

Highlands Newspaper

Happy Valentine's Day & Presidents Day

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 23, Number 7

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Thurs., Feb. 12, 2026

GOP candidates take questions at Forum

The District 1 candidates are featured this week; District 2 will be next week

By Kim Lewicki

Republican candidates for the Macon County Board of Commissioners met Saturday at

the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building for a 2-hour candidate forum hosted by the Macon County GOP. The event

featured opening statements, a lightning round, and multiple policy questions posed by mod-

• See FORUM page 4

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Highlands Mayor Pat Taylor and Highlander Frieda Bennett spoke about redistricting during public hearing portion of Monday's BOC meeting in Franklin.

Photo by Kristin Fox

BOC heeds public's call to halt redistricting plans

Commissioners agree more information is needed before moving forward

By Kristin Fox

It was standing room only at Tuesday's regular monthly meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners which included a public hearing to

consider changes to how county commissioners are elected.

Highlands was well represented at the meeting as several local citizens made the drive down the mountain to attend the

meeting and voice their concerns about the proposed change to the commissioner's election system.

Among those attending the meeting included Highlands

Mayor Patrick Taylor and former County Commissioner and current Town Commissioner Jim Tate as well as Town Commissioners Amy Patterson and

• See REDISTRICTING page 5

Highlands Hurricane swimmer wins gold at Jr. Nationals

By Steve Hott

After swimming in the 2025 AAU Jr. Olympics in Houston, Texas in August, Highlands Hurricanes swimmer Luca Maseko qualified for and swam in the Zimbabwe Junior National Championships January 30th to February 1st in Mutare, Zimbabwe.

There were 220 swimmers competing, representing 8 provincial teams. Luca swam in 16 total events over 3 days, including preliminaries, finals, and 2 relay events each day. Luca won the gold medal in 100m breaststroke (1:40.90); a silver medal in 50m breaststroke (46.7); and the silver in 200m breaststroke (3:48.63). He also swam in the

• See SWIMMER page 11



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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

• MILESTONE •

Always exercise your right to vote

Early voting for the primary election begins today, February 12, and ends February 28. Election Day will be March 3. Put another way, the election process will move quickly, with some races settled on March 3 rather than in November. Unfortunately, a number of county positions will have no opposition in the November general election, but that should not be construed as a reason to stay home and not vote.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

registered who lives on the Highlands Plateau go to the polls and vote. We are a small precinct, but our vote does have an impact on county elections. I recall an election years ago in which a school bond referendum was on the ballot. It was a tight vote, and the Highlands precinct was the last to report its vote totals. The voters on the plateau rejected the bond referendum by about 100 votes, but that small margin was enough

to change the outcome.

Also, any registered Macon County voter who works in Highlands can vote in early voting at this or any other precinct in the county. On Election Day, a voter does have to vote in his or her assigned precinct.

Some people have expressed concern to me about election candidate signs proliferating throughout the town. They say, "Mayor, the town should limit where signs can be placed." My response is that we do so in accordance with state election law and town ordinances. Our ordinances prohibit signs from being placed in town road right-of-ways. Also, on state highways, election signs have to be placed a specified number of feet from the edge of the roadway. But if the signs are on private property and the property owner has given permission, the candidate signs are allowed to place the signs. For instance, property owners' yards or businesses have the right to display signs during an election.

The town allows candidate signs at the recreation department, which is the township's precinct. There are state-law limitations that restrict signs within a certain distance of the voting area. We allow candidates to place signs at the entrance of the recreation center on a first-come, first-served basis, although my experience has been that candidates are somewhat accommodating and allow opponents space, too. That is the way it should be, everyone gets an opportunity to make their case to the voters.

At a recent meeting of elected offi-

Goodbye Leon & Susan, Hello, Juan & Ivanet







On Sun., Feb. 8, more than 100 people turned out to say goodbye to Don Leon's Leon and Susan as they embark on retirement and say hello to the Avila family and their new offerings as they embark on making Don Leon's their own.

Photo by
Kim Lewicki

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

• WEATHER •

Thu, 12-Feb	Fri, 13-Feb	Sat, 14-Feb	Sun, 15-Feb
			
49°F 29°F	50°F 31°F	49°F 41°F	47°F 30°F
Partly sunny	Mostly cloudy	Rain and a thunderstorm	Cooler with rain
RealFeel® High: 53° Low: 23°	RealFeel® High: 52° Low: 28°	RealFeel® High: 46° Low: 32°	RealFeel® High: 41° Low: 26°

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Highlands Real-Time Weather Station @ HighlandsInfo.com/wx.htm

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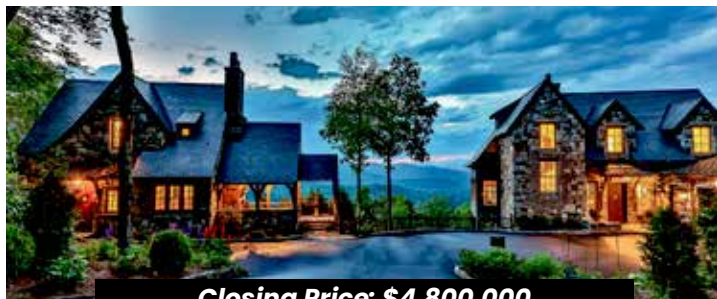


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Pat Allen is very good to work with. She is kind, honest, caring, dependable. I have been using her for several years. She knows what she is doing and always has my best interest in mind. She is the kind of person I love to work with.

-William S. O.

Julie Osborne is the best realtor we have ever worked with in NC. She went far beyond what was necessary to be sure both parties were satisfied with the purchase and sale of our house. We highly recommend her to anyone looking for a true professional—honest and hard working. She is also a delight to work with.

-Linda C.

My wife and I had a very pleasant experience with Pat and her Daughter Julie Osborn. Pat is so knowledgeable about the market and because of this we were able to sell our property in Highlands when there are about 160 other lots available. It was a pleasure during every one on one meeting and phone calls. I can't think of a more friendly person that I have ever met.

-Michael B.



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...FORUM continued from page 1



John Shearl



Don Willis



Joey Wilson

erators and audience members. The candidates weren't given the questions ahead of time.

They shared their perspectives through detailed responses, offering insight into how they would approach budgeting, collaboration, workforce stability, and long-term planning if elected.

District 1 candidates present were John Shearl (incumbent), Don Willis, and Joey Wilson.

What do you see as the fiscal consequences when county departments request funds outside the standard annual budget cycle?

Don Willis: "The county budget process starts with commissioners in February. They meet with departments, review their requests, and have to operate within a set amount of money — this past year, about \$62 million. You have to work within those confines, just like a household budget. If a request comes in outside that cycle, a decision has to be made, and sometimes that's a tough decision about who gets what and how important it is. You have to weigh what will have the greatest impact for taxpayers. That budget process lasts about five months. Departments submit their budgets to the county manager, and then it ultimately comes back to the commissioners for a final decision."

Joey Wilson: "Being married to a very detailed accountant, I know all the importance of budget and sure there are things that come up all year long that we don't plan for. You can't plan for everything. But you can have contingencies, rainy-day funds, and emergency reserves, just like in personal finances, and I think the county should operate the same way. I would love to see the county look for some outside revenue sources, right? Like, let's think outside the box here. For example, using county land like the landfill as a potential solar field that could be leased to generate revenue. That would reduce our reliance on tax dollars and give us more flexibility when unexpected needs arise.

At the same time, departments have to be responsible with their budgets. In my own construction business, if a project runs over budget, I have to explain why and sometimes I have to absorb that cost. We should treat every tax dollar with that same level of responsibility."

John Shearl: "Ladies and gentlemen, this is an easy one for me. If you remember four years ago, my sign said low taxes period. And that's exactly what I meant. This county has been run outside that budget for decades. And I have fought every step of the way to live inside that budget just like every household has to do. And I'm proud to say that I talked to the county manager just the other day. And we have not spent any money outside the budget this year. This will be the first year, hope to goodness, that we don't have to do it. This board of commissioners that you have serving you right now, we're all about business and we're all about taking care of you and your assets and the county employees, the county staff, and everything else. We've actually put just a little bit of money back into the undesignated fund balance even after this adopted budget. And I'm just proud and I hope to goodness that you guys see it through of what we've done for you. It's all about you."

Where do you draw the line between informal collaboration with fellow commissioners and a violation of the public's right to open transparent meetings?

Don Willis: "I believe in open transparency. I think that everything that a commissioner does for the most part needs to be explained to the public. There are some things that you don't want to discuss. If it's a land purchase or something of that nature that maybe the county is looking at, obviously, you know, we want to keep that kind of hush because you know what happens as soon as the county says they're interested in a piece of property that that price goes way down.

• See FORUM page 7

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...REDISTRICTING continued from page 1

Jeff Weller.

The proposed change would establish that the Macon County Board of Commissioners election system consists of three geographical districts – Highlands, Nantahala and Franklin, which would be divided by the commissioners with an equal number of the population of Macon County in each district. The board of commissioners would consist of one resident from each of the three geographical districts and two at-large members with staggered terms for a total of five members. All seats would continue to be elected by a county-wide vote in both the primary and general elections.

At the urging of Commissioners John Shearl and Barry Breeden at the January meeting, the redistricting referendum was posed to be sent to the General Assembly. It was ready in December, but according to Commissioner Shearl, Rep. Karl Gillespie asked for some verbiage changes.

The vote to send it on failed and even though a public hearing on the matter isn't required by law, the board agreed to hold a public hearing on the matter at the February regular meeting.

"Gentleman, I come tonight to implore you to not take hasty action to the detriment of your constituents by voting through the proposed redistricting action," said Dr. Joanne Roesner. "This is not an emergency, and it is not an absolute necessity to send it to the General Assembly short session in March. The urgency is artificial and appears to reflect candidate concerns and personal agendas. Fairness to citizens dictates prudence, waiting, educating and considering all options, not the single one which has been proposed."

A citizen from Nantahala, whose district would also be affected, spoke up.

"I want to thank the board tonight for giving us the opportunity to air this out," said Mary

Williams. "I was concerned that it was going to bypass any public input. So, I appreciate y'all kind of backing it down, slowing it up and letting us voice our concerns. I think this needs new deliberation. We need to take our time before we jump on making any type of proposed plan."

Since 1978, the five-member board of commissioners has been elected entirely from districts, with representation weighted by population. District 1,

which includes Ellijay, Flats, Highlands, and Sugarfork, elects one commissioner. District 3, made up of Burningtown, Cartoogechaye, Cowee, and Nantahala, also elects one commissioner. District 2, which encompasses Iotla, Millshoal, North Franklin, East Franklin, South Franklin, Union, and Smithbridge, elects three commissioners with staggered terms due to its larger population.

Chairman Josh Young shared a Macon County voter population list. District 1 has about 3,200 voting members and District 3 has about 6,000 voting members. District 2, which has the most representation, has 17,000 voting members.

"I believe this resolution has the intention of limiting representation of voters across Macon County," said Caleb Brown of Highlands, who is running for Karl Gillespie's state seat in November. "My parents taught me that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. And if y'all insist that it is broke, you need to find a better solution and develop a detailed plan communicated to the people before trying to push it through the General Assembly."

A suggestion expressed by one citizen seemed to interest commissioners.

"If you want to make a plan, make a plan and have a public input evening at the Carpenter building," said Tom Young. "Allow the public to come and present your plan to the public in that setting where you can have more dialogue and discussion. I think that would benefit you and the community."

Highlands Commissioner Jim Tate, past Macon County Board Chair spoke up.

"I am imploring you that if y'all do decide to move this forward to please take your time with it. I hope that what you decide to do is what's best for Macon County, I personally don't think the route that's being proposed tonight is the best route," he said. "I think there are some other options and I don't know that it's better than what we have right now, but there are a tremendous amount of options that can be investigated. I just ask you to pull the brakes. Slow it down. Let's get this right and do what's best for Macon County."

Mayor Pat Taylor echoed Tate's concerns.

"This represents a very complicated and challenging reorganization of county

• See REDISTRICTING page 15



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Granny, get your pod

...But don't pack your bags just yet. **G**ranny Pods are just another name for ADUs (accessory dwelling units), but what a cool name, right? When I first started selling

real estate in the last century, we used the term, mother-in-law suites. Some of those basement areas, garage apartments or other detached former sheds were quite laughable. It made us wonder about the

sellers' relationships with their own mother-in-law.

In today's world, the tiny home craze has evolved from a mobile home with very limited space to stick-built spaces that are larger but still considered tiny. One can purchase a granny pod for as little as \$5,000, from Amazon. These aren't on wheels and would involve a foundation as well as be subject to city and state permits and regulations.

In theory, having your aging parent or grandparent on your property may be better than the high costs of independent senior living areas. And, let's face it, your fresh-from-college-but-no-job-yet offspring may benefit from living close by as well.

One could also build a ADU in which a caregiver lives. Back in the day, our area had many homes with caretaker cottages on the property. One of their main jobs was to caretake the home when the seasonal residents moved back to warmer climates for half the year.

Other uses for ADUs are for them to be used for rentals, either for extra income for the homeowner, or to help alleviate the need for work-force housing, or both.

According to a January 2026 article released by HUD, titled, "Evaluation Accessory Dwelling Units in Small to Medium-Size Cities," they are nearing the end of a two-year study which involves every state. The study involves 380 small communities with populations of less than 500,000 people. (If that's small, we're microscopic.)

Out of those municipalities, 54% had required parking area concerns, 60% required the residence to be the primary residence and be owner-occupied and 61% required special permits.

In NC, HB627 (which has NOT passed) local governments must adopt implementing ADU regulations by Jan 1, 2027 and not require EXTRA parking, restrict utility connections (if available) or prohibit long-term rentals. (Note there is no mention of STRs, only long-term rentals. A 30-day lease is not a short-term rental, but most of these would be three-to-six months leases, if not for a whole year.) Anyway, this bill has not passed.

House Bill 765 (which also has not



Jeannie Chambers
Chambers Realty
& Vacation Rentals

passed), named "Save the American Dream Act" was the topic of our mayor's weekly column January 22. This bill lists a mandate of cities with over 125,000 residents to allow at least one ADU on single family lots. According to the ChatGPT AI overview, "This bill, aimed at increasing housing density and accelerating development by restricting local government land-use, zoning, and permitting authority. Key provisions include mandatory, by-right, higher-density housing (four+ units/acre), enabling tiny homes/ADUs, limiting design controls, and tightening water/sewer capacity timelines."

Supporters of the bill are NC Home Builders, NC Realtors and the NC Chamber of Commerce. According to the NC-Realtors.org, HB765 does not change local government's ability to have zoning regulations as long as they abide by state laws and permit tiny houses and ADUs in residential zone districts within the state's seven most populated counties. All of Macon County doesn't have enough population to fall under what has been described as a small city.

We still live in a very protected area with residents who care what goes where...most of the time. An affordable housing solution is a big problem here just like it is everywhere. The squeeze of regulation doesn't help the sanctity; it results in less workforce.

There has to be room for everyone, whether there are actual grannies living near their family, visiting nurses, doctors and support staff who work in our hospitals, or workers in our gas stations, restaurants and retail.

A tiny home/ADU/granny pod may not be the ideal solution for every worker or family who needs a little extra income to continue living in the area, but it's a start. We can't expect everyone to fit in the same peg hole. People, their situations, the property in question all of that must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Besides, with neither of these bills having passed, don't we have time to come up with a resolution that is good for everyone? Hold on tight, Granny, there may be hope for you, yet.

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The Town of Highlands Board of Commissioners is now accepting applications to fill the Town Board vacancy.

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Town Clerk

...FORUM continued from page 4

I believe in transparency and what we know, you should know."

Joey Wilson: "I agree with Don. Anytime taxpayer money or the public's best interest is involved, people should know what's happening. It's affecting you just as much as it affecting me. There may be situations — like personnel matters — that legally can't be discussed publicly. I'm not a commissioner, so I don't know every scenario they face, but I trust there are reasons for closed sessions in certain cases.

I'm sure there's going to be circumstances that come up to say, you know, should we talk about this in front of everybody? Should we not? I don't know. John can probably speak more to that than I can. They have a lot of both right now and I think that there's a reason that they have a lot of both. But the more transparency the better on 85% of the topics I believe is a good stance. You don't know what you don't know and I'm not going to pretend that I do."



A decent crowd turned out for the GOP Candidate Forum at the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building Saturday.

John Shearl: "Well, ladies and gentlemen, I can address that very well. We go into close session because we're not allowed to talk about personnel issues. That's one reason we go into close session. The next thing is like Mr. Willis said, when there's a land transaction or anything like that, you must keep it quiet... It is our duty to talk to each other as individuals. We must communicate with each other to

see where their constituents what they're talking about and everything else. When it comes into play is if there are three or more of us then we have to be in a public meeting. I can assure you that most of your business is done in that board commissioner room. However, I do talk to my colleagues and we try to figure out the best plan forward with the problems and the issues at hand."

Would you support a hiring freeze on non-essential vacancies or do you believe all current positions must be maintained?

Joey Wilson: "I think any successful government, any successful business is successful because of the employees. I don't know in the entire Macon County where we have excess, where we have high performers, but I can figure that out

• See FORUM page 12

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• LETTERS •

Beware. It can happen again.

Dear Editor,

I attended a showing of the movie Nuremberg which was held at the Highlands Performing Arts Center. It was a great experience: good seating, popcorn, snacks and wine. And most import: A very large screen. I highly recommend the experience, and the Center will be showing additional movies and live streaming Opera performances in the coming months

The movie was four stars. But if you do go and see the movie, be prepared for a gut punch. It's one thing to know about or read about the Holocaust, but quite another to see actual film footage of the death and destruction wrought on the Jewish people. The final message of the movie, in spite of "never again" message, it can happen again. The author of the book which was the basis of the movie warned that the seeds of the next Holocaust were already planted by the continued and open antisemitism throughout

• CLARIFICATION •

In regards to Patrick Brannon's letter in the Feb. 5 edition entitled "Thanks to you, HBS School Outreach Program will continue," as it turns out, the HBS Outreach Program is NOT be continuing, and consequently Brannon will no longer be employed at Highlands Biological Station.

"I wish certain folks with Western Carolina University would step up to help the children, but they are sadly refusing. But understanding the need, I am privately offering my services to schools until I can find another job. there are no current plans by WCU to make it a permanent position," said Brannon.

Applications still being accepted for Town Board seat

The Town is currently accepting applications from eligible citizens who would like to fill John Dotson's seat on the Town Board. As of Tuesday, Feb. 10 only one application has been received.

Jan Pittman, who was a knowing write-in during the 2025 election, has submitted her application. Applications will be accepted until noon, Monday, Feb. 16.

the West. His warning in 1945 seemed to have fallen on deaf ears. We see evidence of this in recent events.

Major universities have allowed and promoted the demonstrations of antisemitic students on campus. The Keffyeh wearing protesters assaulted Jewish students, tried to prevent their attendance at classes and called for the death of Jewish students. They advocated for the globalization of the Intifada which is nothing more

than a call for the genocide of the Jewish people. The protesters met with very little, if any, resistance or pushback from university administrators. Several university presidents were forced to resign over their failure to protect the rights of Jewish students. It took withholding federal funds to get these universities to focus on the problem, but for that threat they were glad to ignore the dangers to their Jewish students.

Today we see anti-Semitism cloaked

behind the label of anti-Zionism. But in the words of one Auschwitz survivor, Jean Amery: "Anyone who questions Israel's right to exist is either too stupid to understand that he is contributing to or is intentionally promoting an uber- Auschwitz." Anti-Zionism is modern day antisemitism and a posthumous gift to Hitler.

Rick Holloway
Scaly Mountain

JOEY WILSON

FOR MACON COUNTY COMMISSIONER

A VOTE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE OF MACON COUNTY

Joey Wilson is a lifelong resident of Macon County, a proud husband, father, and son, a firm believer that good government means balancing fiscal responsibility with forward-looking growth.

He's seen firsthand how smart planning and responsible spending can create opportunity - for local businesses, for our children, and for our parents who helped build this community.

As County Commissioner, Joey will work to ensure that every tax dollar is used wisely, while making sure our county continues to grow in a way that preserves our small-town values and secures a strong future for the next generation.

PRIMARY ELECTION DAY
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026

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FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Every dollar counts. Joey believes in transparent, efficient budgeting - prioritizing essential services while eliminating waste. County government should live within its means, just like families do.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Growth should bring opportunity, not problems. Joey will promote smart development that strengthens our economy, supports local businesses, and protects what makes Macon County special.

IMPROVED PUBLIC SERVICES

Backing investments in emergency services, education, and critical infrastructure.



PAID FOR BY FRIENDS OF JOEY WILSON

• HS SPORTS •

Highlands Athletics Recap: Two weeks of winter weather and competition

The past two weeks have been a whirlwind for Highlands Athletics, as winter weather forced several schedule changes and cancellations. Despite the disruptions, the Highlanders battled through a busy stretch of basketball games and prepared for state-level swimming competition.



Brett Lamb
Highlands School
Athletic Director



Seniors wrap up their Highlands School basketball days

On Friday, February 6, Highlands School celebrated eight senior basketball players and one manager closing out a grueling stretch of three games in three days. Pictured with their parents are: Cheyann Carver (manager), Hunter Conner, Heidi Doerter, Lillian Rutter, Anne Elizabeth Woods, Aiden Crook-Jenkins, Bryan Juarquin-Colmenares, Paolo McRae, Isaiah Vilardos and senior swimmer Aniah McKim. The Varsity Girls overcame a slow start to win 57-50. The Varsity Boys ended the night with a tough 71-45 loss to the Bulldogs. The basketball teams wrap up their regular season with two road conference games one on Tuesday, Feb. 10 at Hiwassee Dam and one tonight, Feb. 12 at Blue Ridge.

sively, losing 27-70. Aiden Crook and Paolo McRae each scored 8 points.

February 4-Away at Summit Charter

The JV Boys dropped their matchup 29-43. Carpenter again led the team with 8 points, and Conner added 6 points and 9 rebounds.

The Varsity Girls lost a heartbreaker,

41-40. Hunter Conner led with 12 points, 5 rebounds, and 3 blocks. Borino also scored 12 points with 4 assists, Anne Elizabeth Woods added 9 points, and Westendorf pulled down 9 rebounds.

The Varsity Boys ended the night on a high note, earning a much-needed 59-53 victory. Isaiah Vilardo scored a career-high 27 points and grabbed 5 re-

bounds, while Crook and Chase Kenter each added 8 points.

February 5 – Away at Nantahala

The Varsity Girls dominated in a 59-17 win, with eight of ten players scoring. Borino led with 21 points, freshman Aubree Brooks added a career-high 10,

• See HS SPORTS page 11

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...SWIMMER continued from page 1

finals for the 200m Individual Medley (finishing in 6th place overall) and was an alternate for the 100m freestyle finals. In addition to these events, he also swam the 50m freestyle and 50m backstroke. He placed 6th overall in his age group, with 29 total points scored during the swim meet.

He was honored to receive the "Most Outstanding Swimmer" award for the Manicaland Provincial Team. Luca is now nationally ranked in the top 10 swimmers in his age group in Zimbabwe.



Highlands Hurricanes swimmer Luca Maseko.

This year, he had previously qualified for the AAU Junior Olympics 2026 (to be held in Des Moines, Iowa) in the 50m & 100m breaststroke, and he has now qualified for the 100m freestyle also. Luca swam personal best times in all 7 of his individual events in the competition.

Luca qualified for the 200m IM with a time of 4:05.50 LCM on Jan 17th. Then he swam it in 3:53.72 in the prelim on the morning of Jan 30th. And after swimming events in the sun all day, he clocked a finals time of 3:43.71.

after swimming events in the sun all day, he clocked a finals time of 3:43.71.

...HS SPORTS continued from page 10

Woods scored 8, and Westendorf contributed 6 points and 9 rebounds.

The Varsity Boys needed overtime but pulled out a crucial 70-62 conference win. McRae led with 16 points, while Bryan Juarquin and Crook each scored 14. Vilardo added 11 points and 12 rebounds.

February 6 – Senior Night

Highlands celebrated eight senior players and one manager on Senior Night, closing out a grueling stretch of three games in three days.

The JV Boys fell 54-41, with Carpenter scoring 16 points, Weston Sellars adding 9, and Jake Smith contributing 8.

The Varsity Girls overcame a slow start to win 57-50. Borino exploded for 34 points, while Conner nearly recorded a triple-double with 9 points, 12 rebounds, and 9 blocks. Westendorf added 9 points and 7 rebounds.

The Varsity Boys ended the night with a tough 71-45 loss to the Bulldogs. Crook-Jenkins led with 12 points, McRae scored 10, Vilardo added 9 points and 7 rebounds, and Kenter chipped in 8.

The basketball teams will wrap up their regular season with two road conference games: Tuesday, February 10 at

Hiwassee Dam and Thursday, February 12 at Blue Ridge.

Middle School Basketball

Winter weather also impacted the middle school schedule. The final regular-season game against Tallulah Falls was canceled due to the storm and time constraints before the tournament.

The girls' team showed significant improvement throughout the season. The boys faced Rabun Gap in a shortened playoff format, falling 43-35 in the semi-finals. They finished second in the regular season and third in the tournament.

Swimming

The Highlands Swim Team faced regional cancellations due to weather, but two swimmers advanced to the state level. Ian Batista and Aniah McKim qualified for the NCHSAA State Championship after the Board of Directors implemented a formula to determine advancement without regional meets.

Both will represent Highlands this Saturday in Cary, North Carolina.

Despite the challenges of winter weather, Highlands Athletics continues to show resilience, teamwork, and determination across all sports.

Elect Bob Cook as Sheriff of Macon County March 3



Dear Citizens of Macon County,

"The mountains are calling..." My heart is still there. Over 20 years, in a leadership role in MC, it was my honor to consistently "Back the Blue" and participate alongside great law enforcement public servants in both civic activities and GOP leadership roles. It was my privilege to fervently champion 3 ('10,'14,'18) re-election cycles of Sheriff Holland and support his team of public servants, including Major Don Willis (Commissioner Candidate Dis. 1), Captains Nick Lofthouse (Commissioner Candidate Dis. 2), Dereck Jones, Clay Bryson, Tony Carver, and others. What better choice than to continue the tradition of excellent law enforcement in MC? Elect Bob Cook as your Sheriff on March 3rd.

May I offer a unique insight? Specifically, Bob Cook is a subject matter expert in NC Election Finance Law and Ethics Guidelines. In 2016, NC enacted a highly stringent set of Election Finance Laws and Ethics Guidelines with significant penalties for noncompliance. Bob attended at least six of those day-long training sessions offered by the state and, subsequently, from '16 to '22, trained the MC GOP Leadership and staff. From '16-'22, yearly audits of the MC GOP showed 100% compliance. What better choice for Sheriff than a man who demands fiscal responsibility and integrity?

Secondly, Bob Cook is singularly focused on specific issues, including the NC Rule of Law, specializing in officer training, including courses in De-escalation and Leadership, teaching Police Ethics in BLE, providing transparency with weekly "musings," writing news articles, and answering questions like the most current one, "if elected, who would he fire?" Through countless GOP leadership meetings, Bob brought curiosity, innovation, and a passion for the question: How do we better serve the MC constituents? Bob Cook, earning his BA '25, stirs the pot, brings a fresh approach, demands integrity, and speaks his mind! What better choice for Sheriff than a man with those specific character traits?

Thirdly, while historic, familial ties to a community are important, equally so are fresh eyes, fresh thoughts, and fresh ideas brought by enthusiastic, dedicated "newer comers." With exhaustive commitment, passion, and volunteerism, Bob Cook gives himself to our beloved mountain community through his involvement with 11 charitable organizations through his longstanding work with churches, 828 Vets, American Legion, Rotary, Escape to Safety, WNC DWI Task Force, MC Elves, MPP, Kids Place, Fraternal Order of Police, Homeowner Ass., Manna Food Bank, and GOP Hispanic Outreach. What better choice for Sheriff than a selfless man who is deeply involved in his community?

Early vote, Feb. 12-Feb 28. Primary, March 3rd.

Carla Miller
MC GOP Chairman Emeritus

Paid for by Bob Cook for Sheriff

...FORUM continued from page 7

within a month. We've got to be competitive with our pay if we're going to take care of these people. Do we provide enough? You tell me. Do we need more here? Do we need more there? I'm here to listen. I'm here to work together to make Macon County better."

John Shearl: "We are in the [budget] process now with the county manager. I had a meeting with him yesterday about the studies of staffing in Macon County. We did a pay study in 2018 or 2019 and it was implemented and you guys paid

for it. When we did this pay study, it was supposed to save all the county employees. It was a fair wage. It was a living wage. It was going to carry us over the top. So now we're looking at is it really enough? But I don't believe in across the board pay scale. I believe that Macon County has some over-the-top county employees that work beyond their call of duty for the people of this county and unfortunately, they can't be recognized because they're on this pay scale. I've never in my business life ever gone across the board and given all my

employees raises. They earn it, folks. And these people that work for you, I wish there was a way that they could really get recognized because they are wonderful employees and I enjoy working with those people. So I have a problem with the pay scale that we have in Macon County because I don't think it's fair."

Don Willis: "I've been a Macon County employee for 35 years. I know all about the pay. I know about the pay scales. I've gone through three or four different pay studies throughout my career. The problem is we don't adhere to it. When we have these studies done, a lot of times we kind of dilute it a little bit, because we

can't really afford it. But if we're going to keep these quality employees, you have to give them a competitive wage. We are so blessed in this county to have the folks that we have, that come to our needs each and every day. We need to support them and we need to make sure the pay scale is correct."

We have a \$60 million fund balance reserve on the books. What is your strategy for these funds? Should they stay put or be used to offset property taxes or some other purpose?

John Shearl: "Earlier today, I was asked if I supported the [quarter-cent] sales tax increase, and I said no. Prove to me that the county government needs more money. We have \$60 million in a slush fund. That's what it is. Slush funds are used to buy boats. Honestly, that's what it is. The recommendation of the state of North Carolina is we have 20% of the operating budget in our fund balance and the purpose of that is because the state does not want to come in if we have some major disaster. They don't want to bail us out so we're you to use that money to do it. But it's not law. It's their recommendation, so I am totally against a government entity taking any more of your money when we've got plenty of your money already, we're just not using it. This board of commissioners that you have now, we've been using it and it will be disclosed at the next commission meeting."

Don Willis: "These funds need to be used. They need to be used for capital projects that we already have that need to be done. You go back and look at what the county did in 2022 or 2023 and 2024, and not a whole lot was done. There was a state of chaos on our board of commissioners. The meetings were lasting 3, 4, 4, or even up to 6 hours. That's ridiculous. There was not much movement or progress. So now, a new board needs to utilize these funds instead of just sitting on it. We can do a lot of a lot of work with \$60 million."

Joey Wilson: "At Duke Energy, I'm an engineer for five counties and everywhere I go, I can tell you that we're not ahead in every county. We're better than some at some things, but we are lagging compared to others. With a fund balance of \$63 million, let's move forward for the next generation. Let's set our kids up for the next 20 years by doing some stuff now. We've saved long enough and now it's time to do. I haven't just looked at infrastructure, I've built infrastructure for the last 15 years. I know what needs to be done and how to do it."


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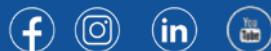
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A man and a woman are laughing together in a kitchen. The man is wearing a brown sweater and the woman is wearing a blue and white striped shirt. They are both smiling and laughing, with their hands on each other's shoulders. In the foreground, there is a wooden countertop with various items: a glass of red wine, a baguette, a bowl of salad, sliced cucumbers, mushrooms, cherry tomatoes, a yellow bell pepper, a red bell pepper, and two carrots. The background shows a white brick wall, a white range hood, and white kitchen cabinets with glass doors.

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SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING



God's love is not enough

Pastor Mark Ford
First Baptist Church
Highlands

From time to time, we hear disputations regarding the love of God and its sufficiency to cover all our sins and sinful lifestyles. We are given a steady diet of Scriptures like I Peter 4:8 that tell us that "love covers a multitude of sin" and that God so loved us that He gave us Jesus to cover those sins (Jn. 3:16). We are reminded that "God is love" and our efforts to abide in love for God and others is our path to walking with God (I John 4:16), while conveniently ignoring our sinful behaviors.

In fact, the two great commandments that summarize the Christian life is to love God with all we have and are, and our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27). If we don't love, God's love does not abide in us (I Jn. 4:8). So, we go about trying to muster up the emotional, even heavenly compassion for all people and God. But sadly, we have bought into a romanticized version of love rooted in feeling and emotions that soon fail us when confronted by the unlovable, and our own tepid love for God that does not surpass the state of lukewarm, which God hates (Revelation 3:15-16).

Nonetheless, we continue to immerse ourselves in the wonderful truth of God's love and the seeming cure-all that this love promotes for life. We anesthetize ourselves with this promise of God's love for us and grit our teeth in attempts to love our neighbor and the world – even our enemies which the Lord commanded (Mt. 5:44).

But in all this waxing eloquent about God's love and our duty to love God and others, there is an important ingredient that is constantly missing in most homilies and moralizing discourse. This ingredient makes all the difference. It is the qualifier of obedience!

Jesus said it plainly three times in John 14:21-24 – "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he is it who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him...If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him...Whoever does not love me does not keep my words."

All the talk about God's love for us is insufficient if it emasculates the need for obeying God's Word and its absolutes regarding what is sinful and what is holy. Further, a lot of talk about love ignores the command to "love not the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15). We can't have it both ways!

Make no mistake about it. "God is love...and God so loved the world." BUT God's love is not enough

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

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Rev. Oliver Rice. Pastor 706-782-3965

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

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

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

BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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

Sundays: School at 9:30; Worship 10:30

GRACE CHAPEL ON HIGH HOLLY

9615 Dillard Rd Scaly Mountain, N.C.

Pastor Steve Kerhoulas. <http://www.Graceonhighholly.com>

Sunday School 9:45; Worship 11; Prayer Service Wed 5:30p

Men's and Women's Bible Study throughout the week

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

The Rev'd Dr. Marc Robertson & Rev. Nick McGee

464 U.S. Hwy. 64E, Cashiers, NC

CAC@christanglicancashiers.org • 828-743-1701

Sunday: Adult Christian Ed, 9:15a; Holy Eucharist, 10:30a;

Fellowship 11:45a; Wed: Bible Study/Contemplative Prayer, 5p

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY. CASHIERS

Pastor Jacob Tedder • Jacob@cashiers.church • 743-5470

www.cashiers.church

Sun. 10:45a; Wed Study 5:15p supper and childcare.

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

Sun: Service 10:45am, Children's 10:30am

Wed.: Youth 5:30-7pm; Women's Bible Study: Mon. 4:30pm, Tues.

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

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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; Women's 10:30 am

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Emily Wilmarth, pastor; Rev. Kelley Connelly Asso. Pastor

828-526-3175 • fpchighlands.org

Sun.: Adult Ed.: 10a; Worship 11a.; Tues: Men's Group 10a;

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

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

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Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

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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. & 6p. Wednesday Worship is 6p

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Pastor Zane Talley

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

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

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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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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

...REDISTRICTING continued from page 5

government, and I urge you to take your time. We need to analyze and study all the possibilities – possibilities of how many districts do we have, whether we want the district voters to elect their representatives. There are just so many possibilities. We need to look at the demographics we're dealing with now as revealed in the recent housing study," he said. "I think it's important that we make sure that we have input from all residents in the county and then make a very critical and deliberate decision on whether and how to reorganize the districts."

BOC chairman Josh Young did say he thought the districts should be recalibrated.

"I would also like to see a comprehensive study that involves other counties in our region and other 'like' counties in the state. I would like to see all the options in front of me on paper."

He also suggested reformulating the Macon County School Board.

"While we are at it, I'll throw another one out there. What about the school board?"

It might be time to do a census and recalibrate that while we're at it. Let's do it right, let's do it entirely," he said.

After listening to several citizens express their concerns about the restructuring, and closing the public hearing, commissioners

continued to discuss the issue among themselves concluding that the board needed more time before considering such a change to the election process.

Commissioners did not take any action and did not vote on the proposed resolution.

Out with the old; in with the new



Demolition of Bill's Soda Shop on the corner of 4th and Main streets was set for February and by the close of Tuesday, Feb. 10 it was gone. In its place will be a 3-story building with retail space on the ground floor, office space on the second floor and luxury residences for nightly rental on the 3rd floor.

Photo by Kim Lewicki

...SPIRITUALLY from page 14

to save us! We must respond in obedience to His Word and keep His commandments if we want to return that love to Him. An example before I close.

In Mark 10:17-22, Jesus is confronted by a young man who wants to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. After clarifying that the young man needed to know he was talking to God, Jesus lists six commandments of the Decalogue as a means of testing. The young rich man tells the Lord that he has kept these since his childhood days. Then it says that "Jesus, looking at him, loved him." Then he gives him the great challenge of selling all he had and gives it to the poor if he wanted treasure in heaven. But the young man, disheartened by the saying,

turned away sorrowful. He could not obey because he couldn't give up his great possessions.

Did you catch it? Jesus loved the young man, but the young man didn't love the Lord enough to obey and give up the things of the world. This is the way the story ends. God's love was not enough. Obedience to God's clear teachings and devotion to the Lord compliments the exchange, verifying that God's love is received and our love is given back.

We can talk a lot about God's love, even wrap ourselves in the emotional comfort that love proffers. But if we stop short of yielding our lives in obedience to His Word and all its teachings, we will find ourselves discour-

aged and filled with despair like the rich young man. God's love is only sufficient when we love Him in return through our obedience. We love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). But we obey Him in our love because He gave us His love, Jesus Christ our Lord.

And back to John 3:16. God so loved the world that He gave us His Son Jesus Christ for our sins. It continues, "that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." The word "believes" is a verb in the original Greek. It is not just a cognitive response that is required, but the constant action of obedience and devotion that completes the exchange of God's loving salvation. Again, God's love is not enough.

• FIRE REPORTS •

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Feb. 4.

Feb. 4

• At 12:22 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Hummingbird Lane.

Feb. 5

• At 9:39 p.m., the dept. responded to a chimney fire at a resi-

dence on Shortoff Road.

Feb. 9

• At 9:01 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

• At 12:23 p.m., the dept. investigated the activation of an alarm at a location on Carolina Way.

...MAYOR continued from page 2

cials, I asked Dr. Chris Cooper, a professor of political science at Western Carolina University, about the impact of yard signs and folks campaigning at polling places. I thought those tactics really had no major impact, that people already had their minds made up about who they were voting. Dr. Cooper replied that research indicates that such practices can make a difference in an election, especially in town and county races where a voter may not be familiar with a candidate. Having yard signs and local residents advocating for a candidate can influence undecided voters heading to the polls.

So, in summary, I accept the

proliferation of campaign signs and groups of supporters during an election season as being part of the American way. It can be sometimes unsightly and irritating to some, but it is a small price to pay for free and open elections.

I also want to express my appreciation and support for all the volunteers who work at the polls during early voting and on Election Day. It is long and hard work, and I hope every voter will be courteous and appreciative of their fellow citizens who are willing to make this important commitment to the community and country.

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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

NOTE:

• No Senior Luncheon at Rec Park the month of February.

MOVIE

• At PAC's Martin Lipscomb Theatre, Feb. 20-March 1, Hamnet, the powerful story of love and loss that inspired the creation of Shakespeare's timeless masterpiece, Hamlet. Showtimes: Fri., Feb. 20, Sat., Feb. 21: 2pm & 5:30pm; Sun., Feb. 22, 2pm (WITH CAPTIONS) & 5:30pm; Fri., Feb. 27, Sat., Feb. 28, 2pm & 5:30pm; Sun., March 1, 2pm (WITH CAPTIONS) & 5:30p. Tickets are \$12 total (including taxes and fees)

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.. 3:30-7pm, Saturday 11am-6pm and Sunday 1-6pm

PICKLE BALL

• At the Recreation Dept. every Monday - Friday 10am-1pm indoors for the winter (notice the days and time has changed),

MOUNTAIN FINDINGS

• **Winter Hours:** Friday & Saturdays. Open: 10 am - 1 pm. Spruce Street. www.mountainfindings.org

ICE SKATING IN PARK

• Thurs., 3:30-8p; Fri. 3:30-10p; Sat. 1-10p, Sun. 1-5p Hours will be extending during Thanksgiving and Christmas vacations. \$8 with or without skates.

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 at 5:30 pm and 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 5pm, on Tuesday @ 7 pm, on Friday at 5 pm and on Saturday at 9 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., Tues., Wed, Fri.

• EnerChi: Connect mind,

body, and breath using Tai Chi in a meditative movement practice. Call or email if interested in these classes 828-634-1404 or WellspringClasses@gmail.com. Mon. 5:30-6:30pm, Tues. 4-5pm, Wed. 6:30-7:30pm and Fri. 4-5pm and 5:30-6:30pm.

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.

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

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

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.

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 budan-dlynn@me.com

2nd Wednesdays

• Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health topics, at 11 AM.. To register, stop by the library or call 828-526-3031.

Wednesdays

• Digital Navigators will be at the Hudson Library from 1-3 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.

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.

• At First Presbyterian Church a free concert "Music for Prayer" at noon. These casual concerts are almost entirely improvised and last 30-45 minutes. This offering is called Music For Prayer.

• At Hudson Library, special children's events will be on tap on Thursday afternoons at 3:30 Kids Zone programs.

Fridays

• At Hudson Library, Friday afternoons at 2 PM, there's a variety of children's programs including board games, STEM programs, and crafts.

3rd Saturdays

• Dec. 20th meeting is cancelled. Meeting will resume in January. 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.

Sundays

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

Fri. & Sat., Feb. 13-14

• PAC Outreach Theater Camp – How to Audition Join us for a two-day theater camp designed for young performers ages 7-18. 10a to 3p. For tickets, call 828-526-9047.

• Highlands Cashiers Players present "For Better or For Worse" mystery Dinner Theatre. at the Martin Lipscomb Theatre in the Highlands Performing Arts Center \$55 per person - dinner, non-alcoholic beverages, dessert and an interactive show. Wine and cocktails will be available for purchase. For tickets go to highlandscashiersplayers.com or call the box office at 828-526-9047.

Mon., Feb. 16

• US House District 11 Candidate Forum at the Macon County Library on Siler Road from 6-8 p.m. The five democrat candidates running for the seat will be featured. Register to reserve your seat at mobilize.us/s/aVVjmZ

Thurs., Feb. 26

• At Highlander Mountain House, Valley James is performing at 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$35 (excluding taxes and fees).

Wed., March 4

• At PAC, Paces Live Presents: A Taste of Ireland at 7:30 p.m. For tickets, call 828-526-9047.

• RECREATION NEWS •

• Macon County Youth Soccer Spring registration is open and ends February 21 for players (boys and girls) born from 2011 through April first 2022. Cost is U5&U6 \$75, U8&U10 \$85 and U12 & U15 is \$90. Register at maconsoccer.net.

• Franklin Little League Baseball registration is open until March 8. Cost to register is Baseball \$65 and Tee Ball is \$50 with sibling discount of \$15. online registration www.franklinlittleleaguebaseball.com.

• Franklin Little League Softball registration is open until March 13. Cost to register for softball is \$55. Open for ages 4-14 years old. Online registration at www.franklinlittleleaguesoftball.com.

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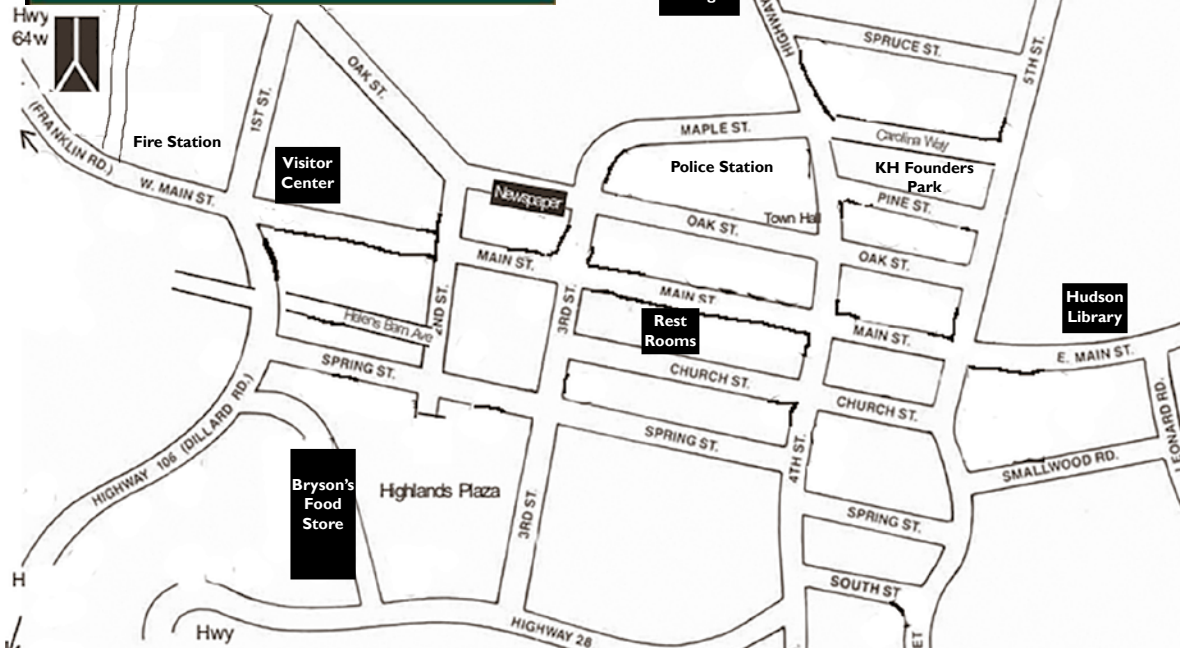
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