

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Sept. 24, 2026

Highlands takes next step to make redistricting a reality

By Kim Lewicki

For the past several months, Highlands Commissioner Amy Patterson has been

traveling about the county explaining and pushing for the redistricting of Macon County into five equal districts rather

than the three at-large districts currently at play or even the 3-2 scenario suggested by the Ma-

• See REDISTRICTING page 12



Folks gathered on the new pavilion at the Hudson Library during Thursday's "Library Party" held to show off the library's expanded outdoor area.

Photo by Kim Lewicki

Hudson Library expands out-of-doors; indoor renovations are next

The Hudson Library Foundation recently celebrated the completion of its new outdoor enhancements and announced the next phase of its capital

campaign.

The new outdoor spaces feature a new community pavilion, a water feature, walking

• See LIBRARY page 4

'Vote 'yes' to a 1/4 of a penny sales tax increase'

By Kim Lewicki

"I don't even want to say 'a quarter of a penny,' I want to say, '1/4th of a penny,'" said Macon County Commissioner Gary Shields who is a founding member of the 1/4 Penny Sales Tax Committee.

Shields and Steve Grisham also of the 1/4 Penny Sales Tax Committee have been traveling around Macon County educating citizens about the proposed

• See 1/4 PENNY page 12



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Photo by Kim Lewicki

Chairman of the PAC board Darren Whatley with HCFF co-chairs Kate Hendrickson and Debi Bock and Artistic Director Joy Jorgensen announced this year's winners prior to the showing of The Phantom of the Opera.

2nd annual HCFF raises \$430,000 for PAC

4-day festival concludes with Phantom of the Opera masquerade ball

By Charlotte Muir

PAC Development Director

The 2026 Highlands-Cashiers Film Festival wrapped up another successful year, welcom-

ing more than 1,500 attendees for four days of film, conversation and special events while raising more than \$400,000 in

• See HCFF page 8



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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Highlands has become a diverse community

Last week was a highly active week in the town. When possible, I attend the many public events that are sponsored by the various organizations in town.

On Thursday morning, I attended the opening screening of a film kicking off the Highlands Film Festival, sponsored by the PAC. Other commitments kept me from seeing more films. I regret having conflicts in my schedule because I saw several creative films on the schedule that dealt with a diversity of subjects and ideas. That is what a serious film festival does: it is a gallery of new, contemporary films produced by emerging and established filmmakers. We now have a delightful event in place for the Highlands and Cashiers communities.

On Sunday afternoon, I strolled around town to take in Porchfest perfor-



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

mances. Here again, I witnessed a diversity of musicians at the venues across downtown, including R&B, Bluegrass, Rock and Roll, Classic Rock, Country, Country alternative, Jazz, Blues, Appalachian Blues, Gospel, bagpipers, Latin Pop, Modern Western, and Free-Range Folk. In other words, Porch Fest had a tremendous diversity of music and styles.

After the mid-afternoon weather delay, Sallie and I, along with some of our out-of-town friends, went to the classical piano concert performed by Leonidas Lagrimas at Coleman Hall at the Presbyterian Church. Leonidas opened his performance with the wonderful church hymn, Morning Has Broken, the song many of us remember as a popular hit in the late '60s by Cat Stevens.

I was moved by Leonidas' rendition, and it caused me to reflect and think about the Highlands community. First, I would suggest Morning Has Broken could be the town anthem for many of us who wake up early each day in gratitude and wonder at being in such a beautiful part of God's creation, as the hymn describes.

But I also thought about the current makeup of our community, as reflected in the multiplicity of musical styles presented that afternoon. We are no longer the homogeneous community of the past, but rather a heterogeneous mix of people from many diverse roads that have led people to the Highlands Plateau. Dare I say that we are becoming a diverse community?

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are currently taboo concepts among some leaders and politicians, but they are goals our American society should strive to meet. As mayor, I am expected to set a vision and direction for the community, and I believe this is a goal we should all pursue. However, I do concede there have been examples of past excesses in its implementation.

But Highlands has been and continues to be a community of diverse people coming together from all walks of life.

• See MAYOR page 20

• MILESTONE •

Thanks to the Bryson Family, the town's scholarship fund is bigger than ever!



From left:
Jim Bryson
owner of
Bryson's Food
Store and Mike
Bryson owner
of Bryson
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Paving.

Monday, Sept. 21, the annual Town of Highlands Scholarship Golf Classic was held at the Cullasaja Club and once again the Bryson Family handled all the expenses. Today, the Scholarship Endowment Fund has grown to over \$1.1 million.

Since 1975, the Town of Highlands Scholarship Fund has been dedicated to helping young students pursue higher education. A heartfelt thank you to the Bryson Family, the Cullasaja Club, the fundraising committee volunteers, the sponsors, and all the clubs that made this event a success. Their support means the world to the community, the school, and the Highlands School graduates. Many of the seniors also volunteered to show their appreciation

• WEATHER •

Thu, 24-Sep	Fri, 25-Sep	Sat, 26-Sep	Sun, 27-Sep
			
62°F 52°F	71°F 42°F	70°F 41°F	68°F 45°F
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Phone: (828) 200-1371

Email:

HighlandsEditor@aol.com

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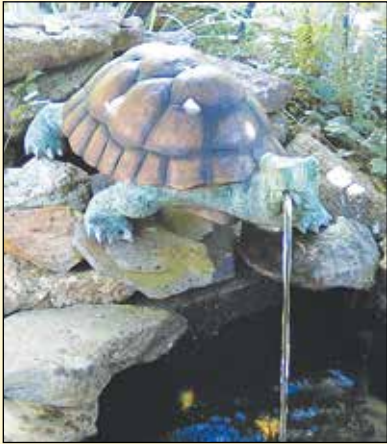
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...LIBRARY continued from page 1

paths, and landscaped grounds.

People can find an enchanting spot to retire and read now inside or outside the library either in the pavilion to the sounds of the water feature or on a bench along the path that rambles behind the property.

The outdoor improvements were made possible through generous contributions by key major donors, including Suzanne Dansby, who funded the new pavilion; Hillary Cone for the water feature; Jeannie and Dale Wolf for the path benches; and the Patterson sisters – Amy, Cookie and Karen – alongside Select Trees, who contributed trees in honor of their brother the late Tim Patterson.

“It takes a village to build something like this,” said Philip Curcuru, Board Chair of the Hudson Library Foundation. “To everyone who contributed to this campaign, thank you for giving the Hudson Library and the Town of Highlands this beautiful new facility. For more than a century, this library has been carried forward by people who decided it was their responsibility.

During the recent ribbon cutting by the Chamber of Commerce prior to the party on Thursday, the Foundation honored longtime trustee, past president, and current emeritus board member Andy Chmar with the prestigious Gertrude and Dolly Harbison Award, recognizing his decades of dedicated leadership and community service.

A team of local professionals brought the project to life, including Summit Architecture, Hank Ross Landscape Architecture, Futral Enterprises, Tate Landscaping, and Bryson Grading. Strategic planning and campaign vision were guided by Wood Lovell and Leslie Manning, alongside the foundation board, fundraising committees, and library staff.



Photos by Kim Lewicki



Phil Curcuru, Hudson Library Board Chair, Suzanne Dansby, who funded the open air pavilion with fireplace and Andy Chmar, Hudson Library Trustee and recipient of the library's Dolly Harbison Award

With the outdoor spaces now open to the public, the Hudson Library Foundation is directing its focus toward the next major milestone: comprehensive interior renovations planned for 2027.

Community support and contributions will be vital to making these critical indoor improvements a reality, ensuring the library continues to serve future generations of Highlands residents and visitors.

For more information on the project, to view architectural renderings, or to contribute to the ongoing capital campaign, please visit the Hudson Library or contact the Foundation.

www.hudsonlibraryfoundation.org/



Hillary Cone funded the water feature; Jeannie and Dale Wolf funded the path benches; and the Patterson sisters – Amy, Cookie and Karen – alongside Select Trees, contributed trees in honor of their brother the late Tim Patterson.



Andrea Gabbard

c: 828.200.6742

AndreaGabbard@gmail.com



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A Season to Slow Down

There's something about this time of year and the coming weeks that makes it almost impossible not to feel a sense of awe at the beauty of the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau.

I drive up Highway 64 from Transylvania County almost daily, so I get to watch the changes happen in real time. It starts with a red leaf here and there, a cooler feel to the morning air, a heavier fog settling into the valleys. Then that familiar gradient begins to take over entire trees, and before we know it, these hills are engulfed in blazing red, gold and orange.

Just thinking about it makes me want butternut squash soup and hot coffee.

And, of course, with all that beauty comes the Leaf Peepers™.

Traffic will back up toward the Big Hill. The Ingles parking lot in Cashiers will become the particular kind of conundrum that locals and frequent visitors know all too well. And Highlands — oh, Highlands. Once fall gives way to the holidays, downtown starts to look like the idyllic little mountain town from a 1990s Christmas movie. Twinkling lights, roasting nuts, decorated storefronts and actual snow-globe vibes.

It's wonderful.

It can also make you want to honk your horn.

But lately I've been thinking that maybe there's something to that. The very people who force us to literally slow down might also be reminding us to slow our minds down a little.

Because the next few months are busy for those of us who live and work here, too. At Landmark, we're looking forward to our annual Chili Cook-Off on October 15. There's the Cashiers Valley Leaf Festival at The Village Green, followed by perhaps the biggest event of the year - Halloween on Main Street in Highlands. Then suddenly it's Thanksgiving, Christmas parades, holiday parties,



Lauren Dahl
Landmark Realty
828-279-4700

lauren@landmarkrg.com

shopping and everything else we try to cram into the final weeks of the year.

It is simultaneously my favorite and most dreaded time of year.

It's incredibly easy to rush through all of it.

So maybe this year we don't.

Buy a Christmas gift from a locally owned shop. Say hello when you see someone you know at the market instead of rushing past because you have six

more things on your list. Make cookies or a pie for a neighbor. Have dinner with people you love. Find something to do together that doesn't require buying anything at all.

And maybe give the car in front of you an extra second when the light turns green.

Because we live in a place people travel from all over the world to experience.

They pull over on the side of the road to photograph views we pass on our way to work or pickleball. They wander through our downtowns, hike our trails, visit our waterfalls, eat in our restaurants and stare at mountains we see every single day. They send those photos home to people they love and tell them how magical it is here.

Meanwhile, we're behind them wondering why on earth they're driving 27 miles per hour.

I'm certainly not promising I'll love the traffic this fall. But I'm going to try to remember what all those visitors already know: there is an extraordinary amount of beauty here worth slowing down for.

And if we're always in a hurry to get somewhere else, we just might miss it.

• *Lauren Dahl is the General Manager and Broker-in-Charge at Landmark Realty Group and Landmark Vacations where she supports an elite team of brokers. She can be reached at 828-279-4700 or via email at lauren@landmarkrg.com.*

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...HCFF continued from page 1

support of the Highlands Performing Arts Center.

Now in its second year, the Festival continues to establish itself as an exciting addition to the Plateau's cultural calendar

and an important fundraiser for the PAC. This year's program featured 16 films, bringing audiences together to experience documentaries, narrative features, seminars and independent filmmaking on the

big screen. The Festival concluded with a Black & White Masquerade featuring a screening of the 1926 silent film Phantom of the Opera with a live score by members of the WCU orchestra.

Three films received top honors during the Festival. Papertown was named Best Documentary, while Honeyjoon received the award for Best Narrative Feature. Festival audiences selected Hold Onto Me as the Audience Choice Award winner.

The daughter of Wild Thyme owners, Tsering Lama won the Emerging Filmmaker Scholarship, presented by the festival to support an emerging filmmaker with a connection to the plateau — nurturing new voices, recognizing promising talent and celebrating the creative spirit of our mountain community.

Beyond celebrating film, the Festival directly supports the work of the Highlands Performing Arts Center. Funds raised through this year's event, will help the PAC continue its mission of bringing live performance, film and educational opportunities to the Highlands-Cashiers community.

Building on the enthusiasm surrounding the Festival, the PAC is now raising funds for its next investment in film: the purchase of a new screen and projection equipment that will allow movies to be shown on the PAC's Main Stage year-round.

The success of the 2026 Festival demonstrates just how quickly the event has become part of the cultural life of Highlands and Cashiers. With strong attendance, enthusiastic audiences and extraordinary donor support, the Highlands-Cashiers Film Festival is already looking toward what comes next, both for the Festival and for film at the PAC.



Masked patrons mingled in the PAC lobby enjoying food, drinks and camaraderie prior to the screening of 1926 silent film Phantom of the Opera accompanied by WCU orchestra.



PAC board member Cynthia Trevathan dressed the part Saturday night while serving up libations.



The daughter of Wild Thyme owners, Tsering Lama won the Emerging Filmmaker Scholarship, to support an emerging filmmaker with a connection to the plateau



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• OBITUARY •

Bill Hall

Milton Johnny "Bill" Hall, age 97, passed from this life to his heavenly home on September 17, 2026. He was comforted in his final days and hours by the caring team at Chestnut Hill and the presence of his children and grandchildren.

Bill was born on December 10, 1928, in Nashville, GA. He was the younger son of Roy M. and Verdine Barber Hall. The family moved to Miami, FL when he was two years old. Miami remained his home until his retirement. He attended Andrew Jackson High School where he met his beloved wife Evelyn, with whom he celebrated his 77th Anniversary prior to her death earlier this year. Together they raised four children.

Bill spent his childhood during the Great Depression and his youth during World War II, twin crucibles

that formed the Greatest Generation.

Bill served in the US Navy from 1948 until 1954, at which time he joined the City of Miami Fire Department, where he was known as Johnny. As a Lieutenant, he commanded Station 12 in Allapattah, the neighborhood where he grew up. In Bill's words, "I had the best crew in the fire department. We answered over 3,500 alarms a year at Station 12, third highest in the nation." The City of Miami pioneered the fire department rescue service, and Bill was one of those pioneers.

Bill first visited Highlands in the late 1940s and fell in love with the area. He and Evelyn built a vacation home in Horse Cove where they moved when he retired in 1983. His was an active retirement. He nearly doubled the size of his house and built a 24 foot square barn/workshop, essentially by himself. He enjoyed woodworking - making furniture, walking sticks, picture frames, vases, pencil holders, recipe boxes, cutting boards, bowls, banks, birdhouses, games, toys, and crafts for friends and family.

He and Evelyn were active in Highlands churches and community. He built libraries at The Bascom and at Community Bible Church, maintained the roadway for the Horse Cove Road Association, built sets for the Highlands Playhouse, helped build a home for Habitat for Humanity, and volunteered at the Eckerd Living Center and the Highlands United Methodist Church Food Pantry, among many other organizations. Bill lived



to serve others.

Bill was a devoted and loving husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, neighbor, and friend. He treasured the family he and Evelyn established and he was blessed to be able to mentor so many generations with his skill, wisdom, and love. All who knew him were equally blessed.

Bill is survived by his children John Richard Hall (Susan), Timothy Mark Hall (Nancy), Daniel Bruce Hall (Angela), and Lisa Marie Hall (Allan); his daughter-in-law

Kathy Sullivan; his grandchildren Andrew Hall, Angela Bailey (Stacey), Jenny Hall, Tyler Hall (Gabby), Amy McCartney (Matt), Daniel J Hall (Hanna), Joseph Hall (Heidi), and Bonnie Sanders (Chris); plus ten great-grandchildren, all of whom were a source of joy and pride in his life.

We will celebrate Bill's life on Saturday, September 26th at 2 PM at Highlands United Methodist Church with Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas officiating. The family will receive friends at a reception following the service. He and Evelyn will be buried at the Horse Cove Cemetery at a future date.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a gift in Bill's name to Highlands United Methodist Church, PO Box 1959, Highlands, NC 28747. Donations can be made online at <https://www.highlandsmethodist.org/give>.

A more detailed biography is available at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com. Online condolences can be left there as well.

• LETTERS •

Say 'no' to gas-powered leaf blowers

Dear Editor,

When maintaining our yards, could we consider avoiding loud gas-powered leaf blowers whenever possible?

We all know that the sound from gas blowers is exceptionally loud and intrusive, and it carries a long distance through the neighborhood. The noise makes it difficult for neighbors to simply enjoy the porch and appreciate the quiet of the mountains.

Beyond the disturbance to everyone nearby, I am also concerned about the people who operate this equipment regularly. They are exposed at close range to the intense noise, fumes, and airborne dust - often through no choice of their own.

I completely understand that yard care is necessary, and I know everyone wants to keep their property neat. My hope is that we can all be mindful of the harmful impact this equipment has on the people nearby.

Although gas-powered blowers are conditionally exempt from the town's noise ordinance, that exemption does not make the noise any less intrusive or harmful to

our neighbors and workers. Quieter options — such as rakes, brooms, and electric blowers — can make a meaningful difference.

Thank you for considering this request and for helping keep our neighborhood peaceful, healthy, and pleasant for everyone.

Tom Kirtland
Mirror Lake, Highlands

Maybe I'm Wrong

Dear Editor,

As is any citizen's desire and duty, I have made an effort to keep informed and up to date on the Mirror Lake dredging and restoration project. After months of following its progress I can't help but think that the Mirror Lake Improvement Association, the Town of Highlands and McGill Engineering, all with the best intentions, have bitten off more than they can chew. Maybe I'm wrong?

Alice Nelson
Highlands

• DINING •

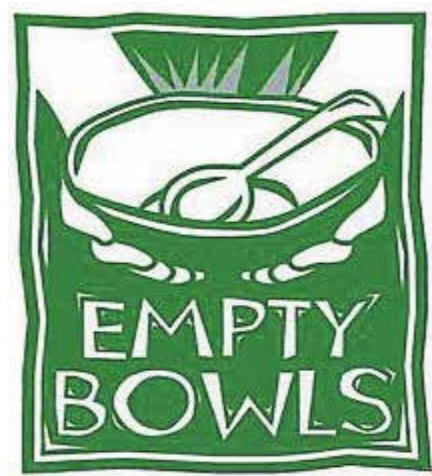
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...REDISTRICTING continued from page 1

con County Planning Board.

At the September Town Board meeting, Highlands Town Board unanimously passed a “A Resolution for County Redistricting.” Mayor Taylor said the Town of Franklin may also pass a similar resolution in October.

“We just want a voice that reflects the needs of our community,” said Patterson. “Redistricting would distribute peoples’ voice throughout the county.”

Currently, Macon County elects five commissioners across three electoral districts.

District 1 is Highlands, Ellijay, Flats, and Sugarfork and District 3 is Burningtown, Cartoogechaye, Cowee, and Nantahala with each electing one commissioner.

District 2 covers the Franklin area, Iotla, Millshoal, Union, and Smithbridge and elects three commissioners.

The issue is that District 2 holds roughly triple the population of Districts 1 and 3 combined, leading to claims of unbalanced representation because voting is conducted county wide at-large. This means anyone from anywhere in the county can pick the representative for any district.

In July, the Planning Board proposed the “3-2” Plan which shifts a 3-district layout with two at-large seats. According to the Planning Board, each of the three districts would have roughly equal populations (around 33% each), requiring Districts 1 and 3 to expand into areas currently part of District 2. One resident commissioner would be chosen from each district, supplemented by two, at-large seats open to any county resident.

“But we want our preferred voice accountable to people of our district,” said Patterson. “As it is now, 80% of the pop-

ulation not our ‘preferred voice’ chooses our representative. We want a representative who is specifically accountable to us who reflects the true sentiment of the citizens in that district.”

The resolution outlines concerns and solutions as follows:

“There exists concentrations of populations in Franklin and the Highlands areas which are the economic centers of the county;

“There are some areas with lower densities, yet carry a major tax burden for the county; and each area or district have unique needs and concerns that should be heard and considered in the decision-making process; (Franklin occupies 1.75% of Macon County land after the National Forest exclusion and represents 8.00% of county taxable property value. Highlands occupies 2.03% of the same adjusted county land base and represents 22.23% of county taxable property value.) and

“Research indicates that election of commissioners by district rather than county wide is the most democratic option

“Dividing the county into five districts with proportional representation is possible; and the current county wide election of commissioners allows an election decision by a majority of voters in a given district to be nullified by voters from other districts in the county.

“Therefore, be it resolved, that the county should adopt a five-district voting map with the election of a commissioner from each defined district by the voters of that district.”

The resolution will be forward to Representative Karl Gillespie and Kevin Corbin at the state level in hopes they will entertain the request.

...1/4 PENNY continued from page 1

1/4 of a penny sales tax increase. They were at the September Highlands Town Board meeting where they met with zero obstacles.

However, over the years, the message has fallen on deaf ears.

The problem?

Shields said in 2022 election and again in the 2024 election, Macon County citizens misinterpreted “a quarter of a penny” to mean “a quarter” which subse-

quently resulted in the failure of the referendum for a 1/4 penny sales tax increase in the county.

Since Macon County is wary about spending its undesignated fund balance and because there are financial needs not being met in the county – specifically the \$2+ million unfunded for the school system in FY ’26-’27 budget – a 1/4 of a penny sales tax increase is being suggested as

• See 1/4 PENNY page 14

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

High diesel fuel costs causes cancellation of Candlelight Celtic Christmas Tour; PAC performance cancelled

The Highlands Performing Arts Center (PAC) has been notified that Candlelight Celtic has made the difficult decision to cancel its upcoming Christmas tour, including the performance scheduled for November 27, 2026, at the Highlands Performing Arts Center.

According to the artist's agent, the cancellation is the result of a substantial and unexpected increase in diesel fuel costs associated with touring. Fuel costs are currently running approximately 65 percent higher than originally budgeted, making the transportation expenses for the tour financially unsustainable.

"We are extremely disappointed that Candlelight Celtic will not be able to join us in Highlands this holiday season," said Jeanne Piazza, Executive Director of the Highlands Performing Arts Center. "We know many of our patrons were looking forward to this beautiful holiday performance. Unfortunately, touring produc-

tions are facing increasingly significant transportation and operating costs, and we certainly understand the difficult decision the artists have had to make."

The PAC will be contacting ticket holders regarding the cancellation. All tickets purchased for Candlelight Celtic will be refunded to the original method of payment.

While Candlelight Celtic will no longer be part of the PAC's holiday season, audiences will still have the opportunity to celebrate the season with an extraordinary evening of music. Just one week earlier, on Sat., Nov. 21, the PAC will present Mark O'Connor's Appalachian Christmas featuring Maggie O'Connor.

The Highlands Performing Arts Center appreciates the understanding of its patrons and the community and looks forward to celebrating the holiday season together.

Howard Hanna Allen Tate now at Carolina Way & N. 4th St.



. Rick Harrison, Steve Sheppard and Will Sheppard of Howard Hanna Allen Tate Highlands-Downtown office

The Highlands Chamber of Commerce was pleased to help celebrate the opening of the Howard Hanna Allen Tate Highlands-Downtown office with a ribbon cutting! Located at 411 N. 4th Street (the old Posh Paws site) the office's agents serve clients throughout Highlands, Cashiers, Sapphire, Lake Toxaway, Franklin, Scaly Mountain and Clayton, GA. Congratulations to the entire Howard Hanna Allen Tate team as you celebrate this exciting new chapter!

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3:30pm

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5pm

Darren Nicholson Band

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From left:
Rotary President
Josh Bryson and
Johanna Fein,
Highlands Chamber
of Commerce/Visit
Highlands, NC

Highlands Chamber previews upcoming events

Johanna Fein, Executive Director of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC, presented a preview of upcoming community events at the Tuesday, September 15 meeting of the Rotary Club of Highlands. She outlined a busy fall and holiday calendar that will bring residents and visitors together while supporting local businesses, nonprofit organizations and cultural institutions.

Among the events Fein highlighted were the Highlands-Cashiers Film Festival, September 16-19; the sixth annual Highlands Porchfest, September 20; and the Highlands Heritage Jamboree, September 26. The free Heritage Jamboree, held from 1 to 7:30 p.m. at Kelsey-Hutchinson

Founders Park, will feature live music, mountain dance, local history and food. A highlight will be a performance by the U.S. Fleet Forces Navy Band's Four-Star Edition, a highly regarded group known for its versatility and energetic performances of classic favorites and contemporary rock, pop, country and hip-hop music.

Fein also previewed holiday events, including the Small Business Saturday Holiday Stroll on November 28 and the Highlands Christmas Parade on December 5. The Chamber's complete and current event calendar is available at www.highlandschamber.org/events.

...1/4 PENNY continued from page 12

a viable economic solution.

There are two ways to fund a local government – property taxes, which only homeowners pay and sales taxes, which both residents and visitors pay.

Property tax increases fall on property owners whereas sales taxes are shared by resident and visitors which represents a broader tax base and spreads the cost.

Currently, Macon County is the only county in Western NC that doesn't have a 7% sales tax. All the others – Clay, Cherokee, Graham, Jackson, Swain, Haywood, Madison and Buncombe – all have 7% sales tax.

Neighboring Rabun County, GA has an 8% sales tax and Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg, TN have a 9.75% sales tax.

It's estimated that a ¼ of a penny sales tax increase would generate a minimum of \$2.3 million annually which could

fund education, law enforcement, fire and rescue, EMS, capital improvements and more. The funds generated by the ¼ of a penny sales tax increase would stay in and benefit Macon County by helping to fund essential services.

Generating that same amount through property taxes would require a 1.7 cent increase to property owners.

The ¼ of a penny sales tax increase WOULD NOT apply to the purchasing of groceries, prescription drugs, motor vehicles, electricity and natural gas, manufactured/modular homes, boats or aircraft.

At the current rate of 6.75% sales tax, a new shirt costs \$37.35 and with the ¼ of a penny increase it would cost a \$37.44 – only 9 cents more.

According to Shields, the way the ref-

• UPCOMING EVENT •

The Bascom to host 16th Annual Clay Symposium Sept. 26

The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts will host its 16th Annual Bascom Clay Symposium on Saturday, September 26, with demonstrations from 10 a.m. to noon and 1:30 to 4 p.m. at the Dave Drake Studio. The daylong program brings ceramic artists Alexander Thierry, Andy Shaw and Tiffany Thomas together for live demonstrations and conversation centered on surface treatment in contemporary ceramics. The event is free and no registration is required; visitors are welcome to stay for the full day or drop in.



thrown vessels layered with custom screen-printed underglaze transfers, drawing on personal photographs and plant life to work memory and narrative into functional forms. Andy Shaw designs and cuts his own bisque molds, using them to press slabs into plates

and other functional ware, an approach built on repetition, pattern and variation. Tiffany Thomas throws forms in frost porcelain, then carves added clay elements to resemble gemstones and ornament before finishing pieces with gold or mother-of-pearl luster.

"The symposium offers our community a rare opportunity to engage directly with contemporary clay artists and gain insight into the passions, inspirations, and creative journeys that shape their work," said Frank Vickery, Director of Ceramics at The Bascom. "By watching Alexander, Andy, and Tiffany work side by side throughout the day, audiences can experience firsthand the extraordinary range of ideas, techniques, and artistic expression that can emerge from a single, shared material."

Following the day's demonstrations, all three artists will join an Artist Meet and Greet from 4 to 6 p.m. in the Greehey Atrium, with brief remarks recognizing the artists at 4:30 p.m. The informal gathering is free and open to the public and offers a chance to talk with the artists and view their work in the companion exhibition.

The Symposium is free and open to the public thanks in part to a Tourism Grant with Visit Highlands, NC, and support from the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

The Symposium has convened ceramic artists in Highlands each year since 2009, when it began as the Three Pottery Symposium before taking its current name in 2025. Past participants include Cynthia Bringle, Ben Owen III, Michael Sherrill and Alex Matisse, among more than fifty artists who have shared the Dave Drake Studio's wheels and worktables over the program's history.

Alexander Thierry builds wheel-

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Highlands



North
Carolina
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Council

The Bascom Clay Symposium

Sept. 26 | Free | 10am - 4pm
Drop-ins welcome.

Featuring Free Artist
Demonstrations by:
Alexander Thierry,
Andy Shaw,
and Tiffany Thomas



A Meet
and Greet
Reception with
the artists will
be held from
4-6pm

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Funding for the Bascom Clay Symposium is provided
in part by: Visit Highlands and the NC Arts Council.

Fall Home & Health Improvement - 2026

The Ripple Effect of Stiff Joints

By Dr. Kristin Lander

"I'm just getting stiff."

I hear some version of that all the time, and usually it is said almost casually, like stiffness is just part of getting older and there isn't much to think about beyond that.

Of course, our bodies do change as we age, but

stiffness is worth paying attention to because it can change the way we move long before anything becomes painful.

The body is incredibly good at compensating. If your upper back doesn't rotate well, your neck may rotate more to make up for it. If one hip becomes less mobile, your low back may start doing more of the movement. If your ankle loses motion, your knee, hip or even your foot may start moving a little differently every time you walk.

Most of the time, you don't notice any of this happening. You simply keep moving, and your body finds another way to get the job done.

That ability to adapt is one of the things that makes the human body so remarkable, but over time those compensations can also become part of the problem.

Golf is an easy example. A golf swing requires rotation through the hips, pelvis and upper back. If one of those areas is no longer moving the way it used to, you probably won't suddenly lose the ability to swing a club. Your body will find another way to create the motion. The bigger question is whether that new movement pattern is as efficient, or whether another area is being asked to do more than it should.

The same thing happens with much more ordinary movements: walking uphill, reaching into a cabinet, turning to look behind you in the car, getting out of a chair, or stepping onto a pickleball court.

That is why I pay attention when someone tells me, "It doesn't really hurt, I just can't move like I used to."

Pain matters, but it isn't the only useful signal. Sometimes the first clue that something is changing is simply that you have started doing the movement differently. You turn your whole torso instead of just your neck. You push off the armrests when you stand. You stop reaching overhead with one arm. You take shorter

steps going downhill. You stop sitting on the floor because getting back up is harder than it used to be.

None of those things automatically means something is wrong. We are all built a little differently, and there is no single "perfect" way to move. But changes in your normal movement can be useful information.

When I evaluate a musculoskeletal problem, I am rarely thinking only about the area that hurts. I am also looking at what is moving well, what isn't, and what other parts of the body may be compensating.

Low-back discomfort, for example, is not always only a low-back problem. Hip mobility, upper-back rotation, strength, load tolerance and even changes in the way someone walks can all affect what the lower back is being asked to do.

The shoulder is another good example. The shoulder doesn't work in isolation. The shoulder blade and upper back both contribute to how well the arm moves overhead, which means the painful spot is not always the only place worth examining.

This is also why simply making pain go away is not always the whole goal.

Ultimately, I want people to be able to move well enough to keep doing the things that matter to them. Sometimes that means restoring motion in one area. Sometimes it means strengthening another. Sometimes hands-on care is useful, sometimes exercise is the bigger piece, and very often it is some combination of the two.

The important part is understanding what has changed and why the body is responding the way it is.

So, every once in a while, instead of only asking yourself, "What hurts?" ask a slightly different question:

What doesn't move as easily as it used to?

Can you turn your head comfortably in both directions? Can you reach both arms overhead? Can you get down onto the floor and back up again? Can you rotate through your hips and trunk? Can you walk uphill and downhill without changing the way you move? Can you stand from a chair without using your hands?

You do not need perfect mobility, and I certainly don't think normal aging should be turned into a medical problem. But maintaining movement, strength and physical capacity is an important part of staying independent as we get older.

And when you notice something changing, it is often easier to address it while it is still a small change than after you have spent years learning to work around



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it.

That same idea — paying attention early instead of waiting for a crisis — is also one of the principles behind the prevention-focused Health Membership I recently started in our office.

Whether we are talking about musculoskeletal

health, strength, metabolic health, sleep or nutrition, I keep coming back to the same question: what is changing now that is worth paying attention to?

Sometimes the body gives us very useful information long before it starts shouting. We just have to notice it.

Dr. Kristin Lander is a chiropractor and functional wellness practitioner at Highlands Chiropractic & Wellness. She works with patients on musculoskeletal health, movement, nutrition and strategies for maintaining health and physical independence throughout life.

From the Field: What Code Inspectors Wish Homeowners Knew

(StatePoint) When homeowners doing work on their property consider a cheaper route, for example, hiring a contractor who doesn't want to pull permits, they may not realize the risk they are taking. But they should know that there is no "undo" button on a disaster.

That's one reason behind the International Code Council (ICC) Building Safety Month, a campaign that reinforces the need for the adoption of modern, regularly-updated building codes, and helps communities understand what it takes to create safe, sustainable structures. As part of the campaign, two seasoned building safety professionals are sharing some important basics they wish homeowners knew.

Egress

Albert Joseph Rocco Jr., the deputy building official in the Building Division for the City of Kissimmee, Florida, says one of the most important safety concepts is the "The Path of Egress." Codes require bedroom windows to be a specific size so occupants can escape a fire, and so firefighters can get in while wearing their equipment. "Any modification, like adding bars to windows or changing a floor plan, must preserve that clear path to the outside."

Rocco also recommends keeping the area around bedroom windows clutter-free. "In an emergency, time spent removing items from the exit path are valuable seconds that might make the difference."

Decks and Balconies

Rocco notes that one often-ignored at-home maintenance task is inspecting exterior deck and balcony framing integrity. Deck ledger boards often fail because the connection to the house rots or was never flashed correctly. This is something people don't think about until it collapses.

"If you see the wood deteriorate, if it feels soft or is cracking, have a professional check it out. Basically, if it doesn't look safe, it's probably not," he says. "And pay attention to deck railing to ensure it's not loose. The last thing you want is for a guest to lean on it during a BBQ and fall through to the ground, however far that is."

Rocco also warns that decks must be used safely. For example, a hot tub filled with water may be heavier

than a deck can handle. Homeowners intending to place a hot tub on their deck should check with a licensed professional to verify if additional support will be needed. Also, it's not recommended to cook on decks with roofs. "BBQ fires can happen easily if left unattended. If those flames get hot and high enough, your steak won't be the only thing burnt," says Rocco.

Water Intrusion

Slow plumbing leaks are the biggest "snowball" culprits, according to Rocco. A tiny drip can lead to structural rot and toxic mold before a spot on the dry-wall appears. Another is foundation drainage. If soil settles and slopes toward the house, water will eventually undermine the foundation, leading to costly structural failure.

"Beyond structural damage and harmful mold, water intrusion can damage electrical systems, increasing the risk of fire or shock, and it often goes undetected until significant harm has already occurred," says Ryan Smith, the building official for the City of Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

Water Heaters

Homeowners often overlook sediment flushing for water heaters, warns Rocco. Mineral buildup at the bottom reduces efficiency and can cause the tank to overheat and fail prematurely.

Vents

Smith reminds homeowners that snow buildup on the side of the house can plug up vents and turn off the furnace. "You have to clear snow around the furnace

• See CODE page 19



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: From left: Josh Bryson, Rotary Club of Highlands President, Col. John Campbell, Speaker and Rick Willeford, Rotary Host.

Retired Army Col. John Campbell reflects on geopolitical challenges of the War with Iran

Military Historian and retired Army Col. John Campbell reflected on the war with Iran through the lens of geopolitics and his personal experiences in Iran 1975-76 at a recent Rotary Club of Highlands meeting. As an advisor to Iranian military units, Campbell's unit was tasked with providing security to the oil production industry. Observing all American and Iranian holidays, religious and national, gave Campbell ample time to learn the Farsi language and he spent many hours talking to farmers in the surrounding countryside. These conversations and encounters gave him an appreciation of Iranians' knowledge of and pride in their ancient culture and their deeply held religious values.

The common Iranian perception of America is largely shaped by what they see on television: a society dominated by crime, violence and sex. This perception has led to the belief that Iran is fighting Satan when it fights America. Campbell remembered spending hours refuting this view of American culture.

Following the Shah of Iran's over-

throw, the very repressive Theocratic leadership grew, largely funded by vast income from oil sales. Iran's military ambitions were threefold: 1) to become the military umbrella over smaller neighboring states; 2) to supply and direct terrorist groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, and Houthis in Yemen and 3) to obtain nuclear strike capability.

Reflecting on the geopolitical aspects of the US-Iranian war, Campell described two very different mindsets: President Trump's DNA to make a deal, centered on economic strangulation through the Strait of Hormuz. But the blockade won't break Iran's religious ideology and it is willing to play the long game – capitalizing on the geography of the Iranian coast of the Persian Gulf, its knowledge and use of drone technology and the vulnerability of oil tankers.

In closing, Col. Campbell noted that "the ultimate objective of any conflict is to break the opponent's will. This will be a thorn in our grandchildren's side for a long time to come."

**Public Swim for children & adults now open WEEKENDS
at Rec Park pool: Sat., 11am-6pm and Sun., 1-6pm**

...CODE continued from page 17

vents – and if they turn off, that is the first place to check.”

Scope

Homeowners should never go beyond the scope of an approved building project. “We don’t know if requirements are met, what materials are used, or if there’s proper ventilation. Going beyond the scope of what’s approved is dangerous,” says Smith.

Products

“We’re seeing products being purchased from Amazon sellers that don’t meet minimum code requirements,” says Smith. From luxury sinks to bogus smoke detectors, homeowners should ensure any product they purchase is UL listed and approved for use in their jurisdiction.

International Codes

ICC’s codes and standards play an important role in creating safe, affordable and sustainable structures. Homeowners can read up on I-Codes and consult with a local professional before starting a project to avoid violations.

“When it comes down to it, most people assume that because their home is standing, it is safe. The truth is, electrical systems age, wood rots, and safety devices expire. The most dangerous home is the one where the owner assumes ‘it’s fine because it’s always been that way,’” says Rocco.

For more home safety tips, visit ICC’s Building Safety Month at <https://www.iccsafe.org>.

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Highlands**

**HIGHLANDS HERITAGE
Jamboree**

Join us!

**Saturday,
September 26, 2026**

Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park

1pm
Highlands Bagpipers

1:30pm
U.S. Fleet Forces Navy Band:
Four-Star Edition

3:30pm
Foxfire Boys

5pm
Darren Nicholson Band

*Square Dancing,
BBQ, Moonshine,
and More!*

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Pictured holding a few of the massive kudzu crowns with vines and nodes attached are (from L-R) Maia Wilde and Andrew Renfro (HCLT) and Laura Harris (HPG).

Group attacks kudzu at Reba Bridger Preserve

A dedicated group of volunteers answered the call of the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and the Highlands Plateau Greenway to begin liberating the land trust's Reba Bridger Preserve at the intersection of N. 4th Street and Foreman Road from an aggressive invasion of kudzu.

The 12-person volunteer team, led by the land trust's Andrew Renfro, learned how to find, expose, and remove the hidden blub-like root crowns of kudzu from which its fast-growing vines and leaves sprout.

Without killing those root crowns,

the vines and leaves will come back again.

A lot of progress was made during this workday, and people should look for much of it to wilt and die back in coming weeks. F

uture workdays will be required to fully eradicate the kudzu from the site.

The group plans to return to the site on October 14 from 9:30am-12:30pm to continue tackling missed root crowns and additional parts of the park where kudzu has spread.

If you'd like to lend a hand, please reach out to andrew@hcltnc.org.

...MAYOR continued from page 2

That diversity is a constructive interaction that makes our community more dynamic and strong. We should welcome all people of goodwill and industry to our town.

Also, we should commit to equity. I saw an illustration several years ago that illustrated the issue of equity. The picture showed three people standing exactly in the same spot in right field watching a baseball game. There was a five-foot right field fence. Everyone in the picture had the same access to the fence, but there were differences. One person was 6 feet tall. He could see the game clearly; another person was five foot two and was having trouble looking over the fence. The third person was in a wheelchair and had no chance of viewing the game. The question was whether that situation was equitable. The question of equity and fairness should be a priority. I know we struggle in town government with this concern

in all the ordinances that are passed and enforced. There is always room for improvement.

Finally, I contend we want to be a community of inclusion. It is the all-American right thing to do as a community. And it is a good business strategy. We want everyone to come to Highlands and enjoy what we have to offer. It is a basic business principle to include all sections of the marketplace, not just focus on one group or class. Highlands has something for everyone to buy, see, or do.

I am a member of the North Carolina Mayors Association. While I have said DEI may not be in vogue in some circles, I would contend that every one of my mayoral colleagues would proudly proclaim that their municipalities embrace a model of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Failing to do so foretells bad outcomes for a community.

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

'Food for Fines' drive this October at Fontana Regional Libraries

Do you have a library book that is overdue? Maybe you turned it in, but still have those overdue fines on your account? You can wipe out those fines, and help your neighbors by stopping by any Fontana Regional Library location with an unexpired canned or boxed non-perishable food item this October! To be eligible for complete overdue fine forgiveness all overdue items must be returned in undamaged, "shelf-ready" condition and must be FRL owned. Please see the list of suggested food items as well as unacceptable items below.

The public library provides resources and opportunities for growth, success, and community engagement every day, and when budgets are tight, these resources can make a huge difference. For those wishing to

reestablish borrowing privileges and full access to resources, this is a special opportunity.

Food collected will be distributed to the Bryson City Food Pantry and the Macon County Food Council, which coordinates with local food banks, little free food pantries and community nonprofits providing hot meals for individuals and families. Suggested items include: boxed meals, peanut butter, cereal, canned goods, pasta, low sodium and gluten free products. Items not accepted: expired or damaged items, glass containers, open packages.

The Fontana Regional Library serves Macon, and Swain counties with a mission to help meet patrons' educational, informational, and recreational needs. Visit fontanalib.org for more information.

Tropher shares passion for birding



Tropher Stephens and Rotary president John Martin.

Tropher Stephens, the Education and Outreach Coordinator for the Highlands Cashiers Land Trust addressed the club and told us about his guided youth backpacking trips globally, including in the Himalayas and

Southeast Asia. He also teaches local courses on birding, wildlife tracking, handcrafts, earth skills, and mindful nature connection. But he truly came alive as he shared his passion for native birds and birding.



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828-482-1112

Highlands Historical Society's Walk in the Park

Saturday, October 3rd, 1:00 - 3:00

Sunday, October 4th, 2:00

Join us
for a walk
through
time and
hear
stories from
Highlands
remarkable
history.



Featuring the
ghosts of:
Mary Chapin
Smith
Uncle Billy Potts
Annie Whip
Bennie Rogers
Fred Allen
Judge Felix Alley

Saturday's Performances will be held in Memorial
Park with Reserved Shuttle Times from the Highlands
Community Building Parking Lot. Sunday's
Performance will be held at the Highlands
Community Building.

Tickets: Adults \$25, Children under 12 Free
Purchase Tickets and Reserve Times at:
highlandshistory.com

• HS TEAMS •



Middle School Boys Soccer

Back Row Left-Right: Head Coach Calab Bowers, 11 Diego Cisneros-Flores, 8 Darwin Frias-Ovando, 13 Hansel Favela-Cortez, 2 Henry Vines, 22 Knox Holbrooks, 3 Asa Garner, 10 David Rogers, Assistant Coach Brent Holbrooks.

Front Row Left-Right: 4 Gauge Hennequin, 16 Rhyver Felshaw, 14 Bryan Munoz, 25 Josh Tift, 17 Porter Bowers, 1 Tripp Holbrooks, 9 Axel Mendoza



Middle School Volleyball

Back Row from left: Head Coach Angela Swain, 24 Willa James, 4 Madelynne Phillips, 12 Valerie Nadzorau, 14 Victoria Rutter, 19 Annie Wilkes, 11 Akira Nolan, 5 Riley Brooks, 8 Yazmin Montalvo, 15 Morgan Chastain, 13 Bella Batista, Assistant Coach Margie Potts.

Front Row from left: 2 Valentina Gooch, 17 Rylee Oakey, 3 Annabelle Searles, 21 Nani Debois, 1 Valentina Gomez, 23 Hayden Tejada, 10 Valerie Olvera, 6 Rylee Bryson, 00 Saylor Holbrooks

• HS SPORTS RECAP •

Late-game drama, personal bests, and volleyball victories highlight action-packed slate

It was a busy, high-stakes week for Highlands School athletics, filled with dramatic comeback wins, personal milestones on the cross country course, and strong performances in the pool and on the volleyball court.



Brett Lamb
Athletic Director

High School Soccer: Carnes' Hat Trick Fuels Dramatic Win at Andrews

On Wednesday, Sept. 16, the High School Boys Soccer team traveled to Andrews for a tightly contested road match.

Highlands struck early when Rowen Carnes found the back of the net off a Michael Mu-

noz assist to take a 1-0 lead. Andrews quickly responded to knot the game at 1-1 before converting a controversial throw-in goal to head into halftime with a 2-1 advantage over the Highlanders.

The drama escalated late in the second half. After being fouled inside the box, Carnes stepped up and converted a penalty kick to tie the match at 2-2. With just eight minutes remaining on the clock, Carnes completed a sensational hat trick, taking another assist from Munoz and burying the game-winner to lift Highlands

• See HS SPORTS page 24



Varsity Boys Soccer

Ian Batista, Colson Blowdown, Jensen Bowers, Rowen Carnes, Jesus Damian, Pierre Damian, Aiden Dendy, Blaine Dendy, Francisco Gooch, Elmer Hernandez, Blake Kenter, Chase Kenter, Alex Lopez, Matthew Morales, Michael Munoz, Lincoln Perkins, Stephen Pierson, Justin Powell, Harper Ramey, Jack Sumner, Todd Vilardo, Camden Westendorf, Charlie Wilkes. Head Coach is Scott Westendorf and Asst. Coaches are Ryan Vinson and Brian Crook.

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...HS SPORTS continued from page 23

to a thrilling 3-2 victory over an upstart Andrews squad.

High School & Middle School Volleyball: Home Triple Header Capping Busy Week

Highlands volleyball teams saw plenty of court time over the past week, capping it off with a stellar home performance.

- Tuesday, Sept 15 vs. Swain County: The JV squad sparked an energetic night by bouncing back from a 19-25 opening set loss to sweep the next two sets 25-18 and 15-11 for a 2-1 match victory. Varsity put up a relentless fight against a tough Swain County team but ultimately dropped a 3-0 contest (18-25, 17-25, 20-25).

- Thursday, Sept 17 at Hiwassee Dam: On the road, JV fought hard in a narrow 1-2 setback. Varsity grabbed a set off Hiwassee Dam but fell short in a tight four-set battle 1-3 (20-25, 18-25, 25-20, 24-26).

- Monday, Sept 21 Home Triple-Header: Highlands hosted a three-match marathon to kick off the new week. Middle School started strong with a dominant 2-0 sweep over Blue Ridge (25-8, 25-11). JV followed with an absolute nail-biter against Summit, coming up just short in the final frame of a 1-2 loss (25-21, 16-25, 14-16). Varsity closed out the night in style, dominating Macon Early College in a clean 3-0 sweep (25-11, 25-17, 25-10).

Cross Country: Top-15 Finishes and Personal Records:

**Highlands runners
made their mark across
two tough meets this past
week.**

At Rabun Gap, the boys' squad delivered strong individual results, led by Asa Garner's 2nd-place finish with a blazingly fast time of 11:24. Gauge Hennequin claimed 7th overall at 13:25, and Hansel Favela-Cortez crossed in 15th at 14:25. On the girls' side, Valentina Gooch paced Highlands in 12th place (15:42), followed by Ana-

Nico Shchelchov in 24th (18:39) and Willa Mae James in 26th (19:09).

On Saturday, the High School team sent a two-man squad of Rowen Carnes and Francisco Gooch to Murphy, where both runners turned in exceptional personal-record performances. Carnes posted a PR time of 19:44, while Gooch locked in his own PR at 20:56.

Middle School Swimming: Strong Points Output in Brevard

On Thursday, September 17, the Middle School Swim team headed to Brevard for a competitive road meet, placing 7th overall as a team behind efficient individual performances.

Bella Batista paced the team with a pair of runner-up finishes, placing 2nd in both the 100-yard Freestyle and 50-yard Butterfly to contribute 34 points. Nicole Shchelgachova scored 27 team points with 5th and 6th-place finishes in the 50-yard Freestyle and 50-yard Breaststroke, respectively. Valerie Nadzorau added to the tally with an 8th-place finish in the Individual Medley and a 13th-place finish in the 50-yard Backstroke.

Another outstanding week of heart, hustle, and Highlander pride in the



From left: Francisco Gooch and Rowen Carnes of the high school cross country team.



Join us!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2026
Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park

1:30pm
U.S. Fleet Forces Navy Band:
Four-Star Edition

VISIT
Highlands

VISITHIGHLANDSNC.COM

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



MAMA crew members with HCA representative.

MAMA Celebrates 40 Years of Providing Critical Care Across Western North Carolina

Forty years after its first flight, Mission Health's Mountain Area Medical Airlift (MAMA) is celebrating four decades of providing critical air medical care across Western North Carolina and the surrounding region.

Since the program began on Sept. 29, 1986, MAMA crews have transported more than 31,000 patients, bringing highly specialized care to patients when minutes matter and quickly connecting them with the level of care they need.

"I am incredibly proud of the generations of flight nurses, paramedics, pilots, mechanics and other team members who have built this program and continue that legacy today. MAMA represents the very best of Mission Health - extraordinary clinical expertise, an unwavering commitment to our patients and a willingness to go wherever we are needed to care for the people of this region," said Greg Lowe, President of Mission Health.

MAMA began with one helicopter, MAMA 1, based at Mission Hospital in Asheville. As the region's needs grew, the program expanded in October 2004 with MAMA 2 stationed at Angel Medical Center in Franklin, bringing air medical resources closer to communities across far Western North Carolina.

That commitment continues today through investments in the people, aircraft and facilities that support the program. HCA Healthcare funded a new hangar for MAMA 2 at Angel Medical Center, providing a dedicated home for the aircraft and its crew.

The hangar is large enough to bring MAMA 2 indoors during severe weather and includes sleeping quarters, a kitchen and other space for crew members who remain ready to respond around the clock. Stationing MAMA 2 and its crew in Franklin helps quickly connect patients throughout the western part of the region with the specialized care they need.

Investment in MAMA's aircraft has also expanded what flight teams can do for patients. The program's newest helicopter can carry more weight, an important capability for safely transporting larger patients, and provides additional room around the patient so flight nurses and paramedics can move and continue providing critical care while in the air.

Today, MAMA is supported by 36 active medical crew members, including flight nurses and flight paramedics, along with 18 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit flight team members and respiratory therapists.

• See MAMA page 29

WAKE UP, AMERICA.

**POOR LEADERSHIP
IS WEAKENING
OUR MILITARY.**

MUNITIONS DRAINED.

The Iran war consumed virtually all available long-range Army missiles, nearly half our Tomahawks and an estimated 65% of Patriot interceptors.

TROOPS PUSHED TO THE BREAKING POINT.

Nearly 5,000 people aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln endured a nine-month deployment amid reported food shortages, broken plumbing, exhaustion and mental-health concerns.

LIVES AND EQUIPMENT LOST.

Eighteen American service members have died, more than 750 have been wounded, and billions of dollars in equipment and military facilities have been damaged.

EXPERIENCE DISCARDED.

Senior commanders have been abruptly removed, while women and Black officers have been denied promotions without performance-based explanations.

SECURITY RISKED.

The Defense Secretary shared exact strike times and aircraft details over the unsecured Signal app hours before pilots were airborne, risking American lives.

THIS IS NOT STRENGTH. IT IS

DETERIORATION. The United States, once respected as having "the greatest military the world has ever known," is losing credibility. Meanwhile, China, Russia and North Korea watch and wait.

DEFEND THOSE WHO DEFEND US.

Paid for by Highlands Indivisible



Highlands Porchfest Sun., Sept. 30

On Sunday, 16 participating local business venues and partner spots throughout downtown Highlands, transformed storefronts and patios into open-air stages.

Participating Venues included Town Hall, High Country Wine & Provisions, Highlands Wine Shoppe, Highlands Historical Society, First Presbyterian Church, Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park, Highlander Mountain House, Western Carolina Brew and Wine, The Stubborn Buddha, Park on Main, Mountain Life Properties, The High Dive, The Stubborn Bull, and Trailborn Highlands.

People enjoyed the balmy weather until the predicted rain started about 3:30 – but the music played on.



KH Founders Park



Town Hall Restaurant



Highlands Wine Shoppe

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

BLUEVALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice. Pastor 706-782-3965

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

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

5th Sunday Singing featuring Georgia Mountain Trio;

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

BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Senior Pastor: Rev. Amy Spivey

Assoc. Pastor: Rev. Wonyeong Lee 828-743-5298

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

GRACE CHAPEL ON HIGH HOLLY

9615 Dillard Rd Scaly Mountain, N.C.

Pastor Steve Kerhoulas. <http://www.Graceonhighholly.com>

Sunday School 9:45; Worship 11; Prayer Service Wed 5:30p

Men's and Women's Bible Study throughout the week

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

The Rev'd Dr. Marc Robertson & Rev. Nick McGee

464 U.S. Hwy. 64E, Cashiers, NC

CAC@christanglicancashiers.org • 828-743-1701

Sunday: Adult Christian Ed, 9:15a; Holy Eucharist, 10:30a;

Fellowship 11:45a; Wed: Bible Study/Contemplative Prayer, 5p

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY. CASHIERS

743-5470 • www.cashiers.church

Sun. 10:45a; Wed Study 5:15p supper and childcare.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

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

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard

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

1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7 p.m.

Wednesdays – Supper at 6 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685

3645 Cashiers Rd. Highlands. NC • Sr. Pastor Gary Hewins

Sun: Service 10:45am, Children's 10:30am

Wed.: Youth 5:30-7pm; Women's Bible Study: Mon. 4:30pm, Tues.

10am; Men's Bible Study: Wed. & Thurs. 7am @ Zookeeper

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

Rev. VV. 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 • fpcchighlands.org

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

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

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS

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

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

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

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

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road

The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily

sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.

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

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376

In-Person and live-streamed Worship Services

909a Bluegrass and 11a Traditional

www.highlandsmethodist.org

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741

Rev. Ken Langsdorf

Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.

Visit our website: Holy Family Lutheran Highlands NC

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Pastor Zane Talley

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

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

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

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

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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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. 15. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Accidents responded to: Sept. 15

Vehicle 1 was traveling north on Choctaw Road and then attempted to turn around. It drove too far forward to the right and became stuck in the ditch due to wet grass. It appeared that a small scratch was on the front center of the bumper not exceeding a reportable amount of damage. The towing company drove over the yard adjacent to the vehicle and left tire marks. The driver in the vehicle exchanged information with the homeowner and advised that he would compensate him for any damages.

Sept. 19

Vehicles 1 and 2 were parked facing south in the Highlands Plaza parking lot. Vehicle 1 was backing out of the parking space next to vehicle 2 and struck the right rear corner of vehicle 2 and left the parking lot.

- During the week, officers issued three citations and 18 warning tickets.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Sept. 16

Sept. 16

- At 7:10 p.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at a residence on Sagee Drive.

- At 7:46 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

Sept. 17

- At 5:08 a.m., the dept. was first-

responders to a residence on Apple Mountain Lane.

- At 6:06 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on White-side Cove Road.

- At 11:09 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Chestnut Street.

- At 12:41 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on White-side Mountain Road.

- At 6:23 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Cottage Row.

- At 10:44 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Randall Road.

Sept. 18

- At 10:15 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Big Bear Pen Road.

- At 6:41 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Netsi Place.

Sept. 19

- At 10:05 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Morewood Road.

- At 10:34 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

Sept. 21

- At 11:51 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a possible search for an individual on Hickory Knut Gap Road.

- At 2:17 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Spring Street.

- At 4:54 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

Sept. 22

- At 3:37 a.m., the dept. responded to a call about a miscellaneous fire at a residence on Bowery Road.



Rescue crews, EMS and police respond to accident at Bridal Veil Falls on US 64 west

At 4:54 p.m., on Monday, Sept. 21, Highlands Fire and Rescue was dispatched to Bridal Veil Falls for a reported vehicle over an embankment with unknown injuries and unknown entrapment.

Upon arrival, crews located a vehicle that had traveled over the embankment into a hole across from the falls coming to rest at the bottom of the hole.

The on-duty crew found a man trapped inside the vehicle. Crews quickly stabilized the vehicle and used a basket to pull the driver up to EMS crews who were waiting on scene.

Highlands Fire & Rescue thanks Macon County EMS, Macon County Squad 4, Highlands Police Department, Macon County North Carolina 911, and Macon County - NC Sheriff's Office for their assistance and teamwork during today's incident.



NOW AVAILABLE! – FREE SAFETY VESTS!

Until we have adequate, safe sidewalks for area workers who have no choice but walk to work, our family is providing free hi-vis reflective vests to each.

We want local hard working support staff to be safe walking along the highways, especially as our daylight hours shorten.

We'll be near Wells Fargo ATM in the Highlands Plaza parking lot from 7-9am on September 24-28 giving away the free safety vests (1 per employee)

Contact psalm82.3and4@gmail.com if you need some vests delivered to your lodging.



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Oct 1-3, 96 Pinecrest Road, Highlands. Exceptional lifetime collection of fine antiques, jewelry, chandeliers, art, cut glass, linens, and baskets. Quality furnishings, and collectibles throughout. Serious collectors and antique lovers won't want to miss this sale. Bring money!

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...MAMA continued from page 25

apists who provide specialized care for the region's smallest and most vulnerable patients. Eight full-time pilots and five full-time helicopter mechanics help keep the program flying safely.

The people behind MAMA are deeply connected to the communities they serve. Current crew members live throughout Buncombe, Madison, Yancey, Henderson, Transylvania, Haywood, Swain, Macon, Cherokee, McDowell, Watauga and Polk counties, as well as neighboring Tennessee and South Carolina.

Some have spent much of their careers caring for patients in the air. John Sherman, RN, has been with MAMA for 37 years and said the impact of that work can sometimes become clear in unexpected places.

"You don't realize the impact that you have," Sherman said. "I was running a race one day and a guy comes up to me and thanks me, telling me I flew his daughter last week. We are very lucky to do what we do."

That commitment spans generations of MAMA team members. Flight paramedic Roy Barlow has served with the

program for 25 years, while pilot Kenny Dehart has served for 13 years. For others, MAMA's mission is intensely personal. Current manager Gina Scharf remembers her mother being flown as a child, while newer crew member TJ Holloway was himself transported by MAMA following a severe childhood car accident.

Four decades after MAMA's first lift-off from Mission Hospital, the aircraft, technology and facilities have evolved and the program has grown far beyond where it began. What has remained constant is its mission: bringing advanced care to patients wherever they are and connecting communities across the mountains with the specialized care available throughout Mission Health.

"For 40 years, people across this region have known that when they see MAMA in the sky, someone is getting the care they need," Lowe said. "We are proud of that legacy, and through continued investment in this program, we are making sure MAMA is here and ready for the next patient, the next family and the next generation of Western North Carolinians."

...1/4 PENNY continued from page 14

erendum has been worded on past ballots and the way it will be worded on the Nov. 3 ballot, has caused problems.

"First of all, it's a long ballot so the sales tax question will be on the second page - you have to turn it over to see it," he said. "And again, the verbiage says one-quarter percent (0.25%), which makes people think it's a quarter not 1/4 of a penny."

Shields said it's important that people

One-Quarter Percent Local Sales and Use Tax	
Local sales and use tax at the rate of one-quarter percent (0.25%) in addition to all other state and local sales and use taxes.	
☐	For
☐	Against
End of Ballot	

turn the ballot over and vote "For" adding the 1/4 of a penny to the local sales tax which would yield a minimum of \$2.3 million to the county coffers.

As an educator for 37 years - 29 in Macon County - he would like the money generated to be spent on the school system but in the end, how the money is spent will be decided by the Macon County Board of Commissioners.

CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD — CASHIERS, NORTH CAROLINA

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25-30 hours per week • \$27-30 per hour • Based on experience

ABOUT THE POSITION

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The Sales Manager will work 3-4 days a week (on a flex schedule) with other managers, dedicated volunteers, and other staff to coordinate our dynamic, non-profit retail operation that benefits nearly 50 local non-profits.

POSITION DETAILS

25-30 hrs / week

\$27-30 / hr DOE

Flex Schedule

Part-time



Learn More & Apply Online

Scan the QR code to visit our online posting and submit an interest form. Full job description available upon request.

• 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-pm outdoors for the summer

MTN FINDINGS

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

FIBBER MAGEES

• Fibber Magee's Thrift Store on Laurel Street Hours. Wed. & Fri. - 10a 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 informa-

tion 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 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 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 ia at 9a; meeting is at 10a. Email ncpost370@gmail.com or just join us at 9am.

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 Fox-fire Boys will perform. At 4p Highlands Smokehouse BBQ and moonshine will be available. Then from 5-7:30p it's the Darren Nicholson Band.

• 16th annual Bascom Clay Symposium from 10a.m. – noon and 1:30 – 4: p.m. Meet and Greet: is 4 – 6 p.m., Greehey Atrium in Dave Drake Barn, The Bascom, 323 Franklin Road, Highlands, NC 28741 Admission: Free; drop in anytime, no registration required Info: TheBascom.org | 828.526.4949

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/UM-VLJHTJJKK2SE.

• 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

Tues., Sept. 29

• At PAC, a Free Authors

Speaking Event with Diane C. McPhail & J.T om Morgan at 5 p.m Diane C. McPhail will discuss her new novel, The French Innkeeper's Daughter, being released September 29, and J. Tom Morgan will share insights into his latest book, A Rainy Night in Georgia. The conversation will be moderated by Ann Huckstep, offering audiences an engaging opportunity to hear from both authors about their new works, their inspiration, and the stories behind the stories.

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.

Sat.& Sun. Oct. 3-4

• "Walk in the Park" at Highlands Memorial Park cemetery. Sat., 1-3p and Sun., 2-4p. Saturday's is at the park, Sunday's is in the Community Building. Shuttle service is from the Community Building parking lot. Tickets are \$25 for adults and children under 12 are free. To purchase tickets and reserve times go to highlandshistory.com.

Sat., Oct 3

• A BBQ fundraiser for the Cullasaja Corge Fire & Rescue Dept. 4-8p. Adults, \$12, Children, \$6. Gospel and Bluegrass music by Done Gone Boys from Walhalla, SC. Chopped pork BBQ, baked beans, cole slaw, roll, dessert and Drink. Also, people can pre-order Boston Butts for \$40 by Sept. 28. Call 828-369-5010.

• Pop Up Pipers final performance for 2026 from 4:30-5p at the First Presbyterian Church on Main Street.

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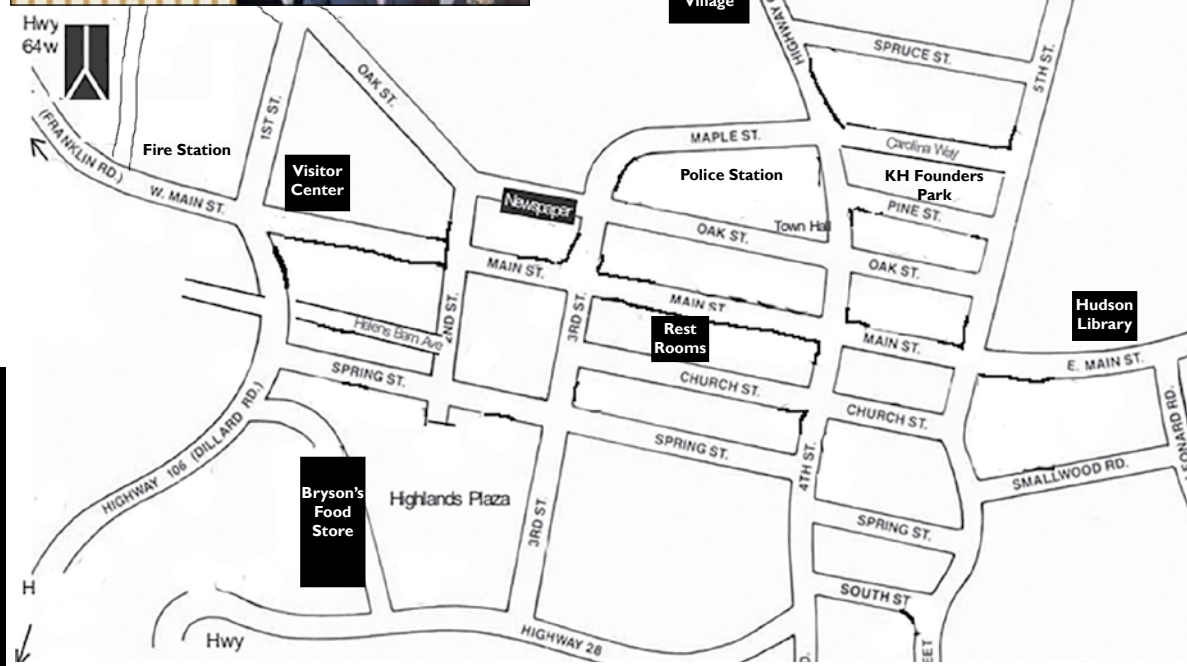
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