

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Aug. 24, 2023

Challenge reduces candidates to five

By Brittney Lofthouse & Kim Lewicki

The Macon County Board of Elections held a Candidate Challenge hearing Tuesday, Aug. 22 at the Macon County Court-

house in the Board of Commissioners board room.

The Challenge was against Overton "Tucker" Chambers of Highlands who signed up to be a candidate for the Highlands Town

Board which has three open seats this election cycle.

The Challenger was Derek Taylor representing Highlanders for Good Government.

• See CHALLENGE page 19



284 5-K runners, ages 2-84, took off from K-H Founders Park on Saturday.

-Photo by Brian O'Shea, Plateau Daily News

Annual 5K brings hundreds to town

By Ricky Siegel

The Rotary Club of Highlands held its' 11th Twilight 5K last Saturday afternoon with the starting line in K-H Park on Pine Street. A total of 284 runners ranging in age from 2 to 84 years old finished the course with hundreds of Highlanders and visitors

cheering participants on along the course and at the finish line back in the park.

The overall winner was Benjamin Kassel, 41, from Davidson, NC, who set a new course record.

The race was followed by music from the High Five band and upon completion, the runners

were treated to a beer compliments of The Ugly Dog.

The Twilight 5K, brainchild of Derek Taylor, raises money annually for different causes benefiting the children of Highlands, and this year about \$25,000 will go to support The Literacy and Learning Center's Pre-K program.

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Town Commissioners discuss a myriad of topics

Traffic control and near misses at the intersection of US 64 east and Little Bear Pen has been a concern for years.

At the August Town Board meeting, James Worrell, resident and spokesperson of the Little Bear Pen community, requested the town help solve the problem once and for all.

Since 2016 when NC DOT did a traffic study, the number of

vehicles that travel US 64 east past Little Bear Pen now exceeds 8,000 a day. This coupled with five roads intersecting US 64 in the area and an 85-ft. line of sight has convinced NC DOT to step in.

Though the reduction of speed approaching the area to 25 mph, the flashing speed limit signs erected last year, and mirrors have helped alert motorists, those

• See TOWN BOARD page 4

MC School buses are set to roll August 28th

By Brittney Lofthouse

As the summer days begin to wind down, the excitement of a new school year can be felt in Macon County. Students, parents, and educators are gearing up for the return to the classroom on Monday, August 28th.

In addition to the first new Superintendent for Macon County Schools in a decade with Josh

Lynch being named as Dr. Chris Baldwin's successor this summer, seven out of the district's 12 schools will have new members of their administration.

Highlands School welcomes new principal Sarah Holbrooks and new Assistant Principal Alysia DeBois

With the commencement of

• See SCHOOL page 22

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

• HIC'S VIEW •

Changes to Committe Meeting system

I fired my large kiln this weekend in preparation for the Village Square Art Show that begins on Saturday. I have been making pots since 1968, and after getting out of the Army in 1972, I thought that if I were a real potter, I would have to make my own kiln, process my own clay, and create my own glazes. I achieved those goals.

When Sallie and I moved to Highlands in 1999, I proceeded to set up a new ceramic studio. I built my fourth kiln in my ceramic career. It has been my pride and joy for the past 21 years and has always provided reliable service.

This weekend I loaded the kiln as always and began the firing process. To my surprise, one of the gas burners was misfiring. These burners have a safety system, and I keep them calibrated for a specific firing cycle. Or at least I thought so. When I witnessed the malfunction, I knew I had to take action, although I was reluctant to take the burners apart to troubleshoot the problem.

When I disassembled my old reliable burners, I immediately discovered the problem with the one that was malfunctioning. A build-up of rust and corrosion in the burner orifices and a dirt dubber nest in the housing were the culprits. I cleaned both burners



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

and reset them on the kiln. To my amazement, they fired with amazing efficiency putting out a new, beautiful blue flame. I realized that over the period where that corrosion developed, I was unaware of the gradual decline in the burners' power and efficiency.

What does this have to do with town governance? Well, sometimes, it is good to step back, be willing to take things apart and reassess what is being done. Like my burner problem, elected officials may sometimes suffer from a gradual, almost imperceptible complacency.

At the last Town Board meeting, commissioners and the mayor made a major change in the way we have been doing things for decades. The decision was to jettison the system of board committees in favor of a new workshop model. Not that the committee system was wrong, but this new workshop system may be better for communicating among ourselves and citizens about town issues.

The committee system involved complicated challenges in scheduling and informing the public of the meetings. Also, the committees of three members always meant two of our five commissioners would be out of the loop. Our new town attorney recommended considering going to an inclusive workshop model to review issues before taking official action.

The new workshop format will have several potential benefits. Workshop sessions will begin at 6 pm before each monthly Town Board business meeting. All commissioners will be present, and the public will have routine and consistent access to the sessions. Normally there will be no votes or final actions taken, and if needed, the issue will be placed on the agenda of the board meeting for the following month. That policy does not preclude actions that may require an immediate response or the option to call for a special meeting during the month.

I am optimistic that the workshop format will be a much better system, and I applaud the board for being willing to embrace a new system. I see a number of town challenges that can be better addressed in the workshops. Development, room tax distributions, utility upgrades, and funding priorities are just a few things that may be reviewed in the coming year.

On another subject, the August Community Coffee with the Mayor will be held on Friday at 11 am at the Hudson Library. I hope you can join us or come by my tent at the art show this weekend. I would love to show you the results of my kiln firing or talk with me about town stuff. I have always worn multiple hats.



• WEATHER •

Thu, 24-Aug	Fri, 25-Aug	Sat, 26-Aug	Sun, 27-Aug
83°F 61°F	85°F 64°F	84°F 64°F	80°F 61°F
A t-storm around in the p.m.	Partly sunny	A t-storm around in the p.m.	A little afternoon rain
RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®
High: 94° Low: 68°	High: 94° Low: 69°	High: 94° Low: 69°	High: 89° Low: 68°

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...TOWN BOARD continued from page 1

moves are still not enough.

According to NC DOT, the answer is Actuated Warning Lights facing traffic exiting Little Bear Pen that will flash to indicate oncoming traffic.

NC DOT will do all the work and will be responsible for maintaining the equipment, but it won't buy the materials that will cost \$65,000.

Residents of the Little Bear Pen community have raised \$17,500 and Worrell requested the town come up with the remaining amount, rounded up to \$50,000 because the cost has been increasing month after month. Worrell said in June the cost of the project was \$1,000 less than quoted last week.

The project might be eligible for grant money, but nothing is certain, so the board voted unanimously to fund the project.

Highlands Food & Wine

Casey Reid with Eleven Events, the Highlands Food & Wine presenter, was on hand via Zoom to request use of K-H Founders Park and Main Street for events over the four-day celebration Nov. 9-12.

The Grand Tasting will be at The Basement from 7-10p on Thursday, Truckin' will be in K-H Founders Park from 1-4:30p on Friday; The Main Event will be on Main Street from noon to 3:30p, and A Generous Pour will be at PAC from 8-10p, both on Saturday; and A Shot of Redemption will be in K-H Founders Park noon-3p, on Sunday.

The board voted unanimously to allow usage of town property but questioned the need to close the park all day Wednesday through Sunday, since there are no events on Wednesday.

Reid said the park would be used as a staging area for events held outside the park, which is why they wanted it a day early, but she said Events Eleven would work with the town regarding the park closure.

Chamber of Commerce lease

The Chamber of Commerce long-term lease agreement is still up in the air, but the board voted unanimously to have a year-to-year lease adopted which would be revisited each year until something long-term is finalized.

The town wanted to charge rent as a way to get about \$30,000 to pay for the maintenance and upkeep of the bathrooms in Town Square.

The problem is the Chamber doesn't make enough money to afford \$30,000 a year; rent money would have to come from room tax money that goes to Visit Highlands that shares the building with the Chamber.

However, room tax money can only be spent on tourist-related activities. Though Town Attorney Bob Hagemann thought the bathrooms, which are basically used by tourists, were an applicable use, the county attorney said it wasn't. Since the county is the pass-through agency for the money, it has to agree to the terms.

Meanwhile, the chamber board has come up with ways to pay the town through room tax money, mainly by paying the town to use its property for events, but those terms are being deliberated.

Until then, the chamber rent will be \$1 a year.

NC 106 Sidewalk

The NC 106 sidewalk plan is a go as far as Shelby Place is concerned, which was the only entity that had stipulations concerning foliage removal and replacement, but now the town has to make sure the sidewalk is ADA compliant due to the lay of the land.

Different apparatus has been discussed but the town is going to consult with NC DOT to see if ADA requirements can be met without costing a fortune.

Town Committees

Last month Attorney Hagemann suggested the town change the way it has been conducting its standing committee meetings for decades and suggested – though open to the public – they might not be entirely legal.

Three commissioners are assigned to various committees – Finance, Public Works, Recreation, Land Use, Sustainability and Community Wellness, Business Group, and Scholarship. The committees meet as needed and as Commissioner John Dotson said, some haven't met for years.

Typically, three commissioners and two staff members attend the meetings. Issue discussions are then continued at monthly Town Board meetings for more discussion and sometimes a vote.

Last month, Hagemann suggested the committee meetings, typically held early in the morning were not completely legal and should be handled differently.

After much discussion, the board voted to hold worksessions instead of individual committee meetings so all the commissioners and the public could hear the issues at the same time which could then be voted upon at a subsequent Town Board meeting.

So now if needed, worksessions will precede Town Board meetings at 6 p.m. the third Thursday of each month and will be added to the Town Board agenda. Like Town Board meetings, worksessions are open to the public.

- Kim Lewicki

• INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft. •

Reasons why you should use a Real Estate professional

Real Estate Brokers or Agents provide valuable services to buyers, sellers and renters, as well as property management services. Here on the plateau, there are a number of reasons buyers and sellers should use the services of a real estate professional who has experience and market knowledge.

1) For sellers, to ascertain the true value of a property as compared to other properties that have sold. There are many factors that a "Zestimate"

doesn't take into consideration like views, the condition of a house, if it has been updated or if it is furnished. An asking price of a similar property doesn't mean that is what the property is worth or will sell for.

2) For buyers that are looking to do a vacation rental, or specifically wanting to avoid that, the agent must explain what the regulations are. Is the property within the town limits or not and has it previously been a rental or not? Are there many rentals in an area a buyer is looking? Many neighborhoods or developments have their own rental restrictions, with none of them being quite the same. Agents help navigate through future rentals that are booked and which ones must be honored; or how to transition a rental listing from one owner to another.

3) Regarding clubs and their developments, the Agent knows which clubs require membership if you purchase within the development and which clubs do not. Or, if you must own property within the development in order to be a member and what the membership requirements might be. What are the different club options and the differences between them? Is the club accepting new member applications or not and roughly, what are the costs?

4) An agent answers questions about community amenities within developments and within the town or county. Just because a buyer wants access to Pickleball, a pool or fitness facility doesn't mean that they must join a club. There are several different options available.

5) The agent must know about expenses or fees that are required such as Homeowners Association, road maintenance and shared well or community water. What is included in the HOA fees and what amenities are available? What is the difference in the HOA fee and a condo-



Carl Romberg
Landmark Realty

minium association fee?

6) There are specific issues relevant to different condominium units. Hardwood floors are not allowed in upstairs units of some condominiums. Some units are winterized and cannot be used in the winter months. Is it an adult only community or are pets allowed? These all are important to some buyers.

7) An agent has contacts to use for financing, home inspections, wood destroying

insect reports, surveys, chimney and septic inspections. If there are issues found, what contractors can provide estimates? Many times, this requires additional negotiation between the buyer and seller.

8) Furnishings are always a factor. The agent knows if a property is being sold furnished or not, and can advise what to do with the furnishings if they are not wanted by the buyer. Or, if it is an estate type situation, advise how to dispose of items and stage the home so it can be sold.

9) There are many different utility providers and what type of internet is available is very important. Many buyers intend to work from home and must have fast and reliable internet. Many remote areas only have access to satellite internet, which hasn't been good in the past but seems to be improving. There are better options in town or within developments that offer fiber optic.

10) I find that I receive calls, texts and emails from past clients on a regular basis that are in need of some type of service. It could be due to an emergency or a plan for some improvement in the future. A good agent will have a list of service providers (some more reliable than others) and can direct the client in the right direction.

In addition to knowledge of these odd items, an agent should furnish examples of listing agreements, contracts and explain them in detail. They can assist with completing the required disclosures and will prepare the listing or purchase documents. Professionals handle the marketing of properties, manage the showings, and arrange access to listings. They present offers and advise clients through the negotiations. The agent keeps certain information confidential and has fiduciary

• See INVESTING page 8

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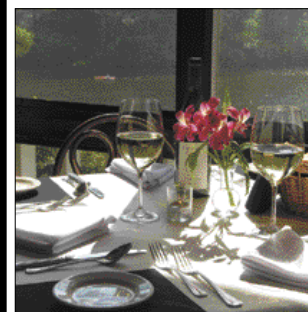
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• LETTERS •

Evidently, Highlands visitors aren't tourists

Dear Editor,

I was so glad Mayor Taylor cleared the air about Highlands NOT being a tourist destination. All these years I thought it was. I guess I got that idea every time I drove down Main Street in the summer and saw over 75% of the 200+ parking places with cars from outside NC.

And, the NC tags may be visitors from other parts of the state and not residents of Highlands

Thank you, Mayor Taylor for setting me straight.

Carol Sandlin
Highlands

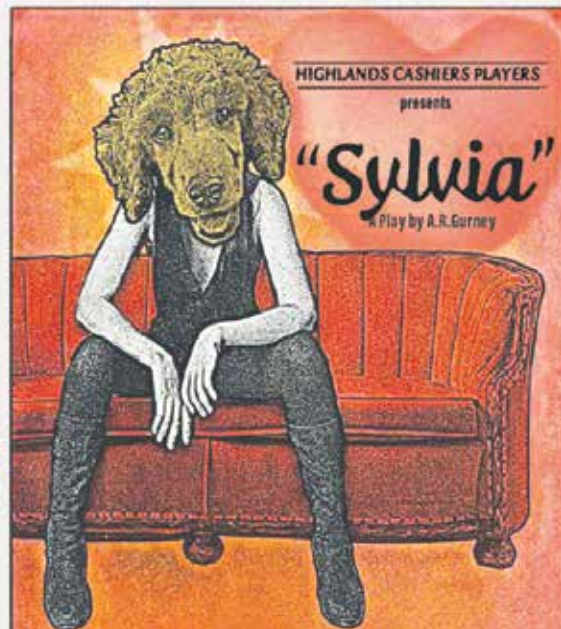
We need our ATM!

Dear Editor,

Why is Wells Fargo Bank thumbing its nose at Highlands? Those of us who bank there will have noticed that the ATM in Highlands Plaza has been out of service for two weeks.

First Wells Fargo closed the Highlands branch. At that point I met with the branch manager of the Cashiers branch and indicated that, while this was an inconvenience, I could manage so long as there was an ATM in Highlands. This would mean visits to a branch office could be kept to a man-

• See LETTERS page 13



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...INVESTING continued from page 4

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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



Mountain Findings' President, Jill Helmer with TL&LC's Bonnie Potts.

Mountain Findings awards \$25,000 Grant to Literacy & Learning Center for Pre-K Initiative

The Literacy & Learning Center in our community has received a \$25,000 grant from Mountain Findings, to support their new prekindergarten (pre-K) initiative. With over 70 children on the waitlist, there is a clear and pressing need for this program.

The center's pre-K program sets the tone for these young students' futures by inspiring them to learn, enhancing their verbal and cognitive development, and improving their social and emotional skills. This type of early childhood education has been proven to be one of the most cost-effective ways to close achievement gaps and break the cycle of poverty.

When the pre-K at Highlands School was put on hold indefinitely by the Macon County Board of Commissioners, the Literacy & Learning Center stepped up to

create its program that will be certified by North Carolina.

Mountain Findings' President, Jill Helmer, expresses the organization's 100% support of this initiative and recognizes the hard work that went into creating this robust program.

Helmer further adds the grant will go towards supporting the pre-K program's development and ensuring that children in our community have access to quality early childhood education.

The Literacy & Learning Center's dedication to education and serving the needs of our community is admirable, and we can't wait to see the positive impact this program will have on the children it serves.

For more on Mountain Findings visit www.MountainFindings.org.

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• HOSPITAL NEWS •

New Sweeten Creek Mental Health and Wellness Center addresses the Behavioral Healthcare needs

Rural hospitals have suffered from mass closures over the last 15 years, but those who live in these areas need advanced healthcare as much as those in densely populated cities. I'm not just referring to caring for patients' physical bodies either. The need is great for mental health services — also referred to as behavioral health care — in rural areas as well.

Our communities on the Plateau and all of Western North Carolina can now count the new Sweeten Creek Mental Health and Wellness Center as an important resource for advanced, evidence-based behavioral health care. The 84,000-square foot facility is just a couple miles from Mission Hospital in Asheville and represents both a \$65 million investment in local mental health services by HCA Healthcare and a meaningful solution to the problem of behavioral health care "deserts" that exist within so many rural communities



**Tom Neal CEO, CNO
Highlands-Cashiers
Hospital**

across the country. The need for services is great, and the Sweeten Creek Mental Health and Wellness Center is meeting it, with its 120 inpatient beds and future plans for an additional 40+ beds.

The Center will offer treatment to children as young as four, and on up to older adults. Inpatient and intensive outpatient services will be available to adolescents and adults, and treatment for all patients will be individualized to meet their specific needs.

The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, traumatic experiences, chronic illness, and everyday stress are just some of the contributors to the alarming increase in mental disorder diagnoses in the United States, especially over the last decade. When you mix this with the fact that there is a shortage of mental health providers, it's a recipe for a bitter stew of unmet healthcare needs.

Anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideations are plaguing our children and adolescents in particular, and the United States Preventive Task Force (USPSTF) now advises that all adults get screened for depression, including older adults. Just one alarming statistic is that, according to the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 77% of counties in our country have a deficit of mental health care providers that is considered severe. Further, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reports that additional barriers to getting proper mental health services for rural res-

idents include limited broadband internet access, a lack of sufficient health insurance or any insurance at all, and the persistent stigma that surrounds seeking help for mental health concerns.

We can practice all the positive self-care strategies that are out there — and that I've talked about in this column — things like eating a healthy diet, exercising, connecting with friends, and engaging in an activity that builds mindfulness, such as meditation, and still find ourselves struggling with depression, anxiety, and intrusive thoughts. There are also many who live with diagnosed mental illnesses that must be carefully managed, like bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

The new Sweeten Creek Mental Health and Wellness Center is expertly designed, beautiful, and tranquil. The community had the opportunity to see it last month at an Open House that was hosted on July 18th, where staff members led tours of the facility, explained in greater detail what their services would encompass, and answered visitors' questions. They also highlighted the patient-friendly amenities — both indoor and outdoor — at the Center. It is located on a sprawling 25-acre campus that offers courtyards, a basketball court, and a horticulture area, while the inside boasts a cafeteria, gymnasium, and areas for music and art therapy, among other benefits.

Though community members can access services at the Center by being referred by their physician, they can also self-refer by calling 828-213-4696. A game changing capability that opens up the Center's services to the entire region is that, no matter where you live in western North Carolina, you can get help via telehealth and receive telepsych services remotely. This technology breaks down one of the most persistent barriers to care.

The Sweeten Creek Mental Health & Wellness Center is

• See HOSPITAL page 12

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For more information:
events@highlandschamber.org
828-526-5841

This event is made possible by the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/
Visit Highlands, N.C.

• INK PENN •

Keep calm and carry on

It's possible I'm stuck in a rut, or maybe I have a reading hangover from my summer trip to England's Lake District. Whatever the reason, my recent reads are all set in England. This week's list contains two set during WWII and a third set in modern times. If my TBR pile is any indication, this trend may continue for quite some time.

Playing it Safe by Ashley Weaver

This is yet another Electra McDonnell book I couldn't put down. I love this spunky heroine--her willfulness, her confidence in the face of adversity, and her no-nonsense attitude.

Once again summoned by "the Major" for a spot of undercover work, she rises to the challenge. It's WWII in London during the blitz, and she must travel to Sunderland with an assumed identity.

The subplots continue in this engaging series: Electra's dalliance with her friend Felix, the sparks between her and the Major, and her quest to discover more about her mother.

I am hooked on this series, and I can't wait until the fourth book arrives. Meanwhile, I've picked up Book two in Weaver's Amory Ames series. The first one was well written and entertaining but not quite as intriguing to me as the Electra McDonnell books.

Untrue Blue by Emma Jameson

Some readers find a series they like and binge-read every book. I prefer to savor them, and so it's been with this series by Emma Jameson. Each title in this seven-book series contains the word Blue. The first—"Ice Blue"—introduces Lord Anthony Hetheridge and Kate and Deepal, his subordinates on the Toff Squad at Scotland Yard. Lord Hetheridge is the perfect person to lead this unit, dedicated to handling crimes involving members of Britain's upper class. He's a Lord, and he's rich, but he's also a respected member of Scotland Yard.

I have thoroughly enjoyed this series ever since I stumbled upon it several years



Kathy Manos Penn

ago. The relationships among the three key characters continue to evolve, often in surprising ways.

As with the rest of the series, this book has dark elements combined with wit and humor and likeable characters. It's also filled with twists and turns and surprises concerning three cold cases. Though it was published in 2021, and the note at the end

says there will be more to follow, I've seen no mention of anything on the horizon. I hope something appears soon!

If the premise appeals to you, I recommend you start with "Ice Blue."

Bones at the Manor House by Emma Jameson

Emma Jameson is equally adept at writing mysteries set during WWII. After enjoying the Blue series, I looked for other books by her and discovered the Dr. Benjamin Bones mystery series.

When a bloodless corpse is found in a manor house in a small Cornish village, Dr. Bones and Lady Juliet have their work cut out for them. The bumbling local bobby, of course, is clueless, and wants only to close the case and get back to ensuring villagers are adhering to blackout protocol and gasoline rationing.

Book two in what appears to be only a three-book series is another delightful outing with Dr. Bones and Lady Juliet in 1939 England. The murder mystery and the subplot concerning the two amateur sleuths and their relationship will keep you guessing.

Despite having a never-ending TBR list, I've already grabbed the third book, "Bones Takes a Holiday." If you like gentle mysteries, this one's for you.

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

...HOSPITAL continued from page 10

providing needed services to patients and families and the expansiveness of the facility, created with an eye toward the future, allows for more services today and tomorrow. When we can speak without shame about mental health needs — our own and

our loved ones' — we can understand the importance of seeking therapy or taking prescribed medication for a mental health diagnosis. In order to be our healthiest, both our physical and mental health must be supported.

...LETTERS continued from page 3

ageable minimum. I was assured that there would always be a functional ATM in Highlands located at Highlands Plaza.

After the ATM had been out of service for four days I contacted the Cashiers branch to report the outage and ask that they work to restore it. I was told that "we have reported it." Nothing happened. The ATM has now been out of service to date (August 19) for two weeks and I have reported this to the Cashiers branch three times, always being given the platitude "Well, we've reported it."

Since these reports have gone unanswered I sought out the higher level of Wells Fargo management, as suggested. This, I have learned, is impossible. I asked to speak to the Cashiers branch manager. He isn't yet on the job, since he is still in training. He did call me with more platitudes, "We're reporting it."

Believing that a higher level of management might have greater influence in solving the problem, I asked to speak to the regional manager. Turns out that the only way to accomplish this is for the local (Cashiers) branch to email the regional manager and ask for a response. Done.

Never responded. Is this Wells Fargo's way of telling its Highlands customers that there will no longer be an ATM in town?

My spouse and I have had multiple accounts with Wells Fargo for many years including accounts with Wells Fargo Advisors. Because this bank has thumbed its nose at its customers in Highlands, perhaps it is time to say to them that we are fed up.

Jack Sapolsky
Highlands

'Informed Deliver' will solve the mail delivery problem

Dear Editor,

In response to Mr. and Mrs. Bell's Letter-to-the-Editor entitled "Why isn't our mail getting delivered?" in the Aug. 3 edition. The Bells need to subscribe to "Informed Deliver" which is a free online service provide by the USPS. On a daily basis they will receive an e-mail Notice of items to be delivered.

Jim Oesterle
Highlands, NC

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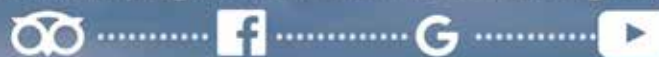
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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

POOL SCHEDULE

• Lap Swim: Mon.-Fri., 6.-9:45a, and Sat., 10a-11p - 6 lanes. Water Aerobics: 18 yrs plus, Mon.-Fri. 10-11am with Karen Chambers. Public Swim Mon. thru Thurs. 11a-7p; Fri. and Sat. 11a-6p and Sun. 1-6p. For info, call 828-526-1595.

ONGOING

• The "Kids Hike Highlands" trail passport program has been refreshed for the 2023 season. pick up a copy of the Kids Hike Highlands passport map at one of the four prize locations or you can download a copy at www.highland-

sbiological.org.

Mon.-Fri.

• Nantahala Tennis plays at the Highlands Rec Park 9a-1p.

Mon-Wed, Fri-Sun

• Alcoholics Anonymous: "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. program of recovery. Highlands Mountain View Group holds open meetings in Highlands at the First Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 PM and Wednesday and Friday at noon. The Cashiers Valley Group holds

open meetings at the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library Tuesday at 7 PM, Friday and Sunday at 5 PM, and Saturday at 9 AM. A ZOOM meeting is available Wednesday at 7PM (ID# 921 817 2966, password CVG2020). For more information, please visit www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of AA 24/7 at 828-349-4357

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 5-6:30pm 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. For more information contact Bud Katz at either 828-526-3190 or at 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.

Wednesdays

• Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health topics, held on the first Wednesday of each month at 11 AM. This series is aimed particularly at older adults and will focus on mental health topics of particular interest to them, but all ages are welcome to attend.

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 info, call 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.

Tuesdays

• At Hudson Library, Nature Kids on selected Tuesday mornings. For more info call the Hudson Library at 828-526-3031

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Workshop for Writers – Tuesdays from 5-6:30 PM. Facilitated by Sam Renken, this group has a simple mission: to foster and provide consistent community for local writers thereby giving writers of all ages and genres the opportunity to write, read, revise, and present their work to the group.

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

Tues. & Thurs.

• Zumba class with Gay Chaplin 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

Thurs. through Aug. 10

• Highlands Biological Foundation's free Zahner lectures at the

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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

Highlands Nature Center (930 Horse Cove Road) at 6 p.m. To preview HBF's full Zahner lecture lineup, please visit www.highlandsbiological.org.

Thurs-Sat.

• Highlands Historical Society Museum at 320 N. 4th Street is open 10a to 4p through October.

Mountain Findings Thrift Store on Spruce Street is open 10a-1p through October.

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, Family Storytime continues throughout the year on Thursday mornings at 10:40 AM.

• 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.

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Chair Yoga – from 4-5 PM. If you are interested in greater strength and flexibility but have difficulty getting up and down from a sitting or reclining posture.

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Gentle Mat Yoga – from 5-6 PM. Looking for greater strength?

Join Dana Thiele at the chapel for Gentle Mat Yoga on the Deck. With more than 20 years experience,

3rd Fridays

• 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.

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 St. in their community room/909 chapel. We serve breakfast at 9 AM and hold our monthly meeting at 10 AM. We invite ALL veterans to attend - email ncpost370@gmail.com for more information or just join us at 9 AM on the 3rd Saturday of the month.

Sundays

• Church in the Wildwood Hymn Sing Sundays 7-8 p.m. through Sept. 3. 828-506-0125.

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Sunday Service: 10 AM Sunday Morning. Stick around for visitation and coffee hour immediately after service. (Coffee hour is replaced by potluck dinner the 1st Sunday of each month).

• Soiree for Pre-K at the Vineyard at High

Holly, 5:30 p.m. until. \$250 per person. Eight per table. Includes Dinner, drinks and dancing. Featuring Steel Toe Stilletto from Greenville, SC. For tickets call 828-526-0863. Or email, info@TheLiteracyandLearningCenter.org.

Thurs., Aug. 24

• At OEI's The Farm, from 6-8 p.m., Ni-

cole Witt a nationally-touring, award-winning Nashville songwriter and multi-instrumentalist known for the soaring melodies and clever turns of phrase that have brought her national acclaim in the country, bluegrass, and Christian music scenes. Tickets are \$40.

• See EVENTS page 16

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• HIGHLANDS EVENTS •

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Aug. 25-Sept. 2

• The annual Cashiers Designer Showhouse theme this year is "Historically Cashiers" and features a classic mountain retreat in The Club at High Hampton. For more call 828-743-7710.

Tues. - Fri., Aug. 22-25

• The Highlands-Cashiers Players presents "Sylvia" at 7:30p at the Highlands Performing Arts Center. Tickets can be purchased at highlandsp Performing Arts Center or at the door. Tickets are \$35.

Fri., Aug. 25

• Please join us on Friday at 11 a.m. in the Hudson Library Meeting Room for Community Coffee with the Mayor. The topic will be: "Future Issues Facing Highlands."

• Hudson Library is excited to welcome Nancy Silberkleit, co-CEO of Archie Comics, for a Books & Bites program on Friday at 1 PM. She'll talk about the history of Archie Comics, her remarkable story of becoming CEO, and the power of comics and graphic novels to inspire a love of reading. Books will be available for purchase and signing at this free program.

Tues. - Fri., Aug. 29-Sept. 1
• The Highlands-Cashiers Players presents "Sylvia" at 7:30p at the Highlands Performing Arts Center. Tickets can be purchased at highlandsp Performing Arts Center or at the door. Tickets are \$35.

Tues., Aug. 29

• The Coalition for Non-native Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM) is holding a volunteer workday to tackle Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), a fast-growing vine found throughout the Plateau. We will be treating a large patch along a town sidewalk on Tuesday from 1:30 4 PM. Those interested in volunteering should bring gloves and meet at the ball-park on Hickory Street. Tools and water will be provided.

• At Hudson Library, Author Talk: Dorothy Padgett author of Jimmy Carter: Elected President with Pocket Change and Peanuts, on Tuesday at 2 PM. Books will be available for purchase and signing at this free program.

Thurs., Aug. 31

• The Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC will host a free community shred event 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Highlands Plaza, near Bryson's Food Store on

NC 106. To ensure a smooth process, we kindly request participants to transport their items in plastic bags or bins. Allowed: paper products with staples or paper clips, spiral notebooks. Not Allowed: 3-ring binders and cardboard. Donations on-site to support two local organizations, The Gordon Center and HCCDC.

• At The Vineyard in Scaly Mountain, A Cause for the Paws Summer Fling 4-7 p.m. Food, art-work, live and silent auction, prizes and live music. Tickets are \$50. All proceeds to benefit the Appalachian Animal Rescue Center. Tickets available at Rosewood Market in Highlands and at the Franklin Chamber of Commerce, Silver Threads, Creekside Gazebo, AARC Thrift Store all in Franklin and Christie's Home Decor in Otto.

Fri. Sept. 1

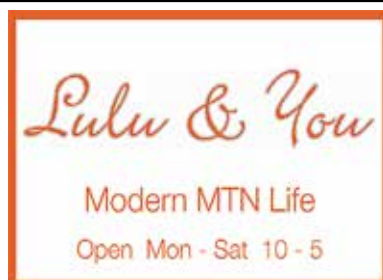
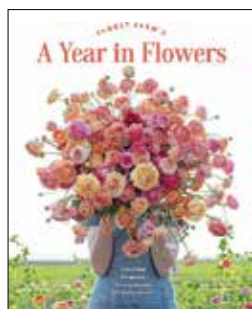
• Friends and customers of Shakespeare & Co. are invited to attend a gathering from 4-6p in honor of our dearly missed, late founder, Katherine Willoughby. We'll have libations and hors d'oeuvres from Fresser's and the Secret Garden. Come share your stories of Katherine and Rugby!

Sat., Sept. 9

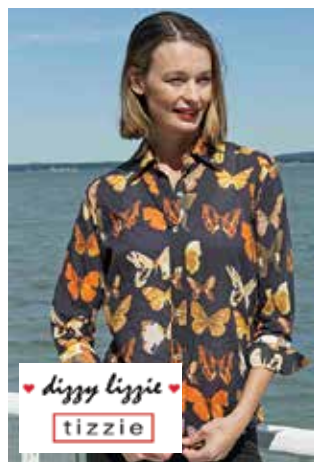
• The Highlands Historical Society presents The Dahlia Festival.

Wed., Sept. 13

• Would you like to be a mentor? Mission's Parent Mentor Orientation Training is for parents who understand the unique experience of raising a child with a disability, mental health challenge, or special healthcare need. Since 1985, Mission Children's Hospital Family Support Network (FSN) has connected parents to volunteer parents who are uniquely qualified to help because of shared experiences. At our upcoming Parent Mentor Orientation Training, parents are trained to offer support in meaningful ways for families undergoing a new diagnosis, transition, or crisis. This training offers volunteer parents the tools they need to support others and become an official FSN Parent Mentor. Training is being offered from 10am-12:30pm; sessions will be at Mission Children's at 11 Vanderbilt Park Dr., Asheville. To register, call 828-213-0047 or email mhav.familysupportnetwork@hcahealthcare.com



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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



Derek Taylor, Highlands Rotary – Twilight 5K



Henry Ross, Friends of Founders Park

Visit Highlands awards grants to nonprofits

Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC recently presented local non-profits with grant and sponsorship monies.

Friends of Founders Park received \$2,500.

Highlands Rotary that sponsors the annual Twilight 5K \$3,000.

Visit Highlands, NC supports local nonprofits through a Tourism Grant program and Sponsorships which are funded by occupancy tax paid by guests staying in Highlands' accommodations.

located on Main Street in the March-

ant-Parker-Davis-Patterson House, its

Highlands Welcome Center is open to all who visit, live and work in the community. The Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC hosts an array of special events and programs throughout the year, including the Plateau Pick-Up, Leadership Highlands, Business After Hours, the Outdoor Concert Series, Meander in May, July 4th Fireworks and an array of holiday and winter festivities.

For more information about applying for a Tourism Grant or Sponsorship email grants@highlandschamber.org.



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**HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS
HOSPITAL**



• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



From left: HEC Vice President Marie Johnson, Teresa Speed, Mary Ann Creswell, President Andy Eidson.

- Photo by Marty Boone

The Highlands Emergency Council held a "Mix & Mingle" fundraising party on Saturday, August 19 at the Conference Center. Along with an abundance of food and beverages, a silent auction and multiple raffle items, this year the Council honored recently retired President Teresa Speed and board member/grants administrator Mary Ann Creswell for their more than 30 years of service.

Megan Van Der Linde named new executive director of The Gordon Center



Megan Van Der Linde

The Gordon Center for Children welcomed Megan Van Der Linde as Executive Director. Her background is rooted in childcare, leadership and program development.

She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Child and Family Development from Georgia Southern University. She then spent time developing teacher training, conducting classroom observations

and environment changes for a franchised childcare center in Columbus, GA before being appointed Senior Director.

In the important role of Executive Director, Megan will be in charge of the overall management of the center, as well as fostering and cultivating partnerships with other organizations and the community at large.

Megan comes to us with a wealth of knowledge in nonprofit leadership. As our newest staff member, dedicated to driving our organizational fundraising and development, we are very excited to have Megan as part of our team.

The public will have an opportunity to meet Megan at our Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser on Thursday, Sept. 14 in the Faith and Fellowship Center at Highlands United Methodist Church. Tickets are \$10 per person and include pasta, bread, meat, salad and a drink. Bake sale items will be available for purchase. There will also be silent auction items to bid on that have been generously donated by local businesses.

Contact the Center for tickets or more information at (828) 526-3376.

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Rev. Oliver Rice. Pastor (828) 421-1315

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

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

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

BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Aryn Williams-Reubel. Pastor 828-743-5298

Sundays: School at 9:30 Worship 10:30

Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

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Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999

Sundays: 10 a.m. Worship; Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

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Rev'd Dr. Michael Matlock, Rector

464 Hwy 64E. Cashiers, NC 828-743-1701

CAC@christanglicancashiers.org & 828-743-1701

Sundays: 9:30 am Adult Christian Formation;

10:30 am Holy Eucharist Worship

Wednesdays: 6 pm Bible Study, Prayer, Potluck

Thursdays: 10 am Healing Eucharist

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS

Pastor Brent Metcalf • 743-5470

www.cashiers.church

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

Tues. Guys study 8am. Gals 10am.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

283 Spring Street - Sunday Service: 10:30 a.m.

Testimony meeting: 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard

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

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

Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685

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

Sundays: 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 &

Thursdays 7am @ Zookeeper Bistro

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY

706.746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447

Pastor Steve Kerhoulas

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

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

Rev. W. Bentley Manning, Rector • 526-2968

5th and Main streets • www.incarnationwnc.org

Sunday: Rite I, spoken, 8 am in Chapel, Rite II with Choir 10:30

am in Sanctuary, Wed: Healing Eucharist 12 pm in Chapel, Morn-

ing Prayer: Mon-Thurs 8:30 am 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; Women's 10:30 am

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Emily Wilmarth, pastor

828-526-3175 • fpchighlands.org

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

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

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

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

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

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

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road

The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily

sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.

Sunday Worship is at 9a. Wednesday Worship is 6:30p

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 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.

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

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and Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur.

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church

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

4224 Big Ridge Road (4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

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

Tues. - 9:30am; Thurs. - 9:30am; Sat. 4pm; Sun. - 11am

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

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.

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer

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

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

ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Aug. 11. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Aug. 11

• At 3:03 p.m., officers responded to a report of a larceny at Reeves Ace Hardware where 10 railroad ties were taken.

Aug. 12

• At 4 p.m., officers responded to a report of a larceny at the Highlands Emergency Council where household goods were taken from the desk.

Aug. 17

• At 2:02 p.m., officers responded to a motor vehicle accident at Main Street and South 5th Street.

• At 7 p.m., Katrina Marie Diaz, 38, of Oxford, FL, was arrested for DUI when stopped on NC 28 and 3rd street. She was issued an unsecured bond. Her trial date is Sept. 6.

Aug. 16

• At 1:30 p.m., officers responded to a motor vehicle accident on Main and Oak streets.

Aug. 19

• At 1:51 p.m., officers responded to a report of someone possessing drug paraphernalia at a residence on Biscuit Rock Road. Where a small baggie with crystal-like substance was found.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Aug. 16

Aug. 16

• At 8:35 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

• At 11:33 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Skyline Lodge Road. It was false.

Aug. 17

• At 4:06 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Hickory Knut Gap.

• At 5:55 p.m., the dept. responded to a call from North Cobb Road about smoke.

Aug. 19

• At 2:07 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Old Edward Lane.

• At 7:04 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Naiad Terrace.

Aug. 21

• At 12:04 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east.

• At 3:21 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Whiteside Mountain Road.,

Aug. 22

• At 9:09 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of smoke at a location on Billy Cabin Road.

• At 12:03 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Cullasaja Club Drive where someone was suffering from heat exposure.

...CHALLENGE continued from page 1

Tucker and his wife were present. Taylor was not able to attend in person so both he and the court reporter participated via Zoom.

The Challenge Hearing was originally set for Tuesday, Aug. 15. However, when a member of the panel chosen by the North Carolina State Board of Elections (NCSBE) notified the group that he couldn't attend that day, the date was changed to Tuesday, Aug. 22.

An email was sent out to participants and the media announcing the new date, but Taylor says he wasn't included on the email list. Consequently, he wasn't able to explain that he wouldn't be able to attend in person due to previous plans that involved being out of the country.

The court reporter who would normally have been assigned was working a trial so she couldn't attend either.

Highlanders for Good Government hired attorney Ward Collins to deliberate the challenge which involved Chambers' residency.

Highlanders for Good Government contested the validity of Chambers' primary residential address contending that he didn't live within the town limits of Highlands which is a requirement to run for Town Board.

Evidence presented by Taylor showed that prior to the pending election, Chambers was registered to vote and has always been registered to vote at an address located on Hedden Lane. Taylor claimed that his registration address was changed to 401 N. 5th Street in town just prior to filing for office.

The panel assembled by NCSBE to assess the challenge was Chairperson Kathy Tinsley, Vice Chairman Gary Dills, Member John Vanhook, Member Jeff Gillette, and Kirk Stephens, who chairs the Jackson County Board of Elections. This panel was tasked with evaluating the evidence presented by both parties involved.

Macon County Board of Elections Director Melanie Thibault chaired the challenge but didn't vote.

Chambers said his driver's license has always displayed the 401 N. 5th Street in Highlands as his address and his personal and business mail has always gone to that address, too, so he thought he could change his voter registration without a problem.

In Chambers' opening statement he said he believed in good government.

"Highlands has been my home for generations and that home has been this house. I changed my voter registration to 401 N. 5th street. I don't own the property, but my driver's license and other documents have that address on it," he said.

He went on to explain his reason for running.

"I decided to run for councilman because my business is being affected by what's going on with the Town Board. I have a lot of clients who have property that the town government is trying to control," he said. "The Highlands government is overriding people's property rights and it is being discriminatory. It's putting property owners against property owners."

In his opening statement, Attorney Collins asked if this looks like a case where somebody is trying to get around a requirement?

"Does this look like permanent intent of abandonment and forever removing themselves from the place they have lived over 20 years? Evidence will show that this doesn't pass muster," he said.

The panel said having a second home doesn't count against a person, but one of the homes has to be the permanent domicile.

Though Chambers said he splits his time between the Hedden address and the in-town address, since he said he wasn't willing to abandon his domicile on Hedden Lane and make 401 N. 5th Street his permanent home, the panel ruled against him.

After reviewing the evidence and arguments made by both Chambers and Collins, the panel arrived at a unanimous decision to uphold the challenge against Chambers.

Consequently, Chambers was disqualified from running for a Town Board seat in the upcoming Highlands municipal election.

This ruling emphasizes the significance of adhering to residency prerequisites to ensure that candidates genuinely represent the community where they reside.

The panel said they appreciated the passion for and commitment he and his family has had for Highlands over the years.

Five candidates will be on the Nov. 7 ballot: incumbents John Dotson and Brian Stiehler, and newcomers Rachel Wilson, Jeff Weller and Kay Craig.

Coming Saturday to PAC



The Highlands Performing Arts Center will present NC comedian, Kelly Swanson in Who Hijacked My Fairy Tale on Saturday, August 26, 2023, at 7:30 pm.

This powerful one-woman comedy/theatrical production from award winning storyteller Kelly Swanson is everything you want in the perfect "Night Out." A heartwarming story paved with belly-laughs the entire way. Curl up on the sofa with Kelly, her best friend Chardonnay, and the cast of characters who show up to tell the story of a wayward southern belle trying to find her happy ending. As you stand in her story, you find yourself standing in your own story, and realize that fairy tales do come true...IF you have the courage to redefine them.

Tickets available online: www.HighlandsPerformingArts.com 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands NC 28741

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8/31



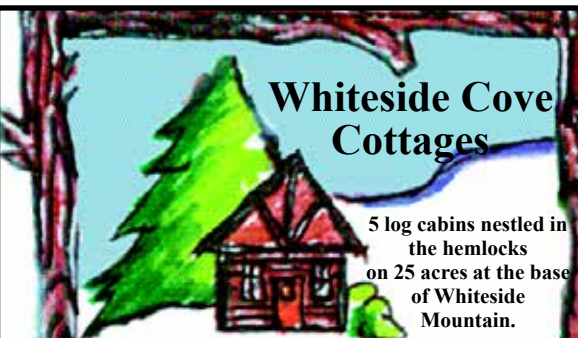
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• HIGHLANDS SCHOOL SPORTS •



Highlands Hannah Valerio returns a Robbinsville serve on Tuesday at home. Highlands JV swept Robbinsville 2-0
- Photo by Brian O'Shea, Plateau Daily News



From left, Highlands Aislynn Wyatt-Luck and Cayden Pierson shut down a Robbinsville tip. Varsity lost 3-0.
- Photo by Brian O'Shea, Plateau Daily News

...SCHOOL continued from page 1

the new school year, safety remains a paramount concern for everyone in the community. As parents and students make their way to schools, it's crucial to keep traffic safety a top priority, especially when school buses and teen drivers are back on the road.

School buses play a vital role in transporting students to and from school safely. According to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), school buses are among the safest modes of transportation for students.

In North Carolina, motorists are required by law to stop for a school bus that is stopped to pick up or drop off students. This includes stopping when traveling in both directions on a two-lane road, a two-lane road with a center turning lane, or a four-lane road without a median separation. Failure to stop for a school bus can result in fines and penalties.

According to NHTSA, school bus-related accidents are relatively rare, accounting for only a small fraction of overall traffic accidents in the United States. School buses are designed with safety features like high seat backs, compartmentalization, and bright exterior colors to enhance visibility.

It's important for students and parents to know the proper procedures for safely boarding and exiting school buses. Students should always wait a safe distance

away from the road at their designated bus stop and follow the driver's instructions when getting on and off the bus.

The start of the school year also marks the return of teen drivers to the roads. Young drivers, often newly licensed, should be especially cautious as they share the road with school buses and pedestrians. Parents and guardians are encouraged to reinforce safe driving practices, including obeying speed limits, avoiding distractions, and always wearing seat belts.

Being mindful of school buses and following traffic laws helps create a secure environment for students and drivers alike. By prioritizing safety, we can set a positive tone for the entire school year and foster a sense of community responsibility.

Free Lunches Offered at 9 of 12 schools

When students return for school next week, students at East Franklin Elementary, Union Academy, Cartoogechaye Elementary, South Macon Elementary, Iotla Valley Elementary, Mountain Valley Intermediate, Nantahala School, Macon Middle School and Macon Early College will all receive free breakfast and lunch through the federal government's Community Eligibility Provisions. East Franklin and Union Academy students qualified prior to this school year for free lunch and all schools qualified for free breakfast.

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a non-pricing meal service option for schools and school districts in low-income areas. CEP allows the nation's highest-poverty schools and districts to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications. Instead, schools that adopt CEP are reimbursed using a formula based on the percentage of students categorically eligible for free meals based on their participation in other specific means-tested programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Franklin High School, Highlands School, and Macon Virtual Academy will not qualify for the program for the upcoming school year. For those students, the cost of lunch will be \$3.75 for PreK-4th grade and \$3.85 for 5th-12th grade.

Despite nine schools in the district qualifying for free meals, families are urged to still fill out the free lunch forms before the school year starts, because those forms are used to determine what reimbursement the district gets for providing the free meals. Without those forms, the district might not qualify for free meals in the future, or the county would be left paying the bill.

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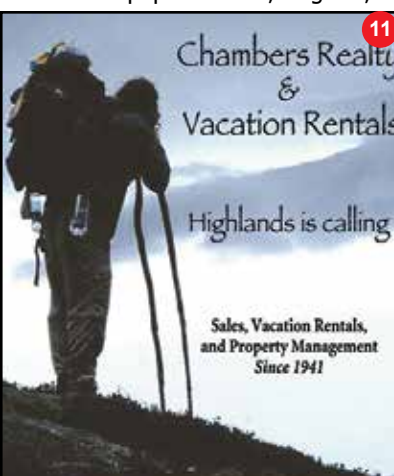
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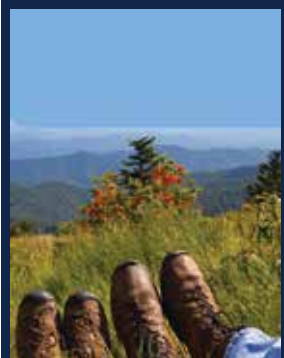
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CAROLINA PRESENCE

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TOTAL SALES
VOLUME 2022

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TOTAL TRANSACTION
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563
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