

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Sept. 17, 2026

HCA Healthcare investing \$32 million in Mission Health facilities in WNC

By Nancy Lindell

HCA Healthcare is investing more than \$32 million across Mission Health facilities in Western North Carolina

to strengthen the safety, quality, and capabilities of care for patients throughout the region.

The investment includes nearly \$15 million for imaging and diagnostic technology and more

• See HCA HEALTH page 17

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Bishop consecrates new OLM Catholic Church

'Treasure this moment; OLM is now a parish'

By Lisa Geraci

The consecration of a new Our Lady of the Mountains Church began Sunday with the chirping of crickets and ended with a cascade of rose petals, marking two milestones for the Diocese of Charlotte: a new church and a new parish.

The Sept. 6 Mass was celebrated by Bishop Michael Martin and Father Jason Barone. It was a historic first for them both, as well as the 300 people who gathered inside the Baroque-style church perched atop a hill in the aptly-named town of Highlands.

The 8,000-square-foot, \$15 million church still needs some finishing work, but the consecration date was selected so the community could celebrate before the mostly seasonal congregation relocates after the Labor Day holiday.

This was the first time many witnessed the special rite in which a building is consecrated and set aside as a sacred house of worship – and they were not alone in celebrating. Crickets inside the church had joined in with the voices of the choir singing the entrance hymn.

“Crickets... usually the mention of the word speaks to silence, and yet, this morning even the crickets rejoice,” the bishop joked as he greeted the congregation.

• See OLM CHURCH page 4

Right: During the closing procession thousands of rose petals were dropped through the oculus, a circular window in the dome of the new church – a tradition that dates to the year 609 at the Pantheon in Rome, and represents the Holy Spirit's descent on Mary and the apostles at Pentecost.

– Photos by Troy C. Hull



An aging activity bus fleet poses safety issues

By Kristin Fox

The Macon County School System is facing a shortage of activity buses to provide safe transportation for students to sporting and other events.

The 18 activity buses fleet average high mileage of 126,000 miles poses a greater risk of breakdowns potentially leaving students stranded on the side of the road.

In June, the school system's transportation department had to remove one of the activity buses from service due to excessive exhaust fumes entering the passenger compartment caused from the engine's worn piston rings. It is estimated to cost approximately \$30,000 to replace the engine on the bus which is

• See BUS page 25

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

• MILESTONE •

Mirror Lake residents turn out for meeting

On Thurs., Sept. 17, the Highlands Town Board will hold two meetings. At 6 pm, the Town Board and Planning Board will hold a joint meeting to review and discuss how to proceed with an assessment of the Highlands Comprehensive Plan. We are approaching the 5-year midpoint of the plan's implementation, and it is time to evaluate where we are in the process. At 7 pm the board will hold its monthly business meeting. Both sessions will be at the Highlands Community Center next to the ballpark. They will be accessible through the YouTube link on the town website.

I want to take this opportunity to update you on an important meeting the Mirror Lake Improvement Association held last Thursday at the small park next to the Hicks Road Bridge. I, along



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

with Mayor Pro Temp Jim Tate and Commissioner Bill Grubb, attended the meeting to share and discuss dredging plans with residents. Also in attendance was Mike Hansen of McGill Engineering.

It was a good strategy to hold the meeting at the lake. I printed all the dredging documents Mike presented to the board in August in a 24"x 36" format. They were mounted on

large 4'x8' foam insulation boards so everyone could clearly examine them on site, right in front of the lake, and ask questions. We also had a board where attendees could post questions and concerns about the project.

What I am about to summarize is a compilation of Mike's presentation, residents' questions, suggestions, and concerns from the comment board.

Mike King of the Mirror Lake Improvement Association opened the meeting and provided a background statement. He suggested naming the small park where the meeting was held in memory of a loved one and one of the major private donors of Phase 1. My response was that the park is owned by the association, and that decision would be theirs, not the town's.

Mike also said his association would like to expand the park where we were meeting by filling in a diagonal area that would begin at the tip of the park end near the parking pull-offs near the bridge. That project would be a homeowner's initiative. It is a very good idea.

I had the opportunity to explain that the documents on display reflected what the board had approved at the August meeting. I emphasized two things. First, any major changes to the approved plans would have to come before the Town Board again. Second, the plans were preliminary outlines. In the coming months, McGill will continue to work on detailed construction and bid documents.

Mike Hansen was asked about the

• See MAYOR page 12



Photo by Jim Lewicki

Community gathers to remember 9-11

The morning of Friday, Sept. 11, HPD Chief Andrea Holland spoke at the 9/11 memorial ceremony held at the park in front of the police station where the flag was lowered by HF&R members.

She said Sept. 11 is the day we remember where we were that morning in 2001 when 3,000 people who went to work ready to pursue an ordinary day, never came home.

She said we remember the courage and compassion of the people who stepped up

that day – firefighters, police officers, paramedics, military personnel, airline crews and countless ordinary citizens who carried strangers down flights of stairs, opened their homes to those stranded, or made phone calls to those they loved.

"Twenty-five years later we can't change what happened, but we can remember the countless acts of kindness and courage, the people who were lost and those left behind, so we will never forget."

• WEATHER •

Thu, 17-Sep	Fri, 18-Sep	Sat, 19-Sep	Sun, 20-Sep
			
79°F 61°F	77°F 61°F	73°F 62°F	74°F 58°F
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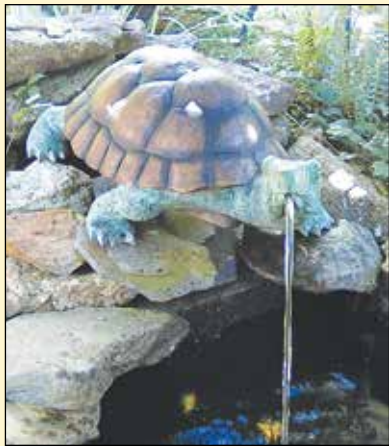
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...OLM CHURCH continued from page 1



Before the Liturgy of the Eucharist began, the altar was dressed in linens and candles were lit, by Father Barone and others, representing the light of Christ.

"This is, in many ways, probably a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I am 64 and have never been to one, let alone as the bishop," he continued. "Treasure this moment – it is unique in the life of the Church."

Sacred moments shared

During the consecration rite, Father Barone, parochial administrator, formally presented the construction drawings to the bishop, who held them up to represent his acceptance of the church on behalf of the diocese. The bishop then blessed the walls of the church and the people with holy water.

The choir sang the Litany of the Saints before the bishop sealed a first-class relic of St. Justine into the altar.

He then anointed the altar with chrism and lit a brazier of incense to represent the prayers of the faithful rising to heaven. Clergy then incensed the parishioners, and before the Liturgy of the Eucharist began, the altar was dressed in linens and candles were lit, representing the light of Christ.

A beacon to the world

In his homily, Bishop Martin noted the grandeur of the sacred space and encouraged the congregation to bring the joy of the day's celebration out into the world – sharing the Gospel message of salvation with others.

"This beautiful new church stands

as a beacon to remind us every single day of what the world needs and what we have been sent to accomplish," he said. "We do not come here just to receive God's Word... we come here to be touched by it, claimed by it and to go forth to proclaim it by our lives and our words. If all we did was create a beautiful space to hear God's Word and crickets thereafter, we have missed the purpose for which God's Word goes out."

His homily ended with a standing ovation as he praised the efforts of Father Barone, who has devoted many hours to planning the beautiful structure for his parishioners and for the glory of God.

Bishop Martin noted it is fitting that the building is not yet completed, since the work of the Church is ongoing.

"Not in the studs that we still see exposed, not in the concrete floor... but in the way the Church envisions a holy, sacred space like this being a springboard for building the Body of Christ," he said. "We have to build God's kingdom wherever we go ... now the real work starts. May this sacred space, this consecrated church, empower all of us to build God's kingdom."

A cascade of blessings

There was one final surprise. The JD Davis team that spent most of the

• See OLM CHURCH page 8

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Sexy sells. Boring protects.

Everyone notices the view. They notice the kitchen, fireplace, stonework, and mountain architecture. Those are the things that make us fall in love with a property. But after working with mountain homes, I've learned that some of the most valuable features are the ones nobody puts in the listing headline: good drainage, a manageable driveway, adequate parking, a great roof, functional storage, reliable utilities, good access, and a sensible floor plan.

Nobody falls in love with a drainage system. Nobody walks into a house and says, "Look at that beautiful roof. I need this house." And I doubt anyone has put "excellent parking situation" on their dream home vision board. But these are the things that can make a mountain property easier, less expensive, and more enjoyable to own.

Take drainage. It may be one of the least exciting things to discuss when touring a home, but in the mountains, water matters, especially when you're dealing with steep and varied terrain. Where does it go after a hard rain? Are the grading, drainage systems, and retaining walls doing their jobs? The same goes for the driveway. Is it manageable in rain, leaves, or winter weather? Can you and your guests comfortably get in and out? And when everyone arrives for Thanksgiving or a gathering, is there enough parking?

Then there are the things you appreciate every day but rarely think about until there is a problem: a solid roof, reliable utilities, enough storage, good access, and a floor plan that makes sense. Where do you put the hiking gear, boots, and firewood? Can contractors, deliveries, and emergency services easily reach the property? Does the house actually work for the way you live?

And that's really the point. Some



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things sell the dream, while other things protect the investment. The view, kitchen, and fireplace create the emotional connection, but the practical features help protect that excitement after closing. When it is time to sell, deferred maintenance, drainage concerns, or a difficult driveway can quickly become negotiating points after an inspection. You may not get a dollar-for-dollar return on every maintenance ex-

pense, but keeping up with the property can prevent a buyer from finding problems they can use as leverage.

The same principle applies when preparing a home for sale. Most buyers do not have great imaginations or look past certain things. Pack up what you can, clear the clutter, thin out closets, keep the driveway and entrance clean, and make the property look cared for. You have spent years making the house yours. Now you need to give the next buyer room to imagine making it theirs. You want them focused on the view and imagining their morning coffee on the porch, not wondering how much it will cost to replace the roof.

Sexy sells. Boring protects. The beautiful features may get someone through the front door, but good drainage, a manageable driveway, adequate parking, a solid roof, functional storage, reliable utilities, good access, and a sensible floor plan are the things that can make an owner glad they bought the property years later. Sometimes, the smartest investment is the stuff quietly doing its job in the background.

• Kara Hardy is a broker with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Meadows Mountain Realty. She serves Highlands, Cashiers, Glenville, Sapphire, Lake Toxaway, Scaly Mountain and Franklin. Kara can be reached at (407) 617-6006 or via email at kara@bhhsmmr.com.

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...OLM CHURCH continued from page 4

last year building the church, snuck up to the rooftop during the closing procession to drop thousands of rose petals through the oculus, a circular window in the dome of the new church.

This cascade of petals through the oculus is a tradition that dates to the year 609 at the Pantheon in Rome, and represents the Holy Spirit's descent on Mary and the apostles at Pentecost.

It awed the congregation, bringing many to tears, and had some pocketing a petal to remember the moment.

"This was very emotional for me. I cried... when the roses came down from the ceiling," said Deacon Sigfrido Della Valle. "I always associate roses with Mother Mary. To me, that is the number-one symbol of the Virgin Mary, and it was unexpected."

Catherine Turner, a longtime parishioner, was also struck with emotion.

"We are the Church Militant and, like the bishop said, we still have work to do. Up there is the Church Triumphant, (in) heaven, and that is where the petals were coming from," Turner said. "We just consecrated this place, and now it's God's house."

Climbing a mountain of faith

After Mass, the congregation gathered to celebrate its history, the day's consecration, and the community's future. Father Barone announced that Our Lady of the Mountains was about to be elevated from being a mission of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Franklin to parish status.

"We first made our mark here in Highlands in the 1950s with a cornerstone for our church, and now we made a slightly larger mark here today," Father Barone said.

The mission was started in the 1930s by Glenmary missionaries to evangelize in the region, where Catholics were scarce.

Marie Schmitt, her husband and four children moved to Highlands in 1965 and were the first full-time members.

"People came and went during the summer months, but for a long time we were the only family here in the winter-time," the 93-year-old laughed. "Lots of times Father would have Mass in the little church that was freezing cold because there was no heat."

Schmitt remarked that the new church was gorgeous, and she is moved by how much the Catholic community has grown.

"This place has been my life since 1965, and I am so proud of it."

Vision of Catholicism on a hilltop

The Baroque-style church may contrast with the surrounding mountain landscape, but it embodies Father Jason Barone's vision and will serve as a teaching tool for locals, tourists and parish-

ioners – a lesson in the Catholic faith made of limestone and stucco, he said.

"Buildings can communicate. They are silently preaching to the world whether people want to hear them or not," Father Barone said. "And what story are they telling? What is the architecture trying to communicate?"

The exterior front wall, currently particle board covered with black paper and blue painter's tape, will soon be transformed into a 35-foot limestone facade adorned with a statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel holding the Christ Child. The words "Behold thy mother" will be engraved underneath the statue as a nod to both the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Church as mother.

Once finished, the interior will literally be supported by the seven sacraments, represented by arched chapels lining both sides of the nave. Each will have its own window, allowing "the grace of heaven to shine through."

The tabernacle is flanked by niches to St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother.

Plans call for the large interior dome, the walls and the marble altars acquired from St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia to be textured with elaborate patterns and painted with sacred images and scripture – all reflecting the beauty of Catholicism through the Baroque architectural style.

Baroque architecture originated in Rome in the late 16th century after the Council of Trent, which was the Church's response to the Protestant Reformation.

Catholic architects designed ornate churches featuring spatial drama, dramatic curves and rich textures to inspire a sense of awe in God's presence.

"Father had a vision for this Baroque church, calling it 'the Catechism in stone,'" said parishioner Catherine Turner, who was active in the campaign to build the church. "It was a vision, and I thought, to build that type of church in this day and age when churches are closing and consolidating – I had to help. People think: Highlands, why not make it look like a mountain church? We are about building a Catholic church, and no matter where it is, it should look like a Catholic church. You don't do things for the human factor; you do them for God."

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• UPCOMING EVENT •



Empty Bowls soup lunch is Sept. 27

The 15th annual Empty Bowls community lunch will be held on Sunday, September 27 from 11a-2p at the Highlands First Presbyterian Church. The event raises critical funds for the Highlands Food Pantry.

According to TJ Smith, Executive Director of the International Friendship Center, which operates the Food Pantry, the event is essential for the pantry to buy food which averages around \$7,000 monthly.

"The Pantry currently serves 500 or more families every month with approximately 50 new families added monthly," said Bonnie Dayton, pantry manager. "These are our neighbors – seniors on fixed incomes, working families with children and others who are struggling to

keep up with the rising cost of food and other necessities."

Dayton said many recipients work in essential service jobs like food service, house cleaning, childcare, construction and landscaping that keep the Plateau working.

This year's soups will be donated by a lineup of local favorites including Highlands Bistro, Town Hall, Chef Roberto deJong, Vaqueros, The Ruffed Grouse, Restaurant Klapdohr, and The Library in Cashiers.

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• LETTERS •

No more ... Enough!

Dear Editor,

Earl Nightingale once said, "it is easier to be critical than correct."

Why does the Highlands Newspaper print letters-to-the-editor from David L. Snell?

David L. Snell is prolific confrontational antagonist throwing unsubstantiated charges about subjects he knows nothing about;

He says "the Veteran community is complicit to this administration's wrongdoing."

The Veteran community's job is to obey orders, follow the Constitution and the UCMJ and not take positions on charges of wrongdoing by elected politicians.

Major Watson violated the UCMJ and should face

charges. If he disagrees with the administration he should resign his commission and seek redress through legal means.

The American Legion, like all post active duty Veteran organizations, does not allow political endorsements or support campaigns.

According to Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution of the American Legion, "The American Legion shall be absolutely non-political and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles not for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment."

The American Legion, as an organization, is prohibited from contributing, helping or endorsing a candidate.

This man fundamentally hates America evidenced by his baseless charges against Veterans, the American Legion, the VFW and the elected President of the United States known by those of us who served this nation as the Commander-in-Chief.

I, too, like millions of American Veterans, are proud to have served this nation willing to offer their life in exchange for the freedoms this country offers its citizens, but when it comes to hearing men like this tear down our country and our legally elected leader ... NO MORE-ENOUGH

Ed McCloskey
United States Marine Veteran
American Legion Member

• DINING •



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Dear Editor,

The gifted and recognized poet, Maya Angelou, once wrote, "I've learned people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

I believe many of us ordinary people are not feeling good about the following:

1. The Oval Office slathered in gold.
2. The East Wing plans that look like a royal palace
3. The historic Rose Garden paved over to look like a country club patio
4. A new helipad of granite
5. The Reflecting Pool debacle
6. Tariffs that cost all our households
7. A War with Iran that won't go away
8. The pain of more expensive gasoline
9. The increased cost of groceries
10. A tax break for the wealthy
11. The increased costs associated with Affordable Care Act insurance plans
12. The ongoing alienating of our Allies
13. The renaming of The Gulf of Mexico & Lake Ontario
14. Reduced opportunity for children to have school

Trump is 'banking' on us believing every word he utters

Dear Editor,

Facts rarely lie and I have repeatedly said that what comes out of Donald Trump's mouth and what appears in his Internet posts is so factually wrong that he is really the most incredible liar the world has ever known.

Surely this man who, with the help of his father, had the privilege of studying at the Wharton School of Business for two years, was taught that import tariffs are paid by the buyer of foreign goods. So, when Mr. Trump claimed Wednesday night, that proof of his economic

lunches

15. The demeaning of women
 16. Allowing ICE to kill and arrest American citizens
 17. Promoting a UFC match on the White House grounds
 18. Sponsoring a Grand Prix car race in Washington
 19. Placing one's name on The Kennedy Center
 20. Attempts to make voting more difficult while weakening the value of Black persons' votes
 21. Spending millions of our tax dollars on refurbishing a "Gift" plane
 22. Redesigning the structure of Navy war ships and their launch systems
- We all grieved the recent death and loss of the talented Dolly Parton. Possibly the favorite of her multitude of melodies was "I Will Always Love You." Again, I believe many of us will never forget how our President and his followers have made us FEEL. What we are seeking is the feeling that our leadership "Will Always Love Us."

Dr. Mike Cordle
United Methodist Minister, Retired
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Some folks asked about the age of the sewer and water pipes. The town and everyone are concerned about the sewer line as well as the water lines. After the meeting, I discovered that the sewer line was installed around 2010. That is not too old for such a line, but still care must be taken when dredging around it. The vacuum hydraulic dredging system will be used around that area and also in Phase 2. Generally, Phase 2 may achieve 8-foot depths in the lake channel. Care will be taken not to disturb docks and shore-

...MAYOR continued from 12

Mike Hansen also stressed to the group that Phase 1 removed about 4,500 cubic yards of sediment. It required about 150 truckloads to transport it to a permanent site. Phases 2 and 3 will require about 5,000 to 6,000 truckloads to transport the sediment to the dump site. Dredging operations will be inconvenient and somewhat disruptive to area residents.

One question was whether the project has plans to build holding areas on Mill Creek and the Cullasaja River to trap sediment in the future. My response was that those are not the only sources of sediment; tree leaves and stormwater runoff from everywhere contribute to sedimentation. Commissioner Tate stressed that the town would continue to develop strategies to control stormwater runoff. Also, the heavy runoff from construction sites upstream should subside to some degree now that most major construction was completed years ago. But, in the end, living in a temperate rainforest with an average of 97 inches of rain per year and in a highly distressed topography, sedimentation in an impounded area will continue.

As for catch basins, that would require building some kind of concrete retaining system, maybe mini-dams; such a project would require permitting from the NC Department of Environmental Quality and the Corps of Engineers. An approval is a highly unlikely prospect. So, the cold fact is that the issue of dredging Mirror Lake will come back in 15 years or so.

Mike Hansen did review the plan to address a canoe channel up to the Mill Creek Bridge area. The canoe channel will have a return loop back to the main lake. Some residents expressed concern about removing the Beach Club Property next to the bridge. The space has evolved into a community gathering area, a mini-community park. Mike said that space will not be removed, but the creek bed near that area will be improved.

Residents' greatest concern was the location of the dredging drainage bags on Cullasaja Road, in a spot that would cut off continuous traffic flow on the road

• See MAYOR page 20

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Busy schedules, travel, exercise, stress, and everyday responsibilities can make it challenging to prioritize hydration and nutrition. While a healthy diet, adequate sleep, movement, and hydration are the foundation of wellness, some individuals may benefit from additional nutritional support.

IV therapy delivers fluids, vitamins, and minerals directly into the bloodstream, providing an alternative method of delivering hydration and selected nutrients. Our knowledgeable team can help you determine which treatment may be appropriate based on your individual goals and health history.

What Is NAD+?

NAD+ (Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide) is a naturally occurring molecule found throughout the body's cells. It plays an important role in cellular energy production and normal cellular function.

NAD+ participates in processes that help cells convert nutrients into energy and is involved in a variety of normal cellular processes. It has also been studied for its role in cellular maintenance, healthy aging, and metabolic and brain function.

NAD+ IV Therapy May Support:

- Cellular energy production
- Energy and vitality
- Mental clarity and focus
- Normal brain function
- Recovery and overall wellness
- Healthy aging and cellular maintenance

NAD+ infusions are generally administered more slowly than many traditional vitamin IV treatments. Your provider will determine the appropriate treatment and infusion rate for you.

What Is IV Vitamin Therapy?

IV Vitamin Therapy provides fluids, vitamins, and minerals directly into the bloodstream. Different formulas contain different combinations of nutrients and may

be selected based on goals such as hydration, nutritional replenishment, energy, beauty, or immune wellness.

IV therapy isn't intended to replace healthy nutrition. Instead, it can be an additional wellness option for individuals seeking personalized hydration and nutritional support.

Explore Our IV Therapy Options

Immunity IV

Nutrients such as vitamin C and B vitamins play important roles in normal immune and cellular function. Our Immunity IV combines hydration with selected nutrients intended to provide nutritional support for normal immune function.

A good option for: Seasonal Wellness • Feeling Run Down • Immune Support • General Wellness

Vitamin infusions support normal immune function but do not prevent or cure infections.

Beauty IV

Healthy-looking skin, hair, and nails are influenced by nutrition, hydration, genetics, hormones, sleep, and lifestyle. Beauty-focused formulas may include nutrients such as vitamin C, biotin, and other vitamins and antioxidants that support normal collagen production, skin health, and cellular function.

A good option for: Skin Wellness • Hair & Nail Support • Hydration • Beauty & Wellness

Myers' Cocktail

The Myers' Cocktail is a well-known IV vitamin formula traditionally containing magnesium, calcium, vitamin C, and B vitamins. These nutrients have important roles in the body, including normal muscle and nerve function and energy metabolism.

A good option for: General Wellness • Hydration • Nutritional Replenishment • Energy Support

Energy IV

Fatigue and low energy can have many causes, including inadequate sleep, stress, dehydration, nutrition, and lifestyle factors. B vitamins play an important role in normal energy metabolism. Our Energy IV combines hydration with selected nutrients intended to support normal energy production and nutritional wellness.

A good option for: Busy Schedules • General Fatigue • Hydration • Energy & Wellness Support

Why Choose IV Therapy at Rejuvenate Medical Spa?

IV therapy offers a different method of delivering fluids and selected nutrients than oral supplementation. Rather than traveling through the digestive system before absorption, IV therapy delivers fluids and nutrients directly into the bloodstream.

This doesn't necessarily mean IV therapy is "bet-



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ter” than oral nutrition. It is simply a different delivery method that may be appropriate for certain individuals and wellness goals.

We focus on personalized treatments in a professional, welcoming environment. Our team takes the time to understand your goals and review your health history to help determine whether a particular IV treatment or NAD+ therapy is appropriate for you.

Which IV Is Right for You?

There isn't one IV that's right for everyone. Your ideal treatment depends on your wellness goals, hydration needs, nutritional needs, lifestyle, and medical history.

Whether you're looking for hydration, energy and

vitality, beauty and skin wellness, immune wellness, general nutritional support, or NAD+ wellness therapy, we can help you explore your options.

Wellness is about finding sustainable ways to take care of yourself through hydration, nutrition, rest, movement, and personalized support.

Rejuvenate Medical Spa is proud to offer IV Vitamin Therapy and NAD+ wellness services to clients in Highlands, Franklin, and surrounding Western North Carolina communities.

Give your wellness routine a boost from the inside out. Contact Rejuvenate Medical Spa to schedule your IV Vitamin Therapy or NAD+ consultation and discover which option may be right for you.

What to Consider When Installing or Replacing Patio Doors

(StatePoint) In addition to offering easy access to your home's outdoor spaces, patio doors can enhance your life in a number of other key ways. Whether you're installing patio doors for the first time or replacing existing ones, here are some of the advantages that patio doors provide, along with insights into maximizing these benefits:

Fresh Air

On a beautiful day, there is nothing more refreshing than throwing open the glass of your patio door and using the screen. Patio doors that incorporate a heavy-duty aluminum screen with BetterVue fiberglass mesh that improves airflow, keeps out insects and repels water. The specialized mesh also resists dirt and grime, and offers superior visibility.

Smart Design

Understanding how different patio door designs can meet different needs and priorities is important. For example, a hinged patio door is great for boosting airflow, enhancing a room's interior design, and providing wider access to the outdoors. However, if you want to maximize space or have limited clearance, a sliding door is likely your best bet. Take a look at the configuration of the room where the patio door will be placed to determine what would work best in your space.

Performance and Efficiency

Because patio doors are an exterior home element, it's important that they be built to withstand the elements and that they provide optimal energy efficiency.

To that end, you may want to consider vinyl, which is recognized as a superior sliding patio door frame material that offers many key benefits. In particular, Pro-Via's vinyl sliding glass patio doors are tested against the most stringent industry standards for air and water infiltration, wind load resistance, ease of operation and more. This means you'll have little maintenance, lower

heating and cooling costs, and increased comfort. It's also a good idea to check the specifications of any product you're considering and take a look at its performance rating to ensure it meets the needs of your local climate.

Beauty

Patio doors add natural light to a room, and draw attention to the beauty of your yard or patio. The doors themselves also offer a range of customization options that can complement your architectural style, from the configuration and construction of the door, to privacy and tinted glass options, to paint colors.

"A patio door installation or upgrade can make a huge impact on your day-to-day life. That's why it's so important to review your options to find the right product for your aesthetic and performance needs," says Julie Monroy, product manager, Windows & Vinyl Patio Doors.

For more information about patio doors in Highlands and Franklin, including specifics about wood-clad vinyl sliding glass and hinged patio doors, plus options for internal blinds and privacy, tinted or decorative glass, visit www.highlandsdecorating.com and www.glassshoppe.com

Important Information:

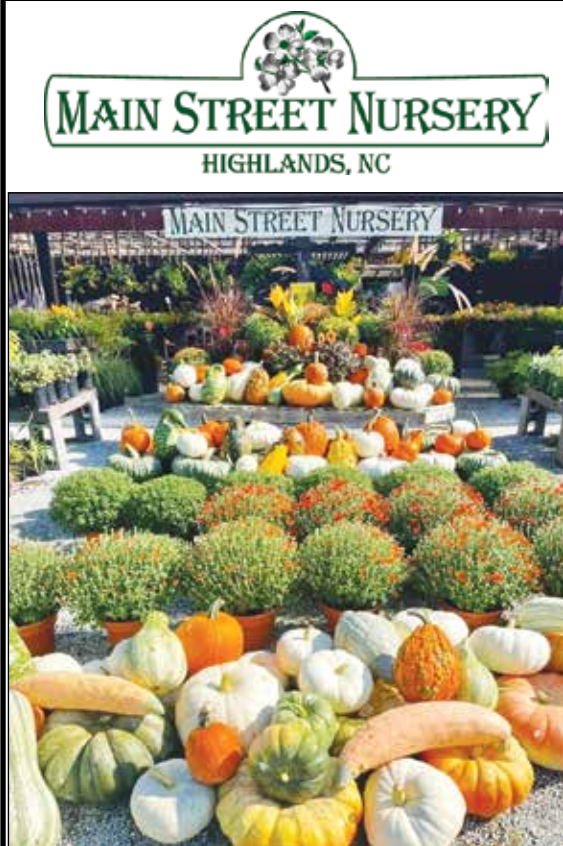
IV therapy is intended to provide hydration and nutritional support and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent disease. Individual responses vary. IV therapy may not be appropriate for everyone. Your provider will review your health history and determine whether a particular infusion is appropriate for you.



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...HCA continued from page 1

than \$13 million for surgical, cardiovascular and procedural care, along with investments in emergency transportation, hospital infrastructure and other patient care resources.

“Investing in our hospitals means investing in the health of Western North Carolina,” said Greg Lowe, President of Mission Health. “These investments give our physicians, nurses and care teams advanced equipment and technology to support safe, high-quality care - from diagnostic imaging and surgery to emergency response. Ultimately, this is about making sure our teams have the resources they need to provide the best possible care for our patients.”

Major HCA Healthcare Investments in Mission Hospital and CarePartners

At Mission Hospital, HCA Healthcare is investing more than \$30 million, including nearly \$15 million for radiology and imaging equipment and \$12 million for surgical and cardiovascular equipment supporting cardiovascular and main operating rooms, cardiology and Mission’s Asheville Surgery Center. The investments will modernize technology used across diagnosis, surgery and cardiovascular care, giving clinicians reliable tools and resources to care for patients with complex and specialized needs and supporting Mission Hospital’s role as the region’s only Level I Trauma Center and tertiary referral center.

HCA Healthcare is also investing \$820,000 in two highly specialized Type I ambulances designed to safely transport some of the region’s sickest and most complex patients, along with funding for endoscopy equipment.

At CarePartners, an HCA Healthcare investment of more than \$200,000 is supporting

improvements to its outpatient facility and the rehabilitation and post-acute services it provides to patients across Western North Carolina.

Strengthening Community Hospitals Across Western North Carolina

HCA Healthcare is also investing in Mission Health’s regional hospitals, with projects targeted to the needs of each facility and the community it serves.

“At a time when many rural communities across the country are facing uncertainty about access to healthcare, we are investing in our community hospitals - in the technology, equipment and infrastructure they need to continue providing high-quality care in the communities they serve,” Lowe said. “These investments strengthen our hospitals today while helping ensure they are prepared to serve their communities for years to come.”

- At Angel Medical Center in Franklin, HCA Healthcare is investing \$365,000 in two new steam sterilizers with integrated steam generators, along with access control and camera upgrades. The new equipment supports the safe, effective sterilization of surgical instruments, while the security improvements help maintain a safe environment for patients, visitors and colleagues.

- At Highlands-Cashiers Hospital in Highlands, HCA Healthcare is investing more than \$635,000 in vehicles, acute care beds, a surgical table, and operating room and endoscopy equipment. The investment will support growing inpatient volumes and expanded surgical services, including total joint, general surgery and endoscopy, helping more patients receive high-quality hospital and procedural care in their community. New vehicles will also strengthen patient transportation and re-

• See HCA page 18



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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



Mardy Ashe with Mayor Pat Taylor.

Highlands recognizes Sept. 17 as Constituion Day

This proclamation declares that "Mayor Patrick Taylor, Mayor of the town of Highlands does recognize that September 17-23, 2026, is hereby designated as Constitution Week and all citizens are encouraged to reaffirm the ideals the Framers of the Constitution had in 1787 by vigilantly protecting the freedoms guaranteed to us through this guardian of our liberties, remembering lost rights may never be regained."

...HCA continued from page 17

place aging facilities equipment essential to maintaining HCH and its off-site locations, particularly during winter weather.

- At Blue Ridge Regional Hospital in Spruce Pine, HCA Healthcare is investing more than \$650,000 to enhance local care, including \$500,000 for a new nuclear medicine camera and \$150,000 for pharmacy improvements. The new technology will help doctors identify and monitor conditions such as heart disease and cancer, while pharmacy upgrades will support safe, timely access to medications. The investments mean patients can receive more of the testing and treatment they need from the care team they know and trust at their hometown hospital.

- At Mission Hospital McDowell in Marion, a \$500,000 HCA Healthcare investment is supporting operating room improvements, providing physicians and surgical teams with updated resources for safe, reliable surgical care and helping

patients in McDowell County and surrounding communities receive important procedures without traveling farther for care.

- At Transylvania Regional Hospital in Brevard, an HCA Healthcare investment of more than \$65,000 is supporting orthopedic extensions as the hospital continues to grow its Total Joint Program, strengthening the resources available to care for patients undergoing joint procedures in their community.

Together, HCA Healthcare's investments in surgical capabilities, diagnostic technology, patient care equipment, emergency response and hospital infrastructure strengthen the safety and advanced care while helping Mission Health hospitals sustain important services throughout Western North Carolina. When more specialized care is needed, patients remain connected to Mission Health's broader network of care.

• HS SPORTS RECAP •

Highlanders hit their stride: Soccer stays hot, volleyball sweeps, and MS athletes shine in action-packed week

It was an action-packed week for Highlands School athletics, featuring dominant volleyball sweeps, a glowing winning streak on the pitch, and standout individual performances in cross country and swimming.



Brett Lamb
Athletic Director

High School Soccer: Unbeaten Week Extends Hot Streak

The High School Boys Soccer team delivered a masterclass in resilience and offensive power this week, picking up three consecutive wins.

Hosting Hayesville, the Highlanders set the tone early as decisive goals from Rowen Carnes and Michael Munoz proved to be the difference-maker in a hard-fought 3-2 home victory.

Highlands then took to the road for a conference showdown against Tri-County Early College, surging to a 2-0 halftime lead courtesy of two first-half strikes by Carnes. Tri-County answered back early in the second half with two quick goals to level the match at 2-2.

Undeterred, the Highlanders regained momentum when Camden Westendorf served a beautiful corner kick to Jensen Bowers, who buried it for the 3-2 lead.

Carnes then sealed the 4-2 victory with his third goal of the match, completing his hat trick and securing a gritty road win.

Returning home to face Murphy, the Highlanders put on a clinic in teamwork and passing to cap off the week with a 6-1 blowout victory.

Westendorf and Munoz paced the attack with two goals apiece, while Todd Vilardo and Blaine Dendy each added a strike.

High School Volleyball: Strong Road Sweeps Before Facing Ranked Foe

The High School Volleyball squad endured a grueling road swing this week, coming away with two strong conference sweeps.

The Lady Highlanders kicked off their week in dominant fashion at Macon Early College, sweeping the match 3-0 with set scores of 25-10, 25-11, and 25-9.

Traveling next to Nantahala, the momentum stayed high as Highlands executed another clean 3-0 sweep with scores of 25-12, 25-14, and 25-10. The grueling stretch concluded with a tough matchup against 1A 8th-ranked Andrews, where the Lady Highlanders ultimately dropped a 0-3 decision.

Middle School Action: Thrillers on the Court and Field

The Middle School Volleyball team powered through three conference matches to post a 2-1 record on the week. They opened with a clean 2-0 win on the road at Blue Ridge, and after dropping a tight 2-1 contest at Summit, the team bounced back with an exciting 2-1 victory over Rabun Gap to cap off the stretch.

On the soccer field, the Middle School team split their matches 1-1. Highlands opened the week with a defensive battle against rival Summit. Locked in a 0-0 gridlock for nearly the entire match, Porter Bowers delivered high drama by finding the back of the net with under two minutes remaining to lock up the 1-0 victory. The following match against Rabun Gap did not fare as well, as the Eagles built on a 2-1 halftime advantage to hand Highlands a 5-2 setback. Porter Bowers and Brian Munoz accounted for the Highlands goals.

Individual Excellence:
Cross Country & Swimming
Competing at the Cookies and Quotes meet at Tallulah Falls, two dual-sport athletes represented the Middle School Cross Country team in a field of 89 runners from 11 teams. Valentina Gooch finished in 32nd place, while Willa Mae James crossed the line in 69th to cap off a strong effort.

The Middle School Swim team opened its season at Macon Middle with a remarkably efficient performance.

• See HS SPORTS page 25

How Is the Cost of Living ...or Doing Business... Affecting You Right Now?

Come join us

for a non-partisan conversation with fellow community members—come listen, come learn, and come be part of shaping what happens next on the Plateau. Solutions are stronger when the whole community and our decision makers understand what everyone else is facing.

You will hear directly from your neighbors — local businesses, nonprofits, seniors, veterans, working families, young adults, educators, health care workers, tradespeople, farmers, and others— sharing their stories and the solutions they would like to see.

Candidates from different parties running for local and district offices are invited to listen and learn alongside the rest of us.

When: Sunday, September 27, 2026, 3–5 pm

Where: Community Building, Highlands, NC

Refreshments will be served.

RSVPs are greatly appreciated as it helps with seating and refreshments:

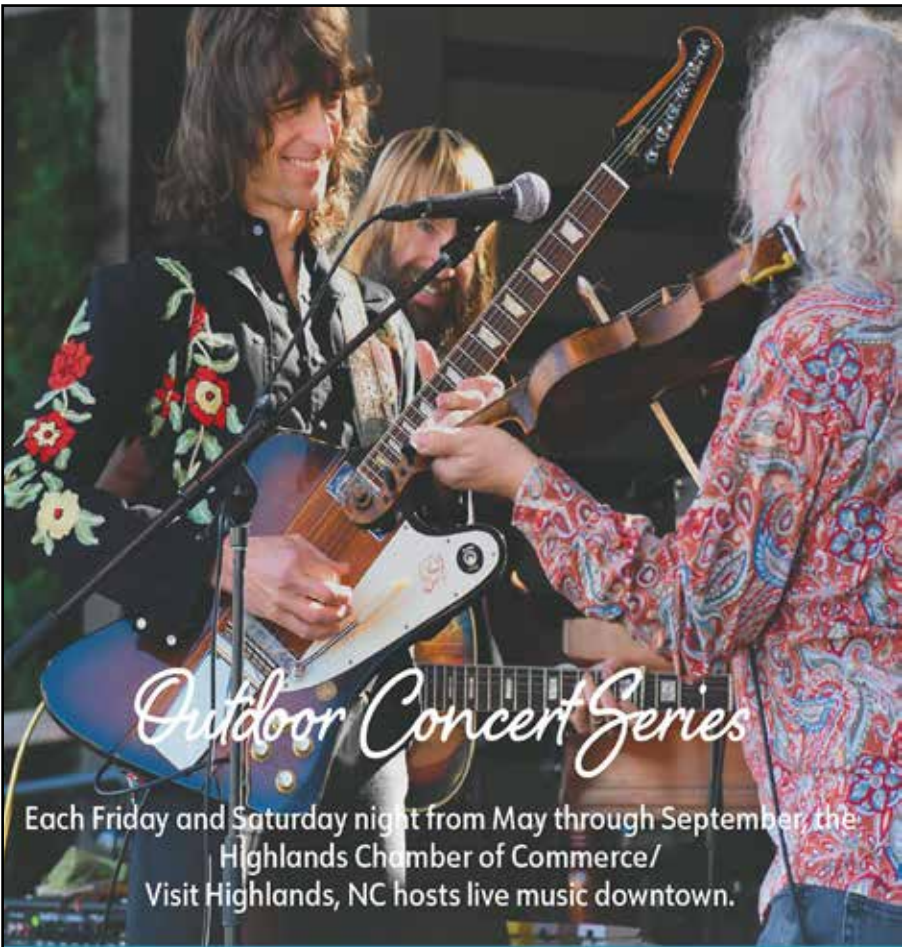
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Look forward to seeing you there!

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SEPTEMBER 12
High 5

SEPTEMBER 19
Boogitherapi

SEPTEMBER 26 - 5PM
Darren Nicholson Band



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...MAYOR continued from 13

but not hinder residence access. One bag was used during Phase 1, which slowed dredging operations and required waiting several weeks for the water to drain out of the bag. Mike Hansen and I emphasized that multiple bags must be on site for the project to proceed in a timely manner.

Commissioner Grubb and several residents raised concerns about trucks backing up to the bags to remove sediment, causing disruptive noise and turn-around problems. Those operations could involve 10 to 15 trucks coming and going in a workday. People were also worried that trees and vegetation might be removed to accommodate the bags. Mike pointed out that the bags are custom-made to fit various areas. He also stressed that the contractor doing the work would also work with residents and address their concerns.

One resident suggested putting the bags on barges in the lake. That would be challenging but will be reviewed. Another suggestion was to develop the property owned by the improvement associa-

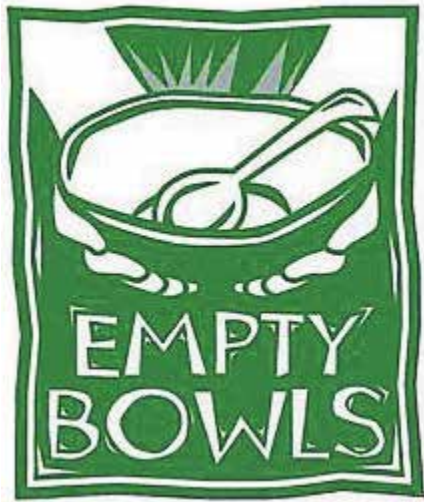
tion near the Big Pine area as a bag and staging site. That proposal, too, will be evaluated. Mike Hansen stated that that site had already been preliminarily evaluated. Some of the property is wetlands and would need to be remediated before use. A cost-benefit analysis will be conducted.

In conclusion, this report distills the questions and notes from this very productive meeting. I may have missed something, and people can let me know.

Where is the project now? Moving forward with a lot of procedural decisions already made, with other critical decisions, mostly the nuts-and-bolts details, still in process.

I will do my best to keep everyone posted. I urged interested residents to attend or tune in to upcoming Town Board meetings, where many of the decisions will be finalized.

Thanks to the residents who attended, the Mirror Lake Improvement Association for hosting the event, and the Town Board representatives who attended the meeting.



**Sunday,
September 27
2026**

11 AM - 2 PM

**@ The First
Presbyterian
Church
of Highlands**

*Thank you for helping
feed our community!*

All proceeds go to The Highlands Food Pantry

Your bowl will help feed families in need.

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EMPTY BOWLS 2026





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Celebrate the season in The Wine Garden
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and a spirited taste of tradition!

SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING



Does it Mean to Consecrate a Church?

Fr. Jason Barone
Our Lady of the Mountains
Catholic Church

On Sunday, September 6, Our Lady of the Mountains was consecrated by Bishop Michael Martin of the Diocese of Charlotte. Many in Highlands may wonder why we consecrated a church that is still unfinished. While not ideal, I proposed the date a few months ago, since the alternative was to wait until completion in December, when few seasonal residents remain. Despite the missing façade, unfinished floors, and lack of pews, the ceremony was jubilant and beautiful.

To consecrate anything is to set it apart from ordinary use and reserve it for God. A consecrated church is not a multipurpose hall. It is God's house, to be used exclusively for divine worship. The ceremony begins when the keys or construction documents are handed to the bishop — a sign that he takes possession of the building. He then blesses and sprinkles holy water on the altar, the walls, and the people, a baptismal sign of cleansing.

The Mass proceeds in the usual way until after the homily, when the rite of dedication begins with the Litany of the Saints. In that ancient prayer, the Church on earth asks Mary and all the saints in heaven to intercede. It is a reminder of the union between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven.

The consecration of the altar follows with the placing of a martyr's relics in the altar itself. From the earliest centuries, in the catacombs of Rome, Christians offered the Eucharist over a martyr's grave on the anniversary of death, reflecting the union of the saint's self-offering with that of Christ. On Sunday, a relic of St. Justina — a small chip of bone from a virgin and martyr of the early 300s — was placed in the sepulchre of the altar and sealed with cement, recalling the sealed tomb of the Lord.

Then came the long Prayer of Dedication, the heart of the rite, with this petition: "Graciously pour forth from heaven your sanctifying power upon this church and upon this altar, to make this forever a holy place with a table always prepared for the sacrifice of Christ." In that prayer the building was given to God, and his presence and glory began to fill it.

Anointing with sacred chrism followed. Oil leaves a sheen even after it is wiped away, a sign of a remaining presence. As the Holy Spirit descended on Christ at his baptism and remained with him, so the grace of anointing remains. The bishop anointed the top of the

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

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

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

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road
The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily
sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.
Sunday Worship is at 9a. & 6p. Wednesday Worship is 6p

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376
In-Person and live-streamed Worship Services

909a Bluegrass and 11a Traditional

www.highlandsmethodist.org

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741

Rev. Ken Langsdorf

Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.

Visit our website: Holy Family Lutheran Highlands NC

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

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

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

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

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

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

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

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone — 526-2418

Sat. 4pm thru Oct 24.; Sun. - 11am

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

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

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

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

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

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

ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

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

THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

1448 Highway 107 S. Office: • 743-2359 • Rev. Rob Wood
Sunday Service (summer): 9am & 11am
Visit our website: www.goodshepherdofcashiers.com
Bazaar Barn outreach is open Fri & Sat. 11am-3pm

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

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

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Sept. 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:

Sept. 9

• Vehicle 1 was backed into the parking lot on 115 Franklin Road facing south. Vehicle 2 was parked facing north in the parking lot at 115 Franklin Road. Vehicle 1 pulled forward and turned slightly left, striking vehicle 2.

Sept. 11

• Vehicle 1 was traveling east on US 64; it ran off the road to the right entering the ditch and travelling approximately 180 feet striking the embankment and rolling travelling approximately 25 feet before coming to rest in the roadway laying on the driver's side of the vehicle.

• During the week officers issued 6 Citations and 27 Warning Tickets

Sept. 8

• At 7 p.m., offices responded to a call of second-degree trespassing at a residence on Happoldt Drive when someone entered and walked on Highlands Country Club golf course.

Sept. 12

• At 3:45 a.m., Cristobal Huix-Quixtan, 31, of Highlands, was arrested for DUI on US 64. He was issued a \$1,000 secured bond. His trial date is Oct. 22.

Sept. 13

• At 1:30 a.m., Mary Grace Middle-

books, 27, of Highlands was arrested for DUI on Main Street. She wasn't issued a bond. Her trial date is Oct. 22.

• At 11:30 p.m., Monique Star Swolley, 26, of Asheville, was arrested for DUI on US 64. She wasn't issued a bond. Her trial date is Oct. 22.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Sept. 8

Sept. 8

• At 6:17 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a tree on a powerline on Edwards Creek Road.

• At 9:17 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a tree on a power line on Buck Creek Road.

Sept. 9

• At 11:44 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Hickory Hill Road.

• At 1:57 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Oak Street.

Sept. 10

• At 10:34 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Pierson Drive.

Sept. 11

• At 6:15 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

• At 3:29 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

Sept. 12

• At 1:34 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on N. 4th Street.

• At 1:55 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a power line down on Clear Creek Road.

• At 6:21 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to location on Cullasaja Drive.

• At 7:35 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers FD.

• At 11:41 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

Sept. 13

• At 6:43 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Horse Cove Road.

• At 6:52 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a power line down on Azalea Circle.

Sept. 14

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

• At 9:28 a.m., the dept. investigated to source of a gas odor at a residence on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 22

altar, and two priests anointed 12 places on the walls, marked by consecration crosses. Twelve is a biblical number of governance: the apostles, and the walls of the heavenly city in Revelation. God's blessing came down upon the altar and the church, and it remains.

A brazier of incense was then placed on the altar, and the whole building was incensed. The rising smoke signifies the prayers of the people joined to the sacrifice of the altar, filling the church with the glory of God.

Finally, the altar was cleaned and dressed for Mass, and the candles were lit — the light of Christ shining forth in his house.



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1:30pm
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• CLASSIFIEDS •

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UNIQUE SETTING - 10 acres, west of Frank-lin. 800 feet of noisy stream. 3 acres of pasture. Spring water, 2 barns, updated 2BD/2BA cabin. Easy access. \$545,000. Call 706-892-4672. (st. 9/10)

COTTAGE ON LAKE BURTON \$129,500 - North Georgia Mountains. 1br/1ba. 1 year old with modern design, all appliances and furniture. Beautiful gated community. www.sugarmillcreek.com Tel: 912-222-2448



17FT ALUMINUM LAKE CANOE, excellent condition with paddles \$600. 828-421-0124 (st. 7/9)

1.06 AC LOT ON 8900 Buck Creek Rd. \$79,900. 828-421-0124 (st. 7/9)

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NEW 2BD, 2BA, FURNISHED APARTMENT within a half mile of downtown. \$1,600 a month. Call 404-234-2516. (st. 7/2)

2BD/2BATH SINGLEWIDE \$1,100 per month internet included. First and last security. Mark 828-200-0765. (st. 5/29)

SERVICES

MOBILE CARWASH/DETAILING - THE DETAIL GUYS WNC (828) 745-3500 text. The detailguyswnc on facebook Full Service. We Come To You

CREATURE COMFORTS - In-House Pet or People sitting. Call Peg Ellis. Retired RN. References available. 828-200-1028. (st. 11/20)

PLATEAU PAINTERS - Interior and exterior painting, pressure washing, decks, and sanding and staining wood floors. Division of Chatlos Construction. Fully insured. Free estimates. Call Mike at 828-200-4071. (6/25)

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JUNK REMOVAL - We take anything. Call 828-200-0492

CUSTOM WELDING - gates, railings, trailer repairs, fencing, hand rails and more. I come to you! Call Gavin at 828-200-4219 or email smallgavin26@gmail.com

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

...HS SPORTS continued from page 19

Competing with a tight squad of just three multi-sport athletes, every swimmer scored points in every event entered.

Bella Batista took 2nd place twice in the 100-yard Individual Medley and 50-yard Backstroke, accumulating 34 points. Nicole Shchelgachova placed 6th in both the 100-yard Freestyle and 50-yard Butterfly to tally 26 points.

...BUS continued from page 1

only worth around \$1,500 in its current condition.

Highlands School has three yellow buses, one yellow backup bus (used only for emergencies), two white activity buses - one of which is slated to be replaced - and a mini-bus.

The school's activity buses that are currently being used include: Bus 8106 -- year 2008 with 105,671 mile; Bus 8117 -- year 2018 with 59,460 miles; Bus 8115 -- year 1999 with 134,000 miles.

Highlands School activity bus 8115, with the highest mileage is a 27-year-old bus showing significant body rust in the rear corners and wheel wells. The bus is at risk of failing a future state inspection or becoming unusable if the rust progresses to the point that exhaust fumes begin entering the passenger compartment.

In addition to replacing aging buses, Highlands and Nantahala Schools have asked to expand their activity bus fleets due to increased participation in athletic programs.

At the last meeting of the Macon County Board of Education, Mike Bale Transportation Director for Macon County Schools, presented a bus fleet assessment and recommendation report.

In his report, he said the school system is facing an activity bus shortage due to an aging fleet with high mileage and a lack of state emergency repair funding.

He said all usable buses are scheduled, and the transportation department does not have room to lose a bus. He also discussed his concerns with transporting students for out-of-state trips.

"We cannot keep offering the same services without some sort of capital replacement plan," said Bale. "We need to figure out how to minimize costs before something drastic happens. And by minimizing costs, I am not referring to buying cheaper brake pads or the cheapest tires made."

According to Highlands School Principal Sarah Holbrooks, the school has not been affected by the school bus shortage; no athletic or school trips at Highlands School have been limited or canceled.

Holbrooks said Highlands School's biggest issue with activity buses is winter brine and rust.

"I sincerely appreciate Mike Bale and the excellent work he does for Macon County Schools," said Holbrooks. "As a principal, I believe the transportation department works diligently to advocate for our schools and students, always prioritizing safety."

Bale said when a yellow bus breaks down, it's happens locally at 35 miles an hour and a spare bus and a

Valerie Nadzorau tied down to the hundredth of a second for 9th in the 50-yard Freestyle and placed 14th in the 50-yard Breaststroke, adding 11 points. Despite having only three swimmers, the Lady Highlanders finished 7th out of 8 much larger teams.

It was an exceptional week of grit and pride across all programs for Highlands School!

mechanic can be dispatched and those children on the way home safely within 20 minutes.

"When an activity bus breaks down, it's going to happen at 55 miles an hour on the interstate and hopefully, and as long as it's in North Carolina, we have somebody to call. We have a team, we have campuses, we have a plan."

However, he said for the last few years, schools are busing to Virginia, South Carolina, Indiana, Kentucky, Florida, and they are filled with student athletes, band members, faculty, etc.

"Those buses are packed with thousands of dollars worth of equipment. Nobody can predict a mechanical failure. However, with the high mileage of our fleet, we are at a high risk for breakdowns with no safety net."

The state doesn't offer emergency funding for activity buses just the yellow buses.

"Buses with 126,000 miles means we're sending our students across the state lines in vehicles that have passed their mechanical peak," he said. "We need to figure out a capital procurement for replacing our buses. It's proven time and time again that we cannot rely on capital outlay to have enough funding to replace buses."

Bale suggested establishing an activity bus capital reserve dedicated only for bus replacements as well as an age- or mile-policy plan for activity bus life spans, because now there isn't a plan for replacement.

"The problem with waiting for the future is it's always going to cost more. Right now, a new activity bus is \$160,000; in two years its projected to be \$220,000. It is just like fuel; everything is going up at an astronomical rate," he said.

At the August meeting, the school board approved an extensive list of overnight trip requests for Macon County students from September 2026 to April 2027. But due to the bus issue, Chair Jim Breedlove said he is not willing to send activity buses out-of-state until a replacement plan is in place.

A cross-country trip to Spartanburg, S.C., Franklin High agriculture trips to Dillard, Indianapolis and Louisville, K.Y., and a Highlands School trip to Charleston were on the agenda for board approval. The board approved the trips pending transportation approval.

The board hopes that the schools find alternative ways to transport students to these events. Board member Hilary Wilkes suggested that the schools consider using charter buses.

• 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. Week-end 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-1pm 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 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 fpchkelley@gmail.com

Mon-Wed-Fri

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

Mon., Tues., Thurs.

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

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 budandlyn@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 Favola 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.

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.highlandscashiers-filmfestival.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.

Sun., Sept. 27

• The 15th annual Empty Bowls community lunch will be held on Sunday from 11a-2p at the Highlands First Presbyterian Church. The event raises critical funds for the Highlands Food Pantry. Tickets are \$35 per person and include a delicious soup and a handmade pottery bowl. Tickets can be purchased online at paypal.com/ncp/payment/UMVLJHTJKK2SE.

• Plateau Community Dialogue will address "how the Cost of Living or Doing Business is Affecting you right now" in the Community Building from 3-5 p.m. RSVP at plateaucommunitydialogue@gmail.com

Thurs., Oct. 1

• The Southern Jackson County Democrats, Cashiers/ Glenville precinct, will host a candidate forum and meet & greet on Thursday, from 5:30-7:45 p.m. at the Cashiers Community Center on Frank Allen Road, located behind the Cashiers Fire Department.

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