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7 years after Mission deal, HCA disputes state's authority to enforce agreement

Highlands' Mayor Pat Taylor weighs in

By Ted Clifford
Asheville Watchdog

In 2018, the North Carolina Attorney General's Office waded into the contentious sale of the nonprofit Mission Hospital to healthcare giant HCA. The office had concerns about the sale.

• See HCA page 2

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Mountain Findings volunteers enjoyed a "curated" afternoon touring Satolah Creek Farm's placement of treasures.

Treasured finds get new life at Satolah Creek Farm

By John Warner

Just south of the North Carolina and Georgia state lines on Highway 28 lies Satolah Creek Farm, a rustic country destination venue renowned for its scenic beauty and charming guest accommodations.

Recently, the farm's owner and operator, Pippa Seichrist, opened her doors to a special group of guests: the volunteers of Mountain Findings. The exclusive tour offered volunteers

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Reducing drug harm in NC mountain counties

By Walker Livingston
Carolina Public Press

In strip malls across rural parts of Western North Carolina, a grassroots harm reduction movement has taken root. In counties from Madison to Macon, volunteers deliver safe supplies to people using drugs, they test substances without judgment and provide things like clothes and food, too.

They are saving lives without stigma, advocates say.

Communities in rural parts of the region have long struggled with methamphetamine usage, while narratives of opioid abuse have swept the whole Appalachian region.

But many individuals who

• See DRUG page 17

NC deputy loses job, faces SBI probe over alleged Flock misuse

By Walker Livingston
Carolina Public Press

A sheriff's deputy in Macon County has been fired for misuse of Flock Safety equipment, months after county canceled contract with the automated license plate reader company the Sheriff's Office recently announced.

This firing is not the first of its kind in North Carolina, and comes after backlash has grown widespread against the technology. Macon County, in the state's southwestern corner, had previously ended its Sheriff's Office contract with Flock, despite Sheriff Brent Holbrooks' insistence that it was a crucial tool.

Holbrooks wrote in an Oct. 20 press release posted to Facebook that his office received an alert on Oct. 16 from a "credible

• See MISUSE page 11



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• The Plateau's Position •

• Mayor on Duty •

It's time to get to work



Highlands Mayor Patrick Taylor

Well, as of November 3rd all the campaigning hype and hoopla is over. Now is the time the new government configurations begin planning for the coming year and beyond. Let me reflect on what I would like to see happen after newly elected officials are sworn in at the beginning of the year.

First, on the federal level, we will have a new congressperson for the 11th district, Jamie Ager.

My goal is to approach his office about getting federal funding for the skybridge and parking lot project at Dry Falls. Those warning signs of congestion just do not solve the problem.

My first step for me will be to contact the US Forest Service about current cost estimates for the Sky Bridge project. I will urge the congressperson to advocate for funding the project, and for the state to partner with the feds on making this critical project a reality.

At the state level, the election created a real shift in power, with Democrats taking control of the state House of Representatives and possibly splitting the state Senate evenly. Republicans will no longer have supermajorities in both houses to overrule Governor Stein's vetoes. Some may say we are facing a divided government scenario. But I see this new alignment as an opportunity for state elected officials to work together to solve critical issues.

The top issue will be to pass a biennium state budget promptly, say by July 1st. Ok, give them until August 1st. The last biennium budget process began in 2024, with conflicts and fighting starting almost immediately between the Republican supermajorities in both houses. A state budget was finally passed in the spring of this year, 2026. The schools and many state agencies remained in financial limbo for almost 2 years. We can do better than that. Let us hope both parties can negotiate a state budget in the coming months.

I hope the new state budget will fully fund education and Medicaid. Medicaid shortfalls will put stress on our rural hospitals, which are already struggling to keep their doors open.

Also, I would like to see legislation that gives the state attorney general more authority in approving major healthcare and hospital mergers. The then-Attorney General, Josh Stein, requested such legislation after he approved the Mission Healthcare system by HCA.

In a recent court action, HCA challenged Stein's authority to impose conditions on his approval of the acquisition, such as requiring outlying hospitals like our own to remain open for at least 10 years.

I would also like to see the certificate of need provision eliminated in state statutes, or at least changed, so more competi-

• See MAYOR page 16

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...HCA continued from page 1

Eager to get the deal done, HCA made concessions.

In the deal, the Nashville-based company agreed to keep rural satellite hospitals open for 10 years, not just five; across the system services and facilities would be maintained.

Under the conditions of the 2018 sale of Mission Healthcare, it was agreed to keep outlying hospitals open for at least 10 years instead of the first proposed five years," said Highlands Mayor Pat Taylor who kept tabs on the process from day one. "The residents of Cashiers and Highlands have been very pleased with the operation of our hospital these past seven years."

HCA also agreed to the appointment of an independent monitor to make sure that they were following the agreement – and the agreement empowered the attorney general to sue them if they weren't.

In December 2023, the attorney general's office did just that. Brought by then Attorney General Josh Stein, now governor, and continued under Attorney General Jeff Jackson, it accuses HCA and Mission Hospital of violating the asset purchase agreement by effectively discontinuing emergency and oncology services at the hospital in 2023.

"The 2018 agreement also required that basic services would not be reduced or eliminated," said Taylor, "but, as a matter of record services at the Highlands Cashiers Hospital have been expanded, not reduced.

However, now, three years into the lawsuit, HCA is claiming that the office does not have the constitutional authority to sue them for violating what they describe as a contractual dispute.

"Neither the North Carolina Constitution nor any statute authorizes [the attorney general] to sue a private buyer on behalf of a private seller," attorneys for HCA argued in a motion to dismiss filed October 15.

Taylor said he is concerned about

• See HCA page 11

• Weather •

Thu, 12-Nov	Fri, 13-Nov	Sat, 14-Nov	Sun, 15-Nov
50°F / 32°F	39°F / 30°F	41°F / 25°F	45°F / 25°F
Cooler with showers around	Colder with a few showers	Mostly sunny and cold	Mostly sunny and chilly
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•HC Hospital News•

Giving thanks this November for our team, our community, and you

November invites us to slow down and reflect on the many blessings in our lives. As Thanksgiving approaches, I find myself especially grateful for the people we love, the comforts we sometimes take for granted, and the simple moments that mean so much. Whether that is time with family, an upcoming visit with friends, or the laughter of children and grandchildren.

At Highlands-Cashiers Hospital (HCH) and Eckerd Living Center (ELC), I have much to be thankful for. First and foremost are our talented, compassionate team members, whose dedication to our patients and residents is evident every day. They work hard to provide excellent care grounded in kindness, respect, and a genuine concern for others.

I am especially grateful for our clinical teams: physicians, surgeons, nurses, patient care technicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, rehabilitation therapists, imaging technologists, pharmacists, laboratory professionals, and the many specialists who support them. Our Eckerd Living Center caregivers and activities team also enrich residents' lives through attentive care, meaningful engagement, and moments of connection. From our Emergency Department to our clinics and throughout HCH and ELC, these colleagues put patients and residents first, often during some of life's most difficult moments.



Tom Neal CEO, CNO
Highlands-Cashiers Hospital

Every day at HCH and ELC, I see the difference our team members make — not only for patients and residents, but also for one another. It is a powerful reminder of what compassionate care looks like in practice. We are especially grateful to the families of our colleagues, who share in this commitment through their own sacrifices. They understand the missed dinners, long shifts, weekends, and holidays that come with caring for others. Their patience, encouragement, and support help make our work possible.

Just as important are the people whose work often happens behind the scenes. Our environmental services, food services, facilities maintenance, biomedical equipment, IT specialists, registration, and administrative teams help keep our hospital and living center safe, welcoming, and running smoothly. From maintaining essential medical equipment to supporting registration, billing, and technology, these contributions make a difference every day.

We are also thankful for the thoughtful guidance of our Board of Trustees and for our dedicated volunteers, whose warmth and generosity make a meaningful difference throughout the year. Whether visiting with patients and residents, offering companionship, or participating in community events, our volunteers share their time and kindness in ways that strengthen our connections across the Plateau.

Our work is guided by HCA Healthcare's mission: "Above all else, we are committed to the care and improvement of human life." We are grateful as well for HCA Healthcare's continued investment in our hospital. These capital improvements help us respond to the evolving healthcare needs of our community. HCA Healthcare has recently committed an additional $900,000 for improvements and equipment that include new beds, surgical equipment, and vehicles and equipment that support our facilities and grounds. Among the practical but important additions are equipment to help keep our parking areas accessible during winter weather and a much-needed transport van for ELC residents. Not every investment is highly visible, but each can make a real difference in the care and experience we provide.

My gratitude extends beyond our walls to the community partners who support our work, including law enforcement, local government, our health department, and emergency medical services. Their collaboration helps us better serve the people of the Plateau.

Most of all, I want to thank the patients, residents, and families who place their trust in us. We never take for granted that you have choices about where to receive care. We remain committed to providing high-quality healthcare close to home. Here, the people we care for are also our neighbors, friends, and family members. That connection is what makes a community hospital special, and it is why trust, respect, and personal relationships matter so much.

We are fortunate to call the Plateau home. This Thanksgiving, I give thanks for every HCH and ELC team member, volunteer, partner, patient, resident, and supporter who helps make our community so special. From all of us at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital and Eckerd Living Center, I wish you and your loved ones a warm and memorable Thanksgiving.

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The results are in.

I didn't win but I'm still grateful.
Thank you to every person who voted, volunteered, donated, knocked on doors, made phone calls, put up a yard sign, or simply listened. It was a privilege to represent you.
Congratulations to those who won. I wish them success in serving all of us. I believe our common bonds are stronger than our differences. Let us all continue to work on making our Macon County community a welcoming presence and a great place to live.



Thank you!

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What is the perfect home?



Pat Allen, BIC
Pat Allen Realty Group
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That's a question I've thought about many times over the years in real estate. And if I've learned anything, it's that the answer is different for just about everybody.

For some people, the perfect home is a beautiful house with a grand entrance, a gourmet kitchen, spacious bedrooms, and a backyard that looks like something out of a magazine. For others, it's a small cottage with a front porch, a comfortable chair, and just enough room for the people they love.

And you know what? Both can be perfect.

When buyers begin looking for a home, they usually have a list. They know how many bedrooms they want, how many bathrooms they need, and whether they prefer an open floor plan or something more traditional. Some want a big yard, while others don't want to spend another Saturday afternoon pushing a lawn mower.

But I've noticed something interesting about those lists. Sometimes the house that checks every box isn't the house that captures their heart.

And sometimes, the house they fall in love with is the one they almost didn't go see.

That's because buying a home isn't just about numbers, measurements, and features. It's about a feeling.

It's walking through the front door and imagining Christmas morning in the living room. It's picturing grandchildren gathered around the kitchen table. It's seeing yourself drinking coffee or sipping wine on the porch or enjoying a quiet evening with someone you love.

It's that wonderful feeling of thinking, "I could be happy here."

Of course, our idea of the perfect home changes as life changes. As in aging (no one loves) but there is no rewind button in life.

The house that was perfect when we were raising children may not be quite so perfect once those children are grown. That big backyard where the kids once played ball can eventually become a lot of grass to cut. The upstairs bedrooms that were once filled with laughter may sit empty, and suddenly a smaller home with fewer stairs starts looking pretty appealing. I'm certainly an example!

And that's OK.

Sometimes we hold on to a house because of the memories we've made there. We remember birthdays, holidays, family dinners, and all those ordinary days that turned out to be extraordinary. Leaving a home like that can be emotional, even when we know it's time for a change.

But here's something I believe: The memories don't stay behind when we move. We take them with us.

As we approach Thanksgiving, I've been thinking about how fortunate we are to have a place to call home. It may not have the latest appliances, the fanciest countertops, or the most impressive landscaping. There may be a few things we'd like to change, repair, or update.

But perhaps perfection has very little to do with any of those things.

Maybe the perfect home is simply one where we feel safe, comfortable, and welcome. A place where laughter is shared, memories are made, and we can close the door at the end of a long day and feel grateful to be there.

Real estate is often described as the business of buying and selling houses. But to me, it's always been about much more than that. It's about helping people find the right place for the next chapter of their lives.

And the perfect home for that next chapter may look nothing like the one they imagined.

So, what is the perfect home?

I don't believe it's the biggest house on the street, the one with the highest price tag, or even the one with every feature on our wish list.

The perfect home is the one that fits

• See INVESTING page 8

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Saturday, December 5
10am
Main Street

Santa in the Park

December 5, 12 & 19
11am-3pm
Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park

All events, other than Ice Skating, are organized and hosted by the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC.

...SATOLAH continued from page 1

a firsthand look at how Seichrist over the last few years, has seamlessly woven treasures purchased from the Highlands-based nonprofit into the interior design of her property's guest houses, which regularly host wedding parties and corporate events.

For the volunteers who dedicate their time to sorting, pricing, and selling the donated merchandise, the visit to the farm offered an opportunity to see how creative patrons give their inventory a renewed lease on life, elevating second-hand finds into curated, intentionally styled decor.

During the walkthrough, Seichrist expressed her appreciation for the local nonprofit, noting that the store offers an inventory of items possessing a distinct connection to people and places — a quality missing from retail big-box stores.

"You can find so many cool things there that you just don't get at retail stores," Seichrist said, adding that knowing the purchases directly support vital community causes makes shopping there even more meaningful.

Another unique culture surrounding shopping at the store is the distinct camaraderie shared among those who line up before the doors open each week. It is an experience where 50, 100, or more people gather with shared excitement, building a tight-knit community of repeat shoppers while welcoming first-time visitors into the fold.

The afternoon concluded as the Mountain Findings volunteers strolled through the various guest properties, playfully guessing which unique pieces of furniture and decor had traveled from their shelves to find a permanent home at Satolah Creek Farm.

Mountain Findings is a nonprofit organization with a mission to empower area nonprofits through community grants as well as offering scholarships to students upon graduation.

Donations of gently used home furnishings, housewares, art, rugs, lighting, and general home decor and linens are accepted by dropping them off anytime at 452 Spruce St., Highlands, N.C. Donors can also call 828-526-9929 or email MountainFindings1@gmail.com to arrange a pickup of items or an entire house pickup.

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...INVESTING continued from page 6

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And to the Veterans out there, your special day may have been yesterday but good people never forget good people and your service to our country! Thank you beyond words!

• *Pat Allen is owner and Broker-in-Charge of Pat Allen Realty Group, a boutique and privately owned firm with 22 years' experience as an award-winning and top producer on the plateau. She and her daughter, Julie Osborn, remain in the top 1.5% of all agents and teams nationwide. She may be reached at pat@patallenrealtygroup.com or 828-200-9179. Office is located at 295 Dillard Road. To learn more about her interests visit patallenrealtygroup.com*



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...HCA continued from page 2

HCA's position that those original conditions that were agreed to by the attorney general and HCA attorneys are now viewed by their leadership as not legally enforceable.

The motion comes after a judge's order in July handed key wins to the attorney general's office and cleared the way for trial. It was filed the same day as two other motions from HCA. These were a motion to split the trial in two and a motion to reconsider a previous ruling on a key phrase in the asset purchase agreement.

"'Grasping at straws,' comes to mind," said State Senator Julie Mayfield, an attorney and founder of Reclaim Healthcare WNC. "They didn't win on the summary judgment, so they're trying any argument that they can to try to get out from under potential liability."

Mission Hospital and HCA did not respond to the Asheville Watchdog's request for comment.

While lawyers for HCA acknowledge in their motion that the contract gave the attorney general the right to sue, they are seeking to challenge the lawsuit on a more fundamental level.

"Contractual right cannot serve as a substitute for the official authority the attorney general needs to bring this suit," lawyers for HCA and Mission wrote. The motion asks Judge Mark Davis, who recently inherited the case on the retirement of Judge Julianna Earp, to dismiss the case for lack of jurisdiction on the attorney general's part.

The attorney general's office also did not respond to a request for comment

The motions were filed by law firms Latham & Watkins, Kirton McConkie, and Asheville-based law firm Roberts & Stevens, which represents Mission.

"You don't get to sign something and respect that agreement for seven years, and then suddenly show up and say, 'Hey, you don't have any authority to do this,'" Mayfield said.

What did HCA agree to?

While the deal that emerged from the sale of Mission Hospital to Nashville-based HCA Healthcare has often been criticized as too soft, Mark Hall, a professor of law at Wake Forest who authored an article on the sale, found that the attorney general imposed unusually strong restrictions.

The North Carolina attorney general has the power to review the sale of nonprofit hospitals. However, the scope is normally limited to ensuring that the assets of the sale are being appropriately transferred into a new nonprofit. In this case, that was the future Dogwood Health Trust.

But during negotiations for the sale of Mission, the attorney general's office became concerned, according to internal documents. The office "determined that [Mission's] board appeared to be overly influenced by the views of the hospital's CEO [Ronald Paulus]," Hall wrote.

Paulus and the hospital's chief consultant on the sale also had "potentially serious conflicts of interest (in the form of prior or anticipated business dealings with HCA) that had not been adequately disclosed to the board," Hall wrote in his report, "Lessons Learned from HCA's Purchase of Mission Hospital in Asheville, North Carolina."

This prompted the attorney general to take what Hall described as "fairly aggressive action." After more rounds of negotiations, HCA and Mission agreed to keep services and hospitals open for 10 years and to allow an independent monitor to ensure they kept their commitments.

To enforce these provisions, the final draft of the asset purchase agreement gave the attorney general the right to sue to enforce the agreement on Dogwood's behalf. This right has not been in dispute up until now.

The purchase agreement allowed the attorney general's office to be a "third party beneficiary" to aspects of the deal. Typically, a third party beneficiary does not sign a contract, but they are allowed to enforce it.

The conditions of the deal "equal or exceed the strongest examples that can be found from other such transactions," Hall wrote.

Until this filing, the Watchdog has been unable to find any public statements from HCA or Mission that they believed the attorney general did not have the right to bring a lawsuit. At a public forum earlier this year, representatives of the independent monitor told community members that Dogwood and the attorney general's office were responsible for enforcing the purchase agreement.

Representatives of Mission who were present did not object.

"Even in the public sphere I've never heard of anyone even hint at the idea that the attorney general was acting improperly with this lawsuit," said Aaron Sarver, a spokesperson for Reclaim Healthcare.

Other motions seek new showdown over key phrase

The motion to dismiss was accompanied by motions to bifurcate the trial as well as a motion to reconsider Earp's decision on summary judgment.

Both motions concern a key requirement of the asset purchase agreement: that HCA "shall not discontinue the provision" of certain services.

In their motion to reconsider, lawyers for HCA asked the court to withdraw Judge Earp's summary judgement that that "provision" required Mission Hospital to "to take all steps necessary to actually provide the services" in the purchase agreement.

"This… ruling is not a matter of simple semantics — if "provision" means what Judge Earp said it means, it will substantially and materially impact the day-to-day operation of Mission Hospital," HCA's attorney wrote.

The motion to reconsider is closely linked to the motion to bifurcate the trial. In seeking to split the case into two trials, attorneys for HCA argued that the first phase of the trial should be to determine the meaning of the phrase "shall not discontinue the provision." The second phase should be to determine whether the company breached that provision.

Doing so would "achieve efficiency and avoid hearing weeks of evidence that ultimately may prove to be irrelevant," HCA's attorneys argue.

Taylor said in recent months community healthcare advocates have had constructive meetings with HCA leadership in addressing operational concerns at Mission Asheville, the Level 1 Trauma Center for WNC.

"I hope this new legal position that HCA is embracing will not hinder future advancements in care at Mission Hospital in Asheville, and all the other outlying facilities," he said.

• Asheville Watchdog is a nonprofit news team producing stories that matter to Asheville and Buncombe County. Ted Clifford is The Watchdog's investigative reporter focusing on healthcare. He can be reached at tclifford@avlwatchdog.org. The Watchdog's local reporting is made possible by donations from the community. To show your support for this vital public service go to avlwatchdog.org/support-our-publication/.

...MISUSE continued from page 1

outside agency" that one of his deputies was abusing the software. The sheriff placed the deputy on administrative leave, and conducted an internal affairs investigation, the post said.

"After the conclusion of the internal affairs investigation, Sheriff Holbrooks determined that the appropriate course of action was termination of the employee," the post said.

Chief Deputy Dereck Jones told the Smoky Mountain News that the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation is now investigating the deputy, Jonathan Bean. Bean, who had been with the Sheriff's Office since 2016, declined a Carolina Public Press request to comment.

This news comes three months after Macon County commissioners unanimously voted to end the county's contract with the technology company on July 16.

As of March, Macon County had 12 Flock cameras operated by the Sheriff's Office. Four more were oper-

• See MISUSE page 13

• Dining •

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• HS Athletics Recap •

Varsity Boys Soccer season ends in heartbreak; Middle School Basketball opens campaign



Brett Lamb
HS Athletic Director

In a thrilling postseason showdown, the Highlands High School varsity boys soccer team saw their exceptional season come to an agonizing end, falling to rival Blue Ridge in a penalty kick shootout after a grueling third-round playoff battle.

Blue Ridge struck first, taking an early 1-0 lead before Highlands' Michael Munoz answered back to tie the match at 1-1. Blue Ridge reclaimed the momentum late in the first half, striking just before the whistle to carry a 2-1 advantage into halftime.

Early in the second half, Blue Ridge extended their lead to 3-1 after converting a penalty kick, placing the Highlanders in a steep deficit. Showing incredible resilience and grit, Highlands launched a ferocious comeback. Munoz found the net once again to narrow the gap, and a subsequent own goal forced by Highlands pressure pulled the match even at 3-3.

The momentum fully shifted when Rowen Carnes buried a clutch goal to give the Highlanders a 4-3 lead. However, Blue Ridge managed to answer late in regulation, forcing the game into extra time tied at 4-4.

Through two 10-minute overtime periods and two additional five-minute golden-goal periods, neither side could break through as both defenses held firm. Forced into a dramatic penalty kick shootout to determine who advanced to the fourth round, Blue Ridge ultimately edged out Highlands 3-2 on PKs.

Despite the heartbreaking end, Highlands wrapped up a stellar campaign with a 15-3-3 overall record, a second-place finish in the conference, and a deep run into the third round of the state playoffs.

Middle School Basketball Opens Season Against Towns County

On the hardwood, the Highlands Middle School basketball teams officially kicked off their season with a home doubleheader against conference foe Towns County.

In the girls' matchup, the Lady Indians applied a relentless man-to-man press early on, making it difficult for the Lady Highlanders to execute their offensive sets. Towns County ultimately pulled away for a 44-8 victory. Akira Nolan, Valerie Olvera, Riley Brooks, and Riley Bryson provided the scoring for Highlands, each contributing two points.

The middle school boys' game proved to be a tight battle early, with Towns County holding a 24-16 edge at the end of a competitive first half. In the second half, Towns County's hot shooting and aggressive defensive pressure proved to be the difference, pulling away to secure a 35-22 win over the Highlanders. David Rogers led Highlands with 9 points, while Porter Bowers and Krimson Rathbone added 4 points each.

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 14

Waiting is not easy, but waiting with trust in God can also provide space, rest. Maybe we can look at waiting like sabbath. A time to pray and to take note of what God is doing. We can trust in what God has in store, and we can trust that God might be having us wait to build up our faith.

Waiting is not easy. But we trust in a God who waits with us. We trust in a God whose divine will is love. And whose timing is never wrong. We trust in a God whose surprises for our lives will amaze us. And are always worth the wait.

...MISUSE continued from page 11

ated by the school system. Combined, they picked up 4.6 million license plates.

Many counties across North Carolina have decided to end their contracts with Flock Safety, which manufactures ALPRs, or automated license plate readers. Flock cameras take images of license plates at a singular point in time and enter them into a database where artificial intelligence catalogs vehicle characteristics, like a vehicle's make, model and color.

Flock is not the only company that manufactures ALPRs — other ALPRs across the country come from vendors such as Axon and Motorola. But Flock maintains a network of data on every car it has detected, which allows law enforcement agencies across the country to search for a specific vehicle's location history across the more than 120,000 Flock cameras in the country.

During the July meeting, Sheriff Holbrooks fielded questions from county commissioners about the technology, which he said was necessary when it comes to investigating major crimes.

"Capturing license plate information in public places does not constitute a Fourth Amendment violation," Holbrooks said, referring to assertions that such data capture infringes on individuals' rights to avoid unreasonable search.

After that decision by the commissioners, Flock cameras in the county were covered up and later removed by representatives from the Atlanta-based tech company, Commissioner Barry Breeden told Carolina Public Press last week.

Though the county no longer owns or operates Flock cameras, some counties in North Carolina, like Mecklenburg, still have memorandums with the company that allow them to access the Flock systems of other state and local law enforcement agencies.

The Macon County Sheriff's Office has not responded to requests for comment from Carolina Public Press. They have also not yet provided the Flock audit logs, for which CPP submitted a public records request on Oct. 22.

Establishing Flock guardrails

ALPRs are drawing a lot of concerns for law enforcement across North Carolina. The SBI issued a best practices document for law enforcement on Sept. 22, in partnership with the NC Sheriff's Association, NC Association of Chiefs of Police and the NC Police Executives Association. These guidelines are not law per se, but a suggestion for law enforcement agencies. Some of the practices include establishing a clear policy for use of ALPR technology — like prohibited uses and delineating probable cause from a simple license plate "hit."

Another guideline was that agencies should set data retention standards for how long they will retain license plate data. Flock announced on Aug. 13 that its cameras will now only store information for seven days, unless the data is related to a criminal investigation. This does not pertain to how long agencies can store data.

When sheriffs contact the NC Sheriffs Association about Flock, said Lauren Earnhardt, the organization's executive vice president, she shares the best practices document with them. She also told CPP that she can connect them with other departments that use the same ALPR software. Flock is just one company that operates this kind of technology.

These guidelines are not law, but North Carolina has general statutes on the use of ALPR technology that were recently updated in the passage of this year's budget. Plate data is confidential and not considered a public record under the statute.

Flock launched an Audit Assistance Tool nationally in April, as a voluntary resource for law enforcement agencies that watches how officers use the system. According to Flock, it does not use machine learning or artificial intelligence to function. The company has mandated that all participating agencies enable the tool by the end of this year.

More trouble in Macon

While not directly related, the situation involving Flock is not the only difficulty facing the Macon County Sheriff's Office in recent days. Three days after the Sheriff's Office announced Bean's firing, a detective in the office was fired because of "charges brought from an outside agency," according to another Facebook press release.

David Blanton, a corporal with the Macon Sheriff's Office, was arrested and charged with domestic violence and dating violence, harassment and telephone harassment by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian Police Department.

Holbrooks was alerted to the charges on Oct. 22 and fired Blanton the following day, according to the Oct. 23 announcement.

Rotary

Club of Highlands
Chartered 1945

Rotary Club Report from Josh Bryson, President, Rotary Club of Highlands



As President of the Rotary Club of Highlands, I am proud of the positive impact our club makes in the community every day. hrough dedicated service projects and partnerships, we support our neighbors and create a lasting impact in the Highlands area.

In service,
Josh
JOSH BRYSON, PRESIDENT

The Rotary Club of Highlands is pleased to recognize and introduce the Students of the Month of October from the Highlands School.

Elementary School: Jamie Watkins

Middle School: David Rogers

High School: Francisco Gooch

Congratulations to the Students of the Month for October 2026 and their families!



We would like to join Club members Stephen Lucas and Sheri Holt of Stephen Lucas & Associates, Accounting in welcoming our newest member of the Rotary Club of Highlands, Scott Jackson. Everyone at the Rotary Club of Highlands welcomes Scott to our Club.

Please join us in congratulating Club member Robert E. Smith on receiving the Roger Ackerman pin.

UPCOMING EVENTS

In November, the Rotary Club of Highlands will feature weekly luncheon programs including:

- **November 3rd – Tommy Reinheimer will share the excitement of Western Carolina University's College Motorsports Program**
- **November 10th – Rose Baugess will provide Rotary Club members with a regional update from the Southwest Commission**
- **November 17th – Governor Paige Scott offers a presentation on Rotary Club activities around the District**
- **November 24th – There will be no Club gathering due to the Community's Thanksgiving Dinner later that evening at 6pm in the Highlands Rec Center**
- **Our Rotary Club of Highlands sponsored Bingo Night for November will take place on Thursday, November 12th for the benefit of Shop With a Cop.**

Spiritually Speaking



Waiting isn't easy but it just might be one of God's greatest gifts

Pastor, Emily Wilmarth
First Presbyterian Church

Some of my favorite children's books to read with my kids have been those written and illustrated by Mo Willems. I adore two of his characters who are best friends, a pig called Piggy and an elephant called Gerald. They have lots of adventures and learn lots of important life lessons. One of the greatest (and highly recommended by kids and grown ups alike) is the book Waiting is Not Easy. You can find a copy at our wonderful Hudson Library!

It's true, isn't it? Waiting is rarely easy. Piggie has a surprise for Gerald, but Gerald has to wait. And as the pages turn, the reader can relate to Gerald's growing impatience. I won't spoil the surprise; check it out yourself!

Waiting is not easy. Neuroscientists know that our brains don't do well with uncertainty. When we are uncertain, we start making predictions and assumptions based on past experiences. Sometimes for the best, but very often for the worst. It's not just Mo Willems and the neuroscientists that know how hard waiting is. The psalmist does, too. In psalm 130, this poetry is so beautiful. I wait for the Lord; my soul waits, and in his word I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

The waiting the psalmist is doing is not the kind of waiting impatiently for minutes to click by on the clock. Waiting as the psalmist waits, as the psalmist's soul waits, is waiting for something we believe will happen. Because, as the psalmist proclaims throughout the psalm, our hope is in God's steadfast love and "great power," or abundant capacity to redeem, to forgive, to offer us grace.

I love that the psalmist says their soul waits for God. I hear the psalmist's brain and heart working together. Facing uncertainty, the brain goes about its usual work of making predictions based on past experience. Meanwhile, the psalmist's heart knows God. God is faithful. God's love abides firm and unwavering. And with God, there is mercy upon mercy. The brain makes its predictions, and the predictions are all based on the psalmist's experience of God's love.

Waiting is not easy, it's true, but when we wait like the psalmist waits, with faith, and hope, and trust in God's great power to redeem all things, then waiting becomes a holy practice for our entire lives. I sometimes wonder if God gave us waiting as a gift to us.

• See SPIRITUALLY page 12

• Places to Worship •

BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH
Rev. Oliver Rice. Pastor 706-782-3965
Sundays: School:10 a.m. , Worship:11
Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7p
5th Sunday Singing featuring Georgia Mountain Trio;
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
Senior Pastor: Rev.Amy Spivey
Assoc. Pastor: Rev.Wonyeong Lee828-743-5298
Sundays: School at 9:30;Worship & Kids 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
743-5470 • www.cashiers.church
Sun. 4p;Wed Study 5:15p supper and childcare.

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

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Jim Kinard
Sundays: School:10 a.m.;Worship:11a.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

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
(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)
Sunday School:10 am.Worship Service:11 am

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS
Non-Denominational-Contemporary Worship
242 Hwy 107N. 1/4 miles from Crossroads in Cashiers
www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814
Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm; Dinner - Wed. 6pm

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH
Hwy 107N. • Glenville. NC • 743-2729 • Nathan Johnson
Sunday: School 9:45a.Worship 11a & 7p. Bible Study 6p
Wed. Kidsquest 6p.;Worship 7p.

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

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Dan Robinson • 4160 Cashiers Rd. Highway 64
Apple Mountain Shoppes • 828-526-0774
Sunday Worship is at 9a.Wednesday Worship is 6p

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376
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www.highlandsmethodist.org

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA
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Rev. Ken Langsdrof
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MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH
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Pastor Zane Talley
Sundays: School:10 a.m.;Worship:11. Choir:6 p.m.
Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.:7 p.m.

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE
Franklin • 828-634-1312 • mountainsynagoguewnc.com.
Rabbi led service 3rd Saturday AM, Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur.

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH
743-2583 • Independent Bible Church
Sun:10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church. 4224 Big Ridge (4.5 miles from NC 107)
Weds:Youth Group 6 p.m.; Bible Study 6:30 p.m.;

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS CATHOLIC CHURCH
Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone – 526-2418
Sat. 4pm thru Oct 24.; Sun. - 11am

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH
Rev. Marty Kilby
Sundays: School –10 a.m.;Worship –11 a.m. & 7
Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.:7 p.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD
290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212
Sun.: School:10 a.m.;Worship:10:45 a.m.;Worship: 6 p.m.

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Rev. Richard Salmonson
Sundays: School:10 a.m.;Worship:11 a.m.

ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
Mass: Sun. 9a (English); Mon. 9:30a (Vatican II in Latin);Tues. 7p (Spanish);Wed.,9:30a (English)

THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD
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Sunday Service (summer): 9am & 11am
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Bazaar Barn outreach is open Fri & Sat. 11am-3pm

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP
85 Sierra Drive. Franklin • uufranklin.org
Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers • 828-743-2122
Sunday School:10 am.Worship Service:11 am

• Police & Fire Reports •

Highlands Police entries from Oct. 31. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Accidents responded to:

Oct. 31

• Vehicle 1was parked facing north on Helen's Barn Ave. Vehicle 2 was parked facing west on the shoulder and partially in the roadway of Helen's Barn Ave. Vehicle 1 backed out of parking spot hitting Vehicle 2 in the passenger door leaving scrape marks on both vehicles.

Nov. 3

• Vehicle 1 was traveling southeast into the parking lot of 537 Main. Vehicle 2 was parked facing southeast in a parking place. Vehicle 1 pulled into a parking space beside Vehicle 2 and struck Vehicle 2 in the process. Vehicle 1 came to rest in parking place and Vehicle 2 came to rest in parking place.

• Vehicle 1 travelled east through the parking lot of 200 Main. Vehicle 2 was parked facing northeast in the parking lot of 200 Main. Vehicle 1 made a left turn into the parking space next to Vehicle 2. As Vehicle 1 was entering the parking space the front right bumper of Vehicle 1 collided with the rear left bumper of Vehicle 2. Vehicle 1 continued forward to finish parking in the space adjacent to Vehicle 2; Vehicle 2 remained parked.

Nov. 5

• Vehicle 1 was travelling north on S. 3rd St. It ran off the road to the right and went down an embankment hitting a speed limit sign and a tree before coming to rest.

• During the week, officers issued 7 Citations and 19 Warning tickets.

Oct. 31

• At 11 p.m., James Preston Byers, 65, of Atlanta, GA, was arrested for DUI when he was stopped on Oak Street. He was issued a $1,500 unsecured bond. His trial date is Dec. 10.

Nov. 2

• At 11:21 a.m., officers responded to a report of someone using a fraudulent credit card for a $5336.45 purchase of construction equipment at Reeves Hardware.

• At 5 p.m., officers received a report of the theft of antique collectibles from a residence on Split Rail Row in Highlands valued at more than $7,000.

Nov. 5

• At 1:15 p.m., Maverick Bruce Hernandez, 25, of Lake Toxaway, NC, was arrested for driving with an expired tag, no liability insurance and resisting arrest. He wasn't issued a bond, but his trial date is Nov. 10.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Nov. 3

Nov. 3

• At 1:44 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Ridge Trail.

Nov. 4

• At 11:36 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Lower Brushy Face.

• At 12:25 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Oak Street.

• At 9:22 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a power line down on Center Drive.

Nov. 5

• At 7:40 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on NC 28 south (Walhalla Road).

• At 1:40 p.m., the dept. provided a lift assist at a residence on Ridge Trail.

• At 6:28 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Pipers Court.

Nov. 6

• At 12:04 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Picklesimer Road.

• At 4:14 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers FD, but the call was cancelled en route.

• At 7:37 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid during a rescue on Whiteside Mountain.

Nov. 7

• At 1 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Whiteside Mountain Road.

• At 9:47 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

• At 11:43 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Garnet Rock Trail.

• At 3:28 p.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at a residence on Brownell Road.

• At 4:08 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Half Mile Drive.

Nov. 8

• At 3:43 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Half Mile Drive.

• At 5:25 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Half Mile Drive.

• At 10:35 p.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at a residence on Flat Mountain Estates.

Nov. 9

• At 6:13 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Whiteside Mountain Road.

Rock climbers rescued from Whiteside Mountain

At 7:37 p.m., Fri., Nov. 6, Highlands Fire & Rescue provided mutual aid assistance to Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad at Whiteside Mountain in reference to two rock climbers stranded on the rock face.

Upon arrival, members of HF&R joined members of the Glenville-Cashiers High Angle Rescue Team and quickly deployed a team to the climbers and assess their situation. Crews learned that the first climber was approximately 230 feet below the summit, while the second climber was approximately 350 feet below the summit.

Rescue personnel rappelled down to the climbers and established the necessary rope systems to safely assist them up the remaining distance to the summit. Through teamwork, coordination, and technical expertise, crews successfully assisted both climbers to safety. Fortunately, no injuries were reported.

The operation continued until both climbers were safely brought off the mountain, with all personnel exiting the woods at approximately 12:45 a.m.

HF&R is proud of the strong working relationship we share with Glenville-Cashiers Rescue. We are always grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such a highly skilled and dedicated team.

Incidents like this highlight the importance of interagency cooperation and the value of maintaining strong partnerships with our neighboring departments.

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...MAYOR continued from page 2

tion among hospitals can take place. For instance, UNC Health wants to build a $1 billion, 97-bed hospital in Asheville. My response is great; if they believe they can successfully compete in that marketplace, then have at it.

Since 2023 the legislature has created a law providing parents with vouchers for their students to attend private schools. Over the next decade that program will consume about $6.24 billion taxpayer dollars. Along with the current voucher program the legislature should pass laws requiring private schools accepting taxpayer funds to show accountability and student progress like public schools must currently do. Public schools have an array of tests that students must take to show competency. Should not every school accepting state tax dollars have to do the same?

I also hope the new legislature will address the shortfall in funding roads and highways in North Carolina. As a member of the regional transportation advisory committee, I am struck by how limited funding is and how far behind schedule critical projects are. A case in point is the needed road improvements at the crossroads in Cashiers. That project needs funding now, not five or ten years from now.

In my next article, I will discuss county and town needs. Stay tuned.

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...DRUG continued from page 1

use drugs use multiple substances, which has been underscored by how variable the drug supply is. Rural counties across the state account for about 42% of overdoses, and a lack of resources, including a lack of methadone providers, has worsened the crisis.

Drug landscape in NC

In North Carolina, an average of 6.8 people a day die from a drug overdose, according to 2025 data from the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services. Drug overdoses have been steadily decreasing since 2023 — there were 178 overdose deaths in February of this year, which is down from 226 in February of last year.

About 75% of drug-related deaths were caused by multiple drugs taken in combination by a single user, or polysubstance use, according to the NC State Center for Health Statistics. Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, has been the leading driver of overdose deaths for the past 10 years. Before that, it was heroin, which is also an opioid.

Across the nation, the drug supply has become increasingly unreliable. Substances like xylazine, a large animal tranquilizer, and medetomidine, another veterinary sedative often mixed with fentanyl, have been showing up during routine drug-checking procedures. Both of these are often mixed with fentanyl, which is a synthetic opioid.

Drug-checking has become paramount in reducing overdoses. So has the widespread distribution of naloxone, a medicine that can rapidly reverse opioid overdoses, commonly known by its generic name, Narcan.

Syringe-exchange programs have also become commonplace to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Sharps disposal kiosks, which are publicly displayed boxes where people can dispose of used needles, are in boxes and restaurants across the region, state and country.

All of these are harm-reduction practices — interventions to minimize the negative medical and legal effects of substance use, without total abstinence. At least 65.9% of those who died from overdoses in 2023 had at least one opportunity for an intervention, like a bystander being nearby or a history of drug use, according to data from the National Institutes for Health.

Policing harm reduction

North Carolina legalized hypodermic syringe and needle exchange programs in 2016, which the NC Harm Reduction Coalition helped craft. The NCHRC is an organization dedicated to harm reduction, public health strategies and drug policy change across the state.

If you get pulled over at a traffic stop in North Carolina, an officer might ask you if you have anything sharp in your pockets, like needles or syringes. Possessing syringes is still technically illegal without that written verification from a syringe program.

So, a person claiming immunity must provide written verification that their needles or syringes are from a syringe service program, or SSP — which can be difficult to regulate. Many law enforcement officials have not received training on safe syringe use, so what happens during these stops can vary by officer and by police department.

'Imagine how much could be saved and reinvented?'

At a September county commissioners meeting in Jackson County, Pazia Harbin, who works with the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition, spoke about these issues during a public comment segment.

While some in the county, are wary about the safety and costs of syringe exchanges and safe drop boxes, Harbin said these resources save lives and money. Spending $5 on a dose of naloxone will save more than $20,000 that an emergency room visit to treat the overdose would have cost, Harbin said.

"This is hundreds of thousands of dollars saved by harm reduction workers doing their jobs," Harbin said. "Imagine how much could be saved and reinvented with county-backed initiatives?"

Drug overdose death rates in rural Jackson are more than 40% higher than those of the rest of North Carolina. In neighboring Swain County, they're more than 70% higher. In these counties with just tens of thousands of residents, these numbers are striking.

In Western North Carolina, there are nine syringe exchange programs. Most of the programs are operated by community groups, though the Buncombe County Health Department also operates one. Most of these do not receive government dollars and rely on grants and donations.

Funding the future of harm reduction

North Carolina is receiving $1.6 billion in funds from opioid settlements with major pharmaceutical companies, but that money will be spread out over the next 18 years. In 2024, Jackson, Macon and Swain counties considered pooling money together to create a regional care center, but there hasn't been any recent motion.

Because of the broad nature of the funds and their slow disbursement, communities have waited to decide how they will use the money to combat the opioid crisis. Places that have already disbursed their installments have given them to things like paramedics, treatment strategies or law enforcement.

Stephanie Almeida hopes some of the Macon County funds will go to harm-reduction efforts. Syringe services are an allowed use of the funding, as well as naloxone distribution. Macon has not yet distributed any of its dollars from the settlement.

She is the founder and director of Smoky Mountain Harm Reduction in Franklin. The area is a big gap for resources, Almeida said. Franklin is just 10 miles from the border with Georgia. Her office, which is a strip mall neighbor to a treatment center, is a refuge for people who need food, naloxone, personal hygiene supplies or really anything.

Hers is one of the few organizations providing support to people experiencing addiction in the four westernmost counties in the state. COVID-19 and Helene were devastating to people who use drugs and those who face housing insecurity, she said. Most of her work is self-funded, or assisted by donations, but still, she loves it.

"My job is to keep people alive and healthy," Almeida said. "Doesn't matter if they use drugs today, last week or if they're abstinent."

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• Highlands Area Events •

SKATING RINK

Nov. 19-Feb. 28

Thurs. 3:30-8p; Fri. 3:30-10p; Sat. 1-10p; Sun. 1-5p.

Thanksgiving Week:

11/25-11/27 1-8p; 11/29-11/30 1-10p; 12/1 1-5p.

Christmas Break:

12/23 1-8p; 12/24 1-5p; 12/26 1-8p; 12/27-12/28 1-10p; 12/29 1-5p;12/30 1-8p; 12/31 1p-1a; 1/1 1-8p.

POOL SCHEDULE

NOTICE:

The pool will be closed Sun., Nov. 15th-Fri., Nov. 20 for maintenance.

• 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+ only. Weekend public swim: Sat., 11am-6pm and Sun., 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-Friday.

MTN FINDINGS

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

FIBBER MAGEES

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

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 at Grace Chapel, 9915 Dillard Rd., Scaly Mountain each Tues & Sat at 5:30 pm;

• In Highlands at the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Mondays at 5:30 p.m. and a NEW WOMENS'S GROUP Thursdays at 5:30 pm; and on Wednesdays & Fridays at 12:00 noon.

• Open in-person meetings are also held in Cashiers at the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library, 249 Frank Allen Rd. on Sundays at 5 pm, on Tuesdays at 7 pm, on Friday at 5:30 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

Mondays

• GED Classes at the Literacy & Learning Center 5:30-7:30 p.m.

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

Monday & Friday

• Karate: Build confidence, focus, and fitness with Karate! Rick Yinger will be offering classes Monday and Friday at 5:15pm. Call 828-421-3119 for more information.

Mon-Wed-Fri

• Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9am at the Rec Park.

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

Mon., Tues., Thurs.

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

2nd Mondays

• The local chapter of PEO, an off-campus sorority founded in the 1800s that provides grants and loans to women with financial need who want to return to school or further their education meets at 10 a.m. For more info call president Paula McDonald at 706-372-3004

4th Mondays

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

2nd Tuesdays

• Highlands Writers Group meets on alternate Tuesday afternoons at 3pm. Writers still uncomfortable with in-person gatherings may participate via Zoom meetings For more info contact Bud Katz at either 828-526-3190 or at 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

Tuesdays & Thurs.

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

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

2nd Wednesdays

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

Thursdays

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

3rd Thursdays

• Highlands Town Board meeting 7 p.m., in the Community Building.

3rd Fridays

• Senior Lunch at the Rec Park/Civic Center at noon.

3rd Saturdays

• Greenway Workday begins at 9a to noon at the Rec Park.

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

Thurs., Nov. 12

• Shop with a Cop Rotary Bingo, 6:30-8:30p. 15 games, $1 per game, free refreshments. Bingo is sponsored by The Rotary Club of Highlands and is licensed by the State of NC.

Sat., Nov. 14

• At The Bascom, FREE Hot Chocolate Bar.

• HCCMF presents a FREE Fall Residency Concert with Am Meer Quartet at the Episcopal Church at 5p. Wine reception to follow. Sponsored by the Cullasaja Women's Outreach.

Thurs., Nov. 19

• The Skating Rink opens 3:30 to 8pm

Fri., Nov. 20

• A fundraiser for the Literacy & Learning Center, Book Lover's Tea with author Susan Beckham Zurenda, author of No Way Out but Through, from 1-3 pm at the First Presbyterian Church in Coleman Hall. Tickets are $50, $100, or $750. For more information email Info@TheLiteracyandLearningCenter.org

Sat., Nov. 21

• Highlands Farmers Market in the Rec Park 10a to 3p.

• A community drum circle will be held Saturday from 6-8 p.m., at the Macon County Public Library. People of all ages are invited to participate. Bring your hand drums and rhythm instruments or use one of ours. In mild weather we drum outdoors so bring a lawn chair.

Tues., Nov. 24

• Annual tradition Community Thanksgiving Dinner at the Rec Park at 6 p.m.

Fri. & Sat., Nov. 27 & 28

• At The Bascom, FREE Make and Take Wooden Ornaments in the SmART Space.

Fri., Nov. 27

• At The Bascom, FREE Holiday Market Reception with Hot Chocolate & and Letters to Santa Sations open. Also, Gingerbread House Workshop for all ages, registration is required.

Sat., Nov. 28

Small Business Saturday Stroll throughout town. Carolers, cookie crawl, face painting, live music, storytelling and more. 11:30a-4p

• At The Bascom, FREE -- Small Business Satruday. Face Painting with Macon Faces 1-3 p.m. and Cookies courtesy of Visit Highlands.

• Light up the Park & Main, KH Founders Park at 5:30p

Thurs., Dec. 3

• Bingo at the Community Building benefitting HCCDC.

Fri., Dec. 4

• Lighting of the Menorah in KH Founders Park at 5:30p.

Dec. 5, 12, 19

• Santa in KH Founders Park on Pine Street 11a to 3p.

Sat., Dec. 5

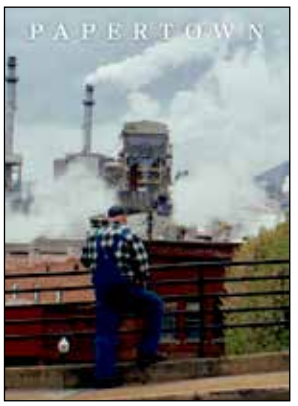
• Highlands Annual Christmas Parade on Main Street beginning at 10a.

• At The Bascom, Holliday Market Reception following the annual Chrsitmas Parade, 2-4 p.m. with Hot Chocolate Bar and Trunk Show.

• At the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation after the parade, boxed lunch with a pulled pork BBQ sandwich, coleslaw, chips, brownie and a soft drink for $20 per person. New this year, a Christmas Market with Advent wreaths, Christmas candles, door decorations and more. All proceeds will go to support the Highlands Community Child Development Center Tickets are on sale at Church of the Incarnation and will be available the day of the parade.

• 12th Annual Cowee Christmas, 10a to 3p at Cowee School Drive, Franklin. 30+ arts and craft vendors, free kids crafts, artist open studios, soup lunch 11a to 2.

Sun., Dec. 6



• "Papertown," is the opening film of the HC Film Fest Prelude at 4 p.m. at the PAC big screen in Highlands. It was "The Best Documentary" winner at the 2026 HC Film Festival. The film follows the closing of the Canton paper mill and what it means for the people of Haywood County and WNC. Tickets are $20 at www.highlandsperformingarts.com/events-tickets or call 828-526-9047. Parents of children in area schools, $10 per adult.

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