

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., April 15, 2021

Town to budget \$3.5 million for FY '21-'22 capital improvements

Wish lists presented by various departments at the annual retreat in March were used as a jumping off place for the devel-

opment of the preliminary FY '21-'22 budget.

At last week's budget workshop meeting, the Town Board

took a look at the first stab. Since the biggest part of the budget revolves around capital

• See CAPITAL page 6

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Jawbreaker kingpin Steele is sentenced

By Brittney Lofthouse

District Attorney Ashley Hornsby Welch said a Franklin man will spend 70 to 96 months in prison for his role in a two-state distribution of large quantities of illegal drugs.

In Macon County Superior Court this week, James Steele, 47, faced a dozen felony charges, some dating back to 2017. Steele's charges – listed in full – included Possession with Intent to Manufacture Sell and Deliver Methamphetamine and Heroin, maintain a vehicle/dwelling/place of a controlled substance, possession of a firearm by felon, simple possession of a schedule IV controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia, trafficking, opium or heroin, possession of a

•See STEELE page 7

Highlands School announces its Val & Sal



From left: Highlands School 2021 Salutatorian Madelyn Drummonds and Valedictorian Jordan Carrier. Madelyn is attending NC State University and Jordan is attending UNC Chapel Hill.

– Photo by Annette Jenkins

New doctors now hired at Blue Ridge Health

After more than eight months of searching for “just the right fit,” The Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation (HCHF) and Blue Ridge Health are extremely pleased to welcome two new physicians to the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau – Ann Davis, MD and Kristy Fincher, DO.

Dr. Davis and Dr. Fincher will begin seeing patients in late June at the new Blue Ridge Health – Highlands Cashiers location on the campus of Highlands-Cashiers Hospital in the Jane Woodruff Clinic.

Dr. Davis is a graduate of Duke University, and the Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk, Virginia. She completed her residency at Hinsdale Family Medicine Residency in Hinsdale,

•See BLUE RIDGE page 5

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Call local pharmacies and get vaccinated

After this past vaccination clinic on Saturday, Tom Neal sent out a message to volunteers that it was time to shift strategies in getting people vaccinated. While there may still be opportunities for mass vaccination events like those that have been done over the last several months, it is time to encourage everyone to get vaccinated at the several locations where vaccinations are available.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

Tom Neal, the CEO of the Highlands Cashiers Hospital, has done a wonderful job in organizing the 250 volunteers that have put on the vaccination clinics. Tom is an expert and a professional who has effectively addressed the challenge of quickly vaccinating as many folks as possible.

He is now encouraging everyone, all adults, to get a vaccination using the following resources.

Anyone can call the Macon County Public Health Department at (828) 524-1500, or the Jackson County Public Health Department at (828) 631-4357 to schedule an appointment to be vaccinated. Both de-

partments have the resources to vaccinate all who want a shot.

Also, pharmacies are now able to vaccinate people. Call the Highlands Pharmacy at (828) 526-1310, or the Cashiers Valley Pharmacy at (828) 743-3114, or the Ingles Pharmacy at (828) 746-6312 for an appointment.

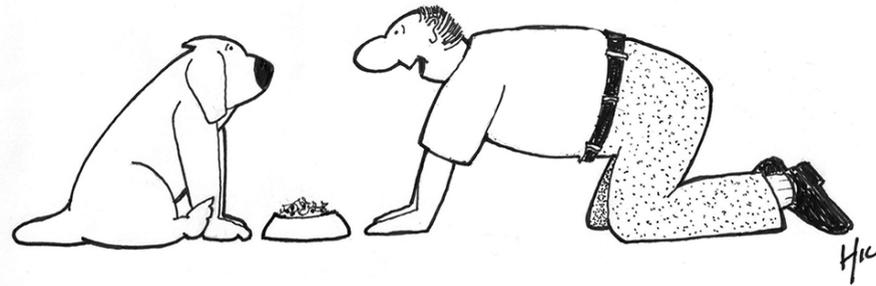
To date 5,419 people and counting have been fully vaccinated in the Highlands and Cashiers area. While this is a great number, Tom and his army of volunteers urge everyone to get vaccinated. Using the resources cited above folks can schedule a vaccination time around work schedules and other commitments. There is no excuse at this point not to get a vaccination. Honoring the spirit of the folks that operate the Highlands Cashiers Plateau Vaccination Clinic, we all need to do it for ourselves and for others.

On another note, there will be construction crews patching degraded areas on NC 28 and US 64. This work is in preparation of Harrison Construction Company returning to the area to repave the entire roadway on NC 28 and US 64. The areas being patched are those spots with the "alligatoring" patterns. That pattern is emblematic of roadbed failure. In order for the new paving to last, the roadbed in these areas has to be reworked and strengthened followed by an asphalt patch. The actual repaving might go faster than the patching of these many problem areas.

Tonight is the Highlands Town Board meeting at 7 pm at the Highlands Conference Center. The meeting is in-person with public comment at the first of the meeting. COVID protocols will be in place. The meeting will also be available through ZOOM for those who would like to be a remote visitor. No interaction will be available through the ZOOM option. The agenda for the meeting is light, but there is a public hearing concerning the new Performing Arts Center. The board will also review where we are on combating COVID.

Last Saturday the Highlands Plateau Pickup of the main corridors was postponed due to rain and fog. It is rescheduled for this Saturday. Volunteers should call the Highlands Chamber of Commerce at (828) 526-2112 to sign up and get information.

• HIC'S VIEW •



"I made this tofu and spinach salad just for you.
Bon appetete."

2021 Town of Highlands Scholarship Information

Reminder Deadline:

The Town of Highlands Scholarship Application Deadline is April 15th. Applications received after this deadline will not be accepted.

Applications can be accessed at www.highlandscnc.org or picked up at Town Hall. For more information, feel free to contact the Town of Highlands at 828.526.2118.

• WEATHER •

Thu, 15-Apr	Fri, 16-Apr	Sat, 17-Apr	Sun, 18-Apr
 57°F 35°F	 58 °F 40°F	 58°F 38°F	 59°F 35°F
Plenty of sun	Partly to mostly sunny	Considerable cloudiness	Times of clouds and sun
RealFeel® High: 64° Low: 44°	RealFeel® High: 68° Low: 39°	RealFeel® High: 60° Low: 45°	RealFeel® High: 66° Low: 40°

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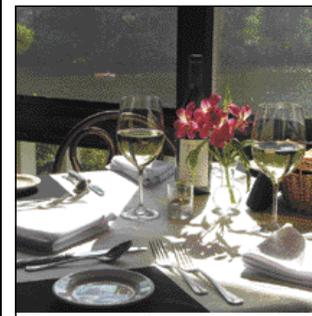
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...BLUE RIDGE continued from page 1

Illinois in November 2011. As a Board-Certified Family medicine physician, Dr. Davis brings ten years' experience in outpatient family medicine, comprehensive primary care for patients of all ages, and chronic disease management. She has held several teaching preceptor positions including an adjunct professorship at Midwestern University. Most recently she practiced family medicine at Novant Health in High Point, NC as Chair of City Family Medicine.

Dr. Davis' broad experience in several practice settings provides the basis for her passion to care for the "biopsychosocial entirety of a patient." She said, "I am committed to partnering with patients to help them live their healthiest life."

Dr. Davis also has interest in medical teaching, population health, and advocating for equitable healthcare access for all people.

Dr. Fincher is a graduate of Erskine College, and the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine in Spartanburg, SC.

She completed her residency at AnMed Health Family Medicine Residency Program in Anderson, SC. Dr. Fincher comes to us with extensive experience in Family Medicine with proficiencies in women's health, lifestyle and nutritional medicine, sports medicine and osteopathic manipulative treatments.

Dr. Fincher's passion for treating "everyone in the family at one location" set her apart during the search for a physician for Blue Ridge Health – Highlands Cashiers. She said, "I am excited to join this tight knit community and use my skills to treat everything from a sprained ankle to a mother-to-be."

"The combined interests and skills of both Dr. Davis and Dr. Fincher are what make them a great fit for our



Dr. Ann Davis

community," said Dr. Richard Ellin, Foundation Board member and leader in the physician recruitment process. "They both enjoy serving patients of all ages and backgrounds and Dr. Davis' love for teaching aligns with the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) Rural Teaching Program associated with UNC Health Sciences, planned for this health center."

The Foundation and Blue Ridge Health look forward to introducing both physicians to our community.

"We are fortunate that these delightful Drs. have chosen to re-locate to our Highlands-Cashiers plateau area and look forward to warmly welcoming them to our friendly mountain communities," said Dr. Walter Clark, Foundation Chair.

About Blue Ridge Health – Highlands Cashiers

Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation, together with generous donors, will provide initial funding and subsidies to establish Blue Ridge Health – Highlands Cashiers which will be operated by Blue Ridge Health, a 501 (c) 3 non-profit patient centered medical home delivering quality healthcare that is accessible and affordable for all.

Additionally, MAHEC will establish a Rural Teaching Practice working in concert with Blue Ridge Health. Recent medical school graduates who want to expand their knowledge of rural medicine will have a Rural Resident Rotation at the center along with current UNC School of Medicine students, WCU Nursing School Students and even local high school and middle school students who are interested in the healthcare field.



Kristy Fincher, DO

Located in the Jane Woodruff Clinic at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, two primary care physicians and support staff will offer a comprehensive continuum of health care services for all ages from infants to seniors, including healthy lifestyles and nutrition programs, screenings, treatments for acute illnesses and minor injuries, physical exams, women's services, minor office procedures and chronic disease management ...all under one roof. Insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid will be accepted, and a sliding-fee scale will be available for eligible patients ensuring that all people are served regardless of ability to pay.

About Blue Ridge Health

Blue Ridge Health (BRH) is a nonprofit healthcare system that works closely with communities to meet the ever-changing healthcare needs of our region with high-quality, comprehensive, and accessible healthcare services. With 33 locations throughout Western North Carolina, BRH offers primary care, dental, pharmacy, behavioral health and nutrition services that prioritize the patient care experience. For 57 years, BRH has served as the leader in community-focused healthcare, providing services to communities in Transylvania, Henderson, Rutherford, Buncombe, Polk, Jackson, Haywood and Swain Counties. If you would like more information about BRH, call 828.692.4289 or visit brchs.com.

About the Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation

The Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation was established on February 1, 2019 as a 501 (c) 3 public charity to improve the health and wellbeing of Highlands, Cashiers, and surrounding communities. Together with generous donors, the Foundation aims to make positive and lasting change supporting projects and programs that advance solutions and improvements in the health and wellbeing of the communities we serve.

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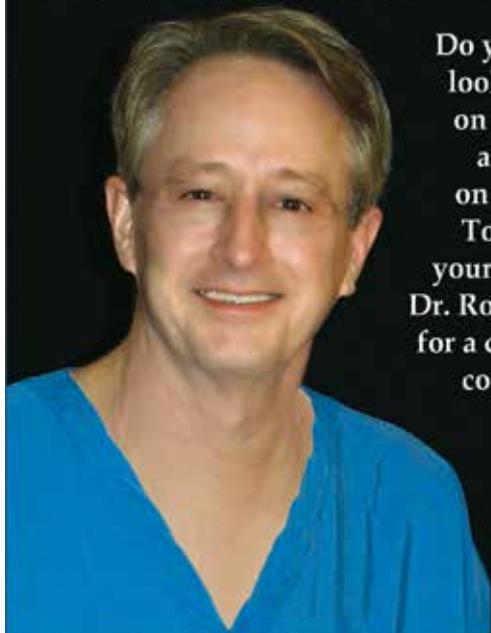
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...CAPITAL continued from page 1

item projects, town staff began its budget presentation with a pared down capital item list.

This involved weighing what should and could be done during the upcoming fiscal year and what could be postponed.

Last year, with the effects of COVID on the town coffers unclear, many capital item projects were postponed. However, with sales tax proceeds during COVID 2020 stronger than ever, items postponed last year were put on this year's list and then some.

Property Tax collections as of February 2021 were \$2,807,849.61 – an increase of \$90,565.27 from February 2020. This represents a collection rate of 98.32%.

Sales Tax revenue were at \$671,896.46 February 2021 -- an increase of approximately \$24,470.77 from February 2020.

Excluding \$34,250 in donations for Police & Recreation projects, General Fund revenues as of February 2021 is at \$4,508,118.37 – \$114,707.24 more compared to February 2020.

The town's enterprise funds – water/sewer, sanitation and electric are holding their own, particularly the electric fund whose revenues are at 74%. Revenue from the electric fund traditionally finances shortfalls in other funds – particularly the sanitation fund at this point – as well as funding town projects.

The shortfall in the sanitation department year-to-date – revenues: \$503,053.51, expenditures: \$643,076.12 – recently caused overtime to be cut and cardboard pickups to be decreased. At last week's budget workshop commissioners discussed doing away with the sanitation department and contracting it out to J&B Disposal or The Trash Company.

Commissioners asked Town Manager Josh Ward to get quotes from those companies to see if they could offer what Highlands offers both for residential and commercial clients and if not, how would their scenarios look.

Commissioners agreed not to make changes of any kind in the sanitation dept. for FY '21-'22 un-

til they know if cutting overtime and cardboard pickups helps stabilize the fund.

Typically, wherever expenditures outweigh revenues, money is transferred from the Electric Fund, which Ward said keeps the sanitation fund stable.

But overall, Highlands' financials are good with revenues on the rise outpacing expenditures the last two years despite COVID 2020.

Street Dept. Projects

Paving is always a hot topic in the community but it has a hefty price tag. However, when the 1.5 cent tax for Recreation Department projects sunset two years ago, commissioners decided to use that money for paving so fewer projects have to be postponed year to year.

To be re-paved this year is Spring Street at \$180,000, Sherwood Forest Road and the spur in that area the town recently took over at \$120,000.

Unpaved roads that will be paved particularly due to erosion and run off are Upper Lake and Lower Lake roads, \$85,000 and \$135,000, respectively.

The paving total is \$884,000.

Sidewalk repair, another hot topic, is now planned for US64 at Wells Hotel for \$111,000, Main Street at the Presbyterian Church for \$70,000 and three tree planter replacements at Reeves for \$17,000.

Postponed is Old Walhalla Road, Warren Road, Maney Road, Gibson Street, Cullasaja Drive Ext., and Talley Road.

Equipment expenditures for the Street Dept. include two dump trucks for a total of \$205,000.

Electric Dept.

For the Electric Dept. the 2009 International/Altec Bucket Truck will be replaced with a new one for \$251,000 and streetlights will be upgraded to LEDs for \$117,000.

Water/Sewer Dept.

In the water/sewer department, the Moorewood Road waterline improvement will cost \$670,000 and a pump station generator at the Little Bear Pen site will cost \$75,000.

The water treatment plant and the wastewater treatment plant are up both up for major upgrades – projects that have been postponed but which now have to be done.

Planned are High Service Replacement Pump Variable Flow Devices, walkway/access walks to clearwell, lab upgrades, service contracts, tank cleaning, pump rebuilds, replacement equipment (DR 3900, CL17) and misc. tools/equipment for a total of \$913,000.

At the wastewater treatment plant, it's tank cleaning, roof repair, belt press parts, diffuser winch replacement, Flygt pump replacement, UV light repair/replacement, and additional testing for a total of \$160,000.

The total for both departments is \$1,818,000.

Police Dept.

The Police Dept. needs two replacement patrol vehicles for a total of \$94,000 and two sets of equipment for those vehicles for \$34,000.

Chief Holland said the best vehicles will be hybrids. Though the initial cost is more than a standard vehicle, the fuel savings will offset the initial expense.

Recreation Dept.

In the Rec Dept., plans are to install/renovate the playground (to be offset by donations) and to remodel the restroom near the tennis courts and skate park so \$75,000 will be budgeted.

Building a Civic Center Annex on the Houston House property will begin with architectural plans this year in hopes that in the next fiscal year the annex can be built. The plans will cost \$36,000.

The total for the work and purchases that passed muster during the first budget workshop round is \$3,456,000.

MIS/GIS Dept.

This year's request from the MIS/GIS Dept. is much less than in years' past.

Replacement of Police Dept. Tablets which will be put in vehicles, replacement of DesignJet Printer & Scanner, much needed

• See CAPITAL page 11

• INVESTING AT 4,118 FT. •

Should you avoid hiring a Realtor® in a seller's market?

This is a great question and certainly one that seems to make sense at face value. After all, a seller's market means that inventory is low, and buyers have a lot of competition due to too few options.

Not having to pay a commission to a REALTOR® is a driving force for this choice.

However, there is much more to selling a home than it may appear and having an experienced REALTOR® on your side can certainly pay off in the end.

Do not be swayed by the idea of not paying a REALTOR® commission. It is natural for a seller to want to capture as high a profit as possible when selling a home. Yet many would-be sellers do not realize that their profit will most likely be higher when a REALTOR® is involved.

According to a recent report from the National Association of Realtors (NAR), Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers, "For-Sale-By Owner (FSBO)s typically sell for



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less than the selling price of other homes; FSBO homes sold at a median of \$217,900 last year and significantly lower than the median of agent-assisted homes at \$242,300."

In the Highlands area the median price is much higher. Capturing a higher price should not be the deciding factor behind choosing to go the FSBO route.

Another reason to not go it alone is the fact that a REALTOR® does far more than stick a sign in the ground and place an ad in the paper.

A REALTOR® will have a property listed in the multiple listing service (MLS) and have access to a complete network of local Realtors.

In turn, this means that a property will get in front of every REALTOR® in the Highlands area and, as a result, in front of their clients. This alone is great marketing for a property.

Furthermore, an experienced REALTOR® has a proven track record and a solid Marketing Plan behind this record.

• LETTERS •

Kudos to CHHS

This is a letter to express my gratitude for: David Stroud, his staff and all who support the Cashiers/Highlands Humane Society.

Those of us who care about and love our pets and other animals are so fortunate to have you in our neighborhood.

It's heartbreaking to see and hear of these neglected, lost and abused animals and it is so heart warming to see them brought to, sometimes their first, real home where they are tenderly treated, cleaned, fed and given a soft safe place to sleep and a safe place to be at Cashiers Highlands Humane Society.

Thank you for all that you do, you are a real gift to the animals and to our community.

Helen Moore
Highlands

...STEELE continued from page 1

controlled substance on a prison/jail premise, deliver heroin, continuing a criminal enterprise, conspire to traffic opium/heroin, possess of heroin, and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Steele plead guilty to continuing criminal enterprise, a class C felony – with all

remaining charges being dismissed. Senior Resident Superior Court Judge Bill Coward handed down the sentence Monday in Macon County Superior Court. With 423 days pretrial credit, Steele will spend the next 4 1/2- 6 1/2 years in prison.

• See STEELE page 9

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Wednesday, April 21, 2021 | 9:30 - 10:30

Friday, April 23, 2021 | 9:30 - 10:30

FEATURING:

David B. Hodgson, *Counseling Psychologist & Delta Air Lines Pilot Interviewer - Retired*

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

MONDAY:

Becoming Resilient in the Face of Uncertainty

WEDNESDAY:

Decision Making In A Crisis - Emotion Is NOT The Enemy

FRIDAY:

Managing Yourself in a Crisis



• ON THE SUNNY SIDE •

Earl of Sandwich

It's hard to believe that we Americans eat over 300 million sandwiches every day. That's right, every day we consume about as many sandwiches as we have people to eat them. And why not? The sandwich may be the perfect food.

There is a sandwich for every occasion. It's popular at parties, picnics, church socials, school kids' lunch, and many, many other events.

The sandwich has a long history. The sandwich as we know it was popularized in England in 1762 by John Montagu, the 4th Earl of Sandwich. Earl of Sandwich is a noble title in the Peerage of England.

In 1762, John Montagu invented the meal that changed dining forever.

John Montagu was a gambler. He could play cards all night and never leave the table. He ordered his valet to bring him meat tucked between two pieces of bread. Lord Sandwich was fond of this form of food because it allowed him to continue playing his cards while eating without a fork and only using one hand.

This form of food became so popular that soon people would just say "bring me a sandwich."



Kenny Youmans

The sandwich's popularity in Spain and England increased dramatically during the 19th century, when the rise of industrial society and the working classes made fast, portable, and inexpensive meals essential.

In London, by 1850, at least 70 vendors were selling sandwiches on the streets. Also, at this time, sandwiches

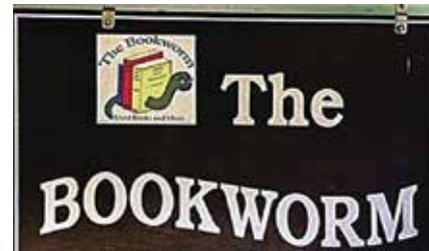
were becoming popular in Holland and America.

John Montagu 11th, is the Earl of Sandwich today. He serves in the House of Lords. John Montagu is still considered an English aristocrat.

He and his youngest son, Orlando, have started franchising "Earl of Sandwich" restaurants. The first "Earl of Sandwich" was opened March 19, 2004 in Downtown Disney. Today there are 37 existing locations.

When I worked for the railroad, I took a bag of sandwiches to work every day I worked. All railroad men did. We also would have a big thermos of coffee.

What are you going to have for lunch today? I think I will have a sandwich - maybe two.



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Village Nature Series begins April 27

By Sarah Pursel
HCLT

The Village Green and Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust co-host a speaker series called the Village Nature Series (VNS), which features experts in their field presenting on wildlife, habitats, conservation, and local cultural heritage. Traditionally, these events are held at The Village Green Commons in Cashiers, NC on the last Tuesday of every month during the summer season, however, at this time, we are bringing these presentations to you virtually!

Our first VNS of this year will be on April 27th at 5PM. In honor of this year's Earth Day theme, "Restore Our Earth," our presenter, Sonya Carpenter, co-owner of Canty Worley and Company, will present on "Nurturing life in your backyard; choices within our control." Sonya describes her presentation:

"Over the past year, most of us have had our lives significantly disrupted by forces beyond our control. World-wide crises such as the pandemic and the climate crisis may leave us feeling hopeless and helpless. Let's celebrate Earth Day by focusing on choices we can make for a better world. By committing to changes in our own gar-

...STEELE continued from page 7

Steele's plea comes as part of the 2018 Operation Jawbreaker, a targeted investigation launched after the Macon County Sheriff's Office, Franklin Police Department, Jackson County Sheriff's Office and the State Bureau of Investigation started investigating the distribution of controlled substances.

"Many of the defendants involved in this extensive operation have spent most of their lives destroying not only their own lives, but the lives of their families and of countless others," said Macon County Sheriff Robert Holland. "Time and time again they've failed to take advantage of opportunities to get the help offered and to make better choices for themselves and for their own families. Mr. Steele, like many of his associates, will now face the consequences that are long overdue. To be honest, all these convicted suspects should count their blessings to have lived through the due process afforded to them by our Constitution. I know many of their families have tried to help them through the years to join avail. Others were not as lucky and lost their lives because of the actions of these individuals and because of addiction. The men & women of law enforcement

dens and communities we can nurture the other species by improving the environment that we share. Learn more about how native plants support native species of insects, birds and other wildlife and how practices in your own garden can lead to big changes."

Participants can register and receive a Zoom link prior to the event by emailing Ann Self, Director of the Village Green, at director@cashiersgreen.com.

The rest of our Village Nature Series line-up will include a presentation about Hemlocks by the Hemlock Restoration Initiative on May 25th, a talk about Hellbenders by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission on July 27th, and a presentation about Red Wolves by the WNC Nature Center on September 28th (June and August TBA). Follow Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and The Village Green on social media for more information and updates about these upcoming presentations.

• *Highlands Cashiers Land Trust is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that has conserved over 3400 acres of our most treasured natural resources in over 100 places on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau. To learn more about the important work the Land Trust does, visit www.hicashlt.org.*

and all involved in these cases want the victim's families to know their loved ones were not forgotten. We thank these families for their patience and continued support of us as we worked night and day to build strong cases against this criminal enterprise in an effort to seek justice for their loved ones and to keep the poison out. While this particular operation came to an end and Mr. Steele's case has now concluded, we know our work is far from over and because of dedicated professionals serving our community our work continues daily's

The operation was named JAWbreaker because of the three individuals, James Steele, Arthur Potts, and Wade Ennis, who were believed to have led the drug trafficking operation. During Operation JAWbreaker, investigators were able to identify at least three additional sources of suppliers living in the Atlanta area and supplying Macon County. Investigators spent hundreds of hours conducting surveillance in both Western North Carolina and Georgia, including the Atlanta area. Warrants for the arrests of the Atlanta, Ga., suspects will be issued and they will be extradited to Macon County upon their arrest.

•See STEELE page 11



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HIGHLANDS

Annual White Goods Pickup

The Town of Highlands has set a
White Good Pick-Up Week annually
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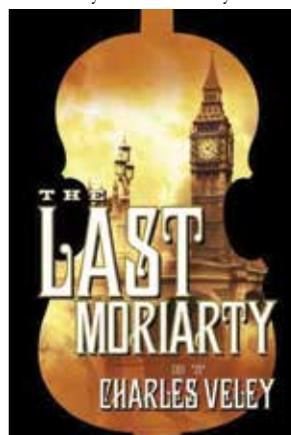
• INK PENN •

A plethora of books

Here's another round of book reviews I've posted on BookBub. Enjoy!

The Last Moriarty

by Charles Veley



I've become a Sherlock Holmes fan despite not having read many of the originals. This is the first of 25 books in the Sherlock Holmes and Lucy James series. What I loved most about the book was its inclusion of "real" people in the story. The likes



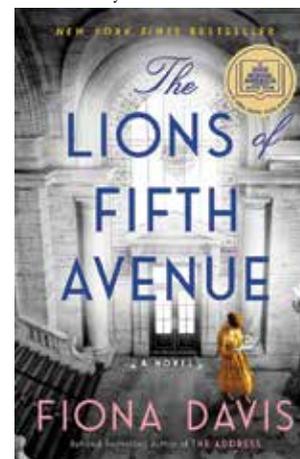
Kathy Manos Penn

of J.P. Morgan, Teddy Roosevelt, and John D. Rockefeller figure prominently in the plot along with the "usual" suspects, if you will--Sherlock, Dr. Watson, Mycroft, etc. J.P. Morgan and Rockefeller arrive separately from the US on their yachts for a special meeting, and the story takes off from there.

Though the plot is not as intricate as the Sherlock tales by Anthony Horowitz, it is still entertaining, and I highly recommend it.

The Lions of Fifth Avenue

by Fiona Davis



How can you resist a book set in the New York Public Library--the famous branch located at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, the one with the lions. Hence the name of the book.

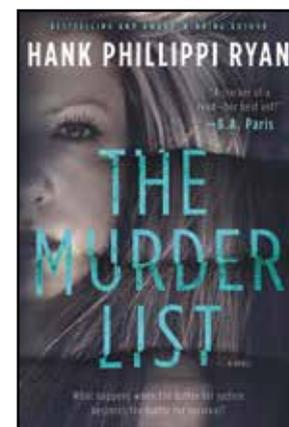
The story alternates between 1913, the year the library opened, and 1993. The details about the library are fascinating, especially to someone like me who lived in NYC as a child. There's something for everyone in this tale--famous books, famous

authors, a love story, architectural details, and of course, a mystery. In the midst of all that is the story of how one woman discovers her potential and pursues her dreams in a time when society had rigid views and rules for women.

I loved it for the history and the mystery.

The Murder List

by Hank Phillippi Ryan



As are all Hank Phillippi Ryan's books, this one is well-written. The plot is carefully crafted and intricate. What I didn't care for has nothing to do with the writing. It's simply that I prefer books with likable characters, and I couldn't find a single one in this book. I'm pretty sure that was the intent, and so the author succeeded. Don't let that put you off, though. If you liked "Gone Girl," which I did NOT, for that same reason, then you'll enjoy this book too.

I read a variety of genres, and I like intricate, twisty thrillers as well as cozy mysteries, but no matter the genre, I want someone to root for in the book, whether it's historical fiction, a thriller, or women's literature. What can I say? I'm a cozy mystery author, and it's possible my world view reflects that!

• Award-winning author Kathy Manos Penn is a Georgia resident. Find her cozy mysteries locally at Books Unlimited in Franklin and on Amazon. Contact her at inkpenn119@gmail.com, and follow her on Facebook, www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/.

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from March 22. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

March 22

• At 8:10 a.m., officers responded to a report of larceny and destruction of property at the Car Spa of Highlands.

March 30

• At 11:50 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident at N. 4th Street.

April 5

• At noon, officers responded to a report of a larceny at a home on Cullasaja Drive where a package was taken off the front porch.

April 11

• At 3:03 p.m., officers responded to a report of a verbal argument at a resi-

dence on NC 106.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from April 6.

April 6

• At 7:50 a.m., the dept. was first-responders at a residence on Clubhouse Drive.

April 7

• At 5:07 p.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at a residence on Copper Dr.

April 8

• At 8:17 a.m., the dept. was first-responders at a residence on Flat Mountain Road.

April 9

• At 3:21 p.m., the dept. activated a sprinkler at a residence on Clubhouse Trail.

April 11

...CAPITAL continued from page 6

Community Building A/V upgrades and three Sewer Pump Station SCADA Up Fits were OK'd for a total of \$108,000.

Town Manager Ward said at this point, there will only be one more budget meeting set for May 6.

“We will go over final budget numbers for each department, including health insurance numbers from all other companies who might propose.”

Currently, the town's health insurance is through MedCost, which is affiliated with the League of Municipalities. The cost

to the town is expected to increase around \$5,000 due to claims during FY '20-'21. Other companies have been asked to submit proposals.

Also at the May 6 budget workshop meeting, the fire department budget has to be approved.

“This will be a standard budget for the department with no capital expenses,” said Ward.

There are no fee or tax increases planned for FY '21-'22.

– Kim Lewicki

...STEELE continued from page 9

During the gathering of intelligence, investigators discovered that drug purchases and transactions were arranged by Steele, Potts, or Ennis and that the three men made additional arrangements for those drugs to be transported back to this area for distribution. During the operation, investigators were able to identify the three suppliers of heroin and meth in the Atlanta area. In collaboration with their local, state and federal partners, investigators were able to intercept various shipments of heroin and meth during traffic stops by law enforcement as it headed back to Macon County.

Investigators say the drug-trafficking organization was responsible for the transport of controlled substances from the At-



James Steele

lanta area to Macon County and, from there, into other Western North Carolina counties, as well as North Georgia.

“Thanks to a lot of hard work and hours of investigation, the majority of players in Operation Jawbreaker have been convicted and sent to prison,” Welch said. “That’s a good outcome – not only for prosecutors and law enforcement but for everyone who lives in and cares about this community.”

Assistant District Attorney

John Hindsman Jr. prosecuted the case.

The two other leaders of Operation JAWbreaker, Wade Thomas Ennis of Highlands died in September 2020 of a heart attack, and Arthur Scott Reynolds Potts continues to have his case pending in Macon County Superior Court.

• At 12:54 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance on Rich Gap Road.

• At 2:36 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cullasaja Club Drive.

April 12

• At 6:20 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on NC 28 south.

• At 8:31 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on East View Way.

• At 3:54 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Highlands View.

• At 6:02 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Clubhouse Trail.

• At 10:44 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

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Spring Home Improvement -2021

14 Exuberant Shrubs for Front of House

By Meghan Holmes

Front yard landscaping usually involves a combination of different types of shrubs and flowers, with evergreen plants providing year-round freshness and flowering bushes adding seasonal pops of color. Our selection

of 14 shrubs for the front of the house will satisfy your needs for lush greenery and bright blossoms, and take your home's curb appeal to the next level.

Dwarf English Boxwood

(*Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa')

Reaching a maximum size of 3 feet high by 3 feet wide, this dense, hardy, low-maintenance evergreen shrub prefers evenly moist areas with partial shade. This dwarf boxwood works well in container entrance gardens, as low hedging, or as ground cover.

- USDA Growing Zones: 5 to 8.
- Sun Exposure: Full sun to full shade, but partial shade for ideal appearance.
- Soil Needs: Well-draining and evenly moist loamy mix.

Smooth Hydrangea

(*Hydrangea arborescens*)

Also known as sheep flower or sevenbark, this flowering deciduous shrub is native to the Eastern United States and can grow up to 10 feet tall and just as wide.

A host plant for the hydrangea sphinx moth, this popular ornamental has numerous varieties with different-colored flowers, including the "Annabelle" cultivar with

white blooms, as well as the Bella Anna, which blooms bright pink.

- USDA Growing Zones: 4 to 9.
- Sun Exposure: Full sun to dappled shade.
- Soil Needs: Medium, well-draining. More water if plant receives full sun.

Creeping Juniper

(*Juniperus agnieszka* 'Horizontalis')

This juniper variety is a low-growing and dense coniferous evergreen shrub native to North America, prized for its flattened growth habit that works well as ground cover.

A rapid grower, this plant can outpace weeds and other nuisance plants that might appear in the yard, and can also work as an alternative to grass. This creeping juniper variety doesn't require mowing and reaches a maximum height of around half a foot.

- USDA Growing Zones: 3 to 9.
- Sun Exposure: Full sun to partial shade.
- Soil Needs: Well-draining. Prefers sandy soil but tolerant of other types.

Inkberry

(*Ilex glabra*)

A slow-growing, broadleaf evergreen shrub, inkberry is native to the United States and commonly found in sandy woods and along the edges of swamps and bayous. Typically reaching between 5 feet and 8 feet tall, dwarf varieties like the "compacta" are also available, with a height closer to 4 feet. Part of the holly family, this plant produces dark purple berries in the fall.

- USDA Growing Zones: Generally 5 to 9, but check your specific variety.
- Sun Exposure: Partial sun to partial shade. Prefers west-facing exposure.
- Soil Needs: Rich, acidic soil. Prefers moist soil and can tolerate some standing water.

Japanese Yew

(*Taxus cuspidata* 'Dwarf Bright Gold')

This dwarf cultivar is smaller and slower growing than other varieties of Japanese yew, reaching around 5 feet in height. It is known for its bright leaves that emerge yellow and slowly turn green.



Smooth Hydrangea



Creeping Juniper

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Japanese yew is native to Japan, Korea, and north-eastern China, where specimens can grow up to 60 feet tall with 2-foot-diameter trunks. These shrubs do not tolerate wet soil.

- USDA Growing Zones: 4 to 7.
- Sun Exposure: Full sun to partial shade.
- Soil Needs: Average; well-draining.

Japanese Meadowsweet (*Spiraea japonica*)

An upright, mounded, deciduous shrub, this peren-

nial is native to Japan, China, and Korea and has been naturalized throughout much of the United States and parts of Canada. This plant reaches between 4 feet and 6 feet tall and produces small, pink flowers on new wood, so pruning in the late winter or early spring will encourage blooming.

- USDA Growing Zones: 3 to 8.
- Sun Exposure: Full sun.
- Soil Needs: Prefers rich, loamy, moist soil, but tolerates a wide range

Azalea (*Rhododendron* sp.)

Flowering shrubs in the rhododendron genera, azaleas are a group of more than 10,000 cultivars in a variety of sizes and colors that are shade tolerant and bloom in the spring.

There is a variety of azalea for almost every landscaped environment, with myriad colors, sizes, and tolerances to different climates developed over hundreds of years. One of the first azaleas cultivated in the United States, *Azalea indica*, arrived in the early 19th century.

- USDA Growing Zones: Generally 6 to 9, but some varieties can grow in zones 4 to 5.
- Sun Exposure: Partial shade to full shade.
- Soil Needs: Acidic, well-draining.

American Arborvitae

(*Thuja occidentalis* 'Danica')

This dwarf, evergreen, coniferous shrub is dense and rounded, with upright, bright green leaves that tint



• Continued on page 14



Azalea

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Spring Home Improvement -2021

bronze in the winter. Reaching between 1 foot and 2 feet in both height and spread, this shrub works well in a mid-

dle front yard garden placement, between larger shrubs or small trees and flowers or ground cover.

- USDA Growing Zones: 1 to 7.
- Sun Exposure: Full sun. Can tolerate some shade, but foliage will be less dense.
- Soil Needs: Tolerates a wide range including wet areas near waterways.

Red Tip Photinia (Photinia x fraseri)

A hybrid between Photinia glabra and Photinia seratifolia, red tip photinia is an evergreen shrub with leaves that emerge red-tipped and transition to green as they mature. Popular along fences or as garden edging, this plant grows quickly and can reach between 10 feet and 15 feet in height and width.

These plants will need regular pruning, with some people also removing the flowers it produces each spring, said to have an unpleasant odor.

- USDA Growing Zones: 7 to 9.
- Sun Exposure: Full sun to partial shade.
- Soil Needs: Well-draining, loamy.

Sasanqua Camellia (Camellia sasanqua)

Capable of reaching around 15 feet tall, sasanqua camellias are native to China and Japan and are typically found growing at higher altitudes. They produce fragrant single flowers in the late summer to early fall that range in color from white to vibrant pink, depending on the variety. Each flower will drop its petals after only a couple of days, making them poorly suited to flower arrangements.

- USDA Growing Zones: 7 to 9.
- Sun Exposure: Prefers partial shade.
- Soil Needs: Rich, acidic, well-draining.

Rosemary (Salvia rosmarinus)

This fragrant evergreen shrub has needle-like leaves and is part of the mint family, along with many other medicinal and culinary herbs. Native to the Mediterranean and parts of Asia, rosemary produces small flowers year-round in ideal warm climates, and blooms in the spring and summer in more temperate regions. Drought tolerant, this shrub typically reaches heights between 3 feet and 4 feet and needs to be pruned to maintain a neat shape.



Dwarf Boxwood

- USDA Growing Zones: 6 to 10.
- Sun Exposure: Full sun.
- Soil Needs: Well-draining; good air circulation. Dislikes humidity and does best outdoors in arid regions.

Winter Daphne (Daphne odora)

Native to China, winter daphne blooms in the late winter and early spring, usually producing pink, tubular flowers, though some varieties bloom white or purple. Reaching around 6 feet tall, this evergreen shrub is relatively short-lived, dying after 8 to 10 years on average. It also doesn't like to be transplanted or any other type of root disturbance.



Bayberry

- USDA Growing Zones: 7 to 9.
- Sun Exposure: Full sun to partial shade.
- Soil Needs: Well-draining, moist. Allow soil to dry occasionally.

Bayberry (Myrica pensylvanica)

A compact deciduous shrub that works well planted in groups, bayberry reaches an average size between 6 feet and 10 feet, though several smaller, dwarf ornamental varieties have also been cultivated. Native to Eastern North America, the plant produces clumps of berries in late summer that are attractive to birds.

- USDA Growing Zones: 3 to 7.
- Sun Exposure: Full sun to partial shade.
- Soil Needs: Well-draining, moist. Prefers peaty and acidic but tolerates range.



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Spring Home Improvement -2021

How to Get More Bang for Your Reno Buck

Repainting the Walls

Once you look outside and realize the winter grays have given way to reds, greens and blues, it probably leaves you itching for a pop of color indoors.

Interior paint jobs can provide big aesthetic impact for a fairly low cost—especially if you do the work yourself.

But before you reach for the paintbrush, consider whether you really want to put in the elbow grease.

Opt to “repaint what you really need to—like a wall that has damage or a color that really takes away from the room’s potential. Light grays, earth tones, yellows or blues are all safe and appealing colors that won’t scare off a new homeowner.

If you’re intent on adding a new hue to a room simply to shake up your living space, focus first on areas where you entertain or spend the most time, because little costs can add up—on top of the gallons of paint, primer, rollers, paint brushes, tray liners and caulking to fill cracks and nail holes.

Replacing the Carpeting

Now that the wool socks have been shed for the sea-

son, who wouldn’t want to feel plush fibers underfoot?

A new carpet can really up a home’s luxe factor—but its short lifespan means buying the pricey stuff just isn’t worth it. you may replace in five or so years. “Carpets stain, they hold more germs than any other [type of] floor. So, they’re a temporary install every time.”

Most people judge carpet by the sensation of walking on it, so often it’s more cost-effective to buy a less expensive carpet and use a more luxurious-feeling pad to place underneath.

Redoing the Deck

Barbecue season is nigh, so turning your puny deck into something more party-sized may seem like a logical investment—but tread lightly.

Translation: You may need to pad your budget to cover any structural issues a contractor may stumble upon.

Really, using the word “renovate” for a deck project is a euphemism: What many homeowners are doing is rebuilding.

Replacing a deck means replacing the structure, because there are multiple concrete footings that need to be

• See RENO page 16

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Nowadays, renovations include upscale outdoor living.

...RENO continued from page 15

formed in the ground to hold the framing. On top of all that is what people usually care about the most—the decking, the railings, and the stairs. The more popular composite decking and railing materials can be three times the cost of traditional wood, but they will last much longer, with little maintenance.

Replacing the Siding

Your siding is on the frontlines of harsh weather, so it's no surprise that years of snow, rain, wind and hail can leave it looking more than a little dingy.

But before you start calling contractors—and you'll need to, because this is a job better left to the pros—keep in mind this is a major outlay: Costs for an average home can start in the \$10,000 range.

If there's no peeling or loose components, the project may not provide much benefit for a large expense.

Rather than swap out all your siding, simply replace the cracked or rotted ones.

Or if you just want a little face-lift all around, consider a new paint job instead.

Buying all new materials—as opposed to just putting new paint over siding that was already good enough—won't necessarily add any value to your home. A new paint job is much more important than new siding.”

Repaing the Driveway

Between the snow and the salt, your driveway takes a beating every winter. How easy would it be to just layer on a new coat of asphalt?

Turns out, not that easy: Properly repaving a driveway isn't akin to simply putting one coat of paint over another.

Unless your driveway is pocked with potholes, don't turn your front yard into a construction zone.

Sometimes all a driveway needs is a new sealcoat, which both experts say will provide a sufficient spruce-up—not to mention that you can do this on your own.

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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

Ongoing

• The Bookworm at 555 Main Street is now open Thursday-Saturday 11a to 3p. For more information, call 828-526-3031.

• Mountain Findings Thrift Store at 432 Spruce Street is open Friday and Saturday from 10a to 1p.

Sat. April 17

• Plateau Litter Pickup. Call the Highlands Chamber of Commerce at (828) 526-2112 to sign up and get information.

Sat., April 17

• The Greenway will be constructing a new loop trail in the Kelsey Preserve. This beautiful wooded preserve is mere blocks away from Main Street and home to the first leg of the historic Kelsey Trail. Join us on Saturday, April 17 from 9a-noon, to learn more about trail construction and give back to your community! If you are interested in participating, please reply to this email so we will know you are coming. We'll meet at the large upper parking lot behind the Recreation Center at 9:00 AM for a brief orientation session, and you will be furnished with the necessary tools and equipment.

Thurs. - Sun. April 23-25

• Bear Shadow Music Festival at Winfield Farms, Scaly Mtn.

Mon.-Fri., April 26-30

• This year the Annual White Goods Pickup will be the week Please, contract Town Hall at (828) 526-2118 to be placed on the pickup list.

May 9

• Chamber event: Highlands is Blooming.

Tues. May 11

• Highlands High School Academic and Athletic Awards and Scholarships in the new gym at 10 a.m.

Tues., May 18

• Highlands School Grades K, 1, 2 Award Assembly in the new gym at 9 a.m.

• Highlands School Grades 3, 4, 5 Awards Assembly. New gym at 10 a.m.

Wed. May 19

• Highlands School Middle School Academic Awards in the MS courtyard or old gym at 10 a.m.

• Highlands School Middle School graduation at 5 p.m. courtyard or old gym.

Fri. & Sat., May 21-Oct. 31

• Chamber event: Outdoor music 6 to 8:30 p.m.

Fri., May 21

• Friday Night Live in Town Square: 6-8:30p. Silly Ridge Roundup

Sat., May 22

• Highlands School graduation at 10a on the track or in the new gym. TBA.

• Chamber event: Meander in May.

• Saturdays on Pine: 6-8:30p. The Caribbean Cowboys

Fri., May 28

• Friday Night Live Concert. 6-8:30p. Trudition

Sat. May 29

• Saturdays on Pine: 6-8:30p. Ashley Heath & Her Heathens

Fri., June 4

• Friday Night Live: 6-8:30p. Byrds & Crow

Sat., June 5

• Saturdays on Pine. 6-8:30p. Peggy Ratusz

Saturday, June 13

• Highlands Motoring Festival. Cars in the Park. (Pine Street) 10a to 4p

Fri. June 11

• Friday Night Live in Town Square: 6-8:30p. Frank & Allie

Sat. June 12

• Saturdays on Pine. 6-8:30p. Hurricane Creek

Fri. June 18

• Friday Night Live in Town Square: 6-8:30p. Johnny Webb Band

Sat. June 19

• K-H Founders Park Annual Shrimp Boil. Drive Thru this year.

• Saturdays on Pine. 6-8:30p. Americana Jones

Fri. June 25

• Friday Night Live in Town Square: 6-8:30p. Trudition

Sat. & Sun., June 26 & 27

• Mountaintop Art & Craft Show (previously the Village Square Show) will be held in downtown Highlands at K-H Founders Park (Pine St.) from 10 to 5. The FREE event features regional potters, jewelers, woodworkers, fine artists, etc. plus food. For more info call (828) 526-9227 or visit www.mountaintopshow.com. Masks may be required.

Sat. June 26

• NO CONCERT

Fri. July 2

• Friday Night Live in Town Square: 6-8:30p. Foxfire Boys

Sat. July 3

• Saturdays on Pine. 6-8:30p. TBA

Sun., July 4

• Chamber event: Fireworks and Concert.

• Music in the Park: Moon Dance

Fri., July 9

• Friday Night Live in Town Square:

6-8:30p. Southern Highlands

Sat., July 10

• Saturdays on Pine. 6-8:30p. Kurt Thomas Band

Fri., July 16

• Friday Night Live in Town Square: 6-8:30p. Johnny Webb

Sat., July 17

• Saturdays on Pine. 6-8:30p. Shane Meade

Fri., July 23

• Friday Night Live in Town Square: 6-8:30p. Sycamore Flats

Sat., July 24

• Saturdays on Pine. 6-8:30p. Silly Ridge Roundup

Fri., July 30

• Friday Night Live in Town Square: 6-8:30p. Byrds & Crow

Sat., July 31

• Saturdays on Pine. 6-8:30p. The Wobblers

Fri., Aug. 6

• Friday Night Live in Town Square: 6-8:30p. Foxfire Boys

Sat., Aug. 7

• Saturdays on Pine. 6-8:30p. High Five

Fri., Aug. 13

• Friday Night Live in Town Square: 6-8:30p. Ben and Marce

Sat., Aug. 14

• Saturdays on Pine. 6-8:30p. TBA

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

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The Rev'd Jim Murphy,
Christ Anglican Church,
Highlands-Cashiers, NC

One of the many distinctive hallmarks of our U. S. Constitution comes in the First Amendment. The entire text thereof states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

The right to freedom of religion and speech are inviolable.

Would that first century Christianity had enjoyed such freedoms! Soon after Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven, there was a clamp-down of sorts on both the freedom to the exercise of religion and the liberty to speak freely. The Lord's disciples were detained, ridiculed, warned and commanded to "speak no longer to anyone in this name (Jesus)." (Acts 4:17) The ruling religious establishment, with the tacit approval of the extant temporal rulers (Rome) wanted to see this Jesus movement come to a quick and complete end.

What was the heinous crime of the Lord's disciples? In this case they had used the spoken power of Jesus' name to heal a lame man. That was it. They put to use their faith and the power of God's Holy Spirit to declare wholeness to a severely handicapped man. Subsequently, they declared the good news that forgiveness and salvation were available to all in no other name. Real spiritual and physical healing was offered.

Be that as it may, the religious authorities, the "Big Tech" of their day, took issue with their ideas and behavior. After conferring with one another they hatched a plan to de-platform all of those who dared to run counter to their group-think. They were determined to control the religious narrative of their day. After all, too many people were beginning to leave the establishment party to follow the teachings of Jesus.

Therefore, a thorough-going program of censorship and intimidation of Jesus' followers was put into action. The religious authorities colluded with the temporal authorities, clamping down on both the freedom of religion and the freedom of speech. The disciples of the Christ were routinely imprisoned, ordered to silence, repeatedly persecuted and even murdered.

Nevertheless, the Jesus movement grew. The disciples would rather speak the truth as God revealed it to them and accept the consequences than wither away. Their Savior had died for their freedom. Free speech and liberty

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 21

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

BLUEVALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

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

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

BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Aryan Williams-Reubel, Pastor 828-743-5298

Sundays: School at 9:30 Worship 10:30

Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

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Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

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9:30am Sunday School; 11:30am Worship Service; 6pm Mon.

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Pastor Brent Metcalf • 743-5470

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Tues. Guys study 8am, Gals 10am.

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard

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

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

Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685

3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC • Sr. Pastor Gary Hewins

Sundays: 9:30am - Adult Sunday School; 9:45am (masks

required) Early Worship Service; 11:15am (masks optional)

Worship Service; Sundays 10:45am-Children's Program,

Sunday Youth-4:30pm - 6:30pm Dinner provided

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Pastor Steve Kerhoulas

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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

526-31 • 75 • 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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Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

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Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.: 7 p.m.

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MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church

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

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Rev. Marty Kilby

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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

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Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 6 p.m.

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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

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Keepin' it evergreen in the mountains

By Brian O'Shea

Plateau Daily News

The Plateau is home to a variety of evergreen plants ranging from towering coniferous trees like Pine, Hemlock, and Pitch; to shrubs such as the ground juniper, rhododendron, and mountain laurel; and even ground cover that includes partridge berry, trailing arbutis, galax, and Oconee bells, said Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust Stewardship Coordinator Kyle Pursel.

The summit of Satulah Mountain (pictured below) is a great place to see a variety of evergreen plants including trees, shrubs, and herbs.

To be considered an evergreen plant, it must retain its foliage throughout the year and into the next growing season. Pursel said several areas throughout the plateau make the ideal habitat for evergreens to thrive.

"They tend to be the dominant in three main habitats around here; rock outcrops, slopes with thin-rocky soils, and acidic stream drainages," said Pursel.

A plant that keeps its leaves throughout winter has two major advantages over other plants, said Highlands Biological Station Educational Specialist Paige Engelbrekts-son.

By retaining their leaves and needles, evergreens avoid the enormous energy expense of growing a new set every year, the way that deciduous plants have to. It also allows them to take advantage of opportunities to photosynthesize early in the spring or late in the fall, when deciduous plants have yet to leaf out or have already dropped their leaves.

"Evergreens get a greater return on their investments in each leaf and needle, and can have a longer growing season," said Engelbrekts-son. "Winter is very hard on plants in general and leaves in particular, which is why so many plants are annuals – dying out entirely, or deciduous – losing their leaves."

She added that because winter is so damaging for leaves, evergreens have adapted in fascinating ways. Broadly speaking, their leaves or needles will have a thick coating of fat and wax called a cuticle. This helps to reduce water loss and gives many of them a thick, leathery feeling to the touch.

Water loss can be a problem because as drier winter air moves over a leaf or needle, it can draw water out through small openings called stomata.

Even if the ground is saturated, it can be difficult for a plant to replace this lost water as freezing temperatures can damage the vascular systems that transport water.

Some evergreens can even produce their own sunscreen.

"Another really neat adaptation includes being able to create their own sunscreen using a group of pigments called anthocyanins," said Engelbrekts-son. "When the forest canopy opens up in the fall, evergreens may receive more sun than they do in the summer. The increase in radiation means they may need to protect their leaves. These bronze and purple anthocyanins reduce the amount of light, just like our sunscreen."

Conifer trees are so named because of the cones that grow on their

limbs used for reproduction. Many of the coniferous trees throughout the plateau have another advantage over annual plants, they have needles.

"Needles are actually a highly modified leaf and provide a number of advantages," said Engelbrekts-son. "Most notably, compared to a 'typical' leaf, they lose less water and catch less snow thanks to their small surface area. They also have the same waxy coating as many other evergreens, which helps to reduce water loss as well."

She added that the triangular shape of a conifer tree also keeps snow from piling at the top and weighing it down. The drooping branches often angle downward, allowing snow to fall more easily off the branch. Lastly, conifers have long fiber cells that make their branches flexible and strong, bending instead of breaking under snow.

Good places to see a variety of evergreen plants on the plateau include Satulah Mountain and Sunset Rock, maintained by the HCLT and open to the public. The trail system throughout Highlands Biological Station, including the North Campus and Highlands Botanical Garden, are also good areas to find a variety of evergreen plants.



Pitch pine needles grow 2.5-3 inches long and have a uniform pattern.



The needles of a Carolina hemlock radiate out in all directions.



Evergreen shrub Rosebay rhododendron.



Galax leaves take on a purplish color due to pigments called anthocyanins that act as a sunscreen for evergreen plants throughout the fall and winter months when they have more exposure to the sun.



Pitch pine on the summit of Satulah Mountain.



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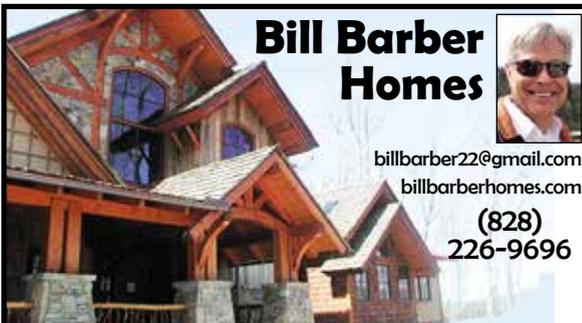
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...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING from page 18

unto faith's expression was inviolable to them.

The early years of the Christian movement can be found in the biblical book of Acts. An accurate account of the church's birth and growth is therein offered. It is a story of strong faith, unswerving commitment and enormous courage. As such, it can serve as an encouragement for those who experience censorship and intimidation of any sort in our day. And not only encouragement, but also health and salvation.

Chamber of Commerce Events slated for 2021

- Meander in May – May 22
- Fri. & Sat. Outdoor Concerts May 22 – Oct. 31
- July 4th Fireworks and Concert – July 4
- Halloween On Main – Oct. 31
- Lighting of the Park and Main – Nov. 27
- Trim Our Town – Nov. 27
- Olde Mountain Christmas Parade – Dec. 4
- Santa in the Park- Nov 27th – Dec 24th
- New Snow Event coming Jan 2022

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HIGHLANDS ABC STORE

– **IS TAKING APPLICATIONS** for a full time clerk. Full benefits. Lifting up to 55lbs, standing for long periods, good customer communication, and some computer experience necessary. Apply at ABC store in Highlands Plaza. 828-526-5470 (st. 4/1)

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AT POSH PAWS

Posh Paws Pet Spa in Highlands, NC is now hiring full-time, part-time, and seasonal dog bathers. Our business hours are Tuesday-Saturday from 9a-5p, and we will be doing open interviews Tuesday-Friday from 10a-3p. We are not open in the evenings or on holidays, so you can expect to be able to enjoy those times with loved ones.

Have you ever been interested in working with animals or trying something new but weren't sure how to get into the animal care industry? Working as a dog bather may be the job for you! This is an entry level position that requires no prior experience. Fast advancement opportunities are available through our self-paced, paid, one-on-one apprenticeship. This is a great opportunity to learn a trade skill without accumulating educational debt! All of our employees (including the owners of the business) have started their dog grooming careers as a bather.

Dog bathers must be willing to learn and take constructive criticism. We currently employ a wonderful group of people that works well as a team, so being a team player is a must. Drama will not be tolerated. A love for dogs and a high level of patience is also required. Attention to detail is a necessity as we never want to send home a dog that isn't 100% clean.

This job does require standing for long periods of time and heavy lifting with help. The bather must be able to wash, rinse, and dry up to 8 large dogs per day plus small dogs.

Daily duties will include bathing and blow drying the dogs, assisting the groomers when needed, and completing daily as well as weekly cleaning routines to keep our salon looking and smelling nice.

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