

Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

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Teachers rally for the arts in schools

By Brittney Lofthouse

The Macon County Board of Commissioners had to move their monthly meeting to a larger space earlier this month when dozens of parents and educators showed

up to support the Arts. As Macon County Commissioners prepare their annual budget, supporters of ARTS for MCS (Macon County Schools) spoke during public comment

period of the commissioners urging them to approve a nearly \$2 million budget increase request to fund a myriad of new positions with the school system.

• See ARTS page 12

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National Nurses Week COVID-19 exemplified 'nursing' as a calling

By Brittney Lofthouse

National Nurses week May 6-12 may be over but nurses need to be celebrated every week.

The week set aside to acknowledge nurses ended on May 12, which is Florence Nightingale's birthday, but the permanent dates position National Nurses Week as an established recognition event.

The way most Americans view healthcare drastically changed in 2020 as COVID19 changed lives forever. This past year underlines the importance of nurses and why they should be acclaimed during National Nurses Week.

While others stayed home to stay safe, nurses layered on PPE [personal protective equipment]

•See NURSING page 11

Highlands School Class of 2021



This year's 29 graduates are: Isabella Blanco, Jordan Carrier, Garrison Chalker, William Chastain, William Creswell, Alyson Dayton, Ellen Diehl, Madelyn Drummonds, Elliott Gordon, Stevi Graham, Brooklynn Houston, Joana Jimenez Reyes, Elijah Kennedy, Jamie King, Olivia Lewis, Jonathan Montalvo Espinoza, Anne Marie Moore, Abigail Nichols, Logan Petrone, Kadence Ramey, Megan Rehmeier, Savannah Shaheen, Collin Stoltzfus, James Tate, Hadley Templeton, Lane Tingen, Marley Ubertino, Rebekah Wiggins, and Tessa Wisniewski. This year's mascots are Jase Raby and Valerie Olvera Lopez.

Expanding Medicaid could save NC counties millions

By Brittney Lofthouse

Closing the health insurance coverage gap – particularly for inmates – could save Macon County millions over the next two years

On average, counties in Western North Carolina spend just under a half a million dollars every year to provide medical care for inmates housed in county jails.

North Carolina general statute mandates individual counties responsible for providing healthcare to inmates and if that inmate doesn't have health insurance, that medical bill gets sent to the county. In the end, county taxpayers foot the bill for inmate healthcare, a moving target for county budgets.

•See MEDICAID page 6



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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

No more masks required indoors or out & outdoor and indoor capacity limits lifted

Covid policies can change fast. Two weeks ago, in accordance with Governor Cooper's new executive emergency order, the town changed the signs downtown to read, "Masks are suggested in crowded areas." On Thursday of last week, I tuned into the CDC press conference where the Director Walensky and Dr. Fauci stated that there was no need for vaccinated people to continue wearing masks both outdoors and indoors. That announcement was a sudden change but welcomed news for the fully vaccinated population. The reports on the efficacy of the three vaccines in use have been so strong that the experts decided this major shift in policy was warranted.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

concerning wearing masks and social distancing.

The governor made a sweeping decision that there would be no more outdoor or indoor masks requirements, except for a few exceptions. Like the CDC recommendations, the state still has masks requirements for medical facilities, schools and public transportation. The governor also lifted indoor and outdoor capacity requirements.

Events were moving so fast that I initially thought the governor had meant people who were fully vaccinated didn't have to wear masks. My initial impression turned out not to be the case, unvaccinated people also do not have to wear masks. The governor did encourage unvaccinated people to continue wearing masks, and everyone to wear masks in very crowded situations. Our signs downtown pretty much capture that recommendation concerning crowded areas.

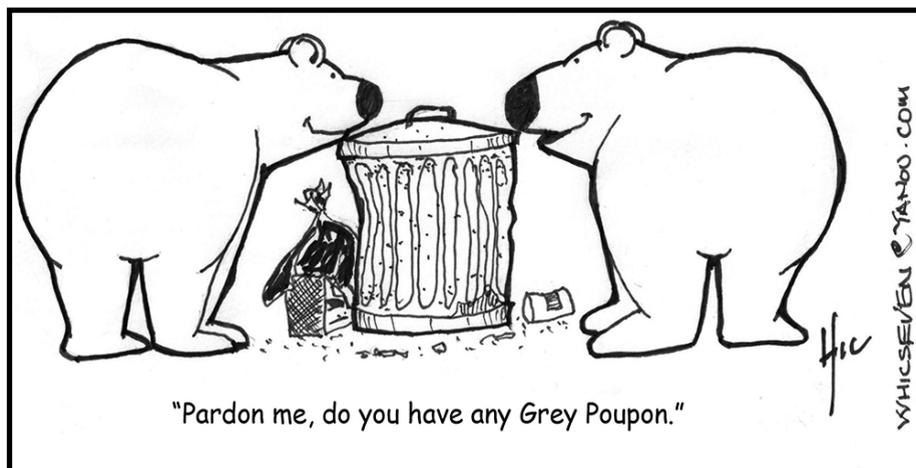
Upon further reflection, I understand why the governor vacated the mask requirement for everyone. An effort to ascertain who is vaccinated and those who are not would have been problematic to say the least. The governor and his staff are hoping that those not vaccinated will continue to wear masks and socially distance.

Barring some unforeseen situation, the town will continue to follow the governor's policies in addressing COVID. He did state at his press conference that towns and counties could impose stricter protocols in critical situations. I do not see that as the case here in Highlands. Business also have the option of requiring masks in their establishments.

After all is said and done, I stand with the governor in urging everyone to get vaccinated. If a person has concerns, they should talk with their physician. The Highlands and Cashiers communities had a wonderful volunteer effort in operating the vaccination clinics. Now we have pharmacies and public health sites willing and more than able to administer vaccinations. Those willing to take the vaccine are really

• See MAYOR page 22

• HIC'S VIEW •



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-eight (38) deaths related to COVID-19.

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 – 4pm Monday through Friday, until further notice.

• WEATHER •

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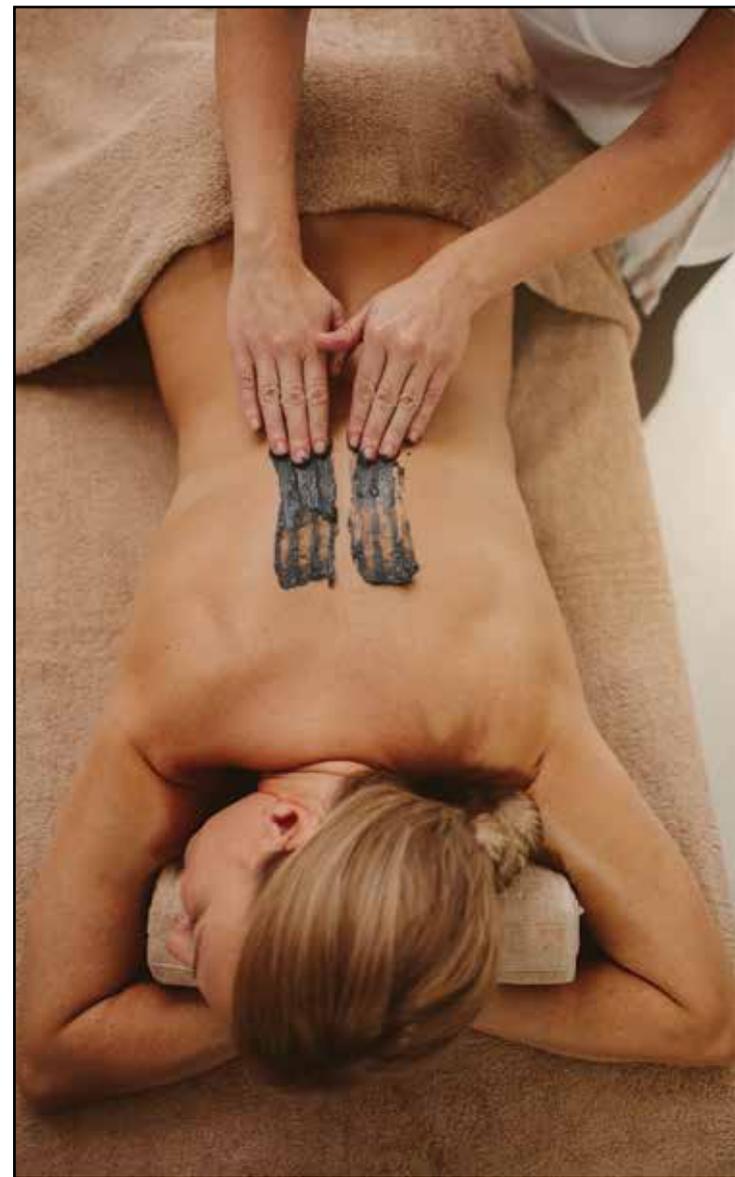
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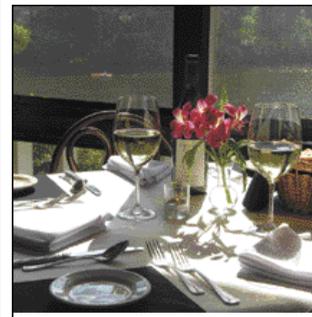
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Last Saturday's belated 2020 5K Run raises \$15,000 for Highlands School

By Brian O'Shea

The Rotary Club of Highlands 5-10k Race was held Saturday at Kelsey Hutchinson Founders Park, with over 237 racers signed up, over \$15,000 was raised, with total proceeds going to the Advanced Highlands Education Committee (AHEC) to support the design and implementation for a new media center at Highlands School.

Race Organizer and Rotarian Derek Taylor said the race's mission has always been to help the youth of Highlands.

"AHEC has shown its ability to have insight into the school's current needs," said Taylor.

He added that the turnout was great, considering COVID postponements and a gas shortage. Of the 237 signups, 149 people ran.

Finishing First in the 5k was James Moore, a 14-year-old cross country runner from Highlands School; the 10k winner was Will Mathiodis, athletic trainer from Highlands School; overall female winner in the 5k race was Blakely Moore, and in the 10k race, overall female winner was Tracy Dockery.

This is the first year Mathiodis competed in the 10k.



The 10k winner was Will Mathiodis.

"I've run the 5k 3 times and decided to bump up to the 10k this year," he said. "I was lucky enough to get the win in the 10k."

Mathiodis added that there's a reason he keeps coming back each year.

"The Highlands Twilight 5-10k is a great community event that raises money for organizations in Highlands," he



Running for a cause, participants of all ages took off from K-H Founders Park on Pine Street.

– Photos by Brian O'Shea

said. "I want to give a shout out to Derek Taylor for organizing this event every year and giving back to the Highlands community."

5k overall female winner Blakely Moore is Highlands School Cross Country and Track Coach and had some fierce competition from some of her team.

"Leading up to this race, my athletes and I were very competitive with one another," said Blakely. "We all talked trash

leading up to the race about who would win. I was able to beat a few but unfortunately not all of them. So great job to James [Moore] and Timmy [McDowell] for kicking so hard at the end and maintaining their lead. And to the rest of the cross country and track team for pushing themselves and doing as well as they did."

Blakely added that she used to run the Twilight 5k in high school and was excited to be able to compete in it again after

finishing her college running career.

"It's such a fun event, with the music and party afterwards," she said. "I love catching up with other runners here in Highlands and this year, watching my cross country and track team compete."

Rotary Club of Highlands' next race is scheduled at 6 p.m. on Aug. 14 and will have live music and free beer at the finish line.

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...MEDICAID continued from page 1

Since 2017, Macon County taxpayers have spent more than \$1,140,000 – about \$300k a year — for inmate healthcare expenses. After being responsible for an inmate’s medical expenses that exceeded \$50,000 a month for a portion of this year, Macon County is now bracing to spend close to \$600,000 this year.

During a recent town hall event covering the economic impact of closing the healthcare coverage gap held at Southwestern Community College, Macon County Commissioner Ronnie Beale addressed the impact the uninsured have had on county taxpayers as it relates to paying for the healthcare costs for inmates — many of whom would be better served in mental health or substance abuse treatment facilities.

“From 2017 through 2020 we spent about \$1.2 million on medical [care] for our inmates,” Beale said. “Prisons have become

our treatment centers for mental health.”

In addition, pregnant inmates require treatment before, during, and after delivery. And people on dialysis represent another big cost driver.

“It is not uncommon for us to get inmates with prior medical issues but once they are in our custody, they become our responsibility,” said Macon County Sheriff Robert Holland. “It is also not uncommon for pregnant women who are “wanted” to try and turn themselves into custody just prior to giving birth in an attempt to keep from having medical expenses.”

Leaders in North Carolina are looking at options to close the health insurance coverage gap through Medicaid Expansion, which stands to save county governments a substantial amount on the cost of healthcare for inmates.

In North Carolina and nationally, county jail inmates tend to be older and

sicker than the general population. Inmates who meet certain conditions such as a disability, pregnancy, or being older than 65 would qualify for state or federal Medicaid assistance when not in jail. But if they are held for more than a few days, their Medicaid coverage is terminated.

Federal and state inmates who have been convicted of crimes are eligible for Medicaid, but those awaiting trial some for as long as three years, lose their eligibility.

If North Carolina were to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, many more inmates could qualify under a plan developed by the N.C. Association of County Commissioners and the state Division of Medical Assistance.

The State of North Carolina operates 57 prisons and provides medical, mental health, dental, and pharmacy services to inmates at a cost of \$322 million annually, an \$89 million increase from 10 years ago. The State spent \$6,923 per inmate on healthcare in Fiscal Year 2014–‘15, which was more than 31 other states and 21% more than the national median of \$5,720

Currently, state officials say less than 5 percent of North Carolina’s state prisoners qualify for Medicaid based on the state’s restrictions on age, income, disability status and family status.

By expanding the types of people who can qualify for Medicaid, expansion

in NC would extend Medicaid access to 80 percent to 90 percent of state prisoners if it passes, according to the North Carolina Department of Public Safety — which would save the state an estimated \$10 million a year.

North Carolina is one of only seven U.S. states that kicks people off Medicaid when they go to prison or jail. The one exception is when an inmate is hospitalized for more than 24 hours. The DOC or county jails can apply for Medicaid funding to cover part of the cost if the inmate is eligible for the government health care plan.

By expanding Medicaid, states may be able to harness significant resources to address persistent criminal justice issues, including the opiate epidemic and the incarceration of people with severe mental illness who could more effectively be served in the community.

Medicaid expansion would also require the Department of Corrections to help counties get jail inmates back on Medicaid after their release — which could substantially reduce the cost associated with repeat offenders.

Once an inmate is no longer incarcerated and enrolled in Medicaid, the inmate would have access to substance abuse treatment and mental health services

•See MEDICAID page 10



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Where do we go from here? Realtors everywhere are lamenting over lack of inventory while ready, willing and able buyers are standing in line, but this column is about another kind of line, the unemployment line -- but wait, there seems to be NO unemployment line. The latter part of that sentence seems rather euphoric, but employers are not dancing in the street, and do you know why? Because they are busy trying to find workers.

It's not unusual for places like Highlands and other towns, that have become seasonal resort towns, to heavily advertise for help a month or so before the season starts. It has become evident over the last few years, and especially in 2020, the season has become year-round, with the possible exception of Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

In the year of our Lord Covid, 2020, a year of such nescience, a year of too many rules, but one where rules seemed needed, where our government needed to take care of their own, but one where the henhouse was left unattended.

With the intent (or at least the guise) to help Americans during the shutdown, things were put into place that seemed like a dream-come-true. One was the no eviction rule, which allowed tenants to stay in their homes without paying rent with no fear of being evicted. After all, how could tenants be expected to pay rent when they couldn't work due to the shutdown? Another was the unemployment extension allowing the unemployed to continue to receive benefits after the normal time limit. Again, how could Americans search and apply for work during a shutdown?

Even though the Pandemic (or at least, much of the fear of the Pandemic) is all but over, and the country is opening with roughly 35% of the country fully

vaccinated, the masks mandates are relaxing a bit with some Americans choosing to wear a mask for a long time to come, but the Pandemic aftermath is still lingering.

The transition from freedom to lockdown happened fast, within two months, but the transition from lockdown-to-freedom is taking much longer. As recent as the Southeast's gas shortage in May of 2021, we all know how the news media spins stories and drives people to act out of fear, causing actions like hoarding toilet paper, sanitizer, and now gas. Some people have said there is no "back to normal," and we will have to get used to the "new normal."

What is not normal, is having available jobs all over the country, but not enough people willing to fill the positions. Too bad the government can't make rulings on a case-by-case basis, but there probably aren't enough government employees to handle the load anyway. What we keep hearing is "Why would someone go to work when they can get paid to stay at home?" and "Why would someone pay rent if they know they won't be evicted?" I wish I had the answers, but I'm afraid those answers are way above my pay grade. Maybe a

paid politician will come up with an incentive plan to get people back to work. One incentive that comes to mind is "There is no more free money. You must return to work if physically able and you must pay your rent." How's that? I bet plenty of people would love to work if they are physically able and have the money to pay for childcare and other living expenses while they work. It's the American way.

Where do we go from here? Our town is opening for a new season, ready for the droves of visitors who want to get away and discover the area. Every year, sometime around the end of August, you can see the "end-of-season" stresses on the faces of some, and until the unemployed want to work, that look will be seen long before August.

Some problems cannot be solved so simply, but what we can do is treat others with kindness until there is some sort of solution. In our town, there will be job openings throughout the season. Be kind and thoughtful if you have to wait longer for any service, or if you go to a business and they are temporarily closed.

What does this have to do with real estate? Plenty. Will people continue to come here and buy property if the businesses aren't open due to lack of employees? Of course, the answer is yes; they will still come, and we will try to be ready for them.

I recently learned there are municipalities willing to pay people to move to their town. I looked it up, and there are at least eight with a minimum of four in Kansas. I guess Dorothy was right when she said, "Toto, I've a feeling we aren't in Kansas anymore." (Sarcastic sidenote: I'm just wondering if we could send a list of names to these places. Reckon they would pay a finder's fee for some of our choice residents?)

• BIZ/ORG. NEWS •

HCHF and Dogwood Health Trust partner to support Blue Ridge Health

Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation (HCHF) and Dogwood Health Trust (Dogwood) have joined forces in support of expanding primary care services on the plateau through the establishment of Blue Ridge Health – Highlands Cashiers, a new health center which will open in late June.

HCHF has made great strides toward its mission to improve the health and well-being of Highlands, Cashiers and surrounding communities. Since February 2019, the Foundation has awarded over \$3 million in grants to 75 organizations and has also led extensive efforts to decrease the spread of COVID-19 across the plateau through school screenings, community testing, and COVID-19 vaccination clinics.

The Foundation is now turning its attention to resolving a problem that has long plagued the plateau: insufficient access to primary healthcare services.

Like many rural areas across the

country, in recent years the plateau has experienced significant difficulty recruiting and retaining primary care practitioners. In the past decade, eight of 10 local physicians have stopped practicing on the plateau. A shortage of physicians can have dire consequences for the communities affected – a reality that was underscored during local listening sessions conducted by the Foundation. Without exception, every participating organization cited limited access to affordable healthcare as being among the top three contributors to systemic community problems.

Given its reach and capacity, the Foundation was uniquely equipped to respond when called upon to help resolve this escalating problem.

Following a thorough needs assessment and extensive research over the course of two years, a collaborative solution was conceived. Plans are now well

• See HCHF page 16

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ALL ABOUT BOOKS

• INK PENN •

Books, books, and more books

This week's selection covers lots of territory. One thriller is set in London; another in Florida, and another moves from Denver to Baltimore to Charleston. Isn't traveling in books a treat?

"A Deadly Deal"

by Simon Fairfax

Fairfax has written a twister set in the world of commercial real estate in England in the 80s. The period is brought to life with references to the music and fashion of the day. Think Sade and Everything but the Girl for your listening pleasure. As a former banker, I had an idea that wheeling and dealing in the world of high stakes real estate could be cutthroat, but not quite like this. Knowing that the real estate bust is right around the corner only heightens the tension. The derring-do includes just the right amounts of brains, brawn, and romance to keep the reader entertained. Learn a bit about how a deal is put together while you sort the good guys from



Kathy Manos Penn

the bad. I'm looking forward to the next book in the series.

"Camino Winds"

by John Grisham

Grisham's Camino Island was highly entertaining, and this second in the series is good, just not AS good. I preferred the world of rare books captured in book one. This one instead dwells on tell all books--interesting, just as not as much so. It brings back familiar characters and has the requisite doses of danger and machismo to keep the reader intrigued. The fact that I see it as set in a fictional version of Amelia Island, a place I visit often, is a plus for me. And, let's face it, for a book lover, what's better than a book whose main character owns a bookstore?

"The Bookman's Promise" by

John Dunning

John Dunning does it again! This is book three in the Bookman series, about a used bookshop owner or bookman--someone who knows books, who can identify rare and valuable books that collectors will want. He's recently purchased at auction a "signed first edition by the legendary nineteenth-century explorer Richard Francis Burton." I was quite intrigued to find this historical character DID exist, and the story Dunning weaves around the book, its provenance, and a possible connection to the Civil War is fascinating. I love it when I learn something from the mysteries I read, and learning about the world of rare and collectible books is always a delight. I look forward to reading book 4 in this series.

Which book do you find intriguing? Will reading your next book take you to a new place?

• 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/KathyManosPenn.Author/.



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...MEDICAID continued from page 6

outside of jail. Medicaid would be available to cover the cost of those programs and an individual continuing treatment upon release.

Of the approximately 750,000 people released from prisons in the U.S. annually, 40 percent of the men and 60 percent of the women released have mental health, substance abuse or physical health problem, according to 2012 report from the National Governors Association that studied the potential impact of Medicaid expansion.

In 2017, Montana Department of Corrections reported that Medicaid expansion saves DOC money simply because

more inmates' hospitalizations are paid for by the Medicaid program.

In 2017, Medicaid expansion had paid over 171 hospitalization claims, with billed charges of over 8 million dollars, which would have previously been the responsibility of DOC.

Further studies have shown that providing former prisoners with immediate access to healthcare upon release has a direct impact on reducing recidivism. A 2007, study, for example, of two counties in Washington and Florida linked ex-prisoners' access to Medicaid with 16 percent drop in recidivism.

...NURSING continued from page 1

and cared for hundreds of thousands of people impacted by the Coronavirus all while balancing their regular duties.

While many say that the past year changed their approach to their career, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital CEO Tom Neal said it only strengthened the services and work he has dedicated his career to.

"I would like to say my responsibilities didn't change with the pandemic as our priority has always been to assure the safety of our patients

and employees, and we have managed through community spread infectious diseases before," said Neal. "However, I don't think any leader in healthcare in the US can say they have managed through anything similar to Covid-19. The intensity of maintaining a safe environment has been a 10 on a 1 to 10 scale. We were constantly implementing new protocols as we learned more about the virus and we were ultra-vigilant in monitoring our preparedness levels. Activities around PPE supplies, employee monitoring, and patient treatment all required extreme focus."

Administrative Manager of Clinical Operations for Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Hollis Whitehead, BSN, RN, NE-BC, said that the last year has been hard on both her and her coworkers.

"Since the pandemic began, I have watched all the nurses on our campus, which includes ELC, show up with love and dedication to their profession," said Whitehead. "They set a standard of service excellence and in the face of adversity have continued to show grace while being resilient. Their professionalism and commitment have gladdened the hearts of the sick they encounter each day."

Despite the fear and uncertainty, she noted that the nurses at HCH never wavered in their dedication to the community.

"The team of professionals that HCH has assembled is one that is hard to rival even in the best of academic centers. The feeling of family is felt between each other and is relayed to patients," said Whitehead. "They not only aide in helping to heal the



Liz Green, RN, ELC

body but they can help heal the soul. I have seen them volunteer at vaccine clinics because they want to promote health and wellness yet show up the next day ready to treat those already sick. It takes an enormous heart to be a nurse and this pandemic has helped highlight what these professionals do every day. I am proud to serve alongside each and every nurse here at HCH as we look to the future and health promotion of our community."

Neal noted that like Whitehead, watching the nurses across the world

preservere through a global pandemic has shown the profession in a new light, and reminded him why he pursued a career in healthcare to begin with.

"I would say that most people respect nursing in a way they didn't before the pandemic," said Neal. "For me, I can best summarize by saying that my respect for nursing has grown. Across our country, nurses have stood up in ways that is admired by all and in some ways unappreciated. Inside the four walls of Highlands-Cashiers Hospital and Eckerd Living Center, I have personally witnessed their sacrifices and I can only say I couldn't be more proud of our nurses."

Working at the Eckerd Living Center was especially difficult for nurses this past year.

"I started working night shift as a Lead Nurse. At that point it was "all hands on deck" and everyone pitched in, no matter what their usual role was. I've also helped facilitate window and Facetime visits," said Liz Green, RN at the Eckerd Living Center. "It's almost like we've become our own self-sufficient community where everyone drops their 'usual jobs' and jump in wherever they're needed."

Despite the challenges, the last year has reminded her why she chose to become a nurse.

"I was drawn to being a nurse because I have passion for geriatrics and taking care of people in general," said Green. "It has shown me and everyone else just how important nurses and all healthcare professionals are. We have always felt that what we do is important, and now the world's eyes have been opened to our value."



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UNC Chapel Hill



Madelyn Drummonds
Salutatorian
UNC Chapel Hill



Abigail Nichols
UNC Charlotte



Alyson Dayton
Western Carolina
University



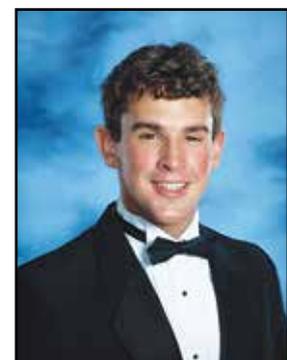
Anne Marie Moore
UNC Chapel Hill



Isabella Blanco
Hillsborough CC



Brooklynn Houston
UNC Charlotte



Collin Stoltzfus
Full time employment



Elijah Kennedy
Southwestern CC



Ellen Diehl
Gap Year



Elliott Gordon
UNC Charlotte



James Tate
High Point University



Garrison Chalker
Western Carolina
University



Hadley Templeton
UNC Charlotte

...ARTS continued from page 1

Leading the charge was Jackson County resident and local art teacher Maggie Jennings who has children in school in Macon County. Jennings, along with Macon County Schools educator Sarah O'Neil launched ARTS for MCS prior to the pandemic in order to spur community support as well as petition the school board and county commissioners to restore funding and positions for art and

music programs that have whittled away over the last decade. After the Macon County Board of Education added the \$2 million increase to their budget ask to the county, Jennings and O'Neil along with more than a dozen other supporters encouraged commissioners to provide the funding.

According to Jennings and O'Neil, Macon Middle

School hasn't had an art teacher for 11 years and hasn't had a chorus teacher for the last five. Union Academy has no music or art teachers and elementary school students receive 30 minutes of music and art weekly throughout the school year on a rotating basis.

Members of the Arts for MCS have requested for

• See ARTS page 13

Highlands School graduating Class of 2021



Jamie King
Western Carolina
University



Joana Jimenez Reyes
UNC Charlotte



Jonathan Montalvo
Espinoza
Military



Kadence Ramey
Southwestern CC



Lane Tingen
Western Carolina
University



Logan Petrone
Gap Year



Marley Ubertino
Southwestern CC



Megan Rehmeier
UNC Charlotte



Olivia Lewis
UNC Charlotte



Rebekah Wiggins
Undecided



Savannah Shaheen
Southwestern CC



Stevi Graham
Southwestern CC



Tessa Wisniewski
Carolina Central CC



William Chastain
N. Georgia Technical
College



William Creswell
Southwestern CC



Valerie Olvera Lopez



Jase Raby

...ARTS continued from page 12

additional positions within the school system to provide students with a consistency in options from elementary schools throughout high school. After elementary school, students have art at Mountain View Intermediate, but then not for two years until they reach high school. For music, after elementary school, students have middle school band, but not choir until high school.

“We believe that Macon County can be top of

the line on many respects, but not without the creativity, resourcefulness, confidence, the peace and the joy, these programs provide our children,” said Jennings. “We believe they are essential to Macon County being top of the line.”

Commissioner Ronnie Beale noted that with the state budget being responsible for funding positions across the state — with the county’s responsibility falling in providing the buildings — Arts for MCS should also considering lobbying Senator Kevin Corbin and Representative Karl

Gillespie to restore funding to the positions and programs that have been lost through attrition over the last decade.

“The state took this out of the budget many years ago, and I would definitely suggest speaking to our state representatives about restoring that funding,” said Beale. “Funding for the Arts is in the Governor’s budget. Talk to Senator Corbin and ask him to honor that and to provide the funding for the arts.”

• 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.

• 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. In person meetings have resumed and are held at 12 Noon Wednesday And Friday at 1st Presbyterian Church Library, 471 Main St., Highlands. On line meeting information can be found @ www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of A.A. call (828) 349-4357.

Every Saturday

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

Thurs., May 20

• Highlands Biological Foundation Virtual Lecture Series: Climate Conversation at 6 p.m. "On the edge of a shifting

range: Climate change and birds of the southern Appalachian Mountains" with Dr. Richard Chandler, Associate Professor, University of Georgia. For more information on our Climate Conversations lecture series or to register for one of the webinars, please visit our website at www.highlandsbiological.org or call us at (828)526-2623.

Fri. & Sat., May 21-Oct.

31

• Outdoor music 6 to 8:30 p.m. in Town Square and K-H Founders Park.

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.

• Meander in May. 11a to 4p. Meander our vibrant downtown where refined taste is packaged in a small-town atmosphere. Enjoy live performances, artisans, and craftsmen, courtesy of Visit Highlands, NC and Highlands

Chamber of Commerce while restaurants and shops keep you fueled for exploration. This free, self-guided event on Saturday, May ends with a concert from 6pm to 8:30pm with The Caribbean Cowboys (Beach & Oldies music) in Kelsey Hutchinson Park. For a map of event locations visit www.visithighlandscn.com.

• The Highlands Performing Arts Center will present an encore performance of the MET's 2013 production of Rigoletto on Saturday at 1pm. Tickets are available online: www.HighlandsPerformingArts.com – click on PAC.

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

• At Shakespeare & Company in Village Square next to Pine Street Park, a reading and booksigning of "The Butterfly Bruises" with author Palmer Smith from 5 p.m. RSVP: ssmith6gm.slc.edu. 25 person limit. Masks encouraged. Refreshments included.

Tues., May 25

• At 5 PM the Hemlock Restoration Initiative (HRI) will present virtually via Zoom "Hope for Hemlocks" as part of the 2021 Village Nature Series program. The presentation will include information about what everyday folks can do to get involved in hemlock conservation. The Village Nature Series is co-hosted by Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and The Village Green and is free to attend, everyone is welcome! To receive your Zoom link for this event, please email director@cashiersgreen.com. To learn about the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and their mission to save valuable natural resources for all generations visit www.hicashlt.org and to learn about The Village Green and their 13.2 acre sanctuary in the heart of Cashiers. www.villagegreencashiersnc.com.

Thurs. May 27

• Highlands Biological Foundation Virtual Lecture Series: Climate Conversation at 6 p.m. "Salamanders of the Future: How climate change

Author Diane McPhail booksigning of The 'Abolitionist's Daughter' at HMH



Highlander Mountain House will be hosting acclaimed artist and author of The Abolitionist's Daughter, Diane McPhail, on May 26th for their Salon Series. This series is designed to illuminate the unique surroundings of Appalachia and the creative work that it inspires. For this event, there will be an intimate q&a with Diane and a book signing at the Ruffed Grouse Tavern (cheese and wine will be served) on May 26th from 4pm to 6pm. Tickets are \$50 per person.

Meander in May

	Location	Time
Musicians		
Curtis Blackwell	Town Square	11a - 1:30p
Doug Ramsay (solo)	The Park on Main, Dog Park (3rd and Spring)	11a - 1:30p
Frank & Allie	Hudson Library	11a - 1:30p
Southern Highlands	Highlands Visitor Center	11a - 2p
We Three Sing	Kelsey Hutchinson Founders Park	11a - 2p
Charles Wood	The Ugly Dog Pub	11a - 2:30p
Paul Jones	Highlands Wine Shoppe	11a - 4p
Mountain Dulcimers (6 people)	The Bascom	noon - 3p
Zorki	The High Dive	noon - 3p
Z Alexander	Bridge at Mill Creek	noon - 4p
Scott Low	Brooking Anglers	1:30 - 4p
Byrds & Crows	Hudson Library	2 - 4p
Chris Kohne	Town Square	2 - 4p
Lisa Rankin (solo - keyboard)	The Park on Main, Dog Park (3rd and Spring)	2 - 4p
Carribean Cowboys	Kelsey Hutchinson Founders Park	6- 8:30p

Artists

Allaben Fine Art	Select Bank	11a - 4p
Leslie Jeffery	Wolfgang's	11a - 4p
Nature's Art by Margie	Select Bank	11a - 4p
Pauline Marr	Jeanie Edwards Fine Art	11a - 4p
Western NC Woodturners	The Bascom	11a - 4p
Barbara Desmond	Highlands Visitor Center	2 - 4 p
Jeannie Edwards	Jeannie Edwards Fine Art	TBA

2021 Plant Sale is on!



JB at the Old Jail on Maple Street wants everyone to come to the Mountain Garden Club's 2021 Plant Sale, Saturday, May 29 at the ball-field.

– Photo by Kim Lewicki

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

will impact salamanders of the southern Appalachians" with Dr. Meaghan Gade, The Ohio State University. For more information on our Climate Conversations lecture series. To register go to www.highlandsbiological.org or call us at (828)526-2623.

• Laura Walsh: Orchard Sessions at The Farm 6-9p.m. Get ready for more enchanting evenings at The Farm this season with the return of our live concert series, Orchard Sessions. Settle into comfortable seating and relax into a summer evening under the heirloom apple trees. A stellar lineup of our favorite musicians will fill the magical mountain air in the stunning surroundings of the orchard, while you enjoy light bites and a cash bar. On May 27, the sessions kick off with Arizona native turned Nashville recording artist, Laura Walsh. Laura has an upbeat pop and country style that is sure to please. Old Edwards Hotel Guests & Members \$15. General Admission \$25 (bookable two weeks prior to the event). Cash Bar & Complimentary Light Bites will be served. \$15 - \$25. Tickets: <https://www.simplenetix.com/laura-walsh-orchard-sessions-at-the-farm-tickets-68518>

Fri., May 28

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

Sat. May 29

• Highlands Mountain Garden Club plant sale 9a to noon at the ballfield on the Cashiers Road.

• At Hudson Library, award-winning, New York Times best-selling author Mary Alice Monroe will appear at Hudson Library on Saturday May 29 to talk about her new novel *The Summer of Lost and Found*. Books will be available for purchase and signing at this free event. Books & Bites programs are sponsored by the Hudson Library Board of Trustees. Masks must be worn at all times while in the library, and social distancing must be maintained. Because of COVID restrictions, attendance at this event is limited and reservations are required. To

make a reservation, please call Hudson Library at 828-526-3031.

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

Tues., June 1

• At CLE, Border Security: Issues, Strategies and Possible Solutions. Time: 2-4 Cost: \$25/\$35 Presenter: Gil Kerlikowske Former Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Register at www.clehighlands.com or call 526-8811.

Wed., June 2

• At CLE, Drug Enforcement in the U.S.: Problems and Solutions. Time: 10-12 Cost: \$25/\$35 Presenter: Gil Kerlikowske Former Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Register at www.clehighlands.com or call 526-8811.

Thurs., June 3

• At CLE, Gardening for Beauty and Nature: Ecological Landscape Design and the New American Garden (FULL) Time: 10-12 Cost \$35/\$45 Presenters:

Booksigning at Hudson Library Sat. May 29

Award-winning, New York Times best-selling author Mary Alice Monroe will appear at Hudson Library on Saturday, May 29 to talk about her new novel "The Summer of Lost and Found." Books will be available for purchase and signing at this free event. Books & Bites programs are sponsored by the Hudson Library Board of Trustees.



Author Mary Alice Monroe

The *Summer of Lost and Found* is a sensitive story that restores the human spirit. After living on the West Coast through a difficult period and breakup with John Peterson, a man she dearly loved and perhaps still does, Linnea Rutledge has come back to Isle of Palms, SC. Life is good until COVID-19 hits home, and Linnea is furloughed from her dream job at the South Carolina Aquarium. She fears she will be unable to continue to afford to live at the Rutledge family's idyllic beach cottage which she rents from her aunt Cara. Tensions mount when Cara's husband comes home from Europe with the virus, and their child, Hope, must live for a time with Linnea.

Complicating the challenges presented by the virus is John's return to Isle of Palms. On a visit to see his mother—Linnea's neighbor—John learns a colleague has tested positive for the virus,

so he must stay put in his old loft apartment next door to Linnea. As she lets John slip back into her life, Linnea is faced with a seemingly impossible decision when her boyfriend Gordon comes in from England. As the weeks turn into months, life in the time

of coronavirus is difficult for the Rutledge family and their friends, but it is also affirming as they reconnect with the rhythms of nature in the sky and sea around them.

Mary Alice Monroe found her calling in environmental fiction when she moved to coastal South Carolina many years ago. With book sales in the millions, the author has achieved many lists, including the New York Times, USA Today, and starred reviews, as well as numerous awards.

For more information or to request an accommodation, please call the library at 828-526-3031. Hudson Library, 554 Main Street in Highlands, is open 10 am-5:30 pm Tuesday through Friday and 10 am-4 pm on Saturday.

Masks must be worn at all times while in the library, and social distancing must be maintained. Because of COVID restrictions, attendance at this event is limited and reservations are required. To make a reservation, please call Hudson Library at 828-526-3031.

Florence Holmes and Cauty Worley. Register at www.clehighlands.com or call 526-8811.

• Highlands Biological Foundation Virtual Lecture Series: Climate Conversation at 6 p.m.

"Climate change and the future forests of Great Smoky Mountain National Park" with Dr. Jason Fridley, Professor. To register, go to www.highlandsbiological.org or call us at (828)526-2623.

Music in the Park kicks off Saturday, May 22



After a year of no music in the park, it's back on starting Saturday, May 22 with Caribbean Cowboys from 6-8:30 p. Bring a picnic and chairs and prepare for a good time.

Laura Walsh in concert at OEI's The Farm



Laura Walsh: Orchard Sessions at The Farm 6-9p.m. Get ready for more enchanting evenings at The Farm this season with the return of our live concert series, Orchard Sessions. Settle into comfortable seating and relax into a summer evening under the heirloom apple trees. A stellar lineup of our favorite musicians will fill the magical mountain air in the stunning surroundings of the orchard, while you enjoy light bites and a cash bar. On May 27, the sessions kick off with Arizona native turned Nashville recording artist, Laura Walsh. Laura has an upbeat pop and country style that is sure to please. Old Edwards Hotel Guests & Members \$15. General Admission \$25 (bookable two weeks prior to the event). Cash Bar & Complimentary Light Bites will be served. \$15 - \$25. Tickets: <https://www.simplenetix.com/e/laura-walsh-orchard-sessions-at-the-farm-tickets-68518>

...HCHF continued from page 9

underway for the opening of Blue Ridge Health – Highlands Cashiers, a comprehensive family medicine center operated by Blue Ridge Health. This is in collaboration with Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) where, as a Rural Teaching Practice, UNC School of Medicine students, and MAHEC Family Practice Residents while providing quality primary care during their rural rotations.

At a time when fewer than three percent of North Carolina's medical school graduates choose

to practice in rural areas, the plateau has benefitted immeasurably from the steadfast care provided by Dr. Patti Wheeler and Dr. Scott Baker who have delivered dedicated care for many years through their respective family medicine practices in Highlands.

The plateau area's rural location and demographic makeup factor into its designation by the Health Resources and Services Administration (an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) as both a Healthcare Provider Shortage Area (HSPA) and a Medically Underserved Area

(MUA). These designations are indicators that at current levels, the number of physicians does not meet the plateau's population health needs.

"HCHF has put together an innovative solution to increase access to healthcare in its surrounding rural communities. With Dogwood's health and wellness strategic priority in mind, we are pleased to partner in this collaborative initiative by partially funding the first-year start-up costs to grow the number of providers serving the rural Highlands Cashiers Plateau area, and to expand access to the broad range of services offered by Blue

Ridge Health," said Dr. Susan Mims, Interim CEO of Dogwood Heath Trust.

The health center, on the hospital campus in the Jane Woodruff Clinic, will serve patients with two physicians whose combined experience and skill sets make them a synergistic pair and a perfect addition to the mountain's medical community. Ann Davis, MD has been a family medicine doctor for 10 years, with five years of experience as a teacher for medical residents. Kristy Fincher, DO will treat all patients from infants to seniors. Dr. Fincher has extensive experience in sports medicine and a true love of treating the whole family.

"Dogwood's grant of \$300,000 is especially appreciated as it lays a solid foundation for the additional

financial support that will be needed to get the health center up and running," said Tindall.

HCHF will seek donations from the community to fulfill its "Leap of Faith" five-year commitment to financially support the health center. Dr. Walter Clark, Board Chair of HCHF said, "We invite everyone on the plateau to join us in supporting the establishment of a lasting solution to ensure high quality, sustainable primary care on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau for generations to come." Visit our website at www.hchealthfnd.org to join us in Lifting Health and Well-Being, Together.

About Blue Ridge Health
Blue Ridge Health (BRH) is a nonprofit

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

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• HIGHLANDS SCHOOL SPORTS •

Highlands Middle School track team wraps up shortened season

By Brian O'Shea
Plateau Daily News

The pandemic may have caused an abbreviated track season this year, but that didn't sway Highlands middle-schoolers from joining up and giving it their all.

"I was really impressed with the effort the athletes put in this year," said Highlands Coach Blakely Moore. "They were constantly asking me to stay late so that they could practice more. One day, when I was out sick, the athletes went to the track on their own and practiced without any prompting. I hope they maintain this enthusiasm and passion for the sport going forward. It will take them so far!"

Last year's track season was cancelled because of COVID-19, and this year schools were allowed an abbreviated season. Moore said the lack of experience from last year's cancelled season was a factor, but the athletes stepped up and did their best.

"Everything was new for everyone," said Moore. "Thankfully, all the athletes were open to trying new running and field events. As a result, we were able to compete in almost all the categories. I really admire the athletes who jumped into events like hurdles, throws, long jump, and high jump. Our athletes have more experience in running events because of the cross-country season in the fall, but they have put a lot of effort into their skills for field events."

Highlands began the season on April 20 at Rabun Gap and Moore said for the first meet, the athletes did a great job.

"Shoutout to Courtney Logan for winning the 400m, Jim de la Cruz for winning the 200m and 400m, Claire Worely for winning the 800m and 300m hurdles, and Timmy McDowell for winning the 800m and the 1600m," said Moore. "And to the whole team for being willing to compete in so many events to make up for our small size, which really hurts us in overall points."

Moore added that in track, unlike cross country, the highest score wins. The top placers in each event score and earn points for the overall-team score. Therefore, the quality and quantity of athletes are both important. She said given the size of Highlands School, she and Coach Derek Taylor felt the athletes performed admirably.

"Derek and I were proud of

the athletes," said Moore. "They ran well and placed high in their events. Several of them had PRs (personal records) as well. But as usual, Highlands couldn't compete when it came to team scores. We just don't have the depth on our team."

Moore added that next year's team is looking strong.



Giving it his all during the Hammer Throw.

Photos by
Brian O'Shea



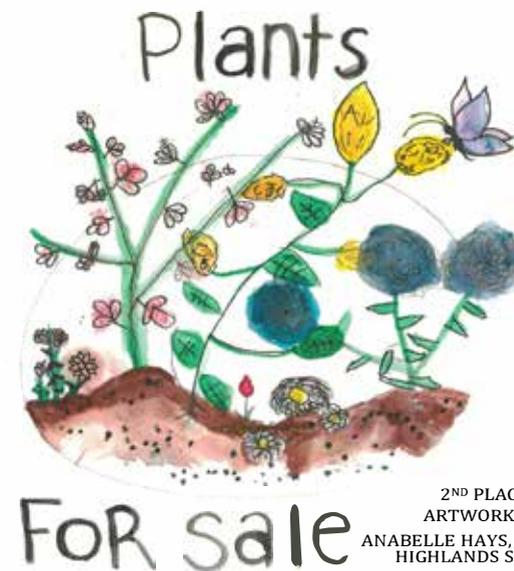
Highlands Charlotte Westendorf checks out her landing during the long jump.



From left are Highlands Margaret Cole and Alejandra Valerio competing in hurdles.

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

Walking a tightrope: Tolerance without compromise

Archbishop
John S. Erbelding

Someone coined a phrase that has much meaning, more today than ever before: "Tolerance without compromise." To be tolerant of others, it is not necessary to accept their beliefs or to live like they live. In fact one may be tolerant of another person and still vigorously oppose everything pertaining to him -- and yet grant him his right to be what he is.

Tolerance does not mean that we must think or act with the majority, or that we must compromise our own convictions. Tolerance may simply mean that we are aware that no two people think or believe exactly alike, and that all of us have a right to think and believe and live as we choose, if we can do so without interfering with these same rights where others are concerned. Not easy. Even when a person opposes prevailing opinion, tolerance would respect his right to do so, so long as he is respectful and doesn't wrongly interfere with others' freedom. This is as prevalent in world affairs as it is in religious beliefs and prejudice.

In a wonderful book written by Barbara Brown Taylor, "Holy Envy, Finding God in the Faith of Others," she, during her twenty years teaching Religion 101 at Piedmont College and her previous position as an Episcopal priest in Clarkesville, Georgia, relates that her own faith was deepened as a Christian by studying and meeting with leaders of other major faiths to learn their vision of God from their faith perspective and viewing this without the prejudice of "my faith is the only faith" which many in all faiths find hard to do, if not impossible.

More than 20 centuries ago Jesus suggested one way to tolerance without compromise when he thanked his Father in heaven for his followers who were in the world but were not of the world.

Sometimes people make the mistake of supposing that tolerance means that we must do the things that others do, that we must live the way that others live -- but in supposing this, have failed to learn one of the greatest lessons of life: that a man may be tolerant without compromising himself or his background or beliefs or his convictions or his habits -- the tightrope.

Tolerance without compromising principles is not only possible, but it is one of the absolute essentials for the peaceful living of life.

Daniel Patrick Moynahan, a four term United States Senator and ambassador, said it best and should be remembered: "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts." Oh, how hard to live this.

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

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

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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.

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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 (Lunch

provided)

Tues: Women's Bible Study 10am-noon

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

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Pastor Steve Kerhoulas

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

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Morning Prayer Weekdays on Facebook live at 8:30 a.m.

Holy Eucharist at noon in the garden on Mon and Wed

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

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Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors

526-31 • 75 • fpchighlands.org

Sun.: Worship 8:30a Adult Ed.: 9:30a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.

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

Wed: Choir: 6p

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

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

Sundays: Worship: 11

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 Morning 9AM

Wednesday Evening 6:30 PM

Sunday Evening Worship 5PM 1st and 2nd Sundays

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Pastor Randy Lucas 526-3376

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Pastor Zane Talley

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

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

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Rev. Marty Kilby

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

Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212

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

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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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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

• HIGHLANDS SCHOOL SPORTS •



Right:

Highlands Isaiah Vilardo rips a shot on Murphy's goal

Far right:

Highlands Aislynn Luck kicks a lobbed pass to keep the ball moving.

– Photos by Brian O'Shea

Highlands MS soccer team finishes season with win against Murphy

By Brian O'Shea
Plateau Daily News

Highlands Middle School soccer team hosted Murphy on April 28 and finished the season strong winning 8-0. Highlands Coach Keith McKim said he

thinks they played their best game all year against Murphy.

Highlands Aniah Mckim scored 2, Brian Jarquin scored 2, Kevin Torres scored 1, Timmy McDowell scored 1, Courtney Logan scored 1, and Olivia Corbin scored

the last point.

Highlands only lost twice all year, both times against undefeated Summit and McKim said he's happy with the team's performance.

"I'm proud of all of our players," said McKim. "I think everyone improved in individual soccer skills, character, and understanding strategy. I'm looking

forward to next year!"

Highlands loses 8th-graders Finneus Garner, Aislynn Luck, and Andrew Reyes who move on to high school, but McKim said they will still be coming back strong next year.

"Most of our players return, so I'm excited about being able to pick up where we left off," he said.

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from May 9. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

May 9

• At 10 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on Big Bear Pen Road.

May 12

• At 10 a.m., officers received a report of a simple assault at the Emergency Council on Poplar Street.

• At 11:34 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on NC 28 south at Cherokee Drive.

May 14

• At 11:14 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on 4th and Laurel streets.

May 15

• At 3 p.m., officers received a report of larceny to plants, and damage to real property at a residence on Memorial Park Drive.

• At noon, officers received a call for service at a residence on Naiad Terrace where someone was attempting to remove a dock and a canoe from the property.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from May 11.

May 11

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

May 12

• At 12:50 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Retreat Lane.

May 14

• At 9:01 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Satulah Road.

• At 5:59 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Clear Creek Road.

May 15

• At 1:07 a.m., the dept. was first responders to a residence on Falls Court.

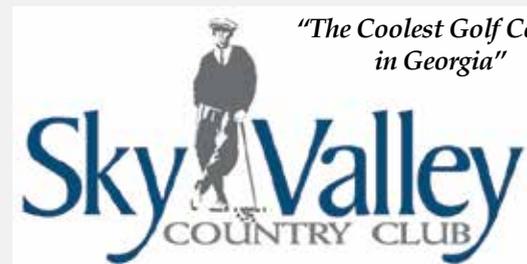
• At 6:55 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Blue Valley Road.

May 17

• A little past midnight, the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Pine Circle.

• At 10 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east.

• At 12:30 p.m., the dept. responded to a CO2 alarm at a residence on W. Black Rock Circle.



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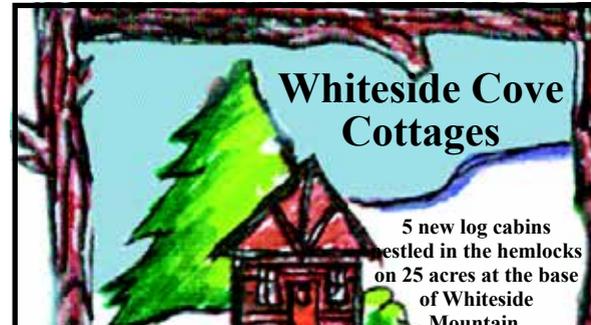
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...ARTS continued from page 13

Diana Brailsford, who works at Highlands School, spoke to commissioners about the importance of art and music and the need for additional positions as Highlands School does not currently have a music teacher.

"We are really, really doing an injustice to our children" Brailsford said.

The \$2 million budget increase would to include funding for the following school system staff:

- STEM Teacher, EC TA (2-positions)/IVE
- PE, STEM & one extra month for clerical/SM
- 2 extra months custodians/MVI
- Guidance Counselor, Art Teacher, Music Teacher
- English Teacher/FHS
- Art/Music/CTE Teacher, Day Treatment Assistant/UA
- \$50,000 Maintenance Contract for MCS
- 10 additional mental health professionals to cover K-12
- 5 additional full time school nurses to cover K-12
- 4 full-time art positions to cover K-12
- 4 full-time music positions to cover K-12

During a survey to students and parents in Macon County – Macon County Schools learned that a majority of those who participated wanted to see federal COVID19 relief funding spent to increase art and music opportunities within Macon County Schools.

Macon County Schools will likely see an additional \$1.5 million from the ESSER II Fund. Macon County Schools Program Coordinator Jennifer Love informed members of the board of education that both students and parents, as well as community leaders, have been involved in sharing their views on how the second round of ESSER funds should be spent in Macon County and with overwhelming support, students wanted to see funding allowed to address the loss of curriculum surrounding the Arts such as music and art education.

By law, 20 percent of the funding Macon County receives will have to be spent to address learning loss due to COVID19, however how the funding is spent under those guidelines is left up to the discretion of the local board.

While Macon County anticipates receiving an additional \$1.5 million, the school district has already received \$1.3 million that was utilized during the 2020-'21 school year. Because the COVID19 funding is not recurring, using it to fund positions would not be financially responsible as the position likely wouldn't be sustained otherwise.

The Macon County Board of Commissioners will be meeting on May 25 for their first look at County Manager Derek Roland's 2021-'22 budget proposal.



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...MAYOR from page 2

protecting themselves, their families and their fellow citizens. Taking the vaccine is also a way of honoring and affirming our many friends and neighbors who devoted countless hours in operating the vaccination clinics. These wonderful volunteers believe in the science and the benefit of vaccinations for our community and our country.

Here is my personal, and yes, official position. I hope those vaccinated will enjoy a return to normal activities free of the burden of wearing masks and socially distancing. For those not vaccinated, I urge them to do so. If not, unvaccinated people should continue wearing masks and socially distancing. For those refusing vaccination and wearing a mask, that is a personal decision that may impact others. I for one chose to be vaccinated and be a part of the solution, not contribute to the problems of this pandemic. It's called responsible behavior.

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