



Local Athlete Ervin Bennett Received Donation of College Items

Anson County standout basketball player Ervin Bennett of Wadesboro recently received a scholarship to play college basketball at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte. For the past

few weeks he has been at Smith working out in the weight room, learning the campus, and preparing for the upcoming year.

Bennett, a 2017 of Anson High School and member of Harvest Ministries in Wadesboro, received an unexpected blessing on Sunday, July 23 during the morning worship experience at Harvest. He came home from Smith for the weekend, not knowing what he would receive.

Gloria Howard of Charlotte contacted Pastor Steve Adams and asked what items Bennett might need for his dorm room, as well as life essentials to make his transition to college life easier. Pastor Adams mentioned that Bennett would need common items such as towels, sheets, etc. However, what Ervin found when he removed the cloth over the items Sunday was far more than he could have imagined.

Howard was able to secure donations from businesses for bed sheets, a microwave, a refrigerator, towels, storage bins, pillows, blankets, and more for Ervin. In addition, local Magistrate Weaver Thomas donated a 32 inch television to Bennett. To cap the day off, Food Lion of Wadesboro and Manager Chris Williams provided Ervin with a gift card to purchase groceries.

Pastor Steve Adams presented Gloria Howard with a plaque of appreciation for her dedication and commitment to the lives of children. Howard has provided free trips to Great Wolf Lodge, Kates Skating Rink, the Aquarium, NASCAR Speed Park and more.

Pastor Adams shared, "Anytime a person has a heart to reach children and youth, they have the heart of Christ, and have touched the heart of Harvest Ministries. Ervin was humbled and thankful for the donations, and will use them to prepare for success in college."

Pictured above are, from left, Steve Adams, Gloria Howard and Ervin Bennett.

10.6% Increase for Fiscal Year Pension Returns in NC

Fund balance hits all-time high during 2nd quarter

NC State Treasurer Dale R. Folwell, CPA, has reported preliminary state pension fund (the Fund) returns for the second quarter of 2017 ending June 30, 2017. The

Fund, comprised of the retirement plans the Department of State Treasurer manages, reported gains of 2.7 percent for the quarter. Pension fund assets were valued at \$93.9 billion, up from \$92.2 billion at the end of the first quarter of 2017.

These figures and all of the following performance figures are reported net of all fees and expenses.

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, the preliminary report indicates the Fund earned 10.6 percent. Public equity (stocks), which makes up almost 40 percent of the total fund, gained 19.0 percent. Private equity rose 9.5 percent while Non-Core Real Estate and Opportunistic Fixed Income returned 10.8 percent and 10.9 percent respectively.

The Multi-strategy portfolio rose 12.9 percent for the twelve month period. Inflation-sensitive and Diversifier investments also increased by 11.2 percent and 8.2 percent respectively. Finally, Investment-Grade Fixed Income returned a loss 0.3 percent for the same period.

"The state pension fund achieved its highest valuation ever during the second quarter of the year," said Treasurer Folwell. "In this low interest rate environment, we are pleased our funds did so well, while at the same time, the pension fund as a whole had less exposure to risk. I want to thank those responsible for this great performance but I am cautious about returns going forward."

Since beginning his first term in January, Treasurer Folwell has aggressively set out to reduce fees paid to Wall Street. During the last fiscal year-end report, those fees exceeded \$600 million dollars while investment returns were only 0.8 percent. To date, more than \$60 million in fees have been cut for a run rate during his first term of at least \$240 million. In addition, Treasurer Folwell has renegotiated contracts across the divisions of the Department of State Treasurer that have saved taxpayers tens of millions of dollars.

See report for a full listing of asset classes at www.nctreasurer.com.

The North Carolina Retirement Systems, the formal name for the pension fund, is the tenth largest public pension fund in the country. It provides retirement benefits and savings for more than 900,000 North Carolinians, including teachers, state employees, firefighters, police officers and other public workers. For more information, visit www.nctreasurer.com.

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QUESTIONS LINGER ABOUT PUPPY'S DEATH ...A PUPPY NAMED SHAYLA

The recent killing on Tuesday, July 11th of a 4 month old shelter puppy, which was under quarantine at the Anson County Animal Shelter, has aroused a great deal of controversy. The puppy was in quarantine for biting a shelter employee. Social media, TV, and newspaper coverage has been extensive, and emotions have run high among rescuers, county officials, and the public at large. Yet despite disagreements, all surely realize that the incident should not have unfolded as it did, when one considers both the animal's life and the damage that has been done to relationships of trust and cooperation. It needs to be investigated thoroughly so that trust can be rebuilt through transparency and accountability.

The story began on Thursday, June 29th when an Anson County resident surrendered a mother dog and her four puppies to the shelter. She signed a surrender form, which turned the animals over to the county. That is the sad reality in a world where shelters are often overcrowded and underfunded, but these dogs' luck was about to change. Thanks to partnerships between the shelter and rescue groups, arrangements were made by a volunteer rescue coordinator to "pull" the Mom and her puppies for the Greater Charlotte SPCA.

Unfortunately, one of these pups, while being loaded into the crate for transfer to rescue, became frightened and bit the shelter employee. While there is some controversy about how the puppy was being handled and whether or not the bite was provoked, it is not surprising that officials reacted quickly and demanded that the puppy be returned to the shelter for rabies quarantine.

Rabies is a very rare disease, but the risk is taken very seriously because it is fatal unless rabies inoculations are administered. It is caused by a virus which attacks the nervous system, and it is transmitted by direct contact with the saliva of an infected animal which is shedding virus in the active stages of the disease. The progress of the disease in dogs and cats is very well understood. The World Health Organization, the Communicable Diseases Center (CDC) in Atlanta, and the laws of every state, including our own, accept the rule that if an animal is symptom-free ten days after biting someone it did not have active rabies at the time of the bite. That is why a ten-day quarantine period is universally accepted as a management tool. This puppy was killed on day 6 of the quarantine period which prevented the completion of the universally recommended quarantine period (why).

In this case there is some disagreement between animal shelter employees and the volunteer rescue coordinator, who observed the bite incident, as to whether the right puppy was taken for quarantine, and that needs to be investigated. One also wonders why the biting animal had been allowed to leave the shelter, and why animal control had no interest in quarantining the other members of this family of dogs if rabies was considered a real possibility.

There may have been confusion because the shelter director, who by all accounts has been doing an excellent job, has been on medical leave and her input was unavailable. How thoroughly the staff and other county officials understood the state's standard operating procedures for handling potential rabies cases is not clear. The fact is that halfway through the quarantine period it was terminated; despite showing no symptoms and under protest from the rescue groups, the puppy was killed. Her head was sent to the state lab in Raleigh for microscopic examination of her brain. The test results were negative for rabies.

Stopping the quarantine and killing the puppy was NOT in compliance with the state's required operating procedure and we really need to find out why it was done. It is true that the "nuclear option" of killing the animal and testing the brain is available in special situations. It generally is because a veterinarian examined the animal and found that it was starting to show symptoms of rabies. In that case a quick diagnosis is needed to determine whether the person bitten needs to start treatment to prevent the disease from developing. That was not the case here. No one has claimed that a veterinarian examined the puppy and there was no medical reason given for killing this puppy.

The outgoing county manager has been quoted as saying that a decision had to be made, but why at that time, and why that decision? Was it anger toward protesting rescuers and/or the former owner, who resurfaced and sought to reclaim the puppy after completion of the quarantine as the law permits? Was it for convenience? Or was it simply because they could?

Comments by a number of county officials have shown a callousness and lack of in-depth understanding of the issues involved, and that is truly disturbing. Is this because the life of a mixed-breed puppy is cheap and without value? Not the kind of attitude we want in the government officials we entrust with the care of citizens' animals.

It is time for a fresh start. It is time for a committee to take a hard look at what happened in light of accepted policy and figure out how to get things back on track. Our state has many highly qualified experts available to provide guidance.

Many North Carolina counties have found that forming a shelter or animal control advisory board is one way to connect these services with the citizens they are serving. Because, of course, this is a two-way street -- community members need more encouragement to carry out their own responsibilities, such as vaccinating and spay/neutering their own animals and not allowing them to run at large. Failure to live up to those responsibilities places a great burden on animal control and the shelter and prevents progress.

We need to communicate monthly on the anniversary of Shayla's death and keep track of our progress in finding solutions. Right now confidence and trust in Anson County officials and animal control services has been badly damaged and needs to be rebuilt.

What steps shall we take now to make this happen?

Justice for Shayla Coalition
Brother Wolf Animal Rescue
Marianna Burt, Attorney

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Please visit www.JusticeForShayla.org to learn how you can help ensure an independent, transparent investigation into this controversial and unfortunate tragedy.