

## Apiary Program Keeps Bees Buzzing

Tucked in a clearing off the side of Chatham Street in Cary, hundreds of honeybees go about their business. These bees are part of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Beneficial Insect Lab, their hives sitting in front of the lab building within a greenhouse and frame.



Apiary inspector Don Hopkins displays part of a beehive at the NCDA&CS Beneficial Insects Lab.



Using a smoker to get bees moving inside the hive.

America in 1987, the mites are now "ubiquitous" in beehives, according to Hopkins. The arthropods nest on the insects. By doing this, varroa mites can spread disease and generally "cause havoc" for bee colonies, similar to how ticks transmit disease to humans, Hopkins said.

With an influx of new beekeepers in recent years, helping spread knowledge about threats like the varroa mite has become an essential part of the apiary program.

"Every hive is going to have some level of mites, but you're not always going to be able to tell how many you have at a glance," Hopkins said. "We try to assist beekeepers in being aware of their mite levels, and help parse out recommendations for them based on those levels."

The apiary program also serves as a watchdog of sorts, tracking threats to both bees and humans and working to keep them out of North Carolina. Among those threats are Africanized bees, also known as "killer bees," which first entered the United States in the early 1990s. Those highly aggressive bees look nearly identical to regular honeybees, and it takes a trained specialist to tell the difference. Glenn Hackney, agricultural research technician, is one such specialist. It is his job to regularly examine bees to make sure that Africanized species have not entered North Carolina.

Africanized bees have shorter wingspans than regular honeybees, so Hackney checks for them by measuring the wing lengths of the bees. He does so using a projector to create a large image of the insect on a wall. Then he can measure the length of the projected bees wing and, using a scale, calculates the wings actual length.

So far, Africanized bees have not been found in North Carolina, Hopkins, outside of one incident in the state's port cities. "There was an incident more than 20 years ago where some were found on ships, one in Wilmington and one in Morehead City," he said. "Those were depopulated. Since then, we're still looking but not seeing any and hoping not to see any."

Beekeeping continues to grow in popularity, and the apiary program has resources to help both aspiring or established beekeepers thrive. For more information, including an up-to-date apiary registration form, visit [www.ncagr.gov/plantindustry/Plant/apiary](http://www.ncagr.gov/plantindustry/Plant/apiary). The closest apiary inspector is Nancy Ruppert in Star, NC, (910) 690-9555, [Nancy.Ruppert@ncagr.gov](mailto:Nancy.Ruppert@ncagr.gov).



Tom McInnis, Steve Earwood and Phil Berger

of Rockingham Dragway, was recognized on Tuesday, July 23 on the floor of the North Carolina General Assembly for his contributions to the state, Richmond County and the city of Rockingham. Senate President Pro-Tem Phil Berger and State Senator Tom McInnis presented Earwood a certificate of acknowledgement expressing appreciation and gratitude for his 27 year stewardship of the track located on U.S. Highway 1 north of Rockingham.

The 2016 recipient of the International Drag Racing Hall of Fame's Founder's Award, Earwood also is a member of both the East Coast Drag Racing Hall of Fame and the NHRA Southeast Division Hall of Fame. He is a founding member of the North Carolina Motorsports Association and has served on the Governor's Motorsports Advisory Council.

After directing NHRA's national media program for eleven seasons as Media Relations Director, Earwood was Marketing Vice-President at Billy Meyer's Texas Motorplex outside Dallas and Vice-President and General Manager of Atlanta Dragway before buying Rockingham.

Under his direction, the NHRA Winston Invitational, which was contested at the track from 1992 through 1998, became the most successful All-Star event in drag racing history, leading, in 1994, to his acceptance of the NHRA's "Man of the Year" Award in the Southeast region.

Earwood's tireless effort to keep the track viable in an ever-changing marketplace and to promote Carolina tourism also led to his acceptance, in 2010, of Richmond County's "Citizen of the Year" award.

Senator Tom McInnis said, "It was an honor to have Steve Earwood at the North Carolina General Assembly on July 23 to recognize him for his contributions to drag racing and Richmond County. Mr. Earwood is originally from Atlanta, Georgia. In 1992 he bought the Rockingham International Dragway, and for 27 years in a row he hosted at least one major drag racing championship. During Mr. Earwood's ownership of the track hundreds of millions of dollars have been brought to and invested in Richmond County and the surrounding areas. Of the 17 drag strips in North Carolina, Mr. Earwood's is the only one with 6 full time employees." The track records at the Rockingham International Dragway set by Clay Milliken."

The website for Rockingham International Dragway is [rockinghamdragway.com](http://rockinghamdragway.com). It is located at 2153 US Highway 1 North in Rockingham. They host events most weekends.

The lab is part of the department's apiary program, which is itself a part of the Plant Industry Division. The apiary program is responsible for maintaining the health of the North Carolina's honeybee population, which is no small job. The number of colonies in the state has grown "exponentially" over the last 10 years, said Don Hopkins, apiary supervision supervisor.

"There was a phenomenon around 10 years ago known as colony collapse disorder which inspired a lot of people who were not beekeepers to say, 'I want to save the bees,'" Hopkins said. "There are around 4,000 North Carolina. The bee population has really bounced back."

For the apiary program, that means there is always something to do. Apiary inspectors such as Hopkins must monitor bees being sold in North Carolina, as selling honeybees requires a permit, as well as those moved across state lines. Any bees coming or going must be certified safe by the sender and then permitted by the receiver, and the NCDA&CS apiary program handles both. This is all to prevent the spread of diseases in bee colonies, Hopkins said. It's the job the apiary program has been called to do since it was established in the 1930's.

"American Foul Brood was the main concern at the time, enough so that the state decided that it was worth it to create an apiary program," Hopkins said. "Since then, there are many more recent pests to have been added on to our mandate."

One of those recent pests is the varroa mite, a persistent problem for bee colonies and one of the causes of colony collapse disorder. Introduced in the 1980s, the mite feeds on the fat bodies in the abdomens of the generally "cause havoc" for bee colonies, similar to how ticks transmit disease to humans, Hopkins said.

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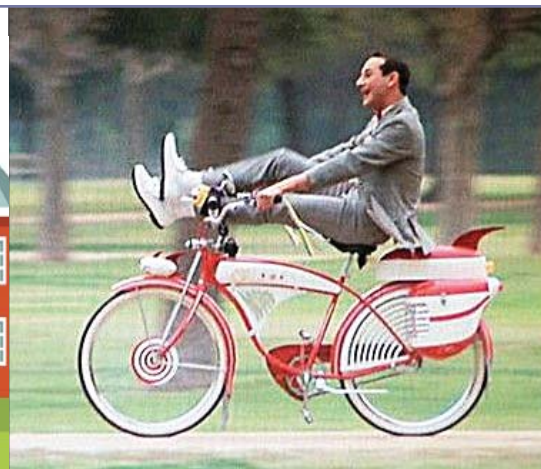
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## NC Senate Honors American Drag Racing Legend Steve Earwood of Richmond County

Steve Earwood, who in 1992 realized a lifelong dream with his purchase

of Rockingham Dragway, was recognized on Tuesday, July 23 on the floor of the



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## Harvest Ministries Offers Free Clothing and Free Groceries

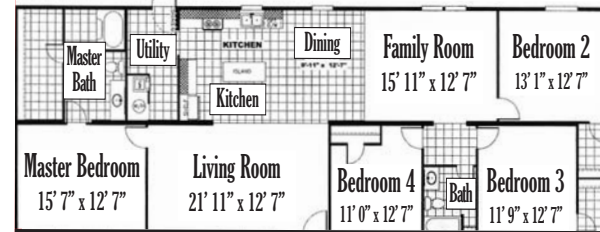
Harvest Ministries Outreach Center in Wadesboro operates two programs to benefit those people in need in LightHouse County. The Community Clothes Closet Community Food Pantry offers free groceries.

The hours of operation are 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month. No documentation is required.

Harvest Ministries is located at 1134 East Caswell Street (Highway 74) in Wadesboro, behind McDonalds. The telephone number is 704-695-2879.

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