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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, April 18, Anson County total cases were 6,566, with 2 cases active. The total Covid-related deaths are 99. The total cases have only increased by 17 in a month, since March 17.

Covid Vaccines are available for everyone 5 years old and older, including walk-in clinics. (Children 5-11 by appointment only.) Vaccine boosters are available. They are free, and all you have to do is call the Health Department at 704-694-5188 for more information. Walk-in clinics are held on Thursdays, 8:30 to 11:00 a.m. and 1 to 3:30 p.m.

The Health Department is located at 110 West Ashe Street in Wadesboro.

Covid Testing Free testing is available Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. without an appointment. They are closed for lunch 12 noon to 1 p.m. Testing takes place in the old hospital parking lot at 500 Morven Road in Wadesboro. No appointment is needed and there is no charge for the Covid test. Results will be called or emailed directly to the person tested or, in the case of children, to their parent or adult caregiver, in 2-3 days. They will test anyone over the age of 1.

Free home Covid tests are available by mail. The US government has set up a website (www.covidtests.gov) or call 1-800-232-0233.

Special Olympics Spring Games Are Back! Scheduled for Friday, April 29.

After a two-year hiatus, Special Olympics Anson County is excited to host Spring Games with limited athlete participation on Friday, April 29 at Anson High School Stadium. Opening Ceremonies will begin at 9:45 a.m.

Athletes will compete in track and field events at their various ability levels. All athletes will have student buddies throughout the event.

The Return to Activities Protocol issued by Special Olympics North Carolina gives guidance whereas everyone (with the exception of spectators in the stands) must complete a Communicable Disease Waiver Form. This Form should be requested and completed prior to the Games on April 29 by contacting Sylvia Tillman, Local Coordinator, at (704) 694-4417.

Thank you for your support.

In the event of rain, the Spring Games will be held on Wednesday, May 4.

2022 NC Strawberry Season Underway

With the arrival of spring and warmer weather, strawberry farms are opening for shoppers and, undoubtedly, strawberry lovers are ready for local berries.

"Growers have done a good job protecting the crop from recent cool temperatures and because of their hard work, this year's strawberry crop looks to be plentiful," said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. "In fact, some fields are opening up for pick-your-own guests this weekend."

Strawberry season typically runs from mid-April through May, although the addition of high-tunnel and greenhouse-grown strawberries in the state has moved up the availability of local berries to March in some locations.

"There are a lot more ways to grow strawberries and we are seeing farmers use greenhouses, high tunnels and other forward-thinking production methods to move up the time when we have fresh, locally grown strawberries," said Kevin Hardison, horticultural marketing specialist with the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

For fun family or group outings, go to the N.C. Strawberry Association's listing at:

www.ncstrawberry.com/farm-locator to find a local you-pick strawberry farm and contact information.

Farms open when the strawberries are plentiful enough to create a memorable you-pick experience, Hardison said. Always contact your local grower to verify times and availability of strawberries before you go.

North Carolina ranks fourth nationally in strawberry production, growing 1,100 acres of strawberries annually.

North Carolina's March Employment Figures Released

The state's seasonally adjusted March 2022 unemployment rate was 3.5 percent, decreasing 0.2 of a percentage point from February's revised rate. The national rate decreased 0.2 of a percentage point to 3.6 percent.

North Carolina's unemployment rate decreased 1.7 percentage points from a year ago. The number of people employed increased 25,123 over the month to 4,853,239 and increased 191,889 over the year. The number of people unemployed decreased 9,880 over the month to 177,303 and decreased 80,734 over the year.

Seasonally adjusted Total Nonfarm employment, as gathered through the monthly establishment survey, increased 18,100 to 4,712,800 in March. Major industries experiencing increases were Construction, 4,200; Education & Health Services, 4,000; Manufacturing, 3,200; Government, 2,200; Professional & Business Services, 2,000; Leisure & Hospitality Services, 1,100; Other Services, 1,100; Information, 1,000; and Financial Activities, 700. Major industries experiencing decreases were Trade, Transportation & Utilities, 1,300; and Mining & Logging, 100.

Since March 2021, Total Nonfarm jobs increased 185,300 with the Total Private sector increasing by 170,200 and Government increasing by 15,100. Major industries experiencing increases were Leisure & Hospitality Services, 54,500; Professional & Business Services, 41,400; Education & Health Services, 16,500; Trade, Transportation & Utilities, 16,300; Government, 15,100; Financial Activities, 12,000; Manufacturing, 10,500; Information, 6,600; Construction, 6,500; and Other Services, 6,200. The only major industry experiencing a decrease over the year was Mining & Logging, 300.



Pictured above, from left, are Cary, Elijah, Elene, Carlene, and Nehemiah Rodgers.

"We loved it! It was wonderful meeting our neighbors and being of service to the community."

Carlene took inspiration from her grandmother, an avid gardener who shared production knowledge, harvests, and a passion for agriculture. Starting small with double-digging, container gardening and composting, the Rodgers build plant health by building healthy soils, using cultural practices to prevent disease issues, and adding homemade compost from kitchen and yard waste to supplement plant needs. Since then the family has chosen to grow their all natural produce, without pesticides or synthetic fertilizer, so it arrives fresh from their farm to your table.

In addition to produce, they also create and sell handmade live-edge wood furniture, and make herbal lip balms and salves that are made from herbs grown and processed at the farm.

"Participating in Community Supported Agriculture is one way of sourcing local agricultural products," says Anson Extension agent Aimee Colf. "Supporting local farmers reduces food miles and overall carbon footprint of food purchases. It contributes to local food security and gives consumers more opportunities to make informed decisions about where their food comes from and how it is raised. Consumers can build relationships with local farms."

CSA sign-up is available now. Visit the QR code to learn about the weekly subscriptions available this spring and summer. Or you can contact the Rodgers family at 704-695-1441 for more information about their farm practices or products. There are two pickup sites:

- Abundant Living Farm, 11775 NC 109 S, Peachland, NC 28133
- Mount Croghan Flea Market, SC-9, Mt. Croghan, SC 29727

Abundant Living Farms CSA Sign-up

Abundant Living Farm is a small farm in Peachland along 109 South, owned by the family of Cary and Elene Rodgers. The family of five started raising produce in 2010. Now daughter Carlene, 24, is spearheading the family's first CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) season.

"We started selling to the public in 2020, selling blueberries, plums and okra," Carlene shares.



Now is a Good Time to Submit Soil Samples for Lawn and Garden

Spring brings our lawns and gardens alive from the winter. Spring is also an excellent time to submit your soil samples to the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services soil testing lab for lime and fertilizer recommendations.

"Soil testing helps protect the environment by determining and advising users on what nutrients are needed to ensure optimal plant growth," said Jagathi Kamalakanthan, NCDA&CS soil agronomist. "Plus, it can save people money especially since fertilizer costs have increased dramatically this year."

Homeowners, community gardeners, pasture and golf course managers are encouraged to use these services especially during the off-season time between April 1 and Oct. 31 when soil testing is free and turnaround times for test results range from 7 to 10 days.

The Agronomic Services Division offers a variety of tests. The soil lab offers routine/predictive tests to analyze soil samples for soil pH and fertility levels.

When starting a new lawn or garden, it is always a good idea to submit soil samples. "Based on the test results, you can plan either to amend the soil and grow the plants of your choice or select plants to suit the soil pH and fertility levels of your lawn and garden," Kamalakanthan said.

Often homeowners buy a large quantity of topsoil or amendments with the start of a new garden season. Kamalakanthan recommends getting them analyzed by the soil lab, too. Samples should be submitted to specific labs based on the actual material. Topsoil purchased in bags or in bulk, should be submitted to the soil lab. Compost, manure, soil-less media or materials with less than 50% natural soil are best analyzed by the lab handling Plant/Waste/Solution/Media.

Irrigation water or nutrient solutions can also be tested by this lab. By knowing the fertility and pH levels of materials/amendments ahead of time, you can make better decisions about how to use these materials for optimal plant growth.

Once the growing season is underway, identifying the cause of plant growth problems can be a challenge. The Agronomic Division's diagnostic services related to soil fertility and plant nutrition can assist in finding out the cause of poor growth. The division's nematode assay lab can also determine if microscopic plant parasitic nematodes are affecting plant growth.

More information can be found regarding the department's agronomic services by visiting www.ncagr.gov/agronomi or by calling 919-664-1600 with questions.

School Board Meeting for April 25 to be Live Streamed on YouTube

The Anson County Board of Education will hold their regular meeting next Monday, April 25. Closed Session will begin immediately after the opening of the meeting at 4:00 p.m. Open Session to the public will begin at about 5:30 p.m.

The meeting will be live streamed on the Anson County Schools' YouTube channel for the public to view.

To find the channel you can search YouTube for "Anson County Schools."

The meeting will be held in the Anson County Schools' Administrative Board Room, located at 320 Camden Road in Wadesboro.

Masks will be required for visitors.

If the public wishes to sign up for public comment, they can sign up in-person. A sign-up sheet will be available 30 minutes before the meeting begins for any individual or group to indicate their desire to address the board.

Location/Site	Quarantined Students	Quarantined Employees	Positive Cases Students	Positive Cases Employees
Anson Early College High School	0	0	0	0
Anson High School	0	0	0	0
Anson Middle School	0	0	0	0
Ansonville Elementary	0	0	0	0
Lilesville Elementary	0	0	0	0
Morven Elementary	0	0	0	0
Peachland-Polkton Elementary	0	0	0	0
Wadesboro Elementary	1	0	0	0
Wadesboro Primary	0	0	0	0
District Office	N/A	0	N/A	0
Transportation	N/A	0	N/A	0
Maintenance	N/A	0	N/A	0
Child Nutrition/Cafeteria Employees	N/A	0	N/A	0
Total	1	0	0	0
Total Students + Employees	1		0	
*Student Enrollment as of 04/14/22	2,937	# of Employees	513	
*Enrollment changes daily		% of Employees Positive	0.00%	
% of Students Positive	0.00%	A link to the dashboard is on the Anson County Schools Facebook page.		

SPCC and Wingate University Offer Free and Low Cost Educations

John Marek, Director of the AnsonEDP, shared this excellent summary of the education opportunities available nearby at SPCC and Wingate University: The "Anson Advantage" could refer to a lot of things, our abundant water resources, our strategic location along the US 74 Corridor, or our low costs of doing business. But, when AnsonEDP talks about the Anson Advantage, we are specifically referencing our post-secondary education programs through SPCC and Wingate University. Programs that we believe are unique in the state and offer local residents, new and old, unprecedented access to free and low-cost education while providing businesses with a steady stream of workers trained in the most in-demand fields.

• Career in a Year - South Piedmont Community College offers a number of courses for individuals that are seeking to complete their career in less than a year. Flexible schedules include weekend and evening classes. The classes range from 4 weeks to 12 months and are offered at zero out-of-pocket cost to Anson County residents.

• Free Community College - Starting your college career at a community college can save you money and future debt. With South Piedmont's free tuition and fees program, students can complete their Associate's degree in two years or less with zero out-of-pocket expenses.

• Low-Cost Bachelor's Degree - Once students have their two-year degree, they can transfer to Wingate University where they can continue on to a bachelor's degree. Students who are admitted into Wingate University and hold an associate's degree from SPCC may have their tuition capped at \$2,500 per year or less.

For more information about SPCC call (704) 272-5300 or visit spcc.edu.

For more information about Wingate University call 704-233-8000 or visit wingate.edu

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