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Serving Anson County and the Municipalities of Ansonville, Lilesville, McFarlan, Morven, Peachland, Polkton and Wadesboro.

## Anson County Covid-19 Update - Big Increase in Active Cases

The latest information posted by the Anson County Health Department on Tuesday, January 4 showed 4,464 total Covid-19 cases, with 322 active. There were 237 active cases reported just one day earlier, on January 3. The total deaths are 88. Just a week ago, on December 28 there were 4,234 total Covid-19 cases, with 123 active and 87. One day after that, on December 29 there were 155 cases, and on December 30 there were 179 cases.

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 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 to 11:00 a.m. and 1 to 3:30 p.m.

**Covid Testing** Free testing is available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. without an appointment. 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.

The NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) reported that statewide as of Tuesday, January 4 there were 10,276 newly reported cases (up from 4,889 new cases on December 27). There were 19,494 deaths, with 3,008 hospitalized. Vaccination rates are only creeping up, with 74% of adults in NC having one dose and 69% with two doses.

## Taking Stock of 2021 and Looking Forward to 2022

This article is courtesy of John Marek, Anson Economic Development Partnership Director: For all of us at AnsonEDP, the ongoing and ever-changing pandemic has played a significant role in the past 12 months, and likely will in the coming year as well. 2021 was a year of both concern and determination. While we have learned to adjust and change, one thing has remained constant: our commitment to improving the quality of life for the residents of Anson County.

So much has happened at AnsonEDP since last December that it would be impossible to recap it all in one email - so let me focus on three major things I believe will have a lasting impact on the Anson Economy:

**Product Development:** When Big Toys Direct acquired the former Walmart building in July, we celebrated a major win for the community, but we also lost our last marketable industrial building of more than 25,000 square feet. In fact, the day that deal closed, our active projects list decreased by nearly half because those projects were also considering that building. In today's world, a community without a viable industrial building for sale is going to have a tough time attracting jobs and investment. That's why the state funding for water/sewer improvements at Atlantic Gateway and the construction of speculative industrial buildings was so crucial to our future. While the cupboard is going to be a little bare for most of 2022, the infrastructure and spec building projects will put Anson County near the top of the list for new projects going forward.

**Entrepreneurship:** Our ongoing efforts, in cooperation with the Chamber and Uptown Wadesboro, Inc., to create a fertile environment for business startups began to show results in 2021, as a bevy of new entrepreneurial ventures opened in and around Uptown; Studio 356, Bank Shots, A&J Winery, The Restless Writer, a new clothing store, and Sable Toney Law. REV Uptown has been at the center of many of these ventures, and we are excited about how it has brought the community together and served as a launchpad for creative services in the county, and our Bootstrap and Enterprise grant programs have provided the financial boost necessary to bring ideas to life.

**Representation and Commitment:** AnsonEDP and our "parent" organization, Anson Economic Development Corporation, added some excellent new Board members in 2021, enhancing an already outstanding leadership team and extending our impact throughout the county. Our Board and staff collaborated to create a new strategic plan that will guide the organization through the next five years. Interested in what's included in that plan? A summary is on our website, [AnsonEDP.com](http://AnsonEDP.com), under the AnsonEDP tab.

I am fortunate to be here in Anson County and to work with a great Board and my colleagues at the Chamber of Commerce, Uptown Wadesboro, Inc., and the Tourism Development Authority. I hope to see them more face-to-face in the coming year and to see COVID fade as an issue in economic development.

All the best to you for a safe, healthy, and prosperous new year in 2022, *John*.

## Annual Toll Rate Increase for Triangle Expressway and Monroe Expressway January 1

The annual increase of the toll rates for the Triangle Expressway and the Monroe Expressway, took effect on Saturday, January 1, 2022. The North Carolina Turnpike Authority Board adopted schedules of incremental annual toll rate increases for both the Triangle Expressway and Monroe Expressway based on the financing requirements for each project.

For NC Quick Pass customers with a transponder traveling the full length of the Triangle Expressway the cost will increase 11 cents to \$3.71, or approximately three percent. For customers with a transponder traveling the full length of the Monroe Expressway, the cost will increase 6 cents to \$2.72, or approximately two percent.

Toll revenue is used to pay off bonds sold to fund the construction of the projects, as well as fund the overall road maintenance including repairs, mowing and winter weather preparation and response.

Drivers can get a free NC Quick Pass transponder that can be used on all toll facilities in North Carolina and saves travelers 35% compared to the bill-by-mail rate. Information is available at [www.ncquickpass.com](http://www.ncquickpass.com) or call 877-769-7277.



## Harvest Ministries, Toys for Tots Christmas Blessing Event Spread Joy to Many

On Sunday, December 19 the annual Community Christmas Blessing event was held at Harvest Ministries. Hundreds of people filled the auditorium for a day filled with Christmas spirit. Each child in attendance received two toys - some left with new televisions, Charlotte Hornets tickets...and a grand prize with a value of over \$700. During the entire day over \$1,500 of prizes and giveaways were distributed! It truly was a magical day for many children and families.

Harvest Ministries would like to thank key sponsors Commissioner Vance Sturdivant and Toys for Tots, Poisson Poisson and Bower law firm and The Express Newspaper. Also, thanks to sponsors: Leavitt Funeral Home, Smith's Funeral Home, Lady Bug Restaurant, C&M Auto, Anson High School Class of 1995 in memory of Sean Harris, Huntley Oil, and the many who gave online.

The true spirit of Christmas, and the love of Jesus Christ was on display! Pastor Steve Adams Lead Pastor of Harvest shared, "There is nothing better than seeing people come together, to show love, express love, and to be a blessing to those who are in need, especially during this current Covid situation and different things. Today is an example of what we can do as a community! Special thanks to the people of Harvest, Commissioner Vance Sturdivant, and Toys for Tots for the continued support and efforts to bless as many people as possible."



## 2021 Toys for Tots Gratitude Banquet is Saturday

Toys for Tots - Anson County will celebrate their 10th year of serving the families, churches, organizations, schools and, most importantly, the children of Anson County, this Saturday, January 8, beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the Lockhart-Taylor Center in Wadesboro.

The guest speaker for the evening will be Pastor Fred Miller of Centenary AME Zion Church in Lilesville. The DJs for the evening are Leon Gatewood and Dr. Curtis "Black Cat" Gatewood. Angel Bennett Photography will take pictures of the entire event. Anointed Kreations is doing decorations. A special dance will be performed by the Mt. Sinai Men's Inspirational Mime Team.

Ten year plaques, certificates and awards will be given. A "Special" award will be presented to The Express Newspaper, Mr. and Mrs. Allen and Melanie Lyon.

The theme for the 2021 Toys for Tots campaign was "The Joy of Giving and Sincere Love." Toys for Tots Coordinator Vance Sturdivant stated, "With all we have been through with COVID-19, the pandemic, losing so many friends and loved ones, it still made me want to give even more. Was I careful? Yes. Did the pandemic make me want to shut down, stay inside and not help our fellow brothers and sisters? No, No, No. If anything, it made me want to do more."

With Toys for Tots being the only major project supplying toys to the less fortunate in Anson County each year, the need was even greater. During the ten years of campaigns we were able to have our first "Senior Citizens Prom," the Toys for Tots Motorcycle ride sponsored by Playaz Elite Motorcycle Club, and the "Father-Daughter Dance."

Sturdivant continued, "We thank Walmart for their partnership and all the support given during the campaigns. Special recognition will be given to all the contributors, sponsors and volunteers. We give special thanks to Harvest Ministries Outreach Center, Apostle Tim Adams and Pastor Steve Adams, who graciously open their doors each year and allow me to operate Toys for Tots from their facility for 4 to 5 months. For this I am truly thankful."

"Without each of them, the campaign would have never been such a success," Coordinator Sturdivant stated. "It truly brings joy to our hearts to be able to supply toys for so many less fortunate kids."

Toys for Tots have already begun strategizing for the 2022 campaign. PlayazElite Motorcycle Club President William "Bugga" Sturdivant stated, "We are going to have our annual Motorcycle Ride at "Gumby's in Lilesville this year. With the support of our Executive Board and the great leaders and citizens of this fine county, we will have a successful campaign."

Vance Sturdivant concluded, "To ALL our supporters, We truly Thank God for you."

## Anson County's Unemployment Rate 4.7% in November

**Anson County** Anson County's unemployment rate for November was 4.7%, down from October's 5.2% rate. Here are other 2021 rates: September 4.9%; August 5.8%; July 5.9%; June 6.1%; May 5.5%; April 5.4%; March 5.9%; February 7.5%; January 7.7%. The 2020 rates were: December 7.1%; November 7.2%; October 7.2%; September 8.5%; August 8%; July 10%; June 7.9%; May 10.1%; and April 8.2%. In March 2020 the unemployment rate in Anson County was 4.9%, just before the pandemic.

**Statewide** Statewide the unemployment rate for November was 3.4%. In October 3.6%. Here are other 2021 rates: September 3.8%; August 4.4%; July 4.6%; June 4.9%; May 4.5%; April 4.4%; March 4.6%; February 5.6%; January and December 2020 6%. Other 2020 rates: November and October 6.1%; September 7%; August 6.8%; July 8.9%.

Anson's total labor force in November was 10,513. Of that number 10,024 were employed and 489 were unemployed. In October the total labor force was 10,554, with 10,002 employed and 552 unemployed.

Unemployment rates (not seasonally adjusted) decreased in 97 of North Carolina's counties in November and increased in three. Scotland County had the highest unemployment rate at 7.0 percent while Orange County had the lowest at 2.4 percent.

All fifteen of the state's metro areas experienced rate decreases. Among the metro areas, Rocky Mount had the highest rate at 5.2 percent while Durham-Chapel Hill had the lowest at 2.7 percent. The November not seasonally adjusted statewide rate was 3.4%.

When compared to the same month last year, not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates decreased in all 100 counties. All 15 of the state's metro areas experienced rate decreases over the year.

The number of workers employed statewide (not seasonally adjusted) increased in November by 12,364 to 4,896,622, while those unemployed decreased by 15,601 to 170,606. Since November 2020, the number of workers employed statewide increased 173,360, while those unemployed decreased 144,592.

## Addiction Recovery Support Group Meets Online on Wednesdays

The Virtual Addiction Recovery Support Group has resumed meetings, and they are now conducted online. The meetings are available to anyone who is interested each Wednesday, from 5 to 6 p.m.

For information on how to participate contact Kelly Kirk, NC Certified Peer Support Specialist, Registered Certified Alcohol & Drug Counselor, Certified Recovery Coach at the Richmond County DHHS Peer Support Program. Her office number is 910-997-8424, email is [Kelly.kirk@richmondnc.com](mailto:Kelly.kirk@richmondnc.com).

## Wadesboro AA Meeting Schedule

- Monday Anson Group meets 7 to 8 p.m.
- Wednesday Harmony Group meets 12 to 1 p.m.

Anyone who thinks they may have a problem with drugs or alcohol, AA wants to help.

The Alcoholics Anonymous building is located at 2177 Country Club Road in Wadesboro, across from the EMS building. For more information call 704-294-4468.

## Recruiting Volunteers for Meals on Wheels

Gracing Senior Center is recruiting volunteers to help with their Meals on Wheels by delivering meals. If you are interested in helping Anson County's shut-in and elderly citizens with this important program, please contact Cynthia Miles at 704-694-6616.