

"Vet Tip Hotline" for USVA Allegations

The North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCVA) launched a "Vet Tip Hotline" on Monday to help veterans and improve services at US Department of Veterans Affairs (USVA) medical facilities located in North Carolina. The hotline will provide a resource for veterans and federal employees to confidentially report alleged misconduct within USVA facilities. The Vet Tip Hotline, via (844)-NC4-Vets or VetTips@doa.nc.gov, will connect the tipster directly to NCVA executive staff. Tips will be referred to appropriate authorities within the USVA for investigation.

"Hundreds of thousands of veterans have received care from dedicated USVA employees at medical facilities in North Carolina," said NCVA Director Ilario Pantano. "Our goal, first and foremost, is to care for our North Carolina veterans, and as their advocate, I want to help the USVA get back on track."

The hotline was set-up after the NCVA received specific allegations of misconduct at USVA medical facilities in North Carolina. After conducting interviews, the allegations were found credible and referred to the appropriate USVA authority. "Our goal with the Vet Tip Hotline is to be constructive, systematic and transparent," said Pantano. "We are not looking for scapegoats but rather solutions to get our veterans the care they deserve."

The Vet Tip Hotline follows a restructuring already underway that will locate NCVA offices within all 17 USVA medical facilities in North Carolina by 2016. This restructuring will assist with advocacy, provide benefit services to veterans, and will assist with the reporting of allegations received through the Vet Tip Hotline.

For more information please contact NCVA Director Ilario Pantano at 919-628-6894. To report misconduct at USVA medical facilities located in North Carolina please call (844)-NC4-Vets or email: VetTips@doa.nc.gov.

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Dr. Brian Dial

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• 3 room office suite at 208 South Rutherford Street. Renovated. Great visibility, easy access, plenty of parking. \$550/mo **704-681-5776** Leave Message

"We have a rare opportunity to improve high speed internet availability throughout Anson County," said Anna H. Baucom, Chairman, Anson County Board of Commissioners. The Anson County Broadband Planning Task Force is seeking the assistance of all county residents in the identification of areas that lack adequate internet access.

Working with the NC Department of Commerce's Broadband Division, the county is distributing a short questionnaire asking residents to provide basic information regarding the availability of broadband or high speed internet service. Using the information gained from this questionnaire, Anson County and NC Department of Commerce staff will identify those areas of Anson County lacking broadband internet service and will share this information with internet service providers and work with them to expand internet service in the county.

As of June 1 a short survey is available for you to indicate your level of broadband service, or lack of service. The survey consists of five simple questions and your home address information. You're not asked to provide your name, or required to provide any other contact information. The survey is designed to obtain service demand information related to the presence or absence of broadband service throughout the county, or the need to improve current service levels.

"Hundreds of school children in Anson County don't have broadband internet service at home, especially in remote areas of the county," said Anson County School Superintendent Michael Freeman. "Further, state funding for textbooks has been slashed by nearly 80 percent over the past four years. At the same time a new state law passed this year says the General Assembly will switch to funding only digital textbooks by 2017, making broadband access a critical need for all Anson County students."

The survey is available online at www.ncbroadband.gov/report_a_lack_of_service and in paper form at the local town halls, the Hampton B. Allen Library, South Piedmont Community College, Anson County School libraries, Grace Senior Center, the Chamber of Commerce, DSS, Burnsville Recreation & Learning Center, HOLLA! and the Health Department. In addition, the Hampton B. Allen Library will have computers available for people to use to complete the survey online. Please return completed surveys to any of those locations or to the Anson County Clerk Bonnie Huntley by July 1.

"We encourage all Anson County residents to complete a survey by July 1," said Baucom. "Our goal is to help improve our quality of life by increasing the availability and use of high speed internet and information technology in education, health care, economic development and all levels of government."

According to County Manager Lawrence Gatewood, "Our goal is to have high speed internet service available to every home and student in Anson County by 2017."

Housing Finance Agency Ready to Help Those Facing Foreclosure

The NC. Foreclosure Prevention Fund has helped over 16,000 homeowners. More interest free loans - some with no repayment - are still available

June marks National Homeownership Month, celebrating the many benefits of ownership and what that means to individuals and the community. What National Homeownership Month may not put under the spotlight is the families throughout North Carolina who are facing the devastating challenges of losing their homes to foreclosure. Enter the North Carolina Foreclosure Prevention Fund (Fund), a service offered by the N.C. Housing Finance Agency to North Carolina homeowners and an answer for responsible unemployed homeowners who are struggling with their mortgage payments or facing foreclosure.

The Fund, offered statewide and funded by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, makes mortgage payments for qualified unemployed workers, while they look for jobs or complete job training. It was created in North Carolina in 2010 because of high unemployment, which continues to exceed the national average in more than half of North Carolina counties.

"Foreclosure hurts everyone - homeowners, their neighbors, and the State's economy. It is our hope to keep the dream of homeownership a reality for North Carolinians," said A. Robert Kucab, Executive Director of the N.C. Housing Finance Agency. "As we celebrate the many benefits of homeownership, there are unforeseen life events that may jeopardize keeping that dream alive. The N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund offers responsible homeowners a bridge so they can keep their homes while they get back on their feet."

Homeownership Month recognizes that home provides shelter for families and their treasured possessions, and also means a promising and stable future for their children. The N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund is in place to provide relief in case of temporary hardships, such as job loss, divorce or death of a spouse, requiring you to look for new employment; challenges faced by returning veterans; and workers who suffer a reduction of income.

There is no cost for mortgage assistance, which is offered as:

- A zero-interest, deferred loan that pays the homeowner's mortgage for up to 36 months (\$36,000) during job search or retraining;
- A zero-interest, deferred loan up to \$36,000, to bring a mortgage current after reduction of income; or
- A zero-interest loan up to \$30,000 to refinance a second mortgage for a homeowner who has experienced a reduction of income, in order to lower the total monthly payment to an affordable level.

No repayment is due as long as the homeowner continues to live in the home. Loans for mortgage payment and reinstatement are extinguished after 10 years of occupancy. Second mortgage loans are repaid after 30 years, or when the home is sold, whichever happens first, and no interest is paid.

Free help applying and evaluating other ways to avoid foreclosure is available through 42 HUD-approved counseling agencies located throughout North Carolina.

The North Carolina Foreclosure Prevention Fund is here to help you. For information and a list of local counseling agencies offering assistance, homeowners can go to www.NCForeclosurePrevention.gov or call 888-623-8631.

About N.C. Housing Finance Agency: The N.C. Housing Finance Agency, a self-supporting public agency, has financed more than 221,000 affordable homes and apartments statewide since its creation in 1973. The North Carolina Housing Finance Agency's mission is to create affordable housing opportunities for North Carolinians whose needs are not met by the market. It designed the N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund using funds from the U.S. Department of the Treasury. You can learn more about the N.C. Housing Finance Agency at www.nchfa.com.

About N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund: The N.C. Foreclosure Prevention Fund helps North Carolina homeowners who are struggling to make their mortgage payments due to job loss or temporary financial hardship, such as divorce, illness or death of a spouse. The Fund also assists returning veterans who are transitioning to civilian jobs. The Fund provides assistance at no cost to you while you search or retrain for new employment. If you or someone you may know would like more information, please visit www.NCForeclosurePrevention.gov or call 888-623-8631.

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Would You Like to Donate a Coat or Blanket?

The Faith-Based Center of Hope has begun their "Warm Coats, Warm Hearts" program. They have distributed coats to several of the churches and schools in Anson County.

Blankets for the elderly are also available.

To donate coats and blankets or to request help, please contact Vancine Sturdivant at 704-848-4412.