

Highlands Newspaper

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Thursday, March 7, 2019

Fencing ordinance is tweaked; Planning Board takes on habitable basements

Highlands takes its zoning seriously, but nothing is set in stone and change is always in the air.

At the February Planning

Board meeting, members put the finishing touches on the Fence regulating portion of the Unified Development Ordinance which the group has been working on for

about three months. In addition, they began discussing allowing habitable spaces in daylight basements in the commercial district.

•See **PLANNING** page 16

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Local state reps don't agree on redistricting

By Brittney Lofthouse

Earlier this month, the North Carolina House of Representative introduced a bipartisan bill that would end gerrymandering and establish a fair and concise redistricting policy for the state.

The majority of House Members, both Republicans and Democrats, support House Bill 69, including House of Representative Kevin Corbin, who just started his second term in the General Assembly.

"I am in support of legislation that is designed to end gerrymandering and to establish a way for districts to be drawn fair, regardless of which party is in control," said Rep. Kevin Corbin. "I support it because it is just common sense. House Bill 69 establishes a committee of evenly split Democrats, Republicans, and

• See **REDISTRICTING** page 5

Reading and Dr. Seuss take center stage at Highlands School with week-long activities



Students and teachers across the country participated in NEA's Read Across America 2019/Dr. Seuss Celebration. It is typically celebrated in classrooms on Dr. Seuss's birthday which is March 2. Since it fell on Saturday this year, it was celebrated on Friday, March 1. Above are students in Ms. Lequire's 5th grade class on "Lorax Day." They dressed in orange and everyone wore a mustache. See full story and photos on page 9.

– Photo by Highlands School Media Coordinator Ms. Terry Stamey

Town Board votes to help fund eradication of invasive plants

By Brian O'Shea

The Board of Commissioners recently voted to match a \$1,500 grant to treat Japanese Knotweed, a non-native invasive plant common throughout the region. Knotweed is highly invasive, spreading from even the smallest cutting or fragment and aggressively spreading, crowding out native species, said Highlands Biological Station (HBS) Executive Director Jim Costa.

Costa said there are several benefits to treating for knotweed as well as other invasives to help maintain both the beauty and ecological health of the Plateau and environs.

"The area, like the region

•See **INVASIVE** page 6

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

What to put on the 'to-do' list

The beginning of March is when town staff and commissioners begin to look at budget priorities for the coming fiscal year. I am already in general discussions with key staff members.

Here is the problem, I tend to be a "big idea thinker," but staff members like the Town Manager bring up those nagging questions about how to pay for my big ideas. For instance, I see a great need to pave a lot of roads in town. The Public Works Director and Town Manager agree.

But then they go to their pencils and calculators and tell me just how much each road will cost to pave. The same is the case for needed water-line replacements, bear proofing garbage cans, replacing worn out equipment and funding needed programs.

The town annually has more needs than a single budget can fund. Administrators maintain a list of priorities that the board uses to fund needed projects. This list will be consulted again at our March Highlands Town Retreat. The problem is we never complete the list. As one project is done and removed from the list another



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

new project pops up, like in the case of the Satulah water tank. It came from nowhere. The water tank replacement was not even on the list a few years ago, but when the old tank began to leak and experts told us it was failing, this critical project jumped to the top of the list.

The condition of many roads has been exacerbated this year by the heavy rain and winter.

Roads that we thought had longer service periods have been damaged by the over 120 inches of rain this past year. In the coming years road paving will take up a lot of the town resources.

I anticipate the Town Manager's mid-year budget update will indicate that the town has strong reserves as revenues have been building up because of the strong economy. The big question that the board will decide at the forthcoming budget workshops centers around how much of those reserves should be spent to address the big projects like road paving, water-line replacement and other pressing items.

For a number annual budget cycles, the town has focused on needed upgrades to recreation facilities. A small tax increase was earmarked for these long overdue improvements. We are now coming to the end of this cycle for recreation. I believe our next major focus will be on roads and waterline replacements. We have several waterline upgrades that will cost nearly a million a piece. Paving a couple of miles or so of road can approach that number, also. Like in recreation improvements, this new focus on infrastructure will not be a one-year effort. It will take a number of years before we have addressed all these issues.

I continue to press the DOT to remove debris from the major state roads. This work needs to be completed before tourist and seasonal visitors return to the plateau.

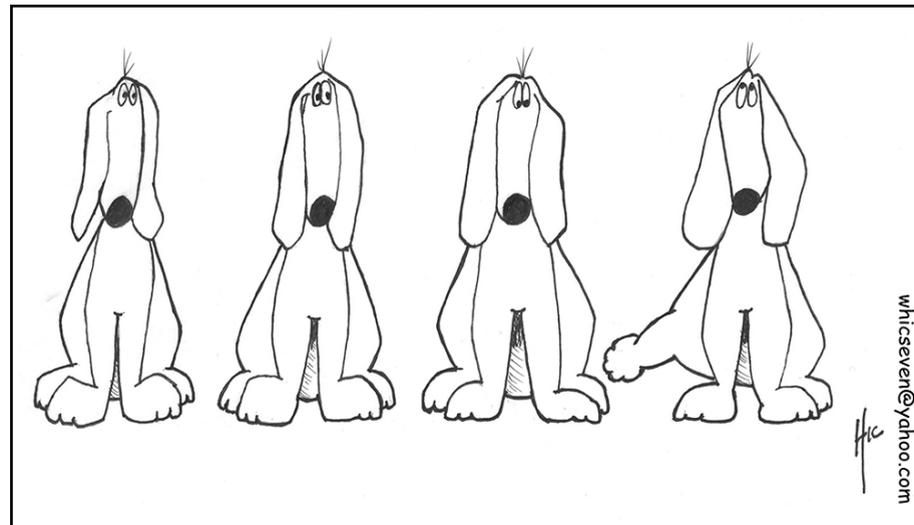
More news from the Mayor

The North Carolina Local Government Commission met Tuesday afternoon, March 5, and approved the loan request for 4.6 million to build the fiber optic network in the Town of Highlands.

The town will now move forward with the project.

– Mayor Pat Taylor

• HIC'S VIEW •



whicseven@yahoo.com

• LETTERS •

...on public shaming

Dear Editor,

As a new resident of Highlands, I was concerned to see publication in your 2/28/19 edition of delinquent utility accounts owed to the Town.

Regardless of whether authorized by the Board of Commissioners, where is there publication of any defenses, counterclaims or set-offs by these allegedly delinquent persons and businesses? Basic fairness in reporting and accounting would dictate such.

Moreover, what about their equal protection and due process rights? How does the Town handle other debts owed to it? Shouldn't the Town at least be required to obtain legal judgments which is relatively easy in the case of default judgments, in small claims court prior to publication in the public record, or to engage in the more commonly accepted, ordinary course business practice of simply turning these unpaid amounts over to a debt collection service?

Public shaming is no more acceptable today than when miscreants were put into stocks and shackles in town squares centuries ago.

Paul Pavlis
Highlands

•See LETTERS page 5

• WEATHER •

	Friday 3/8		Saturday 3/9		Sunday 3/10	
	Daytime	Overnight	Daytime	Overnight	Daytime	Overnight
Temp	42 F	37 F	54 F	48 F	64 F	34 F
RealFeel	44 F	34 F	52 F	41 F	63 F	48 F
Winds	4 g 7	3 g 5	5 g 11	8 g 13	8 g 12	5 g 10
T-Storms	4%	5%	20%	20%	5%	2%
Rainfall	0.35	0.17	0.23	1.35	0.02	0
Snowfall	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Letter Policy:

We reserve the right to reject or edit letters-to-the-editor. No anonymous letters will be accepted. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands Newspaper.



RAVENEL RIDGE This 4 bedroom, 5 1/2 bath home has spectacular views of 30 mountains including Satulah, Little Bear Pen, and Shortoff. The living, dining, kitchen, and award-winning bar area layout make the home an easy flow for large groups. There is an abundant storage area throughout. With its own kitchen and fireplace, the terrace level is perfect for a guest retreat or mother-in-law suite.

MLS# 90266 | Offered for \$3,057,000



CULLASAJA CLUB This incredible luxury home is sited on Lake Ravenel and has 350 feet of water frontage and is surrounded by gardens, trails, babbling water features, a gazebo, and dock. The living room boasts a floor-to-ceiling native stone fireplace, two story soaring ceiling, a built-in bookcase, and a wall of glass which opens the room to the spacious covered deck. Too many features to list!

MLS# 89386 | Offered for \$2,900,000

HIGHLANDS COUNTRY CLUB This idyllic retreat is designed to offer views of nature, mature landscaping and tranquil views of the lake from almost every window. An open floor plan and quality features including gleaming oak flooring, native stone fireplace, tall windows and a vaulted ceiling lined with timber add a dramatic tone to the living area. Step out of your kitchen and living area to a welcoming deck overlooking the lake. One-bedroom guest house above the garage.

MLS# 90280 | Offered for \$2,495,000



HIGHLANDS IN-TOWN This amazing historic property features three completely updated homes with the main house boasting five bedrooms, a guest house with one bedroom, and a cabin with two bedrooms. Clear Creek runs through the property and a lake has been formed with a picnic pavilion plus walking paths along the stream. Located just a short two miles from Main Street. Terrific kennel adjacent to the home for your dogs.

MLS# 89607 | Offered for \$2,395,000



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...REDISTRICTING continued from page 1

Independents and puts them in charge of redistricting. It just makes sense.”

Corbin's counterpart in the Senate, Senator Jim Davis, isn't as confident the legislation has the traction or support it needs to go anywhere in the Senate. The primary sponsors of the House Bill are both Democrats and Republicans and the majority of the 120 members of the house have signed on as co-sponsors, so if put up for a vote in the House, HB 69 would easily pass and then head to the Senate. Senator Jim Davis noted that despite the support the measure has in the house, he doesn't see that happening in the Senate.

“I do not think the support for nonpartisan redistricting is in the Senate, but we will see,” said Davis.

On a personal note, Davis said that while he doesn't think nonpartisan support is as apparent in the Senate, he hasn't actually read House Bill 69 and therefore doesn't have an opinion as to whether or not he would support the measure.

Instead of allowing lawmakers to craft their own districts which often results in a partisan advantage to whichever party has control of the General Assembly, HB 69 would have an 11-member citizens commission draw maps free from partisan politics. The process would include significant public input and full transparency. The districts would then be presented to the legislature for an up or down vote. As written, the bill would take effect for the next redistricting cycle which is slated for 2021.

The bill's primary sponsors are Reps. Chuck McGrady (R-Henderson), Robert Reives (D-Chatham, Durham), Jon Hardister (R-Guilford) and Brian Turner (D-Buncombe).

A solid majority of North Carolinians want impartial redistricting, as shown by a survey conducted in 2018 by Public Policy Polling. That poll found 59 percent of voters in favor of making the map-drawing process nonpartisan, with just 15 percent opposed to reform.

Over 300 locally elected leaders from 140 towns and cities across North Carolina have signed a petition calling

on the legislature to enact nonpartisan redistricting. And more than 100 North Carolina business leaders have joined the call for an end to gerrymandering.

Gerrymandering is something that is specific to one party. As North Carolina history has shown, both Democrats and Republicans, whichever party controls the legislature have been guilty of drawing districts in the state to favor their respective party. House Bill 69 would ultimately end that possibility altogether.

• OBITUARY •

Rene Ramsdell

Rene Ramsdell, 78, of Highlands, NC passed away peacefully with her family by her side Saturday, February 23, 2019 in Safety Harbor, FL. She was a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and friend. Local Celebration of Life to be held at Highlands United Methodist Church, Saturday, June 8, 2019 at 2 p.m. Visit www.veteransfuneralcare.com for more information and guest book.

HS Kindergarten registration for 2019-'20

Highlands School Kindergarten registration for the 2019-2020 school year will begin, Tues. March 12. Parents meet at 10 am in the school's media center. Children who reach the age of 5 on or before August 31, 2019 are eligible for admission into the Class of 2032.

PTO will provide complimentary lunch for all students and their parents in the school cafeteria as part of Kindergarten registration. Registration packets can be picked up at Highlands School or at Highlands Community Child Development Center. All forms in the registration packet (except the Health Assessment Transmittal Form), need to be completed and returned on March 12th. The Health Assessment Transmittal Form should be completed and turned in to the school by August 1, 2019. For more information, call 526-2147.

...LETTERS continued from page 2

'Last week was very busy for me'

Dear Editor,

...and dear mayor,

On Wednesday you went to dinner in Raleigh. Presumably we paid your travel and lodging expenses.

On Thursday you attended the town council meeting, the one where you approved publicly shaming those who have been unable to pay their utility bills, the bills that include the town's profits for passing along the cost (but no added value) of electric power that Duke energy provides.

On Friday you attended a coffee klatch at the library. That's what you told us about. Whew!

That's a busy week? Really?

Brian L. Buckley
Highlands

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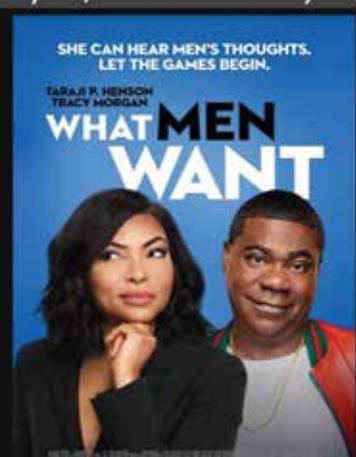
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...INVASIVE continued from page 1

more generally, is renowned for its native plant species diversity, including a great many lovely flowering shrubs and wildflowers,” he said. “Invasives can spread like wildfire because they have been introduced far from their native range where there are natural checks on their populations. We seek to nip problem species in the bud, if you will, to prevent them from becoming both an eyesore and doing ecological damage by crowding out native wildflowers and shrubs.”

HBS is part of the Highlands Coalition for Non-native Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM), the group pushing for the treatment of knotweed and other invasive species and includes the Town of Highlands. The Town joined the coalition in 2016 after Highlands Mayor Pat Taylor



Japanese Knotweed

signed a proclamation. “The Town supports the efforts to eradicate invasive plant species as our commitment to preserve this beautiful, unique mountain environment,” said Taylor. “The knotweed tends to takeover streams and lake areas that are so critical to maintaining a healthy watershed.”

Other members of CNIPM include Land Stewards (Laurel Garden Club), Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust (HCLT), Highlands Historical Society, Highlands Plateau Audubon, and Highlands Plateau Greenway. The Town is matching a grant made by the Laurel Garden Club.

HCLT Stewardship Coordinator Kyle Pursel said knotweed is known to completely take over areas it infests by forming dense thickets and effectively shading or pushing out most other plants. It is mostly clonal,

meaning it does not need to produce seeds to reproduce. It largely spreads by sprouting new plants from small pieces broken off existing plants. Plants along roadways can have pieces carried by cars or equipment that are not properly inspected for plant pieces and cleaned, while those along streams can have pieces float downstream to infest new areas. It also thrives in the Plateau’s climate and landscape, which allows it to quickly establish in new sites and grow rapidly.

“If left unchecked, knotweed and other invasive plants will forever alter our landscape,” said Pursel. “We are now at an important juncture on the Plateau where infestations, while growing, are still capable of being managed without significant use of both financial and human resources. Dealing with the problem now will save money and effort in the long-term.”

Pursel added that due to knotweed’s ability to easily and quickly spread by small pieces and its deep root system, knotweed is best treated chemically.

“It is best to treat it twice a year, in late summer and again in early fall, and to treat each successive year until no new plants pop up the following late spring,” he said. “It can take three-plus years to fully eradicate an infestation, so you must be diligent. Our plan is to treat it twice annually until we no longer notice new sprouts in the treated areas.”

There is something else about knotweed that’s a bit unique, said Pursel.

“Japanese knotweed is actually edible if you get the new shoots (which look like red-speckled asparagus) in spring (April-early

<p>Invasive Vines Chocolate Vine (<i>Akebia quinata</i>) English Ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>) Japanese Honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera japonica</i>) Oriental Bittersweet (<i>Celastrus orbiculatus</i>)</p> <p>Invasive Ground Covers English Ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>) Periwinkle (<i>Vinca major</i>, <i>V. minor</i>)</p> <p>Invasive Screens Golden Bamboo (<i>Phyllostachys aurea</i>)</p> <p>Invasive Shrubs (Fall Color) Burning Bush (<i>Euonymus alatus</i>)</p> <p>Invasive Shrubs (Flowering) Japanese Spirea (<i>Spiraea japonica</i>)</p> <p>Invasive Grasses Chinese Silver Grass (<i>Miscanthus sinensis</i>) Japanese Barberry (<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>)</p>

May),” he said. “It tastes very similar, and has similar uses to, rhubarb. Just be aware of your surroundings as you don’t want to pick any that has been sprayed, are growing around trash, etc. Older plants tend to be too tough to eat.”

At February’s Town Board meeting, Commissioner Brian Stiehler, who has a turf, ornamental and aquatic license issued by the state of NC, said triclopyr will be sprayed on the Japanese Knotweed.

“It’s a selective, aquatic, contact herbicide – an old chemistry that has been around for a long time that isn’t toxic to fish, wildlife or even other plants like rhododendrons. And it only affects what it touches,” he said.

Still, applicators have to be certified, so some of the money the town agreed to allocate will be used to certify an applicator from Tate Landscaping for “roadsides and rights-of-way,” which is where most of the Japanese Knotweed on the plateau exists.

“Applicators have to know how the chemical can react in different environments. On roadsides there is a lot of runoff and that sort of thing that they have to be aware of,” said Stiehler.

CNIPM puts on two workshops annually for homeowners and landscaping professionals so they can learn to recognize and control invasive plants, as well as the benefits of using native plants.

CNIPM also holds volunteer days combating invasive hotspots in town; last fall volunteers cleared a large amount of privet in the woods at the Highlands Rec Park, said Costa.



An embankment of Japanese Knotweed.

– Photo by Tom Heutta, USDA FS.

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• WORD MATTER •

Tax and Borrow, or Tax and Spend. Pick One.

George H.W. Bush, during his 1988 run for the Presidency, said six words that both helped him get elected and kept him from a second term.

“Read my lips, no new taxes!” he said.

He was a trustworthy guy. We elected him. Then, reality set in and in order to keep a promise to reduce the federal budget deficit, he had to renege on the “no new taxes” promise.

He didn’t get reelected. Instant, high-level analysis: people care more about lower taxes than they do about a budget deficit.

This whole idea of NEVER raising taxes has become a foundational promise for virtually every politician running for office. It has also become a benchmark expectation for voters.

And, it makes absolutely no sense.

When did Americans of voting age actually come to believe, in this or any other life, of getting something for nothing?

Why is our national infrastructure: roads, bridges, school buildings, public transit, etc., crumbling? Why does our education system lag behind almost half the developed world? Why does our healthcare sector produce a national life expectancy ranking only tenth in the world? And why does our healthcare cost each of us more than double per capita, than citizens of any other country in the world?

One answer? Our tax revenues don’t meet the wants and needs of the American people.

Our population in 2000 was just over 280 million. By 2020, even though population growth in America is slowing, it will sit at approximately 330 million. That’s an 18% increase, 50 million more people, without factoring any increase in illegal immigration. We simply can’t sustain internal expansion like that on our decaying roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and airports without some revenue relief in the form of taxes. And we’re not even considering impacts on our environment.

We pay less in taxes, per capita, than most of the rest of the developed world. This does allow us to consume more, per



Bud Katz

capita, than people living in most of the rest of the developed world. But, is consumption enough without infrastructure to support it and us?

When we hear our elected leaders say the words “tax cut” we are programmed to believe this is something about which we should be happy, and therefore, we should thank them

with our votes. Not so fast, my friends.

Let’s be clear. Most of our elected leaders, on all levels, are paid more than double the median per capita income in our cities, counties, states and the nation. That means our tax dollars are paying them considerably more than at least half of the rest of us. Their benefits, which, by the way, they get to approve for themselves, are better than those available to most of the rest of us. Our tax dollars pay for their benefits.

Do you live as well as they do? Are your conditions and benefits as nice and as comfortable as theirs? Are your pensions as generous? These are NOT rhetorical questions.

Keep in mind, taxes for some may be going down but salaries for elected officials seem to be going up. Does this equation work for you?

There’s an old adage, actually there’s a couple of them. The first one is, there’s no such thing as a free lunch. Cutting taxes means government on all levels has less revenue for upgrading our infrastructure.

The second old adage is, good stuff isn’t cheap and cheap stuff isn’t good. We tend to get exactly and only what we pay for. It’s all we can ask and it’s all we really deserve.

Be wary of those running for office promising you something for nothing. Be wary of those asking for your vote so you can pay less in taxes.

There’s an ad slogan from back in the middle of the 20th Century made famous by the Fram Auto Filter Company. The actor portraying an auto mechanic says, “You can pay me now, or you can pay me later.” Tax and spend means pay me now. Borrow and spend means pay me later, or your children and grandchildren pay later.

Either way, someone’s going to pay, and the chances are it isn’t going to be those folks asking for your vote.

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What's the Big Deal?

Listing price to sales price ratio is one way to get the current temperature of real estate in your area, but there are several aspects to consider.

1. DOM (Days on Market)
2. Price changes
3. Unique factors of the property

These three things have a synergy like they are in their own galaxy, they can't help but orbit around each other.

Knowing how long a property has been on the market can help in many ways, but sometimes it takes a little work to see why it has been on the market for so long. Most people automatically assume it's because the property was priced too high when it was listed, but there could be other reasons, and those reasons have everything to do with price changes and unique factors of the property.

There have been homes in our local MLS listed for thousands of days before selling. Does that mean something is wrong with those properties? Does that mean the sellers of those properties would (or should) be willing to accept any offer? The answer is NO and NO, with a not necessarily thrown in for good measure.

Let's say a property has been on the market for 10 years. Yes, it happens. The listing sheet may not reflect the true days on market, but if you've followed the real estate market for any length of time, you'll see it happens more than you think.

2009-2014 were tough years. Many unsold properties listed prior and during that time felt the realization of the nation's economy. Most sellers were not willing to cut their losses, some because they owed more than they'd get out of the sale. Hopefully all that torture is behind us, the market corrected



Jeannie Chambers
Chambers Realty & Vacation Rentals
828-526-3717

and sales are back on track.

So, why do we still have properties in our MLS that seem to be just hanging on?

Again, ask your broker to help you do some research. Your broker can search the property by the address and get a full history. Sometimes, there are reasonable situations a property hasn't sold. There's nothing

underhanded about it, but sometimes a seller will take the property off the market for several months, or someone has taken residence for a year or two and taken it off the market, or they may have kept it ON the market while that was going on and it wasn't shown much.

Sometimes, properties are listed, have offers and inspections causing those buyers to walk away. When the property comes back on the market - do we know if things have been repaired or are the sellers just going to try again? These are questions buyers need to know, and their broker can help them find out.

Sometimes, sellers reduce their prices after realizing maintenance items need to be addressed (whether a home inspection was done or not). When a seller reduces their price substantially, a buyer should question why.

Let's say a property needs a new roof, the seller reduces the price instead of replacing the roof, a buyer comes along and makes a low offer because the house needs a new roof, what's a seller to do?

I don't think any seller expects a full price offer (although they happen, and they're very welcome), BUT making an offer is more than just the math, it's all about considering the property and its true value. It's a lot of give-and-take, and emotions really need to be off the table.

In the beginning, sellers need to be realistic when listing their home, and shouldn't try to bully their broker into listing it higher, you know, 'just to see what the market will do.' Listen to your broker when he or she suggests a listing price. Listing prices are based on comparable sales and need to be closely monitored.

In the interim, sellers need to listen when a broker suggests a lower price. You don't have to wait until it's time to extend the listing period. By the same token, if your property hasn't had 'any action,' it's OK for the seller to suggest the broker analyze the market.

In the end, sellers should listen when offers are made, no matter how ridiculous they may seem. Instead of an immediate NO, ask the broker WHY the potential buyers feel their bottom feeder price is warranted. Sometimes, the buyers are just fishing, but sometimes there can be a meeting of the minds.

In 2010, the average listing to sales price ratio was 84%. In the last 12 months that figure rose to 92%. Properties are more competitively priced which makes it easier for buyers to know what to offer. Properties should have starting offers within 10% of the current listing price, even those with substantially reduced prices from their original listing price.

So, what's the big deal?

The big deal is a closed deal, and buyers, sellers, listing and selling brokers all need to be in the same galaxy, orbiting around the property.

• Jeannie and Tucker Chambers are owner/brokers of Chambers Realty & Vacation Realty at 401 N. Fifth Street in Highlands. Now is a great time to find out the value of your home in the Highlands galaxy and we'd love to have you on our planet whether you're renting, selling, buying or just maintaining. 828-526-3717 info@highlandsiscalling.com

Highlands School celebrates literary icon Dr. Seuss for Read Across America Week

By Brian O'Shea
Plateau Daily News

Students at Highlands School spent the week reading about whozits and whatzits and places they can go during the National Education Association's Read Across America Week.

The week-long celebration of Seuss's works, and reading in general, is an effort to show students that there's loads of fun to be had opening a book. Highlands School Vice Principal Sarah Holbrooks said celebrating a figure of Seuss' status is a great way to encourage students to read at an early age.

"I think that Dr. Seuss promotes literacy and makes reading fun," said Holbrooks. "And we encourage reading all sorts of books, not just Seuss, but it's a great way to encourage literacy-based activities throughout the week and think outside the box."

Margie Potts' Kindergarten class was swept up in the spirit of Read Across America Week donning mustaches, silly hats, goofy socks, and Whoville hair.

"The goal is to have fun with reading," said Potts. "We've had a lot of participation with students dressing up and reading Dr. Seuss

books. His books work well with all the pictures and rhyming, and it shows students that reading can just be fun."

Each day of the week students were encouraged to "dress up and read." Many wore costumes of Dr. Seuss characters and listened to guest speakers read a book aloud each morning.

Monday was backwards/opposite day; Tuesday was crazy sock day; Wednesday was crazy hair day; Thursday was Lorax mustache and wear orange day and Friday was hat day.

The strategy worked as Kindergarten Riley Brooks said she could not wait to get home and pick up a Seuss book.

"Dr. Seuss week is so fun because you get to dress up and wear different-funny hats," said Brooks. "I want to read Dr. Seuss books when I get home because we've been talking Dr. Seuss for days."

Read Across America Week is centered around Dr. Seuss's, or Theodore Seuss Geisel's, birthday on March 2. Kindergarten Sophia Aguilar said she has had "so much fun" reading Dr. Seuss books and enjoyed the activities scheduled throughout the week.

"Reading week is fun because



we get to wear silly stuff and I like to read those books because they have funny words and pictures in them," said Aguilar.

3rd grader Falon Brewer said he learned those who are successful oftentimes deal with obstacles before they make it big.

"It's fun because you get to celebrate Dr. Seuss and all the

children's books he's made," said Brewer. "And I learned that his books got rejected before he was famous, and he still made it."

5th grader Jackson Gagne was working with Kindergarten students as a "reading buddy" during the many Seuss-themed activities throughout the week.

"It's a fun week because of all the crazy things you can wear," said Gagne, who's favorite Dr. Seuss book is Oh, the Places you'll Go! "It's good to read to them (Kindergartners) so their imagination can grow and they read more."



Highlands School kindergarten teacher Margie Potts with her class on crazy hair day.

— Photos by Brian O'Shea





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• H-C HOSPITAL NEWS •

Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Takes Inclusive Approach to Improving Efficiency

At Highlands-Cashiers Hospital (HCH), we are engaged in a constant quest for quality. In fact, our clinical care team plays a critical role in guiding us to solutions for overall improvement in the patient care experience. To that end, 10 of our clinical leaders, including nursing, lab, therapy and facility leaders, are currently participating in five full days of LEAN training. LEAN is an organizational systems approach that focuses on increasing efficiency, streamlining processes and eliminating waste – whether time, effort, task redundancy or supplies (both materials and human energy).

One particularly valuable component of LEAN training is the Kaizen event. “Kaizen” means “improvement” in Japanese, and a typical meeting employs a progressive, solution-oriented approach to break down a problem methodically, analyze every component of it from every conceivable angle and reconstruct the process in which it originated to formulate a superior process.

A recent example of a process that needed enhancement emerged from both community feedback and a desire by our emergency department nurses, including Rosalie Lindecamp and Hollis Whitehead, to improve the rapid transport of our sickest patients off the mountain. While our commitment to finding practical solutions to improving the speed and efficiency of the transport process is unwavering, arriving at workable solutions is neither simple nor easy.

HCH recently held a day-long mini-Kaizen performance improvement forum in which we solicited input from members of every stakeholder group involved in the rapid transport



Jacqueline Medland, PhD, RN,
President/CNO
Highlands-Cashiers Hospital

process including physicians, nurses, local community partners such as Macon County EMS, and colleagues within the Mission Health system. Led by our Quality Manager Karen Hendricks and our Performance Improvement Specialist Vivian Trudell, the group immersed themselves in a robust conversation that yielded some immediate solutions as well as long-term ideas for improving the process. Participants mapped out our current transfer process, identified inefficiencies as a team where every voice and idea was valued and considered, and carefully painted a detailed portrait of what they want patient transport to look like in the future. While there is much work yet to be done, the team identified immediate solutions such as refinement of the “estimated time of arrival” notification from the field, radio enhancements, a resource alert and revised documentation.

Our mini-Kaizen event illustrates that HCH cares for the community in so many ways, in addition to direct patient care, and that lasting change can result from this type of coming together. The relatively short day-long time investment in training is reaping

immediate, significant dividends. We owe it to our patients to huddle – literally and figuratively – with our community partners to find inspired solutions to any barrier to the best care.

We gave our stakeholders the appropriate time and space to begin making real traction on this pivotal community issue. Collaboration is the key to a clear path forward for sharpening our efficiency, increasing safety and overall care quality, and making our community stronger and healthier.

• Jackie has enjoyed a career as a healthcare leader for over 30 years, including positions in direct patient care, advanced practice nursing, nursing management and hospital administration. Jackie received her MSN from the University of Illinois, College of Nursing, and her PhD in Organization Development from Benedictine University. She is a member of the American Association of Critical Care Nurses, the American Organization of Nurses Executives, the Illinois Organization of Nursing Leaders and Sigma Theta Tau. Jackie's unique leadership and mentorship was recognized by the University of Illinois, College of Nursing with the Sage Award.

ABOUT H-C HOSPITAL

Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, a member of Mission Health, an operating division of HCA Healthcare, is a community hospital serving Macon, Jackson and the surrounding counties. Located on Highway 64 between the towns of Highlands and Cashiers, the hospital offers 24/7 emergency care, acute inpatient care, rehabilitation, as well as long-term care through Eckerd Living Center. Highlands-Cashiers Hospital has 24 beds for acute care services and 80 beds in the Eckerd Living Center. Ambulatory services are also available, including therapy services and primary care practices serving both Highlands and Cashiers. For more information, please visit missionhealth.org/highlandscashiers.

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Highlands School students flex scientific muscles at STEM/Science Fair Family Night

By Brian O'Shea
Plateau Daily News

After hours of toiling away at kitchen tables, turning living rooms into sterile laboratories, and compiling vast amounts of painstakingly-collected data, Highlands students were ready to present their findings at STEM Family Night at Highlands School on Thursday. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and Thursday was also Science Fair night.

The old gym was full of enterprising and innovative experiments that focused on a question and let the facts reveal what they may. Students tackled brainteasing mysteries like 4th grader Alejandra Valerio who was brave enough to get to the bottom of discovering what liquid makes gummy bears expand the most.

After meticulous time-keeping and measurements, Valerio tested the malleable-gelatinous candy in vinegar, water, salt water, and Sprite. Her findings contradicted her initial hypothesis.

"I really thought it would be vinegar, but I was wrong," said Valerio. "It was really fun seeing which one would grow the biggest."

Valerio added that she could not have completed the experiment without the help of colleague and fellow Highlands student 4th grader Taylor Hays.

Highlands Middle School Science Teacher Stephanie Smathers has organized the science fair for years and said it's a great way for students to think outside the box and devise their own projects.

"We've always had a science fair, the kids make a project and the parents get to come and see all the things they are learning," said Smathers. "It opens the door to kids that sci-

ence is fun. It's not just sitting in a classroom, this is a hands-on activity."

To add to the hands-on theme approach to science was Macon County STEM Coordinator, Jennifer Love. Love and staff brought a variety of STEM activities for the students to interact with in between presenting experiment results to other science enthusiasts.

"We ask them open-ended questions and give them engineering challenges using things like blocks, sticks, and catapults, you name it," said Love. "And as you can see, they are having a blast and learning that science is fun."

4th grader Francisco Gooch studied the boiling points of water versus salt water.

"If salt affects the boiling point of water, that's like the sea and the sun," said Gooch. "If there is an effect, I can solve global warming"

Some students ventured into science that was difficult to quantify using traditional methods, like 4th grader Leela Chrestman who studied the effects of positive and negative energies on plants.

She deduced that the type of energy does indeed contribute to a plant's growth or decay. Of the two plants tested, one was ex-

posed to negative comments written on the jar, sad music played through headphones propped on a plant, and other factors to test her theory. The plant subjected to negative energy showed more decay compared to the plant exposed to positivity.

"The moral of this story is be kind to one another because you can hurt other people," said Chrestman. "The negative plant is deformed and it's a plant, just think of what it could do to people. This just proves what we should do."

Some students like 4th grader Elmer Hernandez dove into more volatile mysteries such as what combinations of liquids cause volcanoes to explode. Before collecting data, Hernandez had to first build a model of a volcano surrounded by a forest for authenticity. He tested a variety of combinations using chemicals and other materials like, water, Coca-Cola, Corona, and rice.

The largest reaction occurred with a mixture of Coca-Cola and rice.

"I never knew that or would have expected that," said Hernandez. "And it was an accident, I was working on it and my brother put rice in it and it started fizzing."



STEM activities included engineering challenges using things like blocks, sticks, and catapults.



4th grader Leela Chrestman who studied the effects of positive and negative energies on plants.



4th grader Elmer Hernandez dove into more volatile mysteries such as what combinations of liquids cause volcanoes to explode.



4th grader Francisco Gooch studied the boiling points of water versus salt water. He hopes to solve global warming.

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

NOTE

- Sign up now for summer camps at the Highlands Nature Center. Call 828-526-2602 or go online at highlandsbiological.org. Scholarships available.
- Sign up for the Highlands Historical

Society's free Kelsey Kids summer day camp for children ages 8-11 set for Mon. - Fri., June 24-28. www.highlandshistory.com.

Ongoing

- Movies at the Playhouse – NEW SCHEDULE – Fri. & Sat. 1, 4, and 7 p.m.; Sun-

day 1 and 4 p.m.; NO MOVIES MONDAY; Tues., Wed., and Thurs. 1, 4, 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 / \$2 off on Tuesdays.

- The Bascom has gone to winter hours. 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 828-526-4949.

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.-Wed.

- Hip Hop classes with Tori Schmitt 5:30-6:30.

- Gentle Yoga at the Rec park at 9:30-10:30 a.m.. All levels welcome.

Mon., Wed., Fri.

- Heart Healthy Exercise Class Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8:30am-9:30am.
- Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9a.

Mon., Wed., Thurs.

- Pickle Ball at the Recreation Department Gym 10:30am -1pm

Tuesdays

- FREE Community Table Dinner at the Community Bldg. at 6p.

- At the Bascom, 3pm - 5pm: Writers group. For more information call 828-526-4949.

- The Humanist Discussion Group meets from 10:30-11:30 am in the Meeting Room at the back of the Hudson Library.

2nd and 4th Tuesdays

- OccupyWNC meets at the 7pm in the Sneak E. Squirrel Community Room (1314 Main St., Sylva. Visit www.occupywnc.org or call 828.331.1524

org or call 828.331.1524

Third Tuesday

- The Macon County Poultry club meets to discuss topics related to raising backyard chickens. For more information please call 828-349-2046 or 828-369-3916.

- The Humanist Discussion Group meets from 10:30-11:30a in the Meeting Room in the back of Hudson Library,

Tuesday and Thursdays

- Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at 5:30. A combination class with many different styles of exercise at Rec Park.

Wednesdays

- Power Flow Yoga with Nalicia Allio a certified Yoga Instructor 12-1pm and 6:30-7:30pm.

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.

Wed. & Fri.

- Duplicate Bridge 12-4pm at Rec Park.

Thursdays

- Storytime at Hudson Library, 10:40 am. Open to the public

- Kids Zone at Hudson Library, 3:30- 5 pm. A different STEAM Program each week, with LEGO Club on the 4th Thursday.

- 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 Out Reach Center on West Main Street in Franklin Call Donita for more info (828) 526-9510.

- Hip Hop classes with Tori Schmitt at 6:30-7:30 at the Rec Park.

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 pm in the Meeting Room at the back of the 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

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

- The Bascom at Sotheby's series features different artists each month with a reception the first Friday of every month at Highlands Sotheby's International Realty from 4-5:30p at the corner of Main Street and Highway 64 across from The Old Ed-



Pictured from left at the Sotheby's downtown office: Jack Calloway, Sheryl Wilson, Jody Lovell, Bert Mobley, artist Kathy Beehler, Andrea Gabbard, Molly Leonard, Craig Berry and Cathy Garren.

The Bascom at Sotheby's series is the first Friday of each month at 4p

The Bascom at Sotheby's series kicked off the year this past Friday with Kathy Beehler as the featured artist for the month of March. Kathy is a member of the Studio Alive group that meets weekly at The Bascom. Studio Alive is a group of dedicated artists that share a passion for working from live models. All interested artists, regardless of talent or ability, are invited to join Studio Alive which meets every Monday from 10a-1p at The Bascom. The Bascom at Sotheby's series features different artists each month with a reception the first Friday of every month at Highlands Sotheby's International Realty from 4-5:30 at the corner of Main Street and Highway 64 across from The Old Edwards Inn. The public is invited to come meet the artist, view the exhibit and have some wine.

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

wards Inn. The public is invited to come meet the artist, view the exhibit and have some wine.

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

Fourth Friday

- Community Coffee with Mayor Pat Taylor at the Hudson Library in the Meeting Room from 11a until noon.

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.
- The Bascom Knitters on the Terrace at The Bascom from 10 am until noon or downstairs in The Bascom Library room.

Sundays

- Live Music in OEI's Hummingbird Lounge 8 p.m. to close with Paul Jones.

Through March 10

- At The Bascom, SOUNDWAVE, Western Carolina University MFA and Ink-Snior Medicare Patrol! This workshop is aimed at teaching seniors to spot, stop, and report healthcare fraud. This informational workshop will be held at The Crawford Senior Center on Wednesday at 9:45 a.m. The key to preventing healthcare fraud is to protect yourself. For more information about services at the Crawford Senior Services Center, please call (828) 349-2058.

Fri. March 8

- Summit's Got Talent. Summit Charter School's annual talent show will take place on Friday, March 8 at Community Bible Church in Highlands. This is a celebration of the gifts students bring to Summit and beyond! The event begins at 6 p.m. and admission is free. For more information, please contact the school at 828-743-5755.

Sat., March 9

- The March 2019 meeting of the Western North Carolina Woodturners Club Inc. will be on Saturday starting at 10 AM at the Bascom in Highlands, NC. The Bascom is located at 323 Franklin Rd, Highlands, NC, just north of Downtown Highlands, NC (heading toward Franklin). Drive across the covered bridge into the parking lot, and come into the main entrance near the covered patio. There will be directions on how to get to the wood turning studio. Visitors are always welcome. The club meets in Highlands the second Saturday of every month between March and November. This month's presenter will be John Tagliarini.

- The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a

moderate 4-mile hike, elevation change 60 ft., to High Falls on the west Fork of the Tuckaseegee River in Jackson County. Hike into a box canyon to see this beautiful fall, passing Rough Run Falls along the route. Meet at Cashiers Rec. Park at: 10 a.m. Drive 18 miles round trip. Call leader Jody Burner, for reservations, 788-2985. Visitors welcome.

Tues., March 12

- Kindergarten registration for the 2019-2020 school year will begin, for parents, at 10 am in the school's media center. Children who reach the age of 5 on or before August 31, 2019 are eligible for admission into the Class of 2032. PTO will provide complimentary lunch for all students and their parents in the school cafeteria as part of Kindergarten registration. Registration packets can be picked up at Highlands School or at Highlands Community Child Development Center. All forms in the registration packet (except the Health Assessment Transmittal Form), will need to be completed and returned on March 12th. The Health Assessment Transmittal Form should be completed and turned in to the school by August 1, 2019. For more information, call 526-2147.

Wed., March 13

- Hudson Library in Highlands is hosting a community blood drive with the American Red Cross on Wednesday from 11 AM to 3 PM at the library. For more information about donating blood, or to schedule a donation, call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or go online at redcrossblood.org.

Sat., March 16

- The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 5-mile hike from Jones Gap to White Rock Mtn. on the NC Bartram Trail to a blue blazed trail up the Mtn., elevation change 400 ft., to a spectacular view of the Tessentee Valley, Albert Mountain and the Nantahala Mountains. Meet at Bi-Lo at 10 am, drive 40 miles round trip. Call leader Gail Lehman, 524-5298, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Sun., March 17

- The Nantahala Hiking Club will take an easy 2-mile birding hike with very little elevation change along the Tessentee Creek in the Tessentee Farms area where a restored farm house can also be visited. Meet at the Smoky Mtn. Visitors' Center at 2 pm. Drive a short round trip distance to the Tessentee Farms. Call leader Mary Stone, 369-7352, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Thurs., Fri., Sat., March 21-23

- Highlands Community Players present its dinner theatre with four one-act plays. Doors open at 6:30p, the first play starts at 7p. Tickets are \$37.50. Call 526-8084 for reservations.

Sat., March 23

- The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a

moderate 4-mile hike with elevation change of 100 ft. to view Lower Whitewater Falls on the Whitewater River, 2 miles down from the upper Whitewater Falls. The hike has great views of Lake Jocasee in South Carolina. Meet at Cashiers Rec. Park at 10 am, drive: 22 miles round trip. Call leaders Mike and Sue Kettles, 743-1079, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

- The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate-to-strenuous 7-mile hike, elevation change 1300 ft., on the Bradley Fork/Smoke-mont Loop in the Smoky Mtns. Nat'l. Park. Hike along the pretty creek, then up Chasteen Creek to a beautiful cascade, and down and around Smokemont Loop. Wildflowers should be coming out. Meet at Oconaluftee Visitor Center in Cherokee NC at 9 am, drive: 8 miles round trip. Call leader Keith Patton, 456-8895, for reservations. Hike lim-

ited to 15 people.

- OEI's Chefs in the House, a dinner series at half-mile farm. Call 828-787-2620 or 828-787-2635 for reservations.

Sun., March 24

- The Nantahala Hiking Club will take an easy 1.2-mile hike on Lakeside Dr. Trail, starting at the Health Dept. in Franklin for a nice winter hike with mild ups and downs, passing through the Environmental Resource Center. Meet at the Sheriffs Dept. Call leader Mary Stone, 369-7352, for reservations and directions if needed.

Thurs., Fri., Sat., March 28-30

- Highlands Community Players present its dinner theatre with four one-act plays. Doors open at 6:30p, the first play starts at 7p. Tickets are \$37.50. Call 526-8084 for reservations.



Elizabeth Gordon playing the part of an unemployed mother of four pleads with a stern official played by Virginia Talbot for food vouchers in the humorous one-act play, directed by Donna Cochran for HCP's March Medley dinner theater at Highlands PAC, March 21 thru 23, 28 thru 30. Call HCP Box office 526-8084 for reservations or reserve seats on line highlandscashiersplayers.org.

HCP presents its dinner theatre with four one-act plays beginning March 21

March is the Month for the Highlands Cashiers Players popular dinner theater, scheduled for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, March 21 thru 23, and March 28 thru 30 at Highlands Performing Arts Center on Chestnut Street. There is no Sunday matinee. This year the event will be held in a much more spacious area than in the past—upstairs in the PAC auditorium, so plays will take place on the main stage.

The four short humorous plays that will be presented between dinner courses are directed by four different directors -- longtime HCP director Donna Cochran, and new directors Lynleigh McLain, Jamie Thomas, and Todd Lipphardt. Kristy Lewis, former owner of the Sports Page Restaurant in Highlands will be catering the delicious dinner planned for the evening. Price for dinner and the show is \$37.50. For season subscriber there is no charge — it's part of the 2018-'19 subscription package. Doors open at 6:30, the first play starts at 7 p.m..

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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Rotary's Jan. & Feb. 'Students of the Month'



Due to incimate weather, the January and February Students of the Month were honored together at the February 26 meeting. Pictured are school Assistant Principal, Sara Holbrooks, January high school winner, Toby Barnes, January middle school winner, Getsi Hernandez, club President Jerry Moore, January elementary school winner, Daniel Wisniewski, school Counselor, Nicole Lui and February elementary school winner, Blake Chastain. Not pictured are February high school winner, Abigail Olvera and February middle school winner, Caleb Burrell.

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• THE INK PENN •

Visiting Greece, if only in books

Chatting with a friend who's planning a trip to Greece made me long to visit again. I've sailed the Greek Islands twice, the last time in 2013, and I'd return in a heartbeat given the opportunity. With all the places on my travel bucket list, I'm not sure another trip is in my future, so I'll continue to get my Greece fix by reading mysteries set there.



Kathy Manos Penn

My favorite author for Greek Island stories is Jeffrey Siger. He's an American lawyer who gave up law to move to Mykonos and write. Color me jealous. Published in 2009, "Murder in Mykonos" became Greece's #1 best-selling English-language novel and a bestseller in Greek too. I stumbled across Siger's series after my last trip to Greece and kept trying to picture its Mykonos night spots since I'd just been there — not to the night spots, but to the island.

Chief Inspector Andreas Kaldis is the main character with a supporting cast of regulars. I've read five of the nine books in the series and found every one hard to put down. I visited Tinos and Delos on my last trip and especially enjoyed the books that featured those islands in addition to Mykonos. The New York Times selected the fourth book "Target: Tinos" as one of its top five beach reads—quite the honor.

I picked up Anne Zouroudi's "The Messenger of Athens" but found it a bit dark for my tastes. Zouroudi has written eight books with Hermes Diaktoros as the protagonist, a character described as the Greek Hercule Poirot. One review I read described her books as "absorbing and beautifully written" but suggested they might appeal more to armchair travelers than to mystery buffs. Perhaps, that's why it wasn't my cup of tea.

Next, I read Leta Serafim's debut novel "The Devil Takes Half," set at an archaeological dig on the island of Chios. It held my interest with its plot and its main character, Yiannis Patronas, Chief Officer of the Chios police. I discovered that Serafim has two more books in the series, so I'll be adding them to my To Read list at the library.

As I sought additional books that might strike my fancy, I stumbled across author Luke Christodoulou. After reading the descriptions of his mysteries, also set on the Greek islands, I was ready to click buy—that is until I read the reviews. Many indicated the books were not well edited, and as a grammar geek, that's a serious turnoff for me.

As can be the risk with the internet, I tumbled down the rabbit hole of books set in Greece and found Mary Stewart's "My Brother Michael," a book I read long ago. It came out in 1960, and I'm sure I read it sometime in the late 60's when I was in my Mary Stewart and Victoria Holt phase. Because I'm fond of saying, "So many books, so little time," I rarely reread a book, but I may have to make an exception for this one.

Writing about these books has not done a thing to assuage my desire to return to Greece. This column, if anything, has only made the longing worse. Who knows? A third trip to Greece could be in the cards.

• *Kathy is a Georgia resident. Find her books "The Ink Penn: Celebrating the Magic in the Everyday" and "Lord Banjo the Royal Pooch" at Books Unlimited in Franklin and on Amazon. "Lord Banjo the Royal Pooch" is also available at Highlands Mountain Paws. Contact her at ink-penn119@gmail.com, and follow her on Facebook, www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/.*

Town Board Closed Session news

At the February Town Board meeting, the issue about Duke Energy and its relationship with the town was discussed in Closed Session.

According to Mayor Pat Taylor, the briefing by Kevin O'Donnell, our Duke liaison, was on pending legal issues on charges that the group of whole sale providers have been involved in with Duke for well over a year. "There was confidential legal information in his briefing that could not be shared," said Taylor.

"My take is that our rate contract with Duke is very stable, and I do not see any significant rate increases on the horizon. Unlike Duke wholesale customers who recently saw a 15% increase, our contract excludes us for those increases. We have nine more years on the contract. At that time, I believe the town should look at all options with providers. The process of developing a new contract will begin in about four years."



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1. Prep ribs by removing the membrane.
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3. Wrap the ribs around the perimeter of the crock pot.
4. Cook on low for 7-8 hours, or 4-5 hours on high.
5. With 20 minutes left of cooking, add your favorite BBQ Sauce.
6. Remove ribs from the crock pot and sprinkle with Bourbon Black Walnut Sugar, and Broil for 6-7 minutes, just enough for the ribs to crisp up and the sugar to caramelize.





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...PLANNING continued from page 1

Some years ago, when tall, solid, wood fences were erected in the setbacks next to travel-ways on US 64 east and west, a fence ordinance was quickly passed to regulate the look and scale especially along the inroads to Highlands.

Now that ordinance is being amended to further clarify allowable residential fences.

The Planning Board worked the ordinance over a few times and then it was sent to the Land Use Committee made up of Commissioners John Dotson, Eric Pierson and Donnie Calloway who added their two cents.

Two Mondays ago, the fence ordinance amendments were tweaked again presumably for the last time.

So, fences or walls are permitted along the side and rear property lines and behind the building setback line from a road right of way or road center line. However, they can't be over six feet high; they can only be constructed of wood, coated chain link, or-

amental iron, aluminum, brick or stone; the exposed framing side must face the interior of the property; and if wood, may be left natural but the stained or painted color should come from the town's approved color chart so to blend in with the environment.

Though fences or walls are discouraged within a building's front setback line, if built, they can't be higher than five feet, can be no closer than 12 feet from the edge of the pavement or built in the right-of-way; and allowable building materials are the same as above. In addition, they can't block the required sight triangle at intersections; exposed framing must face the interior and in front and along roadways fencing of all kinds must have a vegetative screen. As above, the color may be selected from the town's chart.

In all cases, a permit is required before any fence construction begins.

Town Manager Josh Ward will bring the final version to the Planning Board in March before it goes through the official amendment process.

Habitable Basements

Summit Architect Jeff Weller was on hand to discuss the benefits of allowing a basement to be habitable – because people have been doing it anyway so it might as well be allowed, he said.

"This isn't about a specific project, but there has been inconsistency over the years

– regarding what was approved and what wasn't, what was built and what wasn't. People come to the board and lie and then put something habitable in the lower level so now there are three habitable levels, which is technically not allowed if one of those levels is a basement. I just want to be able to come and get a project approved and be honest when it makes sense for the site," he said.

He said over the last three and four years, there are commercial projects that have been built in the B1, B2, and B3 districts that have habitable basements.

In addition to what Weller noted, there are several reasons to amend the ordinance. Recently, the town amended the ordinance to allow attics in the commercial district to be habitable, so why not a day-light basement? The slope of the land in Highlands lends itself to daylight basements and if it's allowed in the residential district, why not the commercial district?

"The idea is to make the ordinance consistent," said Town Manager Ward.

Planning Board Chairman Thomas Craig believes both attics and basements should be habitable.

"The character of the business district buildings are defined by their height, design, color, built-upon area and parking requirements; all of which are controlled by our ordinance," said Craig. "As such, the use of attics or basements as habitable spaces are not detrimental to downtown as long as they comply with the ordinance and the use is consistent with the current zoning district."

In fact, he said he would like to see two habitable floors exclusive of attics and basements allowed.

"If you can use both the attic and the basement and you meet all other requirements, then go for it. Especially, if there is no undue burden on anyone because of what you are doing in that basement whether it's storage, mechanical, a hotel room, office, or parking," he said.

But Town Manager Ward said the Land Use Committee has concerns and Dotson was there to explain.

"You can create your own problem or create your own future if you excavate it right. The folks that built Wright Square excavated the 'Pit' and sold the dirt. So, we don't want someone excavating saying they want to create parking or something else and then 10 years from now turn it into something else – coming back to re-purpose it," he said. "That's what we've got going on behind Wright Square. It's a problem that was created by the developer which now the town needs to cure to make work."

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• BUSINESS / ORGANIZATION NEWS •

Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust Earns National Re-Accreditation

Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is proud to announce that they have earned national re-accreditation through the prestigious Land Trust Accreditation Commission program!

Since its founding more than 100 years ago, the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust (HCLT), originally known as the Highlands Improvement Society, has pursued the highest degree of professionalism as it conserves and cares for vital lands, water, wildlife, recreational opportunities and important viewing areas of the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau. However, resting on tradition is not the approach taken by this historic conservation organization.

In 2008, the Land Trust Alliance designed a program that officially recognizes a land trust as a national leader in land protection.

The land trust accreditation program identifies land trusts that meet national quality standards for protecting and caring for important lands.

The accreditation process includes an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance.

The program was developed to foster public confidence in land conservation and help ensure the long-term protection of land. To learn more about the LTA accreditation process visit <http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org>.

In 2013, Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust was among the first 10% of all land trusts to achieve this distinction. Accreditation lasts for five years, so in 2018,

HCLT underwent the re-accreditation process and remain among the growing number or accredited land trust nationwide. Approximately 30% of land trusts in the United States are currently accredited.

Land trusts and the lands they save for their communities are increasingly important. These local and regional nonprofits around the country help communities meet their goals for protecting clean water, farms, forests and public recreation areas.

"Passing the 420 mark for accredited land trusts is significant," said Tammara Van Ryn, executive director of the Commission. "There are now more accredited land trusts than there are national parks, monuments and historic sites. By earning this distinction, these land trusts have proven they can effectively steward the nearly 20 million acres of land under their care."

Through the rigorous accreditation process, HCLT is advancing its commitment to excellence. Becoming an accredited land trust is an objective affirmation that HCLT meets national standards, upholds the public trust, and ensures that its conservations are permanent.

In 2018, HCLT conserved six new properties that will protect the quality of the water we drink as well as healthy habitat for many of the plants and animals that live on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau. New projects are already in the works for 2019.

The mission of HCLT is to protect valuable land resources for all generations. To learn more about your land trust or how you can be involved visit www.hicashlt.org or call 828-526-1111. Together we are saving the places we all love and need.



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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Summit Charter School hires new director



Kurt Pusch

Summit Charter School, a tuition-free K-9 public charter school in the Cashiers-Highlands plateau of North Carolina, today announces the appointment of Kurt Pusch as its next director, effective July 1. Pusch will succeed Billy Leonard, who has served Summit as interim director since July 2018.

In making the announcement, Edward Cole, board of trustees chair and search committee co-chair, says, "We consider ourselves very fortunate to have someone of Kurt's award-winning experience as an administrator and educator. He has spent the past 15 years with KIPP, the nation's largest and highest regarded network of public charter schools." Cole continues, "Kurt's demonstrated ability to lead a school to high ranking academic achievement, increase faculty retention and decrease student attrition was quite impressive. He is well-versed on the advantages of a charter school, has a passion for outdoor education and aligns well with Summit's place-based and whole-child approach to learning."

Most recently, Pusch served as Chief Schools Officer at KIPP Colorado Schools, overseeing six charter schools serving nearly 2,000 students from early childhood through twelfth grade with the mission of educating students to develop the knowledge, skills and character for success in college and life. Prior to his tenure at KIPP, where he also served as principal, academic dean and middle school history teacher, Pusch was a Teach For America Corps Member, serving as a fourth grade teacher at Northside Elementary School in Norlina, NC. He graduated from The Lovett School in Atlanta, Colgate University in Hamilton, NY and received his Master of Education in Administration and Supervision from National Louis University in Chicago, IL. He will receive his Executive Master of Business Administration from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management in June 2019. He is married to M.C. Pusch and has four children, Briggs (8), Kate (6), McKinley (4) and Henry (2).

"My wife M.C. and I feel deeply privileged by this opportunity for our family to join the Cashiers-Highlands community and to serve Summit Charter School," says Pusch. "In our time getting to know the staff, students,

• See SUMMIT page 19

Proverbs 3:5

BLUEVALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice, Pastor (706) 782-3965

Sundays: School: 10 a.m., Worship: 11

Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7

Wednesdays: Mid-week prayer meeting: 7 p.m.

BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

828-269-3546 • Rev. Jamie Passmore, Pastor

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

CHAPEL OF THE SKY

Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999

Sundays: 10 a.m.: Worship

Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

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, S.S 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.cbchighlands.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 Manning • 526-2968

Monday-Friday: Morning Prayer at 8:15a. Sundays: 8 am

Holy Eucharist Rite I; 9 am Sunday School; 10:30 am 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

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Sunday: School 9:45a, Worship 11a & 7p, Bible Study 6p

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Randy Reed, Pastor 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street

Sundays: Worship: 11

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson

670 N. 4th Street (next to the Highlands Civic Center)

Sun.: Bible Study 10a; Morning Worship 10:45a., Evening

Worship, 6p. Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.

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

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Worship/Communion: 10:30

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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)

Weds: Bible Study 6:30 p.m.; Youth Group 6 p.m.

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CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Father Casimir - 526-2418

Mass: Sun: 11 a.m.; Sat. at 4p

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby

Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11 a.m. & 7

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.

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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Macon Community Funding Pool is Accepting Applications

Macon County non-profit organizations have until March 29, 2019, to apply for county funds allocated in the county's current fiscal year budget, through the Macon County Community Funding Pool (CFP). Application forms and instructions are available on the Macon County website, www.maconnc.org, or may be picked up at the Macon County Public Library on Siler Farm Road in Franklin, the Hudson Library on Main Street in Highlands, and the Nantahala Public Library on Nantahala School Road.

Organizations applying for CFP funds must provide financial statements such as budgets and federal tax-exempt reports, organization goals and objectives, and program/service descriptions. First-time applicants must contact Karen Wal-

lace, 524-3600, or Bobbie Contino, 342-7872, to discuss their proposal. Groups not incorporated as non-profits may enlist an established non-profit to serve as their fiscal agent. Collaborative agency proposals are encouraged to leverage limited funding and to share resources.

The Community Funding Pool was established to help the Macon County Board of Commissioners allocate tax-generated funds to local non-profits in a fair and efficient way. The CFP Task Force is composed of citizens chosen by the Board of Commissioners to consider applications and make recommendations to the Board, who make final funding decisions. The Community Funding Pool is a separate entity from the Macon County Community Foundation.

...SUMMIT continued from page 18

families, and supporters of Summit, we have felt the values and sense of community that clearly make the school such a special place. I look forward to joining the team at Summit, and doing my very best to serve the school as director over the years ahead."

Pusch was selected following a highly-competitive national search. The seven-member search committee included Lauren Bennett (High School Principal and Guidance Counselor), Ann Betty (Board of Trustees Vice Chair), Travis Boswell (Board of Trustees), Edward Cole (Board of Trustees Chair), Amy Corcell (Foundation Board), Jim Hendrix (Former Summit Interim Director) and Lisa Lehotsky (School Office Manager and Former Teacher). Ann Betty, search committee co-chair and board of trustees vice chair, says, "Kurt was an enthusiastic and unanimous choice. As both a professional and cultural fit, Kurt is a win-win for the Summit community."

Josh Crawford, foundation board chair, explains, "We are all so excited about Kurt, but don't want to forget what a tremendous job Billy Leonard has done this year as interim director. We are very thankful for his leadership and steadfast devotion to the school during a year of major transitions and milestones. Billy will certainly leave a lasting legacy at the

school."

About Summit Charter School

Summit Charter School is a tuition-free K-9 public charter school in the beautiful mountains of Western North Carolina that engages students in learning experiences that stimulate discovery, inspire excellence and nurture a positive influence in an ever-changing world. A picturesque mountain campus and state-of-the-art facilities in the Cashiers-Highlands plateau provide an ideal setting for students and teachers to embrace high expectations, build meaningful relationships and practice the seven virtues of the school's daily Summit Pledge: "Each day in my words and my deeds, I will do my best to live these seven virtues: Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, Compassion, Self-Discipline, Perseverance and Giving."

During the 2018-19 school year, Summit welcomed its first ninth grade class and will add a high school grade every year until the inaugural high school class graduates in 2022. Following this spring's opening of the Summit Center, which houses athletic facilities, a performance area and music and art classrooms, the school will open its new high school building. Learn more about Summit's transformative place-based education and whole-child approach to learn at summitschool.org.

...PLANNING continued from 16

But Weller said allowing habitable space in a day-light basement is better than building a huge foundation wall.

"It puts the overall building on a more personable scale rather than just a concrete warehouse-looking foundation wall. The intent is also to make use of sloping property where some portion of a basement will be underground. All the easy properties have been built on," said Weller.

Craig agreed saying this sort of amendment to the ordinance would keep the downtown vibrant which is a benefit.

"This would be a minor change just like the marathon discussion we had over attics.

We allow attics now and it hasn't been detrimental to the town and people can have a habitable space in their attic which is perfectly legal," he said.

Member Glenda Bell said she couldn't see any reason not to amend the ordinance to allow a habitable space in a basement just like in an attic.

Ward said the Land Use Committee is worried multiple basements could be built and that might be a problem. He wants to make sure that isn't an issue before returning to the March Planning Board meeting with a proposed amendment.

— Kim Lewicki

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Feb. 14. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Feb. 14

• At 6 p.m., officers responded to a call about someone trying to pass a \$100 counterfeit bill and obtaining property by false pretenses at 4th Street Market.

Feb. 20

• At 8 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on NC 28 near Cook Road.

Feb. 21

• At 3:12 p.m., Joseph William Ferro Grier, 36, of Highlands, was arrested on two FTA charges. He was issued a \$10,750 secured bond.

Feb. 25

• At 12:30 p.m., officers responded to a report of a break-in and entering of a residence on Main Street in Wright Square where a door was forced open causing damage.

Feb. 26

• At 3:10 p.m., the dept. responded to a two-vehicle accident on US 64 and US 28.

March 1

• At 12:03 p.m., Trey Lamar Gerrells, 18, of Clayton, GA, was arrested on an outstanding warrant from another jurisdiction. He was issued a \$3,000 secured bond. His trial date is March 19.

• At 11:59 p.m., officers responded to a call about someone parked and texting in a driveway of a residence on Wingina Place

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Feb. 26, 2019.

Feb. 26

• At 10:27 a.m., the dept. provided public assistance to a motorist on NC 196.

• At 12:35 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Blue Valley Road.

• At 1:25 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Ravenel Ridge road.

Feb. 27

• At 10:27 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Clubhouse Trail.

March 2

• At 8:29 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Half Mile Drive.

• At 9:11 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on NC 106.

March 4

• At 2:07 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on NC 106.

March 5

• At 2:01 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Lake Villa Court.

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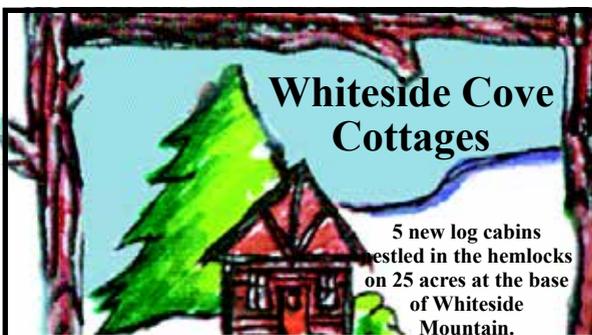
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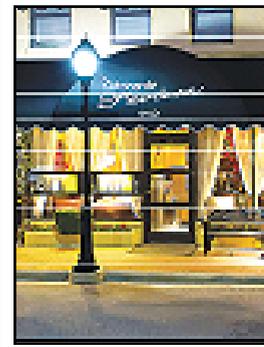
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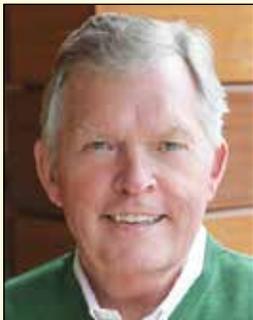
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