

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Sept. 10, 2026

County attorney Ridenour says data center moratorium isn't needed

By Kristin Fox

Following the advice of the County Attorney Eric Ridenour, the Macon County Board

of Commissioners did not adopt a permanent moratorium on data centers at this week's monthly meeting of the board.

Instead, the board will rely on the amendment to its high impact use ordinance that board

• See **MORATORIUM** page 25

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It's dahlia time at The Bascom

Each September, the six-acre Bascom campus fills with dahlias. They arrive by the stem for judging, in arrangements set against paintings on the gallery walls, formed from clay in the studio, and worked in paint and paper through weeks of workshops.

Now in its 16th year, the Dazzling Dahlia Festival is The Bascom's annual celebration of horticulture in conversation with the visual arts on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau.

The 2026 festival runs Thurs., Sept. 10 through Sat., Sept. 12. Admission and all programs are free.

Sept. 10

- Arranging with Show-piece Flowers: Locally Grown Mountain Dahlias with Christy Curcuru

Sept 12

- Beginner Collage: Everything's Dahlias!
- The Dahlia Dialogue with Sonya Carpenter

For more information, go to: <https://thebascom.org>



Running concurrently on Sept. 11 and 12 in The Bascom's Studio Barn, is a pottery sale featuring handcrafted wall pockets and vases created by studio members. Each work will be adorned with fresh dahlias and available for purchase.

NC is first state to send out mail-in ballots

Since Friday the 4th MC Board of Elections has sent out 1 Military, 18 Overseas, and 201 Civilian ballots.

Last Friday, Sept. 4, county election boards began sending out absentee ballots to voters across the state. North Carolina is the first state in the nation to begin mail-in voting in the 2026 general election.

Who can vote by mail in North Carolina?

Any registered voter is allowed to vote by mail. It's used

by many North Carolinians who live overseas or are stationed in the military away from home. and any North Carolinian can vote absentee, regardless of where they are.

What do absentee voters have to do to mail-in vote?

Voters must follow three steps to vote by mail.

• See **BALLOTS** page 12

HPD issues charges for 'Obscene Visual Representation of Sexual Exploitation of a Minor'

By Chief Andrea Holland

On Fri., Sept. 4, at approximately 9:15 a.m., members of the Highlands Police Department, the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (NC SBI), and the Macon County Sheriff's Office served two search warrants

in connection with a cyber tip received through the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's (NCMEC) Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) program.

Following a lengthy investigation, • See **CHARGES** page 23

Film Takes Center Stage in the Mountains

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Let's talk 'affordble' housing

As I have said before, we should help our neighbors who are still recovering from Hurricane Helene. This weekend Sallie and I checked into a downtown hotel in Asheville, went shopping, and dined.

At the restaurant, a very professional young man was our server, and he told us he had worked in several restaurants in Highlands for several years.

I was curious why he no longer worked in Highlands, so I asked why he left. I should not have been surprised by his answer; I expected it. He told us it was too expensive to live in Highlands, and his long hours and long commute motivated him to leave and work in Asheville. While he liked working in Highlands and the money, he told us Asheville was more affordable, and he liked the community and the friends he had made. In short, he felt a part of the community where he could afford live.

His story is problematic for Highlands



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

and our future. We need a younger generation to live, work, and be a part of our community. But like so many places in American – maybe our situation in Highlands is on steroids -- these young professionals, no matter how hard they work, are severely challenged to make ends meet. Think about it: the prohibitive cost of housing, childcare, insurance, and student debt are just some of the stressors facing generations XYZ or whatever the next one is.

The young man that served us dinner chose to live where he could make connections and be a part of a community. Even the motivation of higher pay by traveling to work in Highlands did not keep him here.

I have said that I want to call a meeting of community leaders to discuss the issue of affordable, workforce, attainable housing. I still plan to do that, but before I do, I have another plan.

I am investing in a podcast system and believe I will be ready to post the first one soon. My goal is to do a series of podcasts on the housing issue before holding a public meeting. I want to bring in experts in housing and community leaders to do a series of podcasts on the housing issue, addressing the challenges, issues, and opportunities of housing in Highlands.

I also want to do a podcast with leaders in other communities that have addressed housing. For instance, Mayor Tim Radford of Murphy recently told me they just built 57 workforce housing units in Murphy. I want to do a podcast with him so we can all learn how they did it.

My goal is to frame the housing issue as a community effort to take action. We will have to study the issue initially in a broad context and then focus on what is attainable in Highlands. There may be multiple options to address the issue.

To me, tackling the housing issue here on the plateau will be a creative process. I do not know what the outcome will be, but as a community we have the determination to address the problem. Honestly, we may have a creative breakthrough or hit a dead end of momentous roadblocks. But I, for one, am willing to have the guts to try. I hope others are, too.

• SNAPSHOTS •

Joy and Sweetness



Photo by Kim Lewicki

Hummingbirds' search for nectar represents finding delight and small pleasures in everyday life.

Do you have a heart-felt, 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, 10-Sep	Fri, 11-Sep	Sat, 12-Sep	Sun, 13-Sep
			
79°F 59°F	78°F 60°F	71°F 61°F	75°F 61°F
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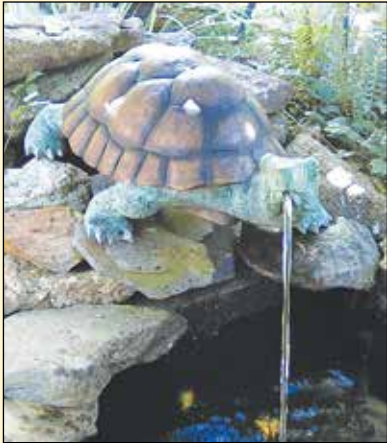
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• FINANCIAL MATTERS •

Never Forget!



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

Like many of you, the attacks of September 11th, 2001, are burned into my psyche in a way that will never allow me to forget what happened that day and where I was. Much like the way older Americans remember Pearl Harbor, the Boomers recall the assassination of President Kennedy, or the late Boomers like me the Challenger disaster, national defining moments have a way of being pressed into us so deeply, that they simply become part of us. That has been my experience.

I revisit that day each year by watching the events unfold, as they happened, to honor the victims and to not forget.

Sometime between 8:46 am and 9:03 am that morning, I walked into my office and my phone was ringing. The person on the other end was a newer client who had recently retired. As soon as I answered, it was obvious she was in a state of panic! Without a hello she said, "Mike, what is going to happen to my money? A plane flew into the World Trade Center!"

My response was like "What? What are you talking about?" She then tried to explain what was going on. I told her I would call her back and began searching for other colleagues to see if they knew what was going on.

Back then, the advisory firm I was with didn't have tv's or cable unless the advisor paid for it on their own. But we all knew Bill, an old timer with the firm, had a small color television and usually had on CNBC. Soon, five or six of us were congregating in his office, glued to the TV. It wasn't long before the second plane flew into the South Tower. At that point, I remember saying that "this guy BinLaden was behind the attack."

As I recall, we continued watching in horror as both buildings collapsed, the Pentagon was attacked and Flight 93 crashed near Shanksville, PA.

Soon there was footage of chaos in lower Manhattan, with people leaping from the burning towers and New Yorkers running for their lives covered in dust.

The next day Rudy Guiliani - at his very best - became "America's Mayor." And President Bush, at Ground Zero reassuring us that the perpetrators would be

found and prosecuted.

This horrific event, a full-blown terrorist attack on the U.S., was THE defining moment for the world in the 21st Century. But now, the events that first united our country have become a source of division that started on internet message boards - which were the social media of the day. In fact, I would go so far as to say the terrorist attack accomplished far more than the terrorists ever imagined.

The "war" that began that day is still raging.

The 25 years since the attacks have been anything but unifying. A year or so after the attacks, I had an uncomfortable conversation with a friend of a friend who had joined us quite a few times for lunch. In that conversation, for the first time I heard the message board conspiracy theory that President Bush had ordered the attacks so he could retaliate against Saddam Hussein. Let's just say I took exception to his theory and that was the last time I saw him.

In the years since, division and social media conspiracies have exploded! We now have people in the U.S. who believe "we deserved it," and that people who may still be wary of the attackers are Islamophobic. We are not.

I believe the changes we've seen and are seeing now are a direct result of 9/11. We essentially two groups in this country who have opposing world views resulting in the worst political division since the Civil War, more wars and more death, more attempted attacks throughout the West, leading to security and surveillance changes, and a distrust of our fellow Americans driven largely by politics and social media.

This September 11, let's unify as Americans around what really happened. Let's remember the 2,997 souls who perished and why - the heroes of the day, especially the first responders who died that day (and years later), the New Yorkers who helped their neighbors escape the buildings and lower Manhattan, and the leaders who led well that day and beyond.

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The Highlands/Cashiers market: strong values, more choices and a more thoughtful pace

The Highlands/Cashiers real estate market continues to demonstrate remarkable strength, but today's numbers also reveal an important shift: buyers have more choices, homes are taking longer to sell, and accurate pricing matters more than ever.

According to recent market insights from Realtor.com, the median listing price in Highlands is now approximately \$1.7 million — an increase of 10.37 percent from the same time last year and 10 percent from the previous month.

That figure reflects the continued desirability of Highlands and the enduring value buyers place on our mountain lifestyle. Our cool climate, natural beauty, vibrant downtown, exceptional dining, cultural offerings and wonderful club communities continue to attract buyers from across the Southeast and beyond.

However, the median listing price tells only one part of the story.

Highlands currently has approximately 269 active properties for sale, an increase of 1.69 percent from the previous month. While that is only a modest rise, it means buyers have more choices and may feel less pressure to make an immediate decision.

Homes are also remaining on the market longer. The current median is approximately 90 days — an increase of 22.52 percent from last year. This does not mean the market is weak. It means the market has become more deliberate.

Buyers are looking carefully, comparing properties and considering value before making an offer. They are paying close attention to condition, location, views, accessibility, renovations, club membership opportunities and the amount of work a home may require after closing.



Pat Allen, BIC
Pat Allen Realty Group
pat@patallenrealtygroup.com

The median listing price per square foot is currently approximately \$693. New home builders are quoting from \$750 and upwards of \$1,000 per square foot. While price per square foot can be helpful when comparing similar properties, it should never be used as the sole measure of value in a market as unique as ours.

Two Highlands homes of similar size can have dramatically different values based on elevation, view, privacy, road access, proximity to town, quality of construction, acreage, outdoor living areas and community amenities. A beautifully renovated home without in walking distance of Main Street cannot be evaluated in exactly the same way as a larger home farther from town.

What does all this mean for sellers?

The market remains supportive of strong values, but buyers are unlikely to overlook an ambitious price simply because the property is in Highlands or Cashiers. The first few weeks on the market are especially important. A home that is properly priced, beautifully presented and professionally marketed has the best opportunity to capture buyer attention before the listing begins to feel stale. A broker who is willing to stage or rearrange even minimally to create an inviting home can significantly cut down on days on market. My car was recently so loaded I couldn't find my computer for a day but was too tired loading and unloading to care! It was in the bottom of a box covered with throw pillows!

Sellers should also remember that the median listing price represents what owners are asking — not necessarily what buyers ultimately pay. The most reliable pricing strategy comes from carefully studying recent comparable sales, current

• See INVESTING page 8

The Dazzling Dahlia Festival

Each September, the six-acre Bascom campus fills with dahlias. They arrive by the stem for judging, in arrangements set against paintings on the gallery walls, formed from clay in the studio, and worked in paint and paper through weeks of workshops. Now in its 16th year, the *Dazzling Dahlia Festival* is The Bascom's annual celebration of horticulture in conversation with the visual arts on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau.



SEPT. 10-12

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Fall Reception

Sept. 10 | 5 pm



Petals and Perspectives

Sept. 10 | 5pm

Sept. 11 | 10am - 5 pm

Sept. 12 | 10am - 4pm



Single Bloom Competition

Sept. 11 | 3:30-5pm

Sept. 12 | 10am - 4pm



Dahlia Dialogue

with Sonya Carpenter

Sept. 12 | 11 am



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with Studio Members

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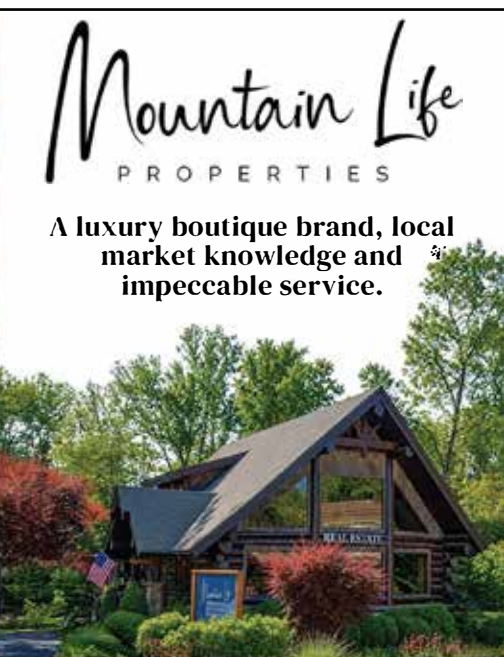
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...INVESTING continued from 6

competition and the features that make an individual property special.

Experienced brokers know how to price a property but may encounter sellers who think they know better. I had a situation in a popular neighborhood where our firm priced it at market value, staged it, eliminated clutter, and had obvious repairs done prior to listing it. The sellers had a “friend” over for dinner who said he had sold a lot of homes in his day and this one was way underpriced! I refused to mark it up \$300,000. The sellers then listed with another broker for a higher price and after months on the market and numerous reductions, it wound up selling for exactly the price we told him. Listening to so-called “experts” not in the business is like asking your dentist to remove your appendix!

For buyers, increased inventory and longer marketing times may create welcome opportunities. Buyers can take a little more time to compare homes, evaluate condition and determine whether a property truly fits the way they intend to enjoy the mountains. In some cases, there may also be more room for thoughtful negotiation.

Still, the most desirable homes — those with exceptional locations, compelling views, beautiful renovations or rare features — can attract attention quickly. More inventory does not mean every buyer will have unlimited time. I recently

worked with a buyer who immediately saw the perfect property pop up but was a day late getting here and it went under contract in three days!

The Highlands/Cashiers market is not standing still. It is adjusting from the unusually fast pace of recent years to a market that rewards preparation, realistic expectations and experienced guidance from brokers who work full-time and are in “the know.”

Strong values, growing choices and longer selling times may sound contradictory, but together they describe our market quite well: Highlands and Cashiers remain highly desirable, while buyers are becoming more selective about which properties justify today’s prices.

In real estate, the headline numbers are helpful. Understanding the story behind them is what leads to better decisions.

• 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@patalenrealtygroup.com or 828-200-9179. Office is located at 295 Dillard Road. To learn more about her interests visit patalenrealtygroup.com

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• LETTER •

We the people HAVE to be brave enough to say: 'No More - Enough'

Dear Editor:

I seriously doubt most Americans view our present political circumstances as I do, but I believe a case could be made that we are reliving the dilemma the colonists faced, the government that held authority over them didn't represent them.

I recall (so vividly) elementary school lessons pertaining to "taxation without representation." We need not prove whether we can govern ourselves but perhaps need reminding, our government doesn't own us, we own it. We're obligated, therefore, to reclaim what is rightfully ours or we will lose it.

I was reminded (and made aware of the colonist's predicament this past summer) when the King of England felt compelled to traverse "The Pond" that separates us, visit our "Great Commanding Theater" (as Thomas Jefferson described Congress), to refresh our memories why we once chose war to settle the issue of governance, review our Constitution, checks and balances, laws, rules, and sacred canons.

Make no mistake, we've allowed ourselves to be ruled by a conman, liar and master grifter who (promising peace) has brought only suffering and economic collapse to an already troubled world. Trump incited an armed mob to attack our Capitol (kill its defenders, if necessary) to overturn an election he knew he'd lost. He then wrongly pardoned 1,600 insurrectionists. This president has been convicted of more crimes than the vast majority of the people he's deported.

The United States is the undisputed epic-center of a chaotic and shattered society of nations. We have never looked weaker, more ridiculous, incompetent and untrustworthy to allies and adversaries alike around the world than we do right now.

Consequently, a new world order has emerged and we're not in it. To our allies our credibility no longer exists. This Administration has tossed that overboard along with our dignity, our integrity, and the last vestiges of our moral conscience.

To the rest of the world we appear a seriously flawed society with the intellectual characteristics akin to and paired with the moral virtues and integrity of a fur ball.

Through it all, even as Trump purges the experienced and knowledgeable leadership from our institutions, the Department of Homeland Security to the Pentagon, the veteran community remains deafeningly silent, seemingly willing to be complicit in this Administration's wrongdoings.

However, one USAF Major (Jason Watson) carried out what the U.S. Congress (together with veterans organizations: The American Legion, VFW and others) should have. Major Watson stood on the Capitol steps (in uniform), knowing full well he might sacrifice both his career and his freedom, and demanded President Trump be impeached, held accountable for his crimes against the Constitution, violations of U.S. and International laws, and removed from office. One man regarded his oath as sacred and acted on it.

Americans must understand -- there can be no justice in a nation where men like Trump are allowed to flourish. Does this once principled and prosperous nation not have a sufficient number of men and women of courage and enough soul left to say: "No More - Enough?"

**David L. Snell
Franklin**



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The Mirror Lake Improvement Association (M.L.I.A) Invites you to an important event to learn about the continuing DREDGING PLAN.

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...BALLOTS continued from 1

First, they must request a ballot by 5 p.m. on October 20. Military and overseas voters have longer, until 5 p.m. on Nov. 2.

Voters can request a ballot through the absentee ballot portal or print out a paper request form and mail or drop it off to their county election board office.

Second, each voter must fill out their own ballot. They have two choices: they can fill out their ballot in the presence of a notary public or they can do it in front of two witnesses 18-years-old or older. Witnesses must sign and print their names and addresses in the appropriate spot on the ballot envelopes. Notaries must properly notarize the ballot. These witnesses should observe that the voter filled out their ballot, but don't have to confirm their actual choices.

Voters must also comply with North Carolina's photo ID requirement. They may either attach a photocopy of a valid photo ID to a pocket on the outside of their ballot envelope, or include a photo ID exception form. The photocopy can be black and white, but it must be readable. Voters should not send their actual ID in the mail.

Voters also must sign the ballot envelope in the correct place. In North Carolina, there is no signature verification. While election officials will check to make sure the signature matches the name of the registered voter, they will not reject a ballot if the signature looks different from the one they have on file.

Third, voters must return their ballot to their county elections board. They can submit it through the U.S. Postal System. Absentee voters may also return ballots in person at an early voting site or at their county election board office.

Under state law, election officials can only accept absentee ballots that arrive by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day, regardless of when the ballots are postmarked.

Can anyone help me with my absentee ballot?

Voters can get help in requesting and returning their absentee ballots, to an extent.

All voters may have a legal guardian or near relative — defined as a spouse, sibling, parent, child, stepchild, grandparent, grandchild, stepparent, mother-in-

• See BALLOTS page 13

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...BALLOTS from 12

law, father-in-law, daughter-in-law or son-in-law — sign the absentee ballot request form on their behalf.

Only near relatives and legal guardians may return absentee ballots by mail or in person, if the ballot has already been sealed by the voter. Strangers, neighbors or any other person may not help, unless the voter has a disability.

Due to a 2022 court ruling, voters with disabilities may choose anyone to help them with their ballot, regardless of relationship. This most often comes into play at places like nursing homes. There are also trained bipartisan assistance teams to help voters fill out ballots.

Assistants may mark ballots at the voters' direction, or help voters fill out the envelope, if necessary. If someone does help a voter with their ballot, they must sign and print their name and address on the absentee ballot request form.

When should I return my absentee ballot to make sure it arrives on time?

Voters are advised to return their absentee ballot as soon as possible to ensure it arrives by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.

Absentee voters can track their absentee ballot as it moves through the process, through BallotTrax.

What if I don't think my ballot will arrive in time, or I change my mind about voting by mail?

Once county election boards receive an absentee ballot, they mark the voter in their system as having voted in the election. At that point, you will not be allowed to vote in person.

However, if the county board has not received your ballot, or you haven't sent it back, you may opt to vote early or in person on Election Day. If you do so, any absentee ballot received afterward will be discarded.

Are the rules different for overseas and military voters?

Yes, overseas and military voters undergo a slightly different process when voting by mail.

They can request an absentee ballot up until 5 p.m. on Nov. 2, the night before Election Day. However, their ballots still must arrive by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day or be sent out by 12:01 a.m. on Election Day.

They may use a Federal Postcard Application to register to vote and request

• See **BALLOTS** page 18

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Fall Home & Health Improvement - 2026

Best fall-flowering perennials – 7 expert-approved blooms for late-season color

Fill your yard with vibrant seasonal color by growing some of the best fall-flowering perennials

By Thomas Rutter

Despite shorter days and cooler temperatures as summer transitions to fall, many popular perennials will continue to put on vibrant displays in garden borders. While those long, hazy July days are a thing of the past, and win-

ter is very much on the way, fall-blooming perennials will inject some late-season color into your yard.

From September and October, many annuals and summer-flowering perennials will begin to droop and fade, so it is a good idea to incorporate one, two or seven of these fall-flowering perennials to extend the gardening season. Think pink and purple asters, golden-yellow black-eyed Susans, red canna lilies or white persicaria blooms - whatever your preference, many perennials will keep flowering until the first frost.

Whether you are looking for fall-blooming native plants or something unique and unknown, our guide has some of the best plants to grow this year for a spectacular fall show that will not disappoint.

7 best fall-flowering perennials

Black-eyed Susans

If you are looking to plant some of the longest-flowering perennials, it is hard to beat black-eyed Susans. These native plants are found growing across the prairies of North America, so they are well adapted to tolerate sun, wind and drought.

'Black-eyed Susans, or Rudbeckias, are some of the toughest perennials to grow,' says Sam Niemann, garden expert and founder of Grown by Design, a boutique landscape design firm based in San Diego. 'These native plants often produce golden, umber or crimson blooms, and will go on flowering late into the fall with little maintenance required.'

These classic perennials can be grown from US hardiness zone 3 and above and can be planted in your yard either in the fall or spring

Asters

Asters are native to North America and can be found



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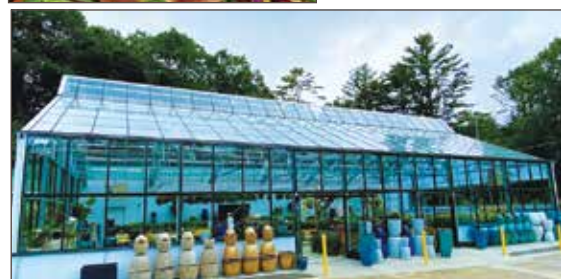
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growing in prairie lands across many states. Many of the best Aster varieties are late-blooming, producing daisy-like flowers long into October and even November.

Asters are excellent plants for the back of the border, often reaching five or six feet tall. One of my favorites is the purple flowering New England aster, *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*, which can be found growing across much of the central and northeastern United States and south-eastern Canada. These purple blooms are also an important food source during the monarch butterfly migration, providing late-season nectar for the remarkable traveling butterflies.

Typically, most asters can be grown from US hardiness zone 3 to US hardiness zone 8, and they are relatively resilient plants. I find they do best in moisture-retentive soil, so mulching your borders in the fall is a good idea to improve the structure and quality of your soil.

Japanese anemones

Japanese anemones are popular herbaceous perennials that can be grown in shady borders and yards. These late-season bloomers are notable for producing masses of pink or white flowers and can reach up to four or five feet tall. As woodland plants, Japanese anemones grow best in

rich, fertile and slightly moist soil, so avoid planting in a free-draining yard.

Growing best in US hardiness zone 5 to zone 8, Japanese anemones are excellent plants for fall pollinators, helping to feed bees, birds and butterflies still active late in the year.

If you already have this perennial growing in your yard, fall is the perfect time to propagate Japanese anemones. From September, you can lift and divide this perennial,

helping you to increase your fall-blooming collection in the year ahead.

Heleniums

Heleniums are a group of herbaceous plants in the Asteraceae - or daisy - family. Commonly known as sneeze weeds, Heleniums are native to the Americas, thriving in open spots with a preference for full sun.

• See FALL FLOWERS page 16



Asters



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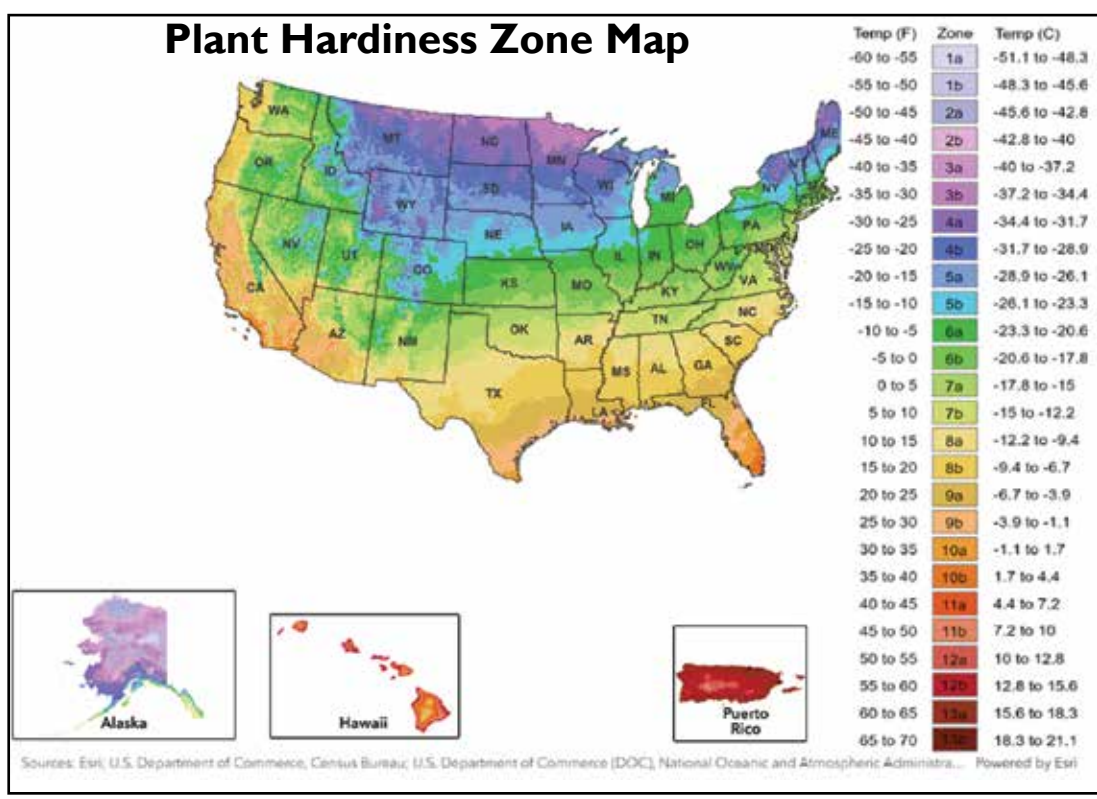
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...FALL FLOWERS continued from page 15

Plant Hardiness Zone Map



• See Fall Flowers page 17

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...FALL FLOWERS from page 16

Growing best from US hardiness zone 6 plus, there are many different species and varieties of *Helenium* that come in a range of sizes and colors. One of my favorites is *Helenium autumnale* 'blooming in orange and red and lasting until the first frost. If you are looking for a fall-blooming perennial with impact, this is the plant to grow.

As with other tall-flowering perennials, it is a good idea to stake and support *Helenium* plants. Many species can reach up to four feet tall, and can suffer during high winds or storms. Alternatively, fill your borders with other tall plants, such as ornamental grasses, dahlias and shrubs that will provide support and protection during high winds.

Persicaria

I have grown *Persicaria* in many different gardens where I have worked across the UK and in Italy. Whether planted under a tree in a shady yard or a sundrenched border, *Persicaria* plants seem to thrive in challenging conditions, leading many to consider these tough, robust perennials as ditch plants. During mild years, I have known *Persicaria* to go on flowering until November and even December.

Persicaria plants can be grown as perennials from US hardiness zone 4 to US hardiness zone 8, and while many species are native to Europe and Asia, there are a handful of native species found growing across North America.

One of my favorites is *Persicaria virginiana*, also called jumpseed, which has brilliant lime-green foliage with dark markings. This species is native to the eastern half of North America and grows well in partial to full shade, producing pink flower spikes late in the season.

Strawflowers

If you are planning a cut flower garden or would like to grow some unusual blooms to snip for vases in your home, strawflowers are impressive fall-flowering perennial plants to consider.

"Strawflowers are spectacular late-blooming plants," says Rachel Bull, head of gardens at Homes & Gardens. "As a flower grower and florist, I love using strawflowers for their sculptural and jewel-like blooms. Learning how to dry strawflowers is an easy way to create winter flower displays or fall wreaths to see you through until spring."

Strawflowers, *Xerochrysum bracteatum*, are better suited to warmer climates, thriving in US hardiness zone 8 and zone 9, where the winters are mild. In cooler zones, this plant should be treated as an annual.

Plant in a sunny spot and use a balanced flower fertilizer during the summer to prolong blooming,' Rachel says. 'With any luck, and regular deadheading, your plants should keep giving you beautiful blooms until the first cold snap.'

If you are a fan of tropical garden ideas, learning how to grow canna lilies might be a good idea. These vibrant perennials will certainly add some late-season color to your plot while also keeping those end-of-summer blues at bay.

Canna lilies

Canna lilies are perennial plants that thrive in sunny yards, and can be grown from US hardiness zone 6 to zone 10. In cooler zones, I suggest planting in a sheltered spot to provide some protection during the fall.

Generally speaking, canna lilies are easy to grow, and once established, they require little maintenance other than a spot of fertilizer every so often. In open or windy sites, it is best to stake the stems, as they can often reach up to six-eight feet tall.

There are many different species and colors to choose from, and whatever your preference, you will probably be able to find a canna lily to suit your tastes. One variety that I have grown and would recommend is *Canna × ehemannii*, which can reach up to 10 feet tall. This variety produces bright pink blooms that go on flowering until the first frost.



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...BALLOTS continued from 13

an absentee ballot. Voters can use an electronic portal or mail the application to the county they last resided.

Another recent update is that so-called Never Residents — U.S. citizens living abroad who have never resided in North Carolina, whether parents or guardians did, may not vote in elections in North Carolina.

What reasons might my absentee ballot be rejected?

Voters make mistakes. If witnesses do not include their names or signatures or notaries don't properly seal the ballot envelope, ballots must be rejected and re-issued to voters.

Voters must place their ballot in the container-return envelope and seal it. Once sealed, they should not open and re-seal the envelope. Then, voters should put the photocopy of their photo ID or an exception form in the pocket outside the container-return envelope. The container return envelope should then be placed in the outer return envelope.

State Board issued guidance requiring absentee ballots to be spoiled and reissued if the inner, container-return envelope is not sealed or the ballot is not inside the

container-return envelope.

If the container-return envelope appears to have been opened and resealed, but is returned in a sealed outer return envelope, the county elections board will contact voters and ask them to attest to how they sealed their ballot so it's possible voters may not have to fill out a new ballot.

The county elections board said my ballot needs to be "cured." What does that mean, and how do I do that?

There are times when voters can fix, or cure, their ballot without starting over.

This might happen if the voter doesn't sign in the correct location on their ballot application or if there are issues with their photo ID. When this happens, county election officials will notify voters by mail, and phone and email when possible, within one business day of uncovering the issue.

The notice will include the required instructions to fix the issue, may include a new ballot and will advise the voter on how to vote in person if they'd like to do that instead. Cure documentation must be received by the fifth business day after the election, under a recently passed law.

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• HS SPORTS RECAP •

Lady Highlanders break through as Highlands athletics enjoys strong week

It was an action-packed week for Highlands School athletics, filled with rivalry matchups, explosive individual performances, and milestone victories across both volleyball and soccer.

The action kicked off on the court, where the Middle School volleyball team set a winning tone at home. Looking to avenge a tough earlier-season loss to Murphy, the Lady Highlanders delivered a dominant performance, sweeping the match 2-0 in front of the home crowd. Later that evening, Varsity Volleyball took on conference rival Summit in a hard-fought contest, ultimately falling 3-0 despite a gritty effort.

On Wednesday, the action shifted to the pitch as the Varsity soccer team traveled to Blue Ridge for a key conference showdown. The Highlanders controlled the rhythm of play from the opening whistle, cruising to a convincing 4-1 victory. Rowen Carnes spearheaded the attack with a stellar hat-trick, netting three goals, while Michael Munoz delivered a complete performance of his own with one goal and two assists.



Brett Lamb
Athletic Director

Thursday proved to be a sweep-filled day on the road at Blue Ridge. Middle School volleyball kept their momentum rolling by taking their match 2-0, setting the stage for a major breakthrough by the Varsity squad. The Varsity Lady Highlanders earned their first win of the season in commanding fashion, shutting out the Lady Bobcats 3-0. After grinding out a tense 25-23 victory in the opening frame, Highlands blew the doors off in the second set with a staggering 25-4 run before closing out the conference win with a 25-19 final set.

The week's scheduled finale featured plenty of school spirit as the Student Government Association hosted an energetic pep rally to send off the home Varsity soccer team ahead of their clash with Franklin. However, Mother Nature had other plans. Heavy rains rendered the playing surface unsafe, forcing the match to be postponed.

With multiple victories under their belt and key programs hitting their stride, the Highlanders will look to carry that momentum straight into another busy week of competition.



Rowen Carnes vs Blue Ridge scoring one of his 3 goals on the day.

Photo by
Todd Sumner

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• HOSPITAL NEWS •

Mission Health investment helps expand nursing education, strengthen WNC healthcare workforce

Partnership with Western Carolina University supports growth of nursing program and new MSN pathway

Mission Health's continued investment in nursing education is helping strengthen the healthcare workforce across Western North Carolina through its academic partnership with Western Carolina University (WCU).

Since 2022, Mission Health has supported an additional full-time nursing faculty position at WCU's School of Nursing, enabling the university to increase enrollment by 10 nursing students each year in response to the growing need for nurses across the region.

"Preparing the next generation of nurses is one of the best investments we can make in the health of our communities," said Greg Lowe, President of Mission Health. "We're proud to partner with Western Carolina University to help expand educational opportunities, strengthen the healthcare workforce and ensure patients throughout Western North Carolina continue to have access to exceptional care close to home. Partnerships like this demonstrate our shared commitment to the future of healthcare in our region."

In addition to increasing undergraduate nursing enrollment, WCU's new Pre-Licensure Master of Science in Nursing program creates another pathway into the profession for individuals who already hold bachelor's degrees in other fields. The inaugural cohort of 11 students will complete clinical rotations at Angel Medical Center and Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, giving students valuable experience in rural healthcare settings while helping build the future nursing workforce for the region.

"We are excited to see the impact of this partnership as we continue working together, and Mission Health's continued investment in nursing education demonstrates the power of partnership in addressing critical healthcare workforce needs," said Lori Anderson, PhD, RN, Dean and Professor, Western Carolina University.

"Several years ago, we recognized that overcoming the region's nursing shortage would require all of us working together, and this collaboration has turned that commitment into action. By expanding enrollment, supporting innovative pathways into nursing, and strengthening clinical training opportunities, we are preparing more highly qualified nurses to serve Western North Carolina. WCU is proud to partner with Mission Health to build a stronger, healthier future for the communities we serve."

The academic partnership was established to help address the growing demand for nurses by expanding educational capacity at WCU while strengthening collaboration between the university and Mission Health hospitals through clinical training opportunities. Together, Mission Health and WCU are helping prepare more nurses through increased enrollment, clinical training opportunities and collaboration between educators and healthcare providers, with students gaining hands-on experience caring for patients in the communities they may one day serve.

ABOUT MISSION HEALTH

Mission Health, based in Asheville, North Carolina is part of HCA Healthcare and serves as the leading healthcare system for Western North Carolina and the adjoining region. Operating 1,219 licensed beds across six acute care hospitals and one inpatient rehabilitation hospital, Mission Health offers numerous satellite practices, post-acute care provider CarePartners and the region's only ACS-verified level I trauma center. As the largest employer in the region, Mission Health is committed to improving the health and wellness of the people of Western North Carolina. For more information, please visit MissionHealthNC.org or [@MissionHealthNC](https://twitter.com/MissionHealthNC).

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Thurs., Sept. 17

(MLT Theatre at PAC)

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10-11:30a

Mallory's Ghost

1:30-3p

The Oldest Person in the World

6-7:30 p

(PAC Main Stage)

Honeyjoon

11a-12:30p

The Last Class and conversation w/the filmmakers

3:15-5:15p

If These Walls Could Rock

8-9:30p

Fri., Sept. 18

(MLT Stage at PAC)

SHORTS Block 2

11a-12:30p

Susan

2:45-4:15p

(PAC Main Stage)

Horror Deconstructed Workshop

10-11:15a

Path of the Panther and Wildlife Corridor Panel with the filmmakers

12:15-2:30p

Papertown

4:30-6p

Patriots Day and conversation with the screenwriter

6:45-9p

Sat., Sept. 19

(MLT at PAC)

Hold On To Me

2:30-4:15p

(PAC Main Stage)

Inside the Grid: The design of TRON: Ares Presented by Darby Fucinto w/ Christian Haberkern

10:30a-noon

Natchez

12:45-2:15p

Black & White Masquerade (Exclusive for Sponsors and Film Society Members only) - 6-9:30p

The Black & White Masquerade transforms the PAC for an unforgettable Festival celebration. Dress in black and white, don your favorite mask, and join us for an evening centered around the 1926 silent-film classic The Phantom of the Opera, on the big screen with a live orchestral performance by musicians from WCU. Following the performance, the Awards Ceremony for competition films will be presented on stage while sweets and champagne are served.



"Honeyjoon" Brings Tribeca-Winning Comedy to HCFF

Sept 16-19, 2026

Honeyjoon, a debut feature awarded the AT&T Untold Stories Award (the world's largest production prize), will screen in competition at HCFF next month. Catch the film September 17th at 11:00 a.m. at the Highlands Performing Arts Center.

Honeyjoon is a surprisingly sexy, darkly funny emotional rollercoaster. In this layered dark comedy, June and her Persian-British mom, Lela, travel to the romantic Azores islands for a grief anniversary, each with her own way of coping. A hot, philosophical surfer takes them on a tour as we surf the waves of life, loss, and flirting... an unforgettable ride.

"I didn't know a trip to a volcanic island in the middle of the Atlantic would change my life," said director Lilian T. Mehrel. "As a filmmaker, my holy trifacta is dark comedy, layered emotion, and stunning cinema. When I see the potential for those to combine, the sparks of inspiration start flying. Turns out grieving on a beautiful island was the perfect inspiration for a surprisingly sexy, life-affirming dark comedy."

Honeyjoon premiered at Tribeca and has since screened at 50 festivals, winning the Tribeca AT&T Untold Stories Award along with multiple audience and jury awards.

Director Lilian T. Mehrel brilliantly transforms grief, desire, and human connection into something electric, introducing a visionary new voice. She earned her MFA from NYU Tisch Grad Film and her BA from Dartmouth - and when she's not directing, she enjoys hip hop dance.



Honeyjoon is one of eight competition films at this year's HCFF, a four-day festival bringing world-class documentaries and narratives to downtown Highlands. Festival passes are available at: www.highlandscashiersfilmfestival.com/passes

SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING



God's word as 'Absolute' is absolutely necessary

Pastor Mark Ford
First Baptist Church
Highlands

To speak of God's Holy Scriptures as absolute is to declare that the Bible as handed down and preserved by the Church is complete in its total expressions as regards doctrinal and moral teachings – free from exceptions and sufficient for the Christian life and faith.

As Christians we need not turn anywhere else for guidance regarding truth and perceptions of reality, as once we have encountered and accepted the efficacious and powerful impact of the Word, we receive a new mindset, a new consciousness, and new lens through which to see reality.

These changes through the Revelation of God's will and purposes in the redemption secured through Christ and His divine Lordship naturally produces in His people a passionate loyalty that works itself out publicly and in defiance of all earthly authorities and ideologies that are pretenders to the throne of truth and power.

Our "confidence" – "con" meaning with, "fide" meaning faith – is that God's Word is humankind's ultimate absolute for life and absolutely necessary to produce meaningful, eternal change in people's lives and our present world.

And yet, if the Word we preach and the Gospel it proclaims has no spiritual power and no cultural, moral, and public-affairs shaping impact in our present world, one must truly wonder if it is THE Word of God that we say we believe in and teach from our pulpits? Or have we traded in the Absolute of the Holy Scriptures for the accommodations of compromise, relevance, and popular acceptance in our churches and pulpits? We must courageously declare in total the Word of God and remember that in doing so we find ourselves in direct defiance of false perceptions and alternate realities of the present culture that reject out of hand the authoritative claims of Christ and His Word!

It was Augustine who taught us long ago that the City of God – God's people dedicated to divine truth – must resist the Earthly City. This latter being dedicated to self-love, worldly pleasures, power, and anti-God sentiments. Therefore, the church that seeks to promote the Absolute of God's Word in trying to change people's minds and hearts and seeks to re-build local communities under the Lordship of Christ is going to clash with the powers of our times. Jesus promised this (John 15:18-

• 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.

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

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

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

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road
The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.

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

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741
Rev. Ken Langsdorf

Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.
Visit our website: Holy Family Lutheran Highlands NC

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11. Choir: 6 p.m.
Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.: 7 p.m.

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

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

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church
Sun: 10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church. 4224 Big Ridge
(4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

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CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone – 526-2418
Sat. 4pm thru Oct 24.; Sun. - 11am

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

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

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

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

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

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

ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

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

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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

...CHARGES continued from page 1

gation, a Highlands Police Department detective determined that the IP address associated with the reported activity was linked to the residence at 155 Shelby Drive, Highlands.

Investigators subsequently determined that the individual believed to be responsible for the reported activity resided at 161 E. View Road. As a result, both residences were searched for evidence related to child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

Detective Amber Wright charged Henry Bullock Salzarulo, date of birth April 4, 1996,



Henry Bullock Salzarulo

of 161 E. View Road, Highlands, with two counts of Obscene Visual Representation of Sexual

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 22

21). Paul described the spiritual realities of this clash (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Today there is a great deal of talk about a “big tent” from the ideological and cultural left that seeks to house all stripes of beliefs from progressives, “woke” advocates, socialists, anti-fascism, Muslims, etc. Ironically, there is no room in

their tent for traditional, conservative advocates of the Christian faith that hold to the absolutes of the Word of God – not that we would want to be there!

Yet, God’s tent is sufficient for us, and is ruled exclusively by God’s Word, which excludes all other pretenders to Truth and their false ideologies. As my Dad and Mom would say occasionally,

Exploitation of a Minor. The arrest warrant was served by the Macon County Sheriff’s Office. Bond was set by the magistrate at \$6,000. His court date is Sept. 15.

The Highlands Police Department would like to thank the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation and the Macon County Sheriff’s Office for their assistance and cooperation throughout this investigation.

All defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

“Our house, our rules.” God’s tent, God’s rules – as found in the Holy Scriptures. In His tent is forgiveness, grace, mercy, peace and love – but also His clear rules for living holy lives and preparing for the next life.

God’s Word is absolute, and absolutely necessary!

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Aug. 29. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

• Officers issued 17 Citations and 35 Warning Tickets

Aug. 29

• At 5 p.m., officers responded to a call of the larceny of a Tiffany’s necklace valued at \$3,200 taken by someone who had been working in a residence on Brooks Road.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Sept. 1

Sept. 1

• At 12:02 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Brushy Face Road.

Sept. 3

• At 10:34 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Pierson Drive.

• At 3:42 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Overlook Villas.

Sept. 4

• At 4:34 p.m., the dept. re-

sponded to a call of a tree on a power line and house on Wyanoak Road.

Sept. 5

• At noon, the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Bear Mor Ridge.

• At 4:32 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Sanctuary Ridge.

Sept. 6

• At 8:41 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Hickory Hill Road.

Sept. 7

• A little past midnight, the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Split Rail Row.

• At 6:17 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Mirror Lake Road.

• At 2:15 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Horse Cove Road.

• At 6:17 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Chestnut Cove.

Sept. 8

• At 1:22 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Kelsey Court.

Horror Deconstructed

is with local sculptor and Academy Award winner, Wesley Wofford who will share his experiences creating special effects for movies such as Hannibal and will include Clara Stack, granddaughter of a Highlands resident and young American actress who stars in the HBO prequel series, *IT: Welcome to Derry*.



**Single Tickets
to select films and seminars
are now available!**



**Tickets are also available for the
VIP FEATURED SPECIAL WORKSHOPS:**

Horror Deconstructed

Friday, Sept. 18 at 10 AM
and

Inside the Grid: The Design of Tron: Ares

Saturday, Sept. 19 at 10:30 AM.

Both these are \$22/per and feature local people and those with regional ties.

Inside the Grid

Go behind the scenes of Tron: Ares and explore the design of its digital world. Presented by Darby Facinto, of Nashville and local Highlands resident, Christian Haberkern. This seminar offers an inside look at the creation of the film’s futuristic UI, HUDs, and motion graphics — exploring the inspiration, creative process, and visual effects behind bringing the Grid to life.



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...MORATORIUM continued from page 1

passed at its August meeting to dissuade data centers from locating in Macon County.

During several public comment periods, citizens have spoken up expressing their opposition to data centers being in the county. Many citizens have stated the county's high impact use ordinance is not strict enough and requested the county adopt a moratorium against data centers.

Last month, commissioners gave the county attorney the charge to consider the legalities of adding an additional layer to the ordinance by passing a moratorium on data centers.

"Legally the answer is yes we could add the additional layer by putting on a moratorium in addition to the ordinance that we passed; however, I don't think that it strengthens anything that we have done," said Ridenour. "I actually think in the long run it could potentially weaken it, in that we have already done and gone through the process that would be required in a moratorium."

Ridenour spoke of Highlands' moratorium stating the town has "unquestionably the best moratorium ordinance he has ever seen." He stated that the town's end result of passing the moratorium is that they are now going to send it to their planning department and town attorney to decide what is the best way to approach it legally based on what they have to work with and the bandwidth they have to enact it."

"We have already done that process, and I think if we go back and restart what we have already accomplished, it appears that it undermines the work that we have put into it," he added. "I think we are ahead of the game; we already have ours in place, it is legally sound, and it's something that we have the ability to control. It doesn't open up loopholes; you start adding decibels to things, that opens up loopholes. You create additional loopholes that can be attacked rather than just going straight at it stating this is what we can do within our bandwidth without opening loopholes."

He said he liked what was in place -- better than a moratorium.

Last month, commissioners approved an amendment to the county's high impact ordinance that would restrict data centers from locating in Macon County.

The provisions of this ordinance, known as the "Amended and Restated Ordinance Regulating High-Impact Land Uses in Macon County," were changed to add data centers to the definition of high-impact uses of any land now defined as 'cryptocurrency mining, data centers and server-based facilities.'"

The amended definition includes "Cryptocurrency

mining, data centers and server-based facilities: The use of land, buildings, or structures for cryptocurrency mining, data processing, cloud computing, data storage, server hosting, colocation services, artificial intelligence computing or similar server-based operations utilizing specialized computer equipment. Such uses include facilities that may operate continuously, involve significant electrical demand, water usage, cooling infrastructure, backup power generation or the generation of sustained ambient noise from servers, cooling equipment and related systems."

The amendment also includes legal restraints that would restrict data centers in the county, but not prohibit them outright.

Under locational, screening and mitigation requirements specifications for data centers were added as follows:

"Hours of operation – High-impact uses shall conduct operations only between the hours of six o'clock a.m. and ten o'clock p.m. "except those operations that fall under the definition of "cryptocurrency mining, data centers and server-based facilities" which shall be confined to operating between the hours of eight o'clock a.m. to five o'clock p.m."

The key is restricting the operating hours of operation from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. would make it impractical for data centers to locate in Macon County as they require 24/7 hours of operation.

A further restriction included in the amendment was "The use of cargo containers, railroad cars, semi-truck trailers and other similar storage containers for any component of the operation within a cryptocurrency mining facility, data centers (added) and/or similar server-based facilities is prohibited."

The amendment also specifies the setbacks for high impact use, such as data centers. The requirement for cryptocurrency mining, data centers and/or similar server-based facilities includes a stream setback of 150 feet and principal use setback of 750 feet.

The provisions of high impact use ordinance apply to all unincorporated areas of Macon County lying outside of the corporate limits and the extraterritorial jurisdiction of any municipality.

The set purpose of this ordinance is to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of Macon County by diminishing the impacts of certain land uses which, by their nature, produce noise, odors, vibrations, fumes, light, smoke, dust and other impacts which interfere with the quiet enjoyment of adjacent lands and disturb the peace and dignity of the county.

• 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.

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 MAGEE'S

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

FARMERS MARKET

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

ALL WEEK

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

Mon. & Thurs.

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

Mon-Wed-Fri

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

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

Mon., Tues., Thurs.

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

2nd Mondays

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

4th Mondays

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

2nd Tuesdays

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

Tuesdays

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

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

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

Tuesdays & Thurs.

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

Wednesdays

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

• 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

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

Thurs., Sept. 10

• Mirror Lake Improvement Association annual meeting at the Mirror Lake Bridge at 6p. Michael Hanson (McGill & Associates), the Engineering Firm retained by Town of Highlands, will address, explain, discuss, and take questions regarding the continuing Mirror Lake Dredging Phases 2 & 3.

• Bingo for The Literacy & Learning Center partnering with the Highlands Rotary Club fBingo Night at 6:30p in the Community Building by the ballfield.

Tues., Sept. 11

• HPD And HFD will present a short memorial on 9/11 at 9am at the Highlands Police Dept front parking lot/Veterans Memorial Park. 372 Oak Street.

• An Open House at Blue Ridge Health on the HC Hospital campus to introduce Sherry Burkett, DNP, to the community she now serves from 1-4pm at 209 Hospital Drive #301.

Mon., Sept. 14

• Cashiers Cares 5th annual golf tournament will be held at

Trillium Golf Club Play is limited to first 96 players to sign up and Cost is \$300/player. The format is a scramble start at 10:30 AM. Lunch is provided and also awards party at the golf course. Raffles and Silent Auction featuring local merchants will be part of the activities, including golf foursomes at private clubs here on the plateau. There will be a Long Drive event with a Golf Pro and the chance to win a trip to Pebble Beach to play golf. To sign up to play in the tournament go to <https://cashierscares.org> the details.

Tues, Sept. 15

• At First Presbyterian Church Highlands in Coleman Hall, "Suicide Prevention & Mental Health Advocacy with Dennis Gillan, suicide prevention advocate. 1a coffee & light bites, 10:15a presentation.

Wed, Sept 16

• A FREE 2nd showing of Rise, Ruin, and Restoration: A History of Lake Toxaway. The Return of Lake Toxaway is at 1p at the PAC. Documentary chronicles the creation of the resort on Lake Toxaway, the dramatic collapse of the dam in 1916, and the effort to resurrect the mountain lake some 40 years later. Director Dan Johnson will be available for comments following the film. Registration is required. Seating is limited. Arrive early. Register at www.eventbrite.com/e/1996882373935?aff=oddttdcreator

• 2nd Annual Highlands Cashiers Film Festival Kick-Off Party - Free and open to the public at 6p at PAC. Bring the family, a picnic and lawn chairs and gather round a bonfire (weather permitting) with live music from Silly Ridge, Highlands-based acoustic bluegrass band, and enjoy a first meet-and-greet with Artistic Director Joy Jorgensen.

Wed.-Sat Sept. 16-19

• 2nd Annual Highlands Cashiers Film Festival held at the Highlands Performing Arts Center on Chestnut Street. For lineup and tickets go to www.highlandscashiersfilmfestival.com

Thurs., Sept. 17

• Library Party at the Hudson Library from 5-7 p.m. Unveiling the capital campaigns and newly completed outdoor spaces 5-7 p.m. Live music, food and drinks and tours.

Sat.-Sun., Sept. 19-20

• The Power of a Beautiful State: a 2-Day inner journey to calm, creativity and connection. The Mountain Retreat Ctr., \$150 to \$275. Info: LindaChmar@gmail.com or 404-909-9904

Sun., Sept. 20

• CLE's free annual Porchfest from 1-6 PM. Over 40 musicians will perform across 16 venues in Downtown Highlands.

Mon., Sept. 21

• The 2026 Town of Highlands Scholarship Golf Tournament at the Cullasaja Club. The day will begin with a light breakfast, followed by at 10:30AM shotgun start. Following golf, there is a full buffet dinner in the Cullasaja Club clubhouse. The event will be capped off at 28 teams. The cost is \$800 per team (\$200/player). Hole sponsorships are available, as well as a variety of sponsorship levels. Mike and Jim Bryson are sponsors of the event. For more information call Brian Stiehler (787-2778) or to register, contact Gibby Shaheen at Town Hall by calling 526-2118.

Sept. 25

• OBAGI Day at Rejuvenate Medical Spa, at Highlands Cashiers Hospital campus Suite 202. 20% off all produces and any laser or spa service booked that day. Call 828-482-4430.

Sat. Sept. 26

• The Annual FREE Highlands Heritage Jamboree is at the KH Founders Park. It's a free event of live music, mountain dance, history and food. From 1:30-3:30p, it's the US Fleet Forces Navy Band: Four-Star Edition. At 3:30p the Foxfire Boys will perform. At 4p Highlands Smokehouse BBQ and moonshine will be available. Then from 5-7:30p it's the Darren Nicholson Band.

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