

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., April 22, 2021

Town maintains mask requirement

By Brian O'Shea

The Town Board held its April meeting on Thursday and decided wearing a mask in the commercial district of Highlands should remain a require-

ment.

The decision comes after N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper eased restrictions throughout the state on March 23 and Mayor Pat Taylor suggested the issue should be re-

visited.

He said he spoke with Highlands-Cashiers Hospital CEO Tom Neal and discussed lifting

• See MASK page 10

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Last week, Highlands volunteers swept across the plateau picking up litter.

— Photo by Brian O'Shea

NC 'Litter Sweep' collects over 4MM pounds of garbage; Highlands helps

As part of its litter removal efforts, including the ongoing Litter Sweep, N.C. Department

of Transportation crews, contractors and volunteers have now collected more than 4 million pounds

of litter from roadsides since Jan 1, 2021.

• See LITTER page 9

NC State Superintendent of Public Instruction visits MC School System

By Brittney Lofthouse

Getting folks in Raleigh to remember there is a lot of state in the west, has always been a challenge. But times they are a changing.

Senator Kevin Corbin joined leaders of Macon County Schools on Friday to welcome NC State Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt to Macon County. Truitt toured Nantahala School in Macon County as part of a trip to the west visiting various schools across the state.

"It was a great honor to be visited by Superintendent Truitt and Senator Corbin," said Nantahala Principal Andrew Pyle. "We love having the opportunity to show the awesome and engaging teaching and learning that is taking place at Nantahala School and in Macon County Schools."

Senator Corbin said that Truitt's visit to Macon County was

hopefully the first of many and that she committed to supporting small schools like Nantahala and Highlands on the state level.

"Yes, she agreed by handshake to continue funding small schools in Western NC," said Senator Corbin. "We took her to Nantahala School and she was more than impressed with their work ethic and progress."

Superintendent Truitt, a Republican, was elected last November to serve as the new NC State Superintendent. She began her career in education as a High School English teacher and spent two years in the classroom teaching both high school and middle school. She has been nominated twice for the Teacher of the Year Award. She spent her last three years teaching at West Johnston High School where she taught

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

•MAYOR ON DUTY•

Dealing with litter takes a village

I was playing cleanup on Monday, that is patrolling the corridors and picking up the orange trash bags from the Highlands Plateau Pickup. Over 50 volunteers hit the corridor roads this past Saturday. I want to thank the Highlands Chamber of Commerce, especially Beverly Wichman for her coordination of another successful event.



**Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor**



Every year I see the same trash in the orange bags that the volunteers collect. There are the plastic and aluminum cola and beer bottles, the empty potatoes chip bags, the cans filled with snuff spit, and all sorts of paper products. There is also a substantial amount of construction debris such as insulation, plastic wrap and scraps of wood and metal.

Monday afternoon I was at the city limits sign on NC 28 retrieving the big orange litter sign that I had deployed to warn

motorists on Saturday. About 50 yards beyond the town limits I saw a small wooden structure, pictured in the photo, in the middle of the road. There was a layer of exposed nails that would have reaped havoc on an unsuspecting motorist. I warned two approaching vehicles and quickly ran out to retrieve the hazard.

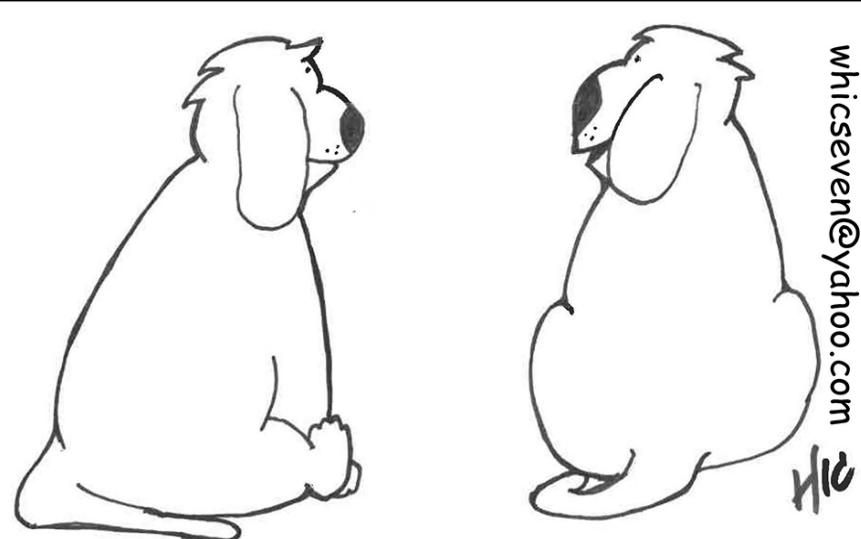
I know where it came from and where it was destined. A contractor crew had loaded a truck with a demolished deck. The truck was headed to the Rich Gap transfer station. The load was not secured and the wooden gate in the photo fell onto the road. I wonder if the driver of the truck noticed the object from his load on his return trip from the transfer station and just kept driving. That may have happened since I was retrieving it after the transfer station had closed.

The question is how can we improve the problem of trash and litter on the roadways? I use the term we, instead of the town. The immediate response by some is that the town should do something like have crews pick up the corridors coming into the town. My response is that the town may need to reconsider pickups on the roadways inside the town, but that would be a limited solution. Our employees cannot go beyond the town limits. That road obstruction was just outside the town limits. While I know our employees would have done the same thing I did in retrieving the danger, technically it would be beyond their responsibility. In addition, the town limits stop at the Sequoyah Dam, so the vast majority of the litter on that scenic byway is beyond the town.

So, what are some solutions? First, maybe the county solid waste department should have a covering of construction material policy for those using their facilities. Expecting law enforcement to enforce such a policy would be a hit or miss proposition, but all those vehicles eventually arrive at the landfill facilities.

• See MAYOR page 21

•HIC'S VIEW•



whicseven@yahoo.com

Some days I'm a good dog. But most days I'm a bad dog, it's more fun."

•WEATHER•

Thu, 22-Apr	Fri, 23-Apr	Sat, 24-Apr	Sun, 25-Apr
51°F 29°F	55°F 38°F	58°F 40°F	62°F 40°F
Plenty of sunshine, but cold RealFeel® High: 55° Low: 32°	Intervals of clouds and sun RealFeel® High: 62° Low: 42°	A.M. showers, then a t-storm RealFeel® High: 56° Low: 42°	Partly sunny RealFeel® High: 68° Low: 41°

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• BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NEWS •

WNC-based special liberty project launches monthly in-person healing retreats for Gold Star Widows

For the first time in its five-year history, the national veteran and Gold Star organization Special Liberty Project, which expanded here in September, completed an onsite Vitality Retreat on its own property.

This recent event launched the organization's new monthly healing, nature-centric program specifically designed for Gold Star Widows at its Farm and Retreat Center in Franklin.

Six attendees, whose husbands gave the ultimate sacrifice while on active duty, travelled across the state to focus on renewing their own much-needed, personal mental and physical health after the death of their spouses.

"The retreat was emotional because of the struggles these courageous ladies face in the absence of their husbands who died as a result of their service to our nation. Yet, it was all so rewarding because these women got to be the focus of healing attention which is rare for single mothers and widows," said Jessica Merritt, SLP co-founder and chief executive officer. "Each served their country too and we're so thankful to be able to bring some relief and revitalization to their lives."

Special Liberty Project expanded to the Western North Carolina area by moving its headquarters from San Diego. Over the past six months, local volunteers joined the family of Jessica and Cory Merritt to build "glamping" style tents and platforms, an outdoor shower, clear hiking paths and prepare pastures for SLP's Healing with Horses Program.

SLP depends upon donations from individuals and businesses to provide its free services. This weekend's retreat was sponsored by Franklin business leader Fred

Drexler and his company Sulky. Combined with peer support, attendees enjoy four days and three nights of nature-centric activities such as hiking, journaling, pottery and sewing workshops, herbal remedies, yoga and more. Room and board during the retreats are offered at no charge for Gold Star Families.

"To meet a group of women who share a tragedy and feel each other's pain is an overwhelming, but satisfying experience," said Crystal Cochran, a Sylva resident whose husband died on active duty. "The retreat gave us one-on-one opportunities to share our stories, grief, and happiness while finding peace, being in nature and enjoying activities to promote the healing process. Whether it's been five months or 20 years, grief is something you deal with differently at each stage in life. When I left, I felt refreshed, renewed, and ready to come back to everyday life as I know it."

With more than 60 military bases in the surrounding six-state region, a VA clinic in Franklin and medical center in Asheville, and families reaching out from all over the country, Special Liberty Project expects the need for its services to grow.

SLP is currently the only non-profit serving the entire veteran family - Gold Star Parents, Spouses and Children, Veteran Suicide Surviving Spouses and Healing Veterans. The Farm and Retreat Center in Franklin allows the organization to serve the veteran family in one location.

Founded in 2016, Special Liberty Project serves Gold Star Families, Healing Veterans and family survivors of Active Duty and Veteran suicides at its locations in North Carolina, Southern California and Arizona. SLP's nature-



Gold Star Widows enjoy the recent retreat.

based programs and experiences provide therapeutic healing, peer support and skill development. The combination of environment, nurturing programs and fellowship helps each cope with the struggles of losing a family member or with wounds from service. Veterans also regain the much-needed camaraderie they miss most from their time in the military. SLP is a 501c(3) non-profit organization. Visit speciallibertyproject.org.

• HIGHLANDS DINING •

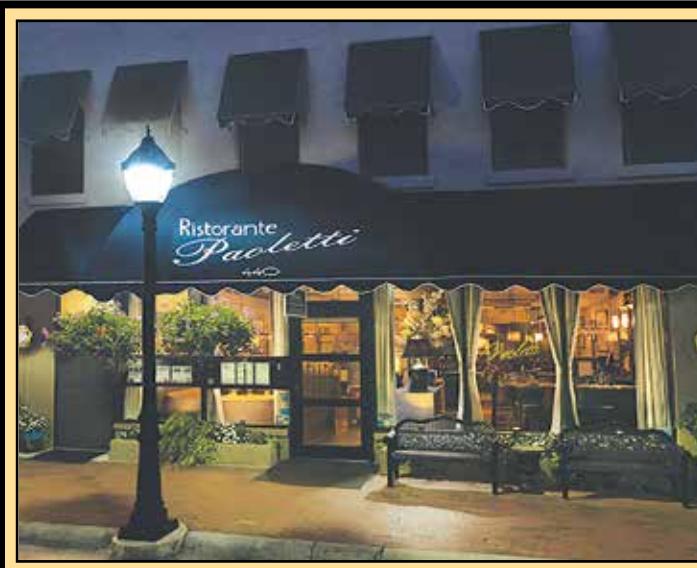


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Highlands Anna Stiehler chips onto the green.

— Photos by Brian O'Shea, Plateau Daily News

High School golfers take on Connestee Falls

By Brian O'Shea
Plateau Daily News

Golfers from Highlands School and Blue Ridge Early College traveled to Brevard to play 9 holes at Connestee Falls Golf Club for the first match of the season on March 22.

After tallying teams' scores, Highlands took 1st place, BREC took 2nd place, and Rosman took 3rd.

Highlands Anna Stiehler

scored all-around first place shooting 42 and said Connestee was an overall fun course to play with some hills and difficult angles, but nothing too bad.

"I honestly liked some of the challenging angles on the course," she said. "Personally, I feel as though the challenges are what can make golf fun. They can also make it very frustrating, it just depends on how you look at it. There were also a lot of deer. I think we

saw them in groups of anywhere from 4-15 at a time. That was pretty cool. It's not something you always see when you're out playing golf."

Stiehler added that the most difficult thing for her during the match was staying in her zone.

"My main challenges were mental," she said. "I was missing putts that I almost always make. Getting my mindset straight at the start is what I need to focus on from now on."

BREC Carson Druffel has never golfed competitively and said he thinks he played decent for his first match.

"The course was nice and fairly easy," said Druffel. "The only reason I consider it easy is most holes were fairly flat, some holes were very difficult due to downhill dog leg holes and water hazards. The deer running through the course was awesome and I thought that was pretty dang cool."



Highlands JJ Postell sets up to drive the ball at Connestee Falls.

• INVESTING AT 4,118 FT. •

Decluttering is Not a Four-Letter Word!

It's that time of year when second homeowners return to escape the heat and humidity that southern states are known for. That's one of the reasons I moved here 27 years ago. There is also a magical and spiritual aura that surrounds us in these mountains.



Pat Allen
Owner, BIC
Pat Allen Realty Group

Upon returning and opening up your home for summer use, there will be signs of the winter's wrath that need to be taken care of: gutters filled with debris, limbs from the strong and whistling winds, damp and cold homes that will revive with heat, and musty odors from lingering mildew.

You have probably heard by now that we definitely are in a sellers' market with homes averaging 4 days on the market and many receiving multiple offers the first day they are listed in our MLS! Prices have escalated like we have never seen. If you have been considering selling your home or business NOW if the time!

In preparing your home for sale, there is one thing that must be done and that is decluttering. The things that mean so much to you that are displayed so prominently only take up space in a buyer's eyes and give the perception that there isn't much space in the home...and space is what we are selling.

Pack up mementos including photos that remind the buyer that this is not their home. Eventually, you will need to pack them anyway when you sell so just get a head start!

Make sure all lamps have bright light

...VISITS continued from page 1

English to Juniors and Seniors. Under Governor Pat McCrory, Truitt was appointed to serve on his Senior Advisory Committee on Education in 2015. Governor McCrory even awarded Truitt with the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, the state's highest honor, in recognition of her efforts to improve public education across the state.

"It was my pleasure to welcome Superintendent Catherine Truitt to Macon County," said Senator Corbin. "Since first being elected to Raleigh, I have made it my priority to ensure that folks in Raleigh are reminded that the state doesn't end in Asheville. As one of the newest elected

bulbs and have closets organized. One common complaint we hear is that closets are too small when they actually aren't if you have packed up or donated items you no longer need...I can't stress enough the importance of organized closets and cabinets.

Good resources for donations are Mountain Findings on Laurel Street, the Emergency Council on Poplar Street and for furniture consignment the Blue Elephant on Dillard Road or Full

House in Highlands Plaza.

If you need help staging – even with your own furniture and accessories – we can help. I did that for two clients in the past and once completed they decided not to sell because it looked so good!

Buyers who walk in a home for sale need to picture themselves living there and if it is cluttered and unorganized and hasn't been maintained they will move on. One of our responsibilities as brokers is to guide you – not only on price – but how to make your home more marketable. And remember, you don't get a second chance to make a first impression!

• Pat Allen is owner and Broker-in Charge of Pat Allen Realty Group with 2 locations: 295 Dillard Road and 5121 Cashiers Road at the entrance to Wildcat Cliffs Country Club. Her firm was selected as a Leading Real Estate Company of the World and is a member of the prestigious Luxury Portfolio International. Her contact info is: pat@patallenrealtygroup.com or 828-200-9179. Office number is 828-526-8784. Pat and Julie Osborn were the leading sales team in Highlands for 2020.

state leaders, Superintendent Truitt is already making the western part of the state a priority and I am looking forward to working alongside her to continue ensuring the residents in the West are not forgotten."

Senator Corbin also made sure that Superintendent Truitt visited Jackson and Swain county schools.

"To my knowledge, this is the only time a Superintendent of Public Instruction has been in Macon or Swain county," said Senator Corbin. "Students from Swain County prepared and served our lunch. It was a great visit and she promised there would be more visits to come."

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ALL ABOUT BOOKS**• INK PENN •****Have you run out of books yet?**

Never fear. I'm back with more of my recent reads. I'm taking some time off from writing as I work to get my fifth book ready for a September release, so I'm finding a bit more time for reading.

Eight Perfect Murders
by Peter Swanson

A perfect book for lovers of mysteries and classic mystery books. Once upon a time, book shop owner Mal Kershaw

wrote a blog listing the books he thought contained perfect murders--the ones that were difficult or impossible to solve. The list includes Agatha Christie's "A. B. C. Murders," Patricia Highsmith's "Strangers on a Train," Ira Levin's "Deathtrap," A. A. Milne's "The Red House Mystery," Anthony Berkeley Cox's "Malice Aforethought," James M. Cain's "Double Indemnity," John D. MacDonald's "The Drowner," and Donna Tartt's "The Secret History."

The only disappointing thing to me was I've only recently stumbled across and purchased Milne's mystery and haven't read it yet. If you're a mystery aficionado, you will have read or heard of most of these books, whether in written form or as a movie. If you haven't, SPOILER ALERT, the plots are described in this book.

An FBI agent visits Mal because she thinks someone is following his list as a plan for committing multiple murders. From there, they try to determine whether that's the case and if so, the who and the why. Suffice it to say, I found it an unputdownable book.

Tangent**by Caroline Goldsworthy**

Author Carolyn Goldsworthy did an excellent job of keeping this reader on the edge of her seat. Not only did she take me into the twisted mind of a serial killer, she wove an interesting back story for DCI Carlson, the detective who eventually solves the crimes.

I look forward to getting to know DCI Carlson better in book two of this series, "Recompense."

An Accidental Death**by Peter Grainger**

I am so glad I stumbled across this author and that there are 8 books in the series featuring Detective Sergeant "DC" Smith. DC is his nickname. The setting is the Norfolk countryside and the author's descriptions bring it to life.

When his superiors hand him the case of a student dead by drowning, DC Smith



Kathy Manos Penn

colors outside the lines in his hunt for the killer. The death has already been written off as an accident, but Smith isn't convinced. Getting to know DC Smith was as much a pleasure as following his persistent pursuit.

The last line of the Amazon description suggests that fans of Colin Dexter (Morse), Ruth Rendell (Wexford), P. D. James (Adam Dalgliesh), and R. D. Wingfield (Frost) will enjoy this series, and I wholeheartedly agree.

I must admit I haven't read the Frost books, but we watched the series on BritBox and were addicted and sorry to see it end. I've read every P.D. James book and all of Ruth Rendell's Wexford series. If you haven't, I suggest you dash right out and get the first of each.

As for Morse, I've read a handful of the books and watched quite a few of the television shows available from time to time on PBS as well as Amazon Prime. The Masterpiece Mystery series Lewis and Endeavor both carry on the Morse story and we never miss those. Taking a Morse tour when we visited Oxford was a treat.

So, there you have it, three book reviews, and a bonus list of suggestions contained in two of them. Enjoy!

• 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/.

**Annual White Goods Pickup**

The Town of Highlands has set a White Good Pick-Up Week annually since February 1987.

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...LITTER continued from page 1

"The Spring Litter Sweep started April 1 and only a week in, and already the sweep has helped tremendously in keeping our roadways clean," said state Transportation Secretary Eric Boyette. "Keeping North Carolina clean requires everyone to do their part, whether that's volunteering in the ongoing Litter Sweep or simply securing your load when you drive."

This past weekend Highlanders did their part, too.

According to Highlands Visitor Center Director, Beverly Wichman, 80 volunteers stuffed 286 orange bags with litter collected on US 64 east and west, NC 106, NC 28 south, Bowery, Hickory, Flat Mountain and Horse Cove roads as well as from the downtown area.

"We had 50 people sign up to participate but ended up with 80!" said Wichman. "We were very grateful."

In the Franklin area, Rotarian road crews, the Franklin High School Interact Club and Boy Scout Troops collected 660 pounds in 54 bags.

Since Jan. 1, 4 million pounds have

been collected with 1 million of that just since April 1.

NCDOT's litter management programs are multifaceted. The department makes use of state-owned forces and contract services statewide. NCDOT's Sponsor-A-Highway Program allows businesses, organizations and individuals to sponsor litter removal along roadsides.

NCDOT is also proud to partner with the more than 120,000 participants in the Adopt-A-Highway Program, where volunteers pledge to clean a section of our highways at least four times a year.

Litter is unsightly, costs millions of dollars to clean up and can hurt the environment, tourism and the state's quality of life.

Everyone should do their part by:

- Securing their loads before driving. Unsecured trash can fly from a vehicle and end up as roadside litter.
- Holding onto trash until it can be disposed of properly.
- Recycling when possible. Recycling protects the environment, saves landfill space and keeps the community clean.



Highlands roadways were scoured for litter by volunteers last Saturday.

— Photo by Brian O'Shea

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...MASK continued from page 1

the requirement and Neal was not in favor.

"After speaking with Tom about changing the mask requirement, he said we have not won this war, the battle is not over," said Taylor. "He did not recommend lifting the mask policy."

Commissioner Amy Patterson said the sidewalks downtown were too small to maintain social distancing.

"You can't maintain social distance on our sidewalks anyway, and the CDC says you should still wear a mask if you can't socially distance," said Patterson.

Commissioner Stiehler agreed to maintain the requirement.

"I wouldn't change a thing," said Stiehler.

No vote was necessary as there was no policy change.

After the decision to maintain the mask requirement, Taylor introduced Robin Austin from the Highlands Cashiers Plateau Vaccination Initiative (HCPVI) who updated the board on the progress of vaccinating the com-

munity through a number of volunteer-run clinics.

Austin said as of April 14, 30.8% of Macon County has been fully vaccinated, and 23.7% of Jackson County. She said the goal is to reach herd immunity on the plateau with 70-80% of people fully vaccinated.

She said there is currently a lull in people looking for vaccinations and she fears a wave of people from other states who don't have access to vaccination clinics like here on the Plateau.

"We're in a phase where not as many people are getting vaccinated and we're waiting for this influx of people from other states who aren't taking it seriously," said Austin. "We're going to be in danger."

Austin said reasons people may not get vaccinated are varied.

"They are afraid they'll get

sick and have to miss work, many young people don't want to receive it, or some people don't care," she said.

HCPVI has been reaching out to local businesses and churches encouraging them to have their employees and congregations vaccinated. Austin said the idea of posting local businesses who have had employees vaccinated on social media to encourage business owners to get involved was discussed, but nothing has been decided.

She asked the board for permission to post signs in town encouraging people to get vaccinated and the board voted unanimously to support their efforts by allowing them to do so.

Austin said she would discuss signage with Neal and be in touch with the board.

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Food Pantry volunteers needed

In response to the growing need in our community, the Highlands Food Pantry (a shared ministry of the International Friendship Center and HUMC) is expanding its hours. In addition to Monday afternoons, the pantry is now open on Thursday mornings 9am - 12noon.

As the word spreads and the program grows, more volunteers will be needed. If you are interested in volunteering for one or more Thursday mornings a month, or want more information please email Keller Torrey - kellertorrey@gmail.com, or Andrea Smith andrea@internationalfriendshipcenter.org

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from April 8. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

April 8

- At 1:35 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on Oak Street.

April 13

- At 9:35 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on Church Street.

April 16

- At 9:16 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on US 64 at Oak Street.

• At 10:27 a.m., officers were called about a vehicle hitting another and then the driver leaving the scene at US 64 and Oak Street. Issues include failure to report an accident, possible burglary tools and hindering and delaying.

April 17

• At 7 p.m., officers responded to a report of theft from a motor vehicle when parked on Horse Cove Road across from the Highlands Nature Center. Numerous items were taken valued at about \$1,800 including money, purse, wallets, which held credit cards, money gift cards, as well as a Google electronic device.

April 19

• At 1:33 a.m., Ivan Jerrod McClamb, 32, of Highlands, was arrested for DUI at a stoplight violation. He was issued a \$500 unsecured bond. His trial date is July 14.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from April 13.

April 13

- At 9:34 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Church Street.

- At 9:22 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a burning brush fire on Hickory Hill Road.

April 14

- At 9:49 a.m., the dept. provided public assistance to on NC 28 south.

April 16

- At 4:04 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Garnet Rock Trail.

- At 11:15 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Flat Mountain Road.

April 17

- At 2:30 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on VZ-Top.



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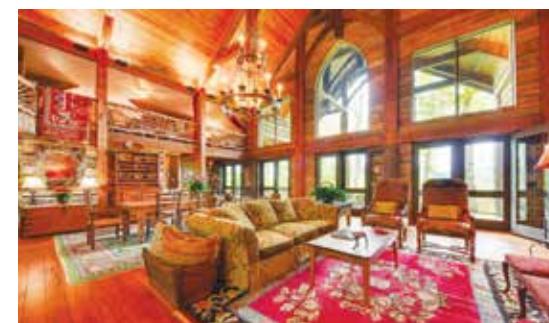
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Spring Home Improvement -2021

11 Natural Lawn Alternatives

By Stacy Tornio

While lush, green lawns are nice, they do very little for the environment. In fact, because so many lawns require chemicals and pesticides for upkeep, they can have quite the negative impact. Natural lawn alternatives, on

the other hand, offer greater advantages to you and the environment. Many lawn alternatives are low-maintenance and naturally attract birds, bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects; plus, home owners can spend less of their time mowing and more of their time admiring their new, unique outdoor space. Here are 10 natural lawn alternatives to freshen up your yard.

Some of the plants on this list may be toxic to pets. For more information about the safety of specific plants, consult the ASPCA's

Clover (*Trifolium pratense*)



Clover is one of the most popular options when it comes to converting a lawn. The botanical name mentioned here is for red clover, known for its beautiful purple flowers. You may also be interested in white clover (*Trifolium repens*) and microclover (*Trifolium repens* var. *Pirouette*). Keep in mind that clover is considered aggressive or invasive in some areas, so monitor its growth is key.¹

Plant Care Tips

USDA Growing Zones: Varies by species.

Sun Exposure: Full sun to part shade.

Soil Needs: Well-drained.

spreading on its own from one year to the next.

Plant Care Tips

USDA Growing Zones: 4 to 8.

Sun Exposure: Full sun to part shade.

Soil Needs: Well-drained.

Creeping Mazus (*Mazus reptans*)



Creeping mazus will only grow to about two inches tall, making it a great replacement for grass. It has tiny purplish flowers that emerge in late spring to early summer and bright green foliage that lasts through fall. Because of the way this plant grows (with creeping stems), it'll slowly and surely expand year after year.

Plant Care Tips

USDA Growing Zones: 5 to 8.

Sun Exposure: Full sun to part shade.

Soil Needs: Well-drained.

Cedar Sedge (*Carex eburnea*)



Creeping Thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*)

Also called wild thyme, this creeping perennial is a popular option for a ground cover. It's not the same type of thyme that commonly used for cooking, but the leaves do have a minty smell to them. Bees love the tiny flowers, and creeping thyme as a lawn alternative does a nice job of

All sedges can be good options to consider when placing grass, and the cedar sedge is definitely a favorite.² Each plant grows to about a foot tall and wide, so if you bunch several of these together, you get a lovely grass-like feel without the added maintenance. Since these are hardy even in cold zones and also work in shade, they can really offer a lot of solutions to gardeners.

Plant Care Tips

USDA Growing Zones: 2 to 8.

Sun Exposure: Part shade to full shade.

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Spring Home Improvement -2021

Soil Needs: Medium moisture.

Lily Turf (*Liriope spicata*)



amongst them are pale white and lavender flowers. Later in the summer and early fall, these flowers turn into little berries. Between the flowers and berries, this makes it great for attracting backyard wildlife.

Plant Care Tips

USDA Growing Zones: 4 to 10.

- Sun Exposure: Full sun to part shade.

Soil Needs: Well-drained.

Sweet Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*)



Gardeners who have a lot of shade love having sweet woodruff around. This popular ground cover grows about a foot high total and will easily spread.³ (Some gardeners

find it a bit aggressive, so plant with caution if you don't want it in a big area.) It has little white flowers in spring, and the fragrant leaves are sometimes used for potpourris.

Plant Care Tips

USDA Growing Zones: 4 to 8.

Sun Exposure: Part shade to full shade.

Soil Needs: Well-drained.

Corsican Mint (*Mentha requienii*)



• See NATURAL continued on page 14

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Spring Home Improvement -2021

...NATURAL continued from page 13



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This miniature mint plant is pretty versatile, tolerating most conditions except extremely dry weather. Gardeners love tucking it between rock gardeners because it fills in the space nicely and also offers tiny blooms and nice aromas. It only grows a few inches tall.

Plant Care Tips

USDA Growing Zones: 6 to 9.

Sun Exposure: Part shade to full shade.

Soil Needs: Well-drained.

Creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*)



Growing only a few inches tall, this is another one that will often grow in places where other plants won't. You have to be a little big careful as some gardeners consider it aggressive, but it's a great option as you look to replace your grass. Look for 'Aurea' for a creeping Jenny option with bright yellow leaves.

Plant Care Tips

USDA Growing Zones: 3 to 9.

Sun Exposure: Full sun to part shade.

Soil Needs: Well-drained.

Blue Fescue (*Festuca glauca*)



All ornamental grasses make good replacements for traditional grass, and blue fescue is one of the best. It will often tolerate less-than-ideal growing conditions, especially dry areas. It grows up to a foot high and has that popular blue tinge to the foliage, which is why so many gardeners seek it out. Check out the popular cultivar, 'Elijah Blue', for

your own garden.4

Plant Care Tips

USDA Growing Zones: 3 to 8.

Sun Exposure: Full sun.

Soil Needs: Well-drained.

Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria majalis*)



Lily of the valley has the cutest white blooms in spring — they are little bell shapes that also smell great. Then the rich, green foliage will last until fall. This is a popular alternative to the traditional hosta, and they tend to spread quickly from one year to the next. However, beware of this option if you have pets as it is considered toxic.5

Plant Care Tips

USDA Growing Zones: 3 to 8.

Sun Exposure: Part to full shade.

Soil Needs: Well-drained.

Native Plants

While it's not a specific plant, it is definitely worth your time and effort. By giving your lawn back to some of the native plants that used to be in your area, you're doing so much for the environment. Check out native plant recommendations in your area or try to find a native plant society who you can purchase plants from. This is a wonderful way to support the birds, bees, and butterflies in your yard.

To check if a plant is considered invasive in your area, visit the National Invasive Species Information Center or contact your regional extension office or local gardening center.

Spring Home Improvement -2021

5 Home Improvement Projects For Spring

In many parts of the country, it's almost home improvement season again. The days are getting longer, the spring flowers will soon peek out from the frozen ground and the temperatures are getting warmer. Now is a good time to assess if there's any winter damage to your home and make plans for spring home improvement projects.

Here are five home improvement projects that yield a big return on investment:

1. Repair your roof

Your roof is your home's No. 1 defense against the elements. Even a small issue on the top of your house can lead to major damage indoors if water is allowed to enter your attic and walls. Take a look at your roof from the ground to see if any shingles have been blown out of place during a winter storm.

If you've had water leaking into your living space this winter, spring is the time to investigate the source of this problem. Remember: water can travel a long way along the beams. The section of your roof that needs repaired may not be directly above your leak. Small repairs make an easy DIY home improvement project, but larger issues are best left to the roofing professionals.

2. Clean windows and check them for damage

Cleaning the outside of your windows is an ideal spring home improvement project and only costs you time and effort. Plus, it's rewarding to start the new season with crystal clear windows.

Replacing broken window panes is inexpensive and goes a long way to making your home more attractive and energy efficient. Strong winds from winter storms combined with the freezing and thawing of the typical winter in colder parts of the country may have cracked a few of your window panes.

Take a walk around your house and visually inspect all of your windows. While you're at it take a look at the window sills and trim for any signs of water damage or deterioration. Painting or replacing damaged window trim is another home improvement project that yields big results.

3. Update your siding

Siding, too, can get damaged from winter snow and wind. And, replacing a warped or loose piece of siding is a home improvement project that can be completed on a sunny spring afternoon.

• See PROJECTS page 21

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• BUSINESS / ORGANIZATION NEWS •



Terry Bell (right) receives The Order of the Long Leaf Pine from SCC President Dr. Don Tomas.

Bell receives state's highest honor

The Order of the Long Leaf Pine is the highest award the state of North Carolina can bestow upon an individual. It is awarded to individuals who have shown extraordinary service to the state.

Nominated by Southwestern Community College President Dr. Don Tomas, Macon County native Terry Bell received the award on Wednesday, March 31 at the SCC Macon Campus.

"It's a privilege and an honor to present this award," said Dr. Tomas. "Not everybody can achieve this level of recognition from the state. Mr. Bell has humbly left a lasting legacy of service to the residents of western North Carolina."

Bell worked for almost 50 years as an instructor at Haywood and Macon County schools, a principal at three different schools and an assistant principal at Franklin High School. After retiring in 2009 as Chief Operations Officer for the Macon County School System, he has continued to work in a special consultant capacity as

Director of Human Resources at Macon County Schools until his recent retirement from that position.

Dedicating his career to education and public service, Bell graduated from Southwestern Community College's Emergency Medical Technology program, giving him the opportunity to serve as an emergency medical technician and volunteer firefighter in Macon County. He also worked as Project Manager to help the county construct new schools and renovate existing buildings.

"He has impacted thousands of western North Carolina students and families, and he continues to do that," said SCC chairman of the board Lambert Wilson. "He's definitely one of a kind."

From 1995 to 2019, Bell served on SCC's Board of Trustees – the last seven as chair.

Through his service, Bell has made a lasting impression for generations to come.

'Safety Town' is set for this Saturday

One in 10 children ages 19 and under will be seen in an emergency department for a non-fatal unintentional injury this year, according to Safe Kids Worldwide. With the goal of reducing the number of preventable injuries to children, Safe Kids coalitions around the world work year round to raise awareness and educate the public on how to protect kids from unintentional injuries.

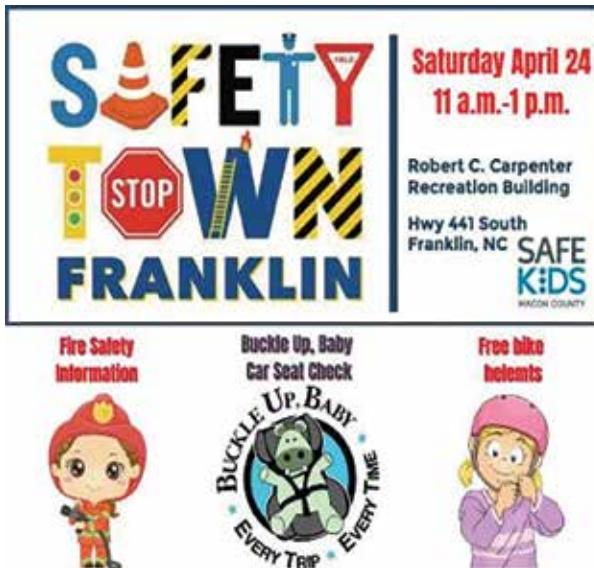
Safe Kids Macon County is gearing up for the annual Safety Town Event scheduled for Saturday, April 24 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building.

Safe Kids Macon County serves North Carolina as the westernmost Safe Kids Coalition in North Carolina and each Spring they partner with local civic and community groups to host a large-scale Safety Town event for the community.

"Due to COVID19, we were unable to host Safety Town last year but we are planning to return this year," said Safe Kids Macon County Coordinator Deputy Nick Lofthouse. "The event will be a little different and will be outside to promote a safer atmosphere for the community."

The annual event encompasses all things kids and all things safety with our focus areas being:

11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building



1) The Buckle Up, Baby car seat checking station where certified car seat technicians will be on hand to check car seats to ensure they are properly installed.

2) Fire Safety information through partnerships with local fire departments.

3) Bike safety- Through a grant with the Governor's Highway Safety Program Safe Kids Macon County will fit and distribute free bike helmets to the community while supplies last.

4) Operation Medicine Drop — There will be a fully staffed a drive-thru medicine drop for the community to properly dispose of their unused, expired, or unwanted medications.

5) An Emergency Vehicle Car Show—the first of its kind in the state. We partner with fire departments, police departments, the hospital for air medics, highway patrol, the forest services, and other emergency services to host an Emergency Vehicle Car show that includes a trophy to the fan favorite. This event is unique for our area and brings all things public safety together for one fun event.

Chase and Marshall from Paw Patrol will once again be at the event for picture opportunities. Additional details will be announced on the Safe Kids Macon County Facebook page.

• 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.

Every Saturday

• Highlands Marketplace in K-H Park on Pine Street. 8a to 12:30p.

Thurs. - Sun. April 23-25

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

Sat., April 24

• Safe Kids Macon County is gearing up for the annual Safety Town Event scheduled for Saturday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building.

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.

Sunday, 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. Tradition

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. 5-7 p.m. Rain or shine.

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

Fri. June 25

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

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.

- Saturdays on Pine: Moon Dance.

6-8:30p.

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

Music in the Park and in Town Square kicks off May 21-22



The Caribbean Cowboys kick off Music in the Park Saturday May 22 from 6-8:30 p.m. Friday, May 21 it's Silly Ridge Roundup in Town Square from 6-9:30 p.m.

SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING**Fight
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WHITESIDE
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Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Today we are facing a real change in our society and culture.

Our nation was built upon a Judeo-Christian philosophy that had at its foundation liberty of conscience.

The Constitution of the United States put forth this idea of the liberty of conscience in the preamble and in the first amendment. That amendment guaranteed the freedom of men's liberty of conscience with protection of religion, speech, press, and assembly.

In the past, we saw many great men give their lives, such as the Reformers for this very principle. They took a stand against Pope and King believing that neither the Church nor the government had a right to bind their conscience. They held to what the Scripture taught in Acts 5:29, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

The Reformation was not a war with the Church and the Pope, as much as, it was a struggle to be witnesses of God for Jesus Christ. Yes, they fought against the Pope and the authority of Rome, and many in the political world liked the idea of weakening the power of Rome. But when the political world saw that it was not just Rome that the Reformers refused to follow but also the governments that wanted to control religion, they became very strong in their persecution of the Reformers.

These Reformers believed that God alone was the Lord of the church and of men's consciences. They declared very boldly that they were "bought with a price" and they would not be "servants of men" (I Corinthians 7:23).

Today we are going through a struggle that is grounded in our liberty of conscience. We are in the position where we must stand up and declare our love of this principle or lose it. Why would a small-town preacher be concerned about this? Because we stand on the verge of all ministers being told they cannot preach the gospel or the truth of God's word.

The place to begin looking at this is the doctrine of the two swords. This is where the principle of the separation of Church and State comes from. The idea our forefathers had was that the State should have no power to bind the consciences of men. Thomas Jefferson explained that there was a porous wall between State and Church. It allowed the exchange of ideas but prohibited the State's control of the Church.

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 19

Proverbs 3:5**PLACES TO WORSHIP****John 3:16****BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH**

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COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY

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Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Choir 5p; Prayer Mtg 6:15p

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...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING from page 18

The forefathers believed that a man's conscience should be free from the state, when it came to what they believed concerning God. Today, we see the State trying to control the minds of men with economic slavery through welfare, through the total control of education, through control of health care and now through fear. They are trying to remove the Church from the public arena altogether. They are using fear to drive people away from their churches and keeping them apart from one another with masks, that according to the warning on the mask packages say they do nothing to stop the spread of viruses.

This was never the intention of our forefathers. That is why Jefferson said the wall between church and state was porous, the forefathers believed they needed the influence of the religious dialogue on the hearts of men. The Church was free to exercise influence on the government through its preaching and teaching but the government was not free to

inhibit the Church.

What is happening today is that this whole idea is being turned upside down and with that comes the binding of men's consciences. Therefore, it is very important that you as a believer understand correctly this principle of liberty of conscience.

Liberalism over the years worked tirelessly to change this philosophical concept. It tried to block the church from any influence in the secular world. They restricted through the IRS churches activities and prohibited them having politicians come and speak about national issues. It has sought to silence any who would claim the right of the church to work in the political realm. There are clear directives today that the church should not be allowed to speak out against open sins as they are clearly shown in the Scripture. They call them rights and say anyone who disagrees is committing a hate crime. What crime is not founded in hate?

But it is not just the secular world that has been changed.

Many in the church have bought into such wrong philosophy. There are two violations occurring in this. The first is when men add commands that must be followed that are not from the Scripture. The second is when they ignore commands clearly given in Scripture. In order to be salt and light, Christians must be true to God's Word. They cannot add to it or take away from it. This new philosophy says you don't need God's Word. They are already in the process of making up the laws they think are the best way for you to live your life. I ask, "Do you want to follow God's direction for your life or man's direction?"

Following the direction of man will lead, to a time, where every man is doing what is right in his own eyes. This will be a time of utter chaos, leading to an absolute tyranny. This is clearly on the horizon today. Their desire is to become our guide and to make us follow them through the laws they pass. G. I. Williamson says, "It has been said that there is 'a pope in every man's heart.'"

We are all tempted to think that we could improve our fellow men, if we had charge of their conscience. We are likewise all liable to imagine that we are doing much better than others in the use of our cherished liberty. We would restrict others and relax strictures against ourselves. Have we not already seen that happening? But the Scripture requires the reverse: charity towards others, and carefulness in the use of our own liberty. We ought to give our brother the benefit of doubt. We should esteem others better than ourselves. And even where it appears that our brother has abused his liberty, we should correct in meekness taking heed to ourselves.

Meanwhile, we should guard against the abuse of our liberty, taking heed that we do not make it an occasion of the flesh, and exercising care that we do not cause a weaker brother to stumble by the exercise of our liberty. If we do not return to such a philosophy, all liberty will be lost and turmoil will ensue which ultimately leads to despotism.

We stand today on the brink of just such chaos and tyranny. We must return to God's word and the Lordship of Jesus Christ, if we are to avoid the destruction the loss of liberty will bring. We must show courage in the face of the cancel culture. We must stand fast against the fear tactics that threaten us with false scenarios. We must also refuse to give in to any degradation of our unalienable rights. We must not allow anyone to threaten our life, take away our liberty and disturb our pursuit of happiness. This is the only way to stop this darkness that is hovering over us today. It is a darkness that can destroy everything good about our nation and its culture.

Please, don't give in to the fear, open your heart to Jesus Christ and He will set you free from your sin and the fear of man. II Timothy 2:1 "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Let us take these three gifts and fight for our liberty.

Macon County reports additional death related to COVID-19

Macon County Public Health received notification that a Macon County resident diagnosed with COVID-19 has passed away. To protect the family's privacy, no further information will be released about this individual. This death brings Macon County to thirty-three (33) deaths related to COVID-19.

"The family and friends of this individual are in our thoughts and prayers," said Health Director, Kathy McGaha. McGaha continued, "Macon County's vaccination process is underway, and there are appointments available for this lifesaving vaccine for all age 18 and over.

The more individuals who get this vaccine, the more likely that we will stop seeing COVID-19 deaths."

The entire state of North Carolina requires masks to be worn when social distancing cannot be maintained. Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19; however, anyone of any age can become infected with this illness. Therefore, we ask that community members strictly follow the governor's orders and continue to practice social distancing, as well as safe hygiene measures such

as hand washing and frequently cleaning touched objects and surfaces. The public can monitor the different phases of re-opening and learn more about the restrictions at <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance>.

If you believe that you may have COVID-19, please call the Health Department at 828-349-2517. The call center is open Monday through Friday from 8:00am – 5:00pm, until further notice. To register and schedule an appointment to receive the vaccine, please call 828-524-1500. The vaccine call center is open from 8am–5pm Monday through Friday, until further notice.

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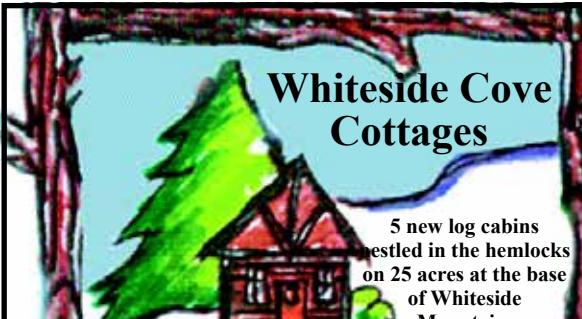
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...PROJECTS continued from page 15

If your siding is older, you might also consider updating your siding with a more energy-efficient and easy to maintain product, such as vinyl siding that helps insulate your house and is easy to clean with a hose and brush.

4. Replace or upgrade your gutters

Your gutters and drain pipes help to direct rain water and melted snow from your roof away from your foundation. Clogged or leaky gutters can cause this water to accumulate below the roof line, causing ruts around your house and possibly leading to water getting into your basement.

Gutters and drain pipes are relatively inexpensive to replace and well worth the effort in keeping your home cozy and dry. Another easy home improvement fix is to install gutter guards in the spring to keep fall leaves from clogging your gutters.

5. Add insulation

If your home wasn't quite as warm this winter as you would have liked it to be, perhaps it's time to beef up the insulation in your attic. Adding an extra layer of fiberglass insulation on the floor of your attic is another easy home improvement project and can help keep the heated air down in your living space where it belongs and make cooling your home this summer much easier.

Attic insulation also helps to keep the top of your house a constant temperature, which is useful in preventing ice dams, a major source of winter water damage.

So, put your spring enthusiasm to work in making your house more secure, safe and attractive. The effort and expense you invest today on home improvement can save you big repair and energy dollars in the future.

...MAYOR continued from page 2

Another idea is to have a program led by a civic organization, maybe the Chamber of Commerce, to pay a company to do litter sweeps of the corridors on a regular schedule, not just a volunteer effort in the spring. Under such a program concerned citizens could donate to support the program.

Finally, maybe local businesses could support such an anti-litter initiative. Our local ABC Store sells a huge amount of small, plastic, one-shot bottles of liquor. Many of these bottles land up in those orange trash bags, as well as the many Bud Light cans and bottles sold at the local convenience stores and gas stations. Maybe these businesses could be participants in such an effort and even be a part of a campaign to make folks aware of littering.

These ideas would need a community commitment, not just a simple position of "just let the town take care of it." I hope in the coming weeks some of the ideas I have suggested can become a reality.

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LANDSCAPE BACKGROUND INDIVIDUAL.— Three-

quarters acre needs restoration and creative ideas. Between Highlands and Cashiers off Hwy 64. 864-423-9623. (st. 3/25)

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.

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Still not sure if this would be the right job for you? Please give us a call at 828-526-9581 with any additional questions about the position or come by to take a quick no-obligation tour before applying. We look forward to hearing from you!

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