

Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

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Thurs., May 4, 2023

Citizens drill Shearl over HS Project

The meeting with John Shearl, Macon County Commissioner for the Highlands district, at the Rec Park last Thursday evening did what no one in the country has thus far been able to do – unite citizens under one banner – “The children come first.”

MAGA Republicans, the religious far right, middle of the roaders, liberals, grandparents, working parents, retirees and every other label under the sun, turned out to voice their support for the High-

lands School Expansion/Pre-K Project and to demand that their county representative – Commissioner Shearl – be Highlands’ advocate and not its adversary.

“Your constituents are here,

• See **SHEARL** page 11

Celebrate National Nurses Week May 6-12

By Brian O’Shea
Plateau Daily News

National Nurses Week was established to recognize the contributions of nurses throughout the country each year from May 6-12.

“We are honored to have such exceptional nurses at both Highlands-Cashiers Hospital and Eckerd Living Center,” said Tom Neal, CEO, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. “Their compassion is unmatched and the individual care they give to our patients and residents makes me proud to be a part of this amazing team.”

Nurses who care for those throughout the Plateau work long hours and deal with heart-wrenching situations on a regular basis. Nurses who work at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital and the Eckerd Living Center all have different

• See **NURSES** page 11

King & Queen of the Prom



Nathan Keener and Bella Wilson, were named King and Queen of the HS 2023 Prom which was held at OEI’s The Farm, Friday, April 28. They were also Homecoming King & Queen. See more photos on page 10.

- Photo by the Sunset Staff

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Highlands celebrated Senior Night on Monday, from left are seniors Caroline Woods, Addie Westendorf, Getsi Hernandez, and Brittany Damien.

-Photo by Brian O’Shea, Plateau Daily News

Conference champion hopes alive with win over BREC

By Brian O’Shea
Plateau Daily News

Highlands girls varsity soccer team hosted Blue Ridge Early College on Monday and earned a 6-2 victory that puts the Lady Highlanders in a position to clinch first place in the Smoky Mountain 1A Conference.

The Lady Bobcats stayed

within striking distance throughout the first half of the game, with Highlands up by a goal 3-2 going into halftime.

Things began to unravel for BREC during the second half with the Lady Highlanders scoring three unanswered goals.

Highlands also celebrated

• See **WIN** page 14

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

My CityVision review

Last week I attended the annual conference of the North Carolina League of Municipalities, aka CityVision. Let me review some of the highlights.

Governor Cooper spoke at the main luncheon. I, along with other mayors and elected officials, was glad to hear the governor say that municipalities should have more autonomy in making zoning and development regulations rather than having legislators



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

supposedly dead for this legislative session.

I used the word "supposedly," because as the budget moves toward finalization and legislators are ready to go home for the summer, anything can happen.

I had a conversation with a League of Municipalities staff member, and he confirmed my concern. As the budget rushes toward approval, parts of stymied legislation can be quietly attached to bills on track for approval. For instance, the short-term rental lobby attempted to attach a beneficial provision to their industry at the last moment during the previous term, but watchdogs caught the move and stopped it. The problem with tracking bills in Raleigh is the sheer number. In this term 1,500 bills have been introduced.

I also attended several sessions on hot topics. One was promoted as a session on how towns can manage STR issues. A large number of elected officials were in the room hoping to share information and learn more about how to address STRs. Instead, we received an infomercial from panelists representing major STR providers such as Airbnb. Their message was to register, permit, regulate STRs, and hold community meetings where all the issues on both sides could be resolved. Like other attendees, I was perplexed. In the brief Q&A that followed those rosy presentations, I pointed out the STR regulation roadblocks facing NC municipalities, especially because of the ruling by the NC Court of Appeals concerning the Wilmington STR ordinance. One panelist proclaimed the NC Vacation Rental Act passed during the 1990s was adequate to address all STR issues that a town would face. I begged to differ on that optimistic assumption. Many of us left the presentation very disappointed.

At roundtable discussions with other elected officials I found we had many common concerns. One was recruiting and retaining qualified personnel, especially in law enforcement. Almost all towns were seeking grants for critical infrastructure projects, especially water and sewer upgrades. Everyone had also experienced supply chain problems. And we all exchanged ideas about how to promote more community involvement and facilitate better communication with our citizens.

• HIC'S VIEW •



"OK just a warning. So what brings you to Highlands."

• WEATHER •

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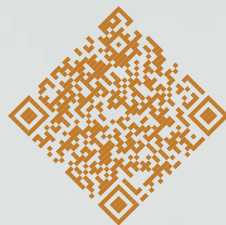
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• INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft. •

I Do or Adieu for ADU

What is an ADU? I'm glad you asked. ADU stands for Accessory Dwelling Unit and can mean an attached or detached residential structure that is used primarily for a single-family dwelling/residence.

If you think ADUs are new, think again. They've been around forever, just under a different name. Names like: Carriage house, mother-in-law suite, garage apartment, granny flat, etc. ADU is the newish term, but you can call yours whatever you want.

Here's the thing. Do you want to embrace and marry an ADU revision to our zoning ordinance? Do you take this ADU to be your lawfully joined residence on your property? If so, say "I DO."

Do you think an ADU revision would be an abhorrent idea in our town? If so, say, Adieu!

Our town had a community plan done in 2021. Of the survey sent out to all the business owners, sixty-two businesses responded representing 1203 employees.

- 61% agree more hotels OR rentals downtown would help their business.
- 51% agree more residential housing would be helpful to their business.
- 0% agree that employee housing is readily available.

Before you say I Do or Adieu, let's look at the pros and cons. Always the optimist, I'll start with the PROS, the positive aspects of ADUS.

#1 BOOM! ADUs could help alleviate the problem of employee/workforce housing.

According to a recent AARP article, "Unlike tiny homes, ADUs are compact but not teeny, so they're a more practical option for individuals, couples and families seeking small, affordable housing." And "ADUs are often hidden from view because they're positioned behind or indistinct from the main house.

#2 ADUs offer young people/adult children entry-level housing choices.

Whether it's your own twenty-something wanting to strike out on their own, or your forty-fifty something who needs to move back home (and to be honest, do you really want them underfoot? Probably not any more than they want you underfoot.) Either of these scenarios means some-



Jeannie Chambers
Chambers Realty
& Vacation Rentals

one needs a place, just a small place to stay until they can get on their feet, which can be anywhere from three months to three years. An ADU would be the most affordable way to go.

#3 ADUs have less impact on the community.

These are a way to increase density of residential neighborhoods without necessarily having cluster homes or huge developments.

#4 ADUs can help homeowners stay in their homes longer.

ger.

Whether older homeowners need a little income to help pay their taxes and other expenses, or they want to downsize by moving themselves into their ADU while renting their main house to a local family, either way helps the neighborhood stay a neighborhood.

Here are the cons, the negative reactions that will come. There'll be more, they can't help it.

#1. ADUs will turn into STRs.

Some have already voiced the possibility of an ADU turning into a short-term rental. Under the current zoning, that wouldn't be possible. Since an ADU is rather close to or is a part of a main dwelling, the possibility of a STR (less than 30 nights) isn't as likely.

#2 Allowing ADUs will be like the wild, wild west. A new frontier.

Everybody and their brother will have ADUs. Although I can't guarantee anything, my bet is that not EVERYBODY on your street or in your neighborhood would not want renters in their backyard. (But bless those who would)

So, what about it? Do you think you'd be in favor of your neighbor adding an ADU? If there were just something to go by, you know some rules laid out that we could see.

SHAZAAM! There ARE some rules in consideration. HB 409

HB409 is not to be confused with the household cleaner, 409, but who knows? This bill would clean up a lot of the mess we're in.

At the time of this paper, our office manages five long-term rentals (LTRs). If we had ten additional LTRs, they would probably have no trouble staying filled. We

• See **INVESTING** page 14

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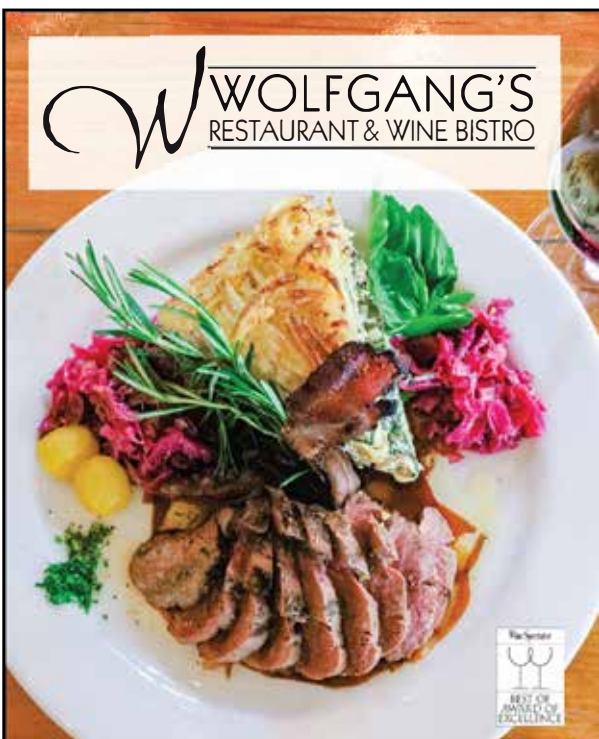
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• OBITUARY •

William 'Pops' Arthur Shaheen, Sr.

William "Pops" Arthur Shaheen, Sr., 90, went home to be with Jesus on April 27, 2023. William was born in Craven County, North Carolina to the late Uriah Grant and Elizabeth Phillips. He was later adopted by his stepfather Bob Shaheen. In addition to his parents he was preceded in death by his sister Marie Grant Hill and brothers Ben Grant and John Shaheen.

Pops was a hardworking man with a great heart and sense of humor. He worked as the service station Manager at the Jacksonville Florida Navy Exchange, from where he retired. He enjoyed sports, fishing and hunting. After retiring he moved to the mountains where he volunteered at Sky Valley-Scaly Mountain Fire Department and worked at Sky Valley Golf



and Ski Resort. Pops was a loving husband, father, grandfather and friend to all of those who knew him.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years Ruby Gaskins Shaheen, and three sons William "Billy" Arthur Shaheen Jr. (Peggy), Timothy Earl Shaheen (PJ) both of Florida, and Jonathan Hayes Shaheen (Gibby) of Highlands NC. Grandchildren, Elizabeth Rachel Willis Shaheen, Savannah Shaheen and John Hayes Shaheen.

A Celebration of Life service will be held at a later time.

Online condolences can be left at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home & Crematory is serving the Shaheen family.

• LETTER •

Please re-instate the Highlands Project/Pre-K

Dear Editor:

First, I would like to thank John Shearl for coming to Highlands last Thursday and taking the time to listen to everyone's concerns. Also thank you Jim Breedlove, Hilary Wilkes and Dr. Baldwin for coming; we appreciate your commitment, and I know it was a long night.

After having Thursday's meeting and Monday night's Board of Education meeting, the excuse and scapegoating from the county commissioners that the Board of Education wasn't prioritizing the Highlands School Project is no longer a valid talking point.

It is apparent that the County Commissioners have made it impossible for the school board by allowing only

one priority which it will act upon. There is no valid reason that the Highlands School Project cannot be prioritized with the commission's blessing to continue. The commission sets the budget.

We are asking that the board of commissioners vote at the next county commissioners meeting to re-instate the plans for the Highlands School Project. This gives flexibility for the future when the funding question for the Highlands School Project is being discussed. Without the plans it is much more difficult to work out the possible funding avenues.

So, again I ask and encourage the county commissioners to re-instate what was already an approved budget line item.

The commission approved a 1.3-million-dollar property for Franklin recently, so the idea of no money for Highlands really doesn't hold up.

Hopefully as the commission moves forward in the budgeting process it will also include discussion about the Highlands School Project's overall funding to complete the upgrade to our school in a timely manner. It is small relative to the Franklin Project but would yield immediate positive outcomes.

We are onboard with the Franklin High School project, but there is no good reason that the Highlands School Project must be on the same timeline as the Franklin Project given its much bigger size, time it will take to complete, and complexity.

Please do what's right and include our small ask in the budget moving forward. Thank you.

Derek Taylor
Highlands



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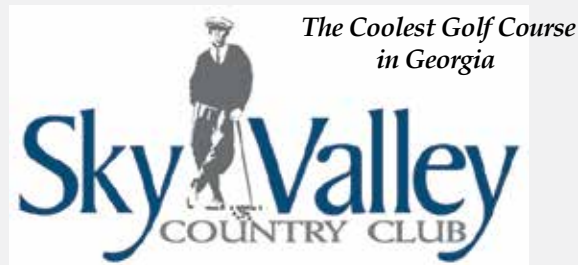


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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Pat Allen & Julie Osborn Top Performers in 2022

At a recent awards ceremony for Allen Tate Realtors/Pat Allen Realty Group held at the Old Edwards Inn, Pat Allen and Julie Osborn received the #1 Company-wide Small Team for 2022 Award out of the 2,200 brokers that serve the company throughout the Carolinas.

Allen and Osborn were tops company-wide for Listing Units, Listing Volume, Listing Volume Closed and Closed Volume for the year.

Allen Tate Realtors CEO, Pat Riley, and President, Gary Scott, presented the awards. Neal Hanks, President of Allen Tate/Beverly Hanks Realtors in Asheville, was also in attendance.

Additional company-wide awards were presented to Allen Tate Realtors/Pat Allen Realty Group's numerous top-performing Highlands and Cashiers-based brokers during the ceremony. Allen Tate Realtors is the #1 Independent Firm (non-franchise) in



Pat Allen



Julie Osborn

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Lance Hardin

Hardin to take the helm at HCLT

On May 1, Lance Hardin became the new Executive Director at the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust (HCLT), taking over for Dr. Gary Wein who is retiring.

HCLT has grown significantly under Wein's leadership, from less than 1,000 conserved acres to almost 4,000 acres under HCLT protection.

Hardin brings to HCLT a strong business background, having spent more than two decades as a "big-4" tax and advisory consultant. A love of the Highlands' regional culture prompted him to return to school for a graduate degree in Appalachian Studies, during which he conducted historical research on HCLT properties. "I am so excited about the opportunities to continue HCLT's mission," says Hardin, adding "the organization and staff have never been stronger, but our area's natural resources are facing unprecedented pressure from development and other forces - HCLT's conservation efforts have never been more vital!" Hardin and his wife, Gwyn, reside in Highlands.

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Highlands School 2023 Prom



...NURSES continued from page 1



National Nurses Week is May 6-12. Pictured are nurses from HC Hospital and the Eckerd Living Center; from left are Tracy Jernigan, Stephanie Mallonee, Kimberly Townsend, and Diana Shane. Not pictured is Sarah Pennington.

reasons for choosing a career in healthcare, but boils down to dedication and commitment to care for others.

Kimberly Townsend is a Clinical Nurse Coordinator at HCH.

Kimberly Townsend is a CNC at HCH and followed in the footsteps of her grandmother, who was also a nurse. Townsend said her grandmother would show the entire family how to properly take care of others, and treat them like family.

Townsend said she especially enjoys working at a patient's bedside and getting to know them.

"I love being able to be there advocating for my patient," she said. "They're scared, they don't feel well, and they often don't speak up or what to tell the doctor."

Townsend remembers a time when a 3-year-old boy came to the emergency room with an injury to his forehead. The boy's 1 year-old sister was at her wits ends and would not stop screaming.

Townsend spoke to the injured boy and helped calm him down, and he then calmed down the hysterical baby-sister.

"It made me feel really good, like I was where I needed to be," she said. "Doctors can't assess a patient if everyone in the room is freaking out. To have that impact and to know I was able to help them, it's

comforting."

Diana Shane is a Nursing Administrative Supervisor at HCH. She does a bit of everything, including bedside nursing, acute care, and emergency room duty.

She chose the healthcare field because of an interest in babies and technology and began her career working in a neonatal intensive care unit. This led to outpatient, pre-op, and post-op surgical care.

Shane then transitioned to a managerial position, but still felt the need to care for patients.

"I wanted to do both, so this is the perfect place," she said. "I can be a nurse and a manager; I can fill out reports while wearing scrubs. It stimulates both things that I enjoy."

She added that being part of a great team makes her position even that more rewarding.

"It's absolutely amazing here, I love it," said Shane. "I've never been somewhere so embracing and war. Everyone here is considered family right from the beginning."

From May 6-12, take a moment to thank a nurse, give them a shoutout on social media, send a card, flowers, donuts or candy; something to show appreciation for their dedication and compassion demonstrated each day on the job.

...SHEARL continued from page 1

and they want to hear one thing from you: come hell or high water you will stand up and let the other four commissioners know that Highlands is number one. And they want to see you fight and do whatever it takes to do that," said one participant. "You make that commitment tonight, that at every meeting you will stand up and fight for Highlands and not just roll, that's what they want to hear. Will you commit to do that? We have yet to hear you say you will be our number one advocate. They have not heard you say that tonight."

MC BOE Superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin and BOE members Hilary Wilkes and Chairman Jim Breedlove joined Shearl during the discussion that was initiated by "Highlands for Good Government."

The \$329,000 allocated for LS3P Architects for the Highlands Expansion/Pre-K Project was in the FY '22-'23 budget, and Phase 1 of the multi-phase design project was completed in the fall for \$35,000.

Phases 2 and 3, which would have made the project "shovel ready" and thereby eli-

• See SHEARL page 17

Returning for the 2023 season!



Written by Louise Fletcher / Directed by Michael Lanzilotta

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Highlands**



3rd Annual Bear Shadow at Winfield Farm was April 28-30



Photos and story by
Kim Lewicki





Last weekend, more than 4,000 people - more than the two previous festivals - attended the 3-day Bear Shadow music festival that was spread out across the pastoral setting of Winfield Farm.

Bands from across the country gathered to entertain while festival goers ate, drank and were merry to the sounds of live music.

Bands included Lissie, Fruit Bats, Spoon, Myron Elkins, Neal Francis, The Head and the Heart, Woody Platt and Shannon Whitworth, Jason Isbel and the 400 Unit.

Three bands played each day and into the night while families and people of all ages wandered about enjoying the free beverages of all kinds while sampling the offerings from several food vendors.

Retail shops also set up camp at the festival offering clothing, jewelry and more.

The weather is always a factor at outdoor festivals, but luckily for the most part it cooperated with cool temperatures and wind offset by sun and blue skies.

Sunday's festival was postponed by one hour due to rain Saturday night and Sunday morning, but that didn't dampen spirits.

This year Bear Shadow partnered with Sky Valley-Scaly Mountain Volunteer Fire & Rescue and The Resource Institute that works to keep land and waterways safe for people and wildlife. \$25 of every ticket went to support these organizations.



...INVESTING continued from page 4

get calls and drop-ins all the time about long-term rentals (year-round AND for the season). Incidentally, if we don't have anything for them, we usually ask them to put an ad in this paper, so if you know of a home for rent, have them check the paper

and/or put in their own ad.

We need to support HB-409. I do NOT agree with those who say that STRs have taken away all the affordable housing for local workers and their families. We've had the same problem in at least the past

31 years that I've been helping people find housing.

Contact your local Congressman and other representatives to voice your concerns about ADUs.

Congressman Chuck Edwards 200 N. Grove St., Ste. 121, Hendersonville, NC 28792 828-425-7310.

Representative Karl Gillespie 300 N. Salisbury St. Rm. Raleigh, NC 27603 530 919-733-5859.

Senator Kevin Corbin 300 N. Salisbury St., Rm. 623, Raleigh, NC 27603 919-733-5875.

And call your mother. You should definitely call your mother- she'll steer you the right way.

Hope to see you at the wedding where we can all agree, "WE DO".

...WIN
continued from page 1

Senior Night and recognized seniors Caroline Woods, Addie Westendorf, Getsi Hernandez, and Brittany Damien.

Highlands Coach Caleb Brown said a few words after the game commemorating their soccer careers as Lady Highlanders and said they would be missed both on and off the field.

Highlands has an 8-1 conference record putting them in second place behind Swain, who they play at 6:30 p.m. on May 5 at home.

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Celebrating Highlands' Heritage

Listen for the call of the Highlands Bagpipers as they perform from a different location the first Saturday of each month through October.

This Month's Performance:

The First Presbyterian Church of Highlands

471 Main Street

Saturday, May 6

4:30 – 5 p.m.

Performances are made possible by the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/

Visit Highlands, NC.



• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Mountaintop Rotarian fighting for the safety of Afghan families

By Robin King Austin

Clark Plexico is no stranger to hard work and big challenges, but he is in the fight of his life right now, trying to save families targeted by the Taliban. The people he is working to save are those who worked for American organizations or fought for human rights. He and a group of former Afghan temporary residents working for various organizations have come together to try and save these families which is as complicated as it can possibly be.

A former NC State Senator, Clark represented this area at one time, but prior to that, he spent time in Afghanistan and Iran working with organizations that promoted Democracy, human rights, and building international relations. He recently was presented with the Order of the Longleaf Pine from Gov. Cooper for his long-term service to our state.

For the last two years, his life (and the lives of many others in his international group), has been consumed by putting families into safe houses, finding funding for their sustenance and working to get them out of the danger zone. He spends hours every day fighting for their safety, trying to raise funds, and connecting with people all over the world to save lives.

He reports some successes on the Afghan front, "We have been able to get about 40 people to Canada and approximately another 40 some into the U.S. In addition, we have individuals who we assisted to get to other countries in order to process their visas into either the U.S. or Canada. That number is around 30 or so and they are in various countries in the region or in Europe.

We spent months negotiating with various countries to



Clark Plexico

let us bring our Afghans into their country so that they can begin processing their visas into the U.S. and Canada"

But there are still many people left in Afghanistan who are targeted and hunted daily. The horror of what will happen to them – and what has already happened to some, is almost too terrible to print. But reality is the Taliban history of what they will do, beheading, using the children as sex slaves, has been threatened to one woman who fought for woman's rights. Now in hiding, unfortunately still in Afghanistan, she and her family are in

grave danger.

Mountaintop Rotary is extremely proud of Clark's long dedication to these people and the stressful and brutal work to find ways to get them to safety.

"Mountaintop Rotary in Highlands has raised almost \$4,000 so far for Clark's work and invites others in the community to join us in fighting this terrible fight," said Michael Lanzilotta, President of Mountaintop Rotary of Highlands. For further information please contact Michael Lanzilotta at 404-273-6481 or incoming President Bill Kirkman at 404-219-7498. Donations are sent to Global Network Foundation, a U.S. 501 (c) (3) who is working with Clark's team of volunteers in this effort. All donations are 100% tax deductible and used 100% to support these families.

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www.melindabarber.com



Nancy Gould-Aaron (Highlands Chamber Music Festival), Kaye McHan (Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC) and Steve Ham (Highlands Motoring Festival).

Room tax funds organizations

Leaders from area non-profits gathered at the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Welcome Center received sponsorship monies from room tax proceeds.

The following sponsorship were awarded for the second quarter of 2023: Highlands Motoring Festival (\$15,000); Mountain Theatre Company (\$15,000); Highlands Chamber Music Festival (\$12,000); Highlands Rotary Club – Annual Golf Tournament (\$1,000)

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

THE POOL IS OPEN

• 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.

OnGoing

• Looking for a fun, engaging way to explore Highlands with your family? 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.

Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri, Sat, & Sun

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

shiers 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 held on the second or third Tuesday of each month at 3pm. Members receive weekly notification regarding when and how the group will assemble.

ble. 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.

Tues. & Thurs.

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

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

First Wednesdays

• Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health, at 11a. This series is aimed particularly at older adults and will focus on mental health issues of particular interest to them.

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, call 828-526 – 0863 or email info@maconncliteracy.org

Thursdays

• Kickboxing 8:15-9:15am. An exhilarating and fun mix of martial arts for a calorie-burning workout. Con-

tact 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.

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.

Through May 31

• The Fontana Regional Library system, including Hudson Library in Highlands, is starting an Active Audio Challenge that will run from March 1st through May 31st. Participants who listen to 25 hours of audiobooks, while being active, will receive a prize. To register for the Challenge, come by Hudson Library and pick up the logbook used to record entries. For more information or to request an accommodation, please call the library at 828-526-3031.

Fri. - Sun., May 5 - 7

• At Half-Mile Farm, live fire cooking with Old Edwards Executive Chef Chris Huerta & Half-Mile Farm Chef Jason Tardo featuring locally grown Providence Farmstead protein. Social Hour Friday and Saturday evenings from 5-6 pm with complimentary hors d'oeuvres and live music from 5-8 pm. Craft beverages also are available from the J. Henry Farmhouse Tavern. Book Online: <https://www.olderdwardshospitality.com/half-mile-farm/#/booking/step-1>

Fri- Sat. May 5-6

• There is a Cowee Valley Quilt & Fiber Celebration at Cowee School Arts & Heritage Center from 10a to 4p. There will be workshops, demonstrations, kids activities, vendors, a fashion show and more. To register for workshops and find more info go to www.coweeschool.org

Fri., May 5

• Local author Victor Treutel will appear at Hudson Library on Friday at 2 PM to talk about his new historical fiction release When the Dogwoods Bloom. Books will be available for purchase and signing at this free event.

• Charles Gandy EMBELLISHED KNITTING workshop 1 to 4 and Get Weaving with Sarah Howard May 5th at 10:30 live ZOOM Talk taking place during the Cowee Valley Quilt & Fiber Celebration at the Cowee School Arts & Heritage Center Franklin N.C. Go to www.coweeschool.org to RSVP

Sat., May 6

• **Bee Kind:** Cinco De Mayo Celebration, Big Kitchens, Little Chefs, 11a to 1p at The Highlands Food Pantry downstairs at the methodist church on Main Street for the "bigs" & "littles" of Big Brothers & Sisters, co-hosted by IFC. Hands-on experience - engage with traditional Cinco de Mayo ingredients and cuisine. Discussion will take place about the holiday and its significance in Mexico. Michael Greene, LCSWA, will incorporate the benefits of cooking and nutrition to mental health. For more info, contact Danielle Hernandez at cashiers@bbbswnc.org

• Pop-up Bagpipers at 1st Presbyterian Church from 4:30-5p.

• Join us in a cozy, Appalachian tavern for an intimate performance with one of country music's most respected artists, Charlie Worsham at The Ruffed Grouse Tavern at Highlander Mountain House, 270 Main Street. 8:30 - 10:30 pm

Tues., May 9

• **Bee Kind:** Compassion and Reciprocity: Lessons from the Pollinator Garden at 10 a.m., at 111 Lower Lake Road, Highlands. For more info, contact Paige Engelbrektsen, paige@highlandsbiological.org or 828-526-2623.

Wed., May 10

• **Bee Kind:** Honeybees and the Christian Imagination: a lesson in the Kindness of God at the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, 520 Main Street, Highlands at 5:30p. Honeybees and the Christian Imagination: a lesson in the Kindness of God Honeybees have captured the hearts and imaginations of Christians throughout history. Holy Scripture, sacred art, and theological reflection have all made good use of the rich

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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

and layered witness of honeybees. Together we explore together what some of God's smallest creatures have to teach us about kindness and community. All are welcome. A light reception will follow the lecture. The Rev. Bentley Manning at bentley@incarnationwnc.org or 828-526-2968 for more info.

Thurs., May 11

• **"Bee Kind Bingo"** at the Highlands Community Building, : 869 N 4th Street, Highlands at 6:30-8:30. Bring cash! \$1 per bingo card, Raffle tickets for prizes: \$5 each or \$20 for 5. Food for purchase. For more info, contact Linda Kirkman at linda@lindakirkman.com or 770-296-2762.

Sat., May 13

• **Bee Kind:** Boys and Girls Club of the Plateau MayFest 12-3p. The Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau welcomes the youth and families to join BGCP, and our local schools/non-profits for a fun day filled with creative learning activi-

ties, games, and more! Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau 558 Frank Allen Road, Cashiers For more info, (828) 743-2775 <https://www.bgcplateau.org/news-and-events>

Sun., May 14

• At PAC, Steep Canyon Rangers. For tickets, email highlandspacnc@gmail.com.

Wed., May 17

• At Acorn's a book signing from 2-4 pm, with Chef Steven Satterfield of Miller Union in Atlanta who will be signing copies of his book, "Root to Leaf: A Southern Chef Cooks Through the Seasons."

Thurs - Sat, May 18-20

• "Nightwatch" with the Highlands-Cashiers Players at PAC at 7:30 p.m. Unable to sleep, Elaine Wheeler paces the living room of her Manhattan townhouse, troubled by unsettling memories and vague fears. Her husband tries to comfort her, but when he steps away for a moment, Elaine screams as she sees (or believes she sees) the body of a dead man in the

window across the way.

Thurs., May 18

• **Bee Kind:** Satulah Sunset for the Spirit Satulah Sunset for the Spirit. Meet at Kelsey Hutchison park at 7p and hike to Satulah for the 8:30 sunset. Keep the 17th open as well just in case the weather doesn't cooperate! Easy uphill hike with incredible views & the best place in town to soak up the sunset. For more info, call Hope Corbin at 301.523.0445

• At OEI's The Farm from 6-9 PM, James Beard Foundation award-winning Chef Steven Satterfield of Miller Union in Atlanta. "Root to Leaf: A Southern Chef Cooks Through the Seasons" (featured on CBS This Morning). \$185 per person, plus tax and gratuity. Book Online: <https://www.simplertix.com/e/chef-steven-satterfield-dinner-tickets-123309>

Friday, May 19

• Dedication of the new Fire Station at Oak and Main streets from 4-6 pm.

...SHEARL continued from page 11

gible for grants or state funding, was halted by the newly elected board in February. The money allocated for LS3P was put back into the General Fund where it sits today.

"The \$35,000 which completed, phase 1 was not a waste of money, we have the plans. The money is there for all phases, but in February every one of you took it away and halted the project. Phases 2 and 3 is \$160,000 of the \$329,000 that was budgeted," said Wilkes. "Reinstate the contract so LS3P can continue their work. That puts us in the position to be 'shovel ready' and grant-ready for the next budget cycle."

Citizens demanded to know why the project was halted, why the county allocated funds to LS3P Architects to make the Franklin High School Athletic Complex [estimated at \$14 million] destined for the Hidgon property "shovel ready" and why Shearl has been an adversary rather than an advocate for Highlands.

"I have never heard of a contract being cancelled when a new board came on," said Jeff Weller.

"Your Board of Commission canceled it. It was a unanimous vote. During that discussion I unfortunately didn't see you say a word. You need to become our advocate not our adversary. Do you feel you advocated for Highlands when you voted to defund the project?"

Time and time again throughout the 2 1/2 hour meeting, Shearl said funding for all projects was on hold while the board figured out the FY '23-'24 budget primarily focusing on the FHS expansion which is expected to cost between \$105 million and \$118 million.

Throughout the evening, Shearl repeated his mantra, "I am not prepared to promise you anything tonight" and "Until we figure out how to fund Franklin High School everything is on hold."

"We are working to figure out what this county really needs," said Shearl. "The school system isn't the only needy agency in the county. We have to compile all these needs and figure out where we get the funds. Until we figure out Franklin High School funding we can't go anywhere."

Citizens struggled to get their heads around Shearl's line

of thought especially since the contract with LS3P to make the Franklin High School Athletic Complex project that is destined

• See SHEARL page 22

Mother's Day BOGO Sale!

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Franklin, NC
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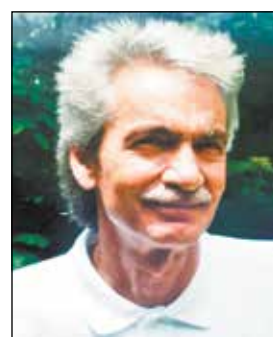
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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

BEE Kind



Pastor Dan Robinson
Highlands Central
Baptist Church

In the 1990s I taught at the Fruitland Baptist College located near Asheville, NC. The course I taught was titled, Clinical Pastoral Education.

As the title suggests, the course dealt not only with the expected classroom lectures, but with practical “Hands-On” clinical experiences that my students (in general) and (Pastors in particular) could expect in their vocations.

Scheduled visits to a hospital, nursing home, funeral home and a psychiatric ward were included. Upon arriving at those institutions, I would hand my students over to the professionals who dealt with those particular areas. As you might imagine, there were a lot of questions. The help forthcoming from these various spokesmen was invaluable.

While my students dealt rather matter-of-factly with physical illnesses, death, dying and the need provided by long-term care institutions, they sometimes stumbled over the issue of mental illness.

Have you ever felt the same way?

I explained to my students that just as someone may have a broken bone, that same someone may, at times, have broken emotions or a broken mind. And, there can be healing and restoration for both.

When my first wife (Gwynne) died in 2002 I wrote a book about her and her illness of ovarian cancer. The book is titled, Lord, The One You Love Is Sick. I chronicled not only her struggles, but my very deep struggles as well.

I wrote candidly about my own dark, mental thoughts. And in my own words, “I came as close to the edge as I ever wanted to come.”

Five years later I remarried a lady from Texas named Kaye. Her first husband was also a Baptist preacher. They had three children, all of whom were bi-polar. The oldest took his own life in 1975 at the age of 18. One can only imagine the shock and heartache. Particularly in the Christian community. It was difficult (at best) for some Christians to reconcile any sort of mental-emotional weakness with what they thought were the foundational tenets of the Christian faith. In fact, at that point, Kaye’s husband began visiting a psychiatrist. And by the way, when he walked into the psychiatrist’s office, he discovered that the receptionist was a member of his church! Surprise! He continued seeing a psychiatrist for 10 years. Remarkably during that time, the comments about his preaching were almost unilateral. He was such an encouragement to those who heard him! His experience with the emotional, mental conditions of his children as well as his own had deepened him in his faith and trust in God.

Life is stressful. People break down. They need encouragement, help, prayer and a listening ear. They do not

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 19

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

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

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

BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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

Sundays: School at 9:30 Worship 10:30

Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

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

www.cashiers.church

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

Tues. Guys study 8am. Gals 10am.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

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

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

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard

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

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

Wednesdays – Supper at 6 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685

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

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

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

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

Thursdays 7am @ Zookeeper Bistro

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY

706.746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447

Pastor Steve Kerhoulas

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

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

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

5th and Main streets • www.incarnationwnc.org

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

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

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

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS

828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org

Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor • 220 Main Street, Highlands

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

Wed.: Men’s Bible Study 8:30 am; 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

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS

Non-Denominational-Contemporary Worship

242 Hwy 107N. 1/4 miles from Crossroads in Cashiers

www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814

Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm; Dinner - Wed. 6pm

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

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

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road

The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily

sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.

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

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376

In-Person and live-streamed Worship Services

909a Bluegrass and 11a Traditional

www.highlandsmethodist.org

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741

Rev. Ken Langsdorf

Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.

Visit our website: Holy Family Lutheran Highlands NC

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

8 miles south of Highlands on N.C. 28 S in Satolah

Pastor Zane Talley

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

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

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

Franklin • 828-634-1312 • mountainsynagoguewnc.com.

Services: 1st /Fri. and 3rd Sat.

and Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur.

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church

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

4224 Big Ridge Road (4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS

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

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from April 26. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

April 26

• At 7:44 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident on Spring Street.

April 27

• At 4:10 p.m., officers responded to a report of a shoplifter at Highland Hiker and Log Cabin on Main Street where clothing and purses valued at about \$350 were taken.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from 4/25.

April 25

• At 12:55 p.m. the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on N. 5th Street.

April 26

• A little past midnight, the dept. was first-responders to a residence on US 64 east.

• At 10:57 a.m., the dept. was first-re-

sponders to a residence on Songbird Lane.

April 27

• At 2:28 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Country Club Drive.

April 29

• At 4:54 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Falls Drive West.

April 30

• At 11:15 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

• At 1:25 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Happoldt Drive.

• At 4:39 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a residence on Carriage Lane.

• At 1:31 p.m., the dept. rescued a hiker on the Bartram Trail.

May 1

• At 8:53 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Horse Cove Road.

• At 9:09 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Simon Speed Road.

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Highlands Festivals, Inc. announces new ticket purchase options to enhance Highlands Food & Wine Festival

Highlands Festivals, Inc., today announced a partnership with a new sales platform to make purchasing tickets for the annual Highlands Food & Wine Festival easier and more cost-effective when they go on sale Thursday, June 15 at 10 a.m. EST.

“We listened to feedback from festival

patrons regarding the ticket buying process and want to ensure an elevated experience with Highlands Food & Wine Festival at every touch point,” said Casey Reid, Festival Director and partner at Eleven Events. “We are pleased to offer an improved ticket buying platform and opportunities to truly enhance the overall festival experience.”

Tickets for the 2023 Highlands Food & Wine Festival (Nov. 9-12) will be sold via TicketSpice for a more streamlined experience, no account setup required and a fan-to-fan ticket exchange. The chef and music talent lineups will be announced at a later date. Tickets are projected to sell out quickly.

Part of the Highlands Festivals, Inc. mission is to give back to the local community through initiatives such as the Louis Osteen Legacy Scholarship and supporting local organizations like Friends of Founders Park, Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and Highlands Biological Foundation, as well as overall conservation and sustainability efforts.

For more information about tickets, interested patrons should visit <https://highlandsfoodandwine.com/>.

...SPIRITUALLY

continued from page 18

need finger-pointing or armchair quarterback diagnoses.

I hope you will be an Encourager to those around you. Whatever their mental, emotional, social, physical, vocational or psychological state/condition. I hope they will feel safe around you. I hope they can trust you whenever they don't have all the answers or when their faith is failing.

They are valuable to Jesus. He loves them just as He does you.

May the Lord bless and keep you and give you a heart like His own for all of the hurting humanity of the world.

NO ACT OF KINDNESS, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, IS EVER WASTED - AESOP. • BE KIND WHENEVER POSSIBLE. IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE - DALAI LAMA. • DO YOUR LITTLE BIT OF GOOD WHERE YOU ARE, IT'S THOSE LITTLE BITS OF GOOD PUT TOGETHER THAT OVERWHELM THE WORLD. • ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU. • WHEREVER THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR KINDNESS. • SENECA. • IT TAKES A LITTLE BIT OF KINDNESS TO ADD MORE KINDNESS TO THE WORLD. • JOEL LEON. • A TIME. • MORGAN FREEMAN. • THE QUALITIES THAT DEFINE A PERSON. • R.J. PALACIO. • CONSTANCY. • KINDNESS CAUSES MISERY. • SCHWEITZER. • WHEN YOU ARE KIND TO THE WORLD. • HAROLD KUSHNER. • WHAT KIND OF DIFFERENCE CAN ONE PERSON MAKE? • HAPPINESS IS A CHOICE. • RESPECT IS A CHOICE. • I WOULD RATHER MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN UNKINDNESS AND HARDNESS. • THEY CAN CHANGE THE WORLD. • ALWAYS MAKE A DIFFERENCE. • FIRST IS TO BE KIND, THE SECOND IS TO BE A LITTLE KINDER THAN KINDNESS. • CONFUCIUS. • A WARM SMILE IS THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE WHICH THE GIVER OF WORDS CREATES CONFIDENCE. • GIVING CREATES LOVE. • OTHERS AND PEOPLE CAN BE WHO KNOWS HOW TO SHOW AND TO ACCEPT KINDNESS WILL BE A FRIEND BETTER POSSESSION. • SOPHOCLES. • TRUE BEAUTY IS BORN THROUGH OUR ACTIONS AND IN THE KINDNESS WE OFFER TO OTHERS. • ALEX WEK. • THE BEST CHARACTER IS HOW HE TREATS PEOPLE WHO CAN'T DO ANYTHING FOR HIM. • ABIGAIL VAN BUREN. • YOU'LL NEVER



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"No act of kindness is too small. The gift of kindness may start as a small ripple that over time can turn into a tidal wave affecting the lives of many." - Kevin Heath

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Please join the Health Foundation & the Counseling Center of Highlands by participating in our Bee Kind activities across the plateau. Mental Health begins with kindness. The little things we do for someone may mean more to that person than we will ever know.

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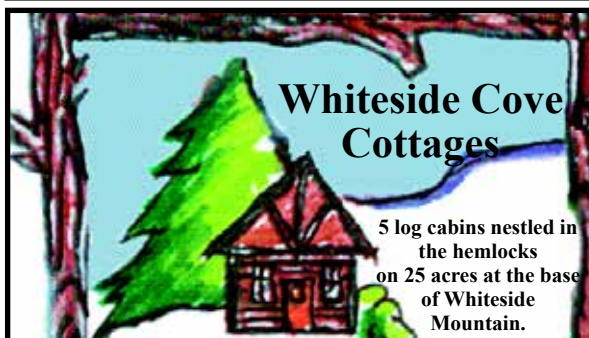
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...SHEARL continued from page 17

for the Higdon property "shovel ready" wasn't cancelled even though funding for FHS is not in sight. The BOC also paid \$10,000 out of the general fund to hold the property and put \$100,000 in escrow.

"If we can't fund Franklin High School, we can't fund anything else? If we can't have a lot, we can't have a little. If we can't drive a Cadillac we can't drive a Ford? The whole hurdle is the Franklin High School which exists and has been functioning for years?" asked Steve Mehder.

Shearl said, "That is correct."

He went on to question the need for the Pre-K component of the Highlands School Project that includes renovating the Media Center, and building four new classrooms and office space in the high school because two high school classrooms in the elementary wing would be used for two Pre-K rooms.

"Is it Pre-K or childcare?" asked Shearl. "There are people on the waiting list for childcare. And people are much better to raise their children than public institutions."

That statement riled a few working moms who said they would much rather be home with their children, but their families

need two incomes. There are 53 children on the waiting list for the HCCDC and Gordon Center Pre-K programs.

Wilkes said 36 students could be served at Highlands Pre-K which would open up space for year-round care at those centers.

Jeff Weller said it was time to stop calling Pre-K childcare when it's actually early childhood education.

Chairman Breedlove said Pre-K is a very valuable program and the BOE wishes every single child could be a part of it. There are 90 students in Franklin's three Pre-K programs. Parents pay \$497 per month.

Citizens refused to let Shearl off the hook.

"Is there any possibility that the Highlands Expansion/Pre-K Project can come to fruition in this budget cycle or the next? With \$40 million in the Fund Balance and \$7 million more in collections, can you make it happen?" asked Jerry Moore. "Can you get us \$4.7 million, not \$118 million. The folks in Franklin have a school they can go to; we have 53 children who can't go to school, so that's our immediate need. Gary Shields will vote with you. And Josh Young said he would vote with you too."

Again Shearl said, "I am not

going to commit to money we don't have."

Two hours in, three-quarters of those in the room left fed up.

Frustrated, Wilkes tried one more time.

"What we need are phases 2 and 3, 1 is complete, 2 is design development and 3 is construction document preparation and readiness. So, phase 2 and 3 will cost \$160,000. The school board is wholeheartedly behind this. We can't get anywhere unless we start walking. And you can walk and chew gum. You don't have to do one thing at a time," she said.

After two hours and 20 minutes, Shearl finally relented.

"I will talk to my fellow commissioners and express that you are asking for \$160,000 to finish phase 2 and 3 of this project with no path moving forward," said Shearl. "But there is no guarantee there will be funding to complete this project. I will get a consensus and you will see action at the next commissioner meeting. You are my constituents, I represent you, but I am only one vote of a board of five. Without their support we can't go anywhere."

He apologized for taking so long to "get that promise out."

Wilkes thanked him for agreeing to move forward with the citizens of Highlands.

- Kim Lewicki

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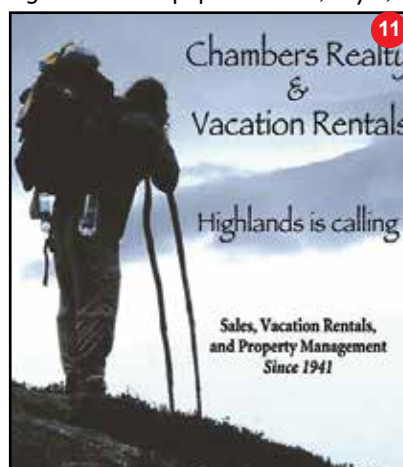
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