

# Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 19, Number 50

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Thurs., Dec. 15, 2022

## Highlands Middle School project and Pre-K gets one step closer

By Brittney Lofthouse

The new members of the Macon County Board of Commissioners unanimously voted Tuesday night to authorize Coun-

ty Manager Derek Roland to enter into contract negotiations with LS3P Architects to complete design work for middle school renovations at Highlands School.

Macon County Commissioner Vice-Chairman Josh Young noted that the school board had included the need for renovations to

• See **PROJECT** page 13

## Man tried to rob Wells Fargo in Cashiers



If anyone recognizes this man, please contact the Jackson County Sheriff's office or the Highlands Police Dept.

At 11:18 a.m., Tuesday, Dec. 13, an attempted robbery took place at the Wells Fargo Bank on 107 south in Cashiers.

A masked Hispanic speaking male, who spoke broken English, initiated an attempted bank robbery after he gave the teller a bag

• See **ROB** page 13



A \$5-\$10 million capital campaign is in the works to build a baroque-style church on the Our Lady of the Mountains campus on 5th St.

## A new Catholic church will soon replace the old

Over the last 20 years most every church in the Highlands downtown area has been renovated or expanded except for the Catholic church – Our Lady of the

Mountains on Fifth Street.

But the time has come.

At an unveiling of sorts last week, Rev. Father Jason K. Bar-

• See **CATHOLIC** page 15

### • INSIDE THIS ISSUE •

|                     |     |                             |    |
|---------------------|-----|-----------------------------|----|
| Mayor on Duty ..... | 2   | Investing at 4118 Ft. ....  | 8  |
| Weather.....        | 2   | Events.....                 | 14 |
| Ink Penn.....       | 4   | Spiritually Speaking.....   | 18 |
| Dining.....         | 6-7 | Police & Fire Reports ..... | 19 |
| Letters.....        | 7   | Classifieds.....            | 21 |

## ABC Store looking for new digs; has sights on the Fire Dept. building

The Highlands ABC Store has outgrown its space and it's looking to the town for help.

At Thursday's Town Board meeting, ABC Store Manager Kevin Vinson and Chairman of the ABC Board Steve Mehder requested permission to hire a contractor to draw up plans for a future ABC Store in the soon to be abandoned 11,000 sq. ft. Fire Station on Oak Street.

The store's current landlord is willing to work with the ABC Store even though the lease runs out in 2028.

The reason for the projected move is two-fold. One, the rent would likely be \$1 a year which is what other tenants of town buildings pay which means its profit distribution would increase dramatically.

Mehder said if the ABC Store didn't have to pay rent, more

of its proceeds could be given to the town's General Fund as well as nonprofits, as required.

And two, the need for more space is paramount as the store has outgrown its 4,400 sq. ft.

"As our mixed beverage business [the service to restaurants, bars and country clubs in and outside of town] has increased exponentially over the last three years," said Manager Kevin Vinson, "we have been forced to carry extra stock in the warehouse side and we just don't have the space for it any longer. We only receive two trucks a month and we have to make sure we have plenty of inventory in stock to fill our mixed beverage orders especially during the holiday periods."

Vinson said due to the lack of warehouse space, some of that stock has overflowed into the

• See **ABC STORE** page 17

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### Winter is coming



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

the town shed for repairs. Second, during exceptionally large snow storms, we have more instances where road plowing vehicles slide off the road and become stuck. That too requires more time for additional staff and equipment to pull the stuck vehicle back onto the road. And finally, plowing large amounts of snow is a management problem, for example, where do you put those large piles of snow?

Looking at existing storm patterns in the West and North makes me worry we could have another huge snow event. When those massive storms hit, it is not business as usual. A major blizzard in Western Carolina could be likened to a hurricane hitting Eastern North Carolina. Power could be lost for a long period of time and roads could be impassable for similar periods. So, my advice to those citizens with conditions that may be problematic in these kinds of emergency conditions, consider evacuating like in a hurricane to safer areas.

Nevertheless, we all need to be prepared for winter snow storms. Sallie and I make sure our pantry is full of food and that our propane tank is full. Before an impending snow storm I make sure our cars are topped off with gasoline. We do not have a generator so I have flash lights and lanterns with batteries on the ready, as well as an ample supply of firewood.

Some might say I am an alarmist, that with climate change we don't even get the snow and cold temperatures that Highlanders endured 30 years or so ago. But, with changing weather patterns those unusual storm events do happen. I won't even discuss the "ice" word. We are approaching 30 years since that epic blizzard of 1994, and some of the old time Highlanders tell me we are due for another anytime now. I hope not, but history has a way of repeating itself.

I look forward to a white Christmas in Highlands just as long as it only around 4 to 6 inches. We haven't had a good white Christmas for about a decade or more.

It's back, snow that is, and we all need to be prepared. The official winter season is just around the corner with next Wednesday being the first official day.

Last year we dodged a bullet with the winter storm that brought 12 inches of snow. Before the storm there were predictions of 16 to over 20 inches of snow. As the mayor those projections made the hair on the back of my head stand up straight. I had visions of the Blizzard of 1994 where Highlands was shut completely down for about two weeks.

Luckily, the big 12-inch snowstorm last year did not cause any major long-term power outages. The roads were covered with heavy snow, and normally our road crews have equipment that can easily handle 3 to 6 inches of snow, but when we are trying to move 12 inches or more, that is a different situation. First, our snow shoveling equipment tends to break more often which means that unit has to go back to

### Highlands Newspaper

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Digital Media/Circulation - Jim Lewicki

Locally owned and operated by

Kim & Jim Lewicki

Adobe PDF version at

[www.HighlandsInfo.com](http://www.HighlandsInfo.com)

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Highlands, N.C 28741

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#### Letter Policy:

We reserve the right to reject or edit letters-to-the-editor. No anonymous letters will be accepted. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands Newspaper.

## • HIC'S VIEW •



"Pleeeeesse Mom. Just one more story before we hibernate."

## • WEATHER •

| Thu, 15-Dec                   | Fri, 16-Dec                   | Sat, 17-Dec                   | Sun, 18-Dec                   |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                               |                               |                               |                               |
| 55°F<br>26°F                  | 43°F<br>22°F                  | 39°F<br>19°F                  | 38°F<br>17°F                  |
| A bit of morning rain         | Mostly sunny and cooler       | Mostly sunny and chilly       | Sunny, but chilly             |
| RealFeel®<br>High: 57 Low: 40 | RealFeel®<br>High: 42 Low: 22 | RealFeel®<br>High: 37 Low: 19 | RealFeel®<br>High: 34 Low: 13 |

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## All About Books

# • INK PENN •

## A festive start to the holiday season

I've spent plenty of time in Highlands through the years, even before I became a columnist for this paper, but this was only the second time I've been able to attend the annual Christmas Parade. What a treat. The camels alone were worth the price of admission, and the occasional raindrop didn't dampen the experience one iota.

The icing on the cake was the opportunity to do a book signing after the parade. I spent the afternoon ensconced in a cozy room at Shakespeare & Company, where I was invited to sign the books in my Dickens & Christie mystery series. It's difficult to say which experience was more fun—viewing the parade or chatting with book lovers in a comfy bookshop.

Munching Christmas cookies at Shakespeare & Company made me feel as though I had crossed the pond to the UK and landed in a shop in a Cotswolds village—much like the one in my books. As readers stopped by, we discussed our favorite books and authors—Louise Penny, M.C. Beaton, Jacqueline Winspear, and more. Like me, the main character in my books is an avid reader and an Anglophile, so books set in England are among my favorites.

Naturally, I also enjoyed answering the many questions about my books. Because I love decorating for the holidays, I especially enjoyed writing “Whiskers, Wreaths & Murder,” Book III in the series, and “Candy Canes, Canines & Crime,” the latest.

How timely that I did an interview last week where I again got to answer questions about my series and the latest Christmas tale. I predict that reading this excerpt will bring some of your favorite Christmas memories to mind. Who knows? You may even be inspired to run to Shakespeare & Company to pick up a Christmas book or two.

**Q:** Where/when is your series set?

**A:** This cozy animal mystery is set in modern times in the fictional Cotswolds village of Astonbury. The friends that make up the cast of characters occasionally travel to other locales in England—Tintagel, Oxford, and Torquay—but the two books set at Christmas take place in their home village.

**Q:** Who is your main character?

**A:** Leta Petkas Parker, the main charac-



**Kathy Manos Penn**

ter, is a fifty-something widow from Atlanta who retires to the Cotswolds with her two precious pets—Dickens the dog and Christie the cat. She describes herself as a work in progress—making new friends and making her way.

**Q:** Why is Christmas so important to the latest book?

**A:** Well, it is a Christmas book, after all! But on a serious note, for me and for Leta, it's all about the memories. The Christmas

decorations and music I describe in my two Christmas books all exist in my life. Pulling out my ornaments and collection of stuffed animals is a joyful trip down memory lane. Like me, Leta has a crocheted tree topper made by a loved one, and she listens to Christmas tunes from all eras of her life. Whether it's Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, or more recent artists like Mannheim Steamroller, the tunes put a smile on my face and hers.

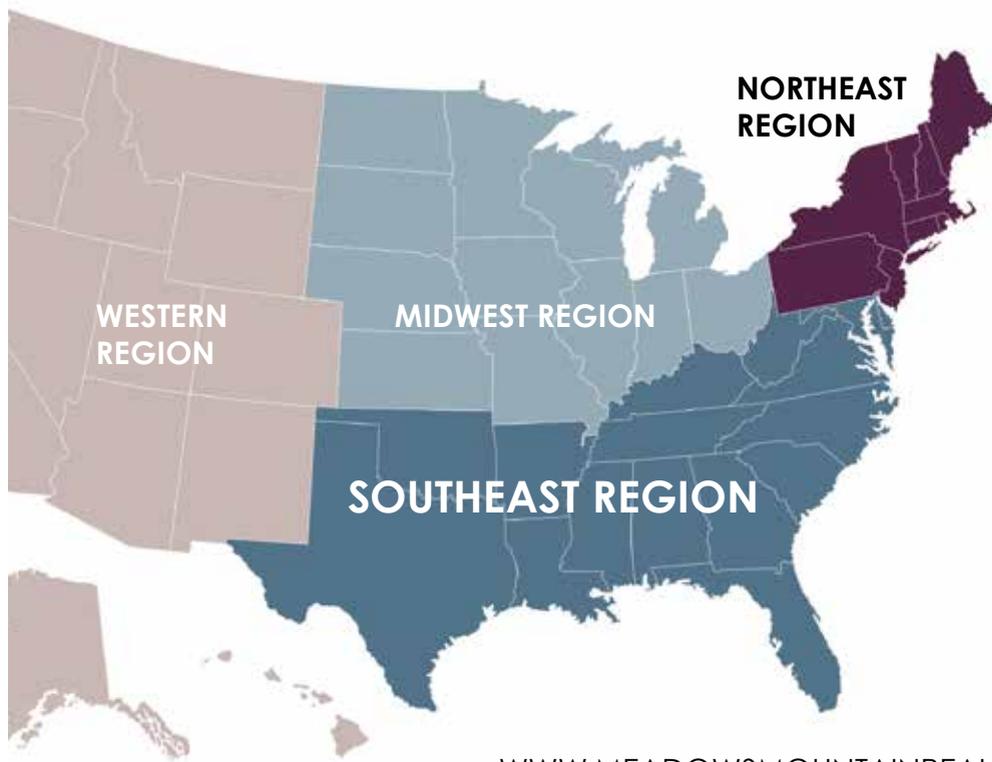
For Leta, it's also bittersweet because she's simultaneously thinking of her late husband and, in the latest Christmas book, taking a big step with a new man in her life.

**Q:** What can readers look forward to in “Candy Canes, Canines & Crime”?

**A:** Oh! I think the back cover blurb says it all—“The halls are decked with holly. But can anyone be jolly when a precious pet vanishes without a trace? The Yuletide cheer turns sour when Leta Parker's delightful doggo Dickens dashes out the door with a canine companion and doesn't return. Can Leta and her team of Little Old Ladies unravel the Christmas caper in time to make the season merry and bright?”

Now, as I turn my attention to wrapping presents, I hope I've left you humming Christmas tunes with a smile on your face. In the words of Jolly Old Saint Nick, “Happy Christmas to all and to all a good night.”

*Award-winning author Kathy Manos Penn is a Georgia resident. Find her cozy mysteries in Franklin at Franklin Office Supply & Gifts and Shakespeare & Company in Highlands, and on Amazon. Contact her at [inkspenn119@gmail.com](mailto:inkspenn119@gmail.com), and follow her on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/](http://www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/).*



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Walk to Mirror Lake, the Performing Arts Center, and the Highlands Recreation Center from this 2.65 acre property. The land is framed by a flowing creek with a couple of small waterfalls. The property consists of two individual lots that can be subdivided. The upper lot is 1.41 acres with a 5-bedroom septic permit. The lower lot is 1.24 acres and fronts the stream. The cabin on the property is ideal as a getaway or guest house. It has been fully renovated down to the studs, and has a new roof, flooring, electrical, and plumbing, plus an updated kitchen. There is foam insulation and the crawlspace has been encapsulated.



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# • LETTERS •

## A review of fiber optic service through Hotwire

Dear Editor,

The thick black fiber optic cable you see attached to telephone poles throughout town took years to finally become a reality, but that was not the end of "hurry up and wait."

I was one of the first people to sign up for internet service through Hotwire. After signing up it took weeks of waiting before they finally got the fiber from the telephone pole to my house. Unfortunately, the crew that did that could not connect it, they just got it to the point on the house where it would go through the wall and left it hanging there. Then I had to wait 3 or 4 weeks for a different crew to show up to actually get connected to the internet. Except for the long periods of waiting, the process has been a very positive one.

The first order of business was to put a junction box on the side of my house where the fiber cable from the telephone pole would be spliced to a smaller fiber cable that would go through the wall and into my house. I was concerned that they would be drilling through the wall and I asked if they could use the old landline phone wire going into my house to pull the new fiber cable through the wall. They were able to do that with little trouble and soon they had an Optical Network Terminal (ONT) sitting on a counter in my kitchen.

After the ONT was set up, the next step was to connect routers throughout my house. Eero Mesh Routers are much higher quality than the routers I have been using for years with my old provider and more expensive.

The first "master" router to be set up connects by a wire directly to the ONT. Other routers throughout the house can be connected to the master router either wirelessly or by wire. The setup crew first placed secondary routers in two places in my house and connected them wirelessly but the coverage was not good upstairs, so an alternative setup was required.

Again, the crew was able to use the old landline phone wire to connect two secondary routers placed upstairs so that the whole house would have good strong signal. One router is in my office and provides a wired connection for my computer and WIFI connection for my TV, laptop and other WIFI devices. Another secondary router was used to assure strong signal strength throughout the house.

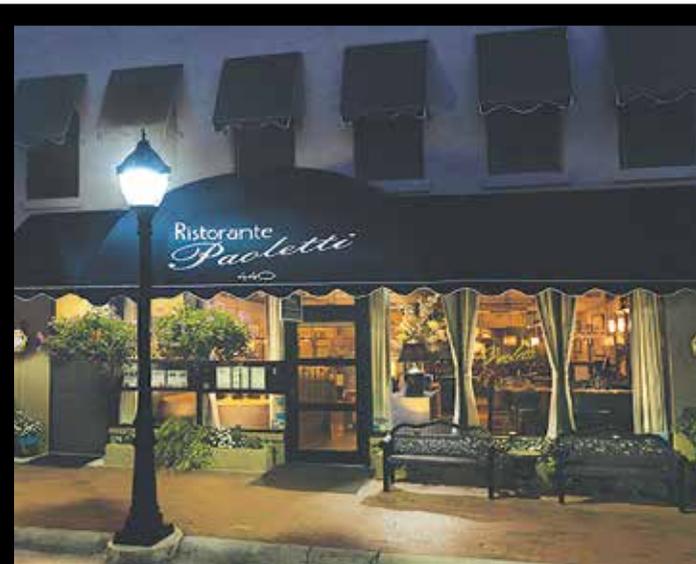
The setup crew was impressive and seemed to know their stuff. After the issues with the initial setup were resolved, things have been going smoothly.

I have had opportunities to meet with the office staff and they also seem to know their stuff. When you sign up for service, you will be assigned an Account Manager which will be either Will Beck or Omar Medina. They will be a point-of-contact for any questions or concerns that arise. Both are very customer-friendly and go out of their way to help.

Office Manager Jeremy Adcock is another person who has a wide range of experience and is very customer oriented and willing to help resolve any issues that may arise.

To me the financial part of signing up for Hotwire is an area full of add-on charges. They will provide you with Eero routers and you will pay \$9.99 a month for each one or

• See LETTERS page 10



## Paoletti

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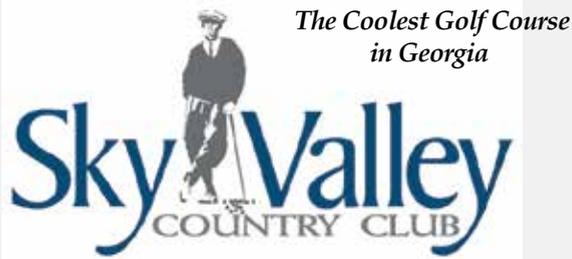
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## • INVESTING AT 4,118 FT •

### Some advice about renovations

We purchased a property two years ago which needed major repairs and renovations. The house had been vacant for 12 years, had active roof leaks and mold infestation. Although many would have torn the house down, we thought it was well built, had some neat features and wanted to renovate. Initially, the plan was to make repairs, update the kitchen and baths, add central HVAC and do cosmetic work. It ended up being taken down to the studs and subfloor inside; with new windows, doors, roof and siding outside. We were finally able to move in just before Thanksgiving, making it a 23-month long project.



Carl Romberg  
Landmark Realty

Previously renovating a number of houses, this was by far the biggest project I have done. I learned a lot and am going to share some suggestions for anyone that is going to do a renovation or even a new build.

1) Work with professionals. This could be an architect, designer, engineer, kitchen or lighting specialist, or a combination of several depending on the complexity of the project. Walk through the options and details and have good drawings and specifications prepared. Ultimately, this could cost less than tearing out things that were done incorrectly or did not work as you think they would. There are numerous talented professionals on the plateau that you can work with depending on your particular project.

2) Have an organized book, folder or Pinterest file of pictures of what you like. Styles of houses, colors, details of trim, doors, windows, floors, cabinets, appliances, etc. This will make it easy for the professional to understand what you are looking to achieve.

3) Pick out as much as you can in advance. This would include items like plumbing fixtures, light fixtures and appliances. Exterior items like shingle material and gutter type; window style and function; shutter material and colors for all these items. There is the bath tile material, grout color, vanities and shower doors. Door and cabinet hardware style and finish. Will the siding be wood or some other material? Decking, deck and porch railings. The options are

unlimited and the hundreds of decisions to make can easily become overwhelming. Waiting to the last minute to find out something is backordered will delay the process and can result in extra trip charges from subcontractors.

4) Talk with several builders, check their references and work, and have a signed contract that clearly states what each party is responsible for. Know which items are fixed price, which are cost plus and which have an allowance? The cheapest proposal probably isn't going to be the best choice.

5) Order appliances, windows and anything else the builder recommends early and create the schedule around the delivery of those items. Our appliances took 11 months and windows took 5 months. Demolition occurred in September and October, but nothing much could happen until the windows arrived in April. Once they arrived, we started seeing progress.

6) Be clear about what is being removed and what is staying. We had not made a decision on the few rooms of existing hardwood floors. That decision was made when they were the first item removed during demolition. The plumbers showed up and removed 90 percent of the copper pipes, which were perfectly fine. They loaded it up in their van and we didn't see them for another month.

7) There has been so much change regarding internet, smart TVs, speakers, wireless networks, alarm systems and access to appliances, doors, thermostats from your phone or tablet. Work with a technology company to make sure you are not only up to date, but they will know what is coming and can make sure you are wired where you need to be and that a wireless system works.

8) There are a number of local artisans on the plateau that can be used. Cabinet companies, iron workers and wood workers can build a custom hood, specialty iron handrails, a unique fireplace surround or custom fireplace mantle. These are truly artists and they can help create ideas that work within your budget. Keep in mind that your contractor can help recommend them, as well as other subcontractors that they have experience working with.

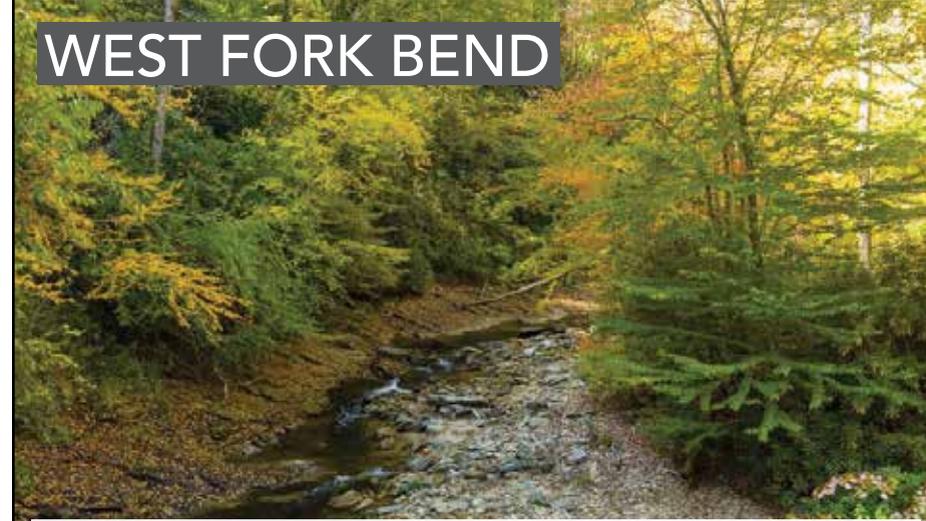
# Acreage to Inspire

A SELECTION OF AVAILABLE LOTS ON THE PLATEAU



Pat Allen  
REALTY GROUP

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## RUSSELL RIDGE

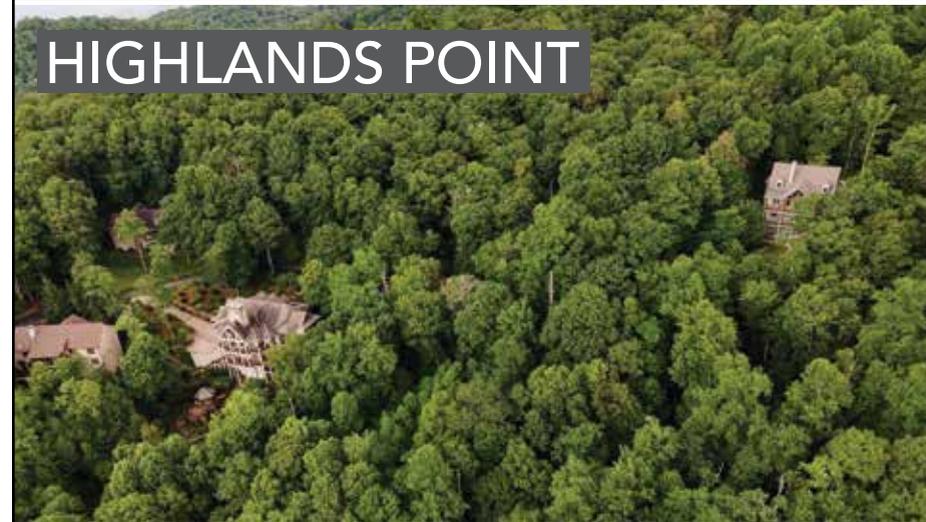


The perfect property to build a private retreat with some long range views of Blue Valley.

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## HIGHLANDS POINT



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## ...LETTERS continued from page 7

if you need 3 you get them for \$24.99 per month. That works out to \$299.88 per year FOREVER. So, I purchased 3 Eero routers from Amazon for \$599 so in just under two years, cutting out the rental fee will cover the cost of my purchased routers.

I did not sign up for a phone service through Hotwire so I can't provide any in-

sight for that service. I briefly signed up for TV service through Hotwire and quickly cancelled it due to all the add-on fees. For each TV you must pay a monthly rental fee of \$9.99 for a set top box that is added on to the TV service fee. There are also other fees added to what they say is the cost of the TV service. DirecTV Streaming was the

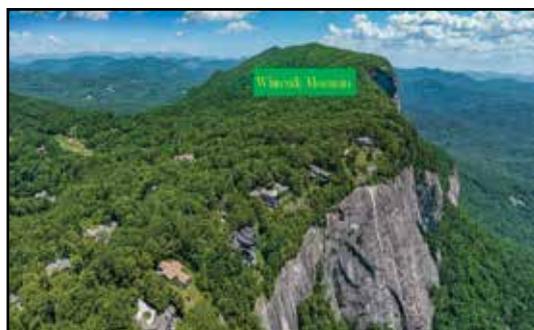
only streaming service I could find that allows me to watch the Braves and all of the other programs I watched on my old cable TV service.

The internet speed is very good at over 300 mbps and is very stable. Except for power outages I have not lost service since the initial installation.

For me the internet service is a significant improvement over my old provider that seemed to go down whenever I needed it the most. The speed I get through Hotwire is also a major improvement.

The bottom line is while waiting years for access to fiber optic internet service was frustrating, I have had a very positive experience with Hotwire.

*Morris Williams  
Highlands*



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## Cherishing the past and appreciating the present

Dear Editor,

Army beat Navy in double overtime this past weekend. Probably not many of you watched the game but in the past that was considered "the game of the year." Every year when they play, it brings back a very special childhood memory. We were kids playing football in the back yard and my dad called the boys in to see the first live broadcast of a football game. My father could not believe that we could watch, in Mobile, AL, an Army vs. Navy game being played in Philadelphia at the same time the game was being played. I am sure he thought at the time we had reached the limit of technology.

My father was raised in a different area. He loved to fish and hunt. His favorite "sport" was quail hunting and we had a bird dog that was our family pet until my dad got out his shot gun, and our pet became a world class bird dog. Times have changed because my dad had several places to hunt wild quail; and when he came home, we had quail for dinner. Today almost all quail hunting is on quail preserves.

When I was a kid growing up, the families in our neighborhood had one car and a large house was three bedrooms and maybe two baths. It was a good life. We had it made with indoor plumbing, natural gas heat, hot water, electricity, (sorry no air-conditioning), and the world's greatest invention -- televisions. High schools didn't have to worry about parking spaces for students.

So, let's fast forward to today's life. I have to say life is great in Highlands. Mother Nature has given us beautiful mountains and a rain forest with unbelievable vegetation. We seem to have all we want, and a lot more than we need. Highlands is very special! We are blessed to have a giving community with caring and friendly folks.

All of us like to reflect on the loved ones from our past and what it was like in the "good old days." That is why we teach history in schools and value our past. Yes, history is a rich treasure and the exhibits at the Highlands Historical Society's museum and Prince House allow us to stroll back to those early Highlands' years between 1875 - 1900 when the first churches were built on Main Street, the resort industry was in the earliest stages and transportation was almost nonexistent. The museum tracks from those earliest days through the growth of

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## ...LETTERS continued from page 10

the golf industry and the history of eight of Highlands cultural gems.

As we approach the Holiday Season, all the HHS board members wish you the best of health and happiness during this wonderful time of the year. Also, we thank you for your support to allow us to preserve and promote the rich heritage of Highlands for present and future generations.

*Harry McDonald*  
*Highlands Historical Society*

## A Tribute to Harry Bears on the closing of the Toy Store, Book Nook and Bags on Main

Dear Editor,

Behind every strong and successful woman is a committed and supportive man. Unfortunately, that is not always true! But in this case it is.

Harry and Michelle Bears are an unbeatable team. Harry has been a quiet supporter of The Toy Store, Book Nook and Bags On Main for many, many years. His business savvy coupled with Michelle's years of experience have created three very successful businesses. It's always good to leave on a high note!

Harry built the walls to create Bags On Main out of a section of The Toy Store. He worked tirelessly with Michelle to decorate and expand the product selection to become the destination hand-bag store in Highlands. After 10 years of business Harry is now tearing down those very same walls. He, Michelle and staff are working long hours, hauling, loading out,

diligently sanding, priming and painting the The Toy Store, Book Nook and Bags on Main to ready it for the next occupant.

The new adventure begins for Harry and Michelle working together at The Southern Way, just a few doors from The Toy Store. Harry will be adding a few favorite lines from Bags on Main to the women's section and as always, an exceptional selection of men's wear.

Many thanks, Harry Bears for all you do. You are the best example of an efficient, effective, honest and most of all, caring business owner. You exemplify the very best in small businesses. It has been a joy working with you and I look forward to our continued success at The Southern Way.

*Janet Wilson*  
*Manager*  
*Bags on Main*



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David Bock

Highlands Police Department

Highlands School

Matthew Eberz

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Steve Ham

Steve Mehder

Tate Landscaping

Tay Branaugh

And all our participants, spectators and volunteers!



[visithighlandscnc.com](http://visithighlandscnc.com)

The 2022 Highlands Christmas Parade is made possible by the  
Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC.



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minutes from Highlands Estate sale will take place soon.



## Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church

### Christmas Eve Masses

Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church • 4 pm  
St. Jude's Catholic Church (Sapphire Valley) • 6 pm

### Christmas Day Masses

St. Jude's Catholic Church • 9 am  
Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church • 11 am

### New Year's Day Masses

St. Jude's Catholic Church • 9 am  
Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church • 11 a.m.

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Join us as we journey to the manger with the characters of the Christmas Story at  
*First Presbyterian Church of Highlands*

|                       |         |  |
|-----------------------|---------|--|
| Sunday, December 18   | 11:00am | Sunday Celebration - <i>The Shepherds</i>                  |
|                       | 12:00pm | Congregational Luncheon                                    |
| Saturday, December 24 | 4:30pm  | Prelude by John Wickey, <i>Harpist</i>                     |
|                       | 5:00pm  | Christmas Eve Service with Candlelight - <i>The Angels</i> |
| Sunday, December 25   | 11:00am | Christmas Stories & Songs                                  |
|                       | 12:00pm | Congregational COOKIES!!!                                  |

*All are welcome!*

*Todos son bienvenidos!*

471 Main Street in Highlands  
828.526.3175  
www.fpchighlands.org

## Join us in celebrating the birth of our Savior at the Highlands United Methodist Church

### Family-oriented Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

*in the Sanctuary*

**5pm**

*Featuring our Children's Christmas Pageant*

### Christmas Eve Eucharist Service

**7pm**

*In the Church Sanctuary*

### Christmas Eve Singing with Less

*In the Faith and Fellowship Center*

**8pm**

### Christmas Day Eucharist

*in the Sanctuary*

**8:45pm**

### Christmas Day Breakfast

*In the Faith and Fellowship Center*

**9:15am**

### Christmas Combined Worship Service

*in the Sanctuary*

**10am**

Pastor Randy Lucas  
315 Main Street • 828-526-3376 • highlandsumc@icloud.com



# LUTHERAN CHURCH

## OF THE HOLY FAMILY

Christmas Eve  
Services  
December 24 @ 2 PM

2152 DILLARD RD, HIGHLANDS

*Come and fellowship with us!*

## ...INVESTING from page 8

9) Make sure that things are installed in the appropriate order. Our flooring contractor had a window of time to install and finish the floors, or we would have had to wait six more weeks. We had them installed and covered them for protection. When we uncovered them, we found that they had cupped due to high humidity. Giving them time to lay back down ended up delaying our move in date at least six weeks.

10) Visit the job as often as possible. We visited daily and some things were still wrong. I walked in to find a painter painting a door that was to be stained. Things like that are going to happen and you make the decision of how to handle it. If you are not able to be here, that is all the more reason to hire a professional.

Years ago, a neighbor told me that renovating on the plateau will cost twice as much as you budget and it will take twice as long as planned. Yes, when we bought, we thought we would be in by Thanksgiving, 2021. It did take twice as long as expected, and we were significantly over budget. However, we ran into unexpected items, expanded the scope of work, and did this in the midst of a pandemic with material and worker shortages.

There were crews that would show up at 7:30 in the morning and work until 7:30 at night, six days a week. There were also crews that would work four hours a day, or even four hours a week. In the end we are pleased with the (almost) finished product and enjoyed working with all of the many workers that spent time on the project. Now, if we can just get some garage doors and if I can sell some houses to pay for it!

• *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@landmarkrg.com.*

## ...ROB continued from page 1

and said, "Put the money in the bag."

Instead, the bank teller activated the burglar alarm at which point the man fled on foot without any money.

According to Jackson County Sheriff Doug Farmer, based on the photos taken from the bank video, he may have been wearing a detonator device on his chest.

"You can see something metallic on his chest and a cord in his hand," said Farmer.

He was last seen fleeing by foot into a nearby wooden area which was searched by multiple officers and canine who was able to pick up a scent trail outside the bank.

It is said he wore a grey hoodie, and grey and blue or dark clothing.

Though in the next town over, the Highlands Police Department notified businesses in Highlands -- retail shops, restaurants and banks -- and conducted perimeter patrols throughout the business district and at the local banks.

Chief Andrea Holland asked citizens to be on the lookout for any suspicious behavior.

She also told Highlands School to lockdown. Until school got out, four officers walked the perimeter and when school got out, they followed students headed to town on foot and continued to patrol.

The Jackson County Sheriff's Office notified the schools in Cashiers and suggested a lockdown, too.

Students at Summit Charter and Blue Ridge School were required to stay in their locked classrooms, to not go outside nor to transition to classes until further notice.

While some deputies tracked in the woods, multiple deputies stayed at the bank to process the scene.

As of press time Wednesday, Sheriff Farmer said there are no more details at this time.

"Detectives are still working diligently on the case which is active and ongoing," he said.

The Jackson County Sheriff's Office and the Highlands Police Department said if anyone knows the man or has information about the case to call them at 828-586-4355 or (828) 526-9431, respectively.

— Kim Lewicki

## HS Varsity Swim Team holds its own at meet in Murphy

By Steve Hott  
Coach

On Saturday, December 10, the Highlands Varsity Swim Team was one of seven teams who competed in the Candy Cane Invitational in Murphy, NC.

Though they were missing four of nine team members due to injury, vacation and other issues, the Highlands School boys team -- sophomore Finneas Garner, freshmen Paolo McRae, Conner Hughes, and Jesus Mendoza -- swam well and finished third.

Missing one of two girls, freshmen Tate Wilson swam regional consideration times in both the 50 and 100 freestyle finishing 7th and 5th, respectively.

The boys 200 medley and

200 free relays took 3rd and 4th. Hughes swam the 2nd fastest boys 500 free in the history of the meet finishing 2nd to the new record holder also with a regional consideration time.

Garner, Hughes and Mendoza finished 3rd, 4th, and 21st in the 50 freestyle. Garner with a regional automatic qualifying time, Hughes a consideration time. Garner, McRae and Mendoza teamed up for a 4, 7, 14 finish in the 100 free. Again Garner with an automatic time and McRae with a consideration time. McRae also swam a consideration time in the 100 breaststroke finishing 3rd.

The Highlands School Varsity Swim Teams' next meet is on Saturday, January 7, 2023 in Tallulah Falls.

## ...PROJECT continued from page 1

the middle school including roof repairs, new windows, flooring upgrades and repairs to the HVAC system in their capitol improvement plan.

With funding available through the North Carolina Education Lottery need-based school construction grant, the design work and architectural services for the renovation project at High-

lands Middle School will be funded through the grant, rather than a local allocation.

Last year, the lottery raised a record \$936 million to support education programs across North Carolina. In the same year, Macon County received \$351,720 for school construction needs, which was allocated based on local officials who decided the best use of

the construction funds.

The Board of Commissioners voted in October to apply for the lottery funds, which are part of the repair, renovation, and expansion fund with the NC Lottery. In a 4-1 vote, commissioners approved the application for the funds, which will now be used to pay for the design of the project.

Earlier this year, the NCACC's 115th Annual Confer-

• See PROJECT page 22

*Festival of Advent*  
LESSONS & CAROLS  
WITH THE INCARNATION  
CHOIR & SOLOISTS

Featuring Hymns, Carols, and Works by  
Bach, Schubert, Archangelsky, Handel,  
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520 Main Street

SUNDAY,  
DECEMBER 18  
10:30 A.M.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES  
CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION  
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24  
5PM & 8PM

# • HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

## ICE RINK SCHEDULE

(Through March 5)

• Thursday: 3:30-8 p.m.; Friday 3:30-10pm; Saturday 1-10pm; Sunday 1-5pm. \$5 for skate rental & skating

## NEW Rec Pool Schedule

• Public Swim: Sat. 11a-6p; Sun., 1-6p. Adult Swim: Tues & Wed 11a-5p and Mon., Thurs., Fri., 11a-2p. Lap Swim: MOn-Fri 6a-9:45a and Sat. 10-11a. 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](http://www.maconncliteracy.org), call 828-526 – 0863 or email [info@maconncliteracy.org](mailto: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 with financial need who want to return to school or further their education meets at 10 a.m. More meeting places call president Paula McDonald at 706-372-3004

## 1st Tuesdays

• Indivisible Highlands from 5-6:30 pm at the Hudson Library.

## 2nd Tuesdays

• Highlands Writers Group meets on alternate Tuesday afternoons at 3pm. Writers still uncomfortable with in-person gatherings may participate via Zoom meetings held on the second or third Tuesday of each month at 3pm. Members receive weekly notification regarding when and how the group will assemble. For more information contact Bud Katz at either 828-526-3190 or at [budandlynn@me.com](mailto:budandlynn@me.com)

## Tuesdays

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

## Mon-Fri

• Water Aerobics 18 years plus 10-11am. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

• Pickle Ball inside and outside. 10am-1pm, everyone is welcome so come out and enjoy a game of Pickle Ball.

## Mon., Tues., Thurs.

• The Food Pantry behind the Methodist Church on Spring Street is open from 10a to 6p.

## Mon. & Wed.

• New Mobility Class with Anna Norton It's all about movement. 5:30-6:30pm and Wednesday 6:45-7:45. For more information, call Anna 267-825-0716.

## Mon, Wed, Fri

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

• Aerobics w/Tina Rogers 8-9a. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more info.

## Tues. & Thurs.

• New Zumba class with Gay Chalpin from 4:30-5:30p. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

• Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at 5:30. A combination class with different types of exercise. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information

## Thursdays

• Kickboxing 8:15-9:15am. An exhilarating and fun mix of martial arts for a calorie-burning workout. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

• At Hudson Library, Kids Zone at 3:30 pm with a wide variety of STEAM, nature, and craft activities. For more information about any of these summer activities, contact Hudson Library at 828-526-3031.

## 2nd Saturdays

• The Western North Carolina Woodturners Club meets in Highlands at The Bascom at 10 a.m. March thru November.

## 3rd Saturdays

• The American Legion Post 370 meets at the First Methodist Church at 315 Main Street in their Community Room/909 Chapel. We serve breakfast at 9am and hold our monthly meeting at 10am. We invite ALL Veterans to attend. Contact Ed McCloskey, Commander for any information @828-787-1660.

• At the Rec Park, Senior Lunches noon in the meeting room. For any other information call Lester Norris or Maxine Ramey at 828-526-3556.

## Saturdays in December

• Santa in the Park in Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park. Santa will appear in the park each Saturday to hear wishes from children of all ages. He will also periodically stop by to retrieve letters placed in a special mailbox in the park.

## Thurs., Dec. 15

• At The Bascom, Exhibition Reception for Listening to the Land | Free. 5-6:30 pm

## Dec. 16-31

• The Mountain Theatre Company presents Home for the Holidays, a Christmas Tradition. Celebrate the season as we make magic in the mountains this holiday, at The Playhouse on Oak Street. Wednesday - Saturday @ 7:30p and Saturday & Sunday @ 2p. For tickets go to [www.mountaintheatre.com](http://www.mountaintheatre.com).

## Sat., Dec. 17

• Ceremony and wreath laying at noon in the cemetery. Ceremony is at the Community Building and shuttles will take volunteers to and from the cemetery to lay veteran wreaths. For more info, call Phil Potts at 828-200-9753 or email [ppotts63@frontier.com](mailto:ppotts63@frontier.com)

## Sat. & Sun, Jan. 28-29

• Snow Fest in Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park. It's back and better! Bring friends and family for guaranteed winter fun (courtesy of snow blowers, if needed) in the park. A snowball toss, a merry-go-round, a snow slide, s'mores, "snowga" (a twist on yoga) and more.

Join Us in Our Mission

Remember ★ Honor ★ Teach

## ★ December 17, 2022 ★ CEREMONY AND WREATH LAYING

Highlands Community Building

869 N. 4th Street

12 NOON

Following the ceremony at the Community Building, Shuttles will take volunteers to and from the cemetery to lay veteran wreaths



For more information contact Phil Potts at 828-200-9753 or [ppotts63@frontier.com](mailto:ppotts63@frontier.com)

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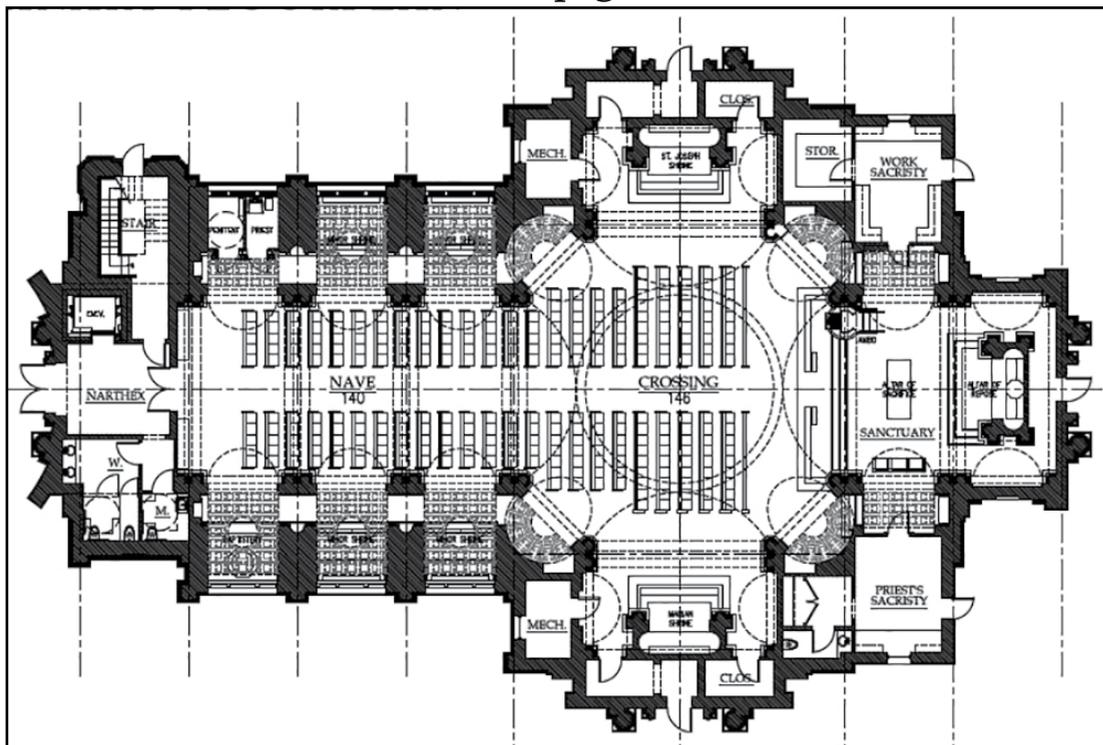
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2060 Dillard Rd, Highlands  
2 miles south of Main

...CATHOLIC continued from page 1



With its traditional rectangular floorplan, the sanctuary of the new church will allow all worshipers to direct their focus simultaneously on the High Altar, the tabernacle, and the crucifix. The 2.5-acre campus in downtown Highlands. It provides an ideal site for the new church, as well as room for future construction of a parish hall and office facility.

one, parochial administrator, announced the church's "Building a Beacon of Catholic Faith" capital campaign with \$5-\$10 million in its sights.

The plans to build a new church, revitalize the church property – whereby revitalizing the parish – are substantial and started January 2022.

The idea is that the baroque-style church structure of approximately 9,000 square feet will provide a comfortable church for celebrating Mass and the Sacraments; seating for approximately 300 people; a narthex for fellowship before and after Mass and for use as a cry room; dedicated spaces for the confessional, Baptismal font, sacristy, and vestry for the priest and altar servers; a choir loft for singers and musicians, as well as the organ, piano, and other instruments; restrooms that are fully accessible by all and appropriately located.

This is a far cry from the current building which has long outgrown its use.

In the 1930s – a quaint Catholic mission was established

on the plateau and priests from Waynesville, NC, offered Mass in Highlands every other week in the school auditorium in the Highlands Playhouse.

Bishop Vincent Waters of the Diocese of Raleigh eventually purchased 2.5 acres of land on 5th Street in Highlands to establish Our Lady of the Mountain's Mission and in 1950, built the current church. In 1950 it served 35 families year-round and 45 families seasonally. As it is now, OLM is debt-free.

As Highlands' popularity grew, so did Our Lady of the Mountains.

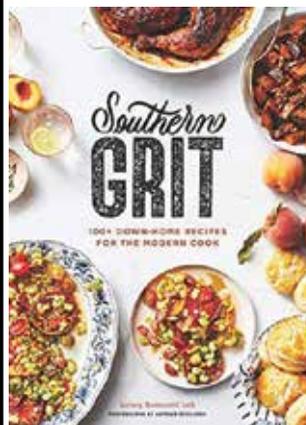
Between 1986 and 1990, a two-story wing was added to the church that doubled its seating capacity and provided a lower-level parish hall. A rectory and a retreat cottage was also built. For the next 32 years, however, the mission's campus remained unchanged except for the construction of a 21-niche columbarium in 2021.

Today, Our Lady of the Mountains serves over 325 families, full-time or seasonally, plus

• See CATHOLIC page 22



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Visit our new Highlands Mercantile Store on Main Street.

**PLANET**  
BY Lauren G



## Musicians honor Maestro Fletcher Wolfe

By Casey Anglin

Of the 16 guests who arrived at Maestro Fletcher Wolfe's home in Sky Valley recently for dinner and a concert, many were outstanding classical musicians.

Attending and performing was the well-known piano virtuoso of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra, Kathleen Warner. Also attending was her husband Harry, who is a premier percussionist with the orchestra. Mrs. Warner entertained the group playing a composition by Franz Liszt on the Maestro's concert grand piano.

Also performing for the guests that evening was the well-known flutist, Candace Keach. Ms. Keach, also a soloist with several major orchestras, is a flute teacher at Lovett and Westminster schools in Atlanta and Spelman College. She and Mrs. Warner presented several pieces together.

Other musicians in attendance who came to honor the Maestro were Ann and Don Ahnberg. Both have had close musical associations with Maestro over the years.

Maestro Wolfe, former Director of Music at Highlands Episcopal Church was also the Director of the Highlands Community Chorus for several years.

Now almost in his 91st year Maestro Wolfe recently returned home from France and Italy where he had performed many times. During his long musical history, he appeared many times in France with one of the world's most famous artist and composers, Nadia Boulanger.

When he was a young baritone soloist, the Maestro appeared with Nadia Boulanger many times in concerts in Fontainebleau France. Mlle Boulanger lived in the Palace Château in Louis the 14th's apartment and young Fletcher occupied Louis the 15th's.

On his most recent trip back to France he again visited the Château Fontainebleau which also served as Napoleon Bonaparte's headquarters.

Later on, after his return to New York, he made his debut at Carnegie Hall and was chosen by Rick Besoyan for the lead in his new Broadway production "The Prince of Liederkranz." His protagonist for the show was Eileen



Maestro Roberto Maconi and his wife with Wolfe in Venice, Italy.

Brennan, later a movie star.

On his latest visit to Europe the Maestro also visited Venice Italy where he had appeared in many concerts and while there had dinner with Maestro Roberto Maconi and his wife at the Cipriani Hotel. Maestro Maconi has been the organist at St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice for over 50 years.

Following Mr. Wolfe's singing career he came to Atlanta where he founded and directed the world-famous Atlanta Boy Choir for 60 years. 6000 boys came under his tutelage and many of them have also become famous musicians. Pulitzer Prize winner, Taylor Branch was a member of the Atlanta Boy Choir in the 1950s and he has continued to enjoy singing throughout his life as a tenor chorister with the Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church in Baltimore. Also, some of the choir members include the Metropolitan opera star Maurice Robinson. Mark Stringer, professional conductor at the Vienna Conservatory. Benjamin Beilman, international concert violinist. Chris Neiman, television star. Dwayne Shattuck, tv producer and multiple Emmy Award winner. Tony Award winner and Broadway Star Shuler Hensley are some of the boys the Maestro trained. These are just a few of the world achievers who give Maestro Wolfe and the time they spent in the Atlanta Boy Choir as a great reason for their success.

Continuing Maestro Wolfe's musical adventures, I think I should mention his organizing the Georgia Festival Of The Arts In Italy. This included two painters and sculptors of the many participating were Rosemary Stiefel

a Highlander and Betty Sanders, wife of Georgia Governor Carl Sanders. Also, included an opera company, a ballet company and a black jazz group. This group of over 100 performed under Maestro Wolfe's direction all over Italy for several years.

Maestro Wolfe has been given many awards over the years for his performances by many countries including Russia who made him a Knight of Malta and Italy where he was given the highest award that of being made a Commendatore by the President of Italy Alessandro Pertini in the Palazzo Giustiniani.

Later during his many appearances with the Atlanta Symphony, he won the Grammy Award and much of this worldwide recognition was the subject for this delightful November event.

Some of those attending was Helen Moore from Highlands, a longtime friend of Maestro Wolfe and his late wife Roberta. Also attending was Superior Court Judge Jack Partain and his wife Pamela from Dalton, GA. Judge Partain had been one of his boys in the 1950s.

During 2016 the Maestro and his choir were featured in the Hollywood film "Captain America Civil War." His being invited to walk the red carpet in Hollywood for its premier performance, he invited Megan Lewicki, the daughter of Highlands Jim and Kim Lewicki who was there beginning a career as an actor.

So many of those who came out for this event have profited from their long relationship with the Maestro and wish him many more years ahead!

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## ...ABC STORE continued from page 1

showroom causing clutter.

"We would rather have clean, clear pathways for people to be able to shop comfortably," he said. "There is also the challenge of having enough room to pack the orders and receive shipments in the warehouse side due to the lack of storage."

In addition, about three years ago, Vinson said Ready To Drink beverages started taking over the liquor industry by storm. About 1 1/2 years ago, the NC ABC Commission approved the installation of coolers in the ABC Stores to accommodate the new item.

Vinson said their first 3-door cooler was installed early September which took up the "sales" area of the store.

"That has really taken off and as that market continues to grow, we will need more coolers and more floor space in the next 3-5 years," he said.

Mayor Pat Taylor said moving into the fire department building is a cost-effective plan opposed to building an entire building.

"The benefit of bringing the ABC Store back onto town property and into a town building means they aren't paying rent so the savings will go to the town and to the nonprofits," he said.

He reminded the board that the original ABC Store was in the current Police Department building.

Mehder said the potential renovation won't be a burden to the town.

However, Commissioners Marc Hehn and Amy Patterson suggested the town take its time and look at the entire tract including The Playhouse site before making a decision.

Hehn said the Comprehensive Plan had a couple of suggestions for the tract which should be considered.

Commissioner Patterson said she understands that the ABC Store needs more space but consideration needs to be given to town property and town needs.

"I'm saying that it is a town building, and we need to make

sure we maximize what's the best use for the Town of Highlands," she said. "I agree that we shouldn't make a decision tonight since this is the first we've heard about it. We knew that we were going to have to decide what the building will be, but I don't know enough about it or how chopped up it is, or how useful it will be. There is no rush on this, we can take a month or two to look at it."

Commissioner John Dotson said he thought Highlands Plaza was a good spot for the ABC Store using the same argument used years ago when the store moved from the Police Department building to Highlands Plaza.

"I think the location as far as revenue for the ABC Store is concerned is in a great location, despite the square footage limitations," he said. "You have parking, other stores around; if they move to the fire department there will be no spontaneous buying. It's going to be a destination."

Mehder and Commissioner Eric Pierson said the ABC Board was only asking permission to do preliminary work with an architect and contractor to see if their plan will work.

"This is just the first step so we can come back with a plan," said Mehder. "We have conceptualized how we will use this space. We know we need at least 50% more space than we have now plus there will be more things in retail sales that are likely to come aboard. We just need permission to get with an architect to see how we could utilize the space. Then we will come back with a rendering and so on."

Commissioner Patterson said the town doesn't have any plans for the space now but that doesn't mean it won't have plans.

"Maybe it's an ABC Store, but maybe it's not," she said.

In the end the board agreed to let the ABC Board proceed with a conceptual design and that the potential project will be considered at a later date.

— Kim Lewicki



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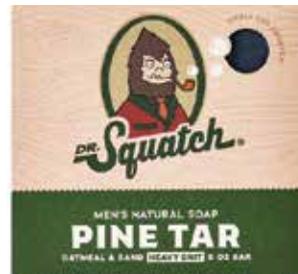
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# • SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

## It's Time...



**Sr. Pastor  
Gary Hewins**  
Community Bible Church

A woman was nervously waiting at the airport for her husband to return from his skydiving lesson. The pilot approached her: "I'm sorry, but there's been an accident. I have some bad news, some good news, some more bad news, and some more good news. The bad news is your husband fell out of the plane. The good news is he had his parachute on. The bad news is he hit the ground before his chute could open. The good news is we hadn't even taken off yet."

There's no shortage of news relentlessly coming at us in this cultural moment. We have access to news far more now than ever before. We can know what is going on in this world nearly instantaneously. Circulating news, two centuries ago, was both good and bad, yet rarely quick or in real time.

When we get word that a couple is going to have a baby, we receive that as good news. I have friends who live in Cashiers, who will soon have their baby in Greenville, SC. That's Greenville SC, not Glenville, NC. Well, they are not going to actually deliver a baby, the mother is going to do that, but you get the idea. Pregnant moms usually utter just two words that set into motion a series of often rehearsed events that lead to the delivery of a baby or sometimes babies. What are those two words? "It's time." Once she says, "it's time," only one thing in life changes, "everything."

Being Christmas and all, let's think about one such world-altering, mood-altering event, likely preceded by the phrase uttered by a young teenage girl named Mary, "It's time."

So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2:6-7

I am hoping that each of us knows ourselves fairly well. I personally know myself well. I have always been with myself for my entire life. I have been present for every thought, feeling, victory and defeat I have ever experienced. There were times in my younger days when I was, what you might say, temporarily out of my mind, but for the most part I am the guy to ask about me. You are likely the same about yourself? So, knowing what you know about yourself, if God himself was to utter these words to you deep in your heart... "It's time." How would you follow up those

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 22

## Proverbs 3:5

# • PLACES TO WORSHIP •

## John 3:16

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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.

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

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Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

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Sundays: Service 10:45am, Children's 10:30am

Wednesdays: Youth 5:30-7pm; Women's Bible Study: Mondays

4:30pm, Tuesdays 10am; Men's Bible Study: Wednesdays &

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Sanctuary 10:30a; Morning Prayer Mon-Thurs 8:30a in Chapel

### 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

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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

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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

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

### HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road

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Rev. Marty Kilby

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Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

### SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

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

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### SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

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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

# • POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

**Highlands Police entries from Nov. 21. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.**

## Nov. 21

• At 10:50 a.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident at W. Church and Spring streets.

## Dec. 4

• At 4:57 p.m., officers responded to a call of a breaking and entering at a residence on Upper Lake Road where household goods valued at \$100 were taken.

## Dec. 6

• At 4:10 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on W. Church Street.

**The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Dec. 7**

## Dec. 7

• At 5:51 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of smoke on the Cashiers Road.

• At 8:27 a.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on the

**...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING from page 18**

words? "It's time." What is it time for you to do, say, confess, learn, experience that the Lord Himself would thoroughly enjoy seeing you experience?

Mary brought forth her first-born Son. Maybe it's time to make Him first or at least move up the relational rankings in your life?

*She wrapped Him in swaddling cloths...* (much like Egyptian burial cloths), like the hospital blankets for babies with the blue and pink and I think green accent stripes. Maybe it's time for you and me to be a little less wrapped up in something that keeps us from He who is meant to be the first friendship on our list.

*... and laid Him in a manger (feeding trough).* Maybe it's time we fed ourselves a more uplifting self-talk, news, and spiritual food that affords us the reality of becoming more like we eat. Perhaps it's time to open both our hearts and our Bibles while asking Him to give us a further development taste for love, truth and grace in our lives.

Cashiers Road.

## Dec. 8

• At 12:56 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on the Dillard Road.

• At 6:09 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a pedestrian being hit by a vehicle on Main Street.

## Dec. 9

• At 8:57 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Carriage Lane.

## Dec. 11

• At 6:25 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on the Dillard Road.

• At 10:08 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident between a bear and a vehicle on the Dillard Road.

## Dec. 12

• At 11:45 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Foreman Road.

• At 5:03 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a possible gas leak at a location on Main Street.

*...because there was no room for them in the inn.* Maybe our minds are a bit cluttered with racing thoughts, anxiety and fear. No room for peace? It may be time to declutter by praying for peace, resolve and hope. Is there room in your mind to birth something a bit more loving and life-giving? Is your heart cluttered with offenses, resentment, anger or hurt or even cholesterol for that matter? Maybe it's time to make room not for something else but someone else? Christ.

It's likely time for you to experience one or more of the following, in ways that you yourself know is important: It may be time for you to...grow, learn, laugh, heal, move on, explore, triumph, overcome, let go, seize, get on with it or whatever.

I don't know what you need to do or say. I do know it's always time to seek out the Christ, and do as the Magi did, bow your heart low before Him and worship Him—wherever we are...in our car, in your living room, on a golf course and yes, in a church. It's time. Merry Christmas.

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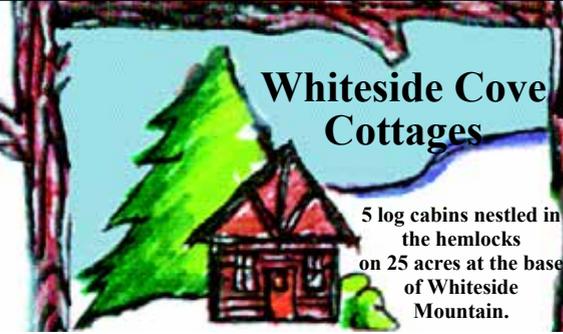
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• CLASSIFIEDS page 22

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## ...PROJECT continued from page 13

ence featured a session with the North Carolina Education Lottery to share news of the increased investment that is adding millions more to what was already earmarked for school construction.

That announcement included information about \$50 million to the new Public School Building Repair & Renovation Fund.

A \$500,000 grant goes to each of the state's 100 coun-

ties to help renovate and repair school buildings. That's in addition to \$300,000 grants provided last year. Counties must apply to receive the grants at the Office of School Construction in the N.C. Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI).

The grassroots group Advancing Highlands Education Committee (AHEC) raised funds for a planning study to be com-

pleted that determined needs of the school that initially estimated \$8 million would be needed to meet the school needs. However, that number was reduced to \$5 million ahead of the joint session with the project scope being changed to address the most pressing needs. A portion of those needed renovations includ-

ed repairs to the middle school that amounted to nearly \$700,000.

Tuesday night's vote moves the middle school renovation project is one step closer to completion.

In addition to the renovations at the middle school, LS3P Architects also won the bid to

complete the Schematic Design Contract for an expansion of the middle school, which would free up space in the elementary wing to construct two new pre-k classrooms. The renovation project is separate from the expansion project, which would create two new pre-k spaces.

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countless visitors attracted to the Highlands community year-round.

With those numbers and now over 70 years old, the current church structure is showing its age and limitations.

The current sanctuary does little to unify worshipers. Physically and visually the congregation is split in two. Half of the church faces the altar, and the other half faces the tabernacle and crucifix, all of which should be a central focus when Mass is celebrated, said Barone.

Furthermore, there is no appropriate place to gather before and after Mass, so suitable space is needed for parishioner interactions outside the sanctuary itself.

According to Father Barone, a millennium before Christ, King David was inspired to build the Temple where God could dwell among men. His vision was ambitious as he desired the building to reflect the grandeur of God and His closeness to His people.

“We, too, share King David's vision of an inspiring building that reflects the meeting of the human with the divine. Further, given the demographics of Highlands, we possess a rare opportunity to bring to fruition a truly magnificent and inspiring spiritual home,” said Barone

The new church is designed in the baroque style because the baroque design harkens back to a specific momentous time in Catholic Church history, said Barone.

After years of scandal and corruption during the Renaissance that led to the Reformation and disunity within the Church, the Holy Spirit brought about authentic renewal during the “baroque”

period. That renewal, led by the holiness of new saints, was reflected in the arts and architecture. Baroque, therefore, represents renewal from decay, or a phoenix rising from the ashes – a sign we desperately need today, said Barone. A precious gem of ecclesiastical architecture, baroque design is making a return in popularity.

Barone says the new building will exhibit the timeless grace of this period of church architecture to people within and beyond Highlands.

Rich in traditional religious symbolism, the new church will manifest God's glory and inspire a deeper reverence for the Mass and the Sacraments, embodying the good, the true, and the beautiful of the Catholic faith.

With its traditional rectangular floorplan, the sanctuary of the new church will allow all worshipers to direct their focus simultaneously on the High Altar, the tabernacle, and the crucifix.

With the blessing of Bishop Peter Jugis of the Diocese of Charlotte and by engaging Kucia Consulting, a firm that has assisted many parishes in North Carolina with capital projects, it has been determined that Our Lady of the Mountains, though small, has a robust history of giving that could support raising the \$5 million needed for the basic church structure.

However, a campaign that generates between \$7.5 million and \$10 million would fund the construction of the church proper and the potential of a parish hall and office facility that will accommodate the parish far into the future.

According to Planning Direc-

tor Michael Mathis, the structure's mostly stucco façade is allowed in the zone it occupies which is Residential 2 – in other zones in town only a small percentage of stucco is allowed.

“The stucco limitations are tied to our Community Design Standard, which governs commercially zoned parcels and multifamily housing complexes,” said Mathis. “Our Lady of the Mountains is located at 315 N 5th Street and zoned R-2 residential. Therefore, this property is not subject to the Community Design Standard.”

However before the town can approve the redevelopment it needs to see the plans to ensure they conform with the Unified Development Ordinance.

The plans must show the impervious surface calculations (built-upon area); building setbacks; building height; parking; erosion and sedimentation control; stormwater runoff and any other information requested by the Planning and Development Office.

Father Barone said beside money raised through the capital campaign, the diocese supplies in-kind administrative support from its legal, development, properties, and finance offices.

“This will save us much money, but the diocese will not be ‘cutting’ us a check,” he said.

Since January 2022, the capital campaign has raised \$7 million which means they could be on their way to developing the campus in addition to the church.

Barone said optimistically he would love to break ground the fall of 2023. “But it's too soon to give a definitive answer.

– Kim Lewicki

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