

# Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 20, Number 2

Real-Time News, Weather & WebCams: HighlandsInfo.com

Thurs., Jan. 12, 2023

## STRs make 2022 a year of contention - 2022 Year in Review -

Short-term rentals and election candidates dominated the news in 2022. Thankfully, with STR stop gaps put in place to stop the pro-

liferation of STRs, and software identifying owners using Airbnb and VRBO, the rancor that permeated the town has settled down. According to Highlands Po-

lice Chief Andrea Holland, Sept. 15 (the cutoff date for existing STRs) through Dec. 30, there has been one STR noise complaint  
• See **YEAR IN REVIEW** page 12

## School and county debate future of facilities in county

**By Brittney Lofthouse**  
According to NC General Statute, it is the "duty of the local boards of education to make provisions for the public school term by providing adequate school buildings equipped with suitable school furniture and apparatus."  
However, the same provision specifies that while the board of education has the duty to make provisions for the facilities, "the needs and the cost of those buildings, equipment, and apparatus, shall be presented each year when the school budget is submitted to the respective  
• See **FACILITIES** page 14



A multi-agency vehicle check at Lower Lake and Big Bear Pen on Tuesday. - Photo submitted

## Illegal drugs found during routine traffic checkpoint

On Tuesday, Jan. 10 afternoon, motorists on Chestnut Street got the opportunity to see a law enforcement checkpoint in action. During the routine traffic check, K9 officers from Highlands

Police Department and the Macon County Sheriff's Office were used to sniff multiple vehicles. Consequently, the operation yielded the seizure of methamphetamines and drug paraphernalia found in a ve-  
• See **DRUGS** page 19

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## NCDOJ will not charge former Congressman with voter fraud

**By Brittney Lofthouse**  
The North Carolina Department of Justice announced in December that there is not sufficient evidence to bring charges against former District 11 Congressman Mark Meadows or his wife Debra Meadows for alleged voter fraud involving the 2020 election. Attorney General Josh Stein released the following statement:  
"The State Bureau of Investigation conducted an extensive investigation into the fraud allegations against Mr. and Mrs. Meadows concerning their registration and voting in the 2020 elections," said North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein in a statement. "After a thorough review, my office has concluded that there is not sufficient evidence to bring charges against either of them in this matter."  
The investigation into the Meadows began last year after The New Yorker magazine reported that Mark Meadows had registered to vote in Macon County just weeks before the 2020 election.  
North Carolina voter records show Meadows registered at the Scaly Mountain address on September 22, 2020. He voted absentee by mail in the 2020 general election. He was removed from the North Carolina voter rolls in April after it was determined Meadows was simultaneously registered to vote in three states.  
"Mr. Meadows has made numerous unfounded, damaging allegations about voter fraud both before and after the 2020 election," said Stein. "In addition, in its referral to the United States Department of Justice, the bipartisan January 6th congress-  
• See **FRAUD** page 10

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### The way things work in two parts

#### Part 1 – The Local Government Process:

I am not the Kim Jong-il of Highlands. Nor am I “Boss Hogg” directing town employees and the police to follow my commands. I sometimes suspect a few folks on social media and others who send me emails might have that impression.

In reality, I am a mayor with limited authority by North Carolina statute law. I work with the Town Manager who was hired by the Board. The Town Manager oversees town operations, budget development, finances, and hiring and firing of employees, to name only a few of his duties.

I have to work with the five elected Town Board commissioners. The Town Board sets priorities and directs the Town Manager to implement their governing policies and decisions. Any major decision must be approved by the majority of the board members.

As Mayor, I advocate for what I believe is in the long-term best interest of the town. I bring issues and proposals before the board in the form of agenda items and make a case for adopting certain initiatives.



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

On the other hand, Town Board members have to review certain plans, proposals, policies, and budget items to make final decisions as the governing body. It is their role to ask staff and presenters questions. Board members debate the issues at hand before the mayor calls for a vote.

I review the process described above to underscore how our local government operates as we begin a new year. I also acknowledge the sobering reality that as the highest-paid elected official in the town, the final responsibility for the town's effective administration falls on my shoulders. If there is a problem, I am the official who has to explain what took place and how corrective action will address the issue. The buck does stop with me.

I can be contacted by sending an email to: [Mayor@highlandscnc.org](mailto:Mayor@highlandscnc.org), or by going to [AskmayorPat.com](http://AskmayorPat.com). My phone number is: (828) 506-3138.

As the Town Board and staff begin the process of developing a budget for FYI 2023-'24, please feel free to let me or any board member know your ideas about what the town should fund and/or address in the new budget. The new budget goes into effect on July 1st.

Starting around February and continuing through May, the board and staff will conduct an ongoing review of proposed budget items. This process will begin with the Highlands Town Retreat in March, followed by a series of afternoon budget workshops. All budget meetings are open to the public.

#### Part 2 – Post-Freeze Town Update:

Our water system is at full capacity following the “big freeze.” The only problem the system had was a leaking 6-inch main line. Thankfully our crews got out in that freezing cold on Christmas Eve to make the repair. No significant loss of service was incurred.

The “big freeze” event underscored the need for every residence to have a street number clearly displayed at the entrance to the property. Clearly marked house numbers were helpful for water crews cutting off service to houses with leaking pipes. Whether from the town, law enforcement, the fire department, or EMS, responders need clear information when determining an emergency location.

## • HIC'S VIEW •



## • WEATHER •

Thu, 12-Jan	Fri, 13-Jan	Sat, 14-Jan	Sun, 15-Jan
51°F 33°F	37°F 23°F	39°F 18°F	49°F 21°F
Heavy rain and a thunderstorm	Chilly with low clouds	Partly to mostly sunny	Partly sunny and milder
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# • INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft •

## Do's and Don'ts in Real Estate!

**W**ith 2022 now behind us, we anticipate another great year in real estate sales. I'm constantly asked how the market is doing with indications from the public that things are slowing down and prices adjusting.

If we were in a metropolitan area that would be the case but as we all know Highlands and Cashiers are so special and desirable there is no comparison on anyone's chart!

As the adage goes, as different as "apples and oranges, we certainly are that! Citrus tend to be apples with many rotten ones in the barrel while we are oranges, sweeter and kissed by the sun! There is a responsibility, however, of maintaining values and to generate quick sales if you have property to sell on the plateau and I'll give some thoughtful suggestions.

### DO'S:

**DO** maintain your home regarding cleanliness and mildew. The biggest turnoff is "that smell" when you walk in the door which usually means a quick walk out!

Encapsulation has become a must to stop the must! We are a rainforest and moisture in the dirt underneath your home has nowhere to go except up into the floors and walls of your home. Encapsulating with heavy commercial grade plastic and a commercial dehumidifier stop this! Even though it seems costly, you will recoup the cost in the sales price. Get several estimates and references so you aren't scammed!

**DO** replace ALL light bulbs that require it. A dark home is depressing and a turnoff. Use the highest wattage available. Also replace smoke detector batteries. It is so annoying to show a home with the constant piercing sound of a smoke-detector. Small things do make a big difference.

**DO** leave heat on at least 55 degrees. It not only allows some warmth but keeps your hardwoods from swelling from humidity.

**DO** unclutter before listing. I always remind sellers that you will have to pack it up anyway when it's sold so get a head start. We are selling space and the more space they see the better.



**Pat Allen BIC**  
Allen Tate Realtors/Pat Allen Realty Group.

**DO** be patient. There is a home for everybody but not everybody is a buyer for YOUR home. If another broker is showing your home, sometimes they never give feedback so, therefore, we don't have that for you. If we don't get an offer then your home was not right for them whether too small, too large, too far from town, or this could be the buyer's first trip to look, and they aren't ready to buy. If your real estate agent feels the need for a price adjustment after several showings with no offers, please listen to the reasons and consider the facts. Their goal is to sell your home, so everyone needs to work together.

### DON'T'S:

**DON'T** overprice your property! Ethical brokers give a current market analysis and **DON'T** overprice to get the listing. Ask for facts that warrant the price you are given. It's like getting three estimates from repair man and going with the cheapest. You may realize later that was a mistake and that estimate was just to get the job, especially if it wasn't done well.

The same goes for real estate – but it's the opposite: the highest price usually is to get the listing and it sits for a long time! And **DON'T** try to come up with your own price based on your opinion and desires. This will generate too many days on market and creates a red flag.

**DON'T** let furniture get in the way of

a sale. This is so important. I have just had two contracts ranging from \$1.6 - \$3.6 million that were almost lost due to furniture negotiations. If you aren't going to include something, whether artwork or pieces of furniture, REMOVE them BEFORE your listing goes active. The "exclusion list" becomes a sore spot because if the buyer sees it and knows you want it, they want it, too. I can't tell you how many discussions I've had regarding this down to losing a sale based on one item that should not have been an issue to start with had it not been seen.

**DON'T** be present for showings. It becomes too personal, and the buyer is more focused on you and "chit-chat" than the home that is for sale.

**DON'T** be alarmed when you read an inspection report that will range from 35-80 pages! You know my feelings regarding inspectors, but they feel an obligation to the buyer to examine with a "fine-tooth" comb. I would rather the comb have bigger teeth and they just report on matters that pertain to safety and integrity of the home to prevent further damage.

So discuss issues with your broker to determine what really needs attention and plan to get it done or give a credit, allowing the buyer to do it once they own the property.

With the new year in full swing now, as I've gotten older, I really think about what saying: "Happy New Year" means. It's like making a wish on a star. We hope for the best but must deal with the present. For some it will be a great year and for others it won't. Loss of a loved one, whether sudden or after a long illness will change you and your perspective on life forever. Take care of your health and be kind to others. It matters.

• *Pat Allen is broker-in-charge of Allen Tate/Pat Allen Realty Group in the downtown office at 295 Dillard Road. She is a Certified Luxury Home Marketing Specialist, consistent award-winner, and a top producer every year for her real estate career of 19 years. You may reach her at 828-200-9179 or email her at pat.allen@allentate.com*

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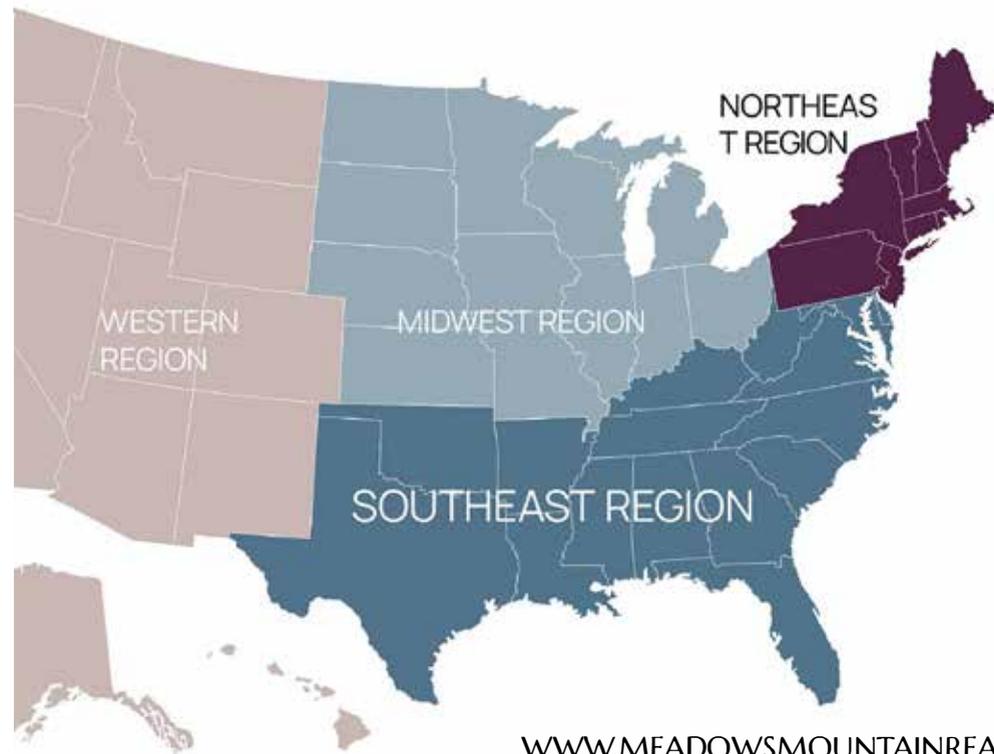


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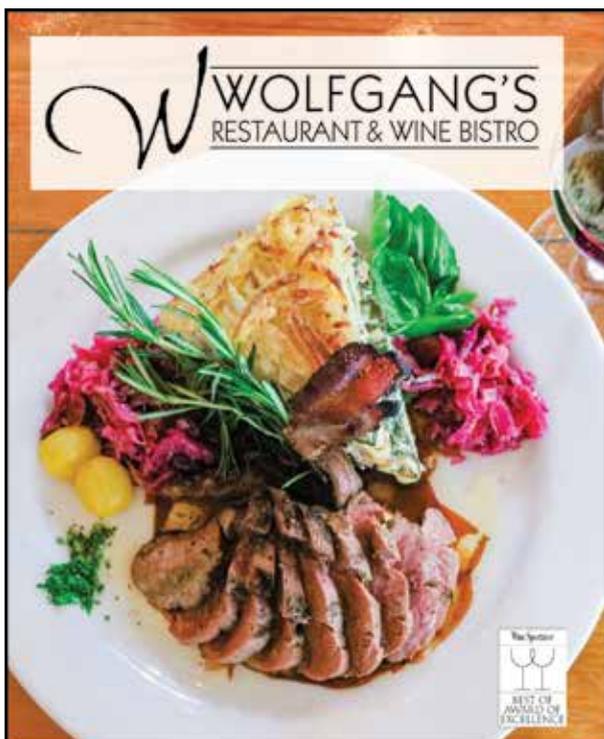
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# • LETTER •

## Weather extremes through the ages

Dear Editor,

I am sitting by the fire in early January and reflecting on the extreme weather Highlands had during the Christmas season.

We recorded -9 F with 30 mile an hour winds on Little Bear Pen. It came to mind that climate change would be a great topic for our Winter/Spring 2023 Highlands Historical Society Newsletter.

Also, thoughts about those early settlers living in the area even before our Highlands founding date in 1875. How could you survive with only firewood heat, no insulation, no electricity and no indoor plumbing.

Thinking of early settlers, David and Patsy Rog-

ers from TN arrived in 1820 and the Rogers log cabin still stands today in the Buck Creek Community. Also, in 1848 Hugh and Mary Ann Gibson bought 100 acres at 5 cents an acre and lived in a single-room log cabin. WOW, they had to be tough folks.

Going back to climate change, I had the opportunity to visit with Jason Love with the Highlands Biological Center, and he gave me documents from many years of research that will be featured in the next HHS newsletter. To give you a preview of the newsletter I thought you may be interested in the climate overview of their period of record from USDA US Forrest Service.

- Air temperatures have increased significantly since the late 1970's.
- Drought severity and frequency have increased with time.
- Precipitation distribution has become more extreme over time.

A few years of average yearly temperatures are below:

1901 - 48.9 F

1902 - 50.6 F

1903 - 48.2 F

2020 - 52.4 F

2021 - 51.5 F

2022 - 51.3 F

We could understand climate change if there were a straight- line trend over the last 100 plus years; however, 1933 was the warmest year on record with a average temperature of 56.8 F. The year 2020 had the most precipitation with 136.5 inches, 1895 was the most snow with 53.4 inches. Hope you didn't plant your flowers May 1 in 1992 because May 9, 1992, was recorded as a day with late snowfall.

Just a few interesting facts for you to think about now and our Highlands Historical Society newsletter will have a greater coverage of the history of Highlands weather.

If you are not on our newsletter distribution and would like to be, please send us an email stating your name and address to [hhshighlandshistory.com](mailto:hhshighlandshistory.com).

**Harry McDonald  
Highlands**

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## • OBITUARY •

### Jack Hill Cotton, Jr.

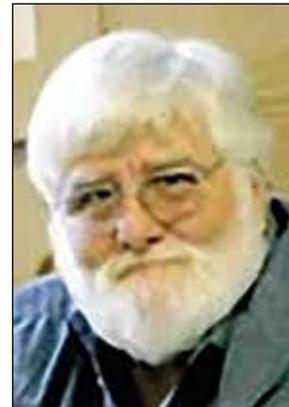
Jack Hill Cotton, Jr., was born on May 17, 1953, at the Corpus Christi Naval Air Base in Corpus Christi, Texas, to Hope Hardy and Jack Hill Cotton. He passed on to Glory on January 8, 2023.

Jack's father's career was in the United States Navy so Jack and his family lived in many places around the country. When his father retired, the family moved to the Hendersonville, NC, area, and Jack attended West Henderson High School. He frequently visited Franklin where his grandparents, Robert and Madge Hardy, lived.

Jack enlisted in the United States Navy just before his 18th birthday. He was assigned to the USS Saratoga as a jet engine mechanic and was stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin for eleven months during the Vietnam War.

After returning to the United States, he attended Southwestern Union College where he met and married his wife, Diane. He was employed by Halliburton in the industrial construction business and retired as Project Superintendent. After retirement he relocated to Franklin to care for his parents. He was employed by Macon County Schools as a custodian for Highlands School and East Franklin Elementary.

Jack spent his retirement years reading, gunsmithing, mowing, and moving azaleas from place to place for his



mother and wife. He was also a member of the VFW and American Legion and served on the VFW Honor Guard for a number of years.

Jack is survived by his wife of 44 years, Diane; his children, Jesse Cotton (Rachel) of Chesapeake Beach, MD, Hope McClure (Samuel) of Glade Valley, NC, and Benjamin Cotton (Rachel) of Franklin; his sisters, Linda Jarman of Franklin and Robin Genest (Frank) of Hendersonville, NC; his grandchildren, Lillian Cotton, Jack Cotton, Emily McClure, and Brice McClure; his close cousin, Jacqueline Mette of Franklin; his close nephew, Brian Cotton (Sherry); his

heart family, Anthony, Ashton, Addison, and Alex Zari of Franklin and many wonderful nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents and his brothers, Michael Cotton and Jeffrey Cotton.

A private family service will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to Franklin Post 7339, VFW Honor Guard, 60 Palmer Street, Franklin, NC, 28734 or Read 2 Me, P.O. Box 1362, Franklin, NC, 28734.

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## ALL ABOUT BOOKS

# • INK PENN •

## Hitting the Jackpot at the library

Receiving emails that say, “Materials you have on hold are now available at your pick-up library” brings a huge smile to my face. The message informs me I have seven days to pick up my book(s), and if I already have a few on my nightstand, I often delay pick up until the last possible moment.

The other time I delay is when I see the little truck icon on my “Hold” list on the library website. That means my selection is in transit, and I can anticipate it arriving in a few days. It’s a rare occasion when I have plenty of books on my nightstand, several waiting for me at the library, and suddenly, several more in transit.

Imagine me humming Carly Simon’s “Anticipation” as I finally made my trip to the library to pick up—wait for it—six books! I told the librarian I felt as though I’d hit the jackpot, and she wished me happy reading. I often pick up several at a time, but I think six may be a record.

Three were part of some of the series that I return to time and time again—the latest and, hopefully, not last book in the Clare Ferguson / Russ Van Alstyne series, another from The Chronicles of St. Mary’s, and one Ruth Galloway mystery. I suspect I’ve written about all of these before, but chances are you’ll get an update soon.

Which book did I immediately dive into? It was “Killers of a Certain Age” because it was a two-week checkout. The others were good for a month. Who knows where I read about this book? Maybe I stumbled across it on Amazon where it’s labeled an Editor’s Pick and one of the Best Books of 2022. Maybe there was a review in the AJC or the



Kathy Manos Penn

WSJ. Buzzfeed’s one-liner says it all: “This Golden Girls meets James Bond thriller is a journey you want to be part of.” As I write this, I’m halfway through after one night and loving it.

The final book in the stack was recommended to me by one of my newsletter subscribers when I asked what everyone’s favorite Christmas read was. She wrote me that she rereads Rosamunde Pilcher’s “A Winter Solstice” every December.

That seemed to be quite a testament to the book, so I added it to my library hold list. I read Pilcher’s “The Shell Seekers” years ago and I recall enjoying it, but somehow never picked up any of her other books. The blurb inside the cover has me eagerly anticipating this one. “Once again, Rosamund Pilcher reminds us all that friendship, compassion, loyalty, and love can come together and renew us all—even when the days seem darkest.”

If you’re an avid reader like I am, you won’t have any difficulty with the idea of me finishing six books in a month. If you’re not, you may think I’ve bitten off more than I can chew. Either way, I’ll be smiling as I work my way through the stack night after night. Oh! Did I mention I have many more books on hold at the library? I hope to hit the jackpot again soon!

• 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](mailto:inkpenn119@gmail.com), and follow her on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/](http://www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/).

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# • BIZ/ORG NEWS •

## HCHF awards grant for Recreational Therapist

By Josh Bryson  
HCHF

Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation (HCHF) has awarded a grant to Boys and Girls Club of the Plateau to fund a recreational therapist position at their Cashiers facility. The recreational therapist will serve to improve the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of youngsters from Cashiers, Highlands and the surrounding plateau communities through mentorship and activities that encourage healthy habits; reduce depression, stress, anxiety; and build confidence and socialization skills.

“Given our Foundation’s expansion to address our communities’ growing needs for mental health and wellness services we are pleased to partner with the Boys and Girls Club of the Plateau on this important initiative,” says Robin Tindall, CEO and Executive Director of HCHF. “Their evidenced-based recreational therapy program is an important component to the array of services that support our mission of lifting health and well-being, together.”

The club will be conducting bi-yearly assessments on club members to establish baselines and to help monitor progress. Many children are not comfortable sharing, and it becomes more difficult to recognize where there is a need. By conducting the assessments, it helps with identifying children that need additional support. One of the primary goals of the club is prevention, and this allows the staff to follow their evolution and give them the

support that they need before an issue can escalate.

“Behind every behavior action is a need,” says Brandon Norwood, LRT, CTRS, Director of Health and Wellness with Boys and Girls Club of the Plateau. “Finding that need is incredibly important. Too often kids are just written off for too many ‘thumbs down’ as just a bad kid. Maybe that kid is just going through some stuff, so let’s try to figure out what we can do to help.”

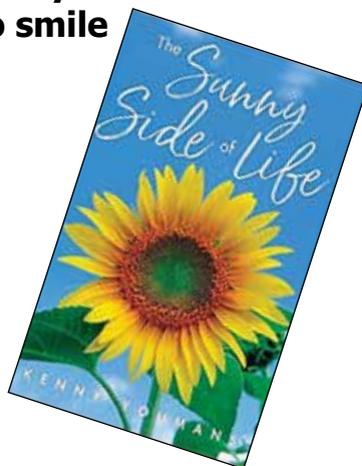
In addition to working directly with members of the club, the recreational therapist will be developing a range of new programs. An educational program for parents is currently being developed. The program would focus on supporting parents and encouraging whole family health and wellness. Additionally, a new internship program for recreational therapy students at Western Carolina University is being developed. This new program will allow the club to support more youth while providing one of the few local internships available on the plateau.

“This means so much for our youth,” says Carmen Waite, CEO of Boys and Girls Club of the Plateau. “Having been a volunteer here first, working closely with the kids and now in the CEO position, I definitely see a difference in our kids and the struggles that they face. We really want our kids to reach their maximum potential. To do that, they need to have academic success, but also self-confidence and social/emotional well-being. I really do believe we can make a huge impact in every child’s self-esteem here at the club. It’s exciting to have a program that we know can make that impact.”

### Pick up a copy of ‘The Sunny Side of Life’ and prepare to smile

Highlands Newspaper columnist Kenny Youman’s book *The Sunny Side of Life* is available at Shakespeare & Co. in Village Square.

*The Sunny Side of Life* is a compilation of real-life stories that will inspire, comfort, support, motivate, encourage, entertain and warm the hearts of readers of all ages and genders. Some of these stories will cause readers to laugh at loud and others will inspire hope. But whether they create laughter or tears of joy or relief, all of these uplifting stories are just what we need during these troubling times we face in America today.



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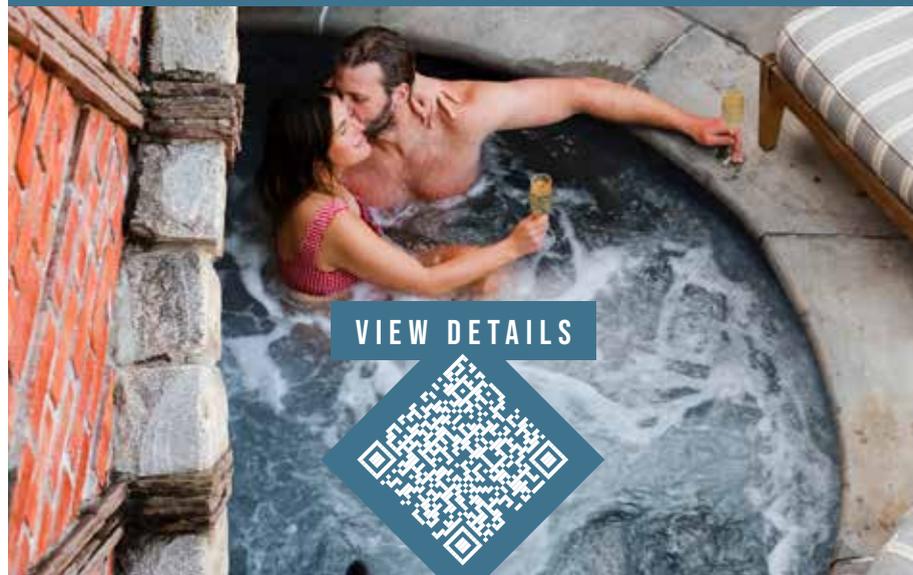


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## ...FRAUD continued from page 1

sional committee named Mr. Meadows as a likely co-conspirator over his central role in the January 6th insurrection. This attempt to disrupt the peaceful transition of power represents one of the most significant assaults on our democracy in the 246-year history of our nation. The appropriate authorities will now fully vet these referrals. I urge federal prosecutors to hold accountable every single person who engaged in a conspiracy to put our democracy at risk.

"None of the matters involving January 6th, however, are relevant to the specific allegations of voter fraud concerning Mr. and Mrs. Meadows that were referred to my office for review. My office has concluded that there is not sufficient evidence to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt against either Mr. or Mrs. Meadows, so my office will not prosecute this case. If further information relevant to the allegations of voter fraud comes to light in any subsequent investigation or prosecution by authorities in other jurisdictions, we reserve the right to reopen this matter."

According to Stein's office, key facts that led to the decision not to pursue legal actions against the former Republican Congressman or his wife were:

Meadows was engaged in public service



Mark Meadows

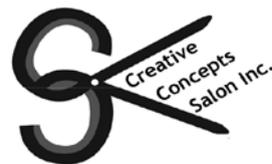
in Washington, DC, and therefore qualified for a residency exception pursuant to NCGS § 163-57(8).

Meadows and his wife signed a year-long lease for the Scaly Mountain residence that was provided by their landlord.

Cell phone records showed Mrs. Meadows was in and around Scaly Mountain in October of 2020.

Stein's office also said that while there wasn't sufficient evidence to prosecute Meadows, the investigation did find that Mark Meadows was "almost certainly never physically present at the Scaly Mountain address," noting that US Secret Service records showed that he had no official travel and did not request any unaccompanied travel leave to North Carolina from September 2020 to November 2020. However, state law does not "require the physical presence of a federal government servant in North Carolina in order for them to maintain residence and vote in North Carolina."

During the North Carolina Department of Justice's investigation, both Mark and Debra Meadows declined to be interviewed by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation.



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# • 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

## Rec Pool Hours EXTENDED

• **Public Swim:** Mon.-Wed. 3:30-7p; Sat. 11a-6p; Sun. 1-6p. **Adult Swim:** Mon.-Wed. 11a-3:30p and Thurs. and Fri., 11a-2p. **Lap Swim:** Mon-Fri 6a-9:45a and Sat. 10-11a. **Water Aerobics:** Mon.-Fri. 10-11a. 828-526-1595.

## 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

## 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

## Wednesdays

• 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)

## 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.

## Sat. & Sun., Jan. 7-8

• At PAC, from the writer of One Man, Two Guvnors comes a hilarious new play, set in 1940s British summer time. After an aerial dog fight, Pilot Officer Jack Absolute flies home to rejoin his fearless young Hurricane squadron at RAF Fontwell. Once back on British soil, Jack is shocked to find his old flame, Lydia, on the base. He sets his sights on winning her heart, but with turbulence and hilarity never far away, his advances quickly turn to anarchy. Showtimes: 1 p.m. both days. For tickets, email [highlandspacnc@gmail.com](mailto:highlandspacnc@gmail.com)

## Sat., Jan. 14

• Soprano Sonya Yoncheva, one of today's most riveting artists, sings the title role in Fedora of the 19th-century Russian princess who falls in love with her fiancé's murderer, Count Loris, sung by star tenor Piotr Beczala. Soprano Rosa Feola is the Countess Olga, Fedora's confidant, and baritone Artur Rucin'ski is the diplomat De Sirieux, with Met maestro Marco Armiliato conducting. 12:55 p.m. For tickets call 828-526-9047

## Sat., Jan. 28

• A modern retelling of William Shakespeare's classic Much to do About Nothing. Since the 1930s, the legendary family-run Hotel Messina has been visited by artists, celebrities and royalty. When the current owner's daughter falls for a dashing young soldier, the hallways are ringing with the sound of wedding bells. However, not all the guests are in the mood for love, and a string of deceptions soon surround not only the young couple, but also the steadfastly single Beatrice and Benedick. 1 p.m. For tickets call 828-526-9047

## 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.

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## ...YEAR IN REVIEW continued from page 1

and 1 STR trash complaint about STR properties.

And now with the heated BOC and Sheriff election in the rear view mirror, 2023 will likely be dominated by issues regarding ongoing town needs.

Staffing the fire department, cleaning Mirror Lake, paving, sidewalk expansion and figuring out how to fund town projects since the Electric Dept. fund balance can no longer be depended upon, should be the issues in the spot light.

A snapshot of issues that made the news in 2022 follows:

### JANUARY

• STRs in all districts stand says PB. In a 6-1 vote the Planning Board voted to accept what they hammered out in December – mainly that STRs in some form would be allowed in every residential district.

• NC filing to reopen Feb 24 after court ruling. A three-panel

judge ruled Tuesday evening that North Carolina's redistricting maps will not be tossed out

• Mission Primary Care Cashiers welcomes new doctor at 57 White Owl Lane, Cashiers - Dr. Kathleen Shattenkirk.

• Chamber rolls out first annual Snow featuring everything from twinkly lights to fun in the snow was Saturday and Sunday, Jan 29-30

• Winter Storm Izzy makes Highlands a wonderland. 12-18 inches of snow late Saturday, Jan. 15 through Sunday, Jan.16, shifted MC EMS Highlands Mayor Pat Taylor, Police Chief Andrea Holland and Duke Energy into high gear.

• MC Schools began working on offering Pre-K in Highlands which is still on the drawing board.

• Public input was sought about allowing bear hunting in Panthertown.

• After the Planning Board

had its say, the fate of STRs was put on the Town Board's plate.

• A year of service was commended at Fire & Rescue Dept. banquet. Jeff Burnette was named Fireman of the Year at the awards banquet at OEI's Spring House, Saturday, Jan. 22.

### FEBRUARY

• Town Board workshop on STRs raises more questions; short on answers.

• COVID forces Mission to halt elective surgeries until peak passes but elective surgeries unaffected at H-C Hospital Mission representatives urge people to get vaccinated.

• The Highlands Playhouse launches the Mountain Theatre Company.

• Quarter cent sales tax hike is on the table to generate additional needed monies for Macon County Schools.

• Macon County looks at a \$3 billion increase to its property tax base due to record home sales over the past few years. The total tax value in 2015 was just over \$8 billion and 2019 numbers bumped it up to over \$8.1 billion. Macon County is anticipating that number to be over \$11 billion after the 2023 revaluation.

• COVID-exposed students with no symptoms can now go to school.

• Dangerous fire sends Otto Fire Chief to burn center.

• Town hires attorney for 2nd opinion about PB's short-term rental take. After the Feb. 1 Town Board worksession on short-term rentals, the board came away thinking it needed another legal view concerning the Planning Board's recommended changes to the UDO as they apply to STRs.

### MARCH

• Camps line up at Public Hearing to discuss PB's STR recommendations which was the last step before the Town Board began final deliberations about STRs.

• Cawthorn seeks re-election in District 11 not 13.

• Conditional Zoning to help make Highlands Parkside Center at Bank of America property a reality.

However the project was nixed by owners.

• Did President Trump's Chief of Staff Mark Meadows commit voter fraud in Macon County?

• BOC hears funding requests to expand Pre-K in Highlands.

• Chamber of Commerce property gets a face lift

• Hehn threatens litigation against town regarding an ongoing dispute between the town, the Board of Commissioners, Town Manager Josh Ward and Commissioner Marc Hehn concerning the Hotwire contract's redline documents.

• Citizens are ready to revive Mirror Lake. A MLIA Dredging Fund has been set up to finance the \$4.2 million project which is expected to take 2-3 years.

• Commissioner Hehn asked to be recused from last two TB agenda - item 16: Powerline Removal Request and soon after asked to be recused for item 15: Redline Draft of Fiber Contract as well. In both cases he said would leave the room if that was best.

• BOC District 1 contenders to face off on May 17 primary -- Don Willis and John Shearl.

• Macon voters to decide on 1/4 cent sales tax increase in November. It fails.

• Graffiti culprits were sought by Highlands Police Dept.

• HHS's Prince House is scene of movie shoot.

### APRIL

• Mission nurses are overburdened; patients are suffering.

• Mayor declares April the month to financially help the Ukrainians.

• Closed session centers on Marc Hehn regarding Hehn's filing against Town Manager Josh Ward regarding the draft, red-line fiber contract documents as well as issues now developing concerning Hehn's Powerline Removal request made at the March Town Board meeting

• Child dies when swept over Whitewater Falls.

• Republican primary candidates for District 2 – Danny

Antoine, Gregg Jones, Richard Lightner, Dan Reitmeier, and Gary Shields.

• Commissioner Hehn wants an apology to his wife for the angst she has experienced while the red-line document issue was being addressed by the Town Board.

• 5 Republican candidates want to be MC's next Sheriff – Clay Bryson, Bob Cook, Brent Holbrooks, Dereck Jones.

### MAY

• Bear signage to go up on area trails.

• Highlands PD catch two juvenile suspects the evening of Friday, April 29, believed to be involved in several vandalism (graffiti) incidents which have occurred throughout town.

• Seniors Hayley Borino and Jeffrey Olvera were crowned Queen and King at the prom held at Highlands Country Club's Hudson House Sat., April 23.

• Despite Duke forecasts, Highlands electric rates will hold steady - for now.

• Samuel Kelsey's great-great-grandson, Seth Kelsey III visits Highlands for the first time. Sees exhibit at the Historical Society.

• Proposed UDO says STRs are to be allowed in all but district R1 but those in existence are grandfathered.

• Packed race reveals winners. Holbrooks is Sheriff, Shearl to face off with Moore, Reps. Antoine and Shields to face off Dems; Rep. Cawthorn loses reelection bid.

• The town's final word on Short-term Rentals - New STRs in R1 are prohibited after Sept. 15.; those in existence are grandfathered. Tourist Homes are allowed in all but district R1

• Unofficial election results on Tuesday, May 17 reported Dereck Jones lost the Sheriff election to Brent Holbrooks by 54 votes. Holbrooks got 2,201 votes and Jones got 2163 votes. Since the margin of victory was less than 1 percent, a recount can

• See YEAR IN REVIEW page 13

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## ...YEAR IN REVIEW continued from page 1

legally be requested.

### JUNE

- Angela and Art Williams, owners and visionaries of the Old Edward Hospitality Group, officially open GlenCove off Norton Road between Highlands and Cashiers

- Driver crashes into Paoletti's Restaurant front window.

- PB sees plans for multi-million dollar subdivision – Sanctuary at 1st – at Oak and 1st

- County budget shows no property tax rate increase for '22-'23 FY.

- Recount confirms Holbrooks is MC Sheriff.

- Due to properly notifying the community in the media of the February 24 public hearing to discuss the Planning Board's recommendations about STRs, the town must hold another public hearing but this time the verbiage will be what the Town Board adopted in May rather than the verbiage presented in February.

- Town's \$27.4 million budget passes for FY '22-'23. No tax increase nor increase for town services.

- Highlands is named a 'Best Small Town for Shopping' Places 5th among 19 towns nominated across the country

### JULY

- On Thursday, June 23, Barrett McKim, a science buff was conducting an experiment to change the color of different rocks and fool's gold, when the alcohol he was heating up on a Bunsen burner caused the apparatus to blow up. Barrett and mother were severely burned.

- Staffing shortages plague area law enforcement.

- McKim family endures the path to recovery.

- Two versions of the amended Unified Development Ordinance as it pertains to Short-term Rentals were briefly discussed at the Special Meeting Thursday, July 14, prior to them being submitted to the Planning Board.

- Franklin man, Joseph Orr, 25, drowns at Big Shoals in Highlands.

- Six will be on the ballot for Board of Education seats.

### AUGUST

- In a surprise move Tuesday night, the 5-member Planning Board voted unanimously to not recommend the two proposed STR-related ordinances presented by the Town Board.

- Last JAWbreaker ringleader Arthur Potts pleads guilty to felony attempted trafficking of opium/heroin, two counts of felony obtaining property by false pretenses, and felony larceny (both related to another incident) in Macon County Superior Court.

- Institute of Justice urges town to reconsider STR crackdown.

- Board of Elections wants new voting machines.

- Annual Twilight 5k raises \$25K for TL&LC.

- Reval is based on billions in RE sales.

### SEPTEMBER

- Save Highlands deposes Town Board. Last Wednesday marked one year the town has been navigating its short-term rental ordinance and the fallout from its Aug. 24, 2021 decision to prohibit STRs in the R1 zoning districts effective Jan. 3, 2022.

- Obie Oakley is inducted into the 'Long Leaf Pine' order. Earns North Carolina's highest award for service

- BalsamWest brings high-speed internet connectivity to Scaly and Sky Valley.

- PAC is open for business. The public is invited to the Open House, Sept. 18 from 2-5p.

- Town Board decides STRs won't be amortized ... for now. But new STRs are not allowed in the R1 or R2 districts after Sept. 15. However Tourist Homes are allowed everywhere accept R1.

- Donors could make the NC 106 sidewalk a reality.

- Chamber lease with the town is up in the air.

- Community wants HS soccer field fixed.

- Cherokee County Schools cancels volley ball games with

Highlands due to a player's injury.

### OCTOBER

- BKLYN: The Musical at the Highlands Playhouse wows audiences.

- HCHF is recipient of 40th Annual Bob Jones Invitational Golf Tournament proceeds.

- MC Commissioners vote to bid out Highlands School soccer field project.

- MC BOC is split on funding renovations at Highlands School -- Commissioners Higdon & Young vote no

- 'A Wrinkle in Time' kicks off new youth program. Spring youth performance will be the last performance at The Playhouse

### NOVEMBER

- Pre-season viruses empty classrooms across Macon County.

- Highlands celebrated its heritage with its first 'Heritage Day' Oct. 29. Highlands' families who are still here after 100 years were singled out.

- MC elects first all Republican Board of Commissioners in county history - Shearl, Antoine and Shields win Board of Commission seats. Laseter and Breeden.

- Cherrywood Partners, which includes locals David and Debi

## Rotary speaker Mike Thompson evokes memories of winters past

Local historian, storyteller and wine expert Mike Thompson recently entertained Rotary Club of Highlands members with his memories of winters past.

Thompson's stories were filled with sensory images: pictures of people stringing up lights around Lake Sequoyah where figure skater Jim Hines skimmed the lake so fast he was able to skate on a mere 1/4-inch of ice.

The bitter cold winter the ice froze so thick a 48-inch hole was measured and a car drove clear across the lake.

Rotarians could practically

Bock and out-of-town financiers, has developed a workforce housing complex on 32 acres in "The Meadows" on US 64 east between Highlands and Cashiers near the Dollar General and the Highlands Fire & Rescue substation off Cherrywood Drive.

- Former Fedex driver, Gregory Thomas Bufkin, is found guilty of 2021 Highlands burglaries.

- County approves architect for potential Highlands School middle school and Pre-K expansion.

- Despite the cold and rain, Highlands Food & Wine entertained more than 3,000 people turning out for the 4-day event.

- The November meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners marked the last meeting for Commissioner James Tate. Tate was appointed to fill a seat left vacant by Brian McClellan and then was re-elected to serve a total of 11 years representing District 1 on the board of commissioners. Higdon was named chairman and Young was named Vice-Chair.

- Much needed extended sidewalks are in Highlands' future.

### DECEMBER

- U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree came from area's Pisgah Nat'l For-

est.

- Community honors MC Sheriff Robert Holland for 30 years of service

- Highlands School Homecoming King and Queen Nathan Keener and Bella Wilson were named Saturday, Dec. 3 in Coleman Hall at the First Presbyterian Church.

- Macon County BOC welcomes new members. Higdon elected chair, Young elected vice chair.

- Man tried to rob Wells Fargo in Cashiers

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

- A new Catholic church will soon replace the old.

- Electric fund as 'savior' may change. Auditor says the days of using the electric fund to fund projects and more are coming to an end. But gives Highlands a clean bill of health.

- Highlands PD and children 'Shop with a Cop' for Christmas.

- A real estate snapshot of 2022 for the Town of Highlands, Highlands Township and Scaly Township is explained.

- Kim Lewicki



From left: Chris Wilkes, Rotary Club of Highlands President; Mike Thompson, Speaker and Rotarian Tom Stribling.

hear brooms swishing over the frozen lake to sweep away the snow and keep the ice smooth.

As Thompson talked, the Community Building filled with the imaginary aromas of wood smoke, "Nanny's" bread baking, and Jimbo Potts' smudge pots.

"Some winters it was so cold for so long that ice skating was the

only way you could get around town. In 1977 it was below zero for 22 nights in a row," Thompson remembered.

Rotarians listened with rapt attention, asked many questions and woke from their reveries and all cued up for the 2023 winter holidays....hoping for just a little snow.



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## ...FACILITIES continued from page 1

tax-levying authorities. The boards of commissioners shall be given a reasonable time to provide the funds which they, upon investigation, shall find to be necessary for providing their respective units with buildings suitably equipped, and it shall be the duty of the several boards of county commissioners to provide funds for the same.”

Because the two board are required by law to work together to provide public education, the Macon County Board of Commissioners and the Macon County Board of Education met for a joint session just before the Christmas holiday to discuss the future facility needs for the school system. With two new members on the school board and two new members on the commission, the new leadership called the meeting to get on the same page about ongoing projects, current needs, and future planning. The nearly four-hour long meeting ended with no votes being able to be passed, however the newly elected officials shared their visions for the future of Macon County Schools.

The agenda for the joint meeting included an update from LS3P-the architectural firm working on several projects in Macon County- on the Franklin High School Project, an update on the Macon Middle School Locker Room Facility, an update on the Highlands Middle School Renovations, an update on the Highlands Pre-K project and other facility needs in the district which included, the Highlands Soccer Field, the Macon Middle School Track, and dislodged popes at Macon Middle School.

### Highlands Specific projects

Macon County Manager Derek Roland updated the board on the Highlands Middle School Renovation project, which was identified by the school system as a top priority for the Repair, Renovation, and Expansion fund with the NC Lottery. The project and need for renovations to the middle school wing at Highlands School includes roof repairs, new

windows, flooring upgrades, and repairs to the HVAC system, all of which was part of the school system’s capital improvement plan.

### Project timeline

The Macon County Board of Commissioners approved an application to the NC Lottery for the project during an October joint meeting with the board of education. The board voted 4-1 to apply for the \$500,000 grant funding with Commissioner Paul Higdon casting the sole “no” vote. With additional funding allocated to Macon County from the lottery’s renovation fund, the entirety of the Highlands School Middle School renovation project will be funded through state allocated granted funding. During the regularly scheduled meeting on January 10, the Board of Commissioners unanimously voted to approve the architectural contract with LS3P to move forward with the middle school renovations.

During the December 13 meeting of the Board of Commissioners, with the county’s application for NC Lottery Funds for the projects approved by the state, the new slate of commissioners unanimously voted to authorize Roland to enter into contract negotiations with LS3P Architects to complete the design work for the middle school renovations.

According to Roland, negotiations are ongoing with LS3P for the project and he expects a contract to be finalized and presented to the board for a vote during the January board meeting.

Roland then presented the board with an update on the current status of the Highlands Pre-K Project, which is still in early stages of discussions. As Macon County Board of Education member Hilary Wilkes, who represents the Highlands District, noted, while the project has been identified as the “Pre-K” project, the two pre-k classrooms that are proposed within the project are a very small portion of a larger Highlands School expansion which also includes expanding opportunities for Project-Based Learning (PBL) and provide CTE (Career Technical Curricu-

lum) for students.

### Project timeline

The Macon County Board of Commissioners approved a contract with LS3P on Nov. 8, 2022, for \$329,255 for design services on the proposed new Pre-K for Highlands School. The total project cost for the Pre-K project in Highlands is \$4.7 million and currently, there has been no funding allocated or identified for the proposed project.

Wilkes presented the urgent need surrounding the Highlands Soccer fields as the current conditions propose a significant liability. Addressing Macon County Board of Commission Chairman Paul Higdon, she noted that while he is adamant school capital needs be addressed within the annual budgeting process, the situation at the Highlands Soccer fields occurred after the budget process was over and needs immediate attention.

### Project timeline

In October, commissioners were made aware of the needs surrounding the soccer fields which resulted in the school’s soccer teams having to cancel games and several students being injured due to the condition of the field. During that meeting, Macon County Board of Commissioners voted 4-1 to solicit bids for the Highlands Soccer field turf resurfacing project, with Commissioner Higdon voting against the measure.

Wilkes noted that the project had been on the district’s capital outlay request in the past, however the county had not provided funding for the project and other needs arose and took precedent.

The project is anticipated to cost just under \$1,000,000 to place turf on the field to make it useable year-round. Bids are expected to be submitted to the for the project in January.

Commissioner Paul Higdon made a motion to halt joint board discussions for the Macon Middle School track renovations, the Highlands Soccer Field, and the Highlands Pre-K Expansion project and send those items back to the board of education for scor-

• See FACILITIES page 15

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Swimmers from left: Paola McRae, Tate Wilson, Conner Hughes, Finneas Garner, Aniah McKim, Jesus Mendoza.

## Highland School Varsity Swim Team traveled to Tallulah Falls for 'Shiver Me Timbers' meet

**Steve Hott, Head Coach**  
**HS Varsity Swimming and Diving Team**

On Saturday, Jan. 7 the Highlands Varsity Swim Team traveled to Tallulah Falls to compete in the Shiver Me Timbers Invitational.

The five Western North Carolina Regional bound boys team of sophomore Finneas Garner, and freshmen Aniah

McKim, Conner Hughes, Paolo McRae, and Jesus Mendoza finished 4th out of 8. Adding their one girl freshmen Tate Wilson, the combined team finished 5th of 8 against much larger teams. Wilson is in consideration for a trip to regionals.

Garner scored 42.5 pts and a Personal Record (PR). McKim was team high scorer with 49.5 pts.

Hughes finished with 45.5 pts. and a PR, McRae had 36.5 pts, Wilson (without relays to swim in) 31 pts and Mendoza 7 pts and 2 PRs.

Of special note, the regional bound boys 4x100 freestyle relay of McKim, Hughes, McRae and Garner finished 2nd at the meet.

The Highlanders next travel to Franklin on Saturday, January 14.

## ...FACILITIES continued from page 14

ing and prioritization in the coming year's budget. Higdon noted the lack of funding allocated in the county's current budget for the projects as being the reason to pause further discussion and have the school board reevaluate the district capital needs as his reason for the motion.

Macon County Schools Superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin asked Commissioner Higdon for clarification regarding the middle school track funding, as the board discussed utilizing available contingency funds in the renovation project being utilized for the project. Macon County Finance Director Lori Hall confirmed funds were available for the project.

Macon County Board of Education Chairman Jim Breedlove addressed Commissioner Higdon clarifying that the board of education has met — with discussions of the Highlands project dating back to February 2022, nearly a year ago, and identified the projects as priorities, which is why they are before commis-

sioners for funding consideration. According to Breedlove, the board could take the three projects Higdon noted, the middle school track, Highlands expansion, and Highlands soccer fields and put them in order of 1 to 3 — based on the district's need, but ultimately, they are all priorities.

Macon County Attorney Eric Ridenour clarified Commissioner Higdon's motion, stating that because the board of commissioners have previously allocated funding to LS3P for architectural design services on the Highlands Pre-K expansion, Higdon's motion would need to include halting that contract, which would result in losing the funding already paid to LS3P.

Commissioner John Shearl noted that he did not support cancelling an existing contract and backing out on work LS3P is already committed to doing and in the process of completing.

County Manager Roland further explained due to the size of the Highlands expansion project,

it would never be included in the district's annual capital outlay requests. Macon County only allocates \$1 million for capital outlay needs each year, with \$600,000 being earmarked for technology. With the Highlands Expansion project proposal being estimated to cost nearly \$5 million, it wouldn't be feasible to be included in the district's capital outlay requests, which includes things such as technology, safety, new vehicles, and other renovations and repair requests, but rather for larger planning, along the same lines as the new proposed Franklin High School Facility.

Chairman Higdon's motion failed to pass due to lack of a second. After Higdon's motion failed and consensus for the Board of Education to prioritize a complete list of all capital outlay needs and projects during the budget work session in January, Higdon said as Chairman he has the authority to adjourn a meeting. He elected to adjourn the meeting and conversations will continue at another time.

## The Center for Plastic Surgery is closing Jan. 31, 2023

*Until then the office is open for all consultations, simple procedures, and sales*



**A**fter 23 exceptional years of practice at the Center for Plastic Surgery, Dr. Robert

Buchanan will retire on January 31, 2023.

On that date, the Center for Plastic Surgery will permanently close. Until then the office is open for all consultations, simple procedures, and sales.

Dr. Buchanan would like to extend thanks to his patients and the entire community in and around Highlands for their trust, support, and loyalty. He considers his retirement bittersweet, as he has enjoyed caring for his patients over the years but is excited to continue serving the community in other ways.

Before the Center for Plastic Surgery closes, patients wishing to obtain their medical records may either download electronic copies through their Patient Portals or contact the office directly at 828-526-3788.

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## Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau thrives in new facility

The Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau had an exciting 2021 after they moved into their new building last April with membership that continues to grow as they provide programming that supports academic success, healthy lifestyles, and good character.

“We have had many volunteers come and work with our youth this year,” said Cameron Ward, Volunteer Coordinator. “Coming out of Covid, many of our members need extra help with reading and math. Our volunteer tutors have made a huge impact on their success.”

But BGCP is more than homework help; activities include Triple-Play sports skills, hiking, swimming, art, choir, drumming, coding, Odyssey of the Mind, Lego Club, Gardening Club, NASA, and other

STEM activities, to name a few.

In addition, BGCP encourages good citizenship through volunteer activities and programs like Smart Girls and Passport to Manhood.

Boys and Girls Club serves members from kindergarten through high school.

“With a focus on better teen programming, our membership has grown from 5 to 30 members this year,” said Spencer Copen, Operations Director. “This year, we will implement even more teen programming with Friday teen nights and Career Readiness which will help our teens prepare for the future.”

BGCP Board Chair Dr. Joy Clark said they were able to significantly increase the amount of support they were able to give to



BGCP helps kids ages kindergarten to high school through a variety of activities.

families last year and she’s looking ahead to the future.

“The Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau holds a very special place in my heart, and thanks to the support of our community, we were able to support 225% more families this year,” said Clark. “We are proud of our accomplishments and are excited to provide more and better opportunities for our kids and teens next year.”

BGCP ended winter programming with a holiday party for families, volunteers, and community partners. In addition to a shared meal, families participated in holiday games, crafts, and music. BGCP choir members provided the entertainment.

As part of BGCP’s end-of-year celebration, Kathryn Davis was recognized as Volunteer of the Year. In addition to running a successful Concierge Services business, Davis \$ Co. Her passions consist of two core themes: her hometown and making a difference.

Davis began volunteering at BGCP in 2019. In addition to assisting with specialized programming for our youth, she joined BGCP’s board in September of last year, where she is focused on facility management and safety.

Davis enjoys spending time as a volunteer with the BGCP and adores the opportunity she has to help shape today’s youth.

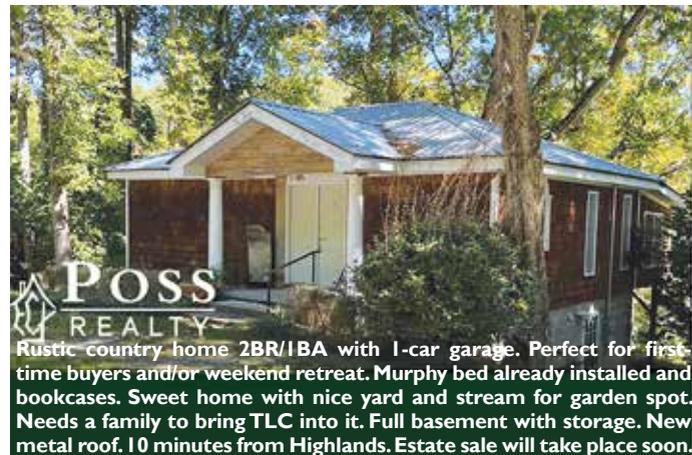
“We are so grateful to Kathryn and all

she does for the Club. She is a rock star,” said Carmen Waite, CEO.

BGCP’s new building is located in Cashiers, NC, the boys and Girls Club of the Plateau’s mission is to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. For more information, visit BGCP’s website at [www.bgplateau.org](http://www.bgplateau.org) or contact the club at 828 743-2775.



BGCP Volunteer of the Year Kathryn Davis.



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# • BUSINESS / ORGANIZATION NEWS •



## Big Brothers Big Sisters celebrate National Mentoring Month

A caring adult can change a child's life, which is why Big Brothers Big Sisters of Western North Carolina is celebrating National Mentoring Month this January.

More than 100 children and youth – many of them local – live in the 18 branches served by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Western North Carolina. Eager to be matched with engaged, caring adults, or “Bigs,” our “Littles” do better in school, at home, in their relationships and with their academic work than their peers, studies have shown.

As a branch of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the largest and most experienced one-to-one mentoring organization in the nation, BBBSWNC supports critical social and emotional development that local children need to help build resilience and promote mental health and well-being. Bigs have loads of fun and often say they get so much out of the relationship with their Little.

Year-round, but especially in January, BBBSWNC celebrates its volunteers and recruits adults ages 18 and older to become Bigs. BBBSWNC staff enroll, train, and support Bigs by pairing them with a young person with similar interests and then helping the

family and the Big bring out the best in the child.

Bigs do that just by showing up for an hour or two every couple of weeks to hang out, talk and listen while doing something fun with their Little – often at events that BBBS and its supporters arrange and underwrite.

Potential Bigs and other supporters can learn more by clicking [HERE](#).

The child's safety is top of mind in everything BBBS does, as is the professional support and supervision it gives to all matches.

National Mentoring Month was created in 2002 by Mentoring.org, a mentoring advocacy organization created more than 30 years ago, and the Harvard T.H. School of Public Health to “amplify, encourage, and strengthen mentorship for young people,” Mentoring.org states on its website.

Among national officials who have supported the creation of National Mentoring Month, according to the website, are former President Barack Obama and members of Congress, including the late Sen. John McCain. Additional support has come from Maya Angelou, Clint Eastwood, Quincy Jones, Gen. Colin L. Powell, Cal Ripken Jr., Bill Russell and Usher.

To learn more about becoming a Big and about Big Brothers Big Sisters of Western North Carolina, go to [www.bbbswnc.org](http://www.bbbswnc.org) or visit its Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/bbbswnc.org](http://www.facebook.com/bbbswnc.org).

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# • SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

## I saw Jesus today



**Pastor Randy Lucas**  
Highlands United  
Methodist Church

I saw Jesus today.

It started with a smile,  
then a nod of understanding,  
then a tear of empathy.

I saw Jesus today.

I saw Jesus today.  
An oasis of kindness  
in a desert of cruelty.

A hospitable,  
outstretched hand  
in a hostile world.  
I saw Jesus today.

I saw Jesus today.

A friend spoke.  
A friend listened.  
A friend understood.  
A stranger became a friend.  
I saw Jesus today.

At the Communion Table,  
in the waters of baptism,  
at a rest home,  
in a hospital,  
a funeral home,  
in prison.  
By a sick bed  
with the dying.

I saw reconciliation.

I heard a child laugh.  
I listened to musings of the aged.  
In uncommon kindness,  
gentleness,  
forgiveness  
and patience,  
I saw Jesus today.

A revival preacher once told me  
that if I welcomed Jesus into my heart  
I would see him one day.  
I must've misunderstood.  
I thought he meant later, in heaven.

But,

I must've misunderstood.  
Because,  
I saw Jesus today.

## Proverbs 3:5

## • PLACES TO WORSHIP •

## John 3:16

### BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice, Pastor (706) 782-3965  
Sundays: School: 10 a.m., Worship: 11  
Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7  
Wednesdays: Mid-week prayer meeting: 7 p.m.

### BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

828-269-3546 • Rev. Jamie Passmore, Pastor  
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

### CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Aryn Williams-Reubel, Pastor 828-743-5298  
Sundays: School at 9:30 Worship 10:30  
Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

### CHAPEL OF THE SKY

Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999  
Sundays: 10 a.m. Worship; Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

### CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

828-743-1701 • 464 Hwy 64E, Cashiers, NC 28717  
www.christanglicancashiers.com

9:30am Sunday School; 10:30am Worship Service. Mon. Night  
Bible Study & Dinner, 6pm, call for details.

### CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS

Pastor Brent Metcalf • 743-5470  
Sun. 10:45am. S.S. 9:30am. Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.  
Tues. Guys study 8am. Gals 10am.

### 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 &  
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### 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 Services Chapel: Rite I spoken, 8a. Rite II with Choir in  
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

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

### GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

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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

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www.highlandsmethodist.org

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

### MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

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### MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church  
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4224 Big Ridge Road (4.5 miles from NC 107)  
Wed: Bible Study 6:30 p.m.; Youth Group 6 p.m.

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### CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone - 526-2418  
Tues. - 9:30am Latin; Thurs. - 9:30am English; Sun. - 11am English

### 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

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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 Dec. 16. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.**

### **Dec. 26**

• At 1 p.m., officers received a report of destruction, damage, vandalism to property at a residence on Bowery Road where trees on the property were cut down without permission.

**The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Jan. 2**

### **Jan. 2**

• At 1:08 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Skylake Drive.

### **Jan. 4**

• At 3:56 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on

Old Orchard Road.

### **Jan. 5**

• At 4:44 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on N. 4th Street.

### **Jan. 6**

• At 3:14 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Bowery Road.

• At 7:03 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on NC 106.

• At 10:15 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on N. 4th Street.

### **Jan. 8**

• At 9:36 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Mel Keener Road.

• At 9:30 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers Fire Dept.

...DRUGS continued from page 1



Methamphetamines and drug paraphernalia found in a vehicle during the license checkpoint.

hicle. Charges are forthcoming.

This was a multi-agency effort in which officers from the Highlands Police Department, Macon County Sheriff's Office, and NC State Highway Patrol took part. Specifically, driver's licenses were checked at the checking station near the intersection of Lower Lake and Big Bearpen roads.

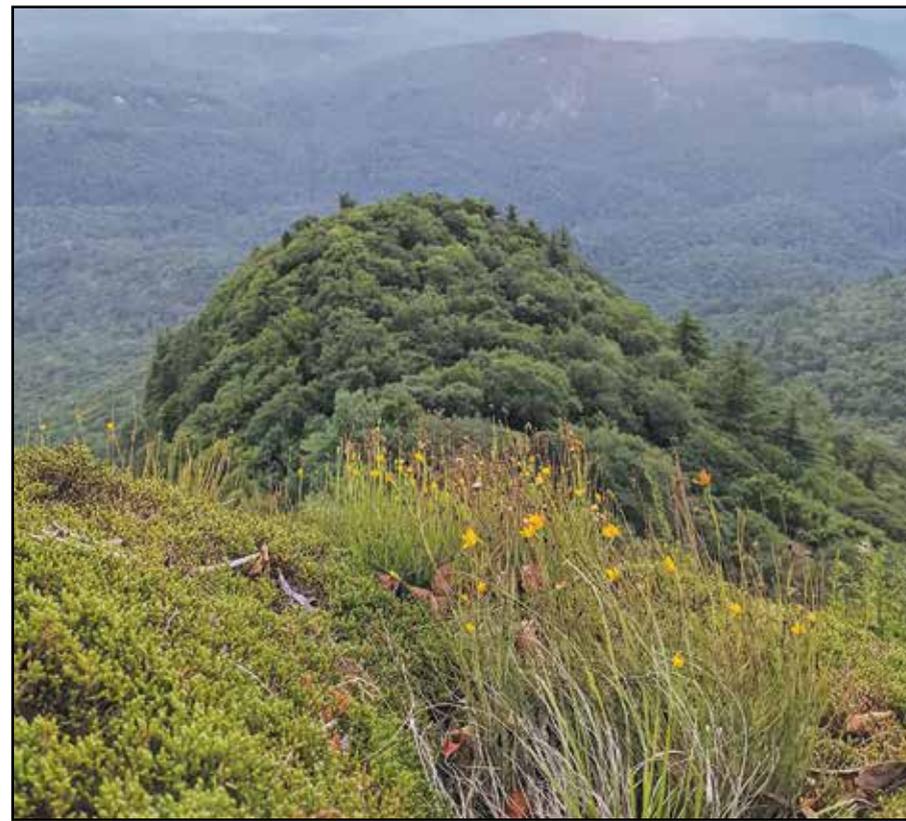
Officers were in the area for approximately one hour and in addition to the seizure of drugs and drug paraphernalia, they wrote several warning notices and citations for vehicle registration and driver's license violations.

"This checkpoint was a coordinated effort between multiple agencies to help deal with complaints of traffic violations and criminal activity in the Highlands area," said Highlands Police Chief Andrea Holland. "Citizens can expect to see further enforcement activities such as this around Highlands as we maintain our commitment to providing a safe community."

Holland said she looks forward to cooperation with the community and fellow law enforcement agencies in these continued efforts.

- Kim Lewicki

## • BIZ/ORG NEWS •



Rock Mtn/Chimneytop from Devils Courthouse.

## Land Trust completes two more conservation easements in 2022

By Gary Wein  
Executive Director

The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust (HCLT) has completed three conservation projects in 2022 protecting two conservation easements in Jackson County and accepting new lands on Big Bearpen in Highlands. Since 1909 HCLT has conserved in Macon and Jackson Counties over 3,850 acres in over 130 places, 3,300 acres of that total since 2006.

Mary and Starcen Ellis placed a beautiful 13 acres into an easement located in Cashiers on Monte Vista Road. This easement conserves a small section of old growth forest and a rare rock outcrop with two federally threatened plant species, milfoil ragwort and a stonecrop. This conservation easement is adjacent to High Hampton which added 87 acres to its nearby easement in 2021 that protects Rock and Chimneytop Mountains.

The Cannon family placed 18 acres in a conservation easement they are calling Liten Gard. The easement is located on North Norton Road and protects part of the watershed for Pine Creek and Glenville Lake. The site is also home to a rare boulder field

forest and two rare plants, the northern fly honeysuckle and northern shorthusk grass.

Conservation easements are not public lands. So please do not run out and visit these places as you will be a trespasser. Conservation easements do provide important public benefits acting as refugia for rare biota, protecting views, and water.

Jane and Tom Ghegan donated three quarters of an acre on Big Bearpen Mountain Road to the land trust. This land is adjacent to one of the Highlands Plateau Greenway entrances to Rhododendron Park on Big Bearpen. The land will be added to the 24.5 acres that make up this public park. Perhaps in the future this land could enable additional parking at a Greenway trail head.

The Land Trust will carry an additional four more conservation projects into 2023, so stayed tuned for more good news in 2023.

The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is a 501(c)3 and depends upon donations from people like you. To find out more about HCLT contact us at [info@hcltnc.org](mailto:info@hcltnc.org) or visit [hicashlt.net](http://hicashlt.net).



*Betty Chestman*  
LMBT #13808

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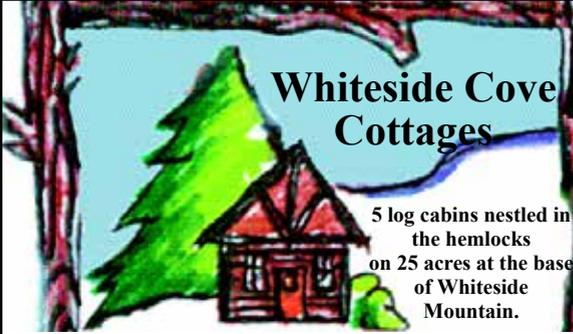
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**QUALIFICATIONS:** Capacity to excel at influencing and leading the staff and the organization; Outstanding communication skills and ability to work well with board, staff, the community and media; High executive functionality; Nature-oriented; Energetic, curious, and social; Passion for the mission and programs of HCLT; Experience in program planning and execution; Donor support and fundraising capabilities; Age-appropriate education programming; Fiscal and operational management; Environmental, property, and/or fiscal regulations

**TO APPLY:** Please send introductory letter and resume to: Carlton King, President, HCLT, P.O. Box 1703, Highlands, NC 28741. Or email to [personnel@hcltnc.org](mailto:personnel@hcltnc.org)

HCLT is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages diversity and equity in all facets of the organization's work. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard

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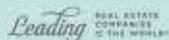


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