

Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

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Town's stance on 'garbage' explained

With COVID on the rise, Highlands' rental business is booming and the real estate market is changing. Vacationers, short-term renters and new homeowners have decided to escape quarantine in their home states and make

Highlands their destination. However, according to Leah McCall with the Highlands Police Department it's clear that this influx of new people is not aware of Highlands' town ordinances. "One issue that has become

problematic is that of proper garbage disposal," she said. Over the last year, and most recently at the November 19 Town Board meeting, the board voted unanimously to amend its Code

• See **GARBAGE** page 8

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Blue Ridge Early College and Highlands Varsity VB fight it out in second battle of season



Highlands India Clark dives to return a BREC serve last week on the road. See stories and photos about last week's games on page 14. — Photo by Brian O'Shea, Plateau Daily News

Dept. HHS steps in to bring rapid covid testing to NC schools

Every day the Macon County School System sends out an alert about COVID-19 cases in its schools.

Just this past Monday Mountain View Intermediate School reported one case, Cartoogechaye Elementary School reported one case, Franklin High School reported three cases, Iotla Valley Elementary School reported one case and Macon Middle School reported two cases.

On Tuesday, MCSS was noti-

fied that a positive case of COVID-19 has been confirmed within Macon County Schools Support Staff.

In addition, Macon Middle School suspended face-to-face instruction beginning Wednesday, December 9th through Friday, December 11th.

The suspension of instruction is due to the loss of staff to quarantine and COVID-19 related symptoms. Macon Middle School

• See **TESTING** page 8

NC Governor tightens restrictions due to COVID

On Tuesday, NC Governor Roy Cooper announced a modified Stay-at-Home order effective Friday, Dec. 11 until Friday, Jan. 8 – the most strict order since Memorial Day.

"As cases across the country continue to rise, we've seen rapid increases in our key metrics here

in North Carolina," Cooper said during a news conference. "Our case counts have broken single-day records on three separate days in just the last week, and the percent of tests returning positive has increased to more than 10 percent."

• See **GOVERNOR** page 15

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Trashing Highlands is not allowed

Here is yet another photo that illustrates trash disposal problems that a small number of residents continue to generate.

Yes, I and the board might be viewed as garbage nazis by some with the passage of the ordinance requiring bear-resistant toters be used and closed properly, but we are not going to sit back and see Highlands literally get trashed by a few individuals who do not want to take responsibility for properly disposing of the garbage they generate.

This photo was taken last week in front of a residence on a main corridor in our town. Probably someone came for the week or weekend and simply put out their garbage in these unsecured containers as they left. There is a black toter in the photo, but it is obviously not bear-resistant. I suspect these folks live back home in a development that would never tolerate what the photo depicts. Why is it OK to do this in Highlands? This irresponsible behavior and is also no longer acceptable in Highlands.

Someone left town and triggered a



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

mess for others to deal with. I know they had been warned about the bear-resistant toter ordinance. Notice the red warning tag in the upper right hand portion of the photo.

The ordinance was passed 16 months ago and was to go into effect on August 1st of this year. The board delayed the ordinance enforcement for a year so folks would have time to purchase the toters.

Then in August implementation of the ordinance was delayed because of backorders of toters at local stores. All the back orders have now been filled and there are toters in stock.

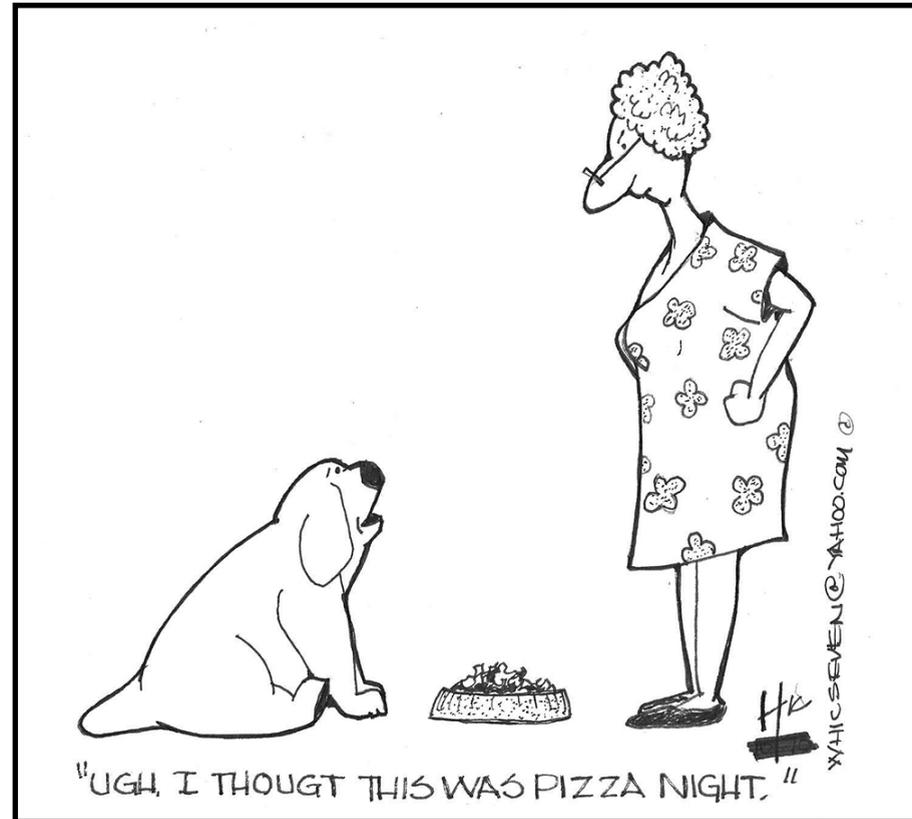
This fall residents who still didn't have bear-resistant toters had red tag warnings placed on their nonconforming trash cans. At a recent meeting, the Town Board authorized the Town Manager and staff to begin enforcement of the ordinance when all the backorder issues were resolved. Therefore, beginning January 1st, the ordinance will go into full effect. Trash crews will not pick up garbage in nonconforming containers. If a resident places garbage in nonconforming containers a fine will be issued.

In addition, some folks seem to be confused about storing of toters in garbage corrals that are next to the street. Residents can roll the toter to the street curb on their collection day, or like me, place it in a storage container near the collection point. One reason for the toter requirement was to eliminate trash crews having to do repetitive lifting of trash cans. Workers were lifting 500 to



• See MAYOR page 22

• HIC'S VIEW •



• WEATHER •

Thu, 10-Dec	Fri, 11-Dec	Sat, 12-Dec	Sun, 13-Dec
60°F 31°F	62°F 37°F	57°F 46°F	54°F 29°F
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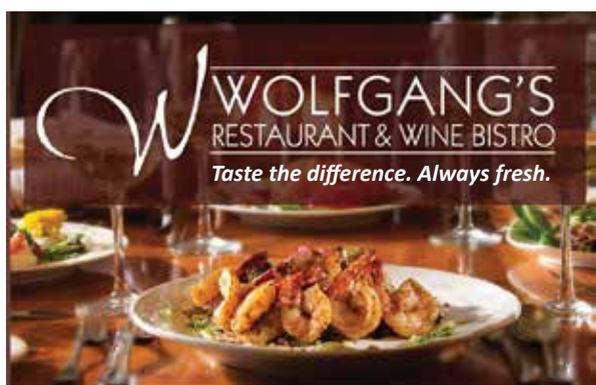
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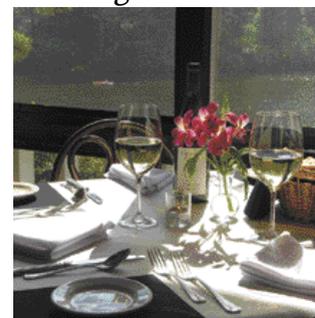
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• LETTER •

Temps Perdu

Dear Editor,

The disappearance of Highlands has been underway for a long time. Centimeter by centimeter it has been slipping away into the past tense, into a remembrance of things past, into lost time (apologies to Mr. Proust).

But maybe because of 9 months of total abnormality, thanks to this insidious pandemic, it feels like the rate of disappearance is visibly escalating. For instance, coming into town, have you noticed that more and more billboards are cluttering up our once bucolic roads? Have you been watching the denuding of the site for the future Dollar General store (which is another subject altogether), the denuding of multiple acres for the new development on Big Bearpen road? Have you considered the ramifications and the repercussions of the proposed enormous development at Cashiers crossroads, how it will change the entire complexion of that neighboring town? The density alone is fair warning. All over Highlands, land is being stripped, trees cut down, old growth Rhododendrons and Laurels uprooted and ignominiously dumped in the land fill on Rich Gap road. And even worse, these loyal mountain natives are being exclusively replaced by those innocuous pointy trees I call Arbor Ubiquitous; sorry, I don't know their real botanical name.

Individually, these occurrences, along with many unnamed others, seem insignificant, but in conglomeration they add up to a radical facelift for Highlands and the surrounding area; a facelift gone wrong and thereby irreversible. That is the key word, irreversible. The consequences are many; loss of beauty, loss of tranquility, loss of habitat for diverse animals and for humans, loss of our unique climate, loss of the night sky, loss of small town quiet, loss of green space, loss of an overall quality of life. I could go on. I bet some of you could, too.

Besides the loss, where is the gain? I guess wealth is to be gained in certain sectors of our community, material wealth, that is. Will it compensate for the losses? I know that people have to make a living, but do they have to make a killing in the process? And what, or who, is being killed? And isn't killing the ultimate and final loss?

Two months ago I meant to commend 2 writers that appeared in the October 15th issue of Highlands' Newspaper, both of whom touched on similar concerns for the quality of life, our life, here in Highlands; Pat Gleeson's Investing At 4,118 Ft. column titled "Trees Are People Too", and David Sweatt's letter to the editor titled "Do We Really Have To Pave Big Bearpen Road?" Thanks to both of them.

Last but not least, I feel sure there are those reading this who will dismiss me as being anti-progress, anti-change, anti-development, too gloomy, negative, etc. etc. They would be mistaken. I am none of those. What I am is an advocate for Quality as against Quantity. That simple.

Alice Nelson
Highlands

• OBITUARY •

Randolph Talley

Randolph Talley, age 75, of Rabun Gap, Georgia, passed away on December 7, 2020.

Randolph was born the son of the late Lyman E. Talley and Leora Carver Talley on September 7, 1945. In his professional life he worked in Quality Control at the Fruit of the Loom manufacturing plant, Burlington Industries, and for the Rabun County School System. Randolph loved gospel music and bluegrass and was a loving husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

In addition to his parents, two brothers, Russell Talley, Ronald Talley; one sister, Rev-elyon Carter, preceded him in death.

His survivors include his loving wife, Hazel Smith Talley, of Rabun Gap, Georgia; two sons, Brian Talley (Candi), of Clayton, Georgia, Stacy Talley (Melinda), both of Webster, North Carolina; one daughter, April Talley Cornett (Kevin), of Kingston, Georgia; two brothers, Rabun Talley, of Gastonia, North Carolina, Relton Talley, of Walhalla, South Carolina; five sisters, Reba Webb, of



Walhalla, South Carolina, Rena Carver, of Seneca, South Carolina, Rodean Wilson, of Lilburn, Georgia, Roberta Barnes and Romonia Picklesimer, of Highlands, North Carolina; ten grandchildren, Jeffery Talley, Lauren Benfield, Amber Barnes, Morgan Talley, Kirsten Phillips, Chelsea Hill, Jessica Rojas, Christopher Rojas, Erica Rojas and Mason Rojas, four great-grandchildren also survive him.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic a private funeral service will be held.

The family asks that in lieu of flowers, donations be made in memory of Randolph to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society 950 E. Paces Ferry Rd. NE Suite 820 Atlanta, GA 30326.

Beck Funeral Home, in Clayton, Georgia, is in charge of the arrangements. If there are any questions, please call 706-782-9599. An online Memorial Register Book is available at www.beckfuneralhome.com.

Highlands School First Quarter A and AB Honor Roll: Aug. 17 – Oct. 16

Avery Cronkrite 3	A	Leela Chrestman 6	A	Tate Wilson 7	A	April Norton 10	A	Davis Ingate 11	AB
Emelina Hernandez 3	A	Bailey Cronkrite 6	A	Margaret Cole 7	AB	Anna Stiehler 10	A	Brandon Moss 11	AB
Mason Johnston 3	A	Katie Fox 6	A	Hunter Conner 7	AB	Mary Tate 10	A	Ava Schmitt 11	AB
Blake Kenter 3	A	Francisco Gooch 6	A	Cameron Ramsey 7	AB	Adisyn Westendorf		Reese Schmitt 11	AB
Ian Kittrell 3	A	Elmer Hernandez Cerrato		Claire Sherwood 7	AB			Brent Sleight 11	AB
Ava Penland 3	A		A	Anne-Elizabeth Woods		Caroline Woods 10	A	Seth Staffelbach 11	AB
Mason Reed 3	A	Juliet Hopkins 6	A			Ezra Branham 10	AB	Luis Torres Zamudio	
Charlotte Swift 3	A	Agustin Juarez Rios 6	A	Claire Worley 7	AB	Lilly Bryson 10	AB		
Todd Vilardo 3	A	Chase Kenter 6	A	Savannah Bozeman 8	AB	Getsemani Hernandez Rojas		Madison Webb 11	AB
Jensen Bowers 3	AB	Alejandra Valerio 6	A	Finneaus Garner 8	AB			Brandy Zagal Damian	
Lane Brooks 3	AB	James Chastain 6	AB	Olivia Cole 9	A	Yasmin Jarquin Colmenares			
Arland Chastain 3	AB	Aiden Dendy 6	AB	Roger Stiwinter 9	A			Jordan Carrier 12	A
Corena Dearth 3	AB	Blaine Dendy 6	AB	Bella Wilson 9	A	Karmen Jenkins 10	AB	Brooklynn Houston	
Harper Ramey 3	AB	Trinity Fernandez Faust		Inman Ahrens 9	AB	Anna Nichols 10	AB		
Oliver Smith 3	AB			Abigail Doerter 9	AB	Frances Ortiz-Figueroa		Abigail Nichols 12	A
Camden Westendorf		Taylor Hays 6	AB	Brooke Fogarty 9	AB			Hadley Templeton 12	A
		Julieta Juarez Rios		Jasmine Oakley 9	AB	Jamison Postell 10	AB	Alyson Dayton 12	AB
Charles Wilkes 3	AB			Darby Templeton 9	AB	Ashlynn Wilson 10	AB	Joana Jimenez Reyes	
Walker Kittrell 4	A	Timothy McDowell 6	AB	Caitlin Tingen 9	AB	Emma Minton 11	A		
Hudson Tilley 4	A	Stephen Pierson 6	AB	Beatrice Bryson 10	A	Jeffrey Olvera Lopez		Elijah Kennedy 12	AB
Stephen Doerter 4	AB	Thomas Smathers 6	AB	India Clark 10	A			Jonathan Montalvo Espinoza	
Jayden Hughes 4	AB	Ryder		Riley Conner 10	A	Taylor Rickert 11	A		
Daniel Wisniewski 4	AB	Stubblefield 6	AB	Sydney Figel 10	A	Hayley Borino 11	AB	Logan Petrone 12	AB
Arabel Aulisio 5	AB	Kevin Torres Zamudio		Luke Hartman 10	A	Jedidiah Clark 11	AB	Megan Rehmeier 12	AB
Rowen Carnes 5	AB			Liam Kennedy 10	A	Russell Dalton 11	AB	Marley Ubertino 12	AB
Elizabeth Hall 5	AB	Lucas Deppe 7	A	Vanessa Lembi 10	A	Kaitlyn Doerter 11	AB	Tessa Wisniewski 12	AB
Charlie Sherwood 5	AB	Aniah McKim 7	A						
Katherine Somov 5	AB	Cayden Pierson 7	A						
Tucker Wilson 5	AB	Jaylin Raby 7	A						
Jordyn Borino 6	A	Nicole Taylor 7	A						

New faces join the Board of Education



Monday morning Clerk of Court Vic Perry swore in the new Board of Education members: Carolyn Arnold and Hilary Wilkes. Wilkes represents Highlands, replacing Stephanie McCall, and Carolyn Arnold was appointed to fill Fred Goldsmith's seat when he resigned right after the election.

Left: Is Hilary Wilkes with her family, husband Chris, son Charlie and daughter Annie.

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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Pisgah Legal Services Opens Highlands/Cashiers Office

Pisgah Legal Services (PLS), a nonprofit that provides free, civil legal aid in Western North Carolina (WNC), is pleased to announce the opening of a new Highlands/Cashiers office located on the second floor of the Jane Woodruff Clinic Building, 209 Hospital Drive, Suite 203, in Highlands. The PLS staff is still working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic but hopes to use the facility to its full capacity in 2021.

PLS Executive Director Jim Barrett says, "This has been a challenging year to say the least, but Pisgah Legal made a commitment to open this new office because we know the needs in Jackson and Macon counties are great. We are excited to be moving ahead, and we are grateful to each and every person and organization that has made this expansion possible."

In 2020, Pisgah Legal began receiving, on average, one thousand calls each week for help from people across the mountain region. Many families and individuals who never thought they would need assistance now find themselves without jobs and searching for resources.

The nonprofit continues to take new applications from local people with low incomes for assistance with critical needs that include: avoiding evictions and foreclosures; stopping domestic violence; coping with debts, avoiding scams; obtaining unemployment and other government benefits; and securing health care.

For assistance, call the Highlands/Cashiers PLS Office at 828-210-3424 or apply online at www.pisgahlegal.org/free-legal-assistance. Pisgah Legal staff and volunteer

attorneys will be in touch via phone and/or email. Other resources can be found on Pisgah Legal Services' website.

The effort to bring Pisgah Legal Services to the Highlands/Cashiers area began more than two years ago when the community began learning more about the way that legal aid can change lives and local fundraising efforts began.

W. Stell Huie, a Highlands resident, Pisgah Legal supporter, and retired attorney, says there were many who recognized the need to open the office. "One of my local businessmen friends told me as we were beginning this work that legal aid is the missing piece in all the local nonprofit service groups," he said.

Megan Quattlebaum, the PLS Community Engagement Officer for the new office, says, "The pandemic slowed our progress but not our desire to serve those who need Pisgah Legal most. Even though the physical office is just opening, Pisgah Legal has been assisting people remotely since this commitment was made and throughout the pandemic. Staff and volunteer attorneys are working with clients remotely by phone and email and driving from Asheville and other PLS offices in the region to attend court in Jackson and Macon counties."

She says, "Even though the office is officially open, we encourage people who need help to call us or apply online as we continue efforts to limit community spread of COVID-19 and ensure the health and safety of our staff and clients. Later in 2021, we hope to have regular office hours and meet with clients in person on a more regular basis."



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...GARBAGE continued from page 1

of Ordinances.

Specifically, Section 12-2 of the Highlands Town Ordinances which describes garbage receptacles and specifically the way garbage is to be presented was amended. This was a result of overflowing receptacles being left on the street which makes the point of a bear-resistant toter moot.

"The ordinance states that all waste is to be bagged and placed in an approved receptacle or container. The container lid must then be secured with the manufacturer's mechanism. Failure to do so shall be punishable by a civil penalty of fifty dollars (\$50) for each offense as covered in Section 12-14," said McCall.

"It shall be the duty of every person in possession, charge, or control of any place in or from which business trash, foreign

material, garbage, household trash, industrial waste, tree trimmings, and yard trash is created, accumulated, or produced, to provide and at all times to keep in a suitable place readily accessible to the city collection crews or private collection agencies, adequate and suitable receptacles and containers capable of holding all such waste materials which would ordinarily accumulate between the times of successive collections. The owner of any multifamily apartment shall furnish or require his tenants to furnish proper waste receptacles and containers," reads the ordinance.

"All waste is to be bagged and placed in an approved receptacle or container and the lid must be secured by using the manufacturer's locking mechanism, failure to do so shall result in penalties described in Section 12-14."

The part of the ordinance that was amended last year and went into effect for residents August 2020 is Section 12-3. It describes the type of containers that are approved and specifically that they must be bear-resistant.

"Commercial customers were to comply with this ordinance by January 1, 2020. Residential customers should have complied by August 1, 2020," said McCall.

The required bear-resistant receptacles are available at Reeves Hardware in Highlands, other hardware stores in Franklin and online.

"We are not going to sit back and see Highlands literally get trashed by a few individuals who do not want to take responsibility for properly disposing the garbage they generate," said Mayor Pat Taylor.

Trash collection days in Highlands can be confusing for new homeowners and visitors renting AirBnBs or VRBOs.

Areas north and west of US 64 are picked up on Mondays and Thursdays. Areas north and east of Horse Cove are also picked up on Mondays and Thursdays. For example: Hickory Hill, Mirror Lake, Cullasaja Drive, Big Bear Pen and Bowery roads are all collected on Mondays and Thursdays.

Of course, there are a few exceptions to every rule.

In an effort to make some pickups more efficient, Naiad Road, Mount Lori Drive, a few homes on Leonard Street, a few homes on South 6th Street and a few homes on Gibson Street are also picked up on Mondays and Thursdays.

All other areas are collected Tuesdays and Fridays. For example: All of NC 106, Helens Barn, NC 28 and the Highlands School area are all collected on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Trash cans must be in front of residences on the side of the road before 7:30 a.m. The drivers can not turn around and come back to get garbage if it is put it out late.

Wednesdays are reserved for commercial pickup and maintenance.

Owners of area rentals have been notified of the garbage collection/presentation requirements and have been instructed to pass the information on to their renters.

"Western North Carolina (specifically Highlands) is a beautiful destination for visitors and a wonderful place to live for those of us lucky enough to do so. If we all do our part by following our ordinances, we can keep our mountains beautiful for many years to come," said McCall.

— Kim Lewicki

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...TESTING continued from page 1

and the Macon County School System will continue to work closely with the Macon County Health Department to reevaluate the circumstances over the weekend.

Since school started Aug. 17 there have been six cases reported at Highlands School.

The Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation tests students who are signed up for the program every Thursday. It also backs testing at Blue Ridge and Summit Charter in Cashiers. Results for those tests take a few days to come in. Parents of children who test positive are notified immediately. Not all parents opted to register their children in the program which means many go untested week after week.

Now the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is launching a pilot program to deploy COVID-19 testing

in K-12 public schools to quickly identify students and staff who may have the virus to help slow its spread.

Local education agencies including public school districts, charter school networks or individual charter schools currently offering any in-person instruction — either Plan A or Plan B — are eligible to apply. Selected pilot sites will receive federally funded rapid antigen tests to be used for students and staff with COVID-19 symptoms or who are close contacts of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

"Having rapid tests available in our schools in another important tool to both slow the spread of the virus and keep our children in the classroom. With increased

• See TESTING page 9



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 INTERNATIONAL REALTY

...TESTING continued from page 8

community spread, these tests add to the other safety protocols in place at K-12 schools to protect our students, teachers and staff," said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D.

To apply for the program, local education agencies must submit a readiness checklist for each participating school to their local health department. The checklist confirms that a school can meet the program's requirements, including obtaining parental/guardian consent prior to testing, maintaining adequate supplies of personal protective equipment, having trained personnel to administer tests or partnering with a local health provider, and reporting test results to state and local public health agencies. Following review of the readiness checklists, the local health department then submits the application to NCDHHS on behalf of the local education agency.

Pilot applications are due Dec. 8, 2020. NCDHHS will select pilot sites based on the pool of eligible applicants. NCDHHS will deliver the rapid tests to pilot sites at no cost to the sites as soon as Dec. 14, 2020.

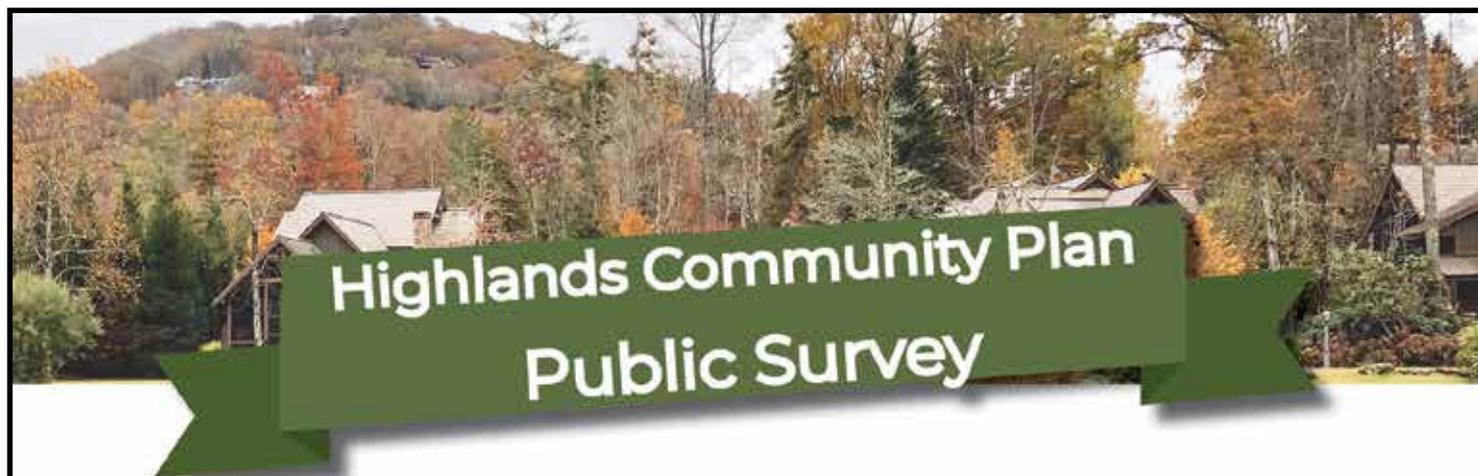
The pilot will use the Abbott BinaxNOW rapid antigen test card, which uses a nasal swab to detect COVID-19 and provides results in 15 minutes without laboratory processing. The swab must be performed by trained personnel.

Macon County Schools Superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin said he has spoken to Director Macon County Health Department Kathy McGaha about applying for this opportunity.

"She is looking into exactly what is involved," he said.

More information on the COVID-19 testing pilot for K-12 Schools is available at <https://www.nc.gov/covid-19/k-12-education-covid-19-resources>.

– Kim Lewicki



The Town of Highlands is updating the Highlands Community Plan, which will help guide development and town priorities into the future. We want to hear from all residents, workers, visitors, and lovers of Highlands about your priorities for the future in and around town. A public survey is open now where you can give feedback on issues such as housing, transportation, recreation, and more.

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• SMALL TOWN; BIG THOUGHTS •

Highlands is a difficult place to be thrifty and parsimonious while also seeking out quality and beauty. But some of us are born with these opposing desires, and it is to you, fellow cheapskates, that this column is dedicated.

Timber! How to chop a holiday tree

There is a pair of candlesticks in this town that cost twenty-eight dollars, before tax. They are made from a cast mold of a hickory branch, using traditional methods and the purest beeswax,

which is said to have, and I can confirm this beyond a doubt, purifying and healing properties. The sticks are poured before your eyes in the shop, which has a terrific resinous smell from all the melting and tallow

soap and incense that gets sold there. It is my opinion that the knotty wax branch candles and the whole experience of coming upon them at Citizen Wilder can now be filed as one of Highlands' most direct and true craft experiences, and that they are well worth their sticker. What I would like to offer here is not a way to deny oneself the pleasure of supporting real innovative craft, only to offset the cost of it by saving on the very thing that might well be illuminated by your candles this season, namely, your Christmas tree.

I mean no offense to the nearby nurseries and far-flung Depots that offer eight-to-ten feet standard trees pre-bagged, or the well-advertised cut-your-own places (some of which now offer socially distant photo sessions with elves), but my jaw rested on a snowbank at the base of Whiteside the other day when I inquired about their pricing. Two-hundred and nine dollars for a full-as-a-belly Fraser Fir given all the right rain, fertilizers and nutrients, and a special elf with a chainsaw to help you feel Bunyon-esque, independent of spirit, as you harvest it "yourself." How odd, to have to pay \$209 for that feeling.

Better to take a left coming from Highlands onto Flat Mountain Road, then a right onto Cheney Lane, where a plain red-and-black lettered sign reads: Duke's Fraser Firs, \$25 Each, On Your Honor, Please Pay at the Shed. Pulling in, you might note that the farm at Duke's, which is about the size of an extra-large playground or maybe an 18-hole putt-putt, is not staffed by anyone, elf or otherwise. There is a shed with a few hand saws and a bundle of twine. There are limbs strewn all akimbo, and trees that might fit in the house of a small giant, with girths bigger than Santa's. You might be like us, and wonder if any of these could fit into your cabin.

There are many secrets to the Cheney Lane Honor Box Farm, in addition to the secret of knowing that it is there (it was the Reverend and Mrs. Manning who told me about it, so whosoever goes there because of this article, goes because of them), and



Anna McDonald

one of the secrets is to saw not the whole, but the top of the tree, and to leave the bottom trimmings for trimming-seekers, who, if you are lucky, will be friendly, and in possession of a toothy corona saw, and well-oriented to the place, having come for more Christmases than she can count.

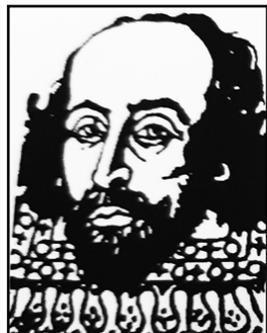
I am sure that we, city slickers and rather newly arrived here, would not have had the gumption to chop

our own tree if not for Beth Crisp, a stranger, who we have relied upon the kindness of (while keeping six feet of distance at all times). Ms. Crisp is a wreath-maker, having made the oversize ones for Paoletti's and The Highland Hiker this year. Gregarious and gravelly, she taught us everything we have mentioned above and then some. And then, to star-top the whole thing, she helped us lop and tie our 13 and a half foot perfectly uncommercial and gappy tree onto the top of our Subaru.

Our tree looks like the tree that Charlie Brown chopped, all grown up, and full of holes, which, I can now say have been perfect for filling in with dried clementines (\$4.98 at Ingles for 5 pounds, cut slits and dry in the oven at 175 for 3 hours), garlands made from shootable soft snowball gun refills from The Toy Store (\$1 per canister, 2 or 3 canisters will do), and little notes to Santa, like this one from my daughter, newly six: "Ples Lev A Sin of You THank You".

But I'm not looking for signs of the Spirit of Christmas. I have received them already, from Duke's Farm, from Beth Crisp, from these wax hickory candles I write by, and from the feeling of leaving something in an honor box, a convention I thought had died out by now. Not in Highlands.

• *Anna McDonald, a poet originally from Gainesville, GA, and most recently Brooklyn, NY, is one of Highlands' newest year-round resident. She has written for the New York Times, and has had her poetry published on many occasions in The New Yorker magazine.*



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• LORD BANJO REFLECTIONS •

Banjo's Christmas list

Let you didn't know we pups have Christmas lists. If you thought about it at all, you probably imagined we listed things like toys and chewies. Maybe some dogs do, but not me. Nope. I'm not materialistic like that.

Don't get me wrong, I didn't put anything especially noble on my list—nothing like the end to world hunger, not even the end to this thing the humans are calling a pandemic. I asked for happy things that are pretty simple, at least I think they are.

Dear Santa,
In no particular order, I'd like:

1. The deer in our yard to come closer, maybe even nose to nose
2. A squirrel to stay still long enough for me see it up close
3. One of those dog walkers to come down the driveway so I can visit with their dog
4. My mum to get down on the floor

and snuggle with me at least daily.

5. Cold weather—all year-round. Warm weather is not my cup of tea.

6. A creek in our backyard. Yup, I adore creeks and want to stand in one up to my belly. Or a pond. A pond would do in a pinch.

7. A cat that plays with my tail. Puddin' did that when she was a kitten, but she hasn't done it in years.

8. A small child to give me nonstop belly rubs. Mum and I used to go to festivals where the children loved on me and oohed and aahed about how handsome I am. What happened with that?

9. Dad to rub my ears. He's the best ear-rubber around.

10. Puddin' to walk away from her wet



Lord Banjo

food when Mum's not looking. The girl hardly ever finishes her little dabs of food, but Mum works hard to keep me from cleaning her dish. Wasteful, I say, just plain wasteful.

11. Speaking of Puddin', would it be too much to ask for her to let me sleep on my dog beds every once in a while? She's a tiny thing and likes nothing better than to curl up in the middle of my humongous beds.

12. Mum to let me out at whatever time of the morning I choose, without grumbling. What does it matter if some days, it's 5 am instead of 7?

13. Along those same lines, I'd like NOT to be awakened and dragged outside at 9 or 10 at night. You'd think my snoring would give Mum a clue, wouldn't you?

14. Snow! I want to stand in the yard with the flakes falling on me and then play and play and play.

15. Better yet, a trip to the North Pole in Santa's sleigh. I hear the snow there is the best!

I'm not sure why Mum's laughing as she types this. I think my list is pretty doable, and I'm pretty sure I'm on Santa's Nice list, not the Naughty one. Just to be sure, let me add an item for my pet parents. Dear Santa, please bring Mum and Dad health and happiness. Okay, okay, please bring it for Puddin' too.

Sincerely,
Banjo (the best dog ever)

• To contact Banjo or his Mum, write inkpenn119@gmail.com. Kathy Manos Penn's cozy mysteries can be found on Amazon and locally at Books Unlimited in Franklin, NC.

• LIFE ON THE SUNNY SIDE •

Summerville, SC: Birthplace of Sweet Tea

In the heart of Lowcountry, there is a place where flowers bloom by the acre, and history lives on every corner. Where world-class cuisine is served with a side of Southern charm and sweet tea is measured by the gallon. The name of the place is Summerville, South Carolina.

Summerville is the birthplace of sweet tea. Every year there is a Sweet Tea festival. Over 15,000 people show up to celebrate sweet tea. Summerville is also the home of "Mason," the largest known container of sweet tea. "Mason" stands over 15 feet tall and can hold up to 2,524 gallons of sweet tea. Dolly Parton calls sweet tea the Champagne of the South.

"Mason" is located on the Sweet Tea Trail. On the trail, businesses serve sweet-tea specials including sweet tea cupcakes, sweet tea cinnamon rolls, sweet tea jelly, a sweet tea porkchop sandwich and even a sweet tea brines chicken salad. While on the Sweet Tea Trail, visitors like to pose for a photo with "Mason."

Historians will agree that the first

place in the United States to achieve long-term tea production was in Summerville, at Dr. Charles Shepard's Pinehurst Tea Plantation. Dr. Shepard was a respected botanist, chemist, lecturer, and writer. His love of horticulture and his meticulous nature influenced every farm-related function for processing tea.

South Carolina is the only state that commercially produces tea on a mass-market scale.

Summerville is now in the Guinness World Record book for serving more sweet tea in one day than any other place in the world.

Just to prove that Americans took their tea seriously, you must remember the Boston Tea Party. December 16, 1773, at Griffin's Wharf, American colonists dumped 342 chests of tea, imported by the British



Kenny Youmans

East India Company into the harbor. They were showing Great Britain that Americans wouldn't take taxation and tyranny without a fight.

How about the favorite drink at the Kentucky Derby? Mint Julip -- a mixture of crushed ice, lemon slices, mint sprigs, bourbon, and of course sweet tea.

The Lowcountry is also the birthplace of Hoppin' John, Charleston Light Dragoon Punch, She Crab Soup, Chicken Bog, Benne Wafers,

Frogmore Stew, and, yes, even Shrimp and Grits.

I always liked the song "Tea for Two" by Vincent Youmans. It was one of the more popular songs for decades. It was written in 1924 and later made into a movie starring Doris Day.

As Paul Harvey used to say, "Now you know the rest of the story."

Fundraiser Sale at Rhodes Superette through Dec 24



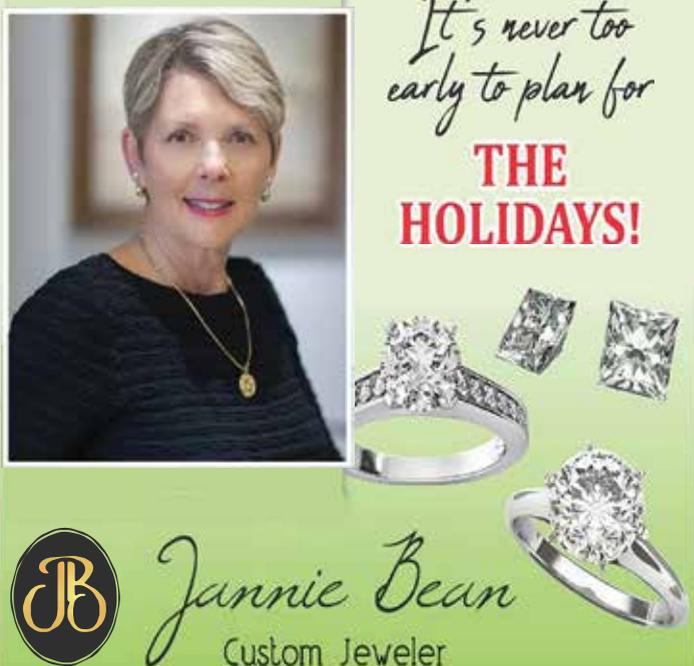
The Rhodes Superette, also known as Dusty's, on NC 106 is selling locally crafted, beaded Christmas ornaments. All proceeds will benefit the Highlands Food Pantry.

Join us in a small but important way to help make those in need have a Christmas devoid of hunger.

The suggested price for each ornament is \$10 but any contribution is welcome.

The Rhodes Superette has volunteered to match donations up to \$1,500.

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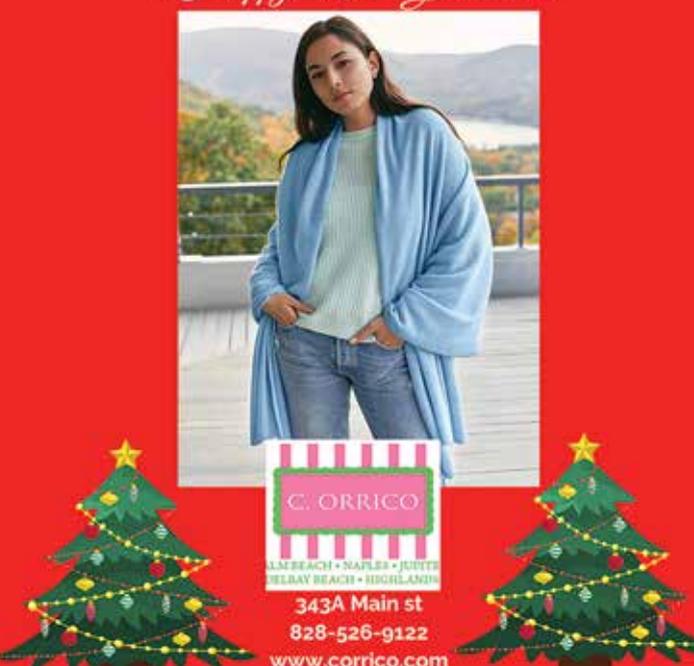
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Summit volleyball team scrimmages Highlands at home

By Brian O'Shea
Plateau Daily News

Highlands Middle School volleyball team hopped a bus to Cashiers Thursday, Dec. 3 to take on Summit for the second of 4 scheduled scrimmages this modified season. Highlands took the win in two sets, 2-0.

Highlands Coach Angela Swain getting time on the court is crucial to build upon for the future.

"Hand on the ball and practice as much as possible," said Highlands Coach Angela Swain. "We've got 8th-graders moving up to the high school level and they need to trust each other and communicate well. We don't want to lose out on an entire season of building skills."

Highlands Assistant Coach Allison Hedman recently joined the MS volleyball program said scrimmages work just fine to keep your game sharp.

"This season is different, but it will be a good bridge to next year," said Hedman. "Hopefully things will be back to normal next season and we'll continue

making progress."

She added that it easier to work with experienced players because you can work to correct specific mistakes, instead of trying to teach the entire concept of the game.

"My first impression, they were impressive," said Hedman. "They have a lot more skill than I would have expected at a middle school level."

Summit Athletic Director Jeremy Robinson stepped in for Coach Jesse Lloyd who couldn't make the game and said each time the Lady Bears hit the court they



get better and better.

"The girls did great, they showed a lot of improvement between the first and second scrimmages, which is what it's all about," said Robinson.

He added any chance players have a chance to compete makes them stronger in the long run.

"It's been really important for them to get back into training and competition," said Robinson. "They are a really fun group of girls and they love to play and compete. The experience they are gaining will definitely give them an advantage moving forward. We are excited about the future."

Jackson County cancelled official middle school sports because of COVID-19, and Robinson said he was thankful Summit was able to schedule scrimmages with Highlands.

"It's been really awesome working with Highlands, being able to support one another, and give our athletes a chance to play and compete," said Robinson.



BREC varsity volleyball team defeats Highlands in second battle of season

By Brian O'Shea
Plateau Daily News

Blue Ridge Early College hosted Highlands Friday, Dec. 4 and won, 3-0.

BREC Coach Carlton Fowler said the Lady Bobcats started off slow in the first game with some trouble hitting but regrouped and pulled it together for the win.

"We didn't hit the ball like we normally do in that first set," said Fowler. "But we dug and passed well, and we played scrappy so we overcame our hitting problems. After that, we hit and served really well and stepped it up, which is what you need to do when you're playing your rival."

Highlands Coach Desiray Schmitt said the Lady Highlanders played well and are up to the challenge of beating BREC, but they need to toughen up mentally.

"They tend to get in their

heads often and when they do it becomes a mental game for sure," said Schmitt. "I know they can get over it and move on, but it's also easier said than done, which I understand."

Highlands India Clark said things began well against BREC, but a couple bad points were enough to turn things around.

"Things were going good in the beginning, I thought we had that first set," said Clark. "Then they scored two good serves on us and we couldn't recover mentally. We lost that set, then lost the second, and it was all over."

Clark added that Highlands needs to work on staying focused when things aren't going their way.

"We have to get out of our heads," said Clark. "Our physical game is good, but we have to get our mental game together."

...GOVERNOR continued from page 1

He said every indicator is trending upward and people coming into Emergency Rooms with COVID symptoms and those being admitted to Intensive Care Units is at the highest level since the virus began in March.

Last week's Saturday and Sunday daily COVID cases was 6,000 each – doubling what was previously considered high in October, that of 3,000.

Specifically, the order imposes new measures that would close non-essential businesses like gyms, restaurants and retail at 10 p.m. nightly, and allow them to reopen at 5 a.m. The new restrictions also include moving the alcohol curfew to 9 p.m. – two hours earlier than the previous curfew of 11 p.m., and doors must close at 10 p.m.

“This order aims to limit gatherings and get people home where they're safer,” Cooper said.

The color-coded county alert system shows a large increase in orange and red counties. Red represents critical spread; orange represents substantial spread and yellow represents significant spread with 80% of the state's 100 counties either orange or red.

Macon County is holding at yellow but the spread of COVID is still considered significant.

As of Tuesday, Dec. 8, there are 1,020 cases in Macon County with 130 tests

pending.

“The vaccine is coming but it isn't here yet,” said Cooper. “So, we have to do our part to safeguard our hospital system and preserve our economy.”

This modified Stay-At-Home order is the first such restriction since Memorial Day. Face coverings continue to be required in all indoor public settings and as in Highlands also on the streets.

Perhaps foreshadowing further restrictions in the future, both Cooper and Secretary of Health and Human Services Dr. Mandy Cohen warned the current spike in cases does not include an expected surge from Thanksgiving, but instead reflects the spread of the virus heading into the holiday weekend.

According to Cohen, the 6,000 daily cases thus were likely the people who attended Thanksgiving dinners not yet knowing they were infected and exposed other people.

“The virus is upon us with a rapid viciousness we haven't seen before. We'll do more if our trends don't improve,” Cooper said. “That could mean additional actions involving indoor restaurant dining, entertainment facilities or retail capacity. None of us want that. All these small businesses need more federal help. Congress and the President need to do that now.”

– Kim Lewicki

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Nantahala Health Foundation awards nearly \$420,000 to 11 CHIP grant recipients

Nantahala Health Foundation has announced its intent to award 11 Collaborative Health Innovation Project (CHIP) grants this month totaling nearly \$420,000 to Western North Carolina nonprofits and public service organizations in support of programs seeking to achieve better health and wellness outcomes for regional residents.

The success of each awarded proposal depends on the applying organization teaming up with at least one collaborating partner. Likewise, each winning proposal will seek to apply a unique approach to eliminating root-cause barriers to health and wellness, according to Nantahala Health Foundation Executive Director Lori Bailey.

“At its most fundamental, Nantahala Health Foundation’s mission to serve as a catalyst for innovation and collaboration within the region framed the criteria for our first-ever CHIP grant awards,” Bailey said. “Through this grant review process, we were excited to discover so many collaborative and innovative projects already at work addressing social determinants of health and even more thrilled at the possibility of expanding upon this important work. We also believe it is important to support nonprofits working to address new or expanding needs as a direct result of COVID-19.”

Organizations awarded CHIP funding are working to improve the health of individuals in Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Swain, Jackson and Macon counties, as well as on the Qualla Boundary. Additionally, CHIP grant funds were awarded in support of programs designed to address NHF’s funding priorities, which include access to healthcare, education, transportation, alleviation of poverty, and quality of housing. These and many other social determinants of

health are known to directly impact up to 50% of an individual’s health outcomes over their lifetime. Additionally, COVID-19 was added as a special interest priority area to help nonprofits expand or sustain services impacted by the pandemic.

“An ever-growing body of research has proven that where and how a person lives, learns, works and plays far exceeds cumulative clinical visits when it comes to determining health outcomes,” said Jane Kimsey, NHF’s board chair and lifelong Macon County resident. “That’s why Nantahala Health Foundation has chosen to work with organizations specifically addressing social determinants of health as a way of improving wellness for all in Western North Carolina.”

CHIP grant funds were awarded to organizations in these categories:

ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY

- Guiding Sheep Ministries – To address food insecurity in Swain and Jackson counties through education and production of nutritious foods with an emphasis on the elderly by taking into consideration their special needs.

COVID RELIEF

- Macon Program for Progress – To address expanded food insecurity in Macon County exacerbated by COVID-19 by delivering food and supplies to low-income and disadvantaged individuals and families.

- Clay County Community for Students – To address needs related to education, economic stability and health as they relate to community well-being in light of COVID-19 safety measures.

- Nantahala Regional Library – To expand remote learning and internet availability in response to COVID-19’s impact on Cherokee, Graham and Clay counties; to purchase network devices to ex-

pand the library’s outdoor WiFi range; and to purchase laptops for The Learning Center Charter School’s remote learning and for curbside use at these library locations.

- REACH of Macon County – To ensure on-site academic tutors are available to serve as liaisons between parents and Macon County Schools/teachers and can work with families to provide support on virtual learning days as a result of COVID-19 safety measure.

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

- HIGHTS – To acquire additional staff to support a growing number of Jackson County youth in need of mental health and other supportive services, including access to food and educational support, especially in situations where traditional access has been limited by COVID-19 safety measures.

- Hospice House Foundation of WNC – To address three healthcare concerns in far Western North Carolina, including lack of quality end-of-life in-patient care, access to mental health support, and health risks of caregiving.

- Swain County Health Department – To provide access to dental services for underinsured resident of Swain County.

- Mountain Area Health Education Center – To hire a community health worker to support members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians through culturally responsive community outreach that promotes trust in COVID-related information and services, such as testing, and increases connections to primary care and social and economic resources.

EDUCATION

- Swain County Cooperative Extension – To renovate the

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• DECEMBER NANTAHALA HIKE SCHEDULE •

Hikes are limited to 10 people. Masks are required during congregating and driving to the trail head. Four people per car with windows down for air circulation.

SAT DEC 12:

The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 4-mile hike, elevation change 200 ft., to Lower Whitewater Falls. Starting at Bad Creek parking lot, the trail continues downhill to a viewing platform for a gorgeous view of these magnificent falls on the Whitewater River, two miles downstream from the upper falls. The hike also has great views of Lake Jocosee in South Carolina. Meet at Cashier Recreation Park at 10 am, drive 22 miles round trip. Call Leaders Mike and Sue Kettles, 743-1079, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

SAT DEC 12:

The Nantahala Hiking Club will take an easy 3-4 mile hike, elevation change 200 ft., exploring the Welch Farm, a Mainspring conservation property between Andrews and Murphy



Whitewater Falls

– Photo by Jim Lewsicki

in Cherokee County, with Rachel Newcomb, public relations coordinator for Mainspring, leading the way. Meet at Westgate Plaza at 9:00 am, drive 100 miles round trip. Call Gail Lehman, 524-5298, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

SUN DEC 13:

The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a strenuous 7.5 mile hike, elevation

change 1250 ft., in the Coweeta Lab area, going up Ball Creek Rd. to the crossover road to Shope Fork side. Meet at the Smoky Mtn. Visitor Center at 1:00 pm, drive 16 miles round trip. Call Leader Katharine Brown, 421-4178, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

SAT DEC 19:

The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 5-mile hike, elevation change 700 ft., from Harrison Gap to Locust Tree Gap on a Forest Service Rd, returning on the Bartram Trail south with views on both sides of the ridge, north into Burningtown and south into Cartoogechaye. Meet at Westgate Plaza at 9:30 am, drive 25 miles round trip. Call Leader Gail Lehman, 524-5298, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

SUN DEC 20:

The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 3-mile hike, elevation change 300 ft., on Larry's Road (Forest Service Rd. 7281) off the old Murphy Road. The road was named for Larry Jelley who first took the hiking group of Silver Striders there. There will be beautiful views into Cartoogechaye valley with the leaves gone. Meet at Westgate Plaza in Franklin at 2 pm, drive 22 miles round trip. Call Leader Kathy Ratcliff, 526-6480, for reservations. Visitors and friendly dogs are welcome.

...NANTAHALA continued from page 16

Swain County Extension Teaching Kitchen, where community residents are invited to learn nutritional literacy and cooking skills.

QUALITY OF HOUSING

• Southwestern Commission – To leverage funding from other sources, which, in turn, will expedite the launch of the Southwestern North Carolina Housing Consortium.

Soon after their establishment in early 2019, Nantahala Health Foundation's Board of Directors focused on strategic planning and information gathering. After hosting an extensive series of listening sessions designed to identify issues challenging Western North Carolina, they defined their priorities and set about allocating funds in support of achieving their mis-

sion.

NHF's 2020 Collaborative Health Innovation Program, during which awards were capped at \$50,000 each, marks the organization's third completed grant cycle with a collective community investment to date of nearly \$2.2 million in support of social determinants of health.

For more information about Nantahala Health Foundation's mission to work with nonprofit service providers and governmental agencies to improve SDofH throughout the region or to offer input about regional needs related to social determinants of health, please visit nantahalahealthfoundation.org or connect with them on Facebook and Instagram.

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



The Heavens Declare the Glory of God Psalm 19

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone
Our Lady of the
Mountains Catholic Church

Remarkable and observable celestial events marked both the beginning and end of the earthly life Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Many, of course, know of the star of Bethlehem, the subject of which this column will primarily speak. Few, however, remember the other bookend.

St. Luke tells us: "It was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. The sun was darkened..." (Lk 23:44-45).

Further, St. Peter quotes the prophet Joel as evidence for the truth about Christ: "I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath, blood and fire and whirling smoke; the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes, great and glorious" (Acts 2:19-20).

Did these events truly happen? Did Magi truly find the Infant by means of a star?

Thanks to modern astrological software and the regular movement of the earth, planets, sun, and stars, we can travel to any place in history on any place on earth and look at the sky. Rick Larson filmed a documentary in 2007 titled Star of Bethlehem in which he presents evidence he found using one such computer program, Starry Night.

This column by no means endorses of all his claims. However, he does present how it might be plausible, for instance, for wise men in a distant land to find a child by a star.

Larson's evidence for the star of Bethlehem is too voluminous for this brief column; however, the following will provide a brief summary.

Around the time of Our Lord's birth Jupiter and Venus overlapped such that they appeared as the brightest star seen in the lifetimes of those living.

Further, the star Regulus (little king) repeatedly crossed paths with Jupiter (the king planet) within the constellation of Leo, which means "lion," the animal associated with the tribe of Judah.

Starry events also occur with the constellation Virgo, or "virgin."

In this light, it makes sense for the Magi to arrive in Jerusalem asking: "Where is He that has been born, the King of the Jews?" (Mt 2:2).

And the end of the Lord's life? On April 3, 33 Anno Domini, a lunar eclipse began just below the horizon if considered from Jerusalem beginning at 3PM. The moon

•See SPIRITUALLY page 22

Proverbs 3:5

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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

CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Wes Sharpe, Pastor 828-743-5298
Sundays: School at 9:30 Worship 10:30

Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

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Tues. Guys study 8am, Gals 10am.

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1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7 p.m.

Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

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Sr. Pastor Gary Hewins

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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; Choir 5p; Prayer Mtg 6:15p

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Mondays: Men's Prayer Group & Breakfast 8 a.m.

Wed: Choir: 6p

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John 3:16

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

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

Sundays: Worship: 11

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Pastor Dan Robinson

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Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.

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Rev. Marty Kilby

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Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

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Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Dec. 1. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Dec. 1

At 12:38 p.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident in Highlands Plaza.

Dec. 6

At 6:30 p.m., Bryan Scott Garrenger, 39, of Franklin, was arrested for being in possession of a lethal cutting instrument and stolen vehicles.. The vehicles have been impounded. He was issued a \$5,000 secured bond. His trial date is Dec. 17.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Dec. 2

Dec. 2

At 7:23 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Cullasaja Club Drive.

Dec. 3

At 3:34 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Big View Dr.

Online options a way to avoid lines at courthouse and be COVID-safe

District Attorney Ashley Hornsby Welch is urging residents to avoid long lines at courthouses and to stay COVID-safe by taking advantage of online options for resolving certain traffic tickets and paying various court costs, fines and fees.

"Using onlineservices.nccourts.org allows people to bypass the pandemic-caused delays in our judicial system, plus it can reduce risks of coronavirus exposure," Welch said. "We want people to stay home and stay safe to the extent possible."

Earlier this year, Gov. Roy Cooper directed the courts to maintain social distancing requirements and to facilitate "online or remote access by customers if possible."

The state's Electronic Compliance and Dismissal System (ECAD), rolled out in 2016, is integrated with the state Division of Motor Vehicles. This allows North

At 8:21 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 west.

Dec. 4

At 2:56 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers FD.

At 11:28 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 west.

At 2:56 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Rustic Lane.

Dec. 5

At 9:23 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Buck Creek Road.

At 1:43 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a downed power line on Wyanoak road.

At 9:38 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a chimney fire at a residence on Hemlock Circle.

Dec. 7

At 3:37 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at the hospital.

At 8:02 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at the hospital.

Carolina residents cited with certain violations to show compliance.

The service is not available at this time to out-of-state residents.

Violations that can be resolved include expired registrations or inadequate inspection records, driving without a license, failing to have a license in the car or using an expired license.

Additionally, state residents can request district attorneys and their staffs to either reduce or dismiss traffic tickets. After reviewing the cases, officials approve or deny the requests. Residents receive electronic notification of the decision.

Also through NCcourts.gov, the public can sign up for text reminders for rescheduled court dates and access other court services online, including citation services, ticket and court payments, court date notifications and reminders.

Hernandez pleads guilty to killing motorcyclist

Sentenced to minimum of 54 months and maximum of 77 months in prison

Explainer:

How is sentencing determined?

Judges in North Carolina have limited powers when handing down sentences. Since 1994, they have used a General Assembly-approved grid chart to make the determinations.

Felony crimes are classified into letter classes (from Class A through Class I), depending on their seriousness. Crimes that involve victim injury or the risk of victim injury are assigned to the highest classes.

Judges calculate the length of prison time using the points, adding still more points for levels of criminal history.

Other factors also weigh in: habitual felon status and whether the crime was aggravated (when certain facts make the sentence more severe) or mitigated (when certain facts make the sentence less severe).

Offenders must serve 100 percent of the minimum sentence and 85 percent of the maximum sentence.

...

Jorge Hernandez, arrested last year after crashing into a motorcyclist on N.C. 107 near Glenville, killing him, pleaded guilty Tuesday in Jackson County Superior Court, Assistant District Attorney Chris Matheson said.

Senior Resident Superior Court Judge Bradley B. Letts sentenced the 22-year-old Cashiers resident to an active term in prison. He will serve a minimum of 54 months and a maximum of 77 months in the N.C. Department of Corrections.

State-mandated laws dictate maximum and minimum sentences allowed in court, based on the severity of the crime, the criminal record of the defendant and aggravating and mitigating factors.

Hernandez pleaded guilty to one count of felony death by motor vehicle and one count of felony hit and run resulting in death and/or serious injuries, according to Matheson, a prosecutor for District Attor-



Jorge Hernandez

ney Ashley Hornsby Welch who oversees the 43rd Prosecuratorial District.

Judge Letts consolidated the charges for sentencing. Hernandez received credit for 443 days pretrial confinement, and he was ordered to pay \$2,255 in restitution and \$2,775 in attorney's fees.

Here's what happened:

On Sept. 15, 2019, just after 5 p.m., Hernandez and Richard Bartnik met with fatal result on N.C. 107 in a notoriously steep curve that

locals call Cabbage Curve.

Hernandez – who would later admit he'd been drinking – was southbound, heading toward Cashiers. Bartnik was northbound on his 2011 Suzuki motorcycle, driving down the steep mountain and toward Cullowhee and Sylva.

Investigators said that Hernandez's pickup veered to the left, crossed the two-lane highway's center line and hit Bartnik's motorcycle head on, killing him instantly.

Bartnik's wife managed to swerve her motorcycle out of the pickup truck's path of travel and to safety.

Bartnik was a native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was a veteran and a retired City of Milwaukee fireman.

At the crash scene, investigators found beer, including an open bottle, in Hernandez's 2003 GMC Sierra pickup truck. The driver had fled.

A witness provided investigators with a physical description. About two hours after the wreck, two Jackson County deputies found and arrested Hernandez on Cullowhee Mountain Road.

They noted his eyes were red and glassy, and that he smelled of alcohol.

Using mathematical analysis and a blood sample, a forensic expert calculated that at the time of the crash, Hernandez, if tested then, would have registered well over North Carolina's legal limit of .08: at the very least, .14.



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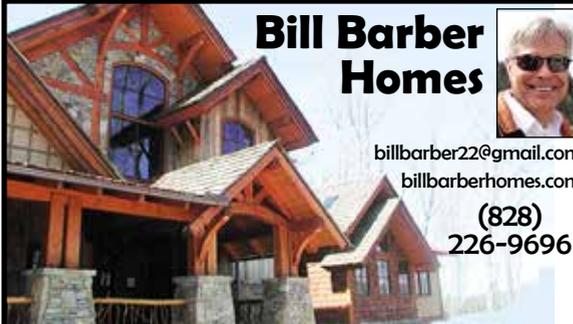
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...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 18

soon rose in a sanguine red, portending gloom for all to see.

One ought not hang his faith on such documentaries. However, considering the plausibility of biblical events supported by science can deepen our appreciation of the true historic nature of the event about which this Christmas season celebrates.

Perhaps most consoling is the display of God's perfect providence: if the stars were set into motion "in the beginning," and if they accurately announced the Lord's birth and death, it shows how perfect God's providence is, even despite human sinfulness.

...MAYOR continued from page 2

700 cans a day.

If a resident elects to construct a container for their toter, it needs to have a gate or open front so crews can roll the toter to the truck. An enclosed four-sided container that makes crews have to lift the toter up and out of the structure defeats the goal of eliminating the continuous lifting of trash containers.

Again, I thank residents who have purchased toters. Your participation and support has help address what was a growing bear problem. It will also help the town maintain current residential collection rates. Folks that do not comply with the ordinance can discuss their issues with our code enforcement police officer.

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