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Thurs., Aug. 6 2026

Judge rejects key HCA argument over its obligations for services at Mission Hospital

Ruling clears way for trial on whether "degraded" emergency, oncology services constitute breach of purchase agreement

By Ted Clifford

Since its sale to the for-

profit HCA Healthcare seven years ago, Mission Hospital has been beset by complaints about

• See HCA page 4

New NC law allows ALPR readers on state roads

Local law enforcement has the last say

By Kim Lewicki

Though a new NC law allows license plate readers on state roads, that doesn't mean local law enforcement has to use them.

In Highlands, two state roads run through the municipality -- US 64 and NC 28 -- but Highlands Police Chief Andrea Holland said at this time, the town isn't interested in employing the technology.

Some time over the last year, Chief Holland and Captain Leah McCall brought the issue up to commissioners citing a grant-funded pilot program that

• See ALPR page 10



The Annual Open House at HF&R Dept. is this Sat.

This annual event is for children and adults of all ages! There will be free hotdogs, fire truck rides, rescue demonstrations, car seat checks, and agility drills from

11a-3p at the station at Oak and Main streets in Highlands.

The SkyValley-Scaly Mountain Volunteer FD is also hosting Community Appreciation Day at

the Scaly Mountain Fire Station on 169 Hale Ridge Road from 11a to 4p. There will be food, games, demonstrations and a bounce house for children.

Photo by Kim Lewicki

Public asked to comment on proposed data center moratorium

By Kim Lewicki

At its July meeting, Highlands agreed to follow in the Town of Franklin's footsteps and impose a one-year moratorium on data centers. To that end Town Attorney Nick Tosco was charged to draw up a moratorium.

Though thoughts are Highlands has limited land available for data centers making massive facility development unlikely, Tosco said he has been drawing up moratoriums across Western NC and the assumption that data centers require large tracts of land is false.

He said a data center is currently underway on a relatively small parcel in downtown Char-

• See DATA CENTER page 9

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Working for the public good

I heard my father repeatedly say, "I work for the public, and I cannot do that." He was the resident engineer for the Georgia State Highway Department, overseeing the construction of the last leg of Interstate 75 to the Florida state line. He always had a sense of accountability to the public; thus, he believed he was a public servant. He wouldn't and couldn't accept gifts or bribes, as he oversaw and advocated the best possible construction of public roads.

Instead of working for the public, he could have made big money as a licensed civil engineer and surveyor. He was the only person in my hometown who had those credentials. Developers and contractors constantly urged him to leave the highway department and work for them in laying out subdivisions and shopping centers, all of which were being built in the region in the late 1950s and '60s. But



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

for personal reasons, he was committed to working for the state, earning a modest salary to support our family. He worked for the public good and was diligently engaged in post-war road construction, especially the Interstate.

Sallie and I were at a social event last week where we were surrounded by folks who shared those same values, being committed to working for the public. We were at the annual social event, a dinner put on by the Southwestern Commission, the council of government for the seven farthest counties and municipalities of Western Carolina. As the mayor representing Highlands, I interact with the staff of the Southwestern Commission throughout the year at meetings. Each summer, there is this one dinner at a nice venue where elected officials from the seven southwestern counties and representatives of state and federal organizations all meet and socialize together.

I am always reminded, by going to this event, that all these people, whether highway engineers, government program representatives, or public officials, while behind the screen of their official duties, are also people with families, dreams, challenges, and private lives, and are also burdened at times with family challenges.

And, they have, for the most part, forsaken the pursuit of acquiring wealth and big financial gains in order to serve the public. With that role as a public servant, they also know there are some things they just cannot do because they work for

• See MAYOR page 10

• CORRECTION •

In last week's article entitled "Planning Board is reviewing the 2022 Community Plan," it was Daryl Griswold not Christian Haberkern who suggested a look at the town's vacant land would be a good start in dealing with housing.

We regret the error and are happy to set the record straight.



Verdant Waves of Green

This shot was taken by Janet Singletary outside the Hudson Library.

Do you have a heartfelt, funny, interesting, or beautiful photo you would like to share in our "Snapshot" section? Email it to highland-seditor@aol.com or text it to 828-200-1371, with a brief description and a name. No anonymous photos will be accepted.

• WEATHER •

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72°F 64°F	73°F 64°F	77°F 61°F	78°F 62°F
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...HCA continued from page 1

declining care. Staff have left in waves, medical specialties have vanished and patient deaths have triggered threats from regulators that the hospital could lose crucial Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements.

Amid a crescendo of public concern, one of the few options to hold HCA accountable has been a lawsuit by the North Carolina Attorney General. It alleges that HCA failed to live up to an agreement to provide services at the same level as previously available under the formerly non-profit and well-regarded Mission Hospital before the 2019 sale.

A ruling Monday by a North Carolina Business Court judge has handed significant wins to the Attorney General's Office and cleared the way for a trial in the closely watched case.

"HCA threw every argument against the wall to try to get this case thrown out, but they didn't stick," Attorney General Jeff Jackson said in a statement. "I'm grateful the judge saw through them. We're going to trial, and I will keep fighting to defend emergency and cancer care in western North Carolina."

Mission Hospital's spokeswoman did not respond to a request for comment from Asheville Watchdog.

The lawsuit, filed in 2023 by then-Attorney General Josh Stein and continued by Jackson, contends HCA violated the 2019 Asset Purchase Agreement by failing to provide oncology and emergency care at least at pre-sale levels that year. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of Dogwood Health Trust, the nonprofit created with the proceeds of the \$1.5 billion sale.

Much of the case appears to hinge on conflicting interpretations of the purchase agreement's requirement that HCA "shall not discontinue provision" of certain medical services at Mission for 10 years post-sale.

HCA's lawyers argued that "provision" meant only that the hospital must supply the infrastructure — the facilities, staff, and equipment — for doctors who choose to perform the services. The agreement, HCA argued, was "silent as to the quantity or quality of services required."

"A hospital is not a physician — it is not a person at all. As a result, a hospital provides services by making space, equipment, staff, and other resources available so that a credentialed provider can care for willing patients," HCA's attorneys argued in filings.

North Carolina Business Court Judge Julianna Theall Earp rejected that argument. It was "unreasonable," she wrote in a 55-page order, to treat the word "provision" as "merely requiring" the company to provide the infrastructure for services and then leave it up to doctors to decide whether or not to provide them.

The judge's ruling did not address whether HCA violated the agreement. The language in it is ambiguous, the judge has ruled, and is one of several questions of fact to be determined at trial.

"Each of the parties posits a reasonable interpretation of the phrase 'shall not discontinue,'" Earp wrote in Monday's ruling. As a result, it would not be appropriate for her to rule in advance of

• See HCA page 5

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...HCA continued from page 4

trial what that phrase meant.

Earp's ruling contained some wins for HCA. The judge found that the Attorney General had not produced evidence that Mission had failed to provide an ear, nose, and throat surgeon in its emergency department as part of its requirement as a Level 2 trauma center.

However, she declined to let HCA avoid trial on the question of emergency services altogether. Earp found that there were still questions about whether HCA had understaffed its emergency rooms at Mission and relied on unsafe nurse-to-patient ratios. If proven, these could be a violation of the purchase agreement's requirement that Mission maintain the standard of a Level 2 trauma center.

Earp also declined to exclude testimony from one of the Attorney General's experts, Dr. Kia Parsi, a physician, professor, and executive director of the Texas A&M University Rural and Community Health Institute.

HCA objected to the doctor's findings and claimed his testimony was irrelevant.

Parsi had concluded that in 2023 Mission Hospital's emergency and trauma services and its oncology services "significantly degraded."

This finding was mirrored in a recent report from an independent monitor on behalf of Dogwood Health Trust. The report, released last week, found that Mission Hospital was in potential violation of the Asset Purchase Agreement for its decision to discontinue and "degrade" services, including the emergency and oncology departments.

"HCA made commitments to the people of western North Carolina about critical health care services they'd continue to perform," Stein, who is now governor, said in an emailed statement. "When HCA failed to live up to its promises, I took it to court. Access to quality health care can be the difference between life and death."

Protect Mission "as we know it," emails show

The judge's ruling hinged on a trove of internal documents and records from

around the time of the sale along with affidavits and depositions from key players.

The documents revealed that as early as April 2017, Dr. Ronald Paulus, Mission's then chief executive officer, was in touch with HCA, exploring the possibility of selling Mission Hospital. Almost a year and a half later, Mission, its successor organization Dogwood Health Trust and HCA signed an agreement for the Nashville-based HCA to acquire Mission effective Feb. 1, 2019.

The Asset Purchase Agreement, which was vetted by the state Attorney General's Office, specified that for a period of 10 years following the sale HCA would "not discontinue the provision" of a set list of services, unless there was an "applicable explanation."

In the years since the sale, the document has been criticized as weak, with limited enforcement powers. Whatever the original intent, key terms were never defined, creating ambiguity over HCA's obligations.

In emails from August 2018, Paulus outlined the thinking of the Mission

Hospital board members to Charles J. "Chuck" Hall, HCA's National Group president responsible for the operations of 96 hospitals across 13 states. "They will ask me to personally reassure them that 'this protects Mission Hospital as we know it,'" Paulus said of the sale.

That understanding, he said, was essential to even beginning discussion about a sale.

"I would never have gotten [The Mission Health Board] to move otherwise," wrote Paulus.

That same month, Dr. John Ball, then chair of Mission Health's board of directors, said that the purchase agreement provided "the best chance for the clinical programs, services, and facilities to continue throughout the region ... with the quality, access, and affordability that the people of this region have come to expect of us."

The following January, Ball wrote to the Attorney General's Office that the sale to HCA was "essential to Mission's continuing ability to operate at least at its

• See HCA page 12

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It's "anti-social media" when two or more are seated in a nice Highlands restaurant, and everyone's on their phone; or when AI becomes a person's heart, soul, and creative spirit; anti-social media is checking your Instagram feed every morning before your first cup of coffee; or it's when you've been in the same town for years, but now turn on Waze or Google Maps in order to find the new bistro just around the corner. And yet, so many use social media when they go about buying relying exclusively upon Zillow, realtor.com. or Trulia as the "experts". The line "well according to Zillow, my house is worth" is prevalent.

The late great Johnny Isakson, former United States Senator and Founder of Northside Realty in Atlanta, GA said it best: "In the real estate business you learn more about people and you learn more about community issues, you learn more about life, you learn more about the impact of government, probably that any other profession that I know of." What Johnny was embracing is that it's important that all of us do business at the "human level", especially in real estate where it's generally one of if the largest investments you'll ever make.



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Zillow, Trulia, and realtor.com certainly serve a purpose. They inform buyers and sellers, period. I just cannot speak to the accuracy of all their data; especially the "Market Values" of real property. Remember, their information is extrapolated from the County records and then propagated based upon algorithms. When was the last time an algorithm told you about the sewage treatment plant just west of the property and when the wind blows you really know it?

Did the online platform mention the fact that the neighbor's driveway encroaches by 20 feet onto the property you're considering buying? Do the beautiful photos show you the moisture in the crawl space? Let's face it you wouldn't buy a car from a vending machine would you (even though you can on Carvana), and WebMD cannot perform an appendectomy. The anti-social media is meant to inform. The human level is where you'll be advised and where you can learn about the local market, especially in the mountains.

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...DATA CENTER continued from page 1

lotte.

Furthermore, he said tightening a high impact ordinance may not be enough because data center entities can move forward once water rights are obtained from the state and arrangements made with electric companies before notifying towns and counties of their intent.

Though it hasn't yet considered a moratorium against Data Centers, at the July Macon County Commission meeting, the board asked the MC Planning Board to consider changes to the county's High Impact Ordinance to hopefully deter data centers in the unincorporated areas of Macon County.

The idea is to close any potential loopholes that would allow data centers to locate in the county as well as tightening regulations regarding noise, electrical use

and zoning concerns.

The MC Planning Board will consider the changes August 6 at 5 p.m. with a formal public hearing scheduled for the commissioners' meeting on August 11 at 6 p.m. The public is invited to attend the planning board meeting as well as the public hearing and commissioners' meeting.

Mayor Pat Taylor said he hopes Macon County will issue a moratorium, like Franklin and Highlands.

To that end, the town has announced a public hearing at the August Town Board meeting beginning at 7 p.m. in the Community Building to receive public comment on a proposed ordinance imposing a temporary moratorium within the corporate limits of the Town of Highlands on the acceptance, review, and approval of development approvals and permits for Data Centers. The moratorium will give the town time to study and establish appropriate zoning and permitting requirements for such facilities.

If passed, the proposed moratorium would remain in effect for a period of 12 months from the date of adoption, unless earlier terminated, extended, or modified by the Board of Commissioners in accordance with North Carolina law.

Meanwhile, Duke Energy's proposed rate increase, which is still up in the air, is directly related to the growing demand of large users such as data centers which according to Duke accounts for 80% of the projected demand.

Duke filed an amended proposal this week to reduce its requested rate increase from about 18% to about 9.5% over two years for residential users, but NC's Attorney General Jeff Jackson rejected the proposal.

Under the proposal, rates for residential users would increase by 5.9% in the first year and 3.6% in the second, leading to a cumulative growth of 9.5%, according to Duke Energy spokesperson Bill Norton.

Gov. Josh Stein, joined AG Jackson in criticizing the proposed settlement, saying the Utilities Commission needs to impose a large load tariff to ensure data centers cover their own electricity costs.

"These are some of the largest and richest companies in the world," Stein said on social media. "They can pay more to lower everyone else's rates."

Jackson Ewing, Director of Energy and Climate Policy at the Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment & Sustainability at Duke University, said that the primary reason for the rate increases is to support Duke Energy's plans to build new energy infrastructure to meet the growing demand of large users such as data centers accounting for 80% of the projected demand.



TOWN OF HIGHLANDS NOTICE OF LEGISLATIVE (PUBLIC) HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 160D-107 and 160D-601 a legislative (public) hearing will be held by the Town of Highlands Board of Commissioners at the Highlands Community Building, 869 North Fourth Street, on the 20th day of August, 2026, beginning at 7:00pm, to receive public comment on a proposed ordinance imposing a temporary moratorium within the corporate limits of the Town of Highlands on the acceptance, review, and approval of development approvals and permits for Data Centers, for the purpose of allowing the Town to study and establish appropriate zoning and permitting requirements for such facilities.

The proposed moratorium would remain in effect for a period of 12 months from the date of adoption, unless earlier terminated, extended, or modified by the Board of Commissioners in accordance with North Carolina law.

All interested residents/citizens are encouraged to attend. At the legislative hearing, all persons wishing to be heard will be given an opportunity to present oral comments, and written comments may be submitted to the Town Clerk before or at the hearing. Copies of the ordinance are on file and available for inspection in the Town Clerk's office at Town Hall, 210 North Fourth Street, Highlands, North Carolina between 8:00am and 4:30pm, Monday through Friday, and may also be obtained by contacting the Town Clerk at 828-526-2118 ext. 1115. Individuals requiring special accommodations to participate in the hearing should contact the Town Clerk at 828-526-2118 ext. 1115 at least 48 hours prior to the hearing.

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Town Clerk

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...ALPR continued from page 1

had been in effect throughout the state which had law enforcement agencies considering using the technology permanently.

Her department had considered requesting funds to purchase four cameras – two each on two specific poles to get a front and rear photo – but she changed her mind.

First, the agreement with the company selling the cameras was about “purchasing” them but according to the contract the “purchase” price would be levied each year, which she said didn’t make sense.

“That sounds more like a ‘leasing’ arrangement and why would we pay an amount to purchase them if we had to pay it again the next year?” she asked.

However, she said the main issue is the number of lawsuits municipalities are shouldering due to the use of the technology. She said citizens are requesting access to the information and there have been well publicized instances of misuse of the information from law enforcement officials themselves.

“If we ever did use them, the officers in my department who would be allowed to access the information would be very limited – myself and three others – so I wouldn’t worry about misuse of the information by my officers,” she said.

However, she said citizens’ requests pose a different problem. She said the funds municipalities use to purchase the equipment and the software is taxpayer money, so legal experts say there could be an argument to be said for taxpayers requesting access.

At its July meeting, the MC Board of Commissioners voted to bar the Sheriff’s Office from using county funds to purchase additional FLOCK cameras and called for the removal of the existing cameras as soon as pos-

sible.

Sheriff Brent Holbrooks had requested \$47,000 in the FY ’26-’27 budget to purchase 12 more cameras. That request has been defunded.

The cameras that are currently located on school property will be allowed to remain on campuses, and those owned by the county that are not located at schools will be moved onto school properties.

The Macon County Sheriff’s Office has been using FLOCK license plate reader cameras since the spring of 2024 under a contract signed in 2023 by then-county manager Derek Roland for \$31,950.

The FY ’26-’27 NC state budget makes the automated license plate reader program permanent, allowing law enforcement agencies to install cameras on state-maintained roads, though agreements have to be made with NCDOT and local law enforcement agencies.

The change was included in Senate Bill 257, the state’s \$34.4 billion budget, which Gov. Josh Stein signed into law July 7. Because North Carolina governors do not have line-item veto authority, Stein could either sign or veto the entire budget but could not reject individual provisions.

...MAYOR continued from page 2

the public and are under public scrutiny.

Like my father they embrace the value of holding the public trust, which translates into working for the good of the communities they serve. Their code of conduct is never to be influenced by potential personal gain or riches. We need more public servants like these now more than ever. And it is tragic when public officials betray that trust as recent news coverage has revealed.

The Southwestern Commis-

sion has a number of staff who have devoted their professional careers to serving in areas such as senior care and aging, workforce and economic development, community health, and other regional public initiatives. After hearing a brief program that thanked people who serve our Western Carolina communities, Sallie told me it was uplifting and inspiring to be among people with such dedication to serving the public good.

While signing the measure, Stein called the budget one with “real flaws.”

Previously, the technology could be installed on state-maintained roads only through the pilot program.

The budget makes permanent the pilot program established in 2023 that basically introduced area law enforcement to the technology and authorizes the North Carolina Department of Transportation to enter into agreements with the State Bureau of Investigation for the placement of automated license plate readers, or ALPRs, on state-owned rights-of-way.

The cameras photograph passing vehicles and record license plate numbers along with a vehicle’s make, model, color, date, time and location. That information is compared with law enforcement databases to alert officers to vehicles associated with felony warrants, stolen vehicles, missing persons and Amber or Silver Alerts.

Chief Holland said there is no doubt that the technology helps solves crimes noting solving the “smash and grab” case at Potpourri last year but said the “baggage” that comes with its use has been detrimental to municipalities.

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• UPCOMING EVENT •

2026 Town of Highlands Scholarship Golf Tournament Registration is filling up!

Registration is now officially open for the 2026 Scholarship Golf Classic, brought to you by the Bryson Family of Highlands. The event is scheduled for Monday, September 21st at Cullasaja Club, marking the 51st Anniversary of the Town's Scholarship Fund. Since 1975, the town has been awarding scholarships to graduates of the Highlands School, who are pursuing a post-secondary education. Students attending universities and trade schools are eligible provided they're a graduate of Highlands School. All students receive some level of support for the duration of their education provided they reapply each year.

The day will begin with a light breakfast, followed by at 10:30AM shotgun start. Following golf, you'll sit down to a full buffet dinner in the beautiful Cullasaja Club clubhouse. The event will be capped off at 28 teams, so be sure to reserve your spot. The cost for the event is \$1000 per team (\$250/player). Hole sponsorships are available, as well as a variety of sponsorship levels. Mike and Jim Bryson are

continuing to support this event, ensuring it continues to be a revered community event, one that everyone looks forward to year after year. For the foreseeable future, the Bryson Family will be a partner for the event and cover all the expenses associated with the golf tournament.

Event Chair, Brian Stiehler, said, "It is an honor to have the support and partnership of the Bryson Family because it enables us to generate substantially more for the Town of Highlands Scholarship Fund. This is such a unique program, and we know the community has been, and will continue to be, behind this 100%." Highlands Mayor, Pat Taylor, said, "the Town is so fortunate to have Bryson Family's support for this important annual event." This year is particularly special because we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Scholarship Fund."

If you have any questions about this year's event, reach out to Brian Stiehler (787-2778) or to register, contact Gibby Shaheen at Town Hall by calling 526-2118.

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...HCA continued from page 5

current level.”

But one of HCA's lead negotiators, Chadd Tierney, stated in an affidavit as part of the lawsuit that he understood HCA was not committing to “any particular levels or volume of any particular service.” The Attorney General's Office characterized Tierney's affidavit as “self-serving” and has urged the court not to consider it “competent” evidence.

After the sale, HCA maintained “compliance trackers,” of its requirements, including that it “[c]ontinue services currently provided at Mission's primary Asheville hospital,” according to HCA internal documents cited by the Attorney General's Office.

Oncology in the spotlight

Oncology services were

among several listed in the Asset Purchase Agreement that could not be discontinued. These included “inpatient and outpatient cancer services, radiation therapy, surgery, chemotherapy, and infusion services.”

The Attorney General has argued that Mission's oncology services have “degraded” since the acquisition. The hospital no longer has medical oncologists to monitor initial chemotherapy treatments (known as “first starts”) and eliminated complex hematology services for adult patients with blood cancers, the Attorney General cited in filings.

In December 2022, Mission-employed oncologists saw 128 new cancer patients; in December 2023, only 10 were seen, the filings state.

According to the Attorney

• See HCA page 14

• HERE'S THE THING •

Stuff is happening, like it or not

There are a couple of highly visible construction sites a few streets apart in downtown Highlands. I refer to the one at the corner of 4th Street and Carolina Way, formerly a bank, and the other one two streets away on the corner of 4th Street and Main Street, most recently a restaurant and a retail shop.

I'm told one will become the Highlands House Hotel while the other work in progress is currently called Cornerstone Highlands.

They both promise to open sometime in 2027 and according to my inside source on the matter both promise to cause as little disruption as possible in and to our otherwise peaceful and quiet existence and way of life here in Highlands.

I'm not sure that's realistic. This kind of stuff takes time.

Within the past month, while waiting to check out at Bryson's, I overheard one customer saying to another, “You'd think they could do their construction stuff over the winter, right? Why do they have to make all that noise during the summer season?” The other person in line commiserated. “I know. All that rigmarole (that's the word she used) is just so ... I don't know ... dirty, messy, you know?” I wanted to say something about them being construction sites, not hospital operating rooms, but I held back. I have no idea what the grocery check-out person thought about the exchange. The things they must hear, right?

I considered sticking myself into their conversation to inquire if they were aware of the Eight on Oak project, which is now virtually the entire view from the spacious offices of this fine publication. Eight



Bud Katz

single-family residences, each with three bedrooms, three and a half bathrooms, and, as their website suggests, a veritable plethora of amenities, all under construction on what seems to be perhaps two acres of land, and all looking right back at The Highlands Newspaper. We'll keep you posted on their progress, maybe.

Here's the thing. I bring all of this to your attention because my suspicion is that there is going to be more of this kind of activity in what has become the growing and changing face of the Highlands we all love.

I've watched, just in the 15 years I've been here full time, and, more recently, when we're walking around the neighborhoods close to downtown Highlands, smaller homes being knocked down in order to build bigger homes. Relatively recently, we've seen the completion of a glorious, beautiful, new Performing Arts Center. Coming soon, there's a really big, brand new Catholic Church still under construction on 5th Street overlooking the park. It's right next door to a recently renovated Episcopal Church.

In the past few years, a formerly untouched 23-acre parcel of land on Flat Mountain Road between Cashiers Road and Cheney Lane began transforming itself into High Camp, which has something to do with something called Glamping.

Don't ask what that is because I have no idea. Glamorous Camping? But the buildings don't look awful and those completed seem to be doing business. Demand and supply, right?

Highlands is growing. Our “season” is expanding into a year-round visitor destination, which promises a more vital business community, which hopefully will serve year-round locals and natives as well as summer and part-time residents, vacationers, week-enders and day-trippers from surrounding states, cities and towns.

Nobody loves change. But it's happening, here, and pretty much everywhere else. Few of us really applaud growth, unless we're the ones helping to bring it or benefiting from it. But it's happening, here. I choose to have confidence in our elected officials that they all love it here as much as we do and won't enable anything that might detract from what has made Highlands special. Thankfully, they live here as well.

Read the Highlands Newspaper to keep current on what's happening, what's going to happen, and what's no longer happening. Things may move slowly. And they may happen during busy times of the year, but they will happen.

• Bruce F. “Bud” Katz, and his wife, Lynn, have lived year-round in Highlands since 2011. Bud is the author of four novels and a work of non-fiction. He facilitates the Highlands Writers Group and spends much of his time in front of a computer making words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, ... etc. You can contact Bud, regarding this column or for information about the Highlands Writers Group, at brucefkatzauthor@gmail.com.

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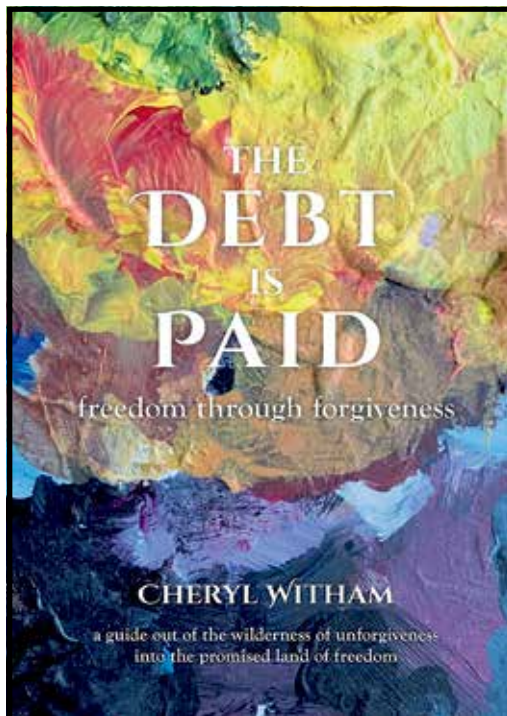
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...HCA continued from page 12

General, oncology services collapsed after the Messino Group, a major cancer treatment provider, ended its contractual relationship with Mission and a medical oncologist with the hospital resigned.

Another doctor brought on to rebuild the cancer service testified in an affidavit that he was unable to retain the oncologists he recruited due in part to “concerns regarding patient safety.”

Mission has defended its oncology service, reiterating arguments that the purchase agreement did not commit the hospital to a standard or volume of care. Mission, its lawyers said, had in 2023 a medical oncologist from the Hope Women’s Cancer Center on staff who was capable of monitoring first starts. Additionally, HCA has argued that complex hematology services have not been discontinued. Mission has treated at least four such patients since 2023, its lawyers wrote.

HCA’s argument around hematology reflects a larger battle in the lawsuit: whether the services described in the Asset Purchase Agreement represented a complete list or a minimum of what the hospital would provide. Where some might see the omission of certain services as an oversight or a flaw in the purchase

agreement, HCA’s attorneys argue it was by design.

In a deposition, Neil Luri, the CEO of ANC Healthcare, which was created to “wind down” Mission’s assets, stated that the Asset Purchase Agreement was meant to be a literal list of services that the hospital would continue to provide under HCA.

Asked if Mission, as the seller, understood that if a service “didn’t make the list, there was no guarantee HCA would provide it post-closing?”

Luria replied simply: “Yes.”

Many services that Mission’s board wanted did not make the list, including hematology, Luria said.

But in their own filings, the Attorney General’s lawyers have argued the list of services was never understood to be literal. One 2018 email they cited from Paulus states, “I’m trusting you that the myriad of obvious things that aren’t listed... will be continued out of common sense.”

• *Asheville Watchdog is a nonprofit news team producing stories that matter to Western NC. The Watchdog’s local reporting is made possible by donations from the community. To show your support for this vital public service go to avhwatchdog.org/support-our-publication/.*



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FREE Screening of 'Never not yours'

The 2025 Best Feature Film Award winner will be shown at the Village Green in Cashiers on Sunday, August 16. The film directors will be on hand to discuss the film and its genesis.

Never Not Yours, a drama short film directed by Steve Kniss and John Klein follows three adult siblings — Michael, Ellie, and James — who travel to their family's remote retired cabin for a weekend visit.

Although they initially arrive without a clear understanding of why they were summoned, the weekend takes a chaotic turn when their parents, Jonathan and Maddie, unexpectedly announce their divorce.

The film earned significant accolades at other major stops on its film festival circuit and is considered a festival favorite. The film is free. Come early. Seating is limited.

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Highlands Hurricanes Swim Team earns top gold medal count - again

By Steve Hott
Coach

On Thursday, July 23 the best of the MSL (Mountain Swim League) converged on Cullowhee, NC to compete in the 2026 MSL All Star meet. As they had done at the All Comers Conference meet the week before the Hurricanes came away with more gold medals than any other of the five teams with 15.

Leading the way for the 22 Hurricanes was Jr. Olympian Justin Powell with 28 pts and 4 gold medals. Jr. Olympians Bella Batista and Luca Maseko each scored 26 pts, winning three races and finishing 2nd in one.

Over the course of the 2026 year, Lucas Maseko broke 2 MSL records; the 50 breast stroke and the 50 freestyle. Sister Zana Maseko had 24 pts winning 2 events and scoring 2nd in 2. Jr. Olympians Emma Denisoff and Jaycee Powell brought home 19 and 18 pts respectively, each with a 1st, 2nd and a 3rd. Helix Sharpe-Sutton scored 17 pts with 2 sil-

vers and a bronze. Agatha Jestin had 13 pts with 2 bronze medals, while brother Max brought home 12 pts and a silver and bronze.

Ian Batista also had 12 pts, and a 2nd and 3rd place finish. Ivan Shchelgachov won a gold medal on his way to garnering 10 pts. Nehemiah Edwards had a 3rd place finish and 9 pts. Nikita Denisoff and Melanie Zabrian brought home 8 and 7 pts, Margot Thrifflilly 6 and a bronze. Anna Shchelgachova 5 and a silver, Lucas Zabrian and Thompson Thrifflilly 2 pts. Stella Kerr, Vic Nadzorau, and Ben Shchelgachov each scored 1 pt. Also swimming well for the Hurricanes was Hananiah Edwards.

Trophies were awarded at the end of the meet for outstanding swimmers (1st, 2nd and 3rd) in each age sex group. Emma Dennisoff was 2nd in the 15-18 girls. Justin Powell 1st in 13-14 Boys. Bella Batista 1st 11-12 girls. Zana Maseko 2nd 11-12 girls. Luca Maseko 1st 9-10 boys. Jayce Powell 3rd 9-10 boys.

• *The Highlands Hurricanes a Highlands Recreation Park team that practices mostly in the evenings at the Highlands Recreation Park Pool. The only requirement for a prospective swimmer is that they must be able to swim 25 yards (the length of the Rec Park Pool) unassisted. For further information please call Steve Hott, Head Coach, at 828.421.4121.*

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



Left to right: Amber Cahill (owner, Western Carolina Brew and Wine), Christal Green, Emily Lenski, Johanna Fein, Robin Cook and Julie Upshaw.

Women in business gather

Nearly 50 women representing a wide range of professions and age groups gathered at Western Carolina Brew and Wine on Thurs., July 30, for the Highlands Chamber of Commerce's third Women in Business event of the season. It was a

wonderful evening of conversation, connection, and community.

The next Women in Business event will be held on Thurs., Nov. 5, at 5pm at One Wicker Cheese Co.

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



From left: Josh Bryson, President of Highlands Rotary Club and Stacy Carter, Founder Stage4Hope

Stage4Hope receives grant from Rotary Club of Highlands

The Rotary Club of Highlands recently awarded a grant to Stage4Hope, a non-profit organization that provides support for advanced-stage cancer patients. This grant makes the Club a part of Stage4Hope's Inaugural Founders Circle. For late-stage cancer patients, Founder Stacy Carter's vision for "faster access to care, expert medical guidance, emotional support, practical help, and a quiet place to reflect and heal" is truly a beacon of hope.

Stacy herself is a stage IV lung cancer survivor and understands all-too-well

the importance of accessing clinical trials, specialized treatments, mental health support and travel expense assistance. Stage4Hope was created to bridge the gaps patients and families face after a late-stage diagnosis – offering support and resources in the areas Stacy sought help. Once its facilities are ready, Stage4Hope will offer wellness retreats at Ferngrove, its 85-acre mountain property, located on the Dillard Road in Highlands.

For more information contact: www.stage4hope.com, call 833/402-8391 or email info@stage4hope.org

Nonpartisan open community forum on MC redistricting is Sunday

Voting and redistricting potentials for Macon County to be discussed Sunday, Aug. 9 at 5 p.m. in the Scaly Mountain Community Building 41 Buck Knob Road, Scaly Mountain.



"Path of the Panther" Set to Screen at Highlands-Cashiers Film Festival

Sept 17-20, 2026

Audiences at this year's Film Festival (HCFF) will have the opportunity to see *Path of the Panther*, an award-winning documentary about the fight to protect the endangered Florida panther and the wildlife corridor essential to its survival. The film is one of the festival's special screenings and offers a timely look at conservation efforts across the Southeast. Directed by Eric Bendick, the documentary follows photojournalist Carlton Ward Jr. as he unites biologists, ranchers, conservationists, and Indigenous peoples in a battle to protect one of North America's most endangered wild cats: the Florida panther. Filmed over five years, the project reveals wild panthers in their native habitat as they've never been seen before. The film traces how a species pushed to the edge of



extinction became the inspiration for something larger: a wildlife corridor stretching across Florida and, potentially, the American continent. That vision helped build public support for passage of the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act, now widely cited as a model for addressing habi-

tat fragmentation nationwide. That model is already taking hold closer to home. In July, the North Carolina General Assembly voted to establish a permanent funding source, directing \$10.2 million every two years toward wildlife crossings and mitigation strategies statewide. The move builds on years of work by the Safe Passage Coalition, a partnership of nearly 20 federal, state, tribal, and nonprofit organizations that has worked since 2017 to make mountain highways in North Carolina and Tennessee safer for wildlife and drivers alike. "Our team evolved alongside *Path of the Panther*, as storytellers, as filmmakers, as humans," Bendick said. "The film has found its path and sparked a movement....This story is inspiring optimism for reclaiming a vision of what could be again. This 'impossible idea' won't just save panthers one day — it might just save us too."

Path of the Panther is one of several special screenings featured at this year's HCFF. Tickets are available now through three access levels: Film Pass, VIP Pass, and Film Festival Society Membership at www.highlandscashiersfilmfestival.com/passes

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



Come to know him intimately

Pastor Dan Robinson
Highlands Central Baptist Church

For some time now I have pasted on the pages of my Bible quotes and excerpts which have continually encouraged and challenged me.

I want to share some of those with you in hopes that your faith will be strengthened as you read them.

"It is not what enemies will, nor what they are resolved upon, but what God will, and what God appoints, that shall be done.

And as no enemy can bring suffering upon a man when the will of God is otherwise, so no man can save himself out of their hands when God will deliver him up for His Glory. We shall or shall not suffer, even as it pleases Him. God has appointed who shall suffer. Suffering comes not by chance or by the will of man, but by the will and appointment of God."

(John Bunyan)

When C.S Lewis was doing battle with the ways of God during his wife's terminal illness, he put his thoughts into these words:

"Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not, 'So, there's no God after all, but, So this is what God is really like. Deceive yourselves no longer."

(A Grief Observed, New York: Bantam Books, 1976, p.5.)

"The evangelistic harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men and of nations is always being decided. Every generation is strategic. We are not responsible for the past generation, and we cannot bear the full responsibility for the next one, but we do have our generation. God will hold us responsible as to how well we fulfill our responsibilities to this age and take advantage of our opportunities."

(Billy Graham)

"Groans that words cannot express (Romans 8:26) are often prayers that God cannot refuse."

(Charles H. Spurgeon)

"Some want to live within the sound of a church or chapel bell. I want to run a rescue mission within a yard of hell."
(C.T. Studd, Missionary to China)

"Neither go back in fear and misgiving to the past nor in anxiety and forecasting to the future. But lie quietly under His Hand....having no will but His."

(H.R. Manning).

Amen! No one knows you better and no one loves you more than the Lord Jesus Christ. I hope you will set your mind today to know Him increasingly and intimately.

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

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Senior Pastor: Rev. Amy Spivey
Assoc. Pastor: Rev. Wonyeong Lee 828-743-5298
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Fellowship 11:45a; Wed: Bible Study/Contemplative Prayer, 5p
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Sun. 10:45a; Wed Study 5:15p supper and childcare.

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

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10am; Men's Bible Study: Wed. & Thurs. 7am @ Zookeeper

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

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Rev. Emily Wilmarth, pastor; Rev. Kelley Connelly Asso. Pastor
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Sun.: Adult Ed.: 10a; Worship 11a.; Tues: Men's Group 10a;

Wed: Bell Choir 4p. Chancel Choir: 5:30p

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Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

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www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814
Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm; Dinner - Wed. 6pm

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

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

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Randy Reed. Pastor 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street
Wed. Bible Study: 6 p.m.; Sundays: Worship: 11

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road
The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily
sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.
Sunday Worship is at 9a. & 6p. Wednesday Worship is 6p

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376
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www.highlandsmethodist.org

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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. Choir: 6 p.m.

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

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

Franklin • 828-634-1312 • mountainsynagoguewnc.com.
Rabbi led service 3rd Saturday AM, 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
(4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

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CATHOLIC CHURCH

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

Sat. 4pm thru Oct 24.; Sun. - 11am

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby

Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11 a.m. & 7

Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

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

Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Richard Salmonson

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

ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mass: Sun. 9a (English); Mon. 9:30a (Vatican II in Latin); Tues.
7p (Spanish); Wed., 9:30a (English)

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1448 Highway 107 S.. Office: • 743-2359 • Rev. Rob Wood
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UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

85 Sierra Drive. Franklin • uufranklin.org

Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers • 828-743-2122

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from June 28. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Accidents responded to: July 28

• Unit 1 was traveling west on US 64 (Franklin Road). Unit 2 was traveling west on US 64 making a right turn onto Oak Street. Unit 1 attempted to pass to the right of Unit 2 through parking places. Unit 2 was turning on to Oak Street and could not see Unit 1. Unit 2 hit Unit 1.

Unit 1 came to rest on the sidewalk to the right of US 64. Unit 2 came to rest on Oak Street.

July 31

• Unit 1 was traveling south on NC 106 (Dillard Road). Unit 1 approached another vehicle in the roadway and made an abrupt right turn to avoid the stopped vehicle. Unit 1 ran off roadway to the right and into the ditch line. Unit 1 came to rest in ditch line against shrubs.

• During the week officers issued 7 Citations and 28 Warning Tickets

The Highlands Fire &

Rescue log from July 28.

July 28

• At 9:55 a.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on Oak Street.

• At 11:24 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Spring Street.

July 29

• At 10:48 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

• At 2:22 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Oak Street.

July 30

• At 8:47 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a loca-

tion on Oak Street.

• At 2:02 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

• At 4:27 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Ridge Lake Circle.

• At 11:40 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Gibson Street.

July 31

• At 2:10 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Split Rail Row.

• At 2:45 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

• At 10:14 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Half Mile Drive.

Aug. 1

• At 7:05 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Hickory Hill Road.

• At 10:04 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Upper Brushy Face Road.

• At 11:08 a.m., the dept. pro-

vided public assistance at a residence on Flat Mountain Road.

• At 9:49 a.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Hickory Knut Gap Road.

Aug. 2

• At 8:32 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a tree down on Mack Wilson Road.

• At 2:27 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

• At 5:04 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on VZ Top Road.

Aug. 3

• A little past midnight, the dept. responded to a medical alarm at a residence on Chestnut Run.

• At 9:31 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers FD.

• At 10:09 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Oak Point.

• BIZ & ORG NEWS •

Howard Hanna Real Estate opens Highlands downtown office Carolinas' real estate leader partners with Team RickSteve

Howard Hanna Real Estate Services, the country's No.1 family-owned and operated, independent real estate firm and the No.1 brokerage in the Carolinas, is proud to announce the opening of its Highlands-Downtown, N.C. office in the old Posh Paws location next to Mountain & Souvenir City at 411 N. 4th Street.

The new office expands the company's presence on the Highlands Plateau and Cashiers Valley while providing buyers and sellers with convenient access to experienced local professionals serving Highlands, Cashiers, Sapphire, Lake Toxaway, Franklin, Scaly Mountain, and Clayton, Georgia.

The Highlands-Downtown office is home to real estate agents Rick Harrison, Steve Sheppard and Wes Sheppard, whose combined backgrounds in executive leadership, finance, strategic planning, and local real estate provide clients with an exceptional level of experience, market knowledge, and personalized service. Steve Sheppard will serve as broker-in-charge of the Highlands-Downtown office.

In 2018, Harrison and Steve Sheppard formed Team RickSteve, which has amassed a total career sales volume of \$90 million, including \$13 million in 2025.

Prior to entering real estate,

Harrison spent 34 years in executive leadership with the State of Georgia, concluding his public service career overseeing statewide operations serving thousands of citizens and public facilities across the state. His leadership experience established the principles that continue to guide the office today — integrity, accountability, professionalism, and a commitment to serving others.

Steve Sheppard enjoyed a distinguished 32-year career in executive finance and business management with a major telecommunications company before beginning his real estate career. He earned his MBA from UGA.. He is recognized throughout the Highlands Plateau and Cashiers Valley for his market knowledge, trusted relationships, and unwavering commitment to his clients.

Wes Sheppard brings a strong business and consulting background to the team. He earned his MBA from George Washington University, beginning his career with a Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm specializing in program evaluation and strategic planning for federal government agencies. Today, he combines analytical expertise with innovative marketing and technology to deliver exceptional service to buyers and sellers throughout North Carolina and Georgia.

"Throughout our careers, we've learned that the company you represent matters," Harrison said. "We wanted to align with a brokerage whose leadership reflects the same values we strive to demonstrate every day — integrity, professionalism, collaboration, and respect."

Sheppard said Howard Hanna leads by example, and they are proud to represent the No. 1 real estate company in the Carolinas, backed by the global connections of Leading Real Estate Companies of the World and Luxury Portfolio International.

"Those relationships allow us to provide our clients with hometown service, world-class resources, and the confidence that they're represented by a company whose values truly match our own," he said.

Gary Scott, president of Howard Hanna Allen Tate Real Estate and Howard Hanna Southeast said they are excited to welcome the Highlands-Downtown office -- represented by Rick, Steve and Wes -- to the Howard Hanna Allen Tate family.

To contact an agent in the Howard Hanna Allen Tate Highlands-Downtown office or for real estate career opportunities with Howard Hanna Allen Tate, call 828-547-0757.

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HELP WANTED

IN SEARCH OF PART-TIME CHOIR DIRECTOR Highlands United Methodist Church is seeking a chancel choir director for their weekly Sunday traditional worship services at 11am. Choir rehearsals are Wednesdays at 4pm. Inquiries may be addressed to Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas, HUMC Senior Pastor, at randyhumc@icloud.com. (8/13)

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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

POOL SCHEDULE

• Lap Swim: Mon.-Fri. 6am-9:45am, and Saturday 10am-11pm - 6 lanes. Water Aerobics: 18 y+ Mon.-Fri. 10-11am with Karen Chambers. Adult Swim: 18y+ Mon.-Thurs. 11am-3:30pm, Friday 11am-1:30pm. Public Swim: Mon. thru Thurs. 11a-7pm, Saturday 11am-6pm and Sunday 1-6pm

PICKLE BALL

• At the Recreation Dept. there are three indoor Pickle Ball courts and six outdoor courts. Pickle Ball can be played every Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs. and Friday 10am-6pm outdoors for the summer

MTN FINDINGS

• Open: 10 am - 1 pm. Thurs-Sat.. Spruce Street. www.mountainfindings.org

FIBBER MAGEES

• Fibber Magee's Thrift Store on Laurel Street Hours. Wed. & Fri. - 10a too 4p. Sat. - 10a to 2p.

FARMERS MARKET

• The "market" is open every Saturday 8a to 12:30p in KH Founders Park on Pine Street.

ALL WEEK

• Scaly Mountain/ Highlands/ Cashiers Alcoholics Anonymous "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. recovery program. Open meetings are held at Scaly Mountain @ Grace Chapel, 9915 Dillard Rd., Scaly Mountain each Tues & Sat at 5:30 pm and at Highlands @ the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 p.m. and on Wednesday & Fridays @ 12:00 noon. Open in person meetings are also held in Cashiers @ the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library, 249 Frank Allen Rd. on Sunday at 5:00 pm, on Tuesday @ 7:00 pm, on Friday at 5:30 pm and on Saturday at 9:00 am. For more information please visit our website www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of A.A. 24/7 call our HELP Line 828 349-4357

Mon. & Thurs.

• At First Presbyterian Church, ArtSpace is open from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The next exhibit will start in mid-August. For information contact fpchkelley@gmail.com

Mon-Wed-Fri

• Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9am at the Rec Park.
• Balance, Stretch & Strengthen Class at the Rec Park 8:30-9:30am. The cost for the class is \$30 a month and is led by Vivian Brewer. Call the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

Mon., Tues., Thurs.

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

2nd 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. For more info call president Paula McDonald at 706-372-3004

4th Mondays

• Highlands Planning Board meeting 5:30 p.m., in the Community Building.

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 info contact Bud Katz at either 828-526-3190 or at budandlyn@me.com

Tuesdays

• Strength Training at the Rec Park 8:15-9:15 am.

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Workshop for Writers – from 5-6:30 PM

• ESL classes at The Literacy & Learning Center, 6-7 p.m. 675 S 4th St.

Tuesdays & Thurs.

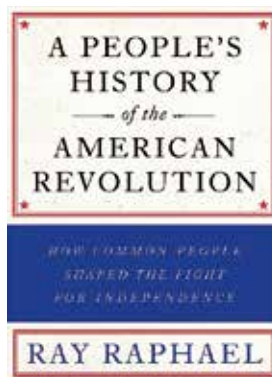
• Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at the Rec Park at 5:30. A combo class with different types of exercise. 828-526-3556

Wednesdays

• The Literacy & Learning Center offers a FREE weekly Citizenship Class led by Faviola Olvera from 5:30 to 7 pm at 675 S 4th St in Highlands, this program is designed to help students navigate the complexities of the U.S. naturalization exam.

• 2026 marks a sesquicentennial in our nation's history and we will be celebrating those 250 years at the Macon County Historical Museum with a free Fall seminar on

the American Revolution, reading and discussing Ray Raphael's The People's History of the American Revolution: How Common People Shaped the Fight for Independence. Participants will have their choice of in-person meetings at the Museum or meeting online using the Zoom platform. We will be meeting once a month, Wednesday evenings, from August thru November. Participants can sign up at tinyurl.com/amrevhistseminar. Seminar leader John deVillle holds a BA in Philosophy from UNC-Chapel Hill and a BS Ed from Western Carolina University. He has taught American History and philosophy for 30 years in a public high school and has led adult seminars in history and philosophy for the past seven years. He is the current Executive Director of the Macon County Historical Museum.



• Digital Navigators will be at the Hudson Library from 10a-noon PM, digital navigators will host a Tech Time drop-in time at Hudson Library with the goal to assist attendees with basic smartphone, laptop, iPad and tablet skills. For more information, call the Library at 828-526-3031. This program is free and open to the public.

2nd Wednesdays

• Highlands Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting at 5:30 in the Community Building

Thursdays

• Kickboxing 8:15-9:15a. at the Rec Park. No martial arts background necessary. Contact the Rec Dept. at 828-526-3556 for more info.

3rd Thursdays

• Highlands Town Board

meeting 7 p.m., in the Community Building.

3rd Saturdays

• The American Legion Post 370 meets at the First Methodist Church at 315 Main St. in their community room/909 chapel. Breakfast is at 9a; meeting is at 10a. Email ncpost370@gmail.com or just join us at 9am.

Thurs., Aug. 6

• Annual Community Barn Dance at The Bascom. \$10 General Admission. 12 and under FREE. Sandwiches from The Secret Garden. Shaved ice and ice cream from M's Ice Cream all available for purchase. Donation Bar and FREE popcorn. To reserve your ticket go to thebascom.org or call at 828-526-4949.

Fri.-Sun., Aug 7-9

• 48th Annual Antique Show at The Village Green Commons, 180 Frank Allen Road in Cashiers. Fri., 7:30a-5p; Sat., 9a-5p; Sun., 11a-4p. Antique hand-sewn door prize.

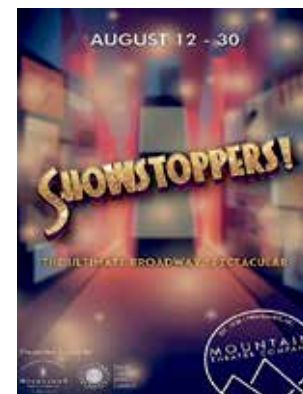
Sat., Aug. 8

• Open House at the Highland Fire & Rescue Dept. at 149 Franklin Road. Free hotdogs, fire truck rides, rescue demonstration, car seat checks, agility drills for the kids. 11a-3p.

• SkyValley-Scaly Mtn Volunteer FD Community Appreciation Day is at the Scaly Mtn. Fire Station on 169 Hale Ridge Road from 11a to 4p. Food, games, demonstrators and a bounce house for children.

Aug. 12-30

• Mountain Theatre Company presents "Showstoppers" a high-energy, 90-minute multimedia spectacular that races through Broadway and Hollywood's most unforgettable musicals, from West Side Story and Dreamgirls to Singin' in the Rain, Chicago, Mamma Mia!, and more. Featuring dazzling costumes, cinematic visuals, and a world-class professional cast, this fast-paced celebration brings iconic movie-musical moments to life with thrilling vocals, dynamic choreography, and nonstop excitement. It's pure, exhilarating entertainment for the whole family — the ultimate musical celebration. For tickets call 828.526.2695 or go to boxoffice@mountaintheatre.com



Sat., Aug. 15

• Highlands Annual 5K at KH Founders Park. 6-7pm. 5K Run/Walk and 5K Stroller Race. All proceeds will go to the Gordon Center for Child Development. Contact Bill at 706-202-3033 for questions or to sponsor.

• As a prelude to the HC Film Festival, the viewing of "The Gardener + Walk in the Garden Soiree. Viewing is a 4p at PAC. Soiree to follow.



Sun., Aug. 16

• Highlands Historical Society invites you to travel through time for the 1920s Gala from 5-7pm. Tickets can be purchased from the Highlands Historical Society website. This roaring '20s themed celebration with a live jazz band.

• Highlands-Cashiers Film Festival Summer Screening. Never Not Yours + Meet the Director. 2p a PAC. FREE. This family dramedy tells the story of three adult siblings visiting their family's remote retired cabin for a weekend visit.

Thurs., Aug. 18

• At First Baptist Church Highlands, "The Debt is Paid - Freedom Through Forgiveness with Cherry Witham, 9:30a-3p. RSVP if coming or would like to purchase a book for \$20. 612-859-2984 or 828-526-5858.

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