And the Super Tuesday winners are...

By Brittney Lofthouse

Just shy of 10,000 voters in Macon County went to the polls to cast their ballots in the Primary Election. Only 37 percent of the county’s 25,702 registered voters participated in the election.

According to MC Board of Elections Deputy Director Gary Tallent, that’s pretty good for Macon County. “In 2016 about the same number of voters turned out and the state reported that Macon County’s 26,126 registered voters participated in the election.”

Town Board agenda was varied

Last Thursday’s Town Board meeting touched on a number of topics – Dogwood Trust Foundation, Highlands Motoring Festival request, Coalition for non-native invasive plants request, an update from the Greenway Trail committee, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments, the request to schedule public hearings for UDO amendments.

First up was Sam Lupas with the Dogwood Trust Foundation, previously on the HC Hospital Board, about his new role at Dogwood as well as an update about its mission.

Prior to his Dogwood role, Lupas helped navigate the sale of Mission to Hospital Corporation of America (HCA). Now he is on Dogwood’s 14-member Board of Directors.

By Brittney Lofthouse

Kim Lewicki

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SINCE THE HCA/MISSION MERGER: PART 4

Lack of services and transport issues are on the minds of citizens

By Brittney Lofthouse and Kim Lewicki

Healthcare in Macon County has experienced significant changes over the last several years.

First the surgical unit at HC Hospital was closed which meant patients had to go to either Angel Medical Center in Franklin, Harris Regional in Sylva, or Mission in Asheville for surgical procedures.

Then Angel Medical Center’s Labor and Delivery Unit (L&D) closed. Now, surgical options at Angel have allegedly been decreased, too, which means patients are sent to Mission or can choose to go to Harris Regional.

Though there are two hospitals in Macon County, since they no longer offer services of the past – both when they were part of Mission and now HCA – the need for patients to travel out of Macon County for healthcare has continued to grow – and that often means a ride in an ambulance.

Shortly after L&D closed in Franklin, Mission Health Systems sold out to the for-profit company, HCA Healthcare. With that transition, came additional changes to rural healthcare – complaints Gibbins Advisors, the independent monitoring firm hired to oversee the transition, heard at town meetings recently held across the region.

During Gibbins’ meeting in Franklin, residents shared their concerns over the loss of specialized care at the Franklin and Highlands hospitals as part of the acquisition.

Surgical services were a specific topic of conversation as local residents shared horror stories of simple procedures such as an appendectomy not being able to be done nearby.

By Brian O’Shea

Plateau Daily News

Highlands School was a gathering of scientific-student minds on Thursday for Highlands School’s STEM Night and Science Fair. Students present scientific findings at STEM Night & Science Fair

By Brian O’Shea

Plateau Daily News

Students present scientific findings at STEM Night & Science Fair

By Brian O’Shea

Plateau Daily News

STEM Night entailed activity stations throughout the old gym focused on scientific principles used in the book Mouse House Tales, presented by students from Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) classes. Each page of the story was the focus of a specific topic of conversation as local residents shared horror stories of simple procedures such as an appendectomy not being able to be done nearby.

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Surgical services were a specific topic of conversation as local residents shared horror stories of simple procedures such as an appendectomy not being able to be done nearby.
The annual town budget retreat is today, at Coleman Hall of First Presbyterian Church. As always, I want to thank the church for sharing with the town this great meeting facility. The retreat will begin at 9 am. It will run through mid-afternoon.

The first part of the retreat will be reports from the Town Manager and department heads. These presentations will identify the budget needs and priorities of each department.

As usual, the big budget items will come from the public works department, which includes water and sewer, the electric, road and sanitation departments. A preview of needs in this area suggests significant spending.

For instance, a garbage truck will need to be replaced. The constant operation of these vehicles impacts their serviceability. A garbage truck can cost around $200,000. We will also be addressing several upgrades and maintenance items in the water department, including replacing old water lines. I anticipate a substantial list of paving projects from our Public Works Director and engineer, Lamar Nix. Paving roads should be a top priority for this upcoming budget.

In the parks and recreation area, I don’t see any large, immediate items. Nevertheless, I think it is time to initiate plans to replace the old Houston House on Foreman Road. It currently serves as an after-school center for children.

I don’t foresee major expenditures in the Police Department except for one. The state is encouraging all law enforcement agencies to convert to the Viper radio system which is currently used by the state patrol. This system provides better coverage and connects all agencies under one seamless system. Our police department needs this upgrade.

We will also be looking at Fire Department Capital needs. This review will be in concert with the new fire station that is under design.

After the staff and commissioners finish their box lunches, we will hear two reports from local groups. At around 1pm, Kaye McHan of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce will provide an update of chamber plans and activities. I believe it is important to work with the chamber in addressing community issues such as downtown aesthetics and appearance.

At about 1:30pm, Cindy Trevathan of the Performing Arts Center will give the board an update on the building of the new theater venue that will house both PAC and Playhouse events. The arts have a tremendous impact on the economic vitality of a community.

After these two presentations, the Town Board will go into closed session to consult with our attorney concerning the contract with WideOpen Networks to lease dark fiber and operate board band services from the town’s new fiber optic system. I anticipate the board coming out of closed session to consider approval of the contract. Upon the signing of the contract, WideOpen will setup operations of the network as the fiber optic network nears completion sometime in May or June.

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Live a lifestyle of adventure and wellness, with fun amenities, a community garden, mountain trails and a 12-hole, par-three golf course, in the beautiful Norton area of Cashiers, North Carolina.

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...OBITUARIES from page 2

Alice is survived by her Sister-in-law, Nell Gadilhe; 7 nieces, Genie Blough, Renee Childers, Michelle Sims, Cherie McElwraith, Alisa Gadilhe-Pfoegeg, Nanette Watson and Barbara Fowler. In addition to her parents, Alice is preceded in death by her two brothers, Brooks Gadilhe and Gene Gadilhe and his wife, Elizabeth; and best friends, Fern and Fred Reuter.

A funeral service was held at the Highlands Presbyterian Church with the Dr. Curtis Fussell and the Rev. Emily Wilmarth officiated. Burial will follow at the Highlands Memorial Park.

In lieu of flowers memorial donations can be made to the Highlands Presbyterian Church 471 Main St. Highlands, NC 28741.

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the Gadilhe family. Online condolences can be made at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com

Adell Jones

Adell Jones, beloved resident of Highlands, NC, for the past 30 years, died February 13, 2020, at Care Partners hospice in Asheville after a brave year-long battle against cancer. Ms. Jones was born on March 27,1947, in Rome, Georgia and was 72 years old. Raised in Dallas, Georgia, she is survived by her long-time companion, Brian L. Buckley, of Highlands, a sister, Jean Jones, and a niece, Dr. Wendy B. Cates, both of Dallas. She was predeceased by her father, Marvin F. “Red” Jones, her mother, Lawanna Jones, and twin brothers who passed away shortly after birth.

Adell graduated from Dallas High School and then from Tift College where she double-majored in Music and English. She then used her skills to teach music and English for 14 years at Paulding County High School.

Adell later relocated to Highlands, North Carolina. She played the organ and was the choir director at the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands for 11 years. A fitness buff, she also owned and operated a highly successful personal fitness business, Good Bodies. She also loved the auction business and kept involved in that both in Highlands and throughout the Southeast over many years.

Adell’s father owned and operated car dealerships and this inspired in her a lifetime enthusiasm for sports cars. He eventually sold his last business to Charles Hardy, who then established Hardy Chevrolet.

At home, Adell was an avid reader and a steady patron of the local arts and theater community.

Always ready with an encouraging word to her friends and acquaintances, Adell was quiet, but steady; reserved, but strong of character; patient, but no push-over; and content in life, with an inner strength of belief in God and service to community.

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.” From 1 Thessalonians, this was her favorite advice.

Over time, she came to know almost everyone in Highlands and was loved in return. Her life will be celebrated in a memorial service to be held on Saturday, March 7, at 2:00 p.m., at the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands. Reception to follow.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands.

Richard Douglas Miller


Richard was the son of the late Jessie and Minnie Ethel Carpenter Miller. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife, Alice Jeanette McConnell; a sister, Ruby Vinson; two brothers, Edwin Miller and Everette Miller and a granddaughter, Patricia Ann Miller.

Richard graduated from Dallas High School and then from the University of North Carolina where he majored in English. He then used his skills to teach English for 14 years at Havelock High School.

Richard later relocated to Highlands, North Carolina. She played the organ and was the choir director at the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands for 11 years. A fitness buff, she also owned and operated a highly successful personal fitness business, Good Bodies. She also loved the auction business and kept involved in that both in Highlands and throughout the Southeast over many years.

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I write this knowing there likely won’t be much clarity on the part of contesting Democrats until all the results are in from the Super Tuesday primaries on March 3rd. I’d like to share a few thoughts on this absolutely ridiculous process the two major parties gleefully engage in every four years. First, though, some numbers.

In 2016, seventeen Republican candidates, including Donald Trump, entered the contest for their party’s nomination. Six Democrats, including ultimate nominee Hillary Clinton, also got into the race.

It would be easy to forget that, in addition to the candidates of the major parties, fully 24 others, including Libertarian Gary Johnson and Green Party candidate Jill Stein, muddied things up by tapping access to ballots in all fifty states. The reason only the major parties, plus a couple of other well-organized minor parties, qualify for access to ballots in all fifty states has to do with a candidate’s financial means and campaign organization. Running for president is expensive and complicated. We’re told that’s why parties exist. So-called “third party” candidates, such as the Reform Party’s H. Ross Perot in 1996, and the Green Party’s Ralph Nader in 2000, influenced popular vote outcomes in both elections but had little, if any influence on electoral vote outcomes. They do, however, complicate the conversation for voters and take money out of the system for major candidates.

Election season, every four years, begins virtually the day after the previous presidential election. I’d like to share a few thoughts on this absolutely ridiculous process the two major parties gleefully engage in every four years. First, though, some numbers.

In 2016, almost $2.4 BILLION was spent on just the presidential election. Another $4.1 BILLION was spent on congressional elections, including about a third of the Senate. Elections are very big business in the United States.

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And then there’s the Electoral College, which, since 1824, has five times produced a presidency in which the popular vote-winning candidate actually lost the election. The last two of those instances were in 2000, when George W. Bush won the electoral vote (contested in Florida), and in 2016, when Donald Trump won the electoral vote (uncontested). Both lost the popular vote. There’s an ongoing debate, mostly along party lines, regarding the appropriateness of a candidate prevailing by winning the electoral vote but not the popular vote. This, of course, could be resolved by either eliminating the electoral college, or requiring a candidate to win BOTH the electoral college and popular votes, but don’t expect action on either of those sensible notions. It’s politics.

The primary election process during a presidential election year is one of the ugliest facets of how we elect our presidents in the U.S.A. Currently, between February 3rd and June 7th, every state plus a handful of territories will hold either a primary or a caucus to decide who, among participating candidates on the respective ballot, gets how many of that state’s or territory’s delegates at the parties conventions in Milwaukee and Charlotte later this year. Trust me on this; there will be no contested convention for the Republicans in Charlotte, unless, that is, the President does something to merit his party’s apocalypse. With Mr. Trump, one never knows. Because of the makeup of the Democratic field, it’s entirely possible a nominee will not emerge through the primary/caucus process. I have no predictions for you on this; these, after all, are Democrats, right? Who knows who’ll survive this mind-numbing process?

Looking down the road, we will definitely have an election this coming November 3rd. We likely will have a President-elect on November 4th, and, we’ll have an inauguration on January 20, 2021.

The, my bleary-eyed fellow voters, we’ll start the whole ridiculous cycle all over again. Yay!

Lady Highlanders finish awesome season

Lady Highlander’s basketball advanced all the way to the third round of state playoffs.

In the second round they faced Langtree Charter, finishing on top with an 83-61 win. They then planned to travel to Allegheny High School to play the number 2 seed.

After the weather postponed the game, they traveled on Monday, March 2nd. After a long, tough battle they fell short by 4 points.

Lady Highlander’s finished their season as both regular season conference champs and conference tournament champs, as well as contenders in the Sweet Sixteen.

Boys high school golf has started practicing for their season. High school and middle school girls soccer have also begun their practices for their season and prepare for their first games.
Three years ago, clients and friends introduced me to their acronym: QTR which stands for “Quality Time Remaining.” This acronym becomes increasingly important as the years go on here on The Plateau.

Each year, I meet dear clients who become friends. They are very conscious of how they want to spend their QTR with family, friends and activities. It is our job as real estate brokers to help newcomers decide if this area is the best place for them to spend their QTR. Here are the reasons that convince many folks to make this their home:

1. Weather. The cool summers and moderate winters allow us to enjoy the outdoors twelve months a year;
2. Natural Beauty. The lush landscape and dramatic views continue to marvel us on a daily basis.
3. Social Network. The diverse and interesting backgrounds of the people attracted to this area are truly amazing.
4. Cultural Amenities. For an area so sparsely populated on a year-round basis, the lively and vibrant opportunities for cultural enjoyment are enormous.
5. Family and Friends. Moving from Atlanta, for example, the quick two-hour commute allows us to stay connected to our children, grandchildren and old friends while providing us an opportunity to meet new friends from all over the world.
6. Medical Facilities. For a community this size, we are fortunate to have a hospital with excellent doctors and emergency care facilities.
7. Air and Water Quality. Water is the new “gold” with many parts of the country continually in drought. The pristine mountain water with an average of 90 inches of rain per year should never be taken for granted. The EPA evaluates areas by the Air Quality Index (AQI). This index is on a scale of 500-0 with 0 being the best air quality. This area is rated 39 which is in the very top range of good air quality.
8. Safety and Crime. When the most common incident in the police reports is “barking dog reported,” you know that you are living in one of the safest spots in this crazy world.
9. Traffic. Driving behind a slow driver in the season is annoying, but getting “stuck” in traffic and wasting years of your life just does not happen here.
10. Investors like YOU. The commitment of homeowners to support the community with its five-star restaurants, the art scene and the fabulous shops that we have supports the economy and vibrancy of this bucolic paradise.

May we all grow old together while enjoying our QTR in one of the most special places on Earth.
Mr. David Warren Warth, 49, passed away Saturday, February 29, 2020 in Highlands, NC. David was born April 2, 1970 in Michigan. David owned and operated Warth Construction in Highlands. He loved to work seven days a week; he loved car racing, working on cars, and was an avid car collector. He loved playing golf and fishing on Lake Burton, GA. He always loved making jokes and laughing up until the very end of his life.

Survivors include his wife, Danielle Warth of the home; a niece, Molly Mendez; and his father and mother-in-law, James “Jake” and Donna Jacobson of Scaly Mountain, NC.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held Thursday, March 5, 2020 at 11 a.m. at the Highlands First United Methodist Church with the Rev. Randy Lucas and Rev. Paul Christy officiating. The family will receive friends following the service at the church.

In lieu of flowers the family ask the all memorial donations go towards any Republican Party in your local town.

Online condolences can be left at www.bryantgrantfuneral-home.com

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the Warth family.

In the past staff could only allow internally illuminated signs that the UDO be amended to disallow internally illuminated signs in the town's rights-of-way. However, they recently changed their minds saying all streets be paved with a hard surface regardless of grade. Commissioners agreed to this and some other requests which Ham said would positively impact the local economy.

The Town Board granted the requests.

**Coalition for Non-Native Invasive Plants**

Representatives from the coalition requested $2,000 to match a grant from the Laurel Garden Club. The money will be used to continue its 3-year eradication plan of Japanese Knotweed growing in the town's rights-of-way.

Commissioner agreed to match the grant for $2,000.

**Greenway Trail Committee**

Sonya Carpenter of the Greenway Trail Committee updated the board on the work being done on the trail on Oak Street across from the First Baptist Church. The trail was started last year to entice people to enter the Greenway at that spot rather than walking to the gazebo along Oak Street that doesn't have a sidewalk.

Carpenter said the entrance to the new trail spur will include numerous native plants, a walkway and signage.

**Planning Issues**

Michael Mathis, assistant planning director, requested three amendments to the UDO be scheduled for a public hearing at the March 19 Town Board meeting -- subdivision street paving; internally illuminated signs; and citation issuance.

In the past months, commissioners suggested requiring street paving in private subdivision for any grade over 5%. However, they recently changed their minds saying all streets be paved with a hard surface regardless of grade. Commissioners agreed that this would eliminate requests from homeowners to later grade and fix their streets when rain events erode them away onto adjoining property and public streets.

Except for restaurant message boards and real estate listings in commercial windows, the Planning Board has recommended that the UDO be amended to disallow internally illuminated signs in the future. As the ordinance is now written, such signage is allowed.

In the past staff could only...
be performed in Macon County due to the lack of a full-time surgeon at AMC – which is where Highlands and Cashiers patients were typically sent. This means patients must wait hours and travel the long distance to Mission in Asheville. Citizens claim wait time and travel delays often caused emergencies such as burst appendix and other severe complications.

Claims regarding reduced surgical staff at Angel are being investigated by HCA's Healthcare Public and Media Relations Director Nancy Lindell but comment wasn’t available by press time.

Transports can initiate at a person’s residence when a 9-1-1 call is made, or from the site of accidents – motor vehicle and others.

According to MC Emergency Services Director Warren Cabe, patients are transported to the closest most appropriate facility, which means the transport may be directly to Highlands, Franklin, or Asheville depending on the circumstances.

“This means many times we bypass several smaller hospitals to get someone to a specialty center,” said Todd Doster with Macon EMS.

For cases such as the appendectomy, which a resident discussed during the Gibbins’ community meetings, EMS transported to Mission rather than Angel, because there wasn’t a surgeon available in Franklin. So, though Mission may now be the best option, it’s because of unavailable services.

Transporting patients to and from healthcare facilities in Macon County and also to Asheville and Sylva is the responsibility of the Macon County Emergency Services. It tracks ambulance services of the county’s three ambulance bases in Franklin, Highlands and Nantahala and to which hospital patients are transported.

Cabe said those “double runs” – first to Highlands, then either Franklin or Asheville or Sylva – are included in the receiving facility numbers which are tracked annually.

“It would be two different runs,” he said, “One to the original facility (Angel or Highlands-Cashiers) and one to the next level of facility out-of-town.

In 2016, Macon County EMS transported 2,844 patients to Angel Medical Center. For the same year, Macon EMS transported 25 patients to Harris Regional Hospital, 266 to Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, and 508 to Mission Hospital campuses.

In 2017, Macon County EMS transported 2,757 patients to Angel Medical Center. 48 patients to Harris Regional Hospital, 279 to Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, and 313 to Mission Hospital campuses.

In 2018, Macon County EMS transported 2,812 patients to Angel Medical Center. 87 patients to Harris Regional Hospital, 211 to Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, and 320 to Mission Hospital campuses.

In 2019, Macon County EMS transported 2,749 patients to Angel Medical Center. 151 patients to Harris Regional Hospital, 251 to Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, and 369 to Mission Hospital campuses.

Looking at where patients were transferred, the numbers for Angel Medical Center, Highlands-Cashiers, and Mission stay fairly consistent, with an obvious increase to Harris Regional beginning in 2017, which coincides with the closing of Labor and Delivery in Franklin.

A close look at the numbers, however, shows that the point patients are sent to various hospitals has shifted over the years.

In 2016, 485 of patients transported to Mission were interfacility transports while just 23 patients were recorded as “other” meaning from the scene of an accident or other emergency response.

In 2017, 285 patients to Mission were interfacility and 28 were “other.”

In 2018, those numbers were 282 and 38, respectively.

In 2019, the year HCA bought Mission, the interfacility transfers to Mission were 328 while 41 were listed as “other.”

Based on the numbers recorded by MC Emergency Services, more patients are being taken directly to Mission Hospital compared to a few years ago.

Despite the shift in numbers, with double the number of patients being taken directly to Mission in 2019 compared to 2016, Cabe said over the years his department has made the necessary changes to keep up with the case load.

“We increased our staffing from four, 24-hour staffed ambulances and one, 12-hour staffed ambulance to five, 24-hour staffed ambulances in 2014. We also initiated an Integrated Healthcare model in 2014-2015 with our Community Paramedic program to address high utilizers of the system and preventative care to decrease the workload on our transport trucks,” said Cabe.

“This program usually is available Monday through Friday.

“In 2016 we implemented a Paramedic Supervisor Program where an EMS Supervisor in a fully paramedic-level equipped SUV is available to respond 24 hours a day to assist the transport trucks and manage some patient calls, instead of a using a transport truck. We also have generated a sixth transport truck with either EMS office staff called in part-time, EMS staff, the Community Medic, Fire Department members, or the career Fire Services crew of which two are Paramedics.

In addition, Cabe said they also coordinate inter-facility transfers with Mission Hospital Regional Transport Services (ambulances) and Glenville-Cashiers EMS. Each transport is classified based on its urgency and assigned to the most appropriate transport agency.

“We also utilize air transportation when necessary including the Mission helicopter fleet and other air ambulances,” he said.

Transporting to, from and across Macon County, Jackson County and Buncombe County – a huge geographical area, is done with just 10 ambulances, which explains the wait-time patients are experiencing.

Cabe said MC EMS has five front-line ambulances (Paramedic level), one EMS Supervisor SUV (Paramedic level), one Community Medic SUV (Paramedic Level) and

• See HCA page 15
Forms for HS Kindergarten Registration are due March 12

Highlands School Kindergarten Registration for the 2020-2021 is on March 11. Children who reach the age of 5 on or before August 31, 2020 are eligible for admission into the Class of 2033. For parents, registration begins at 10 a.m. in the school’s media center. To make the transition from preschool to Kindergarten as fun and positive as possible, we offer new students a taste of great things to come by providing transportation to and from Highlands School for registration. At approximately 10:30am Highlands’ school bus driver, Nathan Smathers, will pick up eligible students from Highlands United Methodist Church and the Highlands Community Child Development Center aboard our activity buses, and bring them to school to meet their parents. Students not enrolled in a day care program may meet before 10:30 am at the Highlands Community Child Development Center, Inc. located at 89 Church Street, Highlands, to catch the bus. Riding the “school bus” is an exciting experience for the students. Please encourage your child to ride to school on the bus that day.

The bus will be returning students to the day care centers. PTO will provide complimentary lunch for all students and their parents in the school cafeteria as part of Kindergarten registration.

Registration packets can be picked up at Highlands School or at Highlands Community Child Development Center. All forms in the registration packet (except the Health Assessment Transmittal Form), will need to be completed and returned on March 12th. The Health Assessment Transmittal Form should be completed and turned in to the school by August 1, 2020.

In addition to the registration documents, the following items should be presented at registration on March 11th for photocopying:

1. Certificate of Immunizations (School must have within 30 days from the start of school). Students without a complete Certificate of Immunizations presented within 30 days from the start of school will be placed on administrative suspension until compliance.

2. Certified Birth Certificate (must present original, certified birth certificate. No copies or “uncertified” birth certificates will be accepted.

3. Proof of Residency.

If you are not the biological parent of the child enrolling, and/or there is a custody agreement in place, please provide any legal documents you have giving you authority to enroll the child (i.e., custody papers, name change documentation, adoption papers or educational domicile affidavits). The faculty and staff look forward to meeting you and your child. Please feel free to call us at 526-2147 should you have any questions.

Kindergarten Registration Itinerary

Wed., March 11

10-10:10: Parents arrive, turn in registration documents, and meet in Media Center
10-10:10: Overview and Orientation
1. Brian Jetter, Principal—School Information
2. Sarah Holbrooks, Assistant Principal—School Information
3. Nicole Liu, Guidance Counselor
4. Terry Stamey, Media Specialist—Library & Computers
5. Mary Tyson, School Nurse—Health Information
6. Annette Jenkins, Administrative Assistant—Child Nutrition
7. Andrea Smith, PTO President—PTO Information
10-10:50: Buses Pick up Students at Pre-Ks
10-10:55: Parents meet up with children
10-11:15: Parents and children eat lunch
11-11:35: Parents and children tour school
11-35-11:40: Children to buses and Parents to Media Center
11-40-12:00: Complete registration forms and pick up goodies

Ongoing

• Movies at the Playhouse Fri & Sat 1, 4, 7; Sun. 1 & 4; Tues-Thurs 1, 4, 7.
• Ice Skating at K-H Founders Park – Thurs., 1-8p; Fri. & Sat 1-10p; Sun. 1-8p.
• 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 Recreation Dept. pool. Public Swim Monday-Thursday 11a-7p Friday and Saturday 11a-6p and Sunday 1-6p.
• Fibbon Magee’s Clothing Thrift Store on Laurel Street is open Tues.-Friday 10a to 4p and on Saturday from 10a to 2p.

First Mondays

• New Guided Botanical Garden Tours: A Garden in Every Season. 11:30 am - 12:30 pm. Meet at the Highlands Nature Center Free, All ages welcome.
• Short off Baptist Church nondenominational Men’s Mtg at 7p.

Mondays

• At the Rec Park, Dance2Fit classes with Tori Schmitt at 5:30pm.
• Hip Hop classes with Tori Schmitt at 5:30-6:30.
• 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 Kristy Lewis at 526-3376.
• Gentle Yoga at the Rec park at 9:15-10:15am. All levels welcome.

Mon-Wed.

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

Mon. & Thurs.

• Heart Healthy Exercise Class Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8:30am-9:30am.
• Step Aerobics with Tina Rog - 8.9a.

Mon., Wed., Thurs.

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

Tuesdays

• FREE Community Table Dinner at the Community Bldg; at 6p.
• 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 budandlynn@me.com.
• The Humanist Discussion Group meets from 10:30-11:30 am in the Meeting Room at the back of the Hudson Library.

Thursdays

• Storytime at Hudson Library, 10:40 am. Open to the public
• NAMI Support Group for individuals dealing with mental illness and the family members of individuals dealing with these challenges from 7 - 8:15p at First United Methodist Church Out Reach Center on West Main Street in Franklin Call Donita (828) 526-9510.

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.

Tuesday and Thursdays

• 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 Community Bible Church, 5-5:30p - Dinner – Free (Donations Appreciated) 5:45-7p - 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 @ the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., at noon. And held six times a week in Cashiers call leader Irene Brewi, 772-263-5991, 828-787-2324, 828-332-0001, 706-746-5426, 727-599-1440.

Fri., March 6

• 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 @ the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., at noon. And held six times a week in Cashiers call leader Irene Brewi, 772-263-5991, 828-787-2324, 828-332-0001, 706-746-5426, 727-599-1440.

Sat., March 7

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 4-mile rambling hike, elevation change 500 ft., around Wallace Branch, up the Bartram Trail, crossing a stream to a lovely trail through the pines, returning on a Forest Service Road. Meet at Westgate Plaza in Franklin at 10 a.m. Drive 6 miles round trip. Call leader Irene Brewi, 772-263-3478, for reservations.

Sun., March 8

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 2-mile hike, elevation change 400 ft., on Whiteside Mountain Loop between Highlands and Cashiers with spectacular views of the Chattooga River Valley.

• See EVENTS page 14
F<br>

For all my fans who’ve been submitting questions, here are the answers. I hope you enjoy ‘em.

Q: Why is it you’re black, but real Great Pyrenees are white?
A: First, I am a real GP; it’s just that I’m mixed with other breeds. My DNA results showed a few Golden Retrievers and one Australian Shepherd along with my GP Great-Grandfather. I think I got my black color from the Aussie. Please note that I may be black with a bit of white, but I am a handsome boy!

Q: Do you have a girlfriend?
A: No, I wish I did. There’s beauty in my neighborhood who looks like Tinker, my adopt-ed older sister. Her name is Bella, and she’s stunning. She’s beginning to go grey, just like I am, and I think we’d make a handsome couple.

Q: I’d like to send you some tennis balls; what color would you like?
A: Oh; that is very sweet of you, but I don’t care for tennis balls or any other kind of ball. They’re just not my thing. I have two favorite colors, in case you want to send me a bandana: red and purple. Funny, those are Mum’s favorites too.

Q: Do the Royal Parents ever shave you in the summer?
A: They tried that once and learned their lesson. It seems I have really thin hair near my tail, and it takes forever for it to fill in after I’m shaved. I had an embarrassing bald spot for months, and I made Mum promise never to shave me again.

Q: Why do you let the cat sleep on your beds? Shouldn’t she sleep on hers—not yours?
A: Why not let her sleep on my big beds? At last count, I had five, and I can only sleep on one at a time. Plus she looks awfully darned cute curled up in the middle of them. She has one official bed on the couch, and she sleeps in it every once in a while. You can also find her asleep in one of the baskets in the living room or in Mum’s file drawer or on Mum and Dad’s bed.

Q: What’s on your bucket list?
A: A trip to France is still #1 on my list, but I’m not sure I’ll ever make it. Next would be a month or two anywhere where it snows every day.

Q: Are you going to be on a diet for life?
A: Probably. Unfortunately for me, Mum read that even though we GPs are big dogs, we don’t need lots of food. And, I have to admit, I have more spring in my step when I keep my weight down.

Q: What’s the last really bad thing you did?
A: First, I’m good almost all of the time, but like two-legged kids, I sometimes get in trouble. The last bad thing? I gobbled half a sub sandwich. Mum and Dad were watching a football game on TV, and Mum put her plate on the table by her chair and walked off. When I realized there was a sub sandwich in easy reach, I just had to have some of it. I might have gotten all of it if Mum hadn’t walked back in.

Look for my next column, Ask Lord Banjo #2, for more fun facts about me and a few about my feline sister Puddin’. Meanwhile, Happy Tails to You!

• Lord Banjo lives in Georgia with his Mum, Kathy Manos Penn. Find more stories in his book, “Lord Banjo the Royal Pooch,” available on Amazon and locally at Highland Mountain Paws. To contact him, please email inkpenn119@gmail.com.

THE SUMMER HOUSE

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MONDAY – SATURDAY: 9AM – 5PM
SUNDAY: CLOSED
An Open Letter to Our Community

Over the past few weeks, we have heard heartfelt concerns from members of our community and our own team about the present and future of Mission Health and its transition to HCA Healthcare. I want to assure you that our commitment to our patients across western North Carolina remains steadfast and at the forefront of all we do.

Mission Health and HCA Healthcare understand the enormous trust placed in us to serve this community through the provision of excellent healthcare, and we take our responsibility very seriously. We've listened to the passionate feedback shared by our team members and the community we serve, and we welcome this opportunity to share with you some important reflections on the first year of our new partnership and to address the comments we have heard.

We knew this transition would be challenging at times and, as with any healthcare system acquisition, change would be inevitable. It's helpful to remember that Mission Health selected HCA Healthcare as a partner because it offered the financial stability to help preserve and expand the high-quality healthcare our friends and families have come to expect from Mission Health. The promises we agreed to at the time of the sale were critical to this decision, and our mutual commitment to them is unwavering.

This past year has been one of intensive learning from each other as we have worked collaboratively through many changes and challenges. We know we can create more opportunities to hear from our community and our teams while keeping these important stakeholders more informed about what we are doing and why. Improving our communication with our communities and our team members is critical to our ongoing success.

In that spirit, I'd like to share with you more details about some of what we've experienced at Mission Health since last February:

- With our more favorable patient financial assistance policies, we provided approximately $252 million in charity care, uninsured discounts and other financial assistance in our first full year of operation. This represents approximately $100 million more under the new HCA Healthcare policy than under Mission Health’s prior policy. You can find out more about our financial assistance programs, which we’ve recently made more accessible, via the main page of our website, missionhealth.org.

- Across the 18 counties we serve, we’ve recruited more than 100 new providers (47 new physicians and 66 new advanced practice providers) over the past year, including some hard-to-fill positions in our regional hospitals serving the more rural areas of our community. Among these is a full-time primary care physician starting in May 2020 to serve the Cashiers community.

- At Mission Hospital in Asheville, we’ve seen both our inpatient admissions and emergency room visits grow by more than 10% in 2019. To meet this significant growth, we have hired hundreds of RNs, as well as other bedside caregivers and support team members. This includes staffing our Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) to a higher level to ensure the most critically ill newborns have the care they need.

- Because of this rapid growth, we’ve also brought in a number of traveling nurses to meet the volume growth demand while we are diligently recruiting more full-time nursing staff.

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We've listened to the passionate feedback shared by our team members and the community we serve, and we welcome this opportunity to share with you some important reflections on the first year of our new partnership and to address the comments we have heard.
• We recently adjusted our approach to deploying Health Unit Coordinators (HUC) and Patient Care Technicians (CNAs) to better support our RNs on the nursing units.

• In October, we completed and opened the Mission Hospital North Tower, the culmination of more than eight years of planning and construction. While this beautiful new state-of-the-art facility means we’ve brought most of our inpatient services under one roof, integrating it into our staffing and processes meant a very complex transition for our staff to navigate.

• The new facility has also increased the need for environmental services (housekeeping) team members at Mission Hospital; we’ve filled 35 open positions on that team since January and are currently hiring for additional positions to meet the increased demand.

• To help recruit and retain our team members, we increased the minimum wage across Mission Health to $12.50/hour last fall. Additionally, we recently provided further targeted market adjustments to raise the pay of hundreds of people in critical roles that help support excellent care at the bedside.

• We’ve added ways to reward our staff. In 2019, we implemented HCA Healthcare’s student loan repayment program. To date, the program has contributed nearly $700,000 to our eligible team members. And, we’ve recently implemented HCA Healthcare’s tuition reimbursement program, through which full- and part-time team members can qualify for up to $5,250 per calendar year – that’s double Mission Health’s prior program – in tax-free reimbursement for applicable higher education courses, including tuition, books and course-related fees.

• We know there have been concerns about our initial decision to close the CarePartners Wheelchair Seating Clinic because of its heavy dependence on grants that we are no longer able to accept. As we reconsidered this decision, we realized we may have moved quickly without having an alternative option readily available to patients. The clinic has continued to serve those patients with the highest needs during a transition period. And now, we are delighted that another community provider has agreed to assume operations of the clinic; we expect to have a more detailed announcement about this very soon.

• We have invested $280 million in capital funding to support the delivery of care through state-of-the-art technology.

• We paid $8.9 million in new property taxes for 2019, providing resources that were previously unavailable to our communities that now help fund vital services and infrastructure needs throughout western North Carolina.

• During the past year, we’ve helped western North Carolina welcome more than 4,000 new babies and have stood side-by-side with family members and friends as we delivered lifesaving care with advanced technology.

It’s certain there will be more challenges to come as we continue this journey together. What’s even more certain is our commitment to working with you to preserve and advance the quality of care, and to navigate the changing needs of our western North Carolina communities. That’s been our commitment for more than 134 years, and it continues to guide our decisions today.

We commit to being open as we respond to feedback, to continue listening to our community and to do a better job of providing updates about our health system. We are all Mission Health, and I hope you will join me in continuing to support this vital community resource as we continue to grow and improve for you.

Sincerely,

Greg Lowe
President
North Carolina Division

[Signature]
2100’ below. Peregrine falcons may soar by. Meet at Bi-Lo parking lot in Franklin at 1 pm, drive 38 miles round trip. Call leader Mary Stone, 369-7352, for reservations. Visitors welcome. Meet at Bi-Lo parking lot in Franklin at 2 pm, drive 38 miles round trip. Call leader Mary Stone, 369-7352 for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Sun., Mon., March 8-9
• Beat the late winter/early spring “blahs!” Come out and audition or volunteer your help for Highlands Cashiers Players spring production, Agatha Christie’s The Unexpected Guest. This is a two act stage play to be held at the Performing Arts Center. There are parts for 3 or 4 women and 4 men and a combination for the leads. The flexibility of parts in the play allows for multiple castings. Call leader Mary Stone, 369-7352 for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Sun., March 11
• Kindergarten registration for Highlands School at 10 a.m.

Sat., March 14
• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 7-mile hike, elevation change 950 ft., on Ridge Trail at Coweeta Hydrological Lab, starting behind the wet lab and hiking to Dyke Gap, with views of Albert Mountain fire tower. Descend on the old Gage Trail to Shope Fork and return to the office complex. Meet at Westgate Plaza in Franklin at 9 am, drive 16 miles round trip. Call leader Gail Lehman, 524-5298, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Sun., March 15
• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take an easy 2-mile hike with very little elevation change in the woods at the west end of the Macon County Library in Franklin, following the bicycle path to the Greenway, walking along Cartoogechaye Creek to the Community Garden and returning. Meet at the library at 2 pm. Call leader Mary Stone, 369-7352 for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Tues., March 17
• Catch up on all the spring buzz! Join the Highlands Nature Center as we get to know our native bees a little better. Through a short introduction and a walk around campus, we’ll find out what “weeds” are actually perfect for pollinators and discover some tricks for being bee-friendly. To participate in this free event, from 1-2 p.m., meet at the Highlands Nature Center, 930 Horse Cove Rd. The event is weather dependent. The Highlands Biological Station is a multi-campus center of Western Carolina University. For more information, please call (828) 526-2623.

Fri., March 20
• Senior Dinner at the Highlands Civic Center at noon. Senior Dinners are the third Friday of each month November through April.

Sat., March 21
• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 5-mile hike, elevation change 400 ft., from Jones Gap to White Rock on the NC Bartram Trail, a leisurely hike with interpretive signs along the way and spectacular views from White Rock of the Nantahala Mountains and Teseetee Valley. Meet at Bi-Lo parking lot in Franklin at 9 am, drive 24 miles round trip. Call leader Gail Lehman, 524-5298, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Sun., March 15
• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take an easy 2-mile hike to Mud Creek Falls, despite its name, a beautiful waterfall in Sky Valley, GA. Follow an old logging road with a small incline along Mud Creek to a picnic area at the falls. Meet at Smoky Mountain Visitors Center at 2 p.m., drive 30 miles round trip. Call leader Katharine Brown, 421-4178, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Sat., March 28
• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate 5-mile hike, elevation change 400 ft., from Jones Gap to White Rock on the NC Bartram Trail, a leisurely hike with interpretive signs along the way and spectacular views from White Rock of the Nantahala Mountains and Teseetee Valley. Meet at Bi-Lo parking lot in Franklin at 9 am, drive 24 miles round trip. Call leader Gail Lehman, 524-5298, for reservations. Visitors welcome.

Fri., May 1
• Chefs in the House Mini Rosé Dinner with Chadwick Boyd. 6:30 pm, cocktails and 7:15 dinner. Eat and stay at Half-mile Farm. $15 per person, plus tax and gratuity. For reservations, call Call: 828-787-2635.

Kenter medals at NC State swim championship

Chase Kenter, 5th Grader at Highlands School, represented the Highlands Hurricanes at the 2020 NC State Age Group Swimming Championship in Greensboro, NC February 14-16. Representing the Hurricanes by himself he was still able to score 25 points placing the Hurricanes 33rd out of 41 teams.

Kenter qualified for 11 events. Each swimmer is only allowed to swim nine events. In his nine swims Kenter had 5 PRs (personal records) scoring 16th in the 200 yard Individual Medley (IM), winning an 8th place medal in the 100-yard breaststroke, and a 6th place medal in the 50-yard breaststroke. In the 50 breast, Kenter beat the 7th place swimmer by 0.01 seconds and lost to the 5th place swimmer also by 0.01 seconds.

Next, Kenter is scheduled to represent the Hurricanes at the USA swimming sectional meet held in the 1996 Olympic Pool on the Georgia Tech campus in Atlanta March 12-15. This is a 7-state meet (NC, SC, GA, VA, WV, AL, and Miss). Kenter has qualified for nine events. Each swimmer is allowed to swim only eight events.

The Highlands Hurricanes are a Highlands Recreation Park Team that practices at the Highlands Recreation Park Pool in the evenings and on Saturday mornings. All practices are optional. The only requirement to join the team is that you be able to swim one length of the pool (25 yards) unassisted. For further information please call Steve Hott, Head Coach of the Highlands Hurricanes at 828.421.4121.
HCA continued from page 9

five backup ambulances (Paramedic level).

Highlands and Nantahala EMS bases have a front-line truck and a back-up truck stationed there 24/7 and Franklin has three frontline trucks and three back-up trucks stationed there.

“If the truck in Highlands is taken out of service for routine maintenance or repairs, the duty crew switches to the back-up truck and another back-up truck from Franklin is moved to Highlands so there are always two trucks in the building,” he said. “Basically, every staffed ambulance has a fully equipped spare back-up. For example, right now, we have a truck down for an engine rebuild so that leaves us five in Franklin, two in Highlands and two in Nantahala. Without that number of vehicles, we could easily become hampered for transports if we didn’t manage an inventory of fully equipped backup trucks.”

Staffing is divided into three ambulance crews in Franklin, one in Highlands, one in Nantahala, which is based on call number and call locations.

“We have a minimum staffing of in-county ambulances -- two ambulances in Franklin, one in Highlands, and one in Nantahala. Ambulance crews are rotated to different areas to maintain that level. For instance, if the duty truck in Highlands takes a transport out of county, a truck from Franklin rotates to Highlands to back-fill the area.”

MC EMS has 41 full-time staff positions with 36 assigned to ambulances, four assigned to the QRV/SUV, and one assigned for coordination.

“All can attend to patients,” said Cabe. “We have 25 Part-time As-Needed employees and all can attend to patients.”

Those transportation costs trickle down to Macon County taxpayers.

Unlike Jackson County’s Harris Regional Hospital in Sylva, which has its own ambulance service, Macon County’s EMS is part of the county budget. While patients are billed for those services, vehicle upkeep and other expenses are part of the EMS’ operating budget, which is funded by taxpayers.

Another issue regarding transportation discussed at the Gibbins’ meeting was how patients get back to Macon County when transferred to Mission.

One Macon County resident said patients with no family or means to get back to Macon were left without transportation back to the county of origin since HCA took over, and the only way to get back to Macon is to pay an extra fee, which was quoted as several hundred dollars.

However according to Lindell that claim about return transportation is not true.

“Mission Health has not changed its process regarding patients who are discharged from Mission Hospital – our process remains as it was prior to Mission becoming part of HCA Healthcare. The Mission Care Management Team works with patients to ensure they are able to return home safely, which may include ambulance or wheelchair transport as needed,” she said.

Lindell said she wasn’t sure about the fee issue but is checking it out.

Since MC EMS has been adjusting over the years, Cabe said the HCA/Mission merger hasn’t taxed their capabilities.

“The only difference we have seen recently is a few more transports to facilities out-of-county for orthopedic coverage and that is not much. So, there has been no significant difference or changes for us,” he said.

Of course, heart issues have been dealt with at Mission for years but since surgery issues have changed dramatically over the past year, facilities’ ability to service Macon County residents in Macon County has significantly changed.

• To read the first three parts of the “Since the HCA/Mission Merger” series go to www.highlandsinfo.com, click on Local News and open issues Feb. 13.
Town Board from page 8

... TOWN BOARD from page 8

cite offenders for sign standards and tree protection — any other zoning violation had to go to the Town Board to be discussed in closed session which usually took at least 30 days to wrap up.

The recommended amendment to the UDO would give the Planning Department the right to issue citations for all zoning infractions, except soil erosion. This decreases the time the issue is put to bed and doesn't encumber the Town Board with the task. Any offender who feels the Planning Department's judgement was incorrect could still appeal to the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Mathis also recommended commissioners approve the RFP needed to request quotes from planning firms to assist with the completion of a Comprehensive Plan.

Recently, the state ruled that local governments must have a comprehensive plan as a condition of adopting and applying zoning regulations. This must be completed by July 1, 2022.

Though a comprehensive plan was started in Highlands voluntarily some years ago, it was never completed. Now it is a requirement and administration believes it will be expedited with the help of a professional planning firm.

The RFP was drafted using examples from other towns. Commissioners approved the RFP.

Fire Department

The architect for the new fire department, Randy Baker, advertised for qualifications for a construction manager to oversee the project. Three large North Carolina construction companies applied.

Staff and the public safety committee reviewed the submittals and compared their recent experience with fire department construction. One of the three hadn't built a fire department since 2008. The other two had constructed fire department within the last three years.

However, D.R. Reynolds stood out because it had built several fire department within the three years and their final pricing was lower than the other company.

In addition, D.R. Reynolds came recommended by two other fire chiefs.

― Kim Lewicki

... STEM continued from page 1

scientific activity presented by AIG students with a STEM (scientific, technology, engineering, and mathematics) theme.

Middle School Teacher Stephanie Smathers said the students and STEM Coordinator for Macon County Schools Jennifer Love did a fantastic job.

“I thought the projects were great this year, and Jennifer Love did a great job with STEM, and she was able to incorporate literacy into the subject,” said Smathers.

“Science and STEM allow students to get involved in learning with their hands. They learn to problem solve and create solutions with different approaches. It’s combines critical thinking and application.”

Sixth-grader Lucas Deppe said his AIG class used electricity to connect receptors that light up when connected to the corresponding answer to a scientific question. For example, the receptors would light up when connected to the word “leg” and the leg of a spider in a diagram. The receptors were connected with strips of aluminum that transferred the electrical current.

“I thought it was awesome,” said Deppe. “I had never heard of that before or done anything like that.”

Tate Wilson helped operate the hex bug maze station using small robots to navigate mazes. She said nights like Thursday are fun because you get to see what other AIG classes have been working on.

“I like this because it gives you a chance to show what you’ve learned in AIG,” said Wilson.

“Then, when you interact with other students you learn new things because of what they’ve been working on. It’s amazing what scientists are discovering nowadays and what they are doing with that.”

In conjunction with STEM Night was this year’s Science Fair; which included projects, inventions, and experiments presented by students K-8th grade.

Harrison Gates and JD Head tackled the question of which toilet paper was the most effective based on absorption. By submerging multiple brands of toilet paper in a set volume of water, the duo was able to determine the most efficient brand is Charmin.

“Our conclusion pretty much supported our hypothesis, so we were right in our thinking,” said Gates. “It was time consuming though.”

Head said while the experiment was a time commitment, the work wasn’t too “torturous.”

“IT wasn’t bad doing it, the hardest part was choosing what to do,” said Head. “Thinking about how hard it would be, how long it would take, and what happens if you mess up in the middle.”

Nicole Taylor studied the growth of mold on organic versus nonorganic foods.

“We didn’t grow up eating organic foods, but now we do, so we wanted to know the difference,” said Taylor.

Taylor’s data suggests mold grows faster on organic foods, which Taylor attributes to a lack of preservatives and pesticides.

“Having a STEM Night is awesome,” said Taylor. “A lot of schools don’t participate in things like this, and we dedicate a whole night to it. I wouldn’t have known that about organic food if we didn’t do the experiment. It’s so fun.”

Margaret Cole partnered with Cayden Pierson on an experiment appropriately titled, “Will it Burn.” Cole said they wanted to focus on a timed experiment when choosing a topic and given this project’s parameters had to set up in a controlled environment.

“We had to use an old microwave because we didn’t want to stink up the house,” said Cole. “Our possible topics focused on races, and what would happen fastest, that’s how we landed on this. It was really fun because you’re learning new things that you didn’t know before.”


The mission of R.E.A.C.H is to eradicate domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking crimes in both Macon and Jackson Counties, through prevention, intervention and educational services.

This year’s King and Queen award went to Vanessa Moore and Craig Berry who raised nearly $6,000 individually, with the whole king and queen group raising over $14,000.

Craig is a Broker with Highlands Sotheby’s International Realty. His office is located at 114 N. 4th Street.

King and Queen Vanessa Moore and Craig Berry
Eckerd Living Center receives 5-star rating

Eckerd Living Center at H-C Hospital, a part of Mission Health, has earned a 5-star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Eckerd Living Center (ELC) is an 80-bed skilled nursing facility physically attached to Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, so emergency and acute care are just a few steps away.

ELC uses an interdisciplinary team approach to ensure administrators, physicians, nurse managers, social workers, dietitians, along with therapists and special consultants work together to provide the highest level of care for each member of our Living Center family.

“This recognition is truly a testament to the hard work and selflessness of our wonderful staff,” said Ava Ammons, Eckerd Living Center Administrator.

CMS creates the overall star rating for nursing homes from three parts: 1) health inspections 2) quality of resident care measures and 3) staffing. Star ratings for each part and for the overall rating range from 1 star to 5 stars, with more stars indicating better quality. To view, go to the Nursing Home Compare on the CMS website.

The Nursing Home Compare and the star rating system enables consumers to search for nursing homes that provide the quality of care they desire. All of the data found on Nursing Home Compare is provided as a service to the public.

The information on Nursing Home Compare comes from three key sources: the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ (CMS) health inspection database, a national database of resident clinical data known as the Minimum Data Set (MDS) and Medicare claims data.

CMS currently calculates a health inspection score for a nursing home on citations identified in each nursing home’s three most recent health inspections and on citations identified from the most recent two years of complaint and facility reported incident inspections.

The staffing rating is based on two measures: registered nurse (RN) hours per resident per day; and total staffing hours per resident per day.

CMS combines the values of 16 quality measures (QMs) (a subset of the 24 QMs listed on Nursing Home Compare) to create the quality of resident care rating.
A
t the end of this month a group of around 25 pa-
rishioners from our church will be traveling to the
Holy Land. I imagine the reasons and motivations
for making such a pilgrimage are as varied and diverse as
the individuals that make up our group. Some look for-
ward to seeing old things - artifacts which tell of a rich and
complicated past. Others are going out of a desire to grow
and deepen their understanding of Holy Scripture. Some
in our group might be traveling to Israel simply because
they like travel and all the experiences it affords. And still
others might be making this journey as an act of prayer.

All of this has caused me to do some thinking about
why people go on pilgrimage - to think about why Chris-
tians have, over the centuries, decided to travel long dis-
tances, often making great sacrifices, in order to spend
time in Jerusalem.

Rowan Williams, the 104th Archbishop of Can-
terbury, says that Christians go to the Holy Land because
“we are aware…that our faith has roots in a particular time
and a particular place. This soil, these stones, have been
brought, says that Christians go to the Holy Land because
is a reminder of our starting point and origin - an out-
ning of this season of fasting, penitence, and prayer
The mark of ashes we receive on our foreheads at the
church's history, Lent has always been understood as a sort
of pilgrimage - as a journey toward the Paschal Mystery.

Proverbs 3:5

• Places to Worship •

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Sundays: School at 9:30; Worship 10:30
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Sun. 10:45am, S.S 9:30am; Wed. 6p supper and teaching. Tues. Guys study 8am, Gals 10am.
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Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11a.m.
1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7p.m.
Wednesdays – Supper at 6 p.m.
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www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685
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Sun.: 9:30am; Sunday School 10:30am; Middle & High School; 10:45am: Child. Program; 10: 45am: Worship
Wed.: 5p Dinner ($7 adult, $2 child), 6pm CBC U.
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828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org
Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor • 220 Main Street, Highlands
Sun.: Worship 10:45 am; Sun.: Bible Study 9:30 am
Wed.: Men’s Bible Study 8:30 am; Choir 5p; Prayer Mtg 6:15p
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Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors
526-3175 • fpchighlands.org
Sun.: Worship 8:30a Adult Ed: 9:30a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.
Mondays: Men’s Prayer Group & Breakfast 8 a.m.
Wed.: Choir:6p
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(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)
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www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter: 743-9814
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HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH
Hwy 107N. • Glenville, NC • 743-2729 • Nathan Johnson
Sunday: School 9:45a, Worship 11 a & 7p, Bible Study 6p
HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD
Randy Reed, Pastor • 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street
Sundays: Worship: 11
HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Dan Robinson
670 N. 4th Street (next to the Highlands Civic Center)
Sun.: Morning Worship 10:45a., Evening Worship, 6p.
Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.
HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Pastor Randy Lucas 526-3376
Sun: School 9:45a.; Worship 9:09, 10:50; Youth 5:30 p.
Wed: Supper: 5:15; youth, & adults activities: 6: Handbell rehearsal, 6:15; Choir Rehearsal 7. (nursery provided ); 7pm
Intercessory Prayer Ministry
HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA
Chaplain Margaret Howell • 2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741
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Worship/Communion: 10:30; Early-Bird Christmas Eve service of Lessons and Carols, Sunday, Dec. 22, 10:30 am.
All are welcome.
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Pastor Zane Talley
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Rev. Marty Kilby
Sundays: School –10 a.m.; Worship –11 a.m. & 7
Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg. 7 p.m.
SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD
290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212
Sun.: School:10 a.m.; Worship:10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.
SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer
Sundays: School:10 a.m.; Worship:11 a.m.
Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 6 p.m.
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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers
Sunday School: 10 a.m.; Worship Service: 11 a.m.
Highlands Police entries from Feb 12. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Feb. 12
• At 11:27 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on Spring Street.

Feb. 14
• At 8 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on NC 106 and Stoney Creek.

Feb. 21
• At 10:55 a.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on NC 106 and Holt Road.

Feb. 23
• A little past midnight, officers responded to a one-vehicle accident at US 64 east and Pinecrest.

Feb. 24
• At 8:06 a.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident at NC 28 and S. 4th St.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Feb. 26

Feb. 26
• A little past midnight, the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Lucerne Drive.
• At 8:11 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on N. 4th Street.

Feb. 28
• At 3:14 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location in Highlands Plaza.
• At 10:48 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Potters Lane.
• At 9:18 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Nall Farm Road.
• At 11:08 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Stoneybridge Lane.

March 1
• At 9:42 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.
• At 9:40 a.m., the dept. was first-responders at a rescue on US 64 west.
• At 6:57 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Carriage Lane.

March 2
• At 4:53 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Buck Creek Road.

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• At 10:55 a.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on NC 106 and Holt Road.

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...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING from page 18

ward and visible sign that we are dust and to dust we shall return. And yet, as Pope Francis has said, we are “dust in the loving hands of God, who has breathed his Spirit of life into each one of us – and still wants to do so.”

So, the season of Lent is not a time for aimless wondering through the desert. No, our journey during these next forty days has a clear focus and direction. Ours is a pilgrimage towards truth, towards healing, towards life - towards Easter. Now is the time to clean the rooms of our hearts and minds. Now is the time to journey towards Christ so that God might find space to come alive at Easter in those parts of us that can only be understood as dry, barren, cold, and dead.

May the gift of this Lenten pilgrimage be a time of blessing and renewal, a time of healing and conversion, a time of patience and truth.

The Rotary Club of Highlands honored the most recent Highlands School Students of the Month at their meeting on February 25.

Pictured from left: Rotary President Sherry Holt, Hendy Rios Ruiz (7th grade), Assistant Principal Sarah Holbrooks, Kendra McCall (Senior), Carlos May Gomez (Senior), Jackson Fairchild (1st grade)

The Rotary Club of Highlands honored the most recent Highlands School Students of the Month at their meeting on February 25.
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