

Anson High's New Program Connects Students to STEM Careers

"The future is now," beamed Charles Murphy, Principal of Anson High School, when asked his reaction to the new federal Youth Career-Connect Grant which the school system has received. "For years we have wanted to unite Career-Technical Education with academics to help students prepare for success in college and careers. With this grant funding we will now be able to provide the resources to advance their preparation in key STEM areas."

Michael Freeman, Superintendent of Anson County Schools, agreed. "The Career-Connect: STEM Academy at Anson High School is an important step for high school education in Anson County," he said. "We want our graduates prepared for continued success in college or the workforce when they leave us, and Career-Connect will help achieve that goal."

Anson High School is one of only 24 grant recipients in the nation to receive a Youth Career-Connect Grant from the Department of Labor. Both Murphy and Freeman credited the collaborative planning team that designed and crafted the grant application that will bring over two million dollars to Anson High School in the next four years to establish a Career-Connect: STEM Academy Program. The planning team included school district leaders, South Piedmont Community College leaders, local and regional leaders, and consultants experienced in innovative high school settings. Together this team designed the Career-Connect: STEM program that will begin this fall with 80 rising freshmen and grow into a full four-year program over the next four academic years, serving over 300 students at Anson High.

"It was a true collaborative effort," stated Murphy. "Our planning team put together an impressive project that convinced the Department of Labor that even though we are a small, low wealth, rural community, we can provide a high school experience for students that will strengthen the workforce and stimulate economic development while providing a quality education."

Freeman explained that applicants had to prove that both higher education and business and industry were vitally connected to the high school project and, thus, to the students. "Through our positive relationship with Dr. Sidor and his staff at South Piedmont Community College," stated Freeman, "we were able to present a sequence of college courses and certificates in each of the STEM areas of study that will lead our high school students to graduate with marketable career credentials." Freeman further explained that Career-Connect has five documented business partners who helped solidify the project design. Those partners are the Anson County Chamber of Commerce, Carolinas Health-care System, Columbus-McKinnon, Hornwood, and Schaeffler Group USA. "These partners will actively interact with Career-Connect students and teachers, providing a direct connection to real workplace experiences," stated Freeman.

The new AHS Career-Connect: STEM program will emphasize the four career focus areas of Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering, Information Technologies, and Medical and Biomedical Sciences. Students in Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering will complete a Project Lead The Way (PLTW)-Engineering curriculum, which was chosen for its nationally recognized achievement in preparing students to succeed in college and careers. The junior and senior years will include SPCC courses that result in college certificates in engineering, industrial maintenance, or mechatronics.

I.T. students will complete Microsoft Academy courses, Multimedia Web Design, and take industry assessments for credentials. Their junior and senior years include SPCC courses leading to certification in either Web Design, Operating Systems, or Computer Support. Medical students in the Biomedical Sciences curriculum of nationally-recognized Project Lead the Way, followed by certification courses through SPCC in Nurse Aide I and BLS/CPR, both of which are prerequisites for application to most medical programs at the collegiate level. They will also take courses that lead to entry into a community college certificate, diploma, or degree program leading to a medical/biomedical field.

In each STEM academy, college credits will count toward a two-year degree, which students can continue after high school graduation. In grades 9-12, students can earn 18 or more semester hours of college credit, while the senior year will be almost entirely composed of college coursework aimed directly at earning certifications or degrees. College courses will be offered by SPCC instructors on the campus of Anson High School.

Many Career-Connect students will choose to continue their education beyond high school. However, some will choose to begin employment immediately after graduation because they have found their special interest area and learned the skills they need to perform a STEM job well.

"The features of Career-Connect earned the approval of the federal grants team at the U.S. Dept. of Labor because the entire prep package is impressive,"

Freeman explained. The Career-Connect program will provide a team of teachers to develop academic and technical skills of students, free access to SPCC coursework, a project-based learning environment, strong career development elements, and industry involvement. Therefore, students who choose a Career-Connect Academy will be fast-tracked to credentials and college credits that count toward a two-year degree."

Mr. Murphy stated that April 22nd is an important date for entering freshmen because 8th graders will turn in their form that day to indicate which high school they prefer attending. "I hope that 8th graders and their parents will contact me or the counselors at Anson Middle or Anson High School to learn more about Career-Connect," Murphy commented. "Next school year is the beginning of major transformation at Anson High, and Career-Connect is the center of that change."

For additional information contact Michael Freeman, Superintendent at 704-694-4417 or Freeman.Michael@Anson.K12.nc.us.

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In last week's article I spelled out my plan to combat drugs, violence and property crime in Anson County. This week I want to discuss my plans to deal with Domestic Violence, bring an active Crime Stoppers program to Anson County, the implementation of a Crisis Intervention Team initiative, and bring back the G.R.E.A.T program to our middle school youth.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

My plan is to bring a strategy to combat domestic violence known as an Offender Focused Domestic Violence Initiative (OFDVI). One of the strategy's critical features is the ability to focus on offenders at earlier stages of offending, before the secrecy of offending entrenches and violence escalates. Research suggests that early intervention is key in stopping the cycle of Domestic Violence (DV).

The Anson County Sheriff's Office message to Domestic Violence offenders will be: Domestic violence is wrong and we will not tolerate it. It's not just Domestic Violence, it is violence.

It includes pushing, shoving, striking, slapping, intimidation, trespassing, vandalism, burglary and all the other games and tricks offenders play on their victims. These will trigger the Anson County Sheriff's Office to take action against you.

We will use all sources of information to monitor your actions. We will not depend on the victim alone. We will use: family, police, co-workers, neighbors, clerk of court, service providers, crime stoppers and anyone we can talk with about your conduct. Your conduct will no longer be a secret.

We will continue to align the Anson County Sheriff's Office with a network of partners putting you and your actions under a microscope. We will attempt to close all of the loopholes you have slipped through in the past. We will use all of these resources to remove you from the community if you don't stop your domestic violence. We will use any case against you. It does not matter if you don't stop your domestic violence case.

If you decide to stop your assaultive conduct you will be dealt with through normal law enforcement channels. If you don't stop, our partners will collaborate on any available case and activate any and all resources to come after you.

The loopholes that have existed before will be closed. Your actions will no longer be a secret. We will be communicating with the system to ensure that you do not get away with anything. You cannot hide, we will be watching you. Domestic Violence is unacceptable and we will no longer tolerate it.

Anson County has one of the only first responding teams in North Carolina, making an advocate available right after the violence has occurred. I will continue to work with our local Domestic Violence agency to provide this service to the victims in our county, so they will always know they are not alone in the fight against Domestic Violence.

ACTIVE CRIME STOPPERS:

One of the most effective tools available to law enforcement in solving crime is the ability to pay rewards for information. I want to have a more active Crime Stoppers Program in Anson County.

Local Crime Stoppers programs are non-profit organizations led by citizens against crime. Cash rewards of up to \$1000 are paid to persons providing anonymous information that leads to the felony arrest of criminals and fugitives.

Crime Stoppers is based on the principal that someone other than the criminal has information that can solve a crime. It was created to combat the three major problems faced by law enforcement in generating that information:

- 1) Fear of REPRISAL
- 2) An attitude of APATHY
- 3) Reluctance to get INVOLVED

Crime Stoppers resolves these problems by:

- Offering ANONYMITY to people who provide information about crimes.
- Paying REWARDS when the information supplied leads to arrest.

CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM:

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Program is a model community initiative designed to improve the outcomes of police interactions with people living with mental illnesses. CIT programs are built on local partnerships between law enforcement agencies, mental health providers and advocates.

This involves individuals living with mental illnesses and families at all levels of decision-making and planning. CIT programs typically provide 40 hours of training for law enforcement on how to better respond to people experiencing a mental health crisis. Equally important, CIT programs provide a forum for partner organizations to coordinate diversion from jails to mental health services.

With 1 out of every 5 law enforcement contacts being with someone experiencing a mental health crisis, it is imperative that we provide officers the tools they need to successfully de-escalate individuals experiencing crisis, recognize the signs of someone in mental distress, and provide the appropriate care they need.

I am the only candidate to have attended this training and know firsthand the benefits this program will bring to the citizens of Anson County.

G.R.E.A.T. (GANG RESISTANCE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING) PROGRAM:

Some of the most impressionable years for young people are the years between elementary school and high school. Most young people are trying to find ways to "fit in" with different peer groups and can easily be influenced by those that may have malicious intent. My goal, as the next Sheriff of Anson County, is to bring back the G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance, Education and Training) Program to our middle school youth.

The G.R.E.A.T. Program curriculum consists of thirteen 30 to 45 minute lessons taught by certified law enforcement officers that teach students about being part of the community, how to make good decisions, how to communicate effectively, how to solve conflict without violence, how to deal with peers, how to manage anger and how to think of others.

Several lessons are accompanied by a family letter that the student takes home explaining the lesson and encouraging parent/student interaction.

One special feature of the curriculum is the G.R.E.A.T. Project, which requires students to present a plan for improving their school. Another special feature is the use of scenarios that address bullying behaviors. Students are presented with a situation where they must make decisions about how they would respond. The activity focuses on empathy, taking personal responsibility, and knowing when to take action.

The youth of our county are the future of our county. We must make a commitment to protect them and give them the necessary skills and support to be good, productive, caring and vital members of our communities.

I humbly and respectfully ask for your support and vote so that I can bring these programs, initiatives and efforts to improve the quality of life for ALL citizens of Anson County.

IMPORTANT DATES April 24 to May 3...One Stop Voting May 6...Democratic Primary Election

"For any law enforcement organization to be successful it must have strong, competent leadership. It must also hold the public's trust. Next week I will share with you my history of demonstrated leadership, my plans to promote quality leadership within the Anson County Sheriff's Office and, most importantly, how I plan to earn and keep your trust."



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