

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Oct. 22, 2026

HPD Chief Holland wants ordinance prohibiting bear hunting in town

By Kim Lewicki

It's bear hunting season in Western NC and with it comes complaints from residents within

the town limits of Highlands regarding baying dogs and trespassing.

At the October Town Board

meeting, Highlands Police Chief Andrea Holland asked commissioners to consider drafting an

• See BEAR page 7



Kevin Corbin
Republican



Tom Downing
Democrat

Q&A with candidates for NC Senate District 50

By Kim Lewicki

The two candidates for NC Senate District 50 were asked to respond to questions about the goings on at the state level because what happens there trickles down to the counties and municipalities abilities to do their jobs.

Senator Kevin Corbin is the incumbent and candidate Tom

Downing is running to unseat him.

Kevin Corbin

Please tell readers a little bit about yourself and why you want to be, or continue to be, the NC Senate member for District 50?

I graduated from Franklin High School and then Appalachian State University with a BS/

• See Q&A page 8

Greenway is building a new trail

By Kim Lewicki

The Highlands Plateau Greenway trail system officially started in 2008 and now its 10-miles of trails stretch throughout town furthering its goal of traversing Highlands without having to walk on streets.

So far there are five pods – Mill Creek, Satulah Mountain, Sunset Rock, Biological Station, and Big Bear Pen.

Now, though the completion date is two years away, with a little help from the town, the Little Bear Pen pod is underway.

At the October Town Board meeting, Greenway representative Jim Ward explained the plan to expand the trail system to a sixth pod – dubbed Little Bear Pen.

Currently, there are two ways to get to the Little Bear

• See GREENWAY page 16

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Spill dam at Highlands Country Club.

Removal of trees explained

By Brian Stiehler
HCC

People driving past the Highlands Country Club have undoubtedly noticed the trees that have been removed around the spill dam.

For the last two years, Highlands Country Club has worked with the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ), North Carolina Dam Safety, and Schnabel Engineering

to bring Club Lake Dam up to current Dam Safety standards. NCDEQ mandates this project. This will require draining Club Lake by late November 2026 and, based on the current schedule, completing the project by late March. The existing dam, originally built in the 1930s, remains structurally sound and has been maintained to evolving dam safety standards over the

• See TREES page 4



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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

• SNAPSHOT •

Recap of Oct. Town Board meeting

Last Thursday's Town Board meeting was very productive, even though only a few agenda items had a definitive vote for an ultimate action and outcome. Most agenda items involved extended discussions and ended with directions to the town staff, the town attorney, and board committees to examine the issue in detail and return to the full board with recommendations for final action.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

One example was the proposal by residents living near the Highlands Cemetery to make the two roads going to the Highlands Cemetery into a one-way system. Currently, motorists frequently make a left turn at the south entrance to Memorial Park, which has a blind curve. The north entrance provides ample sight-distance for a safe left turn. The board endorsed the one-way concept and directed the town staff, the public safety committee, and the police department to develop a detailed plan including signage that would be used to imple-

ment the one-way plan.

Another item of discussion was a master plan for the B-1 district and the adjacent town government property, where town hall, the police department, and the Highlands ABC store are located. Our Town Manager said it is time to review improvements to the B-1 district's design and streetscape, along with other issues, such as how to repurpose the property where the Highlands Playhouse stood. The board directed town staff to develop a request for proposals that professional planning companies could respond to for a master plan for these areas. After reviewing these proposals, an outside firm will be given the task of developing the master plan. I believe now is the right time to conduct this kind of study to identify improvements for this critical area.

Another long discussion centered around attachments by communication providers to town utility poles. By state law, these providers have the right to attach to utility poles owned by the town of Highlands. But in recent years, a proliferation of pole attachments has created jumbled, unsightly images throughout the town. We also now have double pole attachments in some places, where companies have still been connected to old utility poles with a new, larger pole right next to them. Many of the lines are heavy copper bundles that are now obsolete since telephone providers have dropped landline services to residents. It will take a long time, but the town needs to work with these companies in cleaning up the proliferation of lines and where they are attached. Our town attorney, the public works committee, and the department will develop a plan in the coming weeks to address this issue, a problem that will take several years to resolve.

A final issue that garnered a lot of attention and discussion was hunting, specifically hunting bears within the town limits. Our current ordinance centers on prohibiting the discharge of firearms within town limits. The police chief informed the board of reports of hunters running dogs within the town and one case where a bear may have been killed with a firearm being discharged.

There is a 500-word limit. We reserve the right to reject or edit letters-to-the-editor. No anonymous letters will be accepted. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands Newspaper.

Letter Policy:

There is a 500-word limit. We reserve the right to reject or edit letters-to-the-editor. No anonymous letters will be accepted. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands Newspaper.

Obituary Policy

Obituaries are \$8 per column inch.
\$10 per photo.
Payable prior to publication.



Let's make one thing very clear. The Ukrainians are the good guys.

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

• WEATHER •

Thu, 22-Oct	Fri, 23-Oct	Sat, 24-Oct	Sun, 25-Oct
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...TREES continued from page 1

years. Meanwhile, NCDEQ requires the Club to remove most mature trees near the dam to prevent their root systems from compromising the dam's new structural components.

While the Club is disappointed to remove the trees, it remains fully committed to complying with NCDEQ requirements to ensure a safe structure that protects downstream residents and Lake Sequoyah.

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PROPERTIES

• HS ATHLETICS RECAP •

Garner wins XC Finale, Soccer outscores rivals 13-1, Volleyball caps playoff campaign

From individual cross country titles to an offensive explosion on the soccer pitch, Highlands Athletics delivered a stellar week across multiple sports. Highlighting the week's action, Middle School Cross Country capped a strong season, Varsity Soccer strung together three dominant shutout victories, and High School Volleyball represented the town in the opening round of the state playoffs.



**Brett Lamb
HS Athletic Director**

Tuesday, Oct. 13: Middle School Cross Country Wraps Season at Parker Meadows

The Highlands Middle School Cross Country team traveled to Parker Meadows for a meet hosted by Macon Middle School to close out their fall campaign under Head Coach John Gooch.

In the boys' race, Asa Garner set the pace for the field, taking 1st place with a winning time of 12:50. The boys put together a strong team performance with Hansel Favela-Cortez finishing 11th, Gauge Hennequin taking 14th, and David Rogers placing 16th.

On the girls' side, the team earned two top-10 finishes: Valentina Gooch crossed the line in 5th place, while Willa James placed 8th to wrap up a memorable season for the program.

Wednesday, Oct. 14: Soccer Sweep at Murphy

Highlands soccer traveled to Murphy for a midweek road double-header, returning home with two impressive victories.

- Middle School Boys Soccer: After falling behind early to an opening goal by Murphy, the Middle School squad rallied back. Tripp Holbrooks, Porter Bowers, and Darwin Frias-Ovando each found the back of the net to seal a 3-1 comeback victory. The win capped an outstanding 10-2 season record for the Middle School team.

- Varsity Boys Soccer: The High School team kept their offensive stride going with a 5-0 shutout. Rowen Carnes led the scoring with two goals, supported by single strikes from Todd Vilardo, Charlie Wilkes, and Jensen Bowers. Vilardo dished out two assists, with Carnes adding an assist of his own.

Thursday, Oct. 15: Varsity Soccer Blank Cherokee in Home Stand

With zero rest, the Varsity Boys Soccer team returned home on Thursday night to host Cherokee in a makeup match, picking up right where they left off with another 5-0 shutout victory.

Rowen Carnes recorded a hat trick with 3 goals, while Stephen Pierson and Michael Munoz added one apiece. Todd Vilardo contributed 2 more assists, and goalkeeper Chase Kenter got in on the offensive

action, collecting an assist from his own box to cap off a flawless 10-goal, two-day stretch for the team.

Saturday, Oct. 17: Varsity Volleyball Fights Hard in NCHSAA First Round

Following a 4.5-hour bus ride, the Highlands Varsity Volleyball team arrived in Danbury, NC at North Stokes High School for the 1st round of the NCHSAA state playoffs. After dropping the opening set 15-25, the Lady Highlanders fought back in set two, taking a thrilling 25-23 win. A back-and-forth third set went down to the wire, with North Stokes edging out a 25-23 win. The home team carried that momentum into the fourth set (15-25) to close out the match 3-1.

Highlands finishes their season at 7-17 overall, boasting an impressive 2nd-place finish in conference play.

Monday, Oct. 19: Varsity Soccer Shuts Out Andrews in Conference Battle

Highlands Varsity Boys Soccer extended their winning streak on Monday with a 3-0 conference victory over Andrews.

The Highlanders jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the first half and added an insurance goal in the second. Rowen Carnes stayed hot with two goals, and Todd Vilardo scored the third. Defensively, goalkeeper Chase Kenter locked down the clean sheet by turning away a penalty kick attempt with a clutch save.

Upcoming Schedule

- Thursday, Oct. 22: Varsity Boys Soccer hosts Madison High School in their final non-conference match of the regular season.



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• INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft •

How did you get here? Where are we headed? Are we there yet?

I'm not a native Highlander, but I do consider myself a local since I've lived here for 36 years. I've been a Realtor for thirty-four of those years. From the very first day I visited Highlands, four years earlier, I knew this little hamlet was special. I wasn't the only one.

I never thought it would be anything else than my first impression. I was wrong. Highlands was somewhere between Mayberry and Mitford. It wasn't unusual for the Police station to be closed because the two or three officers were on duty and out doing their job. If we needed a plumber, stone mason or other contractor, it was faster to go to the Stop 'N Shop than try to reach them by phone. There was no cell phone service to speak of and if they had an answering machine, they wouldn't get the message until that evening when they finished working. Dry Falls couldn't really be seen from the road, and the drive down to the parking area was sort of steep, but the parking was plenty for the occasional visitor. Bridal Veil Falls was easy to drive under. It was very rare, if ever that we saw 18-wheelers come through. Only people in the know knew about things like Shadow of the Bear, Pinky Falls and Secret Falls.

I was lucky enough to marry into a family steeped in the area's history. My in-laws had seen many changes and regaled me with many tales over the years, and if that wasn't enough, my mother-in-law's (Isabel Chambers) mother, Margaret Hall topped their stories. Sitting around the dinner table with four generations was a common thing, but maybe not so common was to have three of those generations in the real estate profession. The conversations usually morphed into real estate. I remember saying something like, "I am going to get a listing on the Smith house, over on such and such street." Then, Isabel would chime in, "Oh? I sold them that house about 10 years ago." And then her mother would pipe in, "Well, I sold it to the Davis family and Smiths bought it." More times than not, they'd remembered where those buyers and sellers were from and what they did for a living. For fun, when the new Real Estate Buyer's Guides hit the street, Isabel and I would go page by page



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identifying each property either by name or address.

How can there have been so many changes in three and a half decades? People have flocked to small mountain towns, especially in summer for the cool weather, but also for the beauty of the unspoiled area. USFS owns approximately 153 thousand acres in Macon County, which at 46%, is close to half. In the Highlands Township, the USFS manages roughly 68% of the total acreage.

Location has always been the number factor in real estate and it's one of the main things that drives pricing in our mountains. There's only so much land. Thank goodness for the non-profits who protect land. Way back in 1909, The Highlands Improvement Society was formed, and in 1914, the Ravenel Park Association formed to protect the 10 acres known as Sunset Rock. They merged and formed The Highlands Land Trust in 1987, which is now known as the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust. What did landowners know in 1909?

When I started in real estate, listings were mostly word of mouth, and print advertising. Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi and Louisiana is where the majority of the property owners and renters were from. But that was before the internet- the secret of Highlands was no longer a secret.

There was a population boom in the 1970s and in one decade, the census increased 27.8% in Macon County. The 1990s was the next increase with another 27.5% in residents. Some of the new residents over the last fifty years have wanted to move here for decades. They came as children and stayed with their grandparents who had homes here. Others visited a few times, maybe rented a few weeks a few times and loved it. But there are others who, especially during Covid, bought property here without ever setting a foot in Macon County, which gained 1,400 residents in 2020. I've heard people say they looked at a map and searched for areas that looked like it had more trees, meaning the properties were more protected from 'the outside world.'

How did you get here? Where do you think we're headed? Are we there yet?

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...BEAR continued from page 1

ordinance prohibiting hunting and the taking of wildlife within the town limits of Highlands.

"We already have an ordinance prohibiting the discharging of firearms within town limits, but that does not address all the problems associated with hunting, particularly during bear season," she said.

Holland said the police department traditionally receives numerous complaints from residents about hunting dogs baying and running through neighborhoods.

"Hunters come into residential areas to retrieve their dogs, parking in driveways and alongside roadways. Sometimes there are six or seven dogs and the noise and disruption is a problem," she said.

Recently, there was a report of baying dogs running through the Lower Lake region of town around and through the Highlands Biological Station property after which six shots were heard.

Though eyewitnesses to the event have not come forward, Holland said it's presumed a bear was shot and removed from that area.

"This isn't about whether a gun is

fired, it is about the activity of hunting within our town limits and the impact it has on the people who live here," she said.

According to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, municipalities can adopt ordinances that are more restrictive than state laws.

"I would like the Town Attorney to look into this and determine what Highlands can legally do," she said.

NC General Statute 113-130(7) defines "to take" as: "All operations during, immediately preparatory, and immediately subsequent to an attempt, whether successful or not, to capture, kill, pursue, hunt, or otherwise harm or reduce to possession any fisheries resources or wildlife resources."

"This definition is important because hunting involves more than actually killing or capturing an animal. It also includes pursuing wildlife and activities immediately before and after an attempt," she said.

Regarding the dogs which are let loose to pursue bears, Holland requested an amendment to the town's "Responsibility to Control Dogs" ordinance already on the books.

"The proposed amendment would require animals to be maintained within an enclosure or, when outside an enclosure and outside the B-1 leash requirement zone, to remain within the handler's eyesight and under the handler's immediate verbal or effective control," she said.

Holland said the proposed changes are intended to address complaints about hunting dogs running at-large.

"In these instances, owners have argued that their dogs are under their control because they are wearing GPS tracking collars, but the fact that an owner can track an animal's location does not necessarily mean the animal is under immediate control, particularly when the owner is actively searching for the dog," she said.

She said baying and roaming hunting dogs are particularly bad in the Bowery, Hickory Hill and Lower Lake areas.

She said last year, late at night, a man allowed his dogs to chase a bear down Main Street "for the practice."

The chief said amending the existing ordinance would also provide officers greater enforcement authority when responding to complaints involving dogs running at-large in residential neighbor-

hoods

To illustrate her point, Holland brought up an incident where one dog was attacked by another, as well as an incident where a man approached an owner and asked that his dogs be secured.

"During that incident, the man was stabbed after asking the individual to secure his dogs," she said.

According to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, the black bear hunting season in Western North Carolina which is monitored by the Mountain Bear Management Unit, is Oct. 3 to November 21, 2026, and December 12, 2026, to January 1, 2027.

Using dogs to hunt bears is generally prohibited in Western North Carolina, except in specific designated bear management areas during permitted times. Macon, Jackson, and Transylvania counties, are in the Mountain Bear Management Unit of Western North Carolina which allows dogs.

The Town Board asked the Town Attorney to draft a new ordinance prohibiting the hunting of wildlife in the town limits and to amend the "Responsibility to Control Dogs" ordinance.

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Janet Jacobs Greene

for
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...Q&A continued from page 1

BA Business Administration. I was on the Macon County School Board from 1984-2004, the Macon County Commission from 2010-2016, the NC House from 2016-2020 and most recently the NC Senate from 2020-2026.

I am the owner/president Corbin Insurance Agency, the Music Minister at Holly Springs Baptist Church for 25 years, a Deacon at the Holly Springs Baptist Church, a member of the Franklin Rotary Club, board member of the Franklin-area Chamber of Commerce and a board member of the Smoky Mountain Pregnancy Care Center.

My wife, Beth and I have two grown children – Matthew Corbin and Maggie Corbin.

I feel I have been effective for WNC and would like to continue my work in the NC Senate. Governor Josh Stein appointed me to chair the bi-partisan Helene Recovery Committee and has just asked me to continue for the next year. Also, now that I have some seniority and have been named Appropriations Chair of Education, there is a lot I can do for WNC.

The state's 41-cent-per-gallon gas and diesel tax is suspended from Oct. 10 through Nov. 30. It's being lauded as a great savings for citizens, but if that's truly the case, why is it ending Nov. 30 – after the mid-term election – instead of when the war in Iran ends?

We can only control what happens in NC. I co-sponsored the bill to suspend the gas tax through Nov 30. We now have the LOWEST gas prices in the USA. I know it's temporary, but it will bring \$360 million in savings to NC citizens and businesses in during that time. We may extend the suspension past November 30 depending on what happens nationally.

If the Constitutional amendments on the ballot Nov. 3 pass – keeping the state income tax rate from being raised higher than 3.5% AND requiring limits on the property tax increases by local governments – the potential is that it will hamstring the state should it need funds. Does that concern you since Income taxes generate the majority of revenue that funds the state budget every year AND property taxes fund, on average, more than half of counties' General Fund.

I have voted every budget to lower the income tax rate and every single time we have done this it has resulted in a SURPLUS of state funds. Our state has the strongest economy in the US partly because of our tax savings. We have in-

creased funding each budget for education, law enforcement and public health. We have expanded healthcare to over 700,000 North Carolinians during this same time. The tax rate is now under 3.5% and scheduled next year to go to 2.99%. In our growing state economy, there is no need to raise the rate. If the economy weakens, the LAST THING we want to do is raise taxes which would make the economy worse. There are other ways to raise revenue that is more fair to the consumers like consumption taxes. We want to keep our economy strong and growing and raising taxes is not the way to do it.

Along those lines, education investments, including K-12 and higher education, represent 57 percent of NC's General Fund spending. Critics claim NC ranks near the bottom nationwide in funding for education, and teacher salaries. If the Constitutional amendments pass and potential funds are capped, how do you propose the state get the funds needed to continue funding education and other services?

I voted for significant raises for teachers this past budget. Beginning teacher pay was increased by 17% bringing us to the second highest in the Southeast for this year. We also raised overall education spending to over \$19 billion which is 58% of our state budget. These figures represent TOTAL spending must include the spending on all education (including local) from pre-school to universities. The taxpayer foots this entire bill and with that considered, we are not 50th in the nation but actually somewhere in the middle. I was appointed as Chairmanship of Education and if re-elected I have already made the commitment to further raise teacher pay including veteran teachers. I have also made the commitment to work to change funding formulas to benefit rural school systems like Macon County and others.

When relocating to an area, companies and corporations want to make sure there is a good education system, law enforcement and healthcare for their employees. Given potential state funding caps this year, how would you entice them to come?

We have increased funding each budget for education, law enforcement and public health and I will vote to continue to do so. I know of no plan to reduce these. Our education spending

Main Street

COUNTRY CLUB PROPERTIES

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On Flat Mountain Road on over 3 acres is this 4BD/2BA 1969 farmhouse family home. It needs some renovation but has great bones and has a multitude of possibilities. Charming Knotty pine and wood floors to start. An additional home site or two is a possibility, with a septic already in place for a guesthouse or rental. Offered at \$1,200,000 mls #1004110



Perched atop prestigious King Mountain, this exceptional luxury home delivers jaw-dropping views that stretch for miles. Offered fully furnished and tastefully appointed with high-end decor. The dramatic octagonal great room features floor-to-ceiling windows and a stone fireplace, gourmet kitchen, dining area, laundry room and outdoor grilling space. Two expansive primary suites on the main level. Two guest rooms, a second fireplace, family room, a game area or gym, an office, and a garage. The wraparound deck. Community amenities include a clubhouse, pool, and tennis courts. Offered at \$2,900,000 mls #1003430



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On a private lot with frontage to the Cullasaja River creek feeding Mirror Lake, this log cabin is tucked into the woods and has an artsy vibe. Rocking chair porch, and cook's kitchen. Main floor primary bedroom with bath, upper level has 3 bedrooms with a hall bath, there is a full efficiency apartment for long-term rental income. Offered at \$975,000. mls #1003414



Move-in condition, house off Buck Creek Road on Western Rhodes Road. 3BD, plus additional flex spaces. Multiple fireplaces. Open Great Room with custom kitchen, plank wood floors, stone fireplace, covered porch with hot tub spa. Masters on main and upper floors, plus guestrooms complete with baths. Outbuilding and trails. Offered at \$1,895,000. mls #1002662



This true in-town location is about 4 blocks from Main Street. 2BD/2BA is on city sewer for easy expansion. Wood floors and a fireplace, large deck overlooking woods in the back. One-car carport. Laundry in the rear of the carport. Metal roof. A great weekend getaway or starter home. HVAC and backup electric baseboard heat. Offered at \$750,000. mls #1001893



This Scandinavian inspired contemporary cabin in the woods is just 10 minutes from downtown Highlands. Beautifully sited on a private 2.48-acre wooded lot. Newly constructed, 3BR/2.5BA. Super cute kitchen with custom cabinetry, floating shelves, convection cooktop/oven and granite countertops. The primary bedroom is on the main level. Floating staircase leads to 2BD and a full bath. One year builders' warranty from date of purchase. Offered by \$987,000 MLS #1004296



Old Orchard BlueValley views in this 3BD/3.5BA at the end of the road. Move-in condition with a 2-car garage and additional family/tv room in the guest level. Large, covered porch with fireplace, wood floors and beamed ceilings. Offered at \$2,495,000 mls #1003791



This adorable 3BD/2BA cottage combines character with modern updates. Recent upgrades include fresh paint inside and out, fireplace renovation, basement encapsulation, whole house dehumidifier. Beautifully landscaped outdoor space, with private patio and firepit. Offered at \$935,000. mls #1003559



Less than 2 miles from town, this one-of-a-kind generational estate has 10 acres, with 3BD/4.5 BA with 5,000 sf roughed in rooms. Beautiful grounds. French living room with Dalle de Bourgogne French limestone floors, a fireplace. Open dining with adjacent Chefs Kitchen. Primary suite is in opposite wing of the house with a double bath and full office library. There is an elevator and a stairwell to 2 guest bedroom suites, and a bonus room. A rear porch and a 2-car garage. Offered at \$6,200,000 mls #1003939



This charming Highlands property has 3 improved structures, a stream with waterfall. The renovated main cabin has 2BDs and 1BA plus a loft. Stone fireplace, custom kitchen/dining area with peninsula bar with propane range. The living room opens onto a full-length covered porch overlooking white water and cascading stream. Joe Webb cabin guesthouse with a covered porch, stone floor, and sleeping loft. Commercial/residential structure could be a roadside shop. Restore/rebuild the old mill. Offered at \$949,000 mls #1002716



Cute Cottage at the end of Pine Circle near the Skyline Lodge complex. Ready to make it your own. 2BD/1.5BA on the main floor plus a loft. Nice deck. Open galley kitchen. A great getaway or rental. Offered at \$495,000. mls #1002891



Less than two miles from Highlands with stunning 50-mile vista of the layered hills. Terraced backyard and outbuilding rustic cabin. The house is like new with a semi-open floor plan – stone fireplace in Great Room, covered Carolina Room with stone fireplace. The screened area and large deck. Offered at \$5,875,000. mls #1002591



Beautiful 3BD/4BA home offered fully furnished, on 2.23 acres with +-300 feet of creek frontage and year-round flowing water. Conveniently located just 2.3 miles from Main Street. Offered at \$2,625,000. mls #1003921



Discover this solid 3BD/2.5BA just minutes from downtown Highlands. The home features a comfortable floor plan ideal for full-time living or a weekend getaway, with natural light throughout and deck. Offered at \$850,000 mls #1003153

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• OBITUARY •

Joseph Harrell Simmons

Joseph Harrell Simmons was born at Walter Reed Hospital in Bethesda, MD on August 7, 1951 to Dr. James Clarence Harrell Simmons and Vanita Marguerite Rhodes Jones Simmons.

Joe attended White Station High School in Memphis, TN, where he was a member of the track team. He was a member of Eudora Baptist Church, which was founded by his maternal great, great-grandfather, JB Canada. Following high school, Joe moved to Knoxville, TN, where he attended the University of Tennessee. He was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity and graduated from the UT School of Business.

He began work for IBM in various locations, during which he created and led the client executive program and was asked to teach at the Harvard School of

Business. Following his time with IBM, Joe moved to Highlands, NC, where he met his wife, Becky. Together, they co-owned Cabe Realty, then ultimately retired, working as realtors for Highlands Properties.

Joe was former member and president of Mountaintop Rotary Club of Highlands and received the Paul Harris Fellow Award for rotary international. Joe was a deacon and Sunday school teacher at Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, TN, Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta, GA, and a teacher, finance team member, and deacon under Pastor Dan Robinson at First Baptist Highlands and Highlands Central Baptist.

Guided by a deep love for his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Joe was an avid outdoorsman with a boundless passion for nature. Whether he was skiing at Pickwick, hiking mountain trails, horseback riding, scuba diving, or playing racquetball, he embraced every adventure. He was also a skilled archer, sharpshooter, and accomplished equestrian who truly thrived in the great outdoors.

Joe was preceded in death by his parents, Jim and Vanita Simmons, as well as his sister-in-law, Cynthia Simmons of Raleigh, NC. He is survived by his wife, Becky Glattli Simmons; son, Wes Simmons (Nancy) of Cataula,



GA; daughter, Jordan Gilligan of Milton, GA; brother, Thomas Burke Simmons of Raleigh, NC; and sister, Laura Simmons Martin (Paige) of Memphis, TN. His legacy continues through his three grandchildren, Emmett Walsh Gilligan, Emily Anne Simmons, and Katherine Grace Simmons, along with many beloved nieces, nephews, extended family, and friends.

The family would like to thank Joe's caregivers from Four Seasons Hospice, including Andrea Burton and Mary Hamilton, who not only helped him with daily personal needs, but also invested in him above and beyond that of typical hospice staff. Their genuine, loving care for Joe throughout this process, kept him smiling and laughing during a very difficult time.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, TN. Website included below for memorial donation online or by mail: https://www.stjude.org/give/memorials-and-dedications.html?sc_icid=wtg-lz-memorials

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• LETTERS •

What about the corrupt Democratic presidents?

Dear Editor,

I read Linda Arnold's Sept. 3 letter-to-the-editor entitled, "Would this be OK if Trump was a Democrat?" My answer? No! But I'm unconvinced by her allegations of corruption against Trump.

Rather, I would love to read Ms. Arnold's "corruption" commentaries on the Clinton, Obama and Biden administrations during which favors were sold to the Communist Chinese Party (CCP), Ukrainian oligarchs, and Iranian mullahs, to mention just a few. Clinton gave the CCP "Most Favored Nation" status. Wasn't that a favor for all the campaign contributions they sent his and Hillary's way?

Remember the Clinton "coffee klatches" attended by Chinese agents? Obama flew \$400 million in ransom money to the mullahs in Iran — something Donald Trump would, needless to say, never do. Hillary Clinton allegedly used her position as U.S. Secretary of State under Obama to help the Russian state-owned nuclear corporation, Rosatom, acquire the Canadian mining company Uranium One in exchange for donations to the Clinton Foundation.

Joe Biden signed Hunter's pardon before leaving office. Hunter was paid enormous sums for serving on

the Board of Directors of Ukrainian oil company Burisma that was being investigated by Ukrainian Attorney General Viktor Shokin. Biden is on video threatening to withhold \$1 billion from Ukraine unless Shokin is fired. And he was.

Not to mention, all three Democrat presidents refused to secure our border; and, in fact, allowed illegal immigration — Biden encouraged it — leading to the murder of countless American citizens and Border Patrol agents. There's not enough space in this paper to adequately document the 20 years of corruption and anti-American activities under these three Democrat presidents.

Yet, I can't help but wonder: Has Ms. Arnold ever written about corrupt Democrat presidents?

Jeff S. Barganier. AL

The NC ballot wording hides what the constitutional amendments do

Dear Editor,

Each of the three constitutional amendments on the

• See LETTERS page 12

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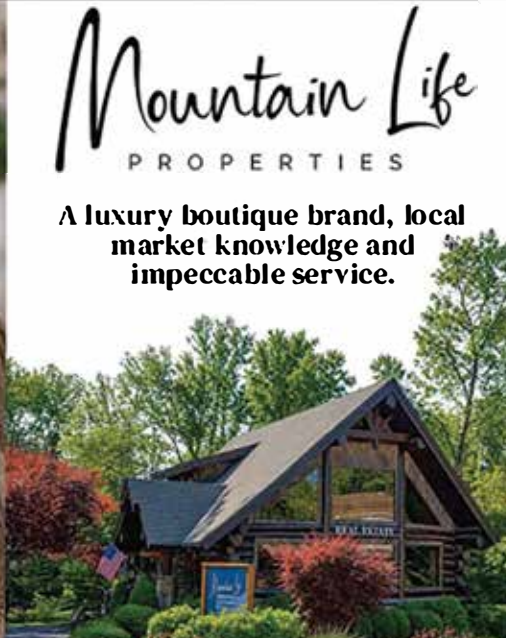
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...LETTERS continued from page 11

Nov. 3 ballot is one short sentence. None tells you what you would give up.

"Limits on property tax increases by local governments" sounds like relief. Yet the amendment sets no limit. It orders the General Assembly to write one later, with whatever formula and exceptions it chooses.

Property taxes are the largest source of local revenue. They pay for school buildings, teacher supplements, health departments, emergency services, libraries and elections. When costs rise faster than a state cap allows, counties are left to cut services or raise fees. Because the cap limits total revenue, not your bill, your tax bill could still go up. The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners opposes this amendment. Decisions we can now question at county meetings would move to Raleigh.

The 3.5 percent income tax cap would not lower anyone's taxes, because current law already sets the rate below it. It would only tie the hands of future legislators in a recession or crisis. Income tax funds about half of the state budget that pays our teachers.

State law already requires every mail voter to include a copy of a photo ID or an exception form. Ask yourself: if the law already requires it, why must it be locked into the constitution, unless the goal is to keep courts and future legislators from changing it, even if it shuts out eligible voters?

A constitutional amendment is very hard to undo. Read past the ballot wording and vote against all three.

Constance L. Neely
Scales Mountain, NC

Local Democrats' new initiative delivers relief to families in need

Dear Editor,

The Macon County Democratic Party is proud to highlight its participation in a national effort, called Dems Work (<https://dems.work/>), to help neighbors confront the high cost of health care in America.

People shouldn't go into debt for getting sick. But in places like Macon County, that outcome is far too familiar. The national campaign shared stories and raised money to relieve medical debt for families in counties like Macon County, all across the state.

The Macon County Democratic Party raised \$1,645 to donate to relieve crippling medical debt for pennies on the dollar. That number, through partnerships that the county party secured, was able to be tripled and expand the impact of the medical debt relief in North Carolina. The money will have at least a 100:1 ratio of debt relief to dollars raised, equaling at least \$329,000 toward medical debt relief in WNC.

If you have been helped by this program, share it at <https://dems.work/tell-my-story>

While working families here in Ma-

con County struggle through rising costs and crushing medical debt, our Legislature has failed to deliver the relief we need in Washington. Democrats know what must change: lower prescription drug prices, crack down on corporate price gouging, and protect the most vulnerable in our communities. No one should go into debt for being sick.

This November we have a chance to change it! That is why we are supporting our NC candidates Caleb Brown for NC House District 120, and Tom Downing, NC Senate District 50. The lasting change is going to come from Washington though, so we need Jamie Ager to represent us in Congress and Roy Cooper to be our voice in the US Senate.

If you want to join us on this mission, please visit our website at www.maconnc-dems.org or follow us on social media to find out how to get involved. <https://www.facebook.com/maconcountydems/>

Together we can fix this broken system and ensure everyone has access to the services they need.

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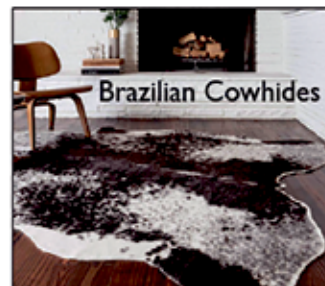
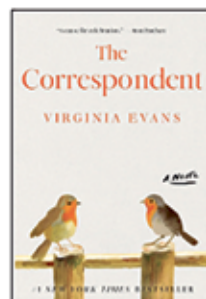


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... GREENWAY continued from page 1

Pen Trail -- walk along the sidewalk across from the Community Building and cross-over the Cashiers Road to Little Bear Pen, or walk along the sidewalk on the Community Building side and then walk along the Cashiers Road to Little Bear Pen.

Both scenarios raise safety concerns.

Crossing the Cashiers Road to Little Bear Pen would require a NC DOT-sanctioned crosswalk at a busy intersection but walking the sidewalk on the Community Building side until it ends and then walking along Cashiers Road is equally disturbing.

It's doubtful NC DOT would allow a pedestrian crosswalk at that intersection,

so the requested solution is for the town to extend the sidewalk that currently ends at the Community Building to Little Bear Pen. That way pedestrians can park in the lot, and walk on a sidewalk all the way to Little Bear Pen where they would pick up the Little Bear Pen trail.

The town would have to come up with the funds and to extend the sidewalk 400 feet.

The mile-long trek up Little Bear Pen would eventually loop around to connect to the Kelsey Trail back in town.

Commissioners weren't against the idea but said it warranted further discussion from a fiscal point of view.

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Cullasaja Women's Outreach grants a record \$412,000

Cullasaja Women's Outreach (CWO) today announced the results of its 2026 fundraising efforts. This independent collective of 101 women, focused on supporting nonprofits in the local community, is awarding \$412,000 in grants to Highlands and Cashiers area organizations. Since its founding in 2006, CWO has invested over \$3,937,000 in local 501(c)(3) organizations striving to strengthen the community.

Funds raised this year are being awarded to 27 entities through a sophisticated grants process jointly chaired by

Lindy Colson Harrison, Jo Hill and Lisa Butts. Individual awards range from \$4,000 to \$30,000. Grant recipients for 2026 include: Big Brothers/Big Sisters; Blue Ridge Free Dental Clinic; Boys and Girls Club of the Plateau; Cashiers-Highlands Humane Society; Cashiers Historical Society; Cashiers Valley Preschool; Center for Learning Enrichment; the Community Care Clinic of Highlands-Cashiers;



From left: the grant's Executive Team – co-chair Lindy Colson; Executive Director Margaret Eichman; Grants Co-Chair Lisa Butts; Treasurer Jane Adams; and Grants Co-Chair Jo Hill.

Counseling & Psychotherapy Center of Highlands; Friends of Panthertown; Hampton Pre-School and Early Learning Center; Highlands Biological Foundation; Highlands-Cashiers Chamber Music Festival; Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust; Highlands Community Child Development Center; Highlands Emergency Council; Highlands Historical Society; the Hudson

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Todd Massey (General Manager), Christie Perrin, David Perrin (Co-Owner) and Mat Barnwell (Co-Owner)

Town Hall restaurant is where Wolfgang's used to be on Main St.

The Highlands Chamber of Commerce was pleased to celebrate the official Ribbon Cutting for Town Hall, located at 474 Main Street in the heart of downtown Highlands.

Serving seasonal Southern comfort food, Town Hall offers beautifully curated dining spaces with elevated rustic finishes, along with an expansive outdoor patio and garden. Its versatile spaces provide a warm and welcoming setting for everything from an evening out to private gatherings and larger celebrations.

HHS 'Walk in the Park' fundraiser was held despite the iffy weather



The Highlands Historical Society held its 2026 Walk in the Park Event Oct 3 & 4. Ghost actors treated lots of attendees to amazing stories of Highlands past. From left: the "ghosts" were Randy Lucas (Judge Felix Alley), Ron Leslie (Bennie Rogers), Brian McClellan (Uncle Billy Potts), Sandie Trevathan (Mary Chapin Smith), April Getz (Annie Whip) and Craig Eister (Fred Allen). Thanks to our actors and Committee Chairs Lee Lyons and Joan Worthy for making this a wonderful event.

...MAYOR continued from page 2

in Highlands. Again, the town attorney will work with the public safety committee and the police department in revising the hunting ordinances to address these concerns.

In summary, I anticipate several proposed changes to current town ordinances. These changes will take effect after careful consideration and opportunities for the public to weigh in.

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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Leadership Highlands celebrates Class of 2026 graduates

Leadership Highlands, a signature community engagement program of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC, proudly announces the graduation of its Class of 2026.

Graduates include Kendra Alexander, Kaysie Allen, Heather Ball, Jennifer

Colson, Randy Foster, Deneece Harrell, Rebecca Horowitz, Joshua LaVere, Jeanne Piazza, Sean Mullarkey, Meg Stevens, Holly Watson and Faye Wurm.

Over the course of eight months - from March through October - the participants completed an immersive program



EARLY VOTING FOR THE NOVEMBER ELECTION

EARLY VOTING WILL BEGIN ON
OCTOBER 15TH – OCTOBER 31ST

★ WE WILL HAVE TWO LOCATIONS FOR EARLY VOTING: ★

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8:00 AM – 7:30 PM
 MONDAY – FRIDAY

8:00 AM – 3:00 PM
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Kendra Alexander, Kaysie Allen, Heather Ball, Jennifer Colson, Randy Foster, Deneece Harrell, Rebecca Horowitz, Joshua LaVere, Jeanne Piazza, Sean Mullarkey, Meg Stevens, Holly Watson and Faye Wurm.

designed to deepen civic understanding, enhance leadership skills, and expand professional networks. The curriculum featured a retreat, monthly day-long sessions, and concluded with a formal graduation ceremony.

“We are so pleased to celebrate the accomplishments of our 2026 Leadership Highlands graduates,” said Johanna Fein, Executive Director of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC. “Throughout the program, they have gained a deeper understanding of our community, built meaningful relationships, and strengthened their leadership skills. We look forward to seeing how they put these experiences to work to help shape the future of Highlands.”

Each year, Leadership Highlands offers participants a unique opportunity to engage with local experts and peers while exploring topics such as Highlands’ history, cultural resources, economic development, government and public safety, health and human services, education, the arts, and outdoor recreation. The program also focuses on personal leadership development through principle-based decision making and team building exercises.

Participant selection is based on civic involvement, leadership potential, diversity of perspective, and a demonstrated commitment to both the program and the Highlands community.

MtnTop Rotary learns about Functional Wellness

Dr. Sue Aery shared an insightful look at functional wellness and the importance of listening to what our bodies are telling us. She discussed common concerns such as low energy, stubborn weight gain, digestive issues, poor sleep, and brain fog — and how her Return, Renew, Recalibrate approach can help people get back to feeling their best.

Dr. Sue Aery with Ron Leslie



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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



MtnTop Rotary learns about AARC

President of MtnTop Rotary John Martin with Angela Cox

Angela Cox introduced Mountaintop Rotary to the lifesaving work of Appalachian Animal Rescue Service (AARC), which gives abandoned and neglected animals a second chance through rescue, rehabilitation, and adoption. From food and medical care to safe shelter and spay/neuter programs, AARC relies on community support to continue its mission. Every helping hand makes a difference in giving these deserving animals a brighter future!

MtnTop Rotary Supports Ferngrove Cancer Retreat Center with \$10,000 Donation

President of MtnTop Rotary John Martin with Stacy Carter.



Mountaintop Rotary welcomed Stacy Carter, who spoke about Ferngrove, Stage4Hope cancer retreat center designed to provide hope, comfort, encouragement, and support to individuals and families facing cancer.

Carter shared Ferngrove's vision of creating a welcoming environment where those affected by cancer can find connection, compassion, rest, and renewal.

Mountaintop Rotary donated \$10,000 to help advance the project. Carter expressed her heartfelt appreciation for the club's generous support, which reflects its commitment to strengthening the community and supporting initiatives that make a meaningful difference.

A large, vertical poster for "Halloween on Main". The background is a close-up of a carved jack-o'-lantern with a glowing face. The text is overlaid on the image in various fonts and colors.

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SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING



By the Spirit

Galatians 5:5

Pastor Sam Forrester

Whiteside Presbyterian Church,
Cashiers

Ezekiel 36:26 says "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." This is a picture of the coming new covenant. You enter this life with a dead heart or as he says a heart of stone. That heart makes it impossible for you to hear and understand anything spiritual. With a new heart of flesh and a new living spirit you will be able to see your need of a Savior. You will be enabled to hear the truth and will out of a love for it, obey its teaching. Jesus Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh to make possible these two wonderful gifts. With his death on the cross, your new heart was prepared. With his resurrection, the sending of the new spirit was made ready. Galatians 5:5 "But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope." Paul lays before you a very simplistic view of the gospel. Don't be slack in the study of these few words. In this short sentence, Paul gives all you need to understand this glorious salvation.

He makes clear everything required for you to come through the Spirit into this salvation. Your salvation was not by human striving, nor by the will of the human heart. Your salvation is a supernatural work, performed by the Holy Spirit, coming into your heart and changing it, working in your mind, renewing it, changing your want to, driving you to Christ. You cannot come to Christ by your own efforts. You don't have the strength required to turn to Jesus by yourself (John 6:44).

In Genesis 6:5 it's pointed out that the intents and thoughts of a man's heart are continually evil. Jeremiah 17:9 says "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure." The essence of this is that man has a sinful, evil nature. Man loves the spiritual darkness in which he lives. John 3:19-20 "Men loved darkness rather than light" and they "do not come to the light." Paul in Romans 3:10-18 explains "There is none righteous ... There is none who understands ... There is none who does good ... There is none who seeks after God." There is not one man who will take himself out of the darkness into the light by his own initiative.

In the fourth century, there was an English Monk named Pelagius, who began to teach that man could take the initial steps toward God and his own salvation apart from God's grace. The great fourth century theologian Augustine opposed this teaching and it was ultimately condemned by the council of Ephesus in 431 A. D. The church has maintained throughout history the teaching that it takes a miracle of grace to save someone. The Holy Spirit must work a change in the heart of man for him to be able to believe in Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John clearly declares you must be "born again" to be a part of the kingdom of God. It also teaches when you are "born again" it is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Your salvation is the exclusive work of God. He initiates the process and carries it through to perfect completion. You are born into this world in a spiritually dead state. You are spiritually blind and totally without spiritual strength. Therefore, until you are given spiritual life, spiritual sight, and spiritual strength you are totally incapable of believing anything spiritual.

• See SPIRITUALLY page 23

• 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 Lee 828-743-5298

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. 10:45a; 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: 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

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

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

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HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

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

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road

The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily

sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.

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

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376

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www.highlandsmethodist.org

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Rev. Ken Langsdorf

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Pastor Zane Talley

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

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Rabbi led service 3rd Saturday AM, Rosh Hashanah & Yom

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MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

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(4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

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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 Oct. 9. 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. 13

• Vehicle 1 was parked facing north on Main Street. Vehicle 2 was traveling east on Main Street when vehicle 1 backed out and hit vehicle 2.

Oct. 15

• Vehicle 1 was parked partially in the roadway on Cobb Road facing south. Vehicle 2 was backing out of a private drive in a southerly direction when it hit Vehicle 1.

Oct. 18

• Vehicle 1 was backing out on to Sagee Woods Drive when the trailer of Vehicle 1 crashed into the mailbox and a dog statue at 317 Sagee Woods Drive before coming to rest in front of the residence.

• Over the week, officers issued 12 Citations and 16 Warning Tickets

Oct. 9

• Officers responded to a call of trespassing on property on Lower Lake Road and 6th Street where a bear was shot and killed on the property.

Oct. 13

• At 10:15 a.m., officers received a report of continual harassment of a 54-year-old woman at Bryson's Food Store by a 57-year-old man.

Oct. 14

• At 2:30 p.m., officers responded to a call of larceny of a purse which held cash, credit cards, keys to a vehicle and more at The Outpost Inn.

Oct. 16

• At 6 a.m., officers responded to a call of a simple assault involving a physical and verbal confrontation of an 18-year-old girl at a residence on Paul Walden Way by a 49-year-old woman.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Oct. 13

Oct. 13

• At 6:10 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Buck Creek Road.

Oct. 14

• At 2:20 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

• At 8:55 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Split Rail Row.

Oct. 15

• At 7:32 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Shortoff Road.

• At 11:23 a.m., the dept. was

first-responders to a location on Half Mile Drive.

• At 1:19 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Whiteside Mountain Road.

Oct. 16

• At 12:03 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Mountain Laurel Drive.

• At 7:39 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Church Street.

Oct. 17

• At 2:46 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on View Point Road.

• At 6:42 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a tree down on Cook Road.

• At 11:45 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Chestnut Run.

• At 1:19 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Old Rock Road.

Oct. 18

• A little past midnight, the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Oakwood Cove.

• At 6:21 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on S. 4th Street.

Oct. 19

• At 9:02 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

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...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 22

Paul says your righteousness comes "through the Spirit." This means your salvation is not through your moral and religious works. It does not come by your own effort at being good. It does not come because you have been careful to keep the law. Only when the Holy Spirit works in your heart to make it anew will you be saved. The initial act of your salvation belongs to God alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). You can love God only because he first loved you (1 John 4:19). You are "in Christ Jesus" only because of his working in your heart.

Christianity does not operate by natural principles. It is not defined by simply learning or merely accepting a doctrine or creed. It is also not simply the act of deciding to follow a certain person. In our day Christianity has become more

of a decision making religion. Terry Johnson, pastor of Independent Presbyterian in Savannah, GA calls it "decisional Christianity." Which would declare "I saved myself by making a decision to follow Jesus." Please understand, people do not become Christians by simply comparing the various choices different religions offer, evaluating the benefits pro and con, and then, through rational thinking choose the best offer. Many people today believe they were saved because they walked an isle, signed a card, raised their hand or prayed a certain prayer. They think, "I made a decision." But the truth, according to the Scriptures is that they were not capable, nor willing, to make such a rational decision. The only hope for such a proper decision had to come with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Man will al-

ways choose darkness over light even though that is a totally irrational decision. Natural man has no desire to follow Christ (John 1:10). Christianity is not a natural religion, it is a supernatural religion. No one can become a Christian except it be "through the Spirit." Jesus says in John 15:16 you did not choose me, I chose you.

Don't misunderstand this. Jesus in saying this, was not denying the fact, you make a decision to follow him. What he is saying is your decision comes only after his decision to call you. It happens after he has changed your heart and given you the gifts of faith and repentance. The critical decision was not yours but his. It was only because of his decision that yours was possible. You, my friends, are not saved by your own efforts, intelligence, and strength but "through the Spirit" as he brings you to recognize Jesus as the one and only Savior.

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...Q&A continued from page 8

has increased 40% just since 2020 from \$13 billion to over \$19 billion. This year alone I voted to give an average of 15% raises to Highway Patrol and other state law enforcement employees. I also led the charge to cover over 700,000 North Carolinians with healthcare in this past budget cycle. People are relocating to NC in record numbers for many reasons and we are in the top four states for net positive influx of population. Funding caps will protect the taxpayers not reduce funding to these critical areas.

Anything else you would like to impart to readers?

I have worked tirelessly in the Senate to bring grant monies to WNC and frankly have been very successful with the help of colleagues like Representative Karl Gillespie. I have advocated for AND RECEIVED over \$300 million in direct grants to six of my eight counties for new school construction including the new Franklin High School. We worked for and received a \$100 million grant for Western Carolina University for a new engineering school. The list goes on, but you have to work hard to get these things and I have done that.

Tom Downing

Please tell readers a little bit about yourself and why you want to be, or continue to be, the NC Senate member for District 50?

The through line in all of my experiences is “service.” All of my professional and personal roles have enabled me to view service through the singular lens of “working for everyone.”

My wife and I live in Cullowhee in Jackson County and I’ve worked in municipal government for the last 15 years in the City of Asheville where I’ve worked in the Mayor’s Office and City Manager’s Office for 6 ½ years before moving to the Finance Department. I earned my Masters of Public Affairs from Western Carolina University and my bachelor’s degree in Theatre from Kansas State University.

Prior to my work in local government I was a special education teacher working with students with serious emotional disabilities for eight years. I’ve taught students at all grade levels in regular education classrooms, special schools, as a summer camp counselor, at the Jackson County alternative school, and in two, large high schools and a rural school dis-

trict at Columbus Junction, Iowa, where I was an elementary grades Title I Reading Teacher. In Jackson County I was proud to be a substitute school bus driver.

Why I am running for NC State Senate? I will be the State Senator who listens and responds to the needs of real people. All people in the eight western counties deserve respectful representation in Raleigh. I find it hard to reconcile how large corporations like Duke Energy get preferential treatment and regular folks like our state employees continue to get the shaft.

North Carolina is first in business and last for workers. Why can’t we be first in both? Send me to Raleigh and I’ll listen to everyone to find real solutions to our shortages of affordable housing, affordable daycare, and the rising costs of health insurance. We should fully fund our public schools! Our tax dollars should stay with the public schools and not go to enrich private schools.

I’ll schedule regular listening sessions and town halls in every county because the voters deserve the opportunity to look their representatives in the eye and tell them what they need and how I’m doing as their representative,

The state’s 41-cent-per-gallon gas and diesel tax is suspended from Oct. 10 through Nov. 30. It’s being lauded as a great savings for citizens, but if that’s truly the case, why is it ending Nov. 30 – after the mid-term election – instead of when the war in Iran ends?

The Republican-controlled General Assembly could have taken action to lower fuel costs via a reduction or suspension of the fuel tax at any time when fuel prices began to spike months ago. Especially considering that diesel fuel costs are an extreme financial burden for our school districts, for our farmers, and everyone in the trucking and transportation industry. Not to mention everyday folks who purchase goods and services that have a diesel vehicle operating somewhere in the supply chain.

The fuel tax suspension has to end at some point because North Carolina needs the revenue from the fuel tax to maintain and build roads. Failure to keep tax money flowing for road maintenance and construction would be catastrophic for our state.

What is a reasonable conclusion considering that the special session occurred

right before an election? It’s simply “Political Theatre” from professional politicians, is my answer.

If the Constitutional amendments on the ballot Nov. 3 pass – keeping the state income tax rate from being raised higher than 3.5% AND requiring limits on the property tax increases by local governments – the potential is that it will hamstring the state should it need funds. Does that concern you since Income taxes generate the majority of revenue that funds the state budget every year AND property taxes fund, on average, more than half of counties’ General Fund.

The only way to make up for that lost revenue is to increase fees and to increase sales taxes, which especially burdens our lower income taxpayers. The Republican-led General Assembly has already made more things subject to sales tax such as auto repair.

As a municipal government employee for 15 years, I have a keen understanding of what the cost of fees means for citizens who have to pay a fee for a needed or required service from their city. I know that most municipalities (and counties) do their best to keep fees and charges as low as possible. There is a limit to how low fees and charges can go because the money to pay for the things that your local government does has to come from somewhere. You would think that the Republican profes-

sional politicians in Raleigh would know this.

Likewise, there is a limit to how high fees and charges can go. So, North Carolinians should prepare (if those two Constitutional amendments pass) to pay more for nearly every local government service. Start making your lists of which local government services that will need to be eliminated.

Along those lines, education investments, including K-12 and higher education, represent 57 percent of NC’s General Fund spending. Critics claim NC ranks near the bottom nationwide in funding for education, and teacher salaries. If the Constitutional amendments pass and potential funds are capped, how do you propose the state get the funds needed to continue funding education and other services?

We can start by shifting the funds from the private schools back to the public schools where they belong. The complete answer must come from the Republicans because they need to accept responsibility for the mess that they have created and step up with a detailed answer to this question.

Teachers have told me that they are enraged when they hear someone brag that the large teacher pay increases in the new state budget are something to cel-

• See Q&A page 26

• CLASSIFIEDS •

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ANYTHING HAULEDAWAY? Call or text James of Going Gone at 828-421-2655. (7/30)

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

POOL SCHEDULE

• Lap Swim: Mon.-Fri. 6am-9:45am, and Saturday 10am-11pm - 6 lanes. Water Aerobics: 18 y+ Mon.-Fri. 10-11am with Karen Chambers. Adult Swim: 18y+ 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, Tues, Wed, Thurs. and Friday 10am-pm outdoors for the summer

MTN FINDINGS

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

FIBBER MAGEES

• Fibber Magee's Thrift Store on Laurel Street Hours. Wed. & Fri. - 10a to 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 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 WOMEN'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 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 is at 9a; meeting is at 10a. Email ncpost370@gmail.com or just join us at 9am.

Fri., Oct. 23

• At the Highlands Biological Center, Leaves of Change, 9-10a, at 111 Lower Lake Rd. FREE. No registration needed.

Thurs.-Sun., Oct. 22-25

• HCP presents Dracula Double Feature – Almost the Bride of Dracula and Mid-Life Dracula at the Martin Lipscomb Theatre on Chestnut Street. For tickets call 828-526-9047.

Sat., Oct. 24

• Mission Health hospitals will be hosting their annual "Crush the Crisis" prescription drug take back day on Saturday at HC Hospital and Angel Medical Center to help make safe medication disposal more accessible and raise awareness about the dangers of prescription drug misuse.

• At the Highlands Biological Center, Pressing Matters, 10a to

noon at Cook Pavilion, 888 Horse Cove Rd. FREE. Registration required.

• Public Open House, 289 Apple Circle, 1-4p. For more info, call Julie Osborn at 828-200-6165.

Tues., Oct. 27

• At the Highlands Biological Center, The Enchanted Forest, 5-6:30p. Meet at Valentine Meadow + Cook Pavilion, 888 Horse Cove Rd. FREE. No registration required.

Thurs., Oct. 29

• Highlands Soccer Field Town Hall meeting, 6-7 in the Community Building next to the ballfield. Community input on future of the field is wanted.

Fri., Oct. 30

• At the Highlands Biological Center, Creepy Critter Crawl, 9-10a. Meet at 111 Lower Lake Rd. FREE. No registration.

• At the Sky Valley Scaly Mountain Fire Dept. on Hale Ridge Road, Trunk or Treat dinner and haunted hallway 6-9 p.m.

• HCP presents a free holiday show – Orson Welles' War of the

Worlds 1938 radio script at 7pm at the Martin-Lipscomb Theatre on Chestnut Street.

Sat., Oct. 31

• Halloween on Main, 6-8 p.m. Trick-or-Treating, hot dogs and Hot chocolate. Live music – 64 and Down, High 5 and DJ Mike Murphy.

Sat., Nov. 7

• Highlanders are invited to attend a Day of Hope, Strength & Connection on Saturday from 10a-3p to learn about Stage-4 Hope and its Wellness Retreats. For information and to register call 833/402-8391.

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.

...Q&A continued from page 25

celebrate. The teachers and school employees I have listened to tell me that all the "increase" was eaten up by higher insurance costs and the lack of the "raises" being retroactive over the period when the Republicans couldn't agree among themselves to pass the state budget. Not to mention that veteran teachers and those holding master's degrees are left out of raises in the salary increase structure.

When relocating to an area, companies and corporations want to make sure there is a good education system, law enforcement and healthcare for their employees. Given potential state funding cuts this year, how would you entice them to come?

One answer is to put a Constitutional amendment on the ballot in 2028 to undo the two tax amendments if they pass. In the meantime, we will need to figure out what to cut from the State's budget and devise other

ways of increasing revenue. The second tax amendment is like when your favorite sports team makes a trade for "players to be named later," which always sounds lazy and shifty to me when they do it. The state's budget should not be a plaything for the Republicans to use as a way to drive voters to the polls.

A "a good education system, law enforcement and healthcare for their employees" may not be possible if the funding is not in the state's coffers. I would entice companies and corporations to come to WNC by explaining how we plan to either achieve or to keep the Democratic majority in the General Assembly.

Anything else you would like to impart to readers?

I will respond to anyone who contacts me at td@tom-downing4ncsenate.com. I check my email and I will respond.

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