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Thurs., July 31, 2025

New Oak Street restaurant OK'd

Next step is Zoning Board issuance of SUP; opening planned for April '26

By Kim Lewicki

If all goes as planned, a new restaurant is set for 446 Main Street/441 Oak Street – the name is yet to be decided.

The restaurant was the subject of the July Planning Board meeting because prior to getting the required Special Use Permit from the Zoning Board for out-

side dining, the Planning Board has to review the plans and submit recommendations.

Owners of Wild Thyme

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Local WCU Alumna names WCU beneficiary of insurance policy

English and media majors are eligible for financial assistance through the endowment

By Bill Studenc

Future students majoring in English studies and participating in student media organizations at Western Carolina University will be eligible for financial assistance made possible by a planned gift of \$100,000 from a WCU alumna who has enjoyed a lengthy career in the education profession.

Monica Henson, who majored in English and was editor-in-chief of the campus newspaper and the student arts and

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"Every installation is unique, but all include the phrase 'May Peace Prevail On Earth' in languages appropriate to its respective community. In Highlands, the phrase is written in Cherokee, Gaelic, Spanish, and English."

Photo by Jim Lewicki

Now more than ever 'May peace prevail'

By Jane Jerry

A quiet yet robust wish for peace rose from Highlands, NC, on Tuesday, July 29 when a new Peace Pole was unveiled on the front lawn of the Community

Building, adjacent to the ballfield on US 64 east.

The year-long effort to establish a tribute to peace is a joint project of the Mountaintop Rotary Club and the Rotary Club

of Highlands, joining 250,000 communities worldwide that host Peace Poles. Rotary Presidents Cath Connolly Hudson and Randy Foster gifted the 12-foot Peace

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County to put alcohol referendum on '26 ballot

By Kristin Fox

While some consider Macon County a "dry" county, it really isn't. Macon County does have some restrictions on where and when alcohol can be sold, but it's not a blanket prohibition like in a true dry county.

In Macon County, the sale of alcohol is permitted in the Highlands and Franklin town limits and extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ); however, there are areas in the county that remain "dry" and are prohibited from alcohol sales. These restrictions include the Scaly Mountain area and on the Georgia Road from Tractor Supply to the state line.

At their recent meeting, the Macon County Board of Commissioners took the first steps toward easing these restrictions. Under the request of Commissioner

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literary journal, has identified WCU as beneficiary of a life insurance policy that will create two endowed funds of \$50,000 each.

The Dr. Monica Henson English Program Endowment will provide experiential learning and professional development opportunities for students in English studies, with preference given to financial support for students or helping with program expenses related to student media supported by the Department of English Studies.

The second fund, the Dr. Monica Henson English Endowed Scholarship, will provide scholarship assistance to undergraduate students majoring in English studies who have demonstrated financial need. Preference will be given to the Western North Carolina counties of Buncombe, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, Swain and Transylvania.

A 1984 graduate of WCU who currently resides in Monroe, Georgia, Henson grew up in Western North Carolina as part of a long line in a family of Clay County educators. Her paternal grandfather was principal of a community schoolhouse, and her maternal grandmother taught second grade for 39 years.

Henson was among the third generation of her family to go to college, receiving a scholarship to help her with the costs of attending WCU, which inspired her to give back to her alma mater.

"I want to support the mission of the university. I do not have the means to make a substantial cash gift in my lifetime, but I can make that gift via my life insurance," she said. "I majored in English and had an incredible experience. I remember winning the Ashby Wade Award for freshman composition, and my professors had a profound positive impact on my career choices."

During her time at WCU, Henson served as editor-in-

chief of both The Western Carolinian newspaper and The Nomad arts and literary magazine.

"Both of these experiences had a significant influence on my time at the university. I follow the newspaper to this day on social media and enjoy seeing the students deliver a product every week on deadline, just as we did when I was in Cullowhee," she said.

"I hope to benefit deserving students in their pursuit of an English degree, and I hope that the student journalists will be able to defray expenses of attending events such as scholastic journalism conferences," Henson said. "We won several awards from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association when I was with The Western Carolinian, but we didn't attend any conferences or events."

Annette Debo, head of WCU's Department of English Studies, said she was thrilled to learn about Henson's gifts creating two endowed funds that will support students in her program.

"Scholarships are game-changers for our students. Most of them need financial assistance to be able to afford the cost of higher education. Getting people to college, especially from Western North Carolina, can be challenging right now in the wake of Hurricane Helene. Scholarships will help a great deal," Debo said.

The fund that will provide experiential learning and professional development opportunities for students will help equip them with skills they will need as they go out into the workforce.

"This is what we need in the 21st century in our department and, in fact, across the nation as we increase our focus on career pathways and what students will do after they graduate," Debo said. "Lots of our students want to go out and work in the media, so having funding for these activities

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Pole to the Town of Highlands. At the dedication, Mayor Pat Taylor expressed his gratitude to Rotarians for initiating a conversation about peace in this important way.

The first seeds for a Peace Pole were planted in Ishikawa, Japan, where a small gathering of peace workers joined Masahisa Goi to listen to his philosophy and visions for a better world. Masahisa Goi encouraged creative ways in order to carry the message to public view. In 1976, the idea of placing the Peace Message and Prayer on poles began to gain popularity. This was the first impulse that led to the beginnings of the Peace Pole Project.

Every installation is unique, but all include the phrase "May Peace Prevail On Earth" in languages appropriate to its respective community. In Highlands, the phrase is written in Cherokee, Gaelic, Spanish, and English.

The dedication ceremony included brief remarks by Jessica Jenkins, Rigo Ortega, Alistair Fox, and Cath Connolly Hudson, each of whom quoted a poem, prayer, or song emblematic of their culture.

Children from Highlands Community Child Development Center sang "It's A Small World" against a backdrop of hundreds of colorful pinwheels, peace doves, peace signs, and hopes for peace made by students from The Bascom, the Boys and Girls Club, The Gordon School, HCCDC, The Literacy and Learning Center, and individual

Highlands residents.

Highlands' unique culture was highlighted at the beginning and end of the dedication, when the solemnity of the occasion was marked by soulful airs played by bagpipers Margaret Tooke and Glenn Morris.

The idea for increasing the number of Peace Poles in North Carolina came from Western North Carolina's Rotary 2024-25 District Governor Connie Molland, who had the vision of illuminating Rotary's commitment to worldwide peace in this manner. Molland, who attended Highlands' dedication, expressed her personal appreciation and noted Rotary International's work to create environments of peace through education, mediation, advocacy and individual peace projects. The 2025-26 Rotary District Governor, Alex Portelli, was also in attendance.

Randy Foster noted that the creation and installation of Highland's Peace Pole was made possible with the talent of architect Jim Ward, landscape architect Hank Ross, contractors and suppliers Robi Decking, Yonah Mountain Timber Frame, Rigo's Stonework, and Bryson's Grading & Paving, Tate Landscaping and Reeves Ace Hardware.

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