Community steps up for area teachers

By Brian O’Shea

Staff at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Meadows Mountain Realty have a close connection to both Highlands and Summit Charter Schools and took it upon themselves to donate $100 to each classroom at both schools to offset the out-of-pocket cost of supplies for teachers.

“The state and county budgets don’t provide enough money for the supplies teachers need,” said Tricia Cox, Vice President of Berkshire Hathaway. “I hope the little bit we gave offsets the out-of-pocket costs. Giving back is a way to be grateful for the blessings we have.”

Rotary Club of Highlands also gives each classroom at Highlands School $100 on an annual basis to offset the cost of materials for teachers. Rotary has been supporting teachers in Highlands for at least 15 years said Rotarian Derek Taylor.

Macon County Superintendent Chris Baldwin said the state allocated $30.12 per student on average daily membership (ADM), plus $2.69 per ADM in grades 8 and 9 for PSAT Testing in 2018-’19.

Last year the school board allocated $20 per student from the local appropriation in 2018-’19.

“This year we will be increasing the local allocation to $25 per student in 2019-’20,” said Baldwin. “The total amount will not be confirmed until after the tenth day of school. At that point, we will have a better idea of the actual number.”

Lawmakers tackle VRBO/AIRBnB issues

By Brittney Lofthouse

Over the last few years, the popularity of short-term vacation rentals have sky-rocketed. With websites such as AirBnB and VRBO, anyone can post their home online for rent. With the increase in their usage, more and more cities across the country began drafting their own policies and regulations.

Just last month Highlands Mayor Pat Taylor directed the town’s land use committee and

Local legislators are fighting the opioid crisis

By Brittney Lofthouse

The opioid epidemic is devastating communities around the nation, including right here at home.

Last week, the Macon County Sheriff’s Office Patrol unit was forced to deploy Narcan, a drug that reverses the effects of an overdose, for the first time since the department began carrying the drug.

Local and state leaders have been grappling with how to attack the issue for years, but recently, a charge lead by North Carolina Senator Jim Davis, looks to be making headway.

Sen. Davis first began his mission to address the state’s drug epidemic by sponsoring and advocating for the NC STOP Act. Davis’ legislation changed how pharmacies could prescribe narcotics and limited the number of pills being distributed at one time. According to Davis, since implementation, the legislation has been deemed effective in communities like Macon across the state.

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Fun for the whole family!
I view the community coffee with the mayor as town meetings. These sessions that include Q&A take place on the last Friday of every month at the Hudson Library.

The main focus at last Friday’s coffee was VRBO. Before the session I had researched the issue and did a slide presentation summary. Here are some of the highlights.

There are two types of home sharing. One is VRBO, the acronym for Vacation Rental By Owner. This phenomenon is not new to Highlands. We have had a short-term vacation rental market for many years. In the past these vacation rentals were handled mostly by real estate professionals. Realtors continue to manage many of these rentals, but we also have an expanding market where homeowners do VRBO.

The other rental type is Air B&B. The acronym stands for Air Mattress, Bed and Breakfast. Air B&B started with young people renting a room in their house or apartment, maybe with an air mattress in a spare room, and providing breakfast for guests.

While I see VRBO as being something manageable, Air B&B has other issues. The town and county have rules and regulations about bed and breakfast businesses. Namely, inspections in the fire, safety and food have to be passed. Highlands has no such requirements for Air B & Bs.

At the coffee I pointed out zoning issues for both Air B&B and VRBO. For instance, renting part of a home in an R1 or R2 zone may violate the single-family occupancy requirement. I say “may” because there could be some ambiguity in the ordinance that staff and the Land Use Committee should review.

In regard to VRBO, it is legal according to current ordinances to do a short-term rental of a home, so long as the owner is not residing in the home at the same time. For instance, my wife and I have a full lower level of our home with two bedrooms and a bath. We can’t rent that part and stay in the home at the same time according to current ordinances. Two separate family entities occupying one residence is basically a duplex which is not allowed in R1 or R2. Again, a review of these issues is needed.

At the coffee I proposed some basic regulations concerning VRBO and Air B&B. I proposed there be a town registration requirement for VRBOs and a responsible party identified in case of problems or emergencies.

Also, occupancy levels, parking issues, trash disposal, noise and public order requirements may need to be included. A prohibition of business type activities not allowed in residential areas should be reaffirmed and included.

Our driving concern should be the preservation of the character and quality of residential zones and thereby avoid the “motelization” of neighborhoods. I believe there was a strong consensus of those at the coffee that this is the direction to should take. The question will be how do we get there with fair and consistent policies?

Philip Powell, 86, of Highlands, NC and Crawfordville, Fl, passed away, Tuesday, August 27, 2019. He was born June 12, 1933 in Hendersonville, TN to the late Charles Leslie Powell and Jean Rule Powell.

Mr. Powell was a carpenter and builder for many years. He liked classic cars and street rods, and blue grass music. He had a love for hunting with and training coon dogs. He was a member of the Gem City Car Club and a U. S. Army Veteran.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife Mary Ann Powell, who passed away 12 years ago.

He is survived by his daughter, Karen Hendricks (Bryant) of Highlands, NC; a son, Charles Leslie Powell (Angie) of Crawfordville, FL; grandchildren, Hannah Kritzinger (Jacques), Joshua Bryant Hendricks, Jennafer Henderson (Logan) and Krista Powell and a great-grandchild, Madeline.

A private service will be held at a later date. Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the Powell family. Online condolences are available at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com.
HIGHLANDS FALLS CC  With a commanding view of the 10th hole, the lakes around the clubhouse, and the ridges beyond, the back deck is surrounded by rhododendron making it wonderfully secluded. The large covered deck also boasts a comfortable seating area and a separate dining spot. Light and bright inside with vaulted, beamed ceilings, gleaming hardwoods, a wet bar and a lovely stone fireplace. The large, updated kitchen opens to the great room.

**MLS# 90948 | Offered for $477,000**

CULLASAJA CLUB  Located on the #17 fairway, this great 4BR/BA home is move-in ready. The main floor has a large, open kitchen, plus a dining and living room space with cathedral ceiling and a stone fireplace, as well as a large master suite with a private screened-in porch, an additional guest room with full bath, and a laundry room. Upstairs is an open loft area and a guest room with full bath. The lower level boasts a large den/family room and a bedroom with full bath.

**MLS# 91186 | Offered for $459,000**

COLD SPRINGS  Cold Springs is a great family community with amenities that include a spring fed lake, tennis court, stable, and paddock. This wonderful home is great for a couple or the perfect spot for an extended family. The front yard is great for children or pets and the back covered deck is very large and welcoming. In addition to the three ensuite bedrooms, there is a bright and light office/library. The kitchen is very large and open with more cabinetry than you can possibly fill.

**MLS# 89105 | Offered for $439,000**

PANTHER MOUNTAIN  Enjoy the peace and quiet while sitting out on the back deck overlooking the unobstructed view. You will fall in love with the coziness, charm and privacy this home has to offer. There are three bedrooms on the main floor in a split bedroom plan. The master opens to the deck and the great view. The great room is vaulted. Features an updated floor plan, neutral colors, and generator.

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HIGHLANDS FALLS CC  This villa overlooks the 6th fairway at Highlands Falls Country Club and also looks out to the national forest. This is the only unit in the Club Villas with a garage. There are two bedrooms and two baths on the main level. The lower level which has two other bedrooms and a family room is accessed from outside but you could also put in an interior staircase or keep the access separate to give extended family a space of their own.

MLS# 89700  |  Offered for $425,000

SHELBY PLACE  Exceptionally well maintained, charming in-town three bedroom, three bath home with single car carport. Less than a mile from Main Street. Open living/dining area with fireplace. Granite counters in kitchen with SS appliances. Two bedrooms on main and master suite on upper level. Large deck. Lower level could be finished into additional living space. Located in Shelby Place subdivision with clubhouse and tennis court amenities.

MLS# 89855  |  Offered for $395,000

HIGHLANDS FALLS CC  Adorable cottage in Highlands Falls Country Club in a very private location on a cul de sac. The home has an older pedigree but has been updated with the addition of a large master suite plus a lower level which features a family room and additional guest quarters. The main level features an updated kitchen with a breakfast bar and opens to the greatroom with stone fireplace. Large back deck with view of Shortoff Mountain. Move-in ready!

MLS# 91516  |  Offered for $398,000

COLD SPRINGS  This cozy 3BR/3BA post and beam home offers plenty of space for family and friends. The main level features living room with fireplace, kitchen, master bedroom, laundry room and hardwoods throughout. The upper level includes two bedrooms, a full bath, and large storage area which could be converted to a bonus room. The lower level features large windows and level access to the backyard. Amenities include tennis courts, stocked private lake, pastures and stable, and access to miles of USFS trails.

MLS# 91184  |  Offered for $377,000

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...COMMUNITY continued
from page 1

of students at each school for 2019-'20.”
Highlands Principal Brian Jetter said Berkshire Hathaway’s and Rotary Club’s donations are most appreciated.
“I think it’s great they recognize how good our teachers are and how hard they work,” said Jetter.

Highlands Vice Principal Sarah Holbrooks spent a decade as a teacher and knows full well the difficulties teachers face when it comes to classroom supplies.
“You can never have enough as a teacher,” said Holbrooks. “You constantly have out-of-pocket expenses for all of the extras, and our teachers always go the extra mile. Donations like these mean so much to them.”

She added that having such a supportive community is one way they are able to retain talented teachers.
“They are so thankful for this,” said Holbrooks. “Not often do you have the support from the community like we...
We’re thrilled to announce another wonderful community from Old Edwards Hospitality Group! Located in-town and walkable to all that Highlands has to offer, this property is just over three acres and will include six homes, each on a half-acre lot. The community will be gated and beautifully landscaped to include a common area featuring a pavilion and small pond. Constructed by renowned Highlands builder, Lupoli Construction, this project will exhibit the finest quality, design, and materials. There are two floor plans available including one-level and two-level options, both with three bedrooms and three and a half baths.

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MOUNTAIN FRESH

- See AIRBnB page 11

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...VRBO/AIRBnB from page 1

staff to review the issue of short-term vacation rentals. VRBOs (vacation rentals by owner) are convenient and often less expensive than traditional lodging, both factors contributing to their popularity.

There are 313 searches returned on AirBnB for Highlands and 672 for Macon County as a whole. For $150 a night, you can rent a chalet downtown The Bascom Arts Center. The property even boasts being pet friendly, something most lodging options don’t accommodate.

According to Highlands Town Planner, Michael Mathis communities across the nation have adopted VRBO ordinances, which has Mayor Taylor considering the option.

The issue essentially lies in property rights. While some argue that it is the right of a property owner to rent out their home as they see fit without interference from the state, others argue that it is also the property rights of other residents in the neighborhood to not have strangers in and out of their communities. Depending on the area, some residences may be in a zoning district that is strictly residential. A VRBO would be considered lodging and as such may need to be located in the appropriate zoning area.

Taylor said he doesn’t want to see VRBOs eliminated as they are vital parts of the local tourism industry, but he does want to see regulations in place to ensure that VRBOs are not interfering with the quality of life of other residents.

Last year, an Asheville man was facing over $1 million in fines for his two illegal AirBnBs. Asheville virtually bans all VRBOs so when Reid Thompson continued to use his residentially zoned homes for short-term vacation rentals, he racked up the fines.

While communities across the state such as Asheville and even Raleigh have adopted their own policies, their ability to do so is up for debate.

On July 1, Governor Roy Cooper signed an update to the state’s Vacation Rental Act that prohibits local governments from forcing property owners to obtain a permit before renting out their properties.

The changes were outlined in S.483 “Vacation Rental Act Changes” which was supported by the Vacation Rental Management Association and the North Carolina Realtors with the intent of protecting private property rights and the ability to use your property as you wish within the state.

The new Vacation Rental Act amendments will now include the following changes:

“Cities and counties are authorized to perform periodic inspections for hazardous and unlawful conditions in buildings within their territorial jurisdiction when there is reasonable cause to believe that unsafe, unsanitary, or otherwise hazardous or unlawful conditions may exist in a residential building or structure.”

However, cities and counties are not authorized to do any of the following, among other things:

“Adept or enforce any ordinance that would require any owner or manager of rental property to obtain any permit or permission from the local government to lease or rent residential real property or to register rental property with the local government, except when an individual rental unit has either more than four verified violations in a rolling 12-month period or two or more verified violations in a rolling 30-day period, or upon the property being identified within the top ten percent (10%) of properties with crime or disorder problems as set forth in a local ordinance.

“Require that an owner or manager of residential rental property enroll or participate in any governmental program as a condition of obtaining a certificate of occupancy.”
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A Question of Time

My wife often tells me I obsess over time. I’m the one who is never late for an appointment, often showing up WAY too early. I know the origins of this condition. It dates back to my days in radio.

As I’ve previously mentioned, I spent most of my thirties working in broadcast radio. I started as a reporter and ended up an operations manager. I always pulled a shift on the air, doing everything from news, sports and talk radio to spinning records, and programming both music and news/talk radio stations.

Whenever I was in studio, no matter what the specific job was, the single dominating presence was a large analog clock directly in my line of sight. Everyone I’ve ever met who worked in the medium understands that the clock is EVERYTHING. It dictated all components crammed into every hour of programming, from how long a news story or an entire newscast would be, to how long a specific song or a set of music would run between commercial breaks.

I worked at stations with national network affiliations, which meant the network had demands on our time. They ran newscasts, and commercials within those newscasts. And, when it was time for the network segments to run, they ran, period.

All of this is to explain why I consider time a much more valuable currency than anything else, including money.

I’m not a futurist. I have no idea what will occur tomorrow, never mind in the next however many years. On this, I subscribe to the Yogi Berra school of thought: It’s hard to predict anything, especially about the future.

Still, I wonder, what if we could buy more time?

This thought grew out of my total inability to conceive that we are well over half way through 2019. Where did it all go? Did I fall asleep in January and wake up yesterday? I’m convinced, the longer I live the faster time flies by. Why is that? Do we have some clock within each of us? Does it connect us with the Universe and speed up as we age?

This wouldn’t be bad if we knew we could acquire a few more days, weeks, months, or years. If this were possible, would you trade tangible wealth – money – for longevity? These are the only two currencies; money, which is fungible, and time, which is not.

I know people who believe our bodies come with just so many heartbeats. The problem, of course, is that we have no clue how many heartbeats our individual body has. The average resting heart rate is, for adults, 80 beats per minute. That’s 4,800 per hour, 115,200 per day, 806,400 per week, and 41,932,800 every year.

We can’t save heartbeats, just as we can’t truly save time. An average, 75-year-old man or woman will enjoy 3.1 billion heartbeats over his or her lifetime.

That’s a lot of heartbeats.

But, what if we wanted more? More to spend with loved ones. More to watch children and grandchildren realize themselves. More to be with that one special person. More to travel. More to breathe in the fresh forest air. More to stand at the seashore in knee-deep gulf or ocean water. More.

What would be a fair price for one more day? Week? Month? Year? Would we be willing to sell off stuff for another week or month? Would additional time come with a guarantee of good health? Could we give or receive it as a gift? Would we be able to use it now, or would we have to tack it on at the end?


How would additional time be credited to each of our accounts? Would we all carry … time cards? Could we use our additional time everywhere, or only in certain places?

All of a sudden, this is getting very complicated.

Perhaps we should pay more attention to the time we have. Perhaps what time we have, however long we have, is already precious enough, and simply, out of respect for the whole human construct of time, should not be wasted, or spent on nonsense, or on unnecessary worry, gossip, hate, anger, envy, jealousy, or overcooked pasta, flat beer or artificial flowers.

Time is already a pretty awesome gift.

We should be thankful for what we’ve been given, and we should use it wisely.
“Levy a special fee or tax on residential rental property that is not also levied against other commercial and residential properties, unless expressly authorized by general law or applicable only to an individual rental unit or property with a certain number of verified violations, and the fee does not exceed five hundred dollars ($500.00) in any 12-month period in which the unit or property is found to have verified violations.”

The bill passed both the House and Senate unanimously. Rep. Kevin Corbin was not present for the house vote. Senator Jim Davis voted in favor of the bill.

Not sure if the new legislation strictly prohibits local governments from addressing short-term rentals at all, House Republican Dean Arp introduced a bill in early July further addressing the issue; however it was quickly pulled.

Arp proposed that any city or county ordinances governing short-term or vaca-
Fall Home Improvement 2019

Get More Bang for Your Buck with these Home Improvements

(StatePoint) Fall and winter downtime is a good time to think about home improvement projects. Whether you’re getting your home in tip-top shape for your own enjoyment, or getting it ready to put on the market, not all home improvement projects are created equal when it comes to return on investment (ROI). Here are top areas on which to focus:

**Interiors**

The kitchen is the heart of the home and it’s one of the best areas to renovate in terms of ROI, according to Remodeling magazine’s annual Cost vs. Value Report, which puts the price tag of the average minor kitchen remodel at $22,507, with 80.5 percent of the cost recouped upon resale.

To give the kitchen an updated appearance, replace the flooring, countertops, sink and faucet. A fresh coat of paint in a trendy shade, such as Living Coral, Pantone’s Color of the Year, can add a vibrant pop of color to energize any kitchen. Not looking to go that bold? Consider an accent wall, or stick to a classic palate of gray and white in terms of cabinets and countertops. White on white is also a popular new style for kitchens and bathrooms.

Other features home buyers are paying close attention to are laundry rooms and such energy-saving elements as Energy Star appliances and windows, according to the survey “What Home Buyers Want in 2019” by the National Association of Home Builders.

**Curb Appeal**

The popularity of outdoor projects remains strong and it’s for a good reason. According to the Cost vs. Value Report, the biggest bang for your buck in 2019 will come from replacing a garage door. The report says the average price is $3,611, and 97.5 percent of it is recouped when the house is sold.

Other outdoor projects with high ROI include adding manufactured stone veneer to the exterior (94.9 percent), adding a wood deck (75.6 percent) and replacing siding (75.6 percent). Looking for a simpler way to make an impact? Sprucing up the landscape by planting flowers or bushes or even just clearing the yard of debris will make a big statement.

No matter what updates you end up making, it’s always a good idea to notify your insurance agent. “Certain upgrades may change the value of a house, so homeowners need to make sure they’re properly covered,” says Bob Buckel, vice president of product management, Erie Insurance. “There are a few things to look for. Ask your agent about guaranteed replacement cost policies that can cover the cost to rebuild a home in today’s dollars following a covered loss.”

Some upgrades may also make you eligible for discounts, Buckel adds, especially if they make the home more secure. “For example, Erie Insurance offers certain safety discounts such as for installing smoke alarms or an automatic sprinkler system.”

Now you have a checklist of projects. But before you start, take a moment to assess which ones are worth your time and money.
“The prescription limits of The STOP Act having already reduced the number of opioid prescriptions dispensed in our state,” said Senator Davis. “Mandating use of the Controlled Substance Reporting System will allow prescribers to track the source of prescriptions, the recipients of those prescriptions, and the number of prescriptions. The mandated use of the CSRS does not begin until 2020 so state government have time to upgrade the system to make it more user-friendly and to allow time for prescriber’s computer systems to be upgraded. Improvements were part of The HOPE Act and The Opioid Epidemic Response Act. Dealing with this epidemic will require future legislative remedies as well.”

The Opioid Epidemic Response Act can be considered the second phase of the state’s attack on lessening the tragic effects of opioids in the community.

“The Opioid Epidemic Response Act is the NC legislature’s bill dealing with the opioid epidemic,” said Davis.” It basically does three things:

1. Eliminates the duplicate registration required of NC prescribers for buprenorphine. NC was one of the few if not the only state requiring state registration to be completed. The state registration was seen as an impediment to prescribers of buprenorphine, an important treatment therapy.

2. Decriminalization of drug testing equipment used to detect contaminants in controlled substances

3. Allowing state funds to be used in syringe exchange programs.”

Davis has supported the legislation and views it as a crucial next step in reaching communities across the state.

“North Carolina is losing between 4 and 5 individuals per day to the opioid epidemic,” said Davis. “I was first made aware of the magnitude of the problem by former Waynesville Chief of Police, Bill Hollingsed, shortly after my first term in the NC Senate. He advised me of potential legislative efforts that were appropriate. Partnering with Attorney General Josh Stein’s office we have gotten signed into North Carolina law The STOP Act, The HOPE Act, and the Opioid Epidemic Response Act. Each of these laws enhance our ability to address the addiction problems facing our society.”

Sen. Davis was also mostly recently a sponsor of the Senate companion bill to the House’s “Death by Distribution Act.” The new legislation was signed into law on July 8, 2019. Under the new law, it would be easier to prosecute those distributors who sell drugs leading to overdose and death. Criminals could face up to 40 years in prison with the “death by distribution” law.

Despite the progress made on the state level addressing legislation to equip law enforcement with the means necessary to fight the drug epidemic as well as provide vital resources to the community to help with treatment, Davis said his work isn’t done.

“We are always examining additional appropriate steps that can be made to address the opioid epidemic,” said Davis.

Highlands-Cashiers Hospital to host ‘Crush the Crisis’ opioid take back day

On Saturday, September 7, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital will host “Crush the Crisis,” an opioid take back event. Law enforcement officers from the Highlands Police Department and Macon County Sheriff’s Office will be on site to assist with the collection and disposal of unused medications from 10 a.m. until noon.

Local law enforcement near the main hospital entrance will be collecting tablets, capsules and patches of Hydrocodone (Norco, Lortab, Vicodin), Oxycodone (Oxycontin, Percocet), Tramadol (Ultram), Codeine, Fentanyl (Duragesic), Morphine, Hydromorphone (Dilaudid) and Oxymorphone (Opana). Please note that needles, syringes, lancets or liquids will not be accepted.

Highlands-Cashiers Hospital is participating as part of HCA Healthcare’s first national “Crush the Crisis” opioid take back day. More than 65 HCA Healthcare facilities across 14 states are uniting to collect unused or expired opioids for one day.

Opioid addiction is a growing crisis across the nation. The goal for ‘Crush the Crisis’ is to raise awareness of the dangers of opioid addiction and educate our community about the proper disposal of these medications. Opioid addiction can happen to anyone and we are providing this drop off opportunity confidentially and anonymously.
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www.WilbanksSmileCenter.com

What a great Labor Day weekend we had! You can still feel the energy in our mountain air. The streets were bustling with shoppers, restaurants and bars filled, hikers with boots on the ground, the Highlands Playhouse and Performing Arts Center filled with smiling faces, and blue skies and a gentle mountain breeze the envy of hot landers!

Having lived here full-time for 25 years, I have seen so many changes! We were a “seasonal” town and the exodus off the mountain began at the end of October! The taste of Highlands was in two tents in Bryson’s parking lot! There were two red lights and traffic was minimal. Wolfgang’s and Lakeside were open for lunch and dinner. Christmas decorations were red bows and Madison’s was the Central House Restaurant, reminiscent of Williamsburg with waitresses donning white ruffled bonnets serving the best chicken salad in town! If you wanted to go to the movies you took a slow road to Franklin. SweeTreats was still on the creek and little and big kids looked forward to creating their own concoction. If you wanted a drink you carried a little brown bag into the restaurant. Bars didn’t exist here and tourists were shocked that around 9 o’clock you just moseyed on home!

Fast forward to today. Highlands is a mecca not only for those who want to escape the heat but also for brides and grooms and their attendees who have discovered our little town. We are a year-round town with restauranteurs who feed us, boutiques who clothe us, and hotels who give us shelter even through the snowy days. The Highlands Food and Wine Festival, held in November, has become so popular that tickets sold out in two hours this year! Christmas decorations fill the streets with festive lights and the spirit is contagious. January and February bring ice skaters of all ages as our Kelsey Hutchinson Park transforms from music and art in the park and picnics and the farmers market on Saturdays to frolicking in the snow or trying to stay upright on ice skates. Wine dinners are looked forward to with renowned chefs and coveted wines. There is simply never a dull moment unless that is your choice for “wind down” time. New restaurants are popping up everywhere with sophisticated and fun bars. Music fills the air in the park and Village Square. Highlands Motoring Festival showcases shiny cars of past years. Faces have become younger and more people want to live here full time.

Even though the dynamics have changed, Highlands will always be special and memories will continue to be made for the next generations that follow. To know Highlands is to love Highlands.

Pat Allen is owner of Pat Allen Realty Group and a Certified Luxury Home Marketing Specialist and is certified in Resort and Second home properties. She chooses to remain an independent firm, allowing for personalized service and decision making. Her professionally trained brokers sell in any price range. Her firm was recently selected as a Leading Real Estate Company of the World. She is consistently a top producer and award-winning broker on the plateau. Visit her on the web at PatAllenRealtyGroup.com, call 828-526-8784, or 828-200-9179. The office is conveniently located at 295 Dillard Road across from Highlands Decorating Center.

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...COMMUNITY continued from page 6

...do here. Not only monetarily, but volunteering, committees, technology, lots of things. That’s amazing and I think that’s one reason we keep our teachers. Plus, donors know their money is going to good use.”

Summit Charter School 1st-grade teacher Maggie Sowell spent some of her $100 to buy books and other project materials.

“I think it’s really great,” said Sowell. “I got books with my students’ favorite characters and I’m able to get hands-on materials for STEM projects, which I otherwise wouldn’t have been able to do.”

Summit Art Teacher Grethen Kapity immediately went out and picked up a variety of goods for her classroom with her $100, including posters, crayons, markers, duct tape, and storage bins.

“I’m so blown away with the generosity of the people at Berkshire,” said Kapity. “It’s so sweet they care about all of us, not just their kids, they did it across the board. It was all about the big picture.”
Thirty-two lawyers and judges gathered recently at breakfast in Highlands to hear about efforts to provide legal aid to those who cannot afford it. Jim Barrett, Executive Director of Pisgah Legal Services, of Asheville and Mayor Pat Taylor made presentations that focused on how it can be done and the pressing need for such services in our area. The Lawyers Committee who organized this effort were: Mike Campbell, Wade Coleman, Debbie Davidoff, Jon Golden, Stell Huie, Judge Carlisle Overstreet, Donna Santo, Stan Starnes, Wilbur Warner and Walter Wingfield.

The last four words of our Pledge of Allegiance “and justice for all” express one of the most basic yet highest ideals of our country. However, for many of our most vulnerable citizens, justice remains a promise that has yet to be fulfilled.

There is a misconception that if you cannot afford an attorney the justice system will appoint one for you. But this is only true in criminal cases. There is no such guarantee of a lawyer in civil actions. For the domestic violence victim, the low-income family at risk of losing their home or the elderly person on a meager fixed income who is taken advantage of by a predatory lender, there is no appointed legal representative.

Poverty is in plain view on the plateau – it is those you see every day who work hard and likely pay too large a portion of their income for housing. If there is sickness, an accident or perhaps a death, anything that interrupts the balance in their lives, many bad things can happen. Domestic violence is all too frequent in these mountains.

Pisgah currently provides legal services for these people in the greater Asheville area through staff attorneys and volunteers. Impressively, there are 300 lawyer volunteers who greatly expand the capacity of Pisgah to serve its clientele. These volunteers are a testament to the excellent job Pisgah is doing in their communities. We need to convince Pisgah to expand into our area, but it is expensive. Their Asheville board is supportive of the expansion, but only if it does not require funds raised in their current service area. So we must raise the necessary funds here. Pledges received at the breakfast exceeded $40,000, and other lawyers, some who missed breakfast but want to help, will be sending in their pledges.

If you are interested in the cause of legal aid or in contributing or in helping to raise money, contact the Lawyers Committee, c/o Stell Huie, PO Box 2469, Highlands, NC, 828 526 9142 or Pisgah Legal Services, c/o Deborah Holt  828 210 3449.

...VRBO/AIRBnB continued from page 11
**Highlands Area Events**

**Ongoing**
- Movies at the Playhouse Fri & Sat 1, 4, 7; Sun. 1 & 4; Tues-Thurs 1, 4, 7. See ad.
- The Bascom is open Friday - Monday 10am-5pm (Sundays 12pm-5pm). Visitors are welcome to enjoy the newly updated Story Walk Trail throughout the week.
- At the Highlands Rec Dept. pool. Public Swim Monday-Thursday 11a-7p Friday and Saturday 11a-6p and Sunday 1-6p.

**Monday - Saturday**
- Mountain Findings Thrift Store on Spruce Street is open from 10a to 4p.
- Fibber Magee’s Clothing Thrift Store on Laurel Street is open Tues.-Friday 10a to 4p and on Saturday from 10a to 2p.

**First Mondays**
- Shortoff Baptist Church non-denominational Men’s Mtg at 7p.

**Mondays**
- At the Nature Center. Free. Garden Tour. 10:30am. Enjoy a walk through the Botanical Gardens with our knowledgeable staff, viewing beautiful native plant life in diverse habitats.
- At the Rec Park, Dance2Fit classes with Tori Schmitt at 5:30pm.

**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.
- Hip Hop classes with Tori Schmitt 5:30-6:30.
- Gentle Yoga at the Rec park at 9:15-10:15 a.m. All levels welcome.
- Heart Healthy Exercise Class Monday, Tuesday and Friday 8:30am-9:30am.
- Step Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9a.
- Pickle Ball at the Recreation Department Gym 10:30am - 1pm

**Tuesdays**
- At the Nature Center. Free. Turtle and Toad Feeding. 11:30am. View our live animals at their most active – feeding time!
- FREE Community Table Dinner at the Community Bldg. at 6p.
- The Highlands Writers Group meets Tuesday at 3pm in the downstairs boardroom at The Bascom. Writers at all levels of proficiency are welcome. For additional information, contact Bud Katz, 828-526-3190 or budan.dlynn@me.com.
- The Humanist Discussion Group meets from 10:30-11:30 am in the Meeting Room at the back of the Hudson Library.

**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.
- Highlands Area Indivisible Group meets at 5 pm in the Meeting Room at the back of the Hudson Library.
- Lunch with the Docs at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital noon to 1 p.m. RSVP to Kara Miller at 828-526-1345. Limited to 50 attendees.

**Tuesdays**
- At the Rec Park, Dance2Fit with Tori Schmitt at 7:30am.
- Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at 5:30. A combination class with many different styles of exercise at Rec Park.

**Wednesdays**
- At the Nature Center. Free. Mad Science. 2:30pm. Try your hand at scientific inquiry with a brief hands-on program aimed at youth ages 7+ (younger ages OK with supervision).
- At Community Bible Church, 5-5:30p Dinner – Free (Donations Appreciated) 545-7p - G.R.O.W. Get Real on Wednesdays – Classes offered on money management, addiction, discovering your spiritual gifts and personality type, studying the bible, evangelism, parenting, marriage, grief, and more. All are welcome! Visit www.cbchighlands.com.
- 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.**
- Highlands/Cashiers Alcoholics Anonymous “Open Meetings” are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. recovery program. Open meetings are held in Highlands at the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Wednesday & Fridays at noon. And held six times a week in Cashiers at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Rte 107, Cashiers. For meeting times in Cashiers visit our website www.aawmc80.org or to speak with a member of A.A. call (828) 349-4357.
- Duplicate Bridge 12-4pm at Rec Park.

**Thursdays**
- At the Nature Center. Free. Exploration Hike. 2:30pm. Visit forests, streams, and other spots across our campus, experiencing unique habitats and honing your observation skills.
- Storytime at Hudson Library, 10:40 am. Open to the public.
- Kids Zone at Hudson Library, 3:30.
- 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 (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**
- At H-C Hospital, Lunch with the Docs noon to 1p. Events are limited to 50 attendees.
- RSVP to Kara Miller at 828-526-1345.
- 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.

**Fridays**
- At the Nature Center. Free. Turtle and Snake Feeding. 11:30am. View our live animals at their most active -- feeding time!
- Live music in Town Square, 6-8 p.m.

**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 4:30-6p 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.
- At the Rec Pool Park. Movie Float-in Night - all ages Pool opens at 6:30p and movie starts at 7 p.m. Call for movie title and prices.
- 526-1595.

**Last 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 - 5p (Sundays 12pm - 5pm): Free Admission to exhibition spaces and SmArt Space for children. For more information call 828-526-4949.

**Satudays**
- 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 drop-in.
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Arre you a praying person? The answer does not necessarily depend on the frequency with which you pray. The answer can depend on what happens when you pray.

Pádraig Ó Tuama, an Irish theologian, describes prayer in his little prayer book, “Daily Prayer with the Corrymeela Community,” as something akin to a small fire to warm cold hands, or even cold hearts:

- Prayer is a small fire lit to keep cold hands warm.
- Prayer flourishes both with faith and doubt.
- Prayer is asking, and prayer is sitting.
- Prayer is not an answer, because not all questions can be answered.
- Prayer is comfort. Prayer is disappointment.

Prayer is words and shape and art around desperation, and delight and disappointment and desire. No prayer is perfect. There is no system of prayer that is the best.

Yet, the Christian philosopher Soren Kierkegaard also said, “The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather change the nature of the one who prays.” Praying, then, involves an encounter not only with God, but also with ourselves. The encounter with God in praying then summons us to change our attitudes, our ideas, our relationships, and our actions towards others and ourselves.

For example, a man had a deeply broken relationship with his son. He objected vigorously to his son’s lifestyle. The man said, “I prayed to God to change my son. But God changed me.” Praying compelled this man to encounter God and his son in a new and positive way.

Pope Francis once remarked, “You pray for the hungry. Then you feed them. That’s how prayer works.” No doubt that is not the only way prayer works, but surely praying encounters us to do our part, so that praying does not merely ask God to act. Praying can become an encounter with God that summons us to act to bring about some good.

Our hands, our hearts, our involvement might be cold making us utterly passive. Yet, by praying, a small fire can grow in us that summons us to live more intentionally aware of God, self, and others. Praying then summons us to also ask, “What can I, or we, do with God in this situation that can bear fruit for a better life?” Such praying indeed “becomes a practice of encounter.”
Getting used to being a star

My first taste of stardom came at my Royal Bash aka a book launch, but it didn’t stop there. Once the Royal Mum and Assistant got the hang of booking book signings for me, the demand for my presence increased by leaps and bounds. I could be found onstage somewhere every weekend.

It’s tons of fun to go to doggie shops where pet parents come in to get dog food or to give their four-legged kids baths. Not only do the pet parents ooh and ahh over me, but I also get to sniff their dogs and even sometimes their two-legged kids. The two-legged ones are fabulously friendly and like to get down on the floor and hug me—and I live to be hugged.

The Royal Assistant, however, has declared doggie shops off-limits ever since a fluffy Pomeranian lifted his leg on my poster at one stop. I agree his behavior was unspeakably rude. Do you think the little munchkin was jealous? Perhaps envious of my imposing size?

I’m happy Mum still considers coffee shops, bookstores, and card shops acceptable because I think they’re great places to hang with me. When parents get coffee or wander the shop, their kids like to hang with me. Don’t get me wrong, adults pet me and give me belly rubs, but they soon go about their business. The kids, though, sit with me a while. Even when they wander off, they tend to return to give me more belly rubs.

I wonder why it is that grownups never fail to ask how old I am and point out my gray snout and eyebrows. They also comment on my calm disposition and sweet demeanor, but the nonstop age remarks could give a dog a complex. The kids are way sweeter when they squeal, “Oh, his fur is so soft, look at his big brown eyes, or look at his gorgeous tail.”

I also enjoy the times Mum takes me to events where she tells the story of how she and I came to be authors. The animal lovers exclaim over me and my royal purple robe and talk about how well behaved I am. You might think Mum’s talks would be boring for me, but I find them quite exciting. Why? Because she lets me wander the audience while she speaks. The crowd is filled with dog lovers, so I can let one person rub my head and then move to the next. I see no need to linger when someone gets distracted and pays more attention to Mum than to me. There are always plenty more folks to visit.

One night, when the presentation was over, folks began to ignore me and instead line up to speak to Mum. I couldn’t fathom why they wanted to talk to my Assistant. Whatever their reasoning, I took that as my signal to lie down behind the podium and nap. Soon enough, Mum and Dad loaded me into the Royal Carriage and took me home to await my next engagement.

I enjoy all my outings in my royal duds, but Mum’s speaking engagements may have a bit of an edge. Having a captive audience make over me is la pièce de résistance.

Lord Banjo lives in Georgia with his Mum, Kathy Manos Penn. Find similar stories in his book, “Lord Banjo the Royal Pooch,” available at Mountain Plans in Highlands, Books Unlimited in Franklin, and on Amazon. Contact him at inkpenn119@gmail.com.
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WAIT STAFF FULL- OR PART-TIME. Experience preferred. Stop by at Wild Thyme Gourmet on Main Street in Town Square. (st. 8/8)

COLONEL MUSTARD’S SPECIALTY FOODS IN HIGHLANDS looking for an awesome person with a passion for food and cooking. Part time position available, includes some holidays and weekends. If you are a quick learner, friendly and hard-working, you’ll fit right in with our team. Please stop by the shop to fill out an application or email resume to col.mustardhighlands@yahoo.com. (st. 7/11)

DUTCHMANS CASUAL LIVING STORE looking for full and part time sales associate to join our team. Must be able to work weekends and holidays. Please call Shannon or Gabbi at 828-526-8864. (st. 6/6)

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THE LOG CABIN RESTAURANT is now seeking a Line Cook/assistant manager. Must be able to work nights and weekends. Some experience preferred. Call or stop by. (st. 7/13)

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Do you know these people?

The Highlands Police Department is asking for the public’s assistance in identifying these two individuals. If you have any information, please contact Sgt. Detective Andrea Holland at 828-526-9431.

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