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Anson's Jobless Rate Dropped .2% in July

Like a short-stringed yo-yo, Anson County's unemployment rate trickled downward by .2% in July - 12.5% as compared to 12.7% in June.

For the first seven months, Anson's average jobless rate was 12.485%, which included a high of 13.8% in January and a low of 11.7% in May. In July 2010 the county's rate was 13.7%, a 1.2% difference 12 months later.

Anson's July 2011 figure is the 34th consecutive month (two years, 10 months) that the jobless rate has been in double digits - dating back to October 2008 when the number stood at 10.1%.

Anson's July numbers show a workforce of 9,702 (compared to 9,691 in June); 8,491 employed (compared to 8,462 in June); and 1,211 unemployed (compared to 1,229 in June). In July 2010 Anson's figures were 9,830 (workforce), 8,480 (employed) and 1,350 (unemployed). For the period August 2010 through July 2011, a total of \$12,271,340 in unemployment benefits were paid out to unemployed Ansonians.

The July breakdown for Anson's neighboring counties:

- Montgomery - 10,374 labor force; 1,391 unemployed; a rate of 13.1% (up .5% from June and up .3% from July 2010)
- Richmond - 20,420 labor force; 2,719 unemployed; a rate of 13.3% (up .1% from June and up .2% from July 2010)
- Stanly - 29,992 labor force; 3,436 unemployed; a rate of 11.5% (up .1% from June and up .6% from July 2010)
- Union - 93,592 labor force; 8,857 unemployed; a rate of 9.5% (unchanged from June and up .2% from July 2010)

North Carolina's unadjusted July jobless rate was 10.3%, a .1% decrease from June's unadjusted rate. The state had a July labor force of 4,556,376 with 471,0322 people unemployed.

"All metropolitan areas across North Carolina experienced a loss in government employment, mainly in educational services," stated Lynn R. Holmes, Employment Security Commission chairman. "The goal of Gov. Beverly Perdue, the ESC and our workforce development partners is to grow jobs and put people back to work."

For July, 48 counties experienced a decrease in the unemployment rate, 39 counties had an increase and 13 counties remained unchanged from June's figure.

Statewide, Scotland County (17.7%) led the state with the highest jobless rate, followed by Edgecombe (16.2%), Rutherford (14.8%), Graham (14.7%) and Vance (14.7%), and Warren (14.2%). Currituck (5.2%) had the lowest unemployment rate, followed by Hyde (6.6%), Chatham (7.2%) and Orange (7.2%), Dare (7.5%) and Henderson (7.6%).

The civilian labor force estimates for all 100 counties are available on the Employment Security Commission's website at www.ncesc.com. For local information, call the ESC office at 704.694.6551 or visit www.ansonjoblink.com. Courtesy of www.ansonbiz-zine.biz

New Youth and Adult Activities for the 2011 Anson Ag Expo, Coming Sept. 23

The 2011 Anson Ag Expo & Fair will feature two new opportunities, the Creative Squash Challenge for youth and the Local Foods Bake-Off for adults. Scheduled for Friday September 23 and Saturday, September 24, plan to participate in something new and fun for everyone.

The Creative Squash Challenge is a youth competition comprised of decorating and crafting a unique creation from squash. Any squash can be used, such as zucchini, pumpkin, patty pan, even gourds. No cutting or carving is recommended, but toothpicks holding items onto the squash are allowed. Squash must be entered at the Ingram Room of the Lockhart-Taylor Center on Friday, September 23 between 7 and 8 p.m. Entries will be judged on Saturday morning at 10 a.m. and judging is open to the public. Three age groups will each receive prize money for placing first \$15, second \$10 and third \$5. Ribbons will also be awarded. Age groups are: 6 and under, 7 to 12, and 13 to 16. Entries and prizes can be picked up at 2:00 pm on Saturday. Items will be judged on artistic work, and the decision of the judges shall be final. So think of what you can create - a ballerina, a spider or a cowboy? Anything goes, so bring your creative idea and enter.

The Local Foods Bake-Off will feature entries of baked items made from local foods. At least one local food ingredient must be used. Local food items may be purchased, but must still be locally produced. Local in this event is defined as within 30 miles of Wadesboro. Baked items must be entered on Saturday, September 24 from 9 to 10 a.m. in the Ingram Room of the Lockhart-Taylor Center. Judging will take place at 11 a.m. and is open to the public. Premium money will be awarded for first \$40, second \$25 and third, \$15. Ribbons will also be provided. Only one entry per person is allowed. Judging criteria will be based on flavor, consistency, doneness, moistness, overall appearance and creativity. Baked goods and prizes can be picked up at 2 p.m. on Saturday. Examples include but are not limited to nuts, eggs, honey, butter, vegetables and fruits. Any baked item is eligible, including bread, cookies, cakes, pies, cornbread, biscuits, etc. A recipe must be submitted with the entry designating the local food ingredient. Entries should be submitted on a disposable container, such as paper plates, with the recipe printed on an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper. Recipe must list all ingredients, quantities and preparation instructions. Name, address and phone number must be printed on the back side of the page.

Guidelines for these new categories, as well as the fair, livestock show, educational exhibits and complete line-up of events are available on the Anson County Cooperative Extension website at anson.ces.ncsu.edu/.

So pull out your favorite recipe, find a local ingredient, help your young friends locate the perfect squash to decorate, and enter it to win! These new events will be different and entertaining. So will the rest of the opportunities at the 2011 Anson Ag Expo & Fair.

Come out and enjoy the fun. Celebrate agriculture in Anson!

Butterfly Count at Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge this Saturday

If you are interested in observing and identifying some of the beautiful butterflies that can be found in the North Carolina Piedmont, then you are invited to attend a Butterfly Count to inventory the numbers of species seen at the Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge. Novices to this activity are welcome to join in to help spot butterflies and learn to identify their species.

Please bring binoculars if you have them and a bag lunch. Be sure to bring insect and sun protection too.

Participants will be driving around the refuge as well as walking on the roads and fields.

If you would like to participate meet at the parking lot near the refuge office, located just off Highway 52, seven miles north of Wadesboro, at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, September 10th. The counting will last until mid-afternoon.

For more information about this event or the wildlife refuge please call 704-694-4424.

First National Bank Employees Commemorate the US Bicentennial in 1976



Many Ansonians remember the celebrations of the United States' Bicentennial in 1976. Locally there was a parade, and other events, with many people participating. Anson County even entered a float in a state-wide parade held in Raleigh.

Among the businesses commemorating the Bicentennial was First National Bank (later Southern National, then BB&T). These employees of the bank dressed in period clothing and are shown here posing in the Anson Room of the Anson County Library (now Hampton B. Allen Library). They are, from left, Doris Griggs, Sarah Livingston, Hilda Paradise, Rita James, Pat Freeman, Geraldine Gaskins and Phyllis Baker.

Health Department Announces Schedule for Flu Vaccine

In a release from the Anson County Health Department: The 2011-2012 flu season is rapidly approaching and you may be undecided about whether to get the flu shot. The New England Journal of Medicine reports that receiving your yearly flu shot is a heart-smart move. The Journal reports that the odds of having a heart attack are increased five fold in the first three days of diagnosis of influenza. Infection triggers an inflammatory response throughout the body that causes a narrowing of arteries and stresses the heart.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination before December to ensure that protective antibodies are in your system before flu activity is typically at its highest. The CDC continues to encourage vaccination throughout the flu season, which may begin as early as October and last through May.

While the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends everyone over the age of 6 months should get the flu vaccine each season, it is especially important for the following high risk groups:

1. Pregnant women
2. Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
3. People 50 years of age and older
4. People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
5. People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
6. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including: (a) Health care workers; (b) Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu; and (c) Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age.

The Anson County Health Department will begin offering flu shots (influenza vaccine) for the 2011-2012 season starting Monday, September 19th. Flu shots will be available by appointment only Monday through Thursday. The department will hold its annual Flu Vaccine Day on Friday, October 7th, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on a walk-in basis. Flu shots are free for qualifying children 6 months to 18 years old.

The cost of the vaccine is \$25, and the health department accepts Medicare-Part B, NC Medicaid, Blue Cross-Blue Shield, NC HealthChoice, Cigna Healthcare, MedCost, and Aetna insurances. The pneumonia vaccine will also be available for adults 65+ years old for \$60. If you have any questions, or to schedule your appointment, please call Anson County Health Department at 704-694-5188.

SPCC Gets Golden LEAF Grant Extension for Career Cruiser

South Piedmont Community College has been granted a one-year extension for utilizing remaining funds from a \$556,380 Golden LEAF grant awarded in 2009 to purchase and operate the Career Cruiser, a mobile classroom serving communities across Anson County. With the original grant period coming to an end, SPCC staff found they had met all the project's goals ahead of schedule with \$130,000 of the grant remaining. Those goals included serving 300 individuals on the Cruiser and certifying 100 workers Job Ready with essential workplace skills through the Career Readiness Certification (CRC) program.

"We were thrilled to get the extension because we know there is so much more that we can do," said Linda Kappauf, director of Human Resources Development at SPCC. Kappauf said those plans include working more closely with faith-based organizations and HOLLA, a grass-roots organization dedicated to improving educational opportunities, to reach out to even more Anson County adults in need of training to be certified Job Ready.

"This is a real credit to the fiscal responsibility the people working with the Career Cruiser have shown," said Stuart Wasilowski, vice president of Corporate and Continuing Education. "The extension was requested because we have met our performance goals for this outreach project while conserving enough of the money to cover an additional year of operations."

Wasilowski said the grant extension was expected to allow the college to certify 40-50 additional candidates Job Ready. He said that a study of people who had already accessed services aboard the Cruiser showed that roughly half had enrolled in additional course work at the college after they encountered Cruiser staffers Toby Carpenter and Eric Tillmon. The extension is expected to continue that trend, and introduce additional students to SPCC's college credit, continuing education and Basic Skills programs.

To learn more about the Career Cruiser, visit www.spcc.edu or call 704-290-6292.

Democratic Party 'Blue & White' Event to Honor Unsung Heroes

Everyday heroes will soon get their due when the Anson County Democratic Party hosts its annual Blue and White Celebration. The event will be held at 6 p.m. Friday, September 9th at the Lockhart-Taylor Center in Wadesboro. "It will be a celebration of Democrats' dedication and hard work toward their community service initiative throughout the year," said Vancine Sturdivant, Democratic Party chair.

One of the highlights of the program will be the recognition of special citizens who are unsung heroes in their own communities. "There are people out there making a difference in their own way, but their deeds don't always make the headlines. These are the people we will be recognizing," she said.

Under the theme "Moving Forward" the guest speaker will be Richmond County Sheriff James Clemmons. Clemmons was elected the first African-American sheriff in Richmond County last year.

"It is a privilege to have such a trailblazer to be our guest speaker as his accomplishments are a testament to progress and hope," Sturdivant said. "As sheriff, he is a prime example of an unsung hero, working diligently everyday to facilitate protection of the citizens his department serves."

Clemmons is a 27-year veteran of law enforcement. He joined the Richmond County Sheriff's Office as a deputy in October 1989. Two years later, he was promoted to sergeant and assigned to the Criminal Investigations Division. By 1997, he had earned the rank of lieutenant and shift supervisor, and a year later he was promoted to captain. In 2002, Clemmons earned the rank of major.

Clemmons said his career goal was to always become the sheriff of Richmond County, so he went back to college later in life to earn a bachelor's in criminal justice to have the necessary tools to realize his goal. He serves on various boards and organizations and is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc.

The program will also feature remarks from various officials and honored guests and a souvenir journal. The journal will highlight the guest speaker and all elected officials. In addition, it will provide a forum for candidates and personal messages of encouragement, love and support from their family and friends, as well as to promote local business and companies.

Tickets to the Blue and White Celebration are \$20 each. For more information about the journal or the event, call Vancine Sturdivant at (704) 848-4412.

Arts Council Drop-In Reception is Sunday

In a release from the Arts Council: The Anson County Arts Council invites you to meet some of our local artists at a drop-in reception on Sunday, September 11th, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. at Olde Mill Gallery in the Lockhart-Taylor Center. The Arts Council will be introducing artist Jeoung Eun Johnson to the Piedmont area. Jeoung Eun is a native of the Republic of Korea and currently resides with her husband Brian and son Erik on a small dairy farm just outside Ansonville. Erik is currently on military deployment overseas. Known as "JJ," Jeoung Eun studied art at Hong Ik University in Seoul, Korea, which is renowned for its art program. JJ's art includes watercolors, jewelry and origami.

Also featured at this month's reception is Melanie Hartung. Melanie is a resident of Wadesboro and is the daughter of watercolorist Melody Dupre. Although Melanie is a watercolorist herself, she will be sharing the art of cake decorating.

Along with JJ and Melanie, Joe Madaras will be displaying a variety of woodcrafts. Joe and his wife Hilda, also an artist, are residents of Peachland.

Please join us for art, wine and refreshments at Olde Mill Gallery on Sunday.

Compassionate Friends Meet Thursday

The Compassionate Friends, a support group for parents, siblings and grandparents who have lost a child of any age, will meet on Thursday, September 8 at 7 p.m. in the Training Room at Pee Dee Electric on Highway 52 South in Wadesboro.

For more information call 704-694-8774 or 704-475-5005.

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