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Serving Anson County and the Municipalities of Ansonville, Lilesville, McFarlan, Morven, Peachland, Polkton and Wadesboro.

Covid Update for Anson County

According to the latest information posted by the Anson County Health Department on Monday, February 13 the county was at 8,421 total COVID-19 cases, with 43 active and 102 deaths. On January 13 the county was at 8,225 total cases, with 78 active and 101 deaths. On December 14 the county was at 8009 total cases, with 37 active and 100 deaths. On November 17 the county was at 7,940 total cases, with 25 active and 100 deaths. The total case count has increased by over 480 since mid-November.

The Health Department offers Moderna COVID Vaccines on Thursdays. They offer the primary series and the bivalent "Fall" booster. They are offered on Thursdays in a walk-in clinic. No appointment is necessary.

For more specific information related to Anson County and NC please visit: covid19.ncdhhs.gov.

The Health Department is located at 110 West Ashe Street in Wadesboro. The telephone number is 704-694-5188.

Cornelius Smith and Jack Kelly Leak Sentenced to Prison for Trafficking Meth

Antonio Cormelius Smith, 32, a prolific methamphetamine trafficker in Wadesboro, N.C., was sentenced to 151 months in prison followed by five years of supervised release today, announced Dena J. King, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina. Smith's co-conspirator, Jack Kelly Leak, 49, also of Wadesboro, was ordered to serve 121 months in prison followed by five years of supervised release for his role in the drug distribution ring.

Robert J. Murphy, Special Agent in Charge of the Atlanta Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which oversees the Charlotte District Office, and Chief Thedis Spencer of the Wadesboro Police Department joined U.S. Attorney King in making the Feb. 9 announcement.

According to information contained in court documents and court proceedings, between September 2021 and April 2022, the DEA began an investigation into Smith's methamphetamine trafficking activities in and around Wadesboro. Over the course of the investigation, law enforcement determined that Smith was a prolific drug trafficker responsible for supplying methamphetamine to a network of local dealers in Anson County, including Leak. Court records also show that Smith's trafficking activities extended beyond Anson County, to include Union, Richmond, Stanly, and Mecklenburg Counties.

According to documents filed with the court, over the course of the investigation Smith engaged in multiple drug transactions with confidential sources cooperating with law enforcement. On December 8, 2021, law enforcement executed an arrest warrant at Smith's residence, from which they seized methamphetamine, digital scales, firearms and more than \$23,000 in drug proceeds.

At the sentencing hearing, the Court determined that Smith, assisted by Leak and others, was responsible for trafficking more than two kilograms of methamphetamine. Smith and Leak pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine, and distribution of methamphetamine. The defendants are currently in federal custody. They will be transferred to the custody of the federal Bureau of Prisons upon designation of a federal facility.

In making the announcement, King commended the DEA and the Wadesboro Police Department for their investigation of the case, and thanked the Anson County Sheriff's Office, the Union County Sheriff's Office, the Richmond County Sheriff's Office, the Stanly County Sheriff's Office, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, and the Marshville Police Department for their assistance.

U.S. Attorney King also thanked the District Attorney's Office in Prosecutorial District 21 which encompasses the counties of Anson and Richmond, the District Attorney's Office in Prosecutorial District 20B which has jurisdiction over Union County, and the District Attorney's Office in Prosecutorial District 28, which includes Stanly County.

Assistant United States Attorneys Regina Pack and Christopher Hess prosecuted the case.

This case is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), a program bringing together all levels of law enforcement and the communities they serve to reduce violent crime and gun violence, and to make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. On May 26, 2021, the Department launched a violent crime reduction strategy strengthening PSN based on these core principles: fostering trust and legitimacy in our communities, supporting community-based organizations that help prevent violence from occurring in the first place, setting focused and strategic enforcement priorities, and measuring the results.

ACDVC BBQ is February 24

Anson County Domestic Violence Coalition will hold its annual BBQ Fundraiser on Friday, February 24, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. or until they sell out. The event will be held at Calvary Episcopal Church located at 304 East Wade Street. This will be take-out and delivery only. All deliveries require a minimum of five orders. Deliveries to local businesses and organizations are courtesy of Anson County Sheriff's Office.

The cost: Sandwiches \$5, Pints \$12 and Quarts \$22. Plates are \$10 and include chopped BBQ, slaw, baked beans, roll and dessert. Call-ins are welcomed and encouraged to ensure you get your food before it sells out! The number is 704-694-4499.

The Anson County Domestic Violence & Rape Crisis Center is a nonprofit organization funded solely by grants, donations and fundraisers. They encourage you to come join them for some delicious BBQ and help promote awareness against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Thank you for your continued support!

School Board Meets February 20 to Discuss New Middle School Project

The Anson County Board of Education will hold a called meeting on Monday, February 20 at 4:00 p.m. for the purpose of discussing bid options for the new middle school project. The meeting will be held in the Anson County Schools' Administrative Board Room located at 320 Camden Road in Wadesboro.



District Attorney Reece Saunders Receives Patriot Award

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense office, announced that W. Reece Saunders, Jr., (pictured in the center) District Attorney for Prosecutorial District 21, as a recipient of the Patriot Award in recognition of extraordinary support of Captain Herman Little (pictured at right) of the 134th Legal Operations Detachment, US Army Reserve.

The Patriot Award was created by ESGR to publicly recognize individuals who provide outstanding patriotic support and cooperation to their employees who have answered their nation's call to duty. Saunders was nominated by Little for being highly encouraging of his effort to serve his country. Assisting in the presentation was Frank Blalock (pictured at left), a Volunteer with ESGR.

In addition to his duties as an Assistant District Attorney in District 21, Little serves as Deputy Group Judge Advocate at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

Reece Saunders is a native of Richmond County, North Carolina. After graduating from Rockingham High School he attended Wingate College and Wake Forest University. He enrolled in Wake Forest School of Law where he graduated in 1977.

Saunders returned to Richmond County in the fall of 1977 and began his law career. He has been in private practice in the 20th Judicial District for over 30 years. He also served for three years in the mid 1980s as a District Court Judge for District 20.

In 2010 Saunders was elected to serve as District Attorney for District 20A, which includes Anson, Richmond and Stanly counties. In 2014 the NC Legislature split District 20A into two districts, and Saunders became the District Attorney for the newly created prosecutorial District 16A (now Prosecutorial District 21).

Do You Have Concerns About Falling?

A Matter of Balance class is free and can reduce the fear of falling and increase the activity levels of older adults who have concerns about falling.

The Matter of Balance classes help participants learn to:

- view falls and fear of falling as controllable
- set realistic goals for increasing activity
- make changes to reduce fall risk at home
- promote exercise to increase strength and balance

The Matter of Balance Class is designed to benefit area older adults who:

- are concerned about falls
- have sustained a fall in the past
- restrict activities because of concerns about falling
- are interested in improving flexibility, balance and strength
- are age 60 or older, ambulatory and able to problem-solve

All participants are welcome, respected and valued. Please contact Grace Senior Center to request accommodations.

Grace Senior Center is offering A Matter of Balance Managing Concerns About Falls. The class starts Tuesday, March 7 and runs through Thursday, March 30. Classes will meet twice a week for four weeks on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon at Grace Senior Center. Call Mary Lindsey-Jones or Tonja Smith at (704) 694-6616 to register or for additional information about the class.

Grace Senior Center is located at 199 Highway 742 South (Chesterfield Road) in Wadesboro, just past IGA.

Anson County 4-H's Clover Crawl is Back!

Anson County 4-H and 4-H Youth Promise is pleased to announce that the Clover Crawl is back! The event will be held on Friday, March 10 at the Lockhart-Taylor Center in Wadesboro, from 6:00 until 11:00 p.m. The Clover Crawl is an adult, 21 and over event. The event will be sure to bring an evening of fun, food and dancing. Heavy hors d'oeuvres and drinks will be served and DJ Rich will be DJing.

Tickets bought in advance are \$50 per person and can be purchased at the Extension Office, located at 501 McLaurin Street in Wadesboro, Lacey's in Wadesboro, or from committee members and Anson Extension staff. Ticket price at the door will be \$60. Tables can be purchased for \$500 and will include eight tickets. If you are interested in purchasing a table, please call the Extension Office at 704-694-2915.

In 2022 4-H programs reached over 600 youth. Youth participated in activities like summer camps, community clubs, district and state events and other year-round educational programs at minimal costs due to fundraising. Anson 4-H and 4-H Youth Promise also work with adults, volunteer leaders and youth to provide community projects and programs that focus on parenting skills and enhanced leadership abilities. All 4-H programming is available to any youth between ages 5-19. Funds raised from this event will be used to support on-going 4-H youth programs in Anson County.

This fundraiser has been a success in previous years and 4-H is optimistic that Clover Crawl will continue to thrive. 4-H programs have had a significant impact on Anson's youth through the years. With your help and support, programs can continue to make significant contributions to our youth's future, and the future of our county.

If you would like to learn more information about this event please contact Samuel Cole, Jr. 4-H Agent at 704-694-2915.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit Helped North Carolina Employers Hire more than 91,000 Workers in 2022

The NC Department of Commerce issued more than 91,000 Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) certifications to employers in 2022, the department's Workforce Solutions division announced today. That represented a more than 13 percent increase in the number of certifications compared to the 2021 calendar year, indicating that more people found jobs thanks to the financial support the program provides to employers.

A federal tax credit, the WOTC serves as an incentive for companies to hire qualified people with significant barriers to employment. In NC, the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) administers WOTC and determines eligibility for the target groups of jobseekers.

According to the newly released data, DWS awarded certifications to employers hiring 91,322 new employees during the 2022 calendar year. Those certifications allowed employers to potentially claim up to \$241,739,400 in tax credits. During 2021, DWS awarded 80,144 certifications for a maximum potential tax credit of \$200,400,800.

"As part of our First in Talent Plan, North Carolina is working to bring more people into the labor force, and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit is one tool we can use to help achieve that goal," said N.C. Commerce Secretary Machel Baker Sanders. "We look forward to encouraging even more businesses to use this important tax credit, because it supports their own success and that of their communities."

After receiving a certification from DWS, employers may then apply for the tax credit with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). A business can claim from \$1,200 to \$9,600 for each eligible employee, depending upon the target group of the person hired, the wages paid to that worker in the first year of employment, and the number of hours worked.

Among those who may qualify for the WOTC are certain veterans, recipients of public assistance, people with felony convictions, people with disabilities, and the long-term unemployed. Only new hires are eligible.

For more information, employers should visit www.commerce.nc.gov/grants-incentives/workforce-grants/work-opportunity-tax-credit or contact a local NCWorks Career Center through www.NCWorks.gov or 1-855-NCWorks (855-629-6757).

Dollar Days Yard Sale for Charity is Saturday

Faith-Based Center of Hope and PlayazElite Motorcycle Club will have a "Dollar Days" yard sale for charity on Saturday, February 18 beginning at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot of Burger King in Wadesboro.

For further information please contact Vancine Sturdivant at 704 848-4412 or Patricia Robinson at 704 848-4995.

Anson Mobile Market is Thursday

The Anson Mobile Market will be held this Thursday, February 16 at 10 a.m. on the Square in uptown Wadesboro. This is an event that will afford the citizens of Anson County to receive 6 to 8 different types of fresh produce monthly. This is a free initiative, so please stop by and get some produce.

This event is to assist in the scarcity of fresh, healthy food in the county.

Here are the available items: Pink Lady 1 bushel; Broccoli 20lb; Butternut Squash 30lb; OG Green Round Cabbage 45lb; Collards 24 bunches; Orange Carrots 25lb; Kennebec Potatoes 50lb; and Covington Sweet Potatoes 20lb.

Legislative Update Program is this Friday

Join the Anson Chamber at 8:30 a.m. this Friday, February 17 at Twin Valley Golf Club for their annual Legislative Update. Hear from Sen. David Craven and Rep. Mark Brody on updates from Raleigh, along with information specific to Anson County.

A light breakfast will be provided for attendees. The event is free for Chamber members, and \$10 for non-members. All attendees are required to register for this event at: form.jotform.com/ansonchamber/2023-legislative-update.

For questions or for more information, contact Shelby Emrich at 704-694-4181 or emrich@ansoncounty-chamber.org.

Black History Month Comedy Night at HMOC

Harvest Ministries Outreach Center and Cityreach Community Center invite everyone to their Black History Month Comedy Night featuring Anson County's own Ampston Hews. Come celebrate Black History Month with comedy and a delicious soul food meal. It takes place on Saturday, February 18, with the doors open at 5 p.m., show at 6 p.m.

This event is free and the soul food meal is only \$10. The meal includes a meat, 2 sides, roll and dessert. Chicken and dumplings will be available for \$5. Drinks are included.

Harvest Ministries is located at 1134 East Caswell Street in Wadesboro, behind McDonalds. The telephone number is 704-294-3153.