

Highlands Newspaper

Happy Memorial Day!

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 23, Number 21

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Thurs., May 21, 2026

Zoning Board denies setback variance

Variances must meet four 'hardship' elements to be granted

By Kim Lewicki

A case heard at last week's Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting epitomized why obtain-

ing a variance is extremely difficult and why the fee to request a variance hearing will be \$1,000 rather than \$250 effective July 1,

2026. Planning and Development Director Michael Mathis said the
 • See **VARIANCE** page 9

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School Board to present 3 budgets to BOC

BOC budget meeting is Thurs., May 21 at 9a

By Kristin Fox

At a recent budget workshop, the Macon County Board of Education School system prioritized the needs of the school system. The result was a budget request of over \$14 million from the county to maintain the needs of school system in the 2026-2027 school year. The request is a nearly \$2 million dollar increase over last year's budget request from the county.

Macon County Finance Director Alayna Ledford presented the school system's proposed budget at the workshop.

• See **SCHOOL BOARD** page 13

Annual Mountain Garden Club Plant and Yard Sale is Saturday, May 23



This Saturday, May 23, Highlands ballfield will be transformed into a field of greens, and eager shoppers. Gates open at 9a and close at noon. Stock up from a large selection of native plants, ferns, hostas, dahlia tubers and more. New this year is the Mountain Garden Club Yard Sale where you will find old and new treasures. The Silent Auction gets bigger and better each year. Bids close at 11:30a. Don't miss it. Club members spend months preparing for the annual sale which has become a Memorial Day Weekend tradition. All proceeds from the sale go to Highlands School scholarships, and upkeep of other pollinator gardens in Highlands. Purchases are cash or check only. Arrive early for best selection.

Memorial Service held for 'fallen' officers

HPD Chief Holland participated at service

By Kristin Fox

Highlands Police Chief Andrea "Sissy" J. Holland and Assistant Highlands Police Chief Leah McCall joined other law enforcement agencies last Friday for the annual Law Enforcement Memorial Service presented by the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #81 of Macon and Jackson counties.

The service is held each year to recognize law enforcement officers in North Carolina who have given the ultimate sacrifice of their lives while serving to protect others.

"For many years, I have attended the Macon County Law Enforcement Memorial to re-

• See **MEMORIAL** page 4



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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Budget work expected to end Thursday night

Thursday, May 21, is the Highlands Town Board's monthly meeting. It will begin at 7 pm at the Highlands Community Building next to the ballfield. It can also be accessed remotely using the YouTube link on the Town of Highlands website.

There is no 6 pm workshop scheduled, but several budget worksession items discussed Tuesday, will be addressed during the Town Board meeting.

At the top of the board meeting agenda will be a report and update by Mike Hanson of McGill Engineering. Mike will update the board and the public on the plans for dredging Mirror Lake. McGill has been securing permits and easements for several months. They have also been working on design and construction documents necessary to seek bids from qualified contractors.

In the coming months, I expect a final review by the board and letting of the contract. The contract would be for the



Highlands Mayor Patrick Taylor

remaining phases of the project. I encourage residents living on or around Mirror Lake to attend the meeting and learn about the plans. As I say, the presentation is the first item of business, so it should begin around 7:15.

Also on the agenda is a continued review of modifications to the town noise ordinance. I have asked Chief Holland to give a sound demonstration to the board that shows various decibel levels at given distances. I think it

would be helpful to all concerned to hear what a 40-decibel level is, compared with higher and lower levels.

The major item on the agenda will be the Town Manager's presentation of a proposed town budget for FYI 2026-'27. For the last several weeks, the town staff and board have been discussing priorities and how to achieve a balanced budget.

At a budget workshop on May 12, the board directed the town staff to include a 3-cent increase per \$100 of property valuation into the proposed budget. This decision came after an analysis that the town's general fund reserves are now below 50% of annual operating costs, and that without a tax increase, the reserves would continue to decline.

Based on previous audit recommendation, the board approved a budget resolution several years ago that these critical reserves should not be below that 50% level. In fact, the standard practice in North Carolina's small towns is to keep reserves between 50% and 100%.

A public hearing for the proposed budget will be held at the June 18 board meeting. After the hearing, I expect the budget to pass with any amended items the board may approve.

On Friday, May 22, I will be holding my first community coffee at the Hudson Library. I will open the coffee at 11 am with a discussion about what happened at the Town Board meeting. I will also conduct an overview of items in the proposed budget. I hope to see you at the community coffee. The community coffees will now be held monthly on the Friday after 'Thursdays' Town Board meeting. The programs will run through the end of October.

• SNAPSHOT •







Photo by Kim Lewicki

Saturday Night on Pine kicks off!

Free music in the park concerts for 2026 kicked off with the rousing tunes of '80s band Lazr Luvr. The weather was perfect and people of all ages were ready to celebrate. May 23 it's the Parks Brothers and May 30 it's Snap.

Friday Night Live in Town Square kicked off with The Foxfire Boys. On May 22 it's Silly Ridge and on May 29 it's Andrew Wakefield & Friends. Both concerts are from 6-8:30 and they're free. Concerts Friday and Saturday nights continue through September.

• WEATHER •

Thu, 21-May	Fri, 22-May	Sat, 23-May	Sun, 24-May
 71°F 62°F	 67°F 59°F	 70°F 57°F	 73°F 59°F
A shower and thunderstorm	Cloudy with a stray t-storm	Rather cloudy with a t-storm	Mostly cloudy with a t-storm
RealFeel® High: 76° Low: 63°	RealFeel® High: 69° Low: 59°	RealFeel® High: 74° Low: 64°	RealFeel® High: 74° Low: 63°

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...MEMORIAL continued from page 1

flect and remember the law enforcement officers who lost their lives in the line of duty or through other tragic circumstances," said Holland. "Attending the memorial is always very personal for me. It gives me a moment to stop, remember, and honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Their dedication and service will never be forgotten, and it's an honor to continue serving while keeping their memories at the forefront of what we do."

The local memorial is one as envisioned by President John F. Kennedy in 1962 when he passed a law known as the National Police Officers Memorial Week. It was almost 20 years later before any group celebrated National Police Officers Memorial Week with the first National Police Officers Memorial Day Service

held on May 15, 1982, on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

The Macon and Jackson counties Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Lodge #81 was formed in February 2003 by a group of active and retired police personnel who came together and met as a brotherhood. The memorial is an annual event put on by the local lodge every May during National Police Officers Memorial Week.

Flagbearers from the Franklin Police Department, Officer Jonathan Lauffer and Sergeant Matt Bingham presented the colors. Macon County Commissioner and Chaplain Danny Antoine opened the event with a blessing.

Macon County Sheriff Brent Holbrooks welcomed the crowd of law en-

• See MEMORIAL page 5

Highlands Historical Society presents our 2026 Season Opening Celebration

Saturday, May 23 from 11:00 - 2:00



Live music from Laney & Bishop with Charles Wood

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...MEMORIAL continued from page 4

forcement, family and community members gathered at the courthouse square in Franklin for the memorial. On behalf of the Town of Franklin, Vice Mayor Mike Lewis also welcomed the crowd and expressed gratitude for the sacrifice and service of local enforcement.

North Carolina State Bureau of Investigations Special Agent Lauren Crawford was the keynote speaker. As a law enforcement daughter, sister and wife, Crawford shared first-hand what life is like being a Blue Line Family.

Highlands Police Chief Holland and Franklin Police Chief Devin Holland read the names of North Carolina officers who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Those honored included: Lieutenant Justin Jones, Officer Gabriel Stainback, Officer Roger Smith, Officer Philip Chiorino, Master Trooper Jason Vindich, Sergeant Kenneth "Hop" Hopkins, Master Trooper Stien Davis, Jr., Master Trooper Steven J. Perry, Deputy Sheriff Kaleb Mitchell and Captain Adam David Beam. After each name was read, a bell was rung to recognize their "end of watch."

As a part of the memorial, Jackson

County Sheriff Doug Farmer and Basic Law Enforcement Training Cadets held a special recognition for fellow Cadet Ryan Ferreira who died while beginning his training in law enforcement at SCC's Division of Public Safety Training. BLET Cadet Gabriel German-Zari, who gave Ferreira CPR, lit a candle in his honor.

Bagpipers Glen Morris and Margaret Tookey played "Amazing Grace." The traditional placing of the wreath was presented by Assistant Highlands Police Chief Leah McCall and North Carolina State Trooper Brandon Padgett.

The memorial concluded with a 21-gun salute by the Macon County Sheriff's Department. Alan Newton played taps followed by the retiring of colors.

The final benediction was delivered by Macon County Chaplain Davis Hooper.

National Police Week is a collaborative effort of many organizations dedicated to honoring America's law enforcement community. Recognizing all that law enforcement does for our community, the week is set aside to respect, honor and remember those who work every day to protect us.

• See MEMORIAL page 11



Highlands Police Chief Holland and Franklin Police Chief Devin Holland read the names of North Carolina officers who gave the ultimate sacrifice

Photo by Kristin Fox



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What AI means for real estate on the plateau

A few months ago, I was sitting at my desk when one of our affiliated agents stopped by and handed me a stack of papers. “My client created this,” she said. “And they’re not a REALTOR®.”

What she handed me was a roughly 20-page comparative market analysis, and honestly, it was better than many I’ve seen created by real estate professionals.

It included Zillow data, tax records, comparable sales, valuation metrics, neighborhood insights, and market trends pulled from multiple online sources. Clearly, this client understood how to use modern AI tools effectively and knew how to ask the right questions to get meaningful results.

It made me stop and think: In a world where nearly everyone has access to Zillow, mortgage calculators, online valuations, and even AI tools capable of generating a fairly convincing market analysis in seconds, what role does a real estate professional really play anymore?

My real estate career has now spanned 17 years and four different states. I wasn’t around for the earliest days of the industry, when agents picked up printed MLS books once a week from their local REALTOR® association, but I was around for a time when information felt much more guarded than it does today.

When I first entered real estate, social media was still in its infancy from a business standpoint. Smartphones were new. Artificial intelligence wasn’t even part of the conversation. In many ways, real estate professionals were still viewed as gatekeepers of information. Today, that world no longer exists.

Buyers and sellers have instant access to listings, valuation estimates, satellite imagery, school ratings, mortgage tools, market reports, and increasingly sophisticated AI platforms capable of organizing information in seconds. Consumers are more informed than ever before — and honestly, that’s not necessarily a bad thing.



Lauren Dahl
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But access to information and the ability to interpret it well are two very different things.

Artificial intelligence can generate comparable sales data, but it cannot walk through a home and understand why one property feels different from another. Algorithms cannot fully understand neighborhood culture, pricing psychology, buyer hesitation, local reputation, or the subtle factors that make one side of a

street more desirable than the other.

Recently, a friend of mine who works in a much larger market sent me a message that simply said, “You need to check this out.”

He had built a custom AI-powered virtual assistant using one of the newer automation platforms available today. Curious (and admittedly a little skeptical), I logged in and connected a few of the programs I use every day.

Within minutes, the system began organizing my day in a way that felt both impressive and slightly unsettling. It flagged looming transaction deadlines, summarized important emails, reminded me about pending North Carolina Real Estate Commission rule changes, and even anticipated personal tasks I’d likely forgotten in the chaos of a busy week.

More than anything, it struck me how quickly these tools are evolving.

When many people think about artificial intelligence in real estate, they picture funny AI-generated social media graphics or automated listing descriptions. But the reality is that AI is increasingly becoming a genuine organizational and analytical tool — one capable of helping agents operate more efficiently and respond to clients more effectively.

I’ll admit that part of me still resists it sometimes.

There are moments when a staff member brings me an email draft that was clearly assisted by AI, or suggests automating a process I’ve always handled manually, and my instinct is still to say,

• See **INVESTING** page 16

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This Sagee Mountain home has a 50-mile vista of the layered hills out back, a lovely natural creek and waterfall, a terraced backyard and rustic outbuilding. The house has a semi-open floor plan with everything you need on the main level; a stone fireplace in the great room and a wall of windows. In the covered Carolina Room there is another stone fireplace. The screened area connects to the large deck and great room. Offered at \$5,900,000. mls #1002107



On the Highlands-Cashiers corridor, this 2BD/1BA has a multitude of possibilities, from residence to rental to office. 1.38 acres for expansion. Stone fireplace, kitchen and bath needs updating but a new roof and some upgrades are done. Great high visibility location. Offered at \$599,000. mls #1001857



Do not miss this move-in condition, spectacular house located off Buck creek road on Western Rhodes Road. 3 bedrooms, plus additional flex spaces. Multiple fireplaces. Open Great room concept with custom kitchen, plank wood floors, stone fireplace in the Great room that flows onto a covered porch with hot tub spa. Masters on main and upper floors, plus guestrooms complete with baths. Outbuilding. Trails lead to your privacy and to explore your own kingdom. Offered at \$1,895,000.



On a corner lot in the Mirror Lake area is a fully renovated 1930s home with a wonderful yard and stream. A real stone fireplace in the living room, wood floors, native stone and a covered screen porch. Cutting edge kitchen, with adjacent den/dining area. Main level has a bath and a bedroom. Lower level has a sauna, and rec room-man cave. Upper level has a primary bedroom with bath and 3 additional bedrooms and bath. Offered at \$2,650,000. Some furnishings may be purchased outside of closing. mls #1002105



A truly unique Highlands cabin less than 3 miles from Main Street with over 19 acres of usable land. A blank canvas to improve to your personal taste and have a family heirloom for another chapter. 4 bedrooms, stone fireplaces, retro kitchen, fantastic sleeping porch. This property has endless possibilities! Offered at \$3,575,000. mls #106429



Make an appointment to view this almost new 2BD/2BA home that sits on a lovely wooded .31 acres lot of usable land. Split bedroom plan with lovely baths, open great room with peninsula kitchen that with stainless appliances, quartz counter tops, gray kitchen cabinets. This home is move-in ready and can be year-round, summer, or can be an income producer. Offered at \$689,000 mls #1002169



In the gated community of Ravenel Ridge, a 31-lot enclave in the heart of Highlands is this 4BD/4.5BA with a detached garage with guest apartment. Great room, family/kitchen room with stone fireplace and a huge, covered gazebo porch. Primary has a large bath with double vanities. Upper level has 3 guest suites separated by a catwalk bridge. Great entertaining house and the most reasonably priced in Ravenel. Offered at \$5,800,000. mls #1002104



Located in desirable Highlands Mountain Club, this beautifully maintained, 2 BD/2BA condo is furnished with some exceptions. With hardwood floors throughout, an updated kitchen and main bathroom, this unit is move-in ready. Covered porch or open deck looking out on a pond. A friendly adult community which features a clubhouse, pool and tennis court. Offered at \$549,000. mls #104688



This true in-town 2BD/2BA is only 4 blocks from Mountain Fresh grocery. Close to Harris Lake and Lakeside dining! On city sewer for easy expansion. Wood floors, fireplace, large deck overlooking woods in the back. One-car carport. Metal roof. HVAC. Offered at \$849,000. mls #1001893



Spectacular mountain view in Wildcat Cliffs Country Club (membership requirements). Everything you need on the main level with foyer entry, powder room, game table, plus dining area, a living/great room with a wall of glass, 2-story ceilings, and fireplace, family room. Custom kitchen. Private primary suite. Upstairs has 3BD/2BA plus an office or nursery. The 2-car garage has a guest area with kitchen, bedroom and bath. Offered at \$2,750,000.00 furnishings are negotiable. mls #1001237



Fantastic In-town Highlands. End unit privacy, charming living room with a fireplace. Dining room and designer kitchen. Glazed-in porch features tree-lined garden space. Three bedrooms upstairs. This home is versatile for full or part-time living or long-term rentals. Offered at \$985,000 mls #1001318



A blank canvas, ready for you to make your own tastes, this 2 bedroom, 2 bath condo needs refurbishing but is in a great location 2 blocks from Main Street. Great covered glass porch. Currently rented and shown by appointment. Offered at \$575,000. mls #1001811



This home offers a serene escape with the comfort of nearby city amenities. Inviting living area. Recent updates include a new roof. Offered at \$699,000 mls # 1002204



About 3 miles from town, this 4 BD/3 full and 2 half bath home sits on over 5 acres with lovely mountain view. Private setting. The dwelling has a spacious floor plan with 2 main floor bedrooms, living and bonus room, kitchen and dining on the main level. Upstairs are 2 bedrooms with a Jack and Jill bath. Ample deck for outdoor living and to breathe in the cool air and take in the view. Offered at \$955,000. mls #1002336



Located atop a ridge about 7 miles from town, this diamond in the rough is sitting upon 15 acres with stunning mountain vistas. The house has heart of pine floors, huge antique beams in the coffered ceiling, and a stone fireplace. Kitchen is functional and ready to be renovated to your personal tastes. Main floor master with ensuite bath. Upper level has 2 additional guest rooms with views and ensuite baths. Detached garage has a bay with workshop storage room and a full upstairs efficiency apartment. Offered at \$4,200,000 mls #1002161

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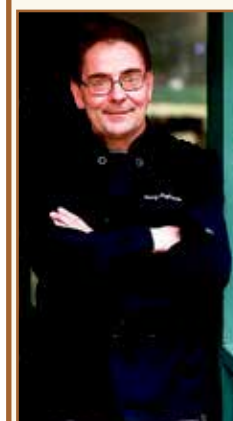


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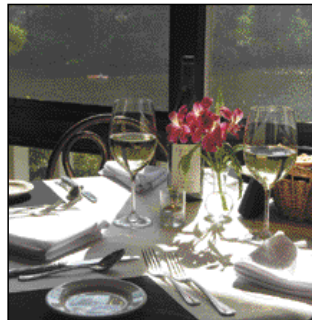
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• OBITUARY •

Floyd 'Smokey' Buchanan

Floyd "Smokey" Buchanan, 87, passed away peacefully on May 16, 2026, at the Elizabeth House in Hendersonville, NC.

Born on July 23, 1938, Smokey was the dear son of Minnie Gregory Buchanan and the youngest of nine children. He was a lifelong resident of the Norton Community.

In 1966, Smokey married his lifelong love, Lassie Edith Crane of Highlands. Smokey worked for 34 years at Reeve's Hardware in Highlands, where he cultivated relationships in the community and created connections for side work as a landscaper and finish carpenter.

A man of limitless talent, many will remember Smokey for his hardworking nature, excellence in craftsmanship, unwavering integrity, and clever sense of humor. Most important to Smokey was his family.

In 1969, he and Lassie had their only child, Carol Jane Buchanan. In 1999, they opened their home and their heart to their grandson, Micah Gregory Buchanan.



Countless other friends and family have childhood memories at Smokey's old place.

To his family, he will always be remembered for his resilience, the joy he found in providing, and his boundless fatherly love. Smokey loved to cook, bake, do handicrafts, and enjoy coffee. His legendary sourdough bread was a gift coveted by many and generously shared by Smokey. To him, a good thing was made even better when it was given to a friend.

Services honoring Smokey will be held on Saturday, May 23, 2026 with the visitation from noon-2 PM at the Yellow Mountain Baptist Church. A graveside service will be held at 2:30 PM immediately afterwards at the Norton Cemetery.

As an expression of sympathy, love your neighbor through a tangible act of service, give the gift of a freshly baked loaf of bread to a kind stranger to gain a friend, and please give generously to the Elizabeth House via the Four Seasons Foundation. Horse at last!

...VARIANCE continued from page 1

increase isn't so people don't ask for a variance, but it's so they understand it's not something they should throw money at lightly, due to the hurdles required to get one.

The Zoning Board of Adjustment does not have unlimited discretion in deciding whether to grant a variance. As defined by the State enabling Act G.S. 160D-705(d), the board must reach four general hardship conclusions before granting a variance.

Section 4.18.2 (B) of the Highlands' Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) defines these same four general findings based on hardships:

1. That, in the absence of the variance, no reasonable use can be made of the property.
2. That the hardship results from conditions that are peculiar to the property, such as location, size or topography. (Hardships resulting from personal circumstances, as well as hardships resulting from conditions that are common to the neighborhood or the general public, may not be the basis for granting a variance.)
3. That the hardship did not result from actions taken by the applicant or the property owner.
4. That the requested variance is consistent with the spirit, purpose, and intent of the Ordinance, such that public safety is secured, and substantial justice is achieved.

Based on its findings, the board voted unanimously not to grant the ordinance because it didn't meet all of the "hardship" requirements, specifically the main one, which usually shoots any variance down, "in absence of the variance, no reasonable use can be made of the property."

The Lloyd Family Trust, represented by family member Peggy Phillips of 19 Owl Pine Lane, and attorneys Taylor Osborn and Brian Goldman of Van Winkle Law

Firm, requested a 10-ft. side yard variance to finish construction on an unpermitted pavilion over their flagstone patio.

According to section 8.2.1 of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) the building setback from property lines is 10 feet in the R1 zone and applies to:

"Any structure built for the support, shelter, or enclosure of persons, animals, or property of any kind, including sheds, pole sheds and other open-walled building, carports, garages, guest cottages and other outbuilding and also including any extension and extrusion of the building such as balconies, deck and porches."

According to the Phillips, the contractor they hired to build the pavilion neglected to get a permit and when they attempted to do so, they learned the pavilion, which was nearing completion, was not allowed as built.

They and their attorneys said the pavilion would help keep rain runoff from getting under their patio – though they said piping had been installed under the patio to carry runoff away – but felt the pavilion would add an extra level of protection.

The pavilion was built within the 10-ft setback of the neighboring property owned by the Wood family.

The two parcels are separated by a cinderblock wall which the Woods said is solely on their property along the property line. An outdoor fireplace is in the wall on the Wood side and now with the construction of the pavilion six inches from the open vent in their fireplace chimney, they fear embers traveling up their chimney could ignite the pavilion and potentially Brushy Face mountain.

"The sparks could ignite the timber – it's combustible material that is close to the exhaust of the fireplace,"

• See VARIANCE page 16

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• FINANCIAL MATTERS •

Honoring sacrifice through financial stewardship

Memorial Day is often seen as the unofficial start of summer – barbecues, travel, and time with family. But at its core, the holiday is a solemn reminder of sacrifice. It honors the men and women who gave their lives in service to our country, preserving the freedoms we enjoy today. Among those freedoms is the ability to build, protect, and pass on wealth – a privilege that carries responsibility.



Michael P Henderson,
CFP® CKA®
Founder/Wealth Advisor
Crossover Point Advisors

Why Planning Matters

As financial advisors, we often talk about planning for the future, but Memorial Day offers a moment to reflect on why that planning matters. Many of the fallen were young, with futures and financial goals left unrealized. Their sacrifice underscores the importance of being intentional with the time and resources we have.

Estate Planning as Stewardship

One practical way to honor that perspective is by revisiting your financial plan. Are your estate documents up to date? Do your beneficiaries reflect your current wishes? Have you clearly communicated your intentions to your family?

These are not just administrative tasks—they are acts of stewardship that ensure your legacy is carried out according to your values.

Preparing for the Unexpected

Memorial Day also highlights the importance of preparedness. Just as service members train for the unexpected, families benefit from having contingency plans in place. Emergency savings, adequate insurance coverage, and a well-structured estate plan can provide stability during life's most difficult moments.

Special Considerations for Military Families

For those with military connections, this holiday may carry additional meaning. It can also be a time to review benefits such as survivor pensions, VA benefits, or life insurance coverage to ensure everything is properly coordinated within a broader financial strategy.

A Legacy Worth Leaving

Ultimately, Memorial Day reminds us that freedom is not only something we enjoy - it is something we are entrusted with. Financial planning, at its best, is about honoring that trust: making thoughtful decisions, protecting those we care about, and leaving a legacy that reflects what matters most.

As you gather with family this Memorial Day, take a moment not only to remember the fallen, but also to consider the legacy you are building – and whether your financial life reflects the values you hold dear.

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...MEMORIAL continued from page 5



Flagbearers from the Franklin Police Department, Officer Jonathan Lauffer and Sergeant Matt Bingham presented the colors.

Photo by Kristin Fox

"I want to thank Ms. Bonnie Peggs and the Fraternal Order of Police for putting this meaningful event together each year. I appreciate the guest speakers who took time out of their day to honor our fallen officers and recognize their

sacrifice," said Chief Andrea Holland. "I also want to thank the members of the public who attended and showed their support for law enforcement and for the families of those we have lost."

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What We Keep Keeps Us: Exploring Our Human Museums

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• UPCOMING EVENTS •

Lectures on China and Russia highlight the opening of CLE's 2026 Summer Sessions

By Richard Shackelford
CLE Curriculum Chair

The opening sessions of the Highlands-Cashiers Center for Life Enrichment's (CLE) 2026 season include lectures on two topics of current global significance: the often bumpy economic relationship between the U.S. and China and an historical perspective on the Putin regime in Russia.

The season will also include lectures by prominent academics on topics relating to this summer's 250th an-



Joseph Kellner, Assistant Professor of Russian and Soviet History at the University of Georgia

niversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

On Wednesday, May 27th from 10AM - 12PM, Economics Professor Penelope Prime, the Founding Director of Atlanta's China Research Center, will lecture on U.S.-China economic policy, an especially timely topic in light of President Trump's meeting this month with President Xi of China. She will explore the twists and turns of tariffs and economic sanctions and the overall U.S.

policy shift under the Biden and Trump Administrations from cooperation to competition, most vividly demonstrated by the current race for AI supremacy.

On Thursday, June 4th from 10AM - 12PM, Joseph Kellner, Assistant Professor of Russian and Soviet History at the University of Georgia, will survey the political and cultural origins of the Putin regime, tracing their development historically and ultimately culminating in Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. He will explain how the authoritarianism and militarism of today's Russia have their roots, not from centuries past, but from more recent decades, especially the hyper-capitalist 1990s.

Later this summer, CLE will host several presentations by nationally-recognized academics on a wide variety of topics relating to the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, including the American Revolution and War, the Founding Fathers and Mothers, Democracy and its challenges, the U. S. Constitution, and the global impact and legacy of the American Revolution. Information on these and other CLE lectures may be found in the CLE course catalog, available digitally at www.clehighlands.com. Physical catalogs are available at the CLE office.

These presentations will take place at CLE's Lecture Hall, located in the Peggy Crosby Center at 348 South 5th Street. The cost for each mentioned program is \$35 for CLE members and \$50 for nonmembers. Walk-ins are welcome. For more information please visit clehighlands.com or call (828) 526-8811.

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...SCHOOL BOARD continued from page 1

The Macon County School System receives 64% of its funding from the state. The remaining funding is broken down into 20% local funding, 6% school nutrition, 5% federal funding, 3% other specific revenue and 2% capital outlay.

The local current expense proposed budget includes 60% allocated for salaries, 11% utilities, 6% capital outlay, 5% local supplements, 4% maintenance, 4% technology, 3% athletics, 6% for insurance, school house and transportation and 1% for charter schools.

For the last several years, the school system has prepared three budget requests to county commissioners – option one to maintain the current expense budget is \$14,330,860.69; option two to maintain and fund the board's top priorities came in at \$15,805,721.68; and finally option three to maintain/fund top priorities and to expand services and fund requests from principals, for which

a figure is pending.

The proposed budget to maintain current expenses includes state mandated salary increases projected at 7% percent for certified staff and 5% for classified staff. In addition, the option includes funding for increased benefits, utilities increases and other expense increases.

The maintain budget includes four school system director positions, 41 certified teachers, guidance counselors and media coordinators and over 62 classified positions funded with local money.

Several things could have a future impact on maintaining the budget including the completion of the new FHS and potential construction of a new East Franklin Elementary School. Operational impacts that could affect the proposed budget also include increased staffing needs, higher maintenance cost, increased utilities expenses. Such impacts could increase the school system's reliance on local funding.

The county request to maintain/and include top priorities is \$15,805,721.68.

The top priorities in that scenario are:

- Four instructional coaches to facilitate curriculum, professional development and support for both student and teachers
- 2 full-time art teachers and 2 full-time music teachers, allowing each elementary school to have its own full-time art and music teachers

- Macon Pulse Internships which provide high school students the opportunity to gain real world experience in various fields

- Instructional technology facilitator to support the effective and responsible use of instructional technology, including AI to enhance teaching practices and improved student academic performance

- Funding for school nutrition for Highlands School and Franklin High School who don't qualify for the CEP program

- Exceptional children teacher at FHS

- Mental health profession at Macon Middle School

- Three self-contained exceptional children teachers and four exceptional children personal care assistants.

The budget presentation included capital outlay pending top priorities including the new East Franklin Elementary School, an assessment of the existing school and a feasibility study for a new school. The Highlands School soccer field is an additional pending priority including construction of the athletic field, assessment of the current soccer field and feasibility student for a new soccer field. The final pending priority is the addition of six classrooms to Cartoogechaye Elementary School.

The school board will meet with county commissioners today Thursday, May 21 for a budget workshop in the commissioners' board room at the Macon County Courthouse.

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...VARIANCE continued from page 9

said Paul Wood.

The Phillips contend that they reconstructed the patio and subsequent pavilion to redirect runoff down the mountain which they considered peculiar to their parcel and to protect and improve their property.

However, Zoning Board Chair Margot Teed said all lots in Highlands have to deal with runoff. It has to be characteristic of your lot and no one else's," she said. "The solution can't be to encroach into a setback."

Member Mike King agreed, saying the condition must be peculiar to the property and not common in the neighborhood.

Member Ricky Siegel suggested moving the structure back 10 feet. "You could still have the pavilion, just make it smaller," he said.

Since the variance criteria didn't meet all four of the hardship requirements, the request was denied.

According to Mathis, though there isn't an exact timeline, the pavilion should be removed within the next few weeks.

"The Phillips understand they must remove the pavilion. However, they and their attorneys are working toward getting the person who installed it to take it down," he said. "After talking with them, I have decided to give them some extra time to pursue that, so long as they keep me updated."

...INVESTING
continued from page 6

"No, let's sit down with a notebook and talk it through."

Because at its core, real estate is still a relationship business.

But I'm also beginning to recognize that perhaps the purpose of these tools is not to remove the human side of our work, but to create more space for it.

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The future of real estate, in my opinion, will not belong to the agents who reject technology entirely, nor to those who rely on it blindly. It will belong to the professionals who learn how to use these tools thoughtfully and intentionally — not to replace human connection, but to strengthen it.

• *Lauren Dahl is the General Manager and Broker-in-Charge at Landmark Realty Group where she supports an elite team of brokers in Highlands, Cashiers, Lake Glenville, Sapphire, Toxaway, and beyond. She can be reached at 828-279-4700 or via email at lauren@landmarkerg.com.*

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

How Child Care Became a Business Issue

By Russ Harris
Executive Director
Southwestern Commission Council of Governments



By Russ Harris
Executive Director
Southwestern Commission Council of Governments

When childcare is difficult for parents to find and afford, it stops being just a family issue – it becomes a business issue. A compromised workforce is as real a challenge as anything tied to supply chains or broader economic uncertainty.

Across North Carolina, that challenge is becoming harder to ignore. Since 2019, the state has had approximately 100,000 fewer parents of young children participating in the labor market. Research from the NC Chamber Foundation, NC Child, and the U.S. Chamber Foundation shows that 35 percent of parents who experienced employment disruptions reported leaving the workforce because of childcare challenges.

The economic impact is significant. Childcare disruptions cost North Carolina an estimated \$5.65 billion annually, including \$4.29 billion in lost business activity and \$1.36 billion in lost state revenue.

These impacts are visible here in western North Carolina. At the Child Care Economic Summit in Sylva this spring, ExCEL NC shared data showing that turnover and absenteeism tied to childcare challenges cost our seven-county region – Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, and Swain – more than \$46.5 million each year.

At the same time, the supply of care is shrinking. Since 2020, North Carolina has seen a net loss of nearly 200 licensed childcare programs, with family childcare homes hit hardest. Infant and toddler care remains the most difficult to provide and afford, and early educators continue to leave the field due to low wages and limited benefits.

In rural communities, this is not theoretical. Employers regularly see talented individuals reduce hours, turn down opportunities, or leave the workforce

because they cannot find reliable childcare. When even one provider closes, the impact is immediate – not just for families, but for staffing, services, and the broader local economy.

The encouraging news is that this issue is getting the attention it deserves. Local business leaders are working with employers, providers, and partners to better understand the problem and identify practical solutions. Our legislators from both parties have also been engaged and supportive as these conversations move forward.

There is no single fix, but there is growing agreement around the need for a more stable and sustainable system. Aligning subsidy reimbursements more closely with the true cost of care is one example of an approach that could help stabilize providers and expand access, particularly in rural areas.

North Carolina has a strong track record of working across sectors to address complex challenges. This is one of those moments. When families have access to reliable childcare, businesses have access to a dependable workforce – and that benefits every community in our state.



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• HS SPORTS •

Record-Breaking Finish: Award Winners and State Championship Runs Cap Off Historic Year for Highlands Athletics

Following an unforgettable celebration at the Highlands Rec Park, the full scope of this year's athletic achievements has come into sharp focus. The annual banquets not only recognized team-specific excellence but also shined a massive spotlight on the class of 2026 seniors and a massive group of elite, multi-sport athletes.

Iron Men and Women:

The Mighty Highlanders

A major highlight of the evening was the presentation of the prestigious Mighty Highlander Award, reserved exclusively for student-athletes who demonstrated ultimate dedication by competing in three or more sports during the 2025-2026 school year.

In an incredible testament to the depth and work ethic of Highlands' student body, more than 30 athletes received the honor this year, showcasing the versatile, relentless spirit of the school's athletic program.

2025-2026 Team Athletic Awards

Coaches from every program took the stage to announce their individual team awards, honoring leadership, grit, and statistical excellence. The complete list of high school honorees includes:

Cheer: Highlander Award, Payton Norman;

Girls Basketball: Highlander Award, Charlotte Westendorf; Offensive MVP - Jordyn Borino; Defensive MVP - Hunter Conner;

Girls Soccer: Highlander Award, Leti Campos; Offensive MVP - Jordyn Borino; Defensive MVP - Taylor Hays;

Boys Soccer: Highlander Award, Blaine Dendy; Offensive MVP, Isaiah Vilardo; Defensive MVP, Paolo McRae;

Boys Basketball: Highlander Award, Aiden Jenkins; Rebound Award, Isaiah Vilardo; Highest FT %, Bryan Jarquin;

Track: Highlander Award, Anabelle Hayes and Claire Worley;

Cross Country: Highlander Award, Claire Worley and Francisco Gooch;



Brett Lamb
Highlands School
Athletic Director

Volleyball: Highlander Award, Claire Worley; Defensive MVP, Jordyn Borino; Rookie of the Year, Annabelle Hays.

State Championships: Highlands Shines on the Grandest Stage

While the banquets celebrated the season as a whole, the week concluded with several Highlands athletes testing their elite skills at the state level,

putting an exclamation point on the 25-26 year.

Golf:

Conner Makes Waves in Fayetteville

On the links, Sam Conner capped off a phenomenal season at Fayetteville's Gates Four Country Club. Conner carded an 84 in his grueling second round of the state championship, bringing his two-day total to 167.

With that performance, Conner finished an incredible 6th overall in the 1A state standings. He walks away with the distinct honors of being the lowest Freshman scorer in 1A and the lowest scorer from the entire West region, signaling a dominant future ahead for Highlands golf.

Track:

Hurdlers Sprint into the Top 15

Over at NC A&T University, track standouts Anabelle Hays and Stephen Pierson lined up against the fastest elite runners in North Carolina for the state track championships. Both competing in the grueling 100m hurdles, Hays captured a stellar 9th place finish in the state, while Pierson pushed through to cross the line at 13th overall.

Girls Soccer: Historic Playoff Run Comes to a Close

Meanwhile, the Lady Highlanders soccer team packed their bags for Kernersville to face off against the heavily favored, #2-ranked North Carolina Leadership Academy (NCLA).

NCLA struck first with an early goal, but the Lady Highlanders refused to back down. Showing the grit that defined their

• See HS SPORTS page 19

...HS SPORTS continued from page 18

season, Anabelle Hays broke away from the defense mid-way through the first half, striking a beautiful shot into the back of the net to tie the game at 1-1. NCLA managed to reclaim the lead late in the half, sending Highlands into the locker room down 2-1.

The second half was a fierce, end-to-end battle with both schools generating quality scoring opportunities. Ultimately, NCLA's clinical execution allowed them to capitalize on their chances, pulling away for a 5-1 victory. Despite the loss, the Lady Highlanders made history this month; their first-round post-season victory marked the soccer program's first state playoff win since the 2022-2023 season.

Looking Ahead to Greater Heights
Milestones were met, school re-

ords were shattered, and personal goals were exceeded across every single sports program this year.

From Coach Lamb:

To the Class of 2026 Seniors: Highlands thanks you for your leadership, your sacrifice, and for maintaining the highest standards of excellence both in the classroom and on the field of play. We wish you the absolute best in your next chapters.

To the parents, families, and screaming fans in the stands: thank you for your unmatched support through every victory and heartbreak this year.

The banners are hung, the fields are resting, and Highlands Athletics is already preparing to strive for even greater heights in 2026-2027. Go Highlanders!



Booster Club president Josh Bryson and HS Athletic Director Brett Lamb with the 2026 Fan of the Year Todd Holder.



HS Senior Athletes Class of 2026.



Middle School athletes with coaches and family members.



Summer Screenings

A Prelude to Highlands-Cashiers Film Festival



“Trail Mix” + Meet the Director

June 20th 12pm (The Village Green) +

3pm (Highlands PAC)

This event is FREE! No tickets required. This documentary was the 2025 Audience Choice Award winner. It follows a 2,000-mile journey from Georgia to Maine along the Appalachian Trail.

“The Gardener” + Walk in the Garden

Soireè August 15th 4pm (Highlands PAC)

This feature is about a powerful cosmetics heiress who retreats to a remote mountaintop garden cottage while fighting to protect her family legacy.

Enjoy a Q&A with the director and a visit to the garden featured in the film.



“Never Not Yours” + Meet the Director

August 16th 2pm (Highlands PAC)

This event is FREE! No tickets required. This family dramedy was awarded the 2025 Best Feature. It tells the story of three adult siblings visiting their families remote retired cabin for a weekend visit.



Highlands-Cashiers Film Festival

September 17-20

Scan the QR code above for more details + tickets.

www.HighlandsCashiersFilmFestival.com



Mountain Garden Club Poster Contest Winners

Three Highlands School students won the Mountain Garden Club’s poster contest promoting its annual plant and yard sale which is Sat., May 23 at the town’s ballfield. They were presented framed copies of their posters as well as cash awards. Art Teacher Stephanie Hudson helped her students see the project through. Poster will be placed in local businesses. Winners were 1st place, 4th grader Brantley Monteith; 2nd place, 1st grader Vicka Nadzorau; and 3rd place, kindergartener Jacob Hernandez Roja.



MtnTop Rotary hears from the Land Trust

Stephanie Contreras, Land Stewardship Manager for the Highlands Cashiers Land Trust, has come beautifully full circle — returning to the woods of WNC that shaped her childhood. Raised among the forests and streams and guided by the wisdom of her grandfather, she developed an early reverence for the land that would define her path. Today, she channels that lifelong connection into caring for and protecting the Land Trust’s properties, blending personal history with professional purpose. She is pictured with John Martin.

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



From left: Mark Chmar, Host; Ricky Siegel, Festival Chairman; Steve Ham, past-chair; Josh Bryson, President Highlands Rotary Club.

Engines are readying for the upcoming Highlands Motoring Festival June 11-14

The Rotary Club of Highlands recently enjoyed an informative presentation, hosted by club member Mark Chmar. Highlands Motoring Festival chair and co-chairs Ricky Siegel and Steve Ham updated the club on the upcoming June 11-14 events, beginning with two special "drives" on Thursday, Happy Hour with special TV celebrity guest Wayne Carini, and three Friday drives followed by Main Street Parade of Classic Cars on Friday. The juried Invitational Motoring Festival show "Classics in the Park" begins Saturday 9:30am to 4pm. Sunday's "High Octane" social and car gathering in Kelsey-Hutchinson Park begins at 8:30am to 11am. All donations will benefit Highlands charities: R.E.A.C.H. of Macon Co, the Literacy and Learning Center, and the Community Care Clinic of Highlands-Cashiers.

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SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING



Remembering

Pastor Randy Lucas
Highlands United
Methodist Church

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow between the crosses, row on row,
that mark our place; and in the sky the larks, still bravely sing-
ing, fly scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead, short days ago we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset
glow; loved and were loved, and now we lie in Flanders fields.*

These are the opening lines of Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae's well-known poem, "In Flanders Fields." McCrae served four years on the Western Front in WWI, was a member of the Canadian contingent and died in France on January 28th, 1918. He is responsible for writing one of our most beloved and hauntingly beautiful war-time poems. Written from the vantage point of the Dead, it speaks to the responsibility of those who survive them.

Lieutenant Colonel McCrae had his comrades-in-arms in mind when he wrote of passing the torch. He offered words of encouragement to those who would follow in the faithful fight for freedom. His words served as a reminder to all who would charge into the field of battle, reminding them they were forever joined to those who fought before, and that fighting for justice and freedom were noble causes worth dying for.

Our local American Legion Post 370 will engage in acts of remembrance this Memorial Day weekend and everyone is invited. At 5:30pm Friday, American Flags will be placed on the graves of Highlands' Veterans at Highlands Cemetery, Saturday from 9am - 12noon poppies will be sold at Bryson's Food Store and Founders Park, and Monday a special service of remembrance will be held at the Veterans' Brick Walk located at the Highlands Police Department at 10am.

I can't imagine how soldiers, young and old, might hear Lieutenant Colonel McCrae's words. I only know how I hear them. I hear them as a reminder of the horrible cost of the freedoms I daily enjoy. I hear them as a testimony to the kind of bravery and courage that exemplifies so many young men and women who had to grow up way too fast. I hear them as a reminder of countless grieving families. And I hear his words as powerful reminders to all of us who did not follow the Dead into battle.

This Memorial Day weekend, I'm remembering that the failing hands of Flanders Fields have tossed the torch to us. The good news is that folks like you and me are not called to take the hill or charge the enemy. We really have it quite easy. We're given a simple task that pales in comparison to the sacrifices of those who rest beneath the poppies that grow between the crosses row on row.

And though our task doesn't demand courage or bravery, I can't help but believe it remains important to the Dead who once lived and were loved, felt dawn and saw sunset glow. All we're called to do...is remember!

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

BLUEVALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice. Pastor 706-782-3965

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

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

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

BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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

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

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 Kinar

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

Bistro

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 • fphighlands.org

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

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

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS

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

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

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

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

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road

The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily

sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.

Sunday Worship is at 9a. & 6p. Wednesday Worship is 6p

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376

In-Person and live-streamed Worship Services

909a Bluegrass and 11a Traditional

www.highlandsmethodist.org

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741

Rev. Ken Langsdorf

Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.

Visit our website: Holy Family Lutheran Highlands NC

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Pastor Zane Talley

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

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

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

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

Services: 1st Fri. and 3rd Sat. and Rosh Hashanah & Yom

Kippur.

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church

Sun: 10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church. 4224 Big Ridge

(4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

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

Sat. 4pm May 23-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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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 May 14. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Accidents

May 14

• Vehicle 1 was stopped at stop sign on Little Bear Pen Road, waiting to make a left turn onto US-64. Vehicle-2 was traveling North on US-64. Vehicle 1 proceeded to make a left turn and traveled into the path of Vehicle 2; resulting in a collision. Both vehicles were moved from roadway prior to law enforcement arrival.

• Vehicle 1 was traveling east on SR 1603 (Horse Cove Road) when it drove off roadway to the right and hit rock embankment and stopped in the roadway.

During the week the officers issued four Citations and 18 Warning Tickets

May 12

• At 10:15 a.m., officers responded to a call of road rage on NC 106 (Dillard Road) where a driver was reported to be driving erratically and aggressively.

• At 1 p.m., officers received a report of littering on Hickory Hill Road where someone disposed of a TV on a vacant lot without the permission of the owner.

May 14

• At 11:40 a.m., Holly R. Harris, 50, from Mt. Pleasant, SC, was arrested for Driving under the influence. She was issued a \$1,500 unsecured bond. Her vehicle was impounded. Her trial date is June 10.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from May 12.

May 12

• At 6:56 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a

location on N. 4th Street.

May 14

• At 7:23 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Falls Village Court.

• At 9:43 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Morewood Road.

May 15

• At 12:14 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

• At 12:25 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Spruce lane

• At 3:29 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Crescent Trail, but it was cancelled en route.

• At 7:01 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Goldmine Road.

• At 9:49 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Old Orchard Road.

May 16

• At 1:10 p.m., the dept. responded to a vehicle fire on W. Spring Street.

• At 2:28 p.m., the dept. responded to a miscellaneous fire on Crisp Road.

• At 9:43 p.m., the dept. responded to a miscellaneous fire on US 64 west (Franklin Road)

May 17

• At 6:06 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Maple Way

• At 8:18 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Fallen Leaf Trail.


• At 7:38 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on N. Cobb Road.

May 18

• At 11:46 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on skyline Lodge Road.

• At 1:39 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cullasaja FD.

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FOR SALE

1 BEDROOM AND 1 BATH PARK MODEL with attached sunroom in the High Cotton Community at Buckcreek Rd and Shortoff Rd in Highlands. \$199,000. If interested, email blueridge143@yahoo.com for more information. (st. 5/21).

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SESSION 2: 7/27-7/30

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NEED FURNITURE MOVED OR ANYTHING HAULED AWAY? Call or text James of Going Gone at 828-421-2655. (7/30)

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Highlands FREE Sports Physicals

FREE OF CHARGE!

WHEN:
Tuesday, May 19th
Time: 3:15pm

WHERE:
Highlands School New Gym
545 Pierson Dr.
Highlands, NC 28741

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

- All rising 6th-12th grade students that will participate in NCHSAA sanctioned sports, must undergo a state-mandated sports physical prior to trying out for any sport.
- Parents/Guardians should plan to attend the sports physical, in order to answer questions, the medical team may have during the exam.

REQUIRED FORMS:
Forms can be picked up in the Highlands School Main Office. The History pages of the physical must be signed by a parent or guardian to receive the FREE Physical.

Link to English Form:
https://www.nchsaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2023-2027_PPE-English.pdf

Link to Spanish Form:
https://www.nchsaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2023-2027_PPE-Spanish.pdf

Questions?
Please contact your Mission Sports Medicine Athletic Trainer Michael Hodges MA,ed, LAT, ATC
Michael.Hodges@HCAHealthcare.com

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

NOTE:

• Highlands Pharmacy is closed on Saturdays until May. Hours are Mon.-Fri. 9a to 5:30p.

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

MOUNTAIN FINDINGS

• **Spring Hours:** Friday & Saturdays. Open: 10 am - 1 pm. May 15-16; Thurs., Fri, Sat.: May 21-23, May 28-30. 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 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

Sundays thru Labor Day

• At the Church in the Wildwood, traditional Hymn-Sing 7-8 p.m. Non-denominational. All are welcome. 10 minutes from downtown Highlands in Horse Cove. A family-friendly summer tradition for more than 30 years. Call or text 919-523-7067 for directions or questions.

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.

• 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

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 budandlynn@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.

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.

• 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.

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

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 nc-post370@gmail.com or just join us at 9am.

Through July 25

• At The Bascom, "Connecting to Place: Blue Ridge Craft Trails Invitational 2026" in the Thompson Gallery. Curated by M. Anna Fariello, a former Smithsonian Renwick Fellow and Fulbright Scholar, the exhibition brings together 20 craft artists from communities across WNC, including Franklin, Waynesville, Dillsboro, Bryson City, Cullowhee, Canton, Cherokee, Maggie Valley, and Brasstown. It's presented in partnership with the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area, which operates the Blue Ridge Craft Trails program. Admission is free.

Fri., May 22

• At Rejuvenate Medical Spa, Obagi Day 10a to 4p. Free skin and scalp analysis, 20% off all products. On-site permanent make-up artist and permanent jewelry technician.

• At Hudson Library, Community Coffee with Mayor Pat Taylor at 11a in the Meeting Room Subject: "Highlights for the Proposed Town Budget."

• American Legion post 370 members will be placing American flags on the graves of all veterans in the Highlands Memorial Park Cemetery. Meet at the cemetery flag pole a 5:30 p.m. Community members are encouraged to assist in flag placement. We are getting older and need the help!

• Friday Night Live in Town Square from 6-8:30p, Silly Ridge.

Sat., May 23

• It's Poppy Day! American Legion Post 370 veterans will be manning Poppy Day saites from 10a to 2p. Places are Bryson's Food Store and the Highlands Farmers Market. The red poppy has been symbol of remembrance since World War I. Please stop by and get a Poppy as a silent thanks to our fallen soldiers.

• Highlands Historical Society Season Opening Celebration on Saturday from 11 a.m. to p.m. at the Historical Village in Highlands. Music, free food and a dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence to celebrate the United States Semi-quintennial, and the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

• Saturday on Pine at KH Founders Park 6-8:30p, The Parks Brothers.

• Headwaters Bird Alliance outing at Tessentee Bottomland Preserve with Melanie and Keith Vickers, Otto, NC. To reserve a spot, please email hello@headwatersbirdalliance.org

Sun., May 23

• At the Church in the Wildwood, traditional hymn-sing opening night. All are welcome, especially children, just 10 minutes from downtown Highlands in Horse Cove. A summer tradition through Labor Day. Ques-

tions, call 919-523-7067.

Mon. May 24

• American Legion Post 370 will conduct a short Memorial Day ceremony at 10a at Highlands Veterans Plaza in the Highlands Police Dept. parking lot. Come honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice and view the Honor Walk with more than 400 engraved bricks honoring veterans. New bricks will be dedicated during the event.

Thurs., May 28

• At Highlands Mercantile, Obagi Day 10a to 3p.

Fri., May 29

• Friday Night Live in Town Square from 6-8:30p, Andrew Wakefield & Friends.

Sat., May 30

• Saturday on Pine at KH Founders Park 6-8:30p, Snap.

• Highlands School graduation, 10 am in new gym.

• At PAC, The Texas Tenors, 7:30 pm. boxoffice@highlandsp Performingarts.com. 828-526-9047

• At The Bascom, From Tuber to Trophy: A Dahlia Growers' Talk, 11 am - 12 pm, Free.

June 1-5

• Vacation Bible School "Camp Yahweh" at Community Bible Church. Rising Kindergarten through rising 6th graders. Register at cbchighlands.com.

June 6

• Pop-Up Pipers

Thurs.-Sat., June 11-13

• Highlands Motoring festival.

Sat., June 20

• Highlands-Cashiers Film Festival Summer Screening. Trail Mix, noon at the Village Green in Cashiers and at 3p at PAC in Highlands. FREE. It follows a 2,000 mile journey from Georgia to Maine along the Appalachian Trail.

Sat & Sun, June 27-28

• Mountaintop Rotary Club's Art and Craft show in KH-Founders Park.

July 11

• Pop Up Pipers.

July 14

• Chef Dinners at OEI's The Farm. Annual Champagne Dinner featuring Pol Roger. Tickets start at \$234. Includes dinner drinks, shuttle and gratuity. Book online.

Fri., July 17

• At PAC, Three American Troubadours at 7:30 pm. boxoffice@highlandsp Performingarts.com. 828-526-9047.

Aug 1

• Pop Up Pipers

Sat., Aug. 15

• Highlands-Cashiers Film Festival Summer Screening. The Gardner + Walk in the Garden Soiree. Screening at PAC. A powerful cosmetics heiress retreats to a remote mountaintop garden cottage while fighting to protect her family legacy.

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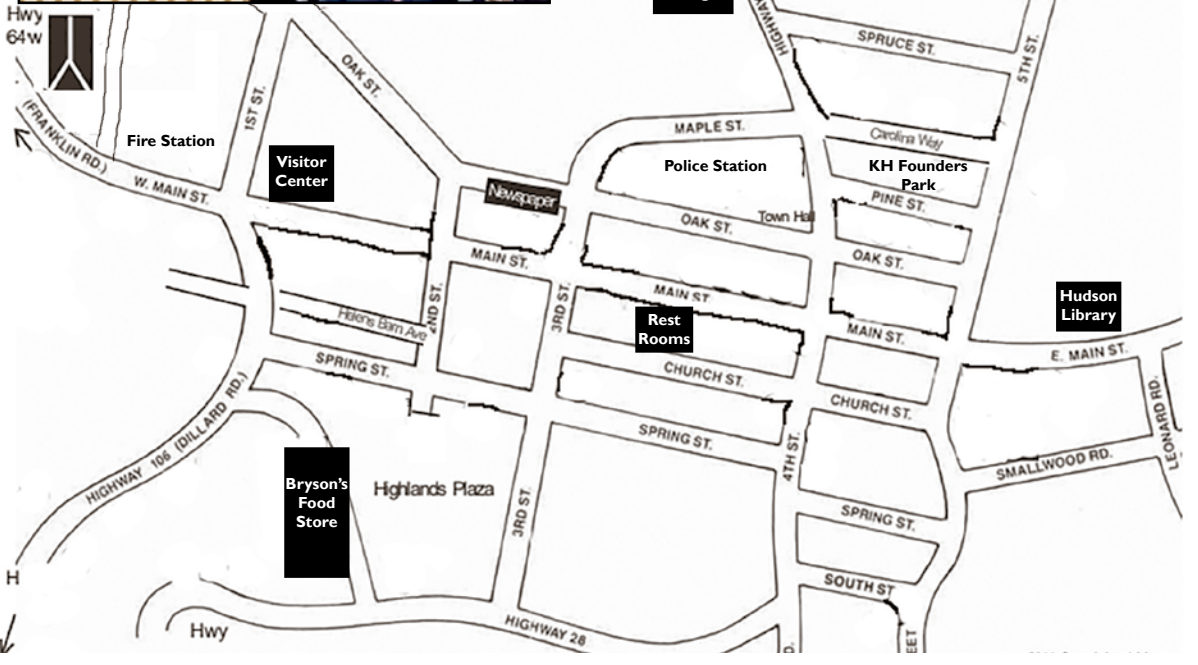
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