

On Thursday, January 14 the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services announced that vaccine providers that are ready to expand may vaccinate all health care workers and anyone 65 years and older.

“Doctors, hospitals and local health departments are working hard to get people vaccinated. There may be a wait, but when it’s your spot, take your shot to stay healthy and help us get back to being with family and friends,” said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D.

Because vaccine supplies are currently limited, states must make vaccine available in phases. To save lives and slow the spread of COVID-19, independent state and federal public health advisory committees recommend first protecting health care workers, people who are at the highest risk of being hospitalized or dying, and those at high risk of exposure to COVID-19.

North Carolina moves through vaccination phases by aligning to federal priorities while giving local health departments and hospitals the flexibility to move to the next priority group as they complete the previous one and have vaccines available. With today’s announcement, vaccine providers who are ready may vaccinate adults 65 years and older and health care workers, which will be followed by frontline essential workers, then adults with high risk of exposure and increased risk of serious illness, then everyone. It is the responsibility of all vaccine providers to ensure equitable access to vaccines. This will mean taking intentional actions to reach and engage historically marginalized communities.

“We know that people are doing all that they can to learn about the vaccines so they can make the best decision for themselves and their families. It can be hard to know what is true and what can be trusted. We are here to provide you with honest, factual information,” said Secretary Cohen.

As part of the ongoing effort to educate North Carolinians about the safety, benefits and importance of receiving COVID-19 vaccinations, NCDHHS launched You have a spot. Take your shot. to provide all North Carolinians with information about COVID-19 vaccine development, testing, safety, side-effects and reactions.

A searchable list of health departments and hospitals administering the vaccination is available on the state’s COVID-19 vaccination website, [yourspotyourshot.nc.gov](https://yourspotyourshot.nc.gov). There is a wait time in many areas. Counties are in various stages as they deal with new COVID-19 cases and vaccinations. To support communities, NCDHHS is partnering with health systems, local health departments and community health centers across the state to host large community vaccine events for people currently eligible to be vaccinated.

In Anson County, call the Health Department at 704-694-5188 for information or to make an appointment.

COVID-19 vaccinations are free of charge, regardless of whether or not people have insurance. However, most doctors cannot provide COVID-19 vaccines in their office at this time. Individuals who are currently eligible and would like to receive the vaccine must make an appointment with their local health department or hospital.

In collaboration with local and statewide media outlets, pooled video footage and photos from recent vaccination clinics, PSAs produced by NCDHHS and other resources are available for publication and broadcast use, and can be downloaded from [bit.ly/3rTOcS2](https://bit.ly/3rTOcS2).

For more information, visit [yourspotyourshot.nc.gov](https://yourspotyourshot.nc.gov).

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**Ansonia January Spotlight is on Joe Dutton**

This is a release from the Anson County Arts Council: Joe Dutton served on the Anson County Arts Council Board of Directors from 2014 until this past year, 2020. He was an ardent advocate and supporter of the arts in our community and the Arts Council. Joe was in his element on a stage performing for an audience, singing and playing his guitar.

On more than one occasion Joe provided the entertainment for the Arts Council’s summer Bach’s Lunches. Often he was accompanied by the band Knights of the Museum, most recently performing curbside for our Bach’s Lunch To Go. One favorite program was done solo by Joe. He led the audience in a foot-tapping, sing-a-long with music we grew up with.

Joe performed and served as master of ceremonies at Open Mic Night at the Ansonia, serving up bluegrass and country music for the audience. Joe put his auctioneering talent to work for the Arts Council as well. He served as master of ceremonies and auctioneer at “Evening for the Arts” at the Lockhart-Taylor Center. Joe seemed to be just as comfortable in a suit and tie as he was in his jeans, but, whichever, he always wore his cowboy boots.

In August of 2017 Joe was instrumental in the Arts Council’s opportunity to purchase the adjacent building from Erwin Gibson. The Arts Council was able to renovate the building to provide additional gallery space as well as much needed classroom/workshop space. We were pleased to see Joe at the Chamber of Commerce-sponsored ribbon-cutting for the building for which he was in large part responsible. Little did we know at the time it would be the last time. We will miss Joe’s ready smile and his can-do attitude.

We love you and will miss you, Joe!  
The spotlight is on YOU ♥



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**You Decide: What's the Future of Retailing?**

By Dr. Mike Walden: One of my most enduring memories as a small child was the weekly shopping trip with my mother. This was in the early 1950s, and my parents lived in a small home in a rural area of Ohio west of Cincinnati, just down the road from my grandparents’ farm. The nearest town with any reasonable amount of shopping was five miles away. Today that’s not very far, but my Mom didn’t have a car. My father used the only vehicle we had for his daily trips to work.

So on Thursdays – which was shopping day – my Mom would put me in a little red wagon and pull it the half mile to Carsh’s grocery store. Carsh’s was a typical “mom and pop” store so prevalent in those days. Not only did Carsh’s sell food products like meat, eggs, bread and cereal, but if you needed some fabric, nails or stationary, Carsh’s had those too. On the way back home, the groceries took my place in the wagon.

Buying groceries has undergone many changes during the last seven decades, and stores like Carsh’s, which was family owned and run, are harder to find. They’ve been replaced by supermarket chains or rolled into “big box” stores which sell everything. At the same time there’s been the rise of specialty stores that cater to particular products and tastes.

Yet there’s no doubt the most revolutionary recent change in retailing has been cyber-buying. The U.S. Department of Commerce defines cyber-buying, or as some call it, e-commerce, as “sales of goods and services where the buyer places an order, or the price and terms of the sale are negotiated, over an internet, mobile device, electronic network, electronic mail or comparable online system.” Translated, we use one of our tech devices to buy something.

Cyber-buying was almost non-existent a decade ago, accounting for only 4.5 percent of retail sales. The latest data for 2020 show it now accounts for 16.5 percent of retail sales in 2020. That’s an amazing almost four-fold increase within a decade.

It may surprise you that cyber-buying “only” accounts for 16.5 percent of all retail sales. This relatively low rate has two implications. First, it means consumers still buy most of their products and services in the traditional way, by visiting stores and shops. This is a big reason why there’s been so much concern about brick and mortar stores during the COVID-19 recession, because those stores are still the main way consumers make purchases.

Second, the fact that cyber-buying accounts for a seemingly low 16.5 percent of retail sales means it has plenty of running-room to grow. In fact, if cyber-buying expands in the next decade at the same rate it has grown in the last decade, by 2031 it will be the way 60 percent of retail sales are accomplished. Cyber-buying will also be strengthened by the fact that as time marches on, more individuals will have grown-up using computers, smartphones and other modern tech devices. Cyber-buying will be as natural to them as rotary phones were to me.

As cyber-buying grows, it will also change. Shoppers will still be able to visit a website, compare products and services, then click and buy as they do today. But there will be three big enhancements to cyber-buying that will be applauded by some, however received skeptically by others.

The first is drone delivery. Cyber buying often comes with delivery. Most such delivery today is done using vehicles on the roads. Drones are small, light-weight machines capable of flying short distances. They avoid congested roads and are perfect for delivering packages. At the end of 2020 the Federal Aviation Administration finalized new rules regulating the flights of drones. Experts think these rules will allow drone delivery to quickly expand and add a new dimension to the advantages of cyber-buying.

The second enhancement will be use of AI, short for artificial intelligence, by cyber-buying companies. One of the aspects of the technology revolution is the ability of companies to collect all kinds of data from people buying their products and services. The companies know what we buy, when we buy and how often we buy.

The development of AI, which is just a fancy term for programs predicting behavior, will increasingly allow cyber companies to anticipate our shopping needs. For example, a cyber supermarket will know the kinds of cereal the Walden’s buy, the size of the box and how many times a month we purchase it. Expanded to all of the Walden’s grocery purchases, a cyber supermarket could fill our weekly shopping cart and have the products delivered to our door. The Walden’s wouldn’t have to take the time and thought to fill out weekly grocery lists, nor would we need to drive to the store to purchase them. In the future, the delivery may even be met by the Walden’s robot, which accepts the groceries and puts them away!

The third new development for cyber shopping will be virtualization. Virtualization allows a person to stay where they are, but have all the sensory (sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell) experiences of being somewhere else. Think about how this could be used with vehicle shopping. I stay in my home but “test drive” vehicles virtually. The one I pick is then delivered to my home.

I know much of these predicted developments, like AI and virtualization, sound like science fiction. But I remember when Dick Tracy’s wrist watch with audio and video capabilities seemed far-fetched, but now we have them. I’m not sure I’m ready for the new retailing world, but do I have a choice? You decide!

Walden is a William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at North Carolina State University who teaches and writes on personal finance, economic outlook and public policy.

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