickle, has also been replaced so that it can be opened, closed and locked easily. Ward said there was money in a line item that funded that.

“The renovation of the building is complete now,” said Ward. “It really needed some improvement. It’s been forever since any work was done to it.”

Nothing is planned in the kitchen but there has been talk about upgrading the bathrooms at some point, said Ward.

In addition, the windows may be replaced – possibly a discussion point at this year’s annual Town Board Retreat.

Ward said the windows are clouding up because the seal is broken and gas between the window panes has leaked out causing a fogged effect.

— Kim Lewicki

...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING continued from 18

see street workers break out in song and dance.

I spend most of my time in the adult world where people deal with real-life struggles and are weighed down by real-life worries. I spend most of my time in a world where magical nannies don’t gracefully glide down to earth. I spend most of my time in a world that can often be harsh and hard, where there is often more reason to lament than laugh.

Perhaps that’s all the more reason to allow ourselves a break from life’s realities from time to time, if for no other reason than to consider that maybe there are some real things that can only be revealed through God’s gift of imagination. Maybe there are some things we can never see without removing our adult glasses. And if your imagination is out of shape from lack of exercise or dusty from too much time on the shelf, that’s OK. It happens to the best of us.

Joan Chittiser, in her blog from January 2018 “The Monastic Way”, reflected on the life of Joan of Arc. She points out that, during her trial in England which resulted in her sentence to be burned at the stake, Joan of Arc testified that God had called her to lead soldiers from her native France against the English in the battle for the French throne. Confronted by the accusation that she merely “imagined” God speaking to her, she is reported to have replied - “How else would God speak to me, if not through my imagination?”

Now I’m not attempting to align the call of God with animated dancing penguins, but maybe its not too far-fetched to consider that we might be a bit more open to the mystery of God if we allowed our keen intellects to become a bit more….shall we say, playful.

One thing of which I’ve become acutely aware in my pursuit of deep thinking (remember “Deep Thoughts by Jack Handy” all you SNL fans?) is that the more I learn, the more I realize just how little I know. I’ve also come to understand that some things are hard to appreciate without imagination, and some things are quite impossible to see without it.

So as you travel along the yellow brick road today, here’s hoping God stirs a little child-like wonder in your heart so that you can catch the majestic beauty that’s easily missed by adult eyes. Here’s wishing for you a whimsical day of waterfalls and rainbows, ocean waves and mountain peaks, humming birds and soaring eagles, along with a healthy dose of dancing penguins and flying nannies!
**Police & Fire Reports** continued from page 19

- At 2:12 a.m., officers responded to a call of a verbal argument at a residence on Wilson Road.
  **Jan. 24**
  - At 8 a.m., officers responded to a call for service at an apartment on Helen’s Bar Ave.
  - At 8 a.m., Manuel Eduardo Chico, 44, of Highlands was arrested for larceny of property and theft from a building. He was issued $1,000 secured bond. His trial date is Feb. 12.
  **Jan. 26**
  - A little after midnight, officers were notified of someone staying on someone else’s property on Laurel Street without permission.

- At 9:30 a.m., Alexus Sade Hall, 21, of Franklin, was arrested for DUI when pulled over on NC 106. She was issued $600 unsecured bond. Her trial date is Feb. 18.
  **Jan. 27**
  - At 10:51 a.m., officers responded to a call of a vehicle theft on Tanner Loop in Highlands where someone stole an equipment trailer valued at $5,000.

**The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Jan. 17, 2019.**

**Jan. 17**
- At 11:11 a.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Old Edwards Lane.
- At 12:51 p.m., the dept. was first-responders in response to a medical alarm at a residence on Harris Drive.
- At 5:32 p.m., the dept. responded to a possible gas leak at a residence on Watkins Road.
  **Jan. 19**
  - At 2:24 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Half Mile Drive.
  - At 3:01 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Half Mile Drive.
  **Jan. 20**
  - At 12:04 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Cullasaja Club Dr.
  **Jan. 25**
  - At 3:48 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers FD.
  **Jan. 26**
  - At 8:19 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on NC 106.
  - At 5:05 p.m., the dept. investigated smoke in the vicinity of Walhalla Road.
  - At 10:31 p.m., the dept. responded to a chimney fire at a residence on Panther Mountain Road.
  **Jan. 27**
  - At 8:59 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on NC 64 east.
  - At 3:56 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location in Highlands Plaza.
  **Jan. 28**
  - At 10:29 a.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Bowery Road.
  - At 4:58 p.m., the dept. investigated smoke in the vicinity of US 64 east and Whiteside Mountain Road.
  - At 9:46 p.m., the dept. answered a mutual aid call from the Cashiers FD but it was cancelled.

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This the 21st day of December, 2018.

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