

Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

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MC Schools to use portion of federal funding for employee bonuses

By Brittney Lofthouse
Just before the Thanksgiving holiday, the Macon County BOE voted to allocate \$4.5 million of the district's nearly \$15 million in

ESSER funds to award one-time retention bonuses for all school employees.
On a motion made by Tommy Cabe and seconded by Carol

Arnold, the Board unanimously approved an Employee Retention Bonus of \$1,500 for full-time employees and \$750 for part-time employees.
•See **BONUSSES** page 22

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Charge of rape under investigation by MCSO

By Brittney Lofthouse
Former Macon County Sheriff's Office Detention Officer was arrested on Nov.19 and charged with second degree forcible rape after an investigation was launched just a few days prior.
The Macon County Sheriff's Office first began an investigation into Detention Officer Kevin Sanchez on Monday, Nov. 15 after receiving a complaint of a sexual assault.

The department's Special Victims Unit initiated the investigation and quickly enlisted the assistance of both District Attorney Ashley Welch's office and the State Bureau of Investigation.
MCSO Jail Administrator Captain Dereck Jones contacted Sheriff Holland after being notified.
•See **RAPE** page 14

**So good to be coming back!
See you Saturday at the parade!**



Highlands kicked off the holiday season with its annual Town Lighting last Saturday. See photos on page 16. Next comes Highlands Olde Mountain Christmas Parade which will be a half-hour longer this year. It starts at 10:30 a.m. and lasts until noon. The route is along Main Street from 6th through 2nd streets and it will be closed to vehicular traffic. Around 60 organizations will be in the parade.
- Photo by Kim Lewicki

REACH out to those in need

In this season of giving, consider giving to REACH of Macon County.
Items are needed to replenish its Domestic Violence Shelter.
Needed are: paper products, full-size toiletries (shampoo, conditioner, razors, etc.), laundry and dish washing pods, dryer sheets, Lysol wipes, feminine hygiene products, diapers and wipes, hairbrushes, toothbrushes, combs, sealed dry dog/cat food and sealed cat litter.
Please bring donations to the Highlands Police Department at 372 Oak Street or the Highlands Fire Department at 322 Oak Street in Highlands.
Donations will be accepted Dec 3 through December 17.
Contribution to this drive will make a difference for a lot of families during this holiday season and will assist us in providing critical services at our emergency room.
•See **REACH** page 10



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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

When is construction noise OK?

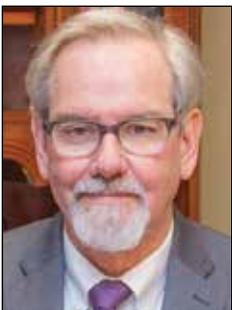
I read Reverend Manning's column several weeks ago about taking time to be thankful on Thanksgiving. The minister expressed concern about stores open and people working on that special holiday.

Thanksgiving morning I rode through town and noticed Main Street was closed down. I drove to the major construction sites, like the new fire station, the Episcopal Church, and the Performing Arts Center. They were closed too.

Then I drove through a neighborhood only to encounter a construction crew working on a house under renovation. My Thanksgiving spirit sunk as I asked the question, are people so busy meeting deadlines that construction has to continue on Thanksgiving? People in the neighborhood were about to settle down to dinner, and they shouldn't have been subjected to construction operations.

I contacted the police and asked them to remind the construction crew that work was not allowed on holidays. Highlands has an ordinance that prohibits construction work on holidays.

Friday morning construction work in the town was back to almost a normal level. The



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

next day, Saturday, I was in my yard around 2:30. I heard a loud, concerted roar of leaf blowers coming from a distant area. I suspected a landscape contractor was working on Saturday afternoon. While I understand homeowners doing yard work on Saturday, such as grass cutting and leaf blowing, I do have concerns about commercial operations on weekends. Our ordinance is somewhat ambiguous about the issue of landscape companies working on the weekend, although I have

witnessed commercial landscapers working in my neighborhood even on Sundays.

The leaf blowers continued to blare all that Saturday afternoon. About 4:30 I decided to take a road run. I ran toward the sound of the leaf blowers. After about a mile from my house I came upon the source of the noise. It wasn't one landscape contractor operating leaf blowers, but rather a concert of two crews from two companies operating multiple leaf blowers in the same area. I don't know how people living near by dealt with that situation.

My concern is that Highlands has always been a retreat community where folks come to get away from all the hustle and bustle of metropolitan, city life. The question for me is whether in our enthusiasm to build more, attract more visitors and expand business opportunities, are we not slowly and subtly degrading the quality of life in this special community? In our quest to build and develop more in pursuit of the good mountain life, are we destroying what we strive to enjoy?

I know some will say here goes that anti business mayor. I support businesses, wise growth and development. On the other hand, I'm concerned about growing practices that reduce our quality of life, especially in residential areas.

In the coming weeks I will ask the Town Board to review current ordinances concerning construction work on weekends. Our ordinance may need clarification. Also, I will request a review of noise issues coming from equipment operation.

Outdoor Fire Ban in Effect

The state and county have issued an emergency outdoor fire ban order. Therefore, there is an outdoor fire ban for the Town of Highlands. It will remain in effect until weather conditions change and the state and county rescind their orders.

• HIC'S VIEW •



"A hiker is missing up on the trail. Do you and your gang know anything about that?"

• WEATHER •

Thu, 2-Dec	Fri, 3-Dec	Sat, 4-Dec	Sun, 5-Dec
 60°F 41°F	 66°F 41°F	 62°F 38°F	 54°F 37°F
Partly sunny and mild	Partly sunny and warm	Partly sunny and warm	Rather cloudy and cooler
RealFeel® High: 62° Low: 40°	RealFeel® High: 70° Low: 39°	RealFeel® High: 68° Low: 42°	RealFeel® High: 55° Low: 39°

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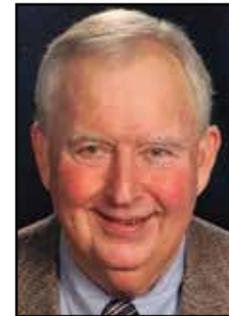
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• OBITUARY •

James Stewart Browne

James Stewart Browne, died peacefully on November 18, 2021, surrounded by his family in Highlands, North Carolina. Born in 1944 in Brooklyn, New York, Jim spent most of his childhood in Coral Gables, Florida and graduated from Coral Gables High School. He had many fond memories of sailboat racing and biking while growing up, and he remained a lover of nature, hiking, and national parks and forests his entire life.



He met Lynne Underwood, his wife of 55 years, at Lake George in the Adirondacks in 1964. They married in June 1966, shortly after he graduated from the Ohio State University, where he was a business major and a member of Sigma Chi fraternity. He served in the U.S. Army in Benjamin Franklin Village, Mannheim, Germany, from 1966 to 1968, specializing as a Chaplain's Assistant. Upon his return to the U.S., he began working at Stewart R. Browne Manufacturing, a safety equipment manufacturing company founded by his grandfather. He remained at the family company from 1968 until his retirement in 2013, serving as President for fifteen years.

Those who knew Jim described him as kind, gentle, generous, funny and humble. He was a devoted husband to Lynne and a doting father to his children, Margaret, of Brooklyn, NY, and Ross, of Atlanta, GA. He instilled in his family his love of travel, nature and the Ohio State Buckeyes. He was a loving brother and health care guardian to his late sister Carolyn Mason Browne.

After 30 years of living in the Atlanta area, Jim and Lynne decided to settle in Highlands, NC, their favorite spot in the mountains. Jim took countless hikes in Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests and in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. He could be found on trails around High-

• See OBITUARY page 6



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Reflections on the past 18 months

I am writing this as the Thanksgiving weekend is coming to an end and feeling very thankful of all the many blessings of family, friends, clients and especially this special place that I am fortunate to call home. I am also reflecting back on the past

18 months and what they have been like for the real estate market here on the plateau.

To give some perspective, 2019 had been the biggest year of real estate sales on the plateau. There were 2200 transactions with a volume of \$1,144,781,450. Yes,

that was over one billion in sales! During the past 18 months there have been 6478 transactions for a total of \$4,202,617,234. Almost four times the volume within just an additional six months of time.

At the beginning of the 18-month period it was still a buyer's market. Since then, we have seen it change to a seller's market; the average days on market reduce by over 100 days; the average sold/list price increase 5%; and the median sales price increase from \$500,000 to \$675,000.

This huge increase in volume has kept the agents busy, but has also impacted many other professions. These include many types of inspectors – for the whole house, wood destroying insects, roof, fireplace, mold and others. Surveys, appraisals and mortgage approvals take longer than they did before. County Health Departments which issue well and septic permits are backed up. And, attorneys and their staff have been working overtime in order to get the deals closed. All general and sub-contractors are busy building and renovating as they deal with supply issues and a labor shortage

We have seen the volume of vacation rentals at record levels. The number of rentals within the town limits reached a tipping point which is causing clarification and modification of the Unified Development Ordinance.

The way in which we show and sell real estate has changed. Open houses were not allowed for a period of time which increased the use of the Matterport 3-D tours. It is rare that clients ride in the same car as agents. Buyers were making offers without



Carl Romberg, BIC
Landmark Realty Group

seeing the property and the use of a non-refundable due diligence fee became common. Many times, there are multiple offers and properties are selling for more than the asking price. Some of the new listings are coming on the market at exaggerated prices.

Mortgage rates are still low but sellers may prefer the cash offer over the one with a mortgage. Or they may take one with a very short or no due diligence period. I have seen some

deals come together because the buyer allowed the seller to remain in the property for an extended period of time or a combination of several creative deal structures. All of this has caused many buyers to become fatigued after making multiple offers on properties.

In years before 2020, as Fall came to an end, we would see the number of new listings decrease then pick back in the Spring. That did not happen in 2020, but it does seem to be happening this year. However, there are still almost 300 properties that are under contract or pending. There are still buyers that are eager to buy and we have an inventory shortage of improved properties.

Real estate here on the plateau and in many areas of the country has seen a great deal of change over the past 18 months. I expect that we will continue to see changes into 2022 and that will be another good year for real estate transactions.

• Carl Romberg is the Broker-in-Charge of Landmark Realty Group's Highlands Office. Stop by his office on Main Street to say hello or reach him at 678-936-9309 or carl@landmarkerg.com.

...OBITUARY continued from page 5

lands almost daily with his beloved mini schnauzers, Sophie and Woody. He was a generous supporter of conservation and environmental causes and an enthusiastic collector of folk art and crafts.

In addition to his wife and children, Jim is survived by two brothers, Alan and Christopher Browne, both of greater Atlanta. Memorial contributions may be made to First Presbyterian Church of Highlands-Missions (www.fpchighlands.org). A memorial service will be held at First Presbyterian Church of Highlands on Friday, December 3 at 2 pm.

Online condolences can be made at www.maconfuneralhome.com. Macon Funeral Home will be handling the arrangements.




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• LETTERS •

NC's disgraceful redistricting - 2021 Edition

Dear Editor,

North Carolina's General Assembly has a long and not so honorable history of creating legislative maps that have been consistently struck down by federal and NC courts. This year, maps for NC Congressional districts, State Senate districts and State Representative districts were drawn again as they are every 10 years due to US Census data, or when the courts order new maps. Indeed, NC has drawn more litigation over this issue than any other state over the past 10 years.

One would think that the Republican legislators who control the map making process would have been embarrassed by their past behavior and the millions of taxpayer dollars they have spent defending their work only to have the courts declare that their maps are illegal. One would think - if they didn't already know that the Republicans in the General Assembly are either very slow learners and/or they just don't care about fairness. Or as is said "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

After months of work and public hearings, the General Assembly passed maps for Congress, state Senate and state House. The maps passed along strictly party- lines - NOT ONE Republican voted AGAINST the maps and NOT ONE Democrat voted FOR the maps. And Governor Cooper cannot veto these maps because only NJ and NC do not allow the governor to veto redistricting maps. How convenient! As one of the commenters said during the recent redistricting hearing at Western Carolina University "Let's call this what it is. Political corruption, pure and simple." And that was BEFORE the maps were drawn.

North Carolina will be adding another congressperson due to our population growth over the past decade. Here in Western NC, we have been in Congressional District 11. In 2022 we will be in Congressional District 14 which will include Watauga County (Boone) and move three counties- McDowell, Rutherford and Polk- to Congressional District 13. President Biden carried Watauga County in 2020.

The only way to challenge these maps is through the courts. Already, the NAACP, Common Cause and several voters have filed suits, challenging the legality of these maps. And noted Democratic election attorney Marc Elias and former US Attorney General Eric Holder are filing suits. Elias won lawsuits challenging prior NC redistricting plans in both federal and local courts. Following the passing of the 2021 maps he said that "NC Republicans are persistent and shameless," and he intends to beat them again.

Why are these suits needed? NC is as close to being a 50/50 Democratic/Republican state as any state in the country. In the 2020 elections, Democratic congressional candidates received more than 50% of the votes while winning only three of 13 NC congressional seats. The maps which just passed don't even pretend to be fair, giving Republicans a 10-4 or an 11-3 advantage in the 2022 Congressional races. The maps for state Senate and state Represent-

• BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NEWS •

ABC Store disburses annual proceeds

On Nov. 15, Highlands ABC Store presented their disbursements to the Town of Highlands.

Present for disbursements were Kevin Vinson-General Manager; Leslie Cook-ABC Board Chairman, Rick Trevathan-Board Member; Dave O'Harra-Board Member; Steve Mehder-Board Member. Not present was Andy Chmar-Board Member Alister Brady accepted for the counseling & psychotherapy of Highlands Master Officer Kyle Kinsland accepted for the Highlands Police Dept. and Mayor Patrick Taylor accepted for Highlands Rec, Scholarship Fund.

The Highlands Recreation Dept. got \$21,040, \$19,211 went to Highlands Scholarship Fund. \$14,479 went to Highlands Police Dept. \$20,270 went to The Counseling & Psychotherapy of Highlands for alcohol education and rehabilitation.

Thanks to store staff members not pictured as well, Skip Keener, Lisa Talley, Erin Estes, Milton Stork, Connie Burlison.



Announcing annual 2021 Chamber of Commerce Awards

Duke Power Award: For Volunteer of the Year

This Volunteer of the Year Award that recognizes leadership and involvement in volunteerism and community service. This year's recipient is on the Board of the Counseling and Psychotherapy Center, volunteered in the Daily Mouse project, is a highly active member and volunteer in the Highlands Rotary, was key in the literacy councils move to its new home and currently serves as Chair of the Council. This year's volunteer of the year is Jane Jerry.

Robert B. Dupree Award: For Outstanding Community Service

Awarded annually since 1980 and presented to a person who has a distinguished record of outstanding community service and represents the true spirit of giving selflessly to others. This year's recipient works full time and makes time to serve as a Rotarian and president of that organization. She volunteers at local events like Highlands Food and Wine and Highlands Motoring Festival she is on the Board of the Historical Society, Performing Art Center, and Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. And has also been active in Highlands School supporting the PTO, athletic and classroom activities. This year's recipient is Sherry Holt!

Del Roberts Award: For Outstanding Business

This year's Del Roberts Award was created in 2005 to honor a business' unselfish contribution to Highlands. This year's business award goes to a local nonprofit that began in 2008 and is run entirely by volunteers. The organization donates its proceeds to other local nonprofits. This year \$81,000 went to three human needs charities. The 2021 business award goes to our local motoring enthusiast at Highlands Motoring Festival!



Pictured from left: Steve Mehder, Jane Jerry, Sherry Holt, Marc Chmar



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ALL ABOUT BOOKS

• INK PENN •

Nancy Mitford, anyone?

I'd heard of the Mitford sisters but didn't know much about them until I visited the Cotswolds several years ago. On a bicycle ride during that trip, we got an introduction to their story from our tour guide not only because their family home was in the Cotswolds village of Swinbrook, but also because we ate lunch that day at the Swan Inn, owned at the time by the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, the last surviving Mitford sister. That's why I adore the two books I describe here.

"The Bookseller's Secret" by Michelle Gable

If, as I do, you like books about books, this one's for you. The story shifts back and forth between WWII London and the modern-day, AND includes the real-life author Nancy Mitford – making it an unputdownable read for me.

Though I'd heard of the Mitford sisters, I'd never read any of Nancy Mitford's books. This story details her struggles to write another successful novel as she is supporting herself working at the Heywood Hill bookshop during the war.

Her wit is one of the main attractions of these chapters. That and glimpses of characters like author Evelyn Waugh. Remember "Brideshead Revisited?"

Like Mitford, the modern fictional author Katie Cabot is enduring a similar dry spell, three years

shelter.

REACH of Macon County provides services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking including male, female, and child victims.

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Kathy Manos Penn

after penning a best seller.

As her story unfolds, we see the parallels in their lives and struggles, but that's not the best part.

For me, the best part is the mystery about a possible missing Nancy Mitford manuscript – an autobiography.

Did she really write one? The mystery unfolds against the backdrop of Nancy's fascinating life during and after the war. Hence, my decision to pick up "Pursuit of Love" which is supposedly her fictional version of those years.

"The Pursuit of Love" by Nancy Mitford

Nancy Mitford really did work in a bookshop in London during WWII, and in 1945, she wrote "The Pursuit of Love."

The sisters in the book are based on Mitford and her sisters, though it is not a one-for-one match. The foreword in the edition I read was written by her sister

Jessica in 1982. All in all, it was a fascinating and often LOL read.

How much of the story, especially the details about the main character's French lover, are true to life? It is a fact that Nancy Mitford did have a long-time affair with Gaston Pawleski, an associate of Charles de Gaulle. Did she meet him in a French train station as depicted in this novel? Did he visit her in London during the war?

I could likely find the answers by spending a few hours on the internet, but I think I'll just remember the tales told in Nancy's book and the more recent "The Bookseller's Secret."

You know a novel has stood the test of time when it has been turned into an Amazon Prime series, and that's what has happened with "The Pursuit of Love."

For me, thoughts about both books continued to surface in my brain for several weeks. In my mind, that's the mark of a good story.

If you find these descriptions interesting, I recommend you start with Michelle Gable's fictionalized account.

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

...REACH continued from page 1

includes a 24-hour crisis and text line, safety planning, crisis counseling, court advocacy, medical accompaniment, emergency shelter, and educational services that support victims through the entire process of physical, mental, and emotional recovery.

All of REACH's services are free and confidential.

For more information about REACH go to www.reachof-maconcounty.org or call Assistant Director Jennifer Turner-Lynn at 369-5544 or on her cell at 318-7241

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Shop-with-a-Cop is subject at Rotary meeting



The very special guest speaker at the Rotary Club of Highlands recently was Macon County Sheriff Robert L. (Robbie) Holland. First sworn in in December of 2002, he has served five terms as sheriff. Twenty-six years ago, he and his wife Marcie started the Shop-with-a-Cop program which provides a Christmas experience to children who otherwise would have none. The program has grown every year and Rotary as well many others have been supporters of the program for many years. A big part of that program now is due to our own former Highlands Police Chief Bill Harrell and our current Police Chief Andrea Holland. While Sheriff Holland and Police Chief Holland are not related, they are certain on the same page with SWAC! For information on how to help, contact the Highlands Police Department at 828-526-9431.

Macon County Sheriff Robert L. Holland and Highlands Police Chief Andrea Holland

Look Your Best for the Holidays

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Bring the joy of the season with **one-of-a-kind, hand-crafted treasures** from The Shop and the Dave Drake Ceramic Studio Barn. Sales support regional artists and our creative community!

Gift wrapping available. Personal shopping by phone available for purchases over \$200.

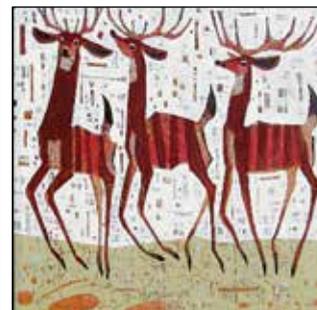


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Highlands, NC
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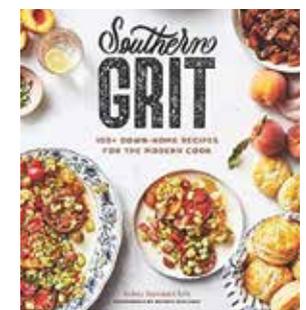


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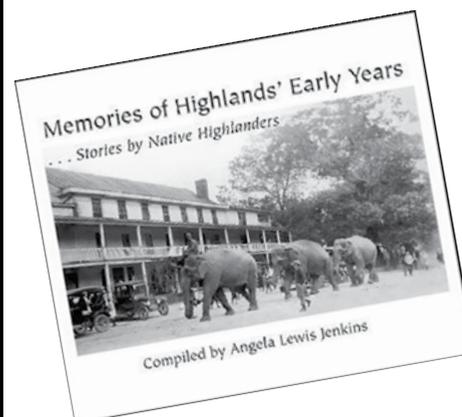
NOW OPEN with more than 50 local artists offering
hand-crafted items for sale where a percentage of
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is on



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On Dec. 4
after the
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Sherpa, Sherpa, Sherpa...Johnny Was Blankets, Hoodie and Robes have arrived.



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is coming
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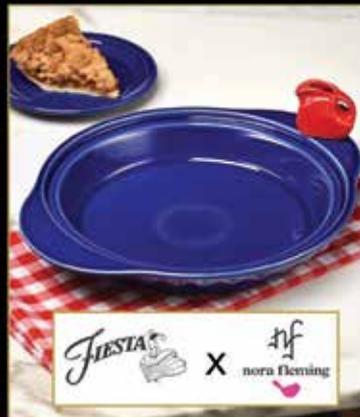
NATURAL SELECTION

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...RAPE continued from page 1

fied of allegations against Sanchez. The allegations claimed that one of the agencies' employees was alleged to be involved in an assault and it was being reported by a friend of the victim. Sheriff Holland contacted Captain Dani Burrows of the Criminal Investigations Unit and requested that she and one of her detectives from SVU immediately initiate an investigation into the allegations.

On Friday, November 19, Sheriff Holland met with MCSO Detention Officer Kevin Sanchez and following a brief

conversation, the Sheriff terminated the employee's employment immediately.

Sanchez was arrested by SBI Agent on warrants that had been obtained by MCSO detectives. Sheriff Holland made arrangements with another Sheriff to house Sanchez while Sanchez attempted to make bond in the amount of \$400,000.

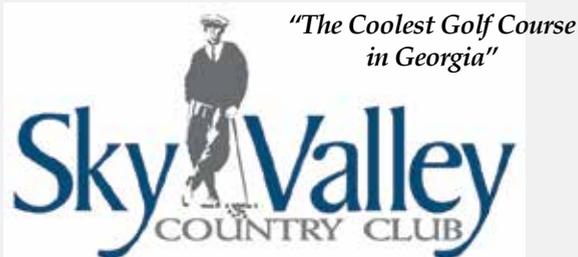
"While this was an employee of the Macon County Sheriff's Office in good standings at the time the alleged crime was committed, he was not on duty," said Sheriff Holland. "We recognize that we cannot

control what our employees do when they are not working but anytime an allegation is made against one of our employees, we take it seriously and will investigate any and all allegations. Wherever the facts lead us we will do the right thing in the end even if it means arresting one of our own."

Since the initial arrest of Sanchez, additional allegations have been made against him, although according to Sheriff Holland, no official complaints have been made to his agency at this point in time.

"Investigators are aware of comments being made on social media pertaining to this case but as of this moment we have not been contacted by any witnesses or any other potential victims as speculated on social media," said Sheriff Holland. "As with

any case we would encourage anyone with information to contact us and we would follow up with that information. Mr. Sanchez is now a former employee and unfortunately there are laws that prohibit me from sharing any information we might have related to any complaints about him while employed. However, in fairness to him and the staff at the MCSO as well as our citizens, I will say I have not had any complaints made against Mr. Sanchez that accuses him of any illegal behavior or it would have been addressed. I also am aware of the accusations being made on social media and again I would encourage those who have information of any kind to come forward and allow investigators to do their job."



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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

ICE RINK IS NOW OPEN

• Thursdays 1-8pm, Fridays and Saturdays 1-10pm and Sundays 1-5pm. For Thanksgiving week the ice rink will be open Wed, Nov. 24 from 1-8pm but closed Thurs., Nov. 25 in observance of Thanksgiving Day.

Rec Pool Schedule:

• Call ahead to make sure the pool is open for Public Swim due to staff shortages. 828-526-1595.

Mondays

• ESL classes are held at the Presbyterian Church in Highlands from 5:30-6:30pm. No registration required – just show up and participate. Questions? Visit www.maconncliteracy.org, call 828-526 – 0863 or email

info@maconncliteracy.org

Second Mondays

• The local chapter of PEO, an off-campus sorority founded in the 1800s that provides grants and loans to women who want to return to school or further their education and have a financial need, meets at 10 a.m. If interested, please call president Paula McDonald at 706-372-3004 for meeting places.

Mon.-Fri.

• Water Aerobics 18 years plus 10:15-11 a.m.

Mon., Tues., Thurs.

• The Food Pantry behind the Methodist Church on Spring Street is open from 10a

to 6p.

Mon. & Wed.

• Cardio Kickboxing with Crystal Corbin 5:30-6:30 p.m. A full body workout that engages every muscle in the body.

Mon. & Thurs.

• Drive-thru flu clinics at the Public Health Center at 1830 Lakeside Dr. in Franklin from 1-4 p.m. \$36 for the regular dose and the \$73 for the high dose (recommended for those 65+). Insurances will be filed; please bring your insurance card with you. Questions? Call 828.349.2081.

Mon., Wed., Thurs.

• Indoor and outdoor Pickle Ball 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

Mon., Wed., Fri.

• Heart Healthy Exercise Class 8:30am-9:30 a.m. \$25 a month. The class is led by Cathy Hodgson. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

• Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9 a.m.

• Highlands/Cashiers Alcoholics Anonymous "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. recovery program. Open meetings are held in Highlands at the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471

Main St., on Mon. at 5:30 p.m. and on Wed. & Fri. at noon. And held six times a week in Cashiers at Church of the Good Shepherd, Rte 107. For exact meeting times visit our website www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of A.A. call (828) 349-4357.

Tues. & Thurs.

• New Zumba class from 4:30-5:15p.
• Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at 5:30pm. A combination class with many different type of exercise.

Tuesdays

• Strength Training 8:15-9:15. Aim for strong, lean muscles using light weights, body weight, and high repetition to shape and tone.

2nd Tues. thru December

• Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health, held the second Tuesday of each month through December. Reservations are required and masks will be required. Register online at vayahealth.com/calendar (click on the desired class to register) or call the library at 828-526-3031.

First Wednesdays

• Highlands-Cashiers Hospital is featuring Walk-in Wednesdays Hiring Event.

• See **EVENTS** page 17

Highlands Playhouse "Holiday" show is Dec. 9-19

For the first time in their 83-year history, the "theatre company in residents" at Highlands Playhouse will produce their very first Holiday show.

"This winter's holiday offering is just a taste of what's to come as our organization grows over the next year"

says Scott Daniel, executive artistic director at the Playhouse. "It was important to me that we create an entertaining escape for our audiences, and an event that is as accessible as possible, while also setting a tradition of an annual Holiday show for our incredible Highlands community."

With this debut offering, the Playhouse also introduced a new price structure for its holiday show with ticket prices for adults at only \$25 in advance or \$35 when purchased day of the performance, and only \$10 for children (under 18 years of age).

Daniel will be working directly with the surrounding schools and outreach programs to ensure that any local student has access to this family friendly holiday production.

"I discovered my love my love for the arts at a very young age, and I want the Playhouse organization to be a place where we foster future arts lovers and advocates," he said.

Highlands Playhouse has partnered



with America's "Best Cabaret Act" (Creative Loafing), The Scott & Patti Show, to bring the plateau audience an over-the-top Holiday extravaganza, perfect for the whole family (especially your weird uncle)!

Based on characters created by

Matthew McGee and Scott Daniel, The Scott & Patti Show has been a popular fixture, and multi-award-winning act, in the cabaret scene across the country for nearly a decade.

Join the mother and son duo as they celebrate the season through songs, dances, side splitting comedy and a bevy of special guests; including Emanuel Carrero, audiences may remember Emanuel from the Fall smash hit Music in Motion; the national touring low brass musician Kyle R. Fulcher, and a collection of familiar (and maybe not so familiar) holiday characters.

Remember Andy Williams and his annual Christmas Special? Well, Scott and Patti guarantee to bring back a nostalgic Yule of yesteryear that is warmer than your Aunt Fanny's fluffy poinsettia sweater with The Scott & Patti Holiday Spectacular, Dec.9 – 19.

Visit www.highlandsplayhouse.org for details and tickets.

Live from the MET Eurydice at PAC Sat.



The Highlands Performing Arts will present live via satellite the MET Opera's premier production of Matthew Aucoin's Eurydice on Saturday, December 4 at 12:55pm. The ancient Greek myth of Orpheus, who attempts to harness the power of music to rescue his beloved Eurydice from the underworld, has inspired composers since opera's earliest days. Rising American composer Matthew Aucoin now carries that tradition into the 21st century with a captivating new take on the story. With a libretto by MacArthur "Genius Grant" recipient Sarah Ruhl, adapted from her acclaimed 2003 play, the opera reimagines the familiar tale from Eurydice's point of view. Met Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin takes the podium, leading Aucoin's evocative music and an immersive new staging by Mary Zimmerman. Soprano Erin Morley sings the title role, opposite baritone Joshua Hopkins as Orpheus and countertenor Jakub Józef Orliński as his otherworldly alter ego. There will be a pre-opera discussion beginning at 12:30 pm. Tickets available online: www.HighlandsPerformingArts.com Highlands Performing Arts Center, 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands

Annual Town Lighting was Sat. Nov. 26



Photos by Jim and Kim Lewicki

...EVENTS continued from page 15

Interviewing for RNs, CNAs, Allied Health Professionals and Support Services Professionals. 1-3:30 p.m. 190 Hospital Drive, front entrance. On the spot offers. Sign-on bonuses offered for select positions. Bring updated resume. Casual wear.

Thursdays

- Kickboxing 8:15-9:15 a.m. An exhilarating and fun mix of martial arts for a calorie-burning workout.

- Free Covid vaccination clinics – 9 a.m. to 5p.m. at the Rec Park. (Closed for a half-hour lunch break) Closed on Thanksgiving Day. Location subject to change, please check <https://myspot.nc.gov/> for the latest location information. Walk-ins are accepted, however we encourage residents to pre-register and schedule an appointment at <https://myoptumserve.com/covid19>, or by calling (877) 505-6723 if you do not have internet.

- AL-ANON Meetings. The AL-ANON Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength, and hope to solve their common problems. An In-Person meeting is held each Thurs., noon at the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., Highlands. An AL-ANON Zoom Meeting is held each Saturday @ 10:15am ID:889-3772-

7928 Password: EasyDoesit or to speak with a member call 828-342-6866.

Thru Dec. 24

- Santa in the Park

Sat., Dec. 4

- Olde Mountain Christmas Parade. 10:30a-noon on Main Street.

- At PAC, the MET Opera's premier production of Matthew Aucoin's Eurydice on at 12:55pm. Pre-opera discussion at 12:30 p.m. Tickets available online: www.HighlandsPerformingArts.com,

- Kick off your holidays by making decorations from natural materials! Drop by the Highlands Nature Center from 1 to 4 p.m. to create seashell Santas, pine cone ornaments, and more. All are welcome to participate in this free event. It will be held rain or shine at the Highlands Nature Center, 930 Horse Cove Road. Masks are required inside. The Nature Center is a part of the Highlands Biological Station, a multi-campus center of Western Carolina University. For more information, please call (828) 526-2623.

- At The Toy Store on Main Street, Angie Jenkins will be signing her latest book, "Memories of Highlands Early Years - Stories by native Highlanders," from 2-4 p.m.

Tues. Dec. 7

- Happy Healthy Blue Ridge Family Hol-

iday from 4-6 pm at the Jane Woodruff Clinic, Suite 204. The celebration is family-friendly for children of all ages as well as adults, and will include refreshments, games, prizes and holiday decorations.

Dec. 9 - 19

- Holiday Spectacular at the Highlands

Playhouse. Ticket prices for adults are \$25 in advance or \$35 when purchased day of the performance, and \$10 for children (under 18 years of age). The Playhouse will be working with area schools and outreach programs to ensure any local student can come to this family friendly event.







Eurydice
by Matthew Aucoin

Saturday, December 4, 2021
12:55pm
Pre-Opera Discussion 12:30pm
RT: 3:03

Highlands Performing Arts Center 507 Chestnut Street
Tickets available online: www.HighlandsPerformingArts.com

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



From left: Thomas Craig, Jim Chance, U.S. Forest Service Recreation Program Manager Viviana Ruiz, Rotary President Tom Graham.

Jim Chance recently spoke to the Rotary Club of Highlands and described his idea of creating a multi-day "through hike" from Clayton to Cashiers. The inspiration for this idea came from a 100-mile trek Jim and his son took through parts of Switzerland and France, on a trail connecting 11 small villages. An avid hiker, Chance was intrigued by the opportunities for economic development posed by a several-day hiking trail. Currently there are many individual "day hikes" in Clayton, Highlands and Cashiers but they don't connect. Creating a through-hike of over 40 miles would require approximately five new miles of trail, 1.7 miles of sidewalk in Highlands and two or three huts or B&B's. Chance described the challenges associated with linking the three towns on one hike – cash, commitment, political will and visionary leadership foremost among the requirements for seeing the project to completion.

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Shop the corner of Fourth and Main Streets in Highlands for unique, inspiring gifts from Acorns and the Old Edwards Spa Boutique.



Purchase gift cards on property or online at OldEdwardsInn.com.

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

Ostrichian Advent?



Pastor Jim Murphy
Christ Anglican Church
Cashiers

The Christian-church season of Advent began on Sunday 30 November. It is a four-week long period wherein Christians and the world are reminded of our Lord's first Advent (his coming at the Nativity) and encouraged to honestly ponder that event in terms of its impact upon our lives and world.

During this same season, the Church and all of humanity are also bidden to consider Jesus' promise to return for his second Advent. The Lord of Creation will come back to take up the task of judgement. This mantle of responsibility was given unto the Son by the Father. As distasteful as the prospect of judgement may be for any of us human criminals, the Redeemer must divide the Wheat from the chaff, the Lambs from the goats, those who love him from those who reject him.

The guarantee of Jesus' return is a sweet savor for all who have accepted him on faith. The promise of a banquet with God Almighty as honored guests, coupled with everlasting peace is glorious to think about. Our life in eternity is assured.

The only guarantee for those who refuse to acknowledge Jesus' lordship, who "cast My [the Lord's] words behind you [them]," according to Psalm 50:16-23, is eternal torment. Those who forget [ignore] God will be torn to pieces, so says the Father through the Psalmist. Ouch! May it not be so, oh, but it must.

These are the people who behave like the venerable ostrich. In the face of danger, an ostrich, a bird of considerable land-speed, size and power, will most often avert their eyes from danger, sticking their heads in the sand. Seeing is believing for them. If they cannot see danger, it must not be there. Many children mistakenly believe like an ostrich in the face of danger and close their eyes.

But so do the vast majority of adults who are aware of Jesus' first Advent and have been told about his second. These who "cast My words behind, ...and forget God," open themselves to being "torn to pieces."

God who is perfectly love is also unfaithfully just. He will not force or cajole anyone into accepting him as Lord and Savior. Receiving him is a personal, pro-life decision that can only be made by each individual. He who's first Advent has taken place, offers each of us a free-choice to either rejoice at his second Advent or faint "from fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world." (Luke 21:26) Which do you prefer?

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

BLUE VALLEY 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. Aryn Williams-Reubel, Pastor 828-743-5298

Sundays: School at 9:30 Worship 10:30

Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

CHAPEL OF THE SKY

Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999

Sundays: 10 a.m.: Worship

Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

828-743-1701 • 464 Hwy 64E, Cashiers, NC 28717

www.christanglicancashiers.com

Sun. - 9:30am Worship (no music); 10:30am Sunday

School; 10:30am Worship Service.

Mon. Night Bible Study & Dinner, 6pm, call for details.

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS

Pastor Brent Metcalf • 743-5470

Sun. 10:45am, S.S 9:30am. Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.

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

Sun.: 9:30am - Adult Sunday School; Worship Service 10:45am;

10:45am Children's Program, Youth-12:15 - 2:30pm Tues:

Women's Bible Study 10am-noon

Thurs: Men's Bible Study 7:30-8:30 a.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY

706.746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447

Pastor Steve Kerhoulas

Worship: Sun. 10:30 a.m. Holy Communion 2nd. Sunday

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

Rev. W. Bentley Manning, Rector • 526-8152

5th and Main streets • www.incarnationwnc.org

Sunday Services in the Chapel:

Rite I, 8a; with choir; 9:30a; with choir, 11a.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS

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

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors

828-526-3175 • fpchighlands.org

Sun.: Adult Ed.: 10 a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.

Tues: Men's Group 10 a.m. Wed: Bell Choir 4 p.m., Choir: 6p

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)

Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS

Non-Denominational-Contemporary Worship

242 Hwy 107N, 1/4 miles from Crossroads in Cashiers

www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814

Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm; Dinner - Wed. 6pm

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Hwy 107N. • Glenville, NC • 743-2729 • Nathan Johnson

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

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

Wed. Bible Study: 6 p.m.; Sundays: Worship: 11

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road

The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.

Sunday Evening Worship 5PM 1st and 2nd Sundays

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas, Pastor 526-3376

In-Person and live-streamed Worship Services

909 Bluegrass and 10:50 Traditional

www.highlandsmethodist.org

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

Rev. Angie Ballard • 2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741

Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.

We wear masks and social distance.

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

8 miles south of Highlands on N.C. 28 S in Satolah

Pastor Zane Talley

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11, Choir: 6 p.m.

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

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

Franklin • 828-634-1312

Services 2x/month May-Sept.; 1x/month Cct. -April

mountainsynagoguewnc.com.

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church

Sun: 10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church,

4224 Big Ridge Road (4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone - 526-2418

Mass: Wed. noon (Latin), Thurs. noon, Fri. 9a; Sat. 4p; Sun.,

11a

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby

Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11 a.m. & 7

Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

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Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

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Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer

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

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

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Mass: Tues. noon (Latin), Thurs. 9a.; Fri., noon; Sat. 5:30p; Sun.

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Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

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Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

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

Nov. 22

• At 8:05 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on US 64 west at N. 3rd Street.

• At 11:47 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on Poplar Street.

Nov. 23

• A little past midnight, Robert Clayton Rogers II, 42, of Highlands, was arrested for DUI when pulled over for speeding on NC 106. He was issued a \$500 unsecured bond. His court date is Dec. 10.

Nov. 27

• A little past midnight, officers received a call for service regarding a domestic disturbance at a residence on Paul Walden Road.

• At 1:27 a.m., Charles Davis Simpson II, 40, of Nashville, TN, was arrested for DUI when he was pulled over for failing to stay in the lane, on US 64 west. He was issued a \$500 unsecured bond. His trial date is Jan. 5, 2021.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Nov. 23.

Nov. 23

• At 11:09 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Rocky Ridge Road.

• At 4:08 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to Highlands-Cashiers Hospital.

• At 4:50 p.m., the dept. the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Big Bear Pen Road.

...LETTER continued from page 8

tative are just as skewed, giving Republicans a likely veto proof majority in the General Assembly again following the 2022 election. And the new maps clearly make our Black, Latino and Native American representatives underdogs for reelection. How convenient!

Many election experts have weighed in on our new maps. The Princeton Gerrymandering Project evaluates election maps across the country and has given the NC General Assembly an "F" for their maps. They simulated a million possible maps for NC and only the outliers showed anything close to the maps which we ended up with. Our General Assembly really had to work hard to come up with maps as unfair as these.

So, where do we go from here? Well, it's up to the courts. At least two possibilities:

• We will have to run the 2022 elections with these new maps because there is not enough time to redraw them before the end of the candidate filing period of (December 6-17) and our March 8 primary

Nov. 24

• A little past midnight, the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Center Dr.

• At 9:47 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

Nov. 25

• At 3:42 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Flat Mountain Road.

Nov. 26

• At 4:41 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Shelby Court.

• At 3:01 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 west.

Nov. 27

• At 2:19 p.m., the dept. was fist-responders to a residence on N. 5th Street.

• At 3:10 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Ravenel Ridge Road.

Nov. 28

• At 10:28 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on NC 106,

• At 11:42 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a brush fire on Skylake Drive.

Nov. 29

• At 9:11 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Church Street.

• At 11:33 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a residence on Zermatt Circle.

Nov. 30

• At 1:17 a.m., the dept. was called to investigate the source of smoke at a residence on Cherokee Drive.

• At 3:24 a.m., the dept. responded to a deck fire at a residence on Highlands View Road.

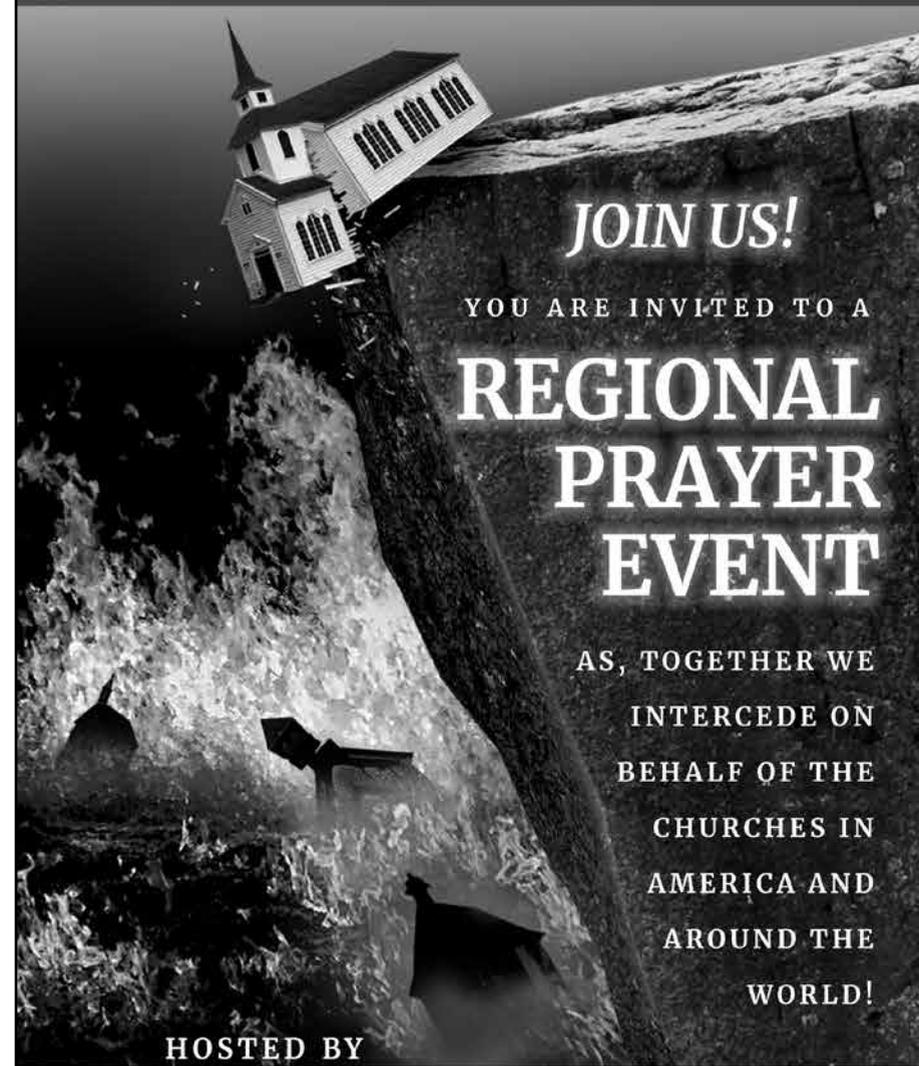
election. If new maps are mandated by the courts, those maps will be drawn after the 2022 election.

• The court(s) will order NC to move the candidate filing period and the March primary to allow time for new maps to be drawn. The NC primary elections have often been in May, so that is a possible solution. But this would have to happen very fast.

It's hard to believe that this is where we have landed. This type of thing is going on in many states controlled by both Democrats and Republicans. It is a major reason that we can't have competitive elections and look what we end up with. With all the talk about secure elections, this is the situation which should be getting the most attention. When we allow partisan hacks to make all the rules, this is what we get. Is it any wonder why so many people have lost interest in politics and why our political bodies have such low approval ratings? Our democracy is at stake if we don't get this fixed soon.

Gary St. Arnould
Franklin

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2 Peter 2:1 reminds us that "false prophets" and "destructive heresies" would arise in their day and so they have also in our own. Come join a growing, interdenominational group of Christians in the WNC mountains and beyond, assembling and agreeing together in prayer! Only the the Lord can save our nation and our churches. The time to intercede is now. Let's join together in humility to pray for real revival in our churches!

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HIGHLANDER MOUNTAIN HOUSE hiring a LEAD BARTENDER. Looking for a bartender who is passionate about hospitality and all things beverage. Someone who loves to take ownership of their role, has a strong work ethic and wants to grow with a company that is doing great things in Highlands. Competitive pay, flexible schedule and great environment. Applicants please email trg@highlandermountainhouse.com (st. 10/14)

THE HIGHLANDS RECREATION DEPARTMENT is looking for an Ice Skating Rink Attendant and life guards. The Ice Skating Rink Attendant is responsible for opening and closing the ice rink and providing good customer service. Life Guard training will be provided for anyone 15 or older. Flexible hours available, may include after school and weekends. Application packets will be available at the Highlands Rec Center, the Highlands Pool

or online at <http://highlandscnc.org>. The Town of Highlands is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Retirees welcomed! (9/16-10/7)

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LIBERTY LOVING EMPLOYEES WANTED! If you love freedom, customer service, having fun and are a positive, happy individual, we want to interview you! Looking for 1 - 2 retail customer service team members in Highlands. Positions include traditional retail duties and being awesome with the public - young to old.

Also looking for one full-time bartender in Highlands, so experience is preferred. Willing to train the right person to be the personality of the establishment. Characters welcome, charisma required, boring is unacceptable. All positions require honesty, dependability and a service oriented personality. Must be presentable and drug-free, with a clean criminal record. Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference. ~ Winston Churchill. Email us at libertynlibations@gmail.com.

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• See CLASSIFIEDS page 22

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each person. Go to www.highlandscountryclub.com, select the Career tab at the top of the tool bar to fill out an application. Or, call 828-787-2782 and leave a message for Greg. See the Club's reviews on Indeed. (st. 6/24)

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THE SUMMER HOUSE BY REEVES FURNITURE STORE IN HIGHLANDS is looking for full and part time positions in sales and warehouse & delivery personnel. Must be professional appearing, friendly, self-motivated, and enthusiastic. Previous sales and/or customer service experience preferred. Competitive starting pay. Generous benefits for full-time positions. Apply in person at The Summer House, 2089 Dillard Road in Highlands. (st. 5/20)

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...BONUSES from page 1

employees. The bonus will be paid out in the December payroll.

“I think it is wonderful that Macon County Schools employees' hard work during this pandemic is being recognized by the Board of Education,” said Highlands School Principal Brian Jetter.

Congress set aside approximately \$13.2 billion of the \$30.75 billion allotted to the Education Stabilization Fund through the Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund). Signed into law on March 27, 2020, the Department awarded these grants to State educational agencies (SEAs) for the purpose of providing local educational agencies (LEAs), including charter schools that are LEAs, with emergency relief funds to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the Nation.

After working with a community collaborative, Assistant Superintendent Josh Lynch presented a proposal to members of the Macon County BOE regarding use of the district's ESSER funding.

The board also voted to move forward with an expansion project at East Franklin Elementary School that will result in six additional classrooms and establish a preschool at the facility for the first time. The project is estimated to cost around \$3.7 million.

In addition to using the ESSER funding to add six classrooms at East Franklin Elementary School, portions of the almost \$15 million will be used to implement project-based learning across the district and address learning loss associated with the COVID19 pandemic, as well as addressing mental health concerns within the school system.

The funding also provides the district with the monies necessary to hire 19 additional staff members including additional teacher assistance, music and art teachers as well as three new school nurses.

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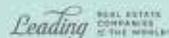


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