

Highlands Newspaper

Volume 20, Number 25

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Thurs., June 22 2023

Highlands FY '23-'24 budget decreases

For the second year in a row the "final" budgets discussed at May Town Board meetings were decreased by the time the June Town Board meetings came around and the final budgets

passed.

In both cases, the decrease was due to the completion of projects between May and June which meant they didn't have to be carried over into the new fiscal year as

originally proposed.

Last year the decrease was about a million dollars between the May and June figure, and this year it was closer to \$3.3 million.

• See **DECREASES** page 15

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Francis, Brian and Roxie Jetter enjoy a fleeting summer moment.

It's time for a new chapter

It's a love story, really. A love of vocation, a love of place, a love for the people in a life.

That's the story of Brian and Francis Jetter who are now contemplating the next chapter in their story entitled: Retirement.

Highlands School Principal Jetter has been a teacher and administrator for a whopping 52 years. Francis has been a Teacher Assistant for 30 years. For both of them, the last 17 years have been

• See **CHAPTER** page 17

The amazing recovery of Barrett McKim

By Kyle McKim

Coming up on our one-year anniversary of Barrett's horrific science experiment accident, we have numerous things to be grateful for.

On the 23rd of June 2022, Barrett was attempting a science experiment using a Bunsen burner and multiple other ingredients. Somehow the accelerant, and either the rubbing alcohol or the lighter fluid blew back onto his body, catching him on fire. His polyester shirt was



Barrett McKim

quickly incinerated. The accelerant was also on his bare skin, which caught fire as well. Rescue workers quickly arrived and he was airlifted to the Augusta Burn Center where he spent the next 51 days in the ICU.

Barrett was burned on over 50% of his body, the majority of which was third-degree burns which required skin grafts. These were pulled from his back and his upper legs which had also en-

• See **McKIM** page 19

The county's first all Republican BOC adopts largest budget increase in history

By Brittney Lofthouse

After failing to adopt the 2023-'24 fiscal year budget on June 13 as originally scheduled, the Macon County Board of Commissioners met again Monday night and after two hours and little to no change to the budget that was voted down less than a week prior, commissioners adopted a budget 4-1. Commissioner John Shearl was the dissenting vote.

At \$63,754,537, the budget approved on Monday night is nearly

identical to the budget County Manager Derek Roland originally proposed in May — \$64,566,978 — with revenues and expenditures balanced at a revenue-neutral tax rate of 27 cents per \$100 of assessed property valuation.

This means Macon County has the lowest property tax rate in the state of 100 counties.

Although the county's property tax will be decreased by .13 cents — the overall county budget will jump

more than \$5 million — with the increase being directly attributed to an increase in revenues collected by the county.

There were a few minor changes to the budget made at the request of Commissioner John Shearl.

Those adjustments included removing the budgeted allocation for renovations to the Highlands School soccer field — an \$800,000 price tag. While the project won't be funded in

• See **BUDGET** page 8

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Budget is done but governing continues

Last Thursday night, the Highlands Town Board passed the budget for fiscal year 2023-'24. The budget will be over 29 million dollars, with about 8 million in the general fund. The remaining portion reflects the cost of operating our enterprise funds, such as sanitation, water and sewer, and electricity.

While we have had some utility rate increases in the last decade, the town has not had a property tax increase in almost 10 years. And we are pleased to report that property taxes have not increased in this new budget.

The fire tax was increased several years ago to build the new fire station and to staff the fire department 24/7. The full-time staffing will go into effect around July 1st. The projection is that the town can fund these full-time staff positions for about three years before a small increase in the fire tax may need to be reviewed. The new staffing will improve response times to accidents and fires and possibly improve fire insurance rates.

A major item in the new budget is the design phase for the replacement of the



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

aging pre-clarifier tank at the water department. This engineering process will start at the beginning of July. The budget also has several road paving projects that will begin in the fall when traffic levels are low.

A major item at the board meeting last Thursday was the introduction of our new electrical consultants. The new consulting firm is Utility Technology Engineers-Consultants (UTEC). This company provides full services to

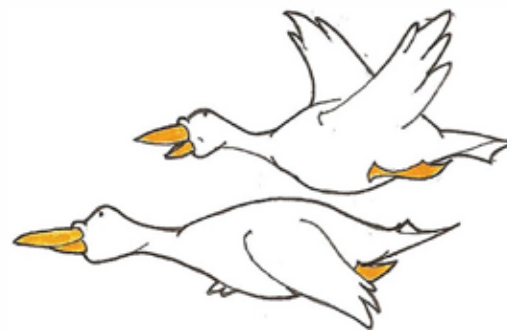
area municipalities that operate electric utility departments. UTEC will be our representative for administering the current wholesale electricity contract that Highlands has with Duke Energy.

In 2028 the town will have to enter a new wholesale contract with an energy provider. It could be that we continue with Duke Energy or go with another provider that offers a better contract. UTEC will broker proposals from potential providers such as Georgia Power, Santee Cooper, and others. They will analyze the proposed contracts and recommend the best one for Highlands. UTEC also provides expertise in other areas, such as green energy options, grid improvements, and cost-saving strategies. I am optimistic that our new consultant will help the town provide better and more reliable service to our residents and customers.

Now is the intense season of "Raleigh Watching." The North Carolina Legislature will approve a final state budget in the next week or so and send it to the governor for his signature. I meet with Josh Ward, our Town Manager, every morning to decipher the status of critical bills and budget items. We look at items like extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), short-term rentals, accessory dwelling units, and changes in wastewater and stormwater regulations, just to name a few. To be honest, it is a mind-boggling process to try to monitor and track the fast flow of legislative initiatives. Like all municipalities, we rely on the NC League of Municipalities staff stationed in Raleigh to alert us to any problematic bills.

To paraphrase Forrest Gump, the conclusion of an NC legislative session is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you are going to get. I only hope it is all sweets for Highlands.

• HIC'S VIEW •



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Hic

• WEATHER •

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High 67° Low: 54°	High 73° Low: 62°	High 81° Low: 61°	High 85° Low: 63°

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• INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft. •

The housing market in 2023: A Realtor’s perspective

The housing market in 2023 is expected to be a mixed bag. On the one hand, home prices are still rising, and inventory is still low. This means that buyers will continue to face competition, and they may have to pay more than they would like for a home.

On the other hand, mortgage rates are expected to continue rising in 2023. This will make it more expensive to borrow money to buy a home, which could help to cool the market and make it easier for buyers to find homes.

Overall, the housing market in 2023 is expected to be more balanced than it was in 2022. Buyers will still face challenges, but they may also find some opportunities.



Rachel Wavra, Broker,
Berkshire Hathaway
HomeServices Meadows
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828-505-6190
rachel@bhhsmmr.com

In Highlands, residential sales are down 28% year-to-date but the average sales price is up 11% compared to 2022. Also notable are days on the market, which is up 27%, averaging 152 days thus far in 2023.

Here are some specific predictions for the housing market in 2023:


- Home prices are expected to continue rising but at a slower pace than in 2022.
- Inventory is expected to increase slightly, but it will still be below pre-pandemic levels.

Despite a brief reprieve, mortgage rates are expected to continue to rise, which could make it more expensive to buy a home.

• See INVESTING page 10

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2
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Amazing long-range mountain views from this beautifully furnished condo in the gated community of VZ TOP! Gaze over the Nantahala National Forest into Georgia and South Carolina from the expansive rear deck. This top level condo has an open floor plan with plenty of space for entertaining. The kitchen is equipped with modern appliances, plenty of prep and storage space, a pantry, and a breakfast bar. The living room has a wood-burning stone fireplace with a walnut mantle. There's also a large laundry room in the unit and a storage closet on the front porch. Close to downtown Highlands with easy access to fine dining, great shopping, and many wonderful events.

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Welcome to this distinctive Jim Fox contemporary home with organic flair in the heart of Highlands! Enjoy a walk-to-town location that offers easy access to downtown. The living room has high wood ceilings and a unique gas log fireplace. The dining area is adjacent to the kitchen and offers the perfect space for an intimate dinner. The master bedroom features an en-suite bath and a walk-in closet. A family room addition with a built-in bookcase is great for overflow guests. With its ideal location and modern design this contemporary home is perfect for those seeking a modern lifestyle in one of the most desirable neighborhoods in the area.

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• LETTERS •

Thanks to a Good Samaritan

Dear Editor,

Have you ever had one of those days when everything went wrong but was saved by a good Samaritan?

Last Friday, my sister Andi, and I got a call that my brother had been sent to ICU in our hometown. We quickly loaded up the car and headed down the Walhalla Road to Anderson. A few miles out of town, we passed a liver colored spotted dog curled up in a ditch, right on the side of the road. We got a quick look into soulful eyes and knew we had to turn around to get this dog to a vet.

My sister swerved into the first road (Jerry's Gap) we could find, backed up and went into a ditch. The car was tilted almost on its side, the other part of the car was three feet off the ground. We crawled out of the passenger side and tried to call Triple A. Of course, there was no cell service.

Just as we began walking, a white truck came around the bend and stopped to ask if he could help. We could see fishing rods in the back, a dog in his front seat and didn't want to ruin his morning but he insisted on trying to get us out.

He said, "I've got a chain. Let me just give it a try."

In five minutes, we were on solid ground and he checked to make sure the tires and the car were safe to drive.

We thanked him profusely telling him about the injured dog.

He said, "That dog is fine. I see it laying there all the time."

The good Samaritan is Sam Schmitt, a well-mannered, handsome young man with a winning smile who was willing to go out of his way for us. It renewed our faith in the younger generation.

Thank you Sam!

Lee Lyons
Andrea Cannell
Highlands

Let's turn the clock back

Dear Editor:

Commissioner John Shearl captured both attention and criticism for his comment that Pre-K was comparable to "free daycare." The fact that the RAPC's paid ad does mention "Free

Childcare" aside, Mr. Shearl is not wrong. In truth, and over a span of the last several decades, Kindergarten and Pre-K have essentially supplanted the family in whose arms the raising of our children was once entrusted. Child-rearing has been turned into a plethora of "for profit" industries as mental health and social services (in addition to education) have managed to commandeer huge portions of funds and functions once solely the responsibility of parents.

I know what you're thinking - "he's hopelessly mired in the 1950's." In truth, the 1940s would be more accurate. However, I am well aware that the global economy, along with technological advances and other societal developments have stressed family life to the max.

That aside, I think present generations have a right to know there was once a time in America when women (upon discovering they were with child) did not immediately and with great haste seek out professional caregivers to raise their children. My generation did not have Pre-K or Kindergarten, we were raised at home by our parents, families and villages and during WWII when everyone who could, worked to support the war effort.

You may recall the book Hillary Clinton penned in 1996 (It Takes a Village - And Other Lessons Children Teach Us). The First Lady was castigated by the "Party of Family Values" screaming "only parents raise children, not villages." Her detractors were wrong then just as they're wrong now in advocating womb-to-the-tomb care and denying children the natural parent-family supervision they need to develop and mature.

My parents both worked and my father served in the Army during WWII. My generation had grandparents, aunts, uncles, older cousins and our villages. By the time we reached the age of six and entered 1st grade we could read, print, write in cursive, were well versed in the art of fair play, knew the colors, how to draw and make things (including change for a dollar). My piggy bank was a toy cash register, a coin bank that accepted pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters which (if I counted it correctly) my grandmother and I would deposit in the account we shared at our local savings bank. I was four years old.

It was parents, families, churches and schools (the village) which raised my generation (together) and schools were a major contributor. The stated objective of The National Congress of Parents and Teachers prior to 1950 was: "To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, church, and community and to develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for every child the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education."

I'm quoting my mother's membership card in the NCP&T - 1949, the card she carried on her person until she died in 1983. That's how important it was to my parents' generation and why they tried so very hard to pass their devotion on to my generation.

My generation failed to honor the sacred traditions that allowed this country to recover and to help the world heal after WWII. German philosopher Georg Hegel (1770-1831) offers an observation that "life has a value only when it has something valuable as its object." Our children were once deemed valuable, not in the sense of a profit or loss line item on a spreadsheet but as the intrinsic summation of past accomplishments and our last best hope for America's future.

I implore parents, teachers, and villages; return to raising and nurturing our nation's children as you once did - so very, very well.

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iPhoto (Level 2)

Presenter: Loraine Smith, Monday, June 26, 1-4pm \$40/\$50

Medicinal Garden Tour: Cultivating Medicinal Plants in the Home Garden

Presenter: Connie Thompson, Thursday, July 6, 10am-12pm, \$40/\$50

Right-Wing Politics and Populism in Modern France

Presenter: Max Owre, Thursday, July 6, 2-4pm, \$30/\$40

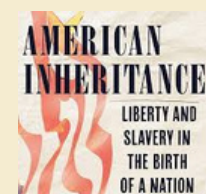
Presenter Spotlight: Ed Larson



The Scopes Trial in History and Folklore

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Join Pulitzer Prize winning author, Ed Larson, for a riveting presentation on the Scopes Trial, and the resulting tension between science and religion that continues a century later.



Conceived in Liberty

Presenter: Ed Larson, Wednesday, June 28, 10am-12pm, \$30/\$40 Member/Non-member

In this lecture, Larson will reexamine the words that gave birth to a nation and will explore the tensions between liberty and slavery during the Revolutionary Era in American history.



Shackleton: The Man and the Myth

Presenter: Ed Larson, Thursday, June 29, 10am- 12pm, \$30/\$40 Member/Non-member

Follow in the footsteps of famed explorer Ernest Shackleton as American historian and legal scholar Ed Larson recounts the remarkable achievements and efforts of this modern-day hero.



Ed Larson holds the Darling Chair in Law and is University Professor of History at Pepperdine University. Recipient of the 1998 Pulitzer Prize in History for Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion, Larson received a Ph.D in the history of science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a law degree from Harvard.

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...BUDGET continued from page 1

the budget, commissioners said it is only delayed, but didn't see the need to carry the funding for the project in the fiscal year budget since soil samples were not expected to be completed until April. Without soil samples, the county said it does not have a clear plan for the needed improvements.

Chairman Paul Higdon reiterated that removing the funding was just temporary and once soil samples are completed, county leadership will continue working with the Board of Education on a plan to address the soccer field.

The budget was also amended to include funding to repair the building located at the county's Zachary Park in Highlands as well as some grading work beyond the adjacent parking lot to make a field for county youth recreation.

The most notable addition to the budget for many was the county's decision to reinstate \$165,000 to complete the architectural design work for the Highlands School expansion project. The project would improve the school's media center and include additions to the high school wing but also include renovations to house two preschool classrooms.

The budgeted funding reinstates money that was cut by commissioners just a few months ago and will get the project "shovel-ready" with design plans so if and when additional funds are earmarked for the actual renovation project itself, it can proceed.

At the request of Commissioner Shearl, one full-time position within the county's animal control division will be eliminated.

The budget did not include any additional

funding for a position within animal control, but it did include funding currently budgeted for an administrative position to be reallocated for a control officer to better serve Macon County.

The funding reallocation was requested to address several comments and concerns from the community regarding animal control, many of which commissioners heard last week during the public hearing.

However, Commissioner Shearl requested the funding not be reallocated for a new animal control officer position, and for it to be eliminated entirely. Along with the elimination of the position, additional funding was removed from the budget that would have provided a vehicle for the position.

Monday night's budget was a compromise budget that included the additions Shearl requested, while also not including other items he wanted to see removed from the budget.

Commissioner Shearl originally made a motion to drop the county's tax rate to .26 cents per \$100 of assessed value, to make the 3% COLA (cost of living adjustment) and 1.5% step increase for county employees a one-time allocation, and to remove funding for the health department to replace the Molar Roller — a mobile child dental facility.

Commissioner Shearl also requested that all fee increases for commercial waste disposal requested by the county's solid waste department be denied.

Although Commissioner Danny Antoine

• See BUDGET page 14

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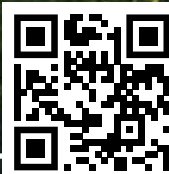
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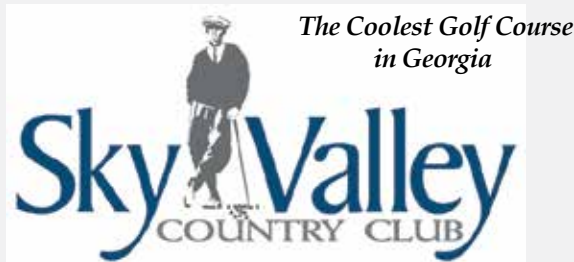
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...INVESTING continued from page 4

- The housing market is expected to remain competitive, but it may be easier for buyers to find homes than it was in 2022.

As a realtor, here are some tips for buyers in 2023:

- Have your finances in order including a pre-qualification letter if you plan to finance any portion of the purchase.
- Be ready to make an offer as soon as you find a home you like.
- Be willing to pay more than you might have expected.
- Be flexible with your budget and your timeline.

Here are some tips for sellers in the current housing market:

- Make your home move-in ready. Buyers are looking for homes they can move into without making significant repairs.
- Stage your home. De-clutter, depersonalize, and remove extra furniture that makes the space feel smaller.

- Use a Realtor that will market your home widely using a variety of marketing channels to reach as many potential buyers as possible.

- Be prepared to negotiate and be willing to compromise.

Whether you are a buyer or a seller, trusted real estate advisor is a must-have. Our job is to support you and keep you updated on the market, even if you never follow through on a transaction.

The housing market in 2023 is expected to be a challenge for buyers, but it is not impossible to find a home. By being prepared and flexible, buyers can increase their chances of success.

** Rachel Wavra is a Broker with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Meadows Mountain Realty. Rachel has a deep connection to the plateau community, where she spent her childhood and returned to raise her own family. Rachel can be reached by call/text at (828)-505-6190 or by email at rachel@bbhsmmr.com.*

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scalymtncrafters@gmail.com to schedule a class!

Each class lasts approximately 90 minutes and provides 25 meals locally for each item made.

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

POOL SCHEDULE

• Lap Swim: Mon.-Fri., 6.-9:45am, 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.highlandsbiological.org.

Thurs-Sat.

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

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 MountainView 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 5-6:30 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 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 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.

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 Depart-

Lighting Up Your Nights

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up the sky with the annual fireworks

display and concert on July 4th.

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JUNE 9	Johnny Webb Band
JUNE 16	Steady Hand String Band
JUNE 23	Southern Highlands Band
JUNE 30	Byrds & Crows

Saturdays on Pine

Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park
Pine Street

JUNE 3	NU - BLU
JUNE 10	Firecracker Jazz Band
JUNE 17	Dive Bar Divas
JULY 1	Blaze the City

TUESDAY JULY 4 – Independence Day Festival Diamond River Band - Fireworks begin after the concert!

JULY 7	The Foxfire Boys	JULY 8	Bill Mattocks
JULY 14	Curtis Blackwell Band	JULY 15	Lazluvr
July 21	Carter Giegerich & Friends	July 22	Back Porch Orchestra
JULY 28	We Three Swing	JULY 29	Shane Meade & the Sound

For more information on the Outdoor Concert Series, July 4th fireworks display or other events, call 828-526-2112, write events@highlandschamber.org or stop by the Highlands Welcome Center, 108 Main Street.

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

ment 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? call 828-526-0863 or email info@maconncliteracy.org

Thurs. through Aug. 10

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

Sundays

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

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Sunday Service: 10AM 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).

June 23-July 8

• "Jersey Boys" at Mountain Theatre Company now in residence at the Performing Arts Center on Chestnut Street. For tickets go to www.mountaintheatre.com

Fri. - Sat., June 30 - July 1

• This special artistic weekend will feature the return of husband and wife duo, writer John T. Edge and artist Blair Hobbs. Social Hour Fri. and Sat. from 5-6 pm with complimentary hors d'oeuvres and special cocktails prepared by John T. available for purchase in J. Henry Farmhouse Tavern. To book your stay today. To book your stay, go to <https://www.oldewardhospitality.com/half-mile-farm/#/booking/step-1>

Tues., June 27

• At the Hudson Library, at 10:15 AM, Highlands Nature Center will be at the library to present a special program geared toward the 5-and-under crowd. This second Nature Kids program will feature Trees! Hands-on fun is guaranteed.

Wed., June 28

• At Hudson Library, Florida-based author Stephen McGuire will appear at Hudson Library on Wednesday at 2 PM to talk about his psychological thriller Fractured Power. Books will be available for purchase and signing at this free event. "Fractured Power" is a dark and haunting psychological thriller about Aiden Fletcher, a young man who came from humble origins and uses his extraordinary ambition and devious ingenuity to fulfill his inevitable destiny and reach the pinnacle of power in Washington, DC. McGuire had a 30+ year legal career serving as an attorney and a federal judge in Washington, DC. He retired in 2008 as the Chief Judge of the Federal Trade Commission, where he received the FTC Dis-

tinguished Service Award and was honored by President George W. Bush for his service to the nation's judiciary. Fractured Power is his second novel.

Thurs., June 29

• At Hudson Library, at 3:30 PM, we'll be holding our first-ever Kids Zone Bingo for Books! Kids of all ages are invited to join the fun. Everyone will play bingo, with free children's books as the prizes! We'll have books for children from toddlers to high schoolers; there's sure

to be something for everyone! Children under 5 will need an adult with them throughout the program.

Sat., July 1

• At The Bascom, Free "Community Day" from 11 am - 2 pm. Free Popcorn, Artist Demonstrations, Make your own art, Help paint a community mural, Storytelling, Teddy Bear Hospital. Bring your own picnic to enjoy in the shaded amphitheatre

Tues., July 4

• 4th of July activities will be at the Town Ballfield on Tuesday. the

shooting off of water rockets starting at 9am; at 11am traditional field games until 12 noon (Tug a War, 3-legged Sack Race, water balloon toss and frozen T-Shirt contest); at 12 noon a possible visit from MAMA the med vac helicopter. The HF&R Dept. will have the ladder truck for the annual spray-down once the MAMA Helicopter leaves. Also Rotary will be serving food at Town Ball Field starting at 11am. The annual fireworks show will start about dark.

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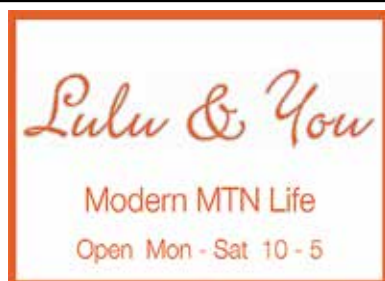
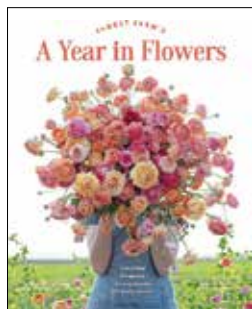


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...BUDGET continued from page 8

originally seconded Shearl's motion and budget proposal, after seeking clarification and further discussion by the board, he ultimately voted to reject Shearl's proposal.

Commission Chairman Paul Higdon, voted for the final budget marking only the third budget he has supported since being elected to the board in 2012.

Commissioner Shearl explained his dissenting vote by saying he remained steadfast in his belief that the taxpayers of Macon County deserved to see a tax decrease — even more so than the tax decrease nearly half of the county will be seeing with the .27 cent tax rate that was being proposed.

Factoring in the reevaluation and the county's new tax rate of .27 cents, close to half of county citizens will see a decrease on their tax bill, however the amounts will vary.

For example, according to MC tax records, Commissioner Shearl owns nine properties in Macon County. Although the taxes on his home address will increase by \$92.64 per year based on his property value increasing by \$188,340 — two of his other prop-

erties that saw a smaller increase in value — between \$5,000 and \$25,000 — will actually see a decrease in taxes of \$270.45 and \$278.44 per year, respectively. When all nine of Commissioner Shearl's properties are factored together, despite seeing the value of his combined properties increase by \$430,880, he will actually pay \$619.99 less in taxes.

While Shearl explained he voted against the budget because he wanted to see additional tax breaks for citizens, the .26 tax rate Shearl proposed Monday night — or even the .24 tax rate Shearl mentioned last week — would still have some county residents seeing an increase on their tax bill due to the reevaluation and their property values increasing.

In fact, the county's ad valorem tax would have to be reduced to .20 cents per \$100 of assessed value — or half of the current tax rate — before no properties in the county would have a higher tax bill this coming year.

Having finalized the budget, it is now ready to submit to the state as required by June 30.



MOUNTAINTOP
ART AND CRAFT SHOW

The 18th Annual Mountaintop Art and Craft Show

Saturday - June 24

Nitrograss with Charles Wood 1-4PM

Clogging with Ginger Mosely 1 PM

Kids Zone:

The Bascom Art Fun

Teddy Bear Hospital 10AM-4PM

Silent Auction begins 10 AM

Sunday - June 25

Line Dance Championship with

Mountain City Playhouse 1-4PM

Kids Zone:

The Bascom Art Fun

Teddy Bear Hospital 10AM-4 PM

Silent Auction ends 3 PM

Kelsey Hutchinson Park
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June 24 & 25 10am-4pm

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Completed this year were the wastewater treatment plant belt press replacement, the Carolina Way sewer line replacement, the Arnold Road pump station rehab, the water treatment plant service pump project and the installation of a number of sewer pump station generators.

The revenue neutral budget for FY '23-'24 stands at \$29,641,478.

Once again, the fees for town services – water/sewer, electric, and sanitation – will not increase, nor will the ad valorem tax rate increase.

In fact, due to the recent property revaluation, the town's tax rate will decrease from last year's 15.6 cents per \$100 valuation to 10.22 cents per valuation with 1 ½ cents of that earmarked for street paving projects.

The tax rate is based on an approximate in-town property valuation of \$2,844,000,000.

The fire department

In addition, the fire tax, which is based on the Highlands Fire District property valuation of \$5.8 billion, will decrease from 3 cents per \$100 valuation to 1.91 cents.

A few years ago, the fire tax was raised to 3 cents per \$100 valuation to fund the new fire station and to eventually fund full-time firefighters.

That time has come. Six full-time firefighters have been hired and are expected to begin work in early July. The projection is that the town can fund these full-time staff positions for about three years before a small increase in the fire tax may need to be reviewed.

The police department

The Highlands Police Department is dealing with chronic vacancies like other law enforcement agencies across the nation as well as those close to home.

Subsequently, the Town Board OK'd a \$2/hour increase in salaries for Highlands police officers for FY '23-'24.

According to Chief Andrea Holland, the increase will help retain the current officers as well as help recruit new officers as the

raise places Highlands Police Department salaries higher than those around Highlands.

The increase amounts to about \$65,000 a year.

"We have reached a critical point within our department with the loss of another officer, bringing the total vacancies to three," said Chief Holland. "We cannot compete with the open positions at Franklin PD, the MC Sheriff's Office, and Jackson County agencies due to their higher salaries."

Officers and administrative officers are currently covering three open positions until January 2024 when two recruits complete Basic Law Enforcement Training.

"Our agency not only needs to attract seasoned police officers, but we must retain the staff we currently have. With the proposed pay increases, we can entice new officers to join our department and others to stay," she said.

She also hopes the salary increase will offset the unpaid two-hour travel time per shift making Highlands an inviting employer.

- Kim Lewicki

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Annual MountainTop Art & Craft show is this Sat. and Sun., June 24-25

The 18th Annual Mountaintop Art and Craft Show Kelsey Hutchinson Park is Saturday and Sunday 10a-4p.

Admission is free but donations will be accepted at the gates.

New this year are two dance concerts: a clogging competition during the band Nitrograss's break which will be judged by Ginger Mosely, former member of the National Championship Clogging team.

On Sunday there will be a Line Dancing Competition with Mountain City Playhouse.



Black and White photograph by area artist, Cynthia Strain who will have a booth at the Art show.

com

There will also be a Kid Zone with a special art project with The Bascom folks and a Teddy Bear Hospital.

With over 100 artists, silent auction and a raffle there are plenty of ways to show your support.

This annual show is a favorite for both artists and visitors. It is also a fundraiser for Mountaintop Rotary of Highlands, supporting community grants. For more information visit www.highlandsartshow.com

"Bach in a Sacred Space"

Thursday, July 6th @ 5:00 PM
Episcopal Church of the Incarnation Chapel-Highlands



HCCMF presents violinist Robyn Bollinger performing Bach, Paganini and Ysaye

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...CHAPTER from page 1

spent at Highlands School, a place they will hold in their hearts forever.

"Simply, know this," said Brian. "All of you, all of Highlands, and all of Highlands School will stay with us the rest of our lives. We thank you for that piece of love and grace you have given us."

Over his 52-year span, Brian has been an English teacher and an administrator, having taught in Florida, Georgia and North Carolina. Francis has been a Teacher Assistant in Georgia and North Carolina. For both, Highlands stands apart.

"Highlands School is a great school academically, and a 'sweet' school humanly because it is a K-12 school. The dynamics between the younger and older students are wonderful to watch," said Brian. "The size of the school means flexibility is possible both in interactions with parents and students and with teachers because having the 'right' size is important for teachers to teach and students to learn. The most important thing in a school is that students grow intellectually and humanly," he said.

Over the last 17 years, Brian said not a lot has changed in regards to "humans" on campus – young and old. But other aspects of life at Highlands School have changed, specifically due to the response to the pandemic.

The pandemic response was a big change. Electronics and internet use with the accompanying online programs has become a much larger change, he said.

"Research used to be a printed endeavor, now it is an online endeavor while still trying to determine fact from fiction/opinion," he said.

Though the number and types of courses are about the same, the knowledge in each has rapidly expanded.

"Highlands School test scores remain high but most importantly, growth stays very high," Brian said.

As can be expected, the campus has been updated and improved over the years from a physical and electronic perspective, with more changes necessary.

"I hope the citizens of Highlands and the supporters of Highlands School continue to champion adding PreK. Parents and kids need it," he said.

The Jettters said all aspects of the job from employees, parents, citizens and students are the best they have ever known and they have immense respect for all the people who have worked at Highlands School through their years.

"There are so many instances of giving, and helping, and teaching, and learning, and growing, and grace that the employees of this school do every day because the school and the children and the people of this community, and each other, deserve it," said Brian.

He said one of the lessons he learned from both sports and his mom is that the team is way more important than the individual.

"We all have different jobs in the work of educating the children brought to this school and put in our care: parents, townspeople, teachers, teacher assistants, custodians, front office personnel, bus drivers, food service personnel, the Rotary clubs, the town's churches, the town and it's scholarship fund for our seniors, Old Edwards Hospitality Group and its scholarships for the Valedictorian and Salutatorian, and their help with prom; the myriad of clubs that give scholarships to our seniors, the golf courses that allow our

golf team to practice and have tournaments, and the greatest element: the children themselves that do so well at the work of getting better at every task they do for each other every day."

The search for Principal Jetter's replacement is underway and will be announced in upcoming days.

Brian believes Highlands School will continue to be a unique educational entity in the mountains: small, different, wonderful, creative, and sweet.

"It's a place where students can be known; parents can be listened to and heard; teachers can do the work of helping students grow in a safe place; where everyone works for a common goal: to help students grow every year."

- Kim Lewicki



LOW COUNTRY SHRIMP BOIL
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SAVE THE DATE

SATURDAY, JULY 15th, 2022

Doors Open at 5, Dinner at 6

Rain or Shine Tented Event at Oak & Pine Streets, Highlands, NC

\$80 Ticket includes tasty low country boil dinner, dessert, and two drinks.

Live Music by Lrazr Luvr of Asheville

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



'THUS, SAITH THE LORD' – End of Discussion

Pastor Mark Ford
First Baptist Church
Highlands

The phrase “Thus, saith the Lord” is found over 430 times in the Bible, and with the derivative phrase of “The Lord says” the number comes to 513. Simply put, this is God’s “I command it...I declare it...end of discussion!”

One might think of the proverbial parental quip to a child that is protesting or arguing with “Why?” or “What for?” and the parent says, “Because I said so!”

Today’s world is filled with a lot of God’s creation arguing, protesting, or outright rejecting the “Thus, saith the Lord” from Genesis to Revelation. For many of our educated elites and common secularists there is no absolute of any kind in our world. Out of their relativistic thinking – which may be their only absolute, unrecognized – they echo the sentiments of William James’ “Damn the absolute” or James Joyce’s “The absolute is dead.”

As the absolutes of God’s Word are rejected, truth dies and personal belief reigns – and by default the “Thus, saith the Lord” is ignored. They join Nietzsche’s belief that God is dead. The only god that exists is the one they made in their own image. The incarnation of their relativistic thinking is the equality of “my truth” and “your truth” and emotivism that exalts “what you feel is good is good and what you feel is bad is bad.” Simply put, “Thus, saith the Lord” is now “Thus, saith me!”

What follows is the requirement for nonjudgmental tolerance and acceptance. The eleventh commandment is now firmly written in the table of stones, “Thou shalt not judge.” No, but God can.

The progressives and cancel culture of today easily judge my values and beliefs, invalidating my faith in “Thus, saith the Lord” while validating their own. Also, they can easily resort to Judeo-Christian values when they need to feel righteously indignant about selective atrocities and violence not in keeping with their worldview.

The irony is that they are aghast at the spilling of blood in our cities via gun violence, but resort to the words “choice, fetus, etc.” and reject out of hand the constant refrain, “Thus, saith the Lord, thou shalt not shed innocent blood” (Deut. 19:10 et al). Is there any more innocent blood than that of the unborn child in the womb? Their response to what they see as judgmental bias and bigotry and hate regarding opposition to LGBTQ+ is for us to “be kind.”

First, our convictions regarding sexuality as that which belongs in the bonds of marriage, and that between a man and a woman, comes from our faith in “Thus, saith the Lord.”

Discussion, open-mindedness, tolerance, and live and let live have no place in Biblical convictions clearly stated

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 22

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

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www.cashiers.church

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Tues. Guys study 8am. Gals 10am.

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

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

Wednesdays – Supper at 6 p.m.

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

Morning Prayer: Mon-Thurs 8:30 am in Chapel

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Sun.: Worship 10:45 am; Sun.: Bible Study 9:30 am

Wed.: Men’s Bible Study 8:30 am; Women’s 10:30 am

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Emily Wilmarth, pastor

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

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Rev. Marty Kilby

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Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

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

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

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Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from June 13. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

June 13

• At 11 a.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on South Street.

June 15

• At 12:35 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on US 64 at Spruce Street.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from June 14.

June 14

• At 7:57 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Buck Creek Road.

• At 6:10 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Whiteside Mountain Road.

June 15

• At 11:32 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of an electric fire at a residence on Choctaw Road.

June 16

• At 9:27 a.m., the dept. responded to a

fire alarm at a residence on Cobb Road.

• At 4:57 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Split Rail row.

• At 6:08 p.m., the dept. was first-responders at a location on Spring Street.

• At 10:10 p.m., the dept. responded to a CO2 alarm at a residence on Hickory Knut Gap.

June 17

• At 8:12 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at Skyline Lodge.

• At 6:46 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Horse Cove Road.

June 18

• At 6:07 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at Skyline Lodge.

• At 11:57 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident in Highlands Plaza.

June 19

• At 10:47 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Forest Trail.

• At 9:08 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Webb Baty Road.

June 20

• At 2:01 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cullasaja Drive.

...McKIM continued from page 1

dured 2nd degree burns themselves. He received over 20 blood transfusions, was intubated twice for several days, and the number of staples and stitches he received were literally uncountable. During those interminable weeks, we can only say that the prayers of the many sustained us.

The doctors were very surprised that Barrett did not have a single problematic infection. They told us when we arrived it would not be if he got an infection but when, but yet the only problem he faced in regards to infection was a small amount of yeast in the new growth site. Over 97% of the grafts that were transferred to his torso, neck and arms took, which is a staggering amount of success for such an extensive burn.

During the first couple months that we were back from the hospital, it was extremely difficult with daily dressing changes that would take upwards of four hours. Our community was absolutely amazing and we did not have to cook dinner for almost 2 months! People brought so much and gifted us abundantly with their generosity and love. We can never say enough 'Thank You's'.

Barrett has since received two release surgeries and two laser surgeries from the Shriners Hospital in Ohio, the first release gave him some expansion and movement of his neck, the second release did the same with his left arm. He is scheduled for his third laser surgery, which helps with the raised and red look of the scarring and elasticity of the scars, in July.

We homeschool our five children, and in part due to that, even though Barrett was a little behind in the fall, but has since made up all that he needed, and has finished the school year on time. His body and endurance have finally recovered to the point where he is again enjoying all his normal boy activities and has even been able to start back with archery which he loves.

We are all extremely proud of Barrett and his continued enthusiasm for life. The pain that he has had to endure can be unbearable for an adult, but for a 12-year-old, it is hard to comprehend. His journey is not over and continual hospital visits and surgeries will last until he is fully grown but the fact that he survived and continues to thrive is testimony to God's sustainability even through the fire.

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...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING continued from page 18

and stated by God. "Thus, saith the Lord" is the end of discussion regarding sexuality and sexual sins because the Almighty said so (cf. Rom. 1:26-32; Jude 1:5-8; I Cor. 6:9-20; Lev. 18:22; 20:13).

Second, the Lord long ago tagged that mantra "Be kind," saying "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph.

4:32).

Our kindness comes not from a compromise of our faith in God's Word and teachings, but from a willingness to exercise kindness toward those who seek the Lord in repentance, even as He has forgiven us for our sins. "Thus, saith the Lord" reveals to me my sins against the absolute of God's Word, precepts, and will. John 3:16, "For God so loved the

world that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" is our hope in light of the multitude of "Thus, saith the Lord."

It is not compromise, or rejecting or explaining away the "Thus, said the Lord's" that is our answer. It is Christ. I say this with genuine kindness.

Highlands Hurricanes Swim Team win second meet in a row; next meet at home Thurs. July 22 at 6pm

**Steve Hott,
Head Coach**

The Highlands Hurricanes traveled to Sylva, NC with 39 swimmers to swim against the Jackson County Swim Team (JCST) and the Smoky Mountain Aquatics Club (SMAC). Highlands won 508 to 224 to 211, respectively.

The Hurricanes were led by a quartet of Jr. Olympians: Chase Kenter, Jack Sumner, and twins Dasha and Ben Halldin. All four won all 5 of their events and scored 24 pts.

The trio of Emilina Hernandez, Jr. Olympians Paolo McCrae, and Justin Powell all won 4 of their events and a 2nd scoring 22 pts. Jr. Olympians Finneaus Garner, Ani-

ah McKim, and Conner Hughes brought home 21, 19, and 18 pts, 4, 3, and 2 blue ribbons, respectively.

Margaret Cole and Ian Batista scored 18 pts, Cole won 3 events, Batista 2. Elizabeth Burnette had 17 pts., while both Penelope McRae and Jr. Olympian Blake Kenter each had 16. All three won 2 events each. Jayce Powell and Jr. Olympian Lilliana Chambless both scored 15 pts. Powell won 1 event, Chambless 3. Chambless broke 7-year-old team record in the individual medley. Aleks Petric, Asa Garner, and Jr. Olympian Corena Dearth both scored 14 pts. and won an event.

Bella Batista, brother and sister AnnMarie and Wylie Hinton all brought home 13 pts. AnnMarie

won 3 events, Wylie and Batista 1 each. Miley Zagal and Morgan Mason scored 12 pts; Ivan Shchelgachov 11.5. Shchelgachov had 2 blue ribbons. John Bradshaw Spencer and Katherine Wise scored 9 pts; Alex Lopez 8.5. Spencer and Lopez each won an event.

Maxwell Basil scored 7 points and won 2 events in his first swim meet ever. Annie Wilkes, Agatha Jestin and Charlie Wilkes scored 7, 6, and 5 pts. respectively; Jestin won an event. William Burnette scored 3 pts, and Nicole Shchelgachov 2.

Also swimming for the Hurricanes was Grayson Banks and Harrison McKim. Bo Curcuru was on injured reserve for this meet.

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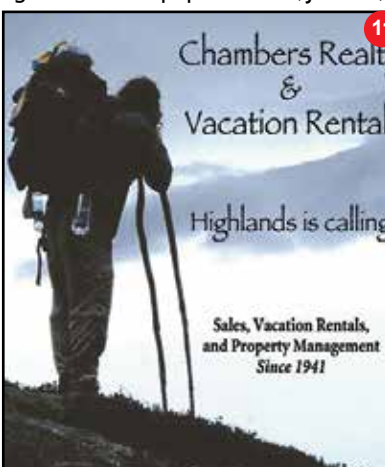
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