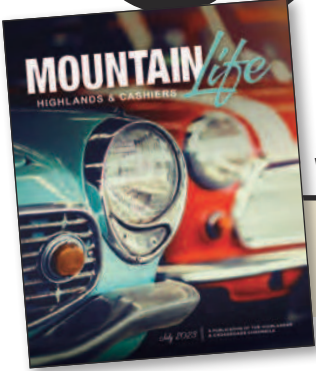


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Inside: Mountain Life highlights the best summer offerings in Cashiers and Highlands.

McDaniel to be Mountain Heritage Lecture Series speaker on Friday

BY MICHAEL O'HEARN
Staff

A historian of the Drayton Hall plantation in Charleston is going to discuss his research during this week's Mountain Heritage lecture at the Cashiers library.

The free event will be held on Friday afternoon at 3 p.m. The Albert-Carlton Cashiers library has requested those who are interested in attending the lecture make reservations by

calling 828-743-0215.

The Cashiers Friends of the Library and the Cashiers Historical Society have put the event together with the assistance of the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority.

Dr. George McDaniel is the author of "Drayton Hall Stories: A Place and Its People," which features more than 50 interviews with descendants, historians, preservationists, educators, donors, tourism leaders, and others.

McDaniel thanked several Cashiers residents for bringing him to the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau, including Ann Austin, Bill Horton, and newly appointed Cashiers Historical Society Executive Director Amelia Golcheski.

Although his book is specifically about Drayton Hall, McDaniel said his novel could be about any place, and he drew parallels to Cashiers and its ongoing grapple with managing

growth, especially in the coming years with new development around town.

"We ask, will there be a presence of the past in our future?" McDaniel said. "Historic preservation is not about mothballing or about nostalgia but about how to manage growth. If we don't grow, we die, but growth unmanaged becomes cancer. So, how do we manage growth? What kind of future



Submitted photo

Dr. George McDaniel will be the guest speaker at the next Mountain Lecture Series talk on Friday afternoon at 3 p.m. at the Cashiers library.

See **LECTURE** page 2A

New subdivision coming near Cashiers Lake

BY MICHAEL O'HEARN
Staff

Consider 2023 to be the year of development around Cashiers Lake, as a local developer announced on Friday they are building a new 62-lot subdivision next to the lake south of the crossroads.

In February, Jackson County officials approved a residential subdivision plan by Daniel Communities and Cashiers Lake Investments for a property located adjacent to Cashiers Lake. The plan allows for the reconfiguration of 19 existing single-family homesites along with 39 new single-family homes and four lots set aside for future growth.

"For more than a decade, we have explored various opportunities for the thoughtful and purposeful development of the neighborhood surrounding Cashiers Lake," said Marvin and Helene Gralnick in an announcement of the project. The Gralniks are working with their business partner, Turner Inscoe, to provide stewardship of the property.

Cashiers Lake Investments is collaborating with Daniel Communities, which has an office in Cashiers on Hwy. 107 South next to Cornucopia Restaurant, on the management of the

development process.

The subdivision will be named Cashiers Lake in reference to the body of water at the core of the community. Lake restoration work will also be underway to address sedimentation from decades of direct discharge from the surrounding watershed.

For anyone wondering why this project was not presented to the Cashiers Planning Council, Jackson County Planning Director Mike Poston cited two reasons.

First, the subdivision is being built outside the Cashiers commercial district, which means the planning council did not need to put its seal of approval on the project.

Secondly, Poston said the county's planning councils do not review or approve subdivision applications. They are governed by the county's subdivision regulations and reviews, and approvals are conducted by the county planning staff or the county planning board.

Troy Lucas, senior vice president of planning and development for Daniel Communities, said the development will prioritize connectivity and that his company has a "strong sense of respect of responsibility to carefully weave the development of Cashiers Lake into the fabric of the village."

"The foundation of our plan is organized around paths, gardens, and gath-



Submitted photo

Daniel Communities announced on Friday a new subdivision is being built next to Cashiers Lake. The plan allows for the reconfiguration of 19 existing single-family homesites along with 39 new single-family homes and four lots set aside for future growth.

ering places, while adhering to thoughtful architectural standards," Lucas said. "As the community evolves, our goal is to create conveniences and amenities walkable to current

offerings and civic destinations surrounding the crossroads."

Lucas did not respond to a set of questions about the project prior to the Chronicle's deadline on

Tuesday.

The plan includes more than half a mile of greenway paths through the network that Lucas

See **LAKE** page 6A

No lull in STRs across Jackson County

BY BETH LAWRENCE
The Sylva Herald

According to some pundits, Airbnb is struggling, but you wouldn't know that looking at Jackson County's numbers.

The short-term vacation rental company may have struggles rooted in any number of causes depending on whom you ask. Some analysts say the company is under performing, Airbnb says differently. Analysts from Nerd Wallet and Business Insider cite several problems facing the company.

One problem is that the company is doing well while hosts are facing low booking numbers because some markets, such as Charlotte or San Francisco, have become glutted with short term rentals giving travelers a wealth of options. In that scenario, the company wins while some hosts lose. Others claim commercial rental companies have moved in on the market pushing out the small businessperson just as they have with long-term rentals.

Whatever the reason, the impact has not manifested itself in Jackson County.

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Blue Ridge athletics director previews upcoming Fall sports seasons

BY NICK CHILDS
Staff

Blue Ridge School and Early College Athletics Director Tim Mayse said he hopes this year brings successful athletics despite less enrollment.

Mayse said Fall sports have been practicing throughout the summer in order to hone skills for the upcoming seasons.

Boys soccer has had workouts twice a week. Varsity boys basketball and varsity volleyball

have been practicing frequently all summer, and varsity girls basketball had workouts in June.

Mayse said boys soccer should have around 20 athletes, with many of them returning from last year. He said the team only lost two seniors. He said Blue Ridge soccer coach Nick Pressler is anticipating another successful season. Last season, Blue Ridge was co-champions of the Smoky Mountain Conference along with Highlands School.

"We only lost two seniors, so we have a very strong team and a very strong chance at repeating as champions," Mayse said.

Varsity volleyball may have to fight harder with a little over 10 expected players. The team saw four seniors graduate, although Mayse said two returners, Isabella Moody and Vanessa Russell, are expected to lead the team.

Moody received all-conference recognition in volleyball, basketball, and soccer last year,

while Russell was all-conference in both volleyball and soccer.

Mayse hopes new players will step into leadership roles.

Due to small enrollment, Blue Ridge has many multi-sport players, and Mayse mentioned players to keep an eye out for this year.

"We're probably one of the smallest enrollments in the state, but we're able to field teams and be competitive in all our sports, so we take great pride in that," Mayse said. "We've always been

able to field sports with competent coaches that have the ability to be successful. We're very appreciative of our community members."

Boys soccer includes Gustavo Morales, last year's SMC Player of the Year, and Jeysson Soriano Diaz, who made All-Conference last year. Additional players include Eric Puskarich, Ethan Henson, Braulio Iglecias Loma,

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LECTURE

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do we want? Though centered on one place, my book is really about any place, if it is strategically thought about and used to enhance understanding and community. That place could be Cashiers or its crossroads.”

McDaniel is the president of McDaniel Consulting, LLC, a strategy firm that helps organizations build bridges to its broader constituents. For more than 25 years, he served as executive director of Drayton Hall, which is on the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

He is an Atlanta native and has also traveled to several places such as Europe, Africa, and Vietnam,

where he saw peace and war and learned by experience about cultural differences and commonalities.

The stories in “Drayton Hall” reveal never told family moments, major decisions in preservation and site stewardship, as well as pioneering efforts to transform a former plantation into a site for understanding and racial conciliation.

“This book seeks to deliberately reveal personal feelings,” McDaniel said. “Too often, a historic site or museum sees a person only as a donor, board member, consultant, or tourism leader and neglects that they too have personal feelings. As donors, for example, they are not ‘moneybags,’ as one donor phrased a stereotype of herself. By featuring people across the spectrum and by my in-

terview questions, it is my hope that we see how all of us blend the professional and the personal.”

Drayton Hall was not a working plantation, but it served as the commercial center of the Drayton commercial empire. Some descendants of the enslaved community there lived at the estate until 1960.

“Little is known about John Drayton’s life prior to purchasing the tract of land in 1738 on which John Drayton would construct Drayton Hall,” a statement on the Drayton Hall website said. “Born into one of South Carolina’s leading colonial families around 1715, Drayton is virtually absent from the public record until his purchase of the property. His wealth was facilitated by the institution of slavery. While no

documents survive from this period to provide the exact number of enslaved individuals owned by John Drayton, he owned more than 100 commercial plantations totaling approximately 76,000 acres of land, and the figure is likely in the thousands.”

McDaniel said his love of stories and lived experiences prompted and enabled him to interview the people for his book.

“When I went to college at Sewanee, Father William Ralston and Andrew Lytle inspired me to teach,” McDaniel said. “During my junior year in Paris, new fields of study like art and architecture opened before me, and upon graduation, I had the pleasure of incorporating them into my teaching at Atlanta’s Lovett School.”

He later served in the Peace Corps in Togo, West Africa, and while there, he said he gained a new appreciation for hard reality, traditional medicine, and religion, as well as life without electricity, running water, telephones, or other modern amenities like wire screens or windows glass.

“I was drafted out of the Peace Corps and fought with the First Infantry Division between Saigon and Cambodia,” McDaniel said. “I saw enough combat to see what war does to people and got blown up twice, once when a friend, who was walking point ahead of me, stepped on a booby-trapped mortar round. I can still touch the shrapnel in my chin.”

It was during his time at Brown University that he

found new ways of practicing historic preservation. He began using historic buildings, objects, landscapes, music, art, and oral histories as resources.

Through a fellowship with the Smithsonian Institution and Maryland Historical Trust, McDaniel forged a career with museums and historic sites.

“I found that no book conveyed the recent history of historic sites from multiple points of view, even though my lived experiences had taught me the need for such,” McDaniel said. “Those experiences have shown how we benefit by seeing life from both the top down and the bottom up and are influenced by things seen and unseen. Such experiences have shaped the formation of Drayton Hall Stories.”

RENTALS

Continued from page 1A

Tourism numbers are still strong, and Airbnb rentals are still clicking along.

“For FY 22-23 we received \$519,259.04 in occupancy taxes from Airbnb, representing \$12,981,476 in Airbnb sales,” said Nick Breedlove, Jackson County Tourism Authority director. “So, for the most recent fiscal year, our Airbnb sales increased approximately 12.72 percent over the prior fiscal year. It’s our highest collection since Airbnb began remitting to us.”

In 2019-20 the county collected \$169,673 in occupancy taxes from Airbnb rentals. For 2020-21 that number was \$424,487, and in 2021-22 it was \$460,666.

The total number of short-term rental units in the county as of May is 1,251 up from 706 in May 2020. That number includes the other well-known vacation rental company VRBO but does not account for other companies and independent owners.

“Overall, as it relates to all vacation rentals, for FY 22-23, our annual tax collections from all STR sources, including inde-

pendently owned rentals, amounts to \$1,372,309.16, representing \$34,307,729 in short term rental sales,” Breedlove said.

For 2021-22, total tax revenue from all short-term rentals was \$1,443,412 amounting to \$36,085,319 in annual sales.

While tourism and short-term rentals are doing well on the whole, what has slipped in the county is VRBO numbers and hotel occupancy.

In fiscal year 2022-23 the county brought in \$396,643 in taxes from a total of \$9,916,067 in VRBO sales. The prior year that number was \$489,607 in taxes from

\$12,240,175 in rentals.

Though hotel sales have decreased, they did not fall as much as Breedlove and the Tourism and Development Authority thought they might, given tougher economic times for the average traveler. Though lower, hotel occupancy rates are close to prior seasons.

“Given the overall economy, I think we are faring well and maintaining our market share. We budgeted this current fiscal year, starting July 1, 2023, conservatively estimating a 10 percent decline across the board, recognizing the impact likely won’t be as

significant, but our board wanted to ensure we allocate resources appropriately should we see fluctuations,” Breedlove said. “With worldwide travel reopening in earnest this

year, travelers have more options and are traveling farther from home. We are seeing strong travel demand this summer and hope it impacts our small businesses positively.”

SPORTS

Continued from page 1A

Manny Magana, and Isaiah Palestine.

“Isabella Moody, Vanessa Russell, McKenzie Woods and Brooklyn Kenney will be players to watch for volleyball, girls basketball, and girls soccer,” Mayse said.

For girls soccer, Mayse mentioned Abigail Corona, Jenny Contreras, Kimberly Rodriguez, and Hope Ward.

Puskarich and Henson, who were both all-conference players last year, along with Anthony Baumgarner, are boys basketball players to look for on the court.

Regardless of enrolled players, Mayse said he remains optimistic.

“We’re always striving to be the best we can be. We have a lot of support in the community,” he said. “We know we’re such a small school, but we do have a lot of support that goes a long way with us. We play in one of the toughest conferences in the state.”

Smoky Mountain Conference, which BREC plays in, has turned out several high-level athletes and won many state champion-

ships in multiple sports, Mayse said.

Mayse said the school always offers boys and girls soccer and basketball, and girls volleyball. There are hopes to bring baseball back this year.

“Baseball is the only sport we’re trying to get back that we haven’t been able to field in a couple of years, but I’m hoping we have the numbers, and we have people interested in coaching. I should know in the fall whether we’ll have a baseball team,” Mayse said.

The sports that are offered depend on school enrollment and available coaches. High school sports usually have a staff member coaching, but Mayse said BREC may rely on qualified community members to coach.

Mayse will again coach girls basketball and boys golf. Ashley Steinel, Blue Ridge’s assistant athletic director and PE teacher, is returning to coach varsity volleyball and assists with girls basketball. April Arnst the assistant varsity volleyball coach.

Pressler, a BREC agriculture teacher, is once again the head coach for both soccer

teams and Brittany Elkins, a BREC math teacher, will again be the assistant coach for both.

Brandon Henson, head coach, and Jim Madden, assistant coach, run boys basketball. They are non-staff coaches.

Mayse said that if baseball is offered this season, it will likely need a community member coach.

Varsity volleyball will begin their season Aug. 17 by hosting IC Charter and then Swain on Aug. 22.

Varsity boys soccer will kick off their season Aug. 21 in an away game against Franklin at 6 p.m. They will then host Franklin Aug. 24 at 6 p.m. before having back-to-back away games against Pisgah, Smoky Mountain, and Swain.

Middle school soccer will take to the road Aug. 28, Aug. 29 and Sept. 5 against Summit, Highlands, and Rabun-Gap. Sept. 6 they will host Highlands and Sept. 11 they will visit Cullowhee.

Middle school volleyball will follow the same schedule.

Varsity basketball will begin Nov. 17 against Summit Charter School on

a five-game stretch on the road before returning home to play Imagine Charter. Middle school basketball will begin Nov. 9 with three home games before hitting the road.

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