

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Feb. 5, 2026

County to urge citizens to vote 'yes' to 1/4 cent sales tax increase

By Kristin Fox

From the need of a new elementary school to replace an outdated facility to a much-

needed all-encompassing justice center, the needs of Macon County are great. For the third time, the Macon County Board

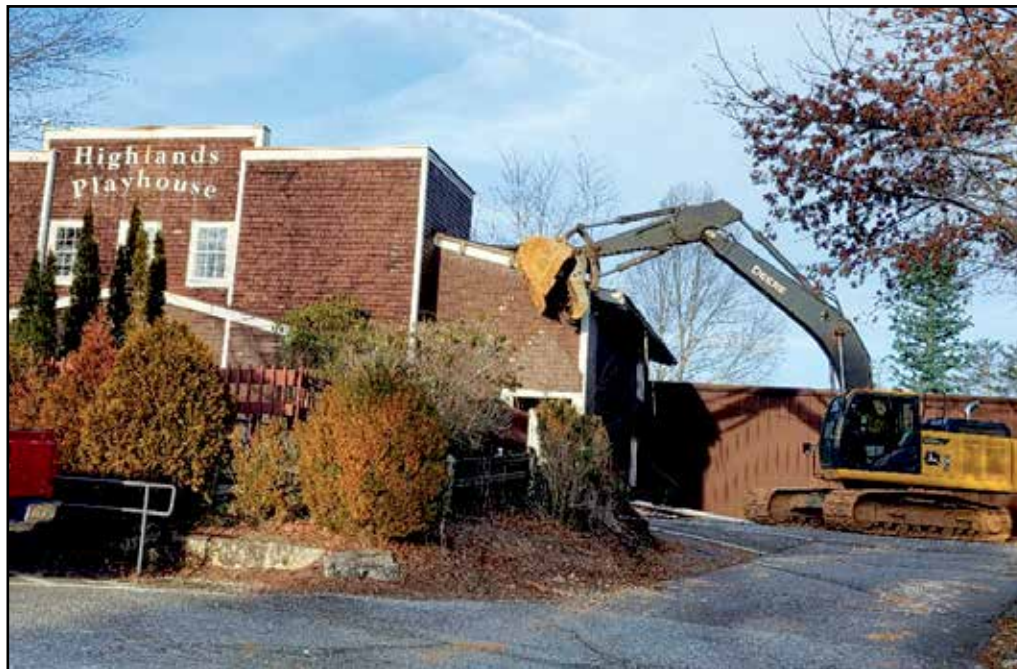
of Commissioners will turn to Macon County citizens to consider a quarter cent sales tax

• See **SALES TAX** page 4

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Playhouse demolition begins



On Thursday, Jan. 29, Bryson's Grading and Paving began dismantling the Highlands Playhouse. Without the funds to renovate it to current standards or a plan from the community as to what to do with it, it is being demolished. Plans for the site are on the drawing table. But no decision has been made. The Playhouse, was established in 1938 as one of North Carolina's oldest theaters. But before that it was the Highlands School auditorium where amateur troupes performed. It evolved from a community theater into a professional venue, rebranding as the Mountain Theatre Company in 2022 before moving to the Highlands Performing Arts Center in 2023.

Photo by Kim Lewicki

MC Schools calendar is adopted for '26-'27

By Kristin Fox

At its recent meeting, the Macon County Board of Education approved the school calendar for the 2026-2027 academic year. The new calendar adopted by the board is the same as last year with no real changes. There are 215 days scheduled in the calendar as required by the state.

The first day of school will be Monday, August 24, 2026. The calendar has 172 student days scheduled for a total of 1,083.6 hours scheduled allowing for days to be worked into the calendar for inclement weather. The state requires that students attend school for a minimum of 1,025 hours.

Teachers will report back on August 10, 2026 for teacher workdays through August 14, with mandatory teacher workdays scheduled for August 17 through the 21, 2026. The 2026-2027 calendar includes 194 teacher days, with the state requiring a

maximum of 195. There are a total of 25 teacher workdays including five mandatory teacher workdays scheduled throughout the academic year.

Next year's calendar includes 11 holidays as required by the state as well as 10 annual leave days.

2026-2027 Holidays/Teacher Workdays

- Sept 7 Labor Day
- Oct 12 Teacher Workday (Oct 9 End of First Quarter)
- Nov 10 Mandatory Teacher Workday
- Nov 11 Veterans Day Holiday
- Nov 23-24 Teacher Workdays
- Nov 26-27 Thanksgiving Holidays
- Dec 18 End of First Semester/Early Dismissal
- Dec 21 Teacher Workday
- Dec 22-23 Annual Leave
- Dec 24, 25, 28 Christmas

• See **CALENDAR** page 18



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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Town's scholarship program encourages continuing education

We are approaching the time of the year when seniors at the Highlands School are making decisions about furthering their education. Also at this time, community organizations will be preparing to award scholarships at the Highlands School Honors Day in mid-May.

The town will again award town scholarships to all graduating seniors who will enroll in a college, university, community college, or technical school. Our endowed town scholarship program is now well over 50 years old, and the endowment stands now at over 1.2 million dollars. The enthusiastic community participation and generous contributions at events like the golf tournament and fly-fishing festival increase the funds available for scholarships.

Our scholarship program is not a one-and-done program. If a student is



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

pursuing a degree or certification and is enrolled in a school, they can apply for continued support. Early in January, I signed scholarship checks for the spring semester. These checks are sent to the institutions where students attend to pay for tuition, books, and fees.

As I signed the checks, I took notes. Let me report where our scholarship recipients are attending school. It is an outstanding record for both the students and their alma mater, the Highlands School.

This semester, we have 3 students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 4 at UNC Charlotte, 2 at North Carolina State University, and 7 students attending Western Carolina University. But the list does not stop at just state universities.

There is one student at the University of Mississippi at Oxford, 1 at LSU, 1 at Kentucky, and 1 at Georgia Southern. If that were not enough, 1 student is at Life University, 1 at Methodist University, and 1 at San Jose State in California.

We have 4 students enrolled at Southwestern Community College, 1 at North Georgia Tech, and 1 at Tri-County Technical College. These students will leave these schools with certificates and licenses that will enable them to pursue very lucrative vocations.

All the scholarship checks I signed were for \$1,000 or more. I know a few seniors in the upcoming graduating class have already been accepted to UNC and other schools. The scholarship recipients are indicative of the Highlands K-12 School; the little school produces outstanding students.

It is a school the community should be proud of and support with additional funding and resources. Some might ask why the town scholarship program is limited to just Highlands School graduates. The answer is that this is how the scholarship's creators, people like Jack Taylor, set up the program decades ago. The scholarship program was

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• See MAYOR page 4

• SNAPSHOT •

Snow Moon shines bright Feb. 1







The 2026 Snow Moon, named by Native American tribes for heavy, winter snowfalls. It marks a period of deep winter, often accompanied by cold, clear nights

Photo by
Kim Lewicki

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

• WEATHER •

Thu, 5-Feb	Fri, 6-Feb	Sat, 7-Feb	Sun, 8-Feb
			
39°F 21°F	45°F 28°F	42°F 19°F	48°F 28°F
Mostly sunny and chilly	Breezy in the afternoon	Partly to mostly sunny	Times of clouds and sun
RealFeel® High: 44° Low: 24°	RealFeel® High: 40° Low: 20°	RealFeel® High: 42° Low: 16°	RealFeel® High: 49° Low: 21°

Highlands NC 4-Day Forecast By AccuWeather.com

Highlands Real-Time Weather Station @ HighlandsInfo.com/wx.htm

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Prepare to be captivated by sweeping, unobstructed views of iconic Whiteside Mountain from this stunning Highlands Falls CC residence, a home so remarkable it has been featured twice in Architectural Digest. Wormy chestnut accents, open floor plan, screened porch with grilling station and Whiteside Mountain in full view! A spacious lower level with fireplace for guests' privacy plus a whole house generator! Offered for \$2,999,000



Perched above Highland's famed 4,118 feet – this craftsman-style elegant mountain gated residence is newly roofed, with an open concept floor plan, spacious rooms, bonus area, a double-sided fireplace, and gorgeous sunsets from the spacious deck. Just a 5-minute drive to Main Street and offered for \$2,400,000



Nestled within the gates of Wildcat Cliffs CC but part of Wildcat Ridge Estates, this new construction estate home by Campagna Homes has all the latest in luxury concepts – elevator, 2 great rooms and a luxurious primary bath ensuite. Club membership is not mandatory. Offered for \$3,500,000



This fabulous jewel designed by acclaimed modernist architect Jim Fox on the golf course of prestigious Wildcat Cliffs CC has as a focal point, a huge double-sided stone fireplace! Lots of natural light and windows add to the ambiance. Offered furnished at a bargain price of \$1,450,000.

2026 is filled with possibilities

828-526-8784

...MAYOR continued from page 2

designed for local students at the Highlands School. For the town to administer the scholarship program, special state legislation had to be secured. That enabling legislation included specific requirements, such as the one cited above, for administering the scholarship funds.

As we enter the graduation season, I hope residents will continue to support

our graduating students by contributing to the town scholarship program or to other scholarships offered by businesses and the nonprofit community.

For further information on how to donate to the town scholarship fund, please call Rebecca Shuler, the Town of Highlands Finance Director, at (828) 526-



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For tickets visit HighlandsCashiersPlayers.com or call the PAC Box Office at 828-526-9047.



• UPCOMING EVENTS •

HCP's interactive murder mystery dinner is Valentine's weekend

Highlands Cashiers Players will present For Better or For Worse, an interactive murder mystery dinner theatre experience, February 13-14 at the Martin Lipscomb Theater in the Highlands Performing Arts Center.

Guests are invited to an open house at The Everlasting Love B&B, where they'll enjoy a buffet dinner catered by Kristy Martin while mingling with attendees of the inn's couples retreat. Before dessert is served, a shocking murder takes place—turning every audience member into a detective and every actor into a suspect.

Audience members will have the opportunity to question suspects who visit their tables and examine physical

evidence, photos, and other clues before making their final guess as to the murderer's identity.

Tickets are \$55 and include dinner, nonalcoholic beverages, dessert, and the interactive murder mystery experience. Wine and cocktails will be available for purchase. Doors open at 6 p.m., with dinner and the show beginning at 6:30 p.m. Seating is first come, first served, though every effort will be made to seat groups together. Tickets are available through the PAC Box Office at 828-526-9047 or online at HighlandsCashiersPlayers.com.

The Highlands Performing Arts Center is located at 507 Chestnut Street, Highlands, NC.

Volunteers needed for annual Plateau Pickup on Sat., April 18

The Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC invites community members to roll up their sleeves and help beautify our local roadsides and public spaces during the annual Plateau Pickup on Saturday, April 18.

Volunteers will gather at 8:30am at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park (Pine Street) to check in and receive clean up assignments along key corridors including U.S. 64, N.C. 28, N.C. 106, and select areas of downtown Highlands.

All supplies will be provided, including a light breakfast, safety vest, gloves, pick-up tools and garbage bags. After the cleanup, volunteers are invited back to the park for a thank-you t-shirt and boxed

lunch at 12pm.

"Plateau Pickup is one of those days that brings out the very best in Highlands," said

Johanna Fein, executive director of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC. "This year, we're proud to be part of the Greatest American Cleanup, working together to make our community cleaner, greener, and more beautiful as we look ahead to America's 250th celebration."

To participate, email events@highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-5841. For more information about Plateau Pickup or other Highlands events, visit highlandschamber.org. ###

...SALES TAX continued from page 1

increase to help fund the many needed projects that are part of the county's capital improvement plan.

The purpose of such a sales tax increase would be to generate additional revenue for the county, which could be used to fund various projects and services that would benefit the citizens of Macon County.

In addition, supporters of the sales tax increase believe such a sales tax increase is necessary to ensure the county's fiscal stability while also maintaining es-

sential services.

The quarter-cent sales tax, which would apply to residents as well as tourists, is projected to accrue about \$2.4 million for the county annually. If the referendum is passed it will raise the sales tax from 6.75 to 7 cents per dollar.

For example, on a \$25 purchase the sales tax increase would result in a six-cent increase while on a \$100 purchase it would end up being a 25-cent increase.

If approved by voters, the sales tax

• See SALES TAX page 7

• HERE'S THE THING •

Is real news a thing of the past?

It's 2026, yet for many, turning on the national nightly news feels less like keeping up with what's happening and more like entering a maze of sensationalism. Questions regarding the efficacy of national news media have become a common topic of conversation. The people charged with keeping us informed and holding power to account seem instead to chase ratings and unimportant controversy. It's no surprise so many of us have lost confidence.

For me, the most glaring issue is the national networks' obsession with sensationalism. Coverage is dominated by overly dramatic headlines and constant "breaking news," punctuated by scandals and disasters. Policy debates have given way to celebrity missteps or political infighting. The "if it bleeds, it leads" mentality intensified in the age of 24-hour coverage and social media. This leaves viewers fearful, anxious, and/or misinformed.

When every story is reported as a crisis, it becomes hard to distinguish real emergencies from the manufactured kind. Viewers need context, nuance, and perspective, but often get a barrage of alarming updates designed to shock rather than inform.

Another source of frustration is the bias present in much of the national media. Whether it's cable news, daily newspapers, or online, many platforms have become infected with political leanings. Consumers of news notice what's getting covered, which voices are elevated, and which facts are emphasized or ignored. This is more than perception; media outlets often write stories to appeal to their core audiences.

The result creates an echo chamber, where viewers and readers find comfort with confirmation of their existing biases, and journalists often reinforce these preferences. Instead of fostering an unbiased understanding of events, the media landscape becomes fragmented. This fuels polarization and mistrust. Americans are right to suspect they're not getting the whole story.

With so many disparate sources vying for attention, the volume of informa-



Bud Katz

tion can be overwhelming. National news outlets pump out updates, push notifications, and live streams at an alarming rate. Yet, the abundance of content doesn't always provide clarity. Sometimes more is just more. Key facts get lost, and follow-up is often lacking. Instead of helping make sense of issues, the media sometimes add to the confusion.

Unclear information overload erodes our ability to focus on what really matters. When every story is marked urgent, it becomes easier to miss the substance. Many Americans are exhausted by the news cycle and end up turning away. This leaves us less informed.

Perhaps most concerning is the way national media often overlook otherwise important stories. Too much coverage is devoted to bickering politicians, or celebrity drama, rather than the challenges of everyday living. Issues like jobs, education, public safety, that address real concerns rarely get attention. And when they do, coverage can be superficial or dropped in only during moments of crisis.

This neglect erodes consumer's sense that the media is truly interested in serving the public. Don't we want to understand how national decisions impact our lives? And don't we want to hear from respected sources? Instead, the focus is often on the loudest voices, and the most dramatic pictures.

Here's the thing. Despite these concerns, the national news media is not beyond redemption. Journalists and editors have a responsibility to provide accurate, balanced, meaningful coverage. This means prioritizing substance over sensation and covering stories that matter to ordinary Americans. It also means owning mistakes, correcting errors, when they inevitably occur.

News consumers also have a role. We can support outlets that put resources into investigation and thoughtful reporting. They're there if we look closely. We can broaden our media diets, challenge our assumptions, and engage respectfully with opposing views. By holding the media and us accountable, we can rebuild the trust that's been lost.

• See KATZ page 6



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...KATZ continued from page 5

In the end, frustration with the national media does not signal apathy. It means we care deeply about the role of information in our democracy. The framers made it the First Amendment, right? If the media can answer the call, perhaps we'll once again find ourselves tuning in with trust, rather than tuning out.

• Bruce F. "Bud" Katz, and his wife, Lynn, have lived year-round in Highlands since 2011. Bud is the author of four novels and a work of non-fiction. He facilitates the Highlands Writers Group and spends much of his time in front of a computer making words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, ... etc. You can get to know Bud better by visiting his website, brucekatz.com, and you can contact him, regarding this column or for information about the Highlands Writers Group, at brucekatzauthor@gmail.com.



Demitra Passmore and Pat Hedden.

Changing of the guard at HCCDC

A very special era is ending at the Highlands Community Child Development Center, and that was honored at a celebration by staff members, teachers, board members, and family on Thursday, January 29 at the center.

After 38 years of guiding the center with unwavering passion, wisdom, and generosity, Pat Hedden is stepping into the newly created role of Founding Director as Demitra Passmore takes over as HCCDC Executive Director. Demitra joined the center in May 2006 as a teacher in the One-Year-Old classroom, a position she held for

10 years. Later she served as administrative assistant and since 2020 she has been the Assistant Director to Pat.

In her new position, Pat will remain an essential part of HCCDC as she works with Demitra for a seamless transition for the students, parents, and teachers.

Congratulations to both of these outstanding women who have made HCCDC the pillar of our community it is today.

HCCDC is a full-time, five-day a week child development center that serves infants to five-year-olds.



Cashiers-Highlands Humane Society News

Two-year-old Charlie needs a forever home that has a calm environment and a loving, patient human companion who will give him lots of one-on-one attention and affection. Charlie loves the company of other canines, so another dog in the household would be an added plus. To give Charlie a new home for the New Year, visit chhumanesociety.org or call (828)743-5752.



THE TOWN OF
HIGHLANDS

Please publish January 29, 2026, February 5, 2026 and February 12, 2026

TOWN OF HIGHLANDS BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS VACANCY

The Town of Highlands Board of Commissioners is now accepting applications to fill the Town Board vacancy.

Applications must be completed and received by Monday, February 16, 2026, at 12:00pm, and can be found on the website, www.highlandsn.org, and should be returned to:

Gibby Shaheen
Town Clerk
PO Box 460
210 North Fourth Street
Highlands, NC 28741

FAX 828.526.2595
gibby.shaheen@highlandsn.org

This 26th day of January, 2026.

Gibby Shaheen
Town Clerk

...SALES TAX continued from page 4

increase would apply to purchases on items such as clothing, household supplies, electronics, and prepared food and drinks from restaurants or stores. However, there are several items that would remain exempt from the sales tax, including prescription medication, gasoline, certain agricultural supplies, motor vehicles, and non-prepared food (groceries).

At the November 2025 meeting of the board, commissioners voted unanimously to adopt a resolution to put a referendum for a quarter-cent sales tax on the 2026 general election ballot. The resolution was passed without a specific earmark of how the funds will be used.

Commissioners can decide to earmark how the funds will be used prior to the referendum being put on the ballot. However, according to County Manager Warren Cabe, future boards would be able to change how the funds will be used.

One reason commissioners feel the sales tax increase has been voted down twice prior, is the lack of knowledge of what exactly the sales tax means for local citizens.

Educating the Public About the Sales Tax

Commissioner Gary Shields, who will not be seeking reelection in the upcoming election, is leading a group of citizens and public officials to come up with a plan to help educate the public with the hopes of getting the citizens to support the resolution in the upcoming election.

The committee who met last month, included Shields, Macon County Democratic Party Chair Betsy Baste, Macon County GOP Chair Patti Trick, Macon County Human Resources Manager Nina Parrott, County Manager Cabe, Macon County Board of Education Chairman Jim Breedlove, Tourism Development Committee member Eric Haggart and other local citizens and business owners.

Shields stated the group is working through a three-phase process to help educate the public about the benefits of the sales tax increase. The plan began with the commissioners' approval of the resolution in November 2025 and will end in November 2026 with the general election.

The group will work through three phases – 1) the final resolution to be

considered by commissioners at the February 10, 2026 meeting; 2) the marketing phase presented to commissioners by June/July 2026 and 3) the “power house” move to educate everyone.

In addition, at the January 2026 meeting of the Macon County Board of Education, school board members voted to back the commissioners voting to adopt a resolution in support of the sales tax increase.

MC School Board Stance

“While you can’t spend any funds on this if it is going to be a referendum, you as individual board members, individual citizens and you as a board as an entity have speech rights,” said John Henning, Macon County School Board Attorney. “This resolution is you expressing as a board that you are in favor of the sales tax increase.”

School board members acknowledged that additional resources generated by such a sales tax increase would be useful to the county in various ways and also ideally free up more money for school funding.

“I think the sales tax increase is important to the county as a whole,” said Breedlove. “The county has our full support for the sales tax increase to be put on the ballot in the upcoming election. I sincerely hope it will be approved by the public.”

Upcoming County Projects

The county has continued to work on projects in the capital improvement plan including recently completed capital outlay projects at Highlands School and Nantahala School, the ongoing construction of a new facility for Franklin High School and a complete overhaul of the Macon County Recreation Park. Other needed projects in the county include but are not limited to a new senior center, veteran services and housing department.

In the very near future, the county will need to replace East Franklin Elementary School, which is overcrowded and has several maintenance issues. A justice center to consolidate the courthouse, sheriff’s department and the detention center operations was the top priority identified in a space needs analysis of county buildings completed in 2019.

Past Attempts to Pass Sales Tax Referendum

• See SALES TAX page 18



VOTE for CONTINUED RESULTS

IN THE PRIMARY! Tuesday, March 3rd

Since taking office in 2022, Sheriff Brent Holbrooks and his team have delivered proven results. Here's a snapshot of our progress in the Investigations Division:

Trained four new investigations analysts	Expanded the narcotics unit from 1 to 5 officers	Strengthened federal partnerships
Created a Criminal Interdiction Unit, including adding a K-9 team	Deployed 16 license plate readers to assist with narcotics investigations	Conduct weekly K-9 training sessions
10 of our 12 investigators have completed their Criminal Investigation Certificate Program	Successfully completed 2 nuisance abatement actions, improving quality of life for our citizens	Accomplished all this while adding five new positions without increasing the budget

For additional questions about the campaign, please call me at 828-421-7240.

I humbly ask for your vote on March 3, 2026, so we can keep moving Macon County forward.

—★—

Sheriff Brent Holbrooks

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• LETTERS •

Thanks to you, HBS School Outreach Program will continue

Dear MC citizens and beyond,

I want to say a big "thank you" for the huge outpouring of support from teachers, students, parents, and other community members when they heard the news that the HBS school Outreach Program will be ending soon due to lack of funding. Many of you have expressed outrage as to why this is occurring and have requested more information, so I will attempt to elaborate.

Since I first created the HBS Outreach program back in 2004, it has been entirely grant-supported. Its primary source of funding has been the NC Science Museums Grant Program, a competitive grant that is awarded to numerous museums and nature centers across the state, all vying for a piece of a limited annual allocation from the state legislature. Although HBS has been fortunate to have received the full grant award for 22 years, this year an increase in the number of museum applicants, coupled with the change to Macon County's tier designation on which awards are largely based, resulted in our receiving only 50% of our usual amount. As such, funding for the program is now depleted.

Although Highlands Biological Station is a part of WCU, the Outreach Education Specialist at HBS has not been funded by the university. Like the grant system, there are many campus departments all competing for extremely limited funds. Despite our repeated requests over the years, there are no current plans by WCU to make it a permanent position.

Many of you have also demanded to know why our affiliated nonprofit fundraising organization, Highlands Biological Foundation, does not offer to provide any financial support to sustain the HBS Outreach Program. The diplomatic answer is that I do not know. But given the thousands of school children each year who will no longer benefit from this important community service, their unwillingness to help is both perplexing and heartbreaking.

Nevertheless, I will personally honor my responsibility to help the community, and intend to continue offering my services to schools as long as my schedule permits. I have dedicated the last 35 years of my life to providing educational op-

portunities for youth that incorporate immersive, outdoor, hands-on science activities. My hope is that my programs will instill in children an appreciation for the region's natural environment and create in them a stronger commitment to serve as contributing citizens and as future stewards of the earth. Like the famous quote: "In the end we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we under-

stand, and we will understand only what we are taught."

Patrick Brannon
HBS Outreach Education

Gaston letter says it all

Dear Editor,

Regarding Jim Gaston's letter in the Jan. 22 edition entitled "Are we a country of laws or chaos?" ... Jim Gaston is the essence of Franklin, NC.

Henry Cheatham
Griffin, GA

• See LETTERS page 10

JOEY WILSON

FOR MACON COUNTY COMMISSIONER

A VOTE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE OF MACON COUNTY

Joey Wilson is a lifelong resident of Macon County, a proud husband, father, and son, a firm believer that good government means balancing fiscal responsibility with forward-looking growth.

He's seen firsthand how smart planning and responsible spending can create opportunity - for local businesses, for our children, and for our parents who helped build this community.

As County Commissioner, Joey will work to ensure that every tax dollar is used wisely, while making sure our county continues to grow in a way that preserves our small-town values and secures a strong future for the next generation.

PRIMARY ELECTION DAY
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026

THE BEST PERSON TO RESPRESENT DISTRICT 1
ELLIJAY, FLATS, HIGHLANDS AND SUGARFORK

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Every dollar counts. Joey believes in transparent, efficient budgeting - prioritizing essential services while eliminating waste. County government should live within its means, just like families do.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Growth should bring opportunity, not problems. Joey will promote smart development that strengthens our economy, supports local businesses, and protects what makes Macon County special.

IMPROVED PUBLIC SERVICES

Backing investments in emergency services, education, and critical infrastructure.



PAID FOR BY FRIENDS OF JOEY WILSON

...LETTERS continued from page 9

The rule of law matters

Dear Editor,

Out with the old - in with the new: time for reflection, perhaps resolve, certainly time to separate fact from fiction, truth from lies. As Lord Chesterfield believed: "That refuse of fools and cowards."

A rather jarring beginning to 2026, watching innocent citizens murdered on the streets of their own city by masked thugs vaguely resembling police officers, under the ultimate direction of the President of the United States, whose chief duty it is to protect the Constitution and enforce the laws made by Congress, an obligation he is under oath to perform.

It seems those Americans receiving

the brunt of the fault for the chaos and turmoil occurring in America are (unjustifiably) Blue State governors, mayors and citizens.

Reflecting on the last election, it was not left-leaning voters who supported the president who incited an armed mob to attack our Capitol, kill and injure its defenders with the clear intent to overturn an election he knew he'd lost, thus preventing the peaceful transfer of power.

Neither did the Left support the president who stole highly classified documents (knowledge of which could cause grave harm to our nation) and then refuse to return them.

Nor did the Left promote the presi-

dent who pardoned more than 1,500 insurrectionists whose actions Jan. 6 led to deaths or injury to scores of defenders of the Capitol, protecting the Vice President, and Congress.

Nor does the Left champion a president who brags about assaulting women and was, in fact, found civilly liable of sexual abuse and defamation.

No, it's the Right, and it's this president, in collusion with the Supreme Court and Republicans in Congress who are responsible for chaos, unrest and national turmoil, including the cold-blooded murder of innocent American citizens exercising their constitutional right (perhaps duty) to resist tyranny.

Neither are news organizations obliged to print letters that express opinions put forward as "evidence," notions that have been proven false time and time again.

A writer may opine the political Left is responsible for all the chaos and disorder in America, that's his right, but printing fabrications dressed up as truth is a venture credible journalists should try to

avoid.

Trump's Administration claims to enforce our laws but, as countless writers have observed, what Trump alleges is not law enforcement it's authoritarianism wrapped in a flag, shielded by lies and enabled by everyone who supports Trump or remains silent.

Trump continually violates the Constitution and disregards checks and balances (without which) transparency and accountability are lost. Exhibiting nothing but contempt for the rule of law, the Trump Administration is the political and moral equivalent of a crime family that lies to cover up its malfeasance.

As made unquestionably plain by the English philosopher, John Locke, in 1689, "Where-ever law ends, tyranny begins." By granting Donald Trump immunity for his many crimes (placing him above the law) the Roberts Court (with the approval of the Republican Congress) opened the door to tyranny. Donald Trump had simply to walk through it.

**David L. Snell
Franklin**

Precinct workers are needed for Early Voting and Election Day

The MC Board of Elections needs precinct workers for Highlands and Flats. Any registered voter is eligible to help. Call the MC Board of Elections at 828-349-2034 if available.

Three people are needed in Highlands and four people are needed in Flats. There are Early voting and Election Day AM and PM slots available in about 6-hour shifts.. Early voting is Feb. 12-28. Election Day is March 3rd 6:15 to 7:30 PM

Macon County Republican Party Presents:

**YOUR COUNTY
YOUR CANDIDATES
YOUR QUESTIONS**

**Macon County Commissioner
Candidate Forum
February 7, 2026**

Forum: 2:30-4:30
★ **Meet the Candidates 4:30-5:30★**
★ **Carpenter Community Center★**
★ **1288 Georgia Road, Franklin★**

SUBMIT YOUR QUESTIONS TO MACONCCFORUM2026@GMAIL.COM

February Specials

1 week only - 2/9/26 - 2/13/26

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Sale price does not include packages)

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Franklin Office:
828-349-1280**



Valentine's JEWELRY SALE

February 1 - 14
10 am - 5 pm

10 - 30% OFF
Select Pieces


Acorns

212 S 4th St., Highlands



• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

P.E.O. celebrates Founders' Day

January 21st marked 156 years celebrating the advancement of women, educating through scholarships, grants, award, loans and stewardship of Cottey College.

Advocating for women who do not have opportunities to expand their education is a primary goal of P.E.O.

It was in 1869 that seven women met at Iowa Wesleyan-University and formed the Philanthropic Educational Organization (P.E.O.) that now reaches around the globe and has impacted the

lives of millions of women. P.E.O. is a nonprofit organization that has helped more 119,000 women pursue their educational goals and provided over \$389 million in educational assistance.

In North Carolina alone, P.E.O. has 99 chapters and the Cashiers-Highlands Chapter BJ continues to grow. Membership is open to any women dedicated to encouraging and supporting women through chapter life and providing educational opportunities for women all over the world.

Women over the age of 18

are eligible to be considered for P.E.O. membership. Members meet to support each other, for fellowship and for the common and uniting purpose of assisting women with their educational goals. Members participate in philanthropic outreach to positively impact women's lives in their community, state/province and worldwide, help to provide life-changing educational opportunities for women, are involved in

opportunities for personal growth and advanced leadership skills, share in fun and friendship with wonderful and diverse women, and become part of a Sisterhood, beyond their own chapter, which provides loving concern and support to all members.

The Cashier-Highlands P.E.O. Chapter BJ is led by President Melle McCafferty and meets the second Monday of each month. At each monthly meeting,

Chapter BJ collects items for the Highlands Emergency Council and continuously seeks ways to support our communities and to make women aware that P.E.O. is focused helping them achieve their educational and career advancement goals. Guests are welcome at monthly meetings and any woman wanting more information should contact Melle McCafferty at 850-830-3124

Chamber's 'Leadership Highlands' announces 2026 class

The Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC is pleased to announce the selection of the 2026 Leadership Highlands class. Fourteen individuals were selected from a very strong applicant pool to participate in this highly regarded community leadership development program.

Leadership Highlands is designed for emerging and established leaders who are committed to deepening their understanding of the Highlands community while strengthening their leadership skills and civic engagement. The seven-month program runs from February through October and includes a retreat, monthly full-day sessions, enrichment workshops, collaborative projects, and a graduation ceremony.

"We are excited to welcome this outstanding group of participants to the 2026 Leadership

Highlands class," said Johanna Fein, Executive Director of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC. "The selection process is always thoughtful and competitive, and this class reflects a diverse range of experiences, perspectives, and a shared commitment to the future of our community." The 2026 Leadership Highlands class includes: Kendra Alexander, Kaysie Allen, Heather Ball, Jennifer Colson, Randy Foster, Denece Harrell, Rebecca Horowitz, Joshua LaVere, Jeanne Piazza, Sean Mullarkey, Henry Salzarulo, Meg Stevens, Holly Watson, Faye Wurm

Throughout the program, participants will engage with

local leaders and subject matter experts on topics such as Highlands history and cultural resources, economic development, local government and public safety, health and human services, education, arts, and outdoor recreation. The curriculum also emphasizes personal leadership development through principle-based decision-making and team-building experiences.

Leadership Highlands is a signature program of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce, fostering informed leadership and meaningful connections that strengthen the greater Highlands community.

For more information about Leadership Highlands and other Chamber programs, visit highlandschamber.org.

Chamber's 'Women in Business' gathering



From left: Nancy Dyleski and Melanie Couch (Spruce Interiors), Heather Ball (Mountain Life Properties), Faye Wurm and Christina Vives (Berkshire Hathaway).

The Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC hosted its first Women in Business networking event on Thursday, Jan. 22, at the Highlands office of Berkshire Hathaway Mountain Meadow Home Services. With more than 40 women in attendance, this quarterly gathering is designed to foster connection, collaboration, and support among women doing business in the Highlands community.

Macon County "Redistricting" Public Hearing

is

**Tuesday, February 10
at 6p**

**Courthouse Boardroom
5 W. Main St. Franklin**

**Let the Board of Commissioners
know how you feel about changing
representation for District 1 –
Highlands, Flats, Elijay & Sugarfork**

For story, see

**"Commissioner Shearl wants to
change Macon County's 'election'
map"**

in the Jan. 22 edition.

Go to:

**[https://www.highlandsinfo.com/
PDFs/26jan22.pdf](https://www.highlandsinfo.com/PDFs/26jan22.pdf)**

Photos by Kim and Rachel Lewicki

The 1st REAL snowfall of 2026

Snow began falling around 11 p.m., Fri., Jan. 30 dumping eight inches by the time it ended late Saturday afternoon. The single-digit temps that followed didn't deter Highlands' snowbunnies.



SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING



The bread of life

Pastor, Emily Wilmarth
First Presbyterian Church

In the months and years following WWII, thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish children who had orphaned during the war found their way to orphanages located throughout Europe (if they were lucky). A German Fulbright fellow spent nearly a decade researching and tracing over 50 orphans of one of the orphanages called Kloster Indersdor. A man she found spoke of his time as an adolescent in the home. He said that at night, many of the children would take bread from the dining hall to bed with them. Traumatized by their experience of war and their own efforts to survive, they could only rest if they knew there would be something to eat tomorrow.

They were hungry for food, of course. But they also hungered for so much more than satisfaction of their basic needs. They hungered for security and the need to be desired and loved.

Jesus tells his disciples: Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

What is the food that endures for eternal life? For the children of Kloster Indersdor, it was the assurance that they didn't have to fear the dreadful truth that they could die of starvation at any point. And it was the understanding that despite the enormity of their losses - childhood, parents, siblings, a home - they were desired and loved. Children need that understanding to thrive. We all do.

What is it that you are really hungry for? For what is your soul longing? What do you hunger for - deep in your heart, deep in your soul - and what can you consume to satisfy that hunger?

Maybe you hunger for a better connections to the people in your family or community. Or for belonging, or a break from the pressure to be perfect. Maybe you hunger for friendship or a romantic partner, rest from too much work, or delight instead of constant frustration.

Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." Jesus is the one who satisfies all of this hunger.

Which is a lovely, and I believe TRUE thing to say. But what does it really mean? How can Jesus help us like those loaves of bread helped the children of Kloster Indersdorf?

Here's what I think he means and how he can begin to help:

Jesus feeds us with this promise: in life and in death we belong to God. And even if we feel unloved or unwanted, we are always desired by God. And God will go to great lengths to seek us out, to chase after us, to stay

• See SPIRITUALLY page 15

• 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 7

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

Rev. Aryn Williams-Reubel. Pastor 828-743-5298

Sundays: School at 9:30; 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

Pastor Jacob Tedder • jacob@cashiers.church • 743-5470

www.cashiers.church

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

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

Bistro

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

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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.

Services: 1st Fri. and 3rd Sat. and 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 5/24/25-10/25/25; 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 • ufranklin.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 Jan. 29. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Jan. 29

• At 12:07 p.m., a firearm valued at \$1,000 was reported stolen from a residence on Williamsburg Court.

Jan. 23

• **At 10 a.m., officers received a report from First Bank that someone sent fake info to intercept a wire transfer of \$38,071.**

Accidents responded to on Feb. 1

• Unit 1 was traveling west on US 64. It crossed the center line and ran off roadway to the left and hit a rock wall and then spun around before coming to rest in the roadway.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Jan. 27

Jan. 27

• At 10:42 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Blue Valley Road. It was cancelled en route.

• At 2:42 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Helen's Barn Ave.

• At 4:04 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at the hospital.

Jan. 28

• At 9:49 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

• At 4:13 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on W. Church Street.

• At 4:20 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on S. 4th Street.

• At 9:41 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on W. Church Street.

• At 10:58 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on VZ Top Road. It was cancelled en route.

Jan. 29

• At 9:39 a.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on S. 3rd Street.

• At 10:25 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Oak Street.

• At 7:29 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Foreman Road.

Jan. 31

• At 3:29 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers FD.

Feb. 1

• At 4:40 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on VZ Top Road.

Feb. 2

• At 5:22 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers FD.

• At 11:37 a.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on Turtle Pond Road.

• At 7:57 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Kelsey Court.

...SPIRITUALLY from page 14

with us, to love us, no matter what.

Jesus feeds us with this truth: as long as we are living in love, we are living right. Maybe we can't afford the greatest trips. Maybe we can't always be present for the ones who need us.

Maybe we can't figure out all the solutions to all the problems we face, but if we are living in love for God, for our neighbors, for ourselves, then we can trust that we're on the right path.

Jesus feeds us with this hope: that just as death was not his final act, it is not ours either. We can live in hope that God's love is more powerful than anything we fear can destroy us. And while there is pain in this life, while there is despair, loss, evil, violence, and hatred, we can proclaim a greater power than that. We can proclaim God's love and grace in Jesus Christ, who comes and lives and dies and rises again for us. That's what saves us.

I don't know what you are hungry for. But I would guess that what you truly desire, others do, too. And the good news of the Gospel, the good news we bear into the world through our lives and our actions, is that no one needs to go hungry. And anyway, Jesus won't let you.


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• CLASSIFIEDS •

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~ Bob Saladna, Owner

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4 BD/3BA FOR RENT HIGHLANDS –

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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. (6/26)

JUNK REMOVAL SERVICE – We take anything. Call 828-200-0492 (7/31)

HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS HANDY-MAN – Chatlos Construction – Remodels, Additions, Framing, Siding, Roofing, Decks, Painting. References. Insured. 828-200-4071. (4/30)

NEED FURNITURE MOVED OR ANYTHING HAULED AWAY? Call or text James of Going Gone at 828-421-2655. (7/31)

HIGH COUNTRY PHOTO/KEVIN VINSON: scanning photos, slides & negatives to CD or DVD for easier viewing. Video transfer to DVD. Everything done in house. Leave message at 828-526-5208.



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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

NOTE:

• No Senior Luncheon at Rec Park the month of February.

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+ Mon.-Thurs. 11am-3:30pm, Friday 11am-1:30pm. Public Swim: Mon. thru Thurs. 3:30-7pm, Saturday 11am-6pm and Sunday 1-6pm

PICKLE BALL

• At the Recreation Dept. every Monday - Friday 10am-1pm indoors for the winter (notice the days and time has changed),

MOUNTAIN FINDINGS

• **Winter Hours:** Friday & Saturdays. Open: 10 am - 1 pm. Spruce Street. www.mountainfindings.org

ICE SKATING IN PARK

• Thurs., 3:30-8p; Fri. 3:30-10p; Sat. 1-10p, Sun. 1-5p Hours will be extending during Thanksgiving and Christmas vacations. \$8 with or without skates.

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 at 5:30 pm and 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 5pm, on Tuesday @ 7 pm, on Fri-

day at 5 pm and on Saturday at 9 am. For more information please visit our website www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of A.A. 24/7 call our HELP Line 828 349-4357

Sat. Feb. 7

• MC Commissioner Candidate Forum 2:30-4:30 p.m. at the Carpenter Community Center, 1288 Georgia Road, Franklin. Meet the candidates 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Sun. Feb. 8

• The reopening of Don Leon's restaurant has been rescheduled for Sunday, from 1 pm to 4 pm. Come meet the new owners Ivanet and Juan Avila with free nibbles.

Tues., Feb. 10

• Macon County Redistricting Public Hearing at 6p in the Courthouse Boardroom, 5 W. Main Street in Franklin.

Fri. & Sat., Feb. 13-14

• PAC Outreach Theater Camp - How to Audition Join us for a two-day theater camp designed for young performers ages 7-18. 10a to 3p. For tickets, call 828-526-9047.

• Highlands Cashiers Players present "For Better or For Worse" mystery Dinner Theatre. at the Martin Lipscomb Theater in the Highlands Performing Arts Center \$55 per person - dinner, non-alcoholic beverages, dessert and an interactive show. Wine and cocktails will be available for purchase. For tickets go to highlandscashiersplayers.com or call the box office at 828-526-9047.

Thurs., Feb. 26

• At Highlander Mountain House, Valley James is performing at 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$35 (excluding taxes and fees).

Wed., March 4

• At PAC, Paces Live Presents: A Taste of Ireland at 7:30 p.m. For tickets, call 828-526-9047.

...CALENDAR continued from page 1

Holidays

- Dec 29-31 Annual Leave
- Jan 1 New Years Holiday
- Jan 4 Teacher Workday
- Jan 5 Mandatory Teacher Workday
- Jan 18 Martin Luther King Holiday
- Feb 12 Mandatory Teacher Workday
- Mar 19 Teacher Workday (March 18th End of 3rd Quarter)
- Mar 22- 25 Spring Break (Annual Leave)
- March 26 Good Friday

- April 22 Mandatory Teacher Workday
- April 23 Teacher Workday
- May 28 Last Student Day / Early Dismissal
- May 31 Memorial Day Holiday
- June 1- 4 Teacher Workdays
- For a copy of the 2026-2027 school calendar, visit the Macon County Schools website at <https://www.maconcountyschools.com/>.

...SALES TAX continued from page 7

Despite encouragement from local elected leaders, voters chose not to pass the quarter-cent sales tax in 2024. However, the margin of defeat was much narrower in 2024 than the last time the referendum was on the ballot in 2022 with 51% voting against to 49% voting for the referendum.

During the midterm election in 2022, the same referendum was on the ballot for Macon County and 15,124 people cast their vote on the question. Of those, 8,575, or about 55%, voted against the measure, and 6,829, or about 45%, voted in favor of the sales tax increase.

Opponents are concerned about the impact of the sales tax increase on residents, particularly those with lower incomes. They

argue that the tax increase would place an additional burden on already-struggling families and individuals.

However, commissioners are pushing for the quarter-cent sales tax, which would apply to anyone making purchases in the county, including visitors, and would be a way to lower the tax burden for residents of the county.

The North Carolina General Assembly granted county boards of commissioners the authority to levy, subject to voter approval, an additional one-quarter cent county sales and use tax. Macon County is the only county in the seven westernmost counties of North Carolina that has not yet implemented the quarter-cent sales tax.

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Gas truck crash closed Cashiers Rd



A LP gas truck crashed through the guardrail on US 64 east (Cashiers Road) near Rhody Lane the morning of Wed., Jan. 28 closing the road to through traffic until Friday morning. The truck settled on a slope below the road where it will stay until it can be removed. Initially burning off the gas was the plan but now the gas will be pumped out instead. Once weather cooperates, the truck will be removed. N.C. State Highway Patrol said weather was not a factor in the accident as the highway was dry and there was no snow or ice at the time. No one was hurt.

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