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Veterans, Coffee and Camaraderie Brewing in Wadesboro

Anson County Veterans Coffee House launches March 18

Fresh coffee. Sweet donuts. Strong stories. Beginning March 18, South Piedmont Community College will open its doors to something simple - yet powerful - for local veterans: a place to gather, connect and spend time with others who understand the veteran experience.

The Anson County Veterans Coffee House will debut Wednesday, March 18, from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Lockhart-Taylor Center, 514 North Washington Street in Wadesboro. Additional gatherings are scheduled for April 15 and May 20, with future dates possible based on attendance and interest.

For years SPCC has hosted the Union County Veterans Coffee House, an event that regularly draws dozens of former servicemembers together for fellowship, information-sharing and connection. Now, that same spirit of camaraderie is coming to Anson County. "The whole premise is to get veterans together with other veterans," said organizer Al Johnstone, who served in the Air Force. "A lot of people say, 'thank you for your service,' but not many people really understand the veteran's psyche. Veterans will open up with other veterans. We like to say this is a chance for coffee, camaraderie and donuts. It's a simple gathering of people who have something special in common, nothing fancy, but to those who attend, it's a meaningful way to spend a morning."

The format will be relaxed and welcoming. Veterans can enjoy coffee and a light breakfast, share stories and occasionally hear from guest speakers on topics of interest to former servicemembers. No speeches required. No uniforms necessary. Just conversation, connection and community.

As it has done in Union County, South Piedmont Community College is providing the meeting space at no charge - a gesture of appreciation for those who have served. "It is a privilege to provide a welcoming space where our veterans can come together, share their stories and support one another," said South Piedmont Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services and CFO Michelle Brock. "They have given so much in service to our country, and opening our doors to them is a small but meaningful way to show our gratitude and respect."

Organizers hope the Anson County Veterans Coffee House becomes a regular fixture on local calendars. If attendance is strong in March, April and May, additional dates may be added. Veterans interested in attending or learning more may contact Johnstone at ajohnwux50@gmail.com.

Energy Policy Task Force Releases Interim Report

Panel outlines steps to keep power affordable and reliable

Governor Josh Stein's Energy Policy Task Force has released an interim report outlining recommendations to ensure North Carolina maintains affordable, reliable and clean energy as demand continues to rise.

The 30-member panel, created in August 2025 and co-chaired by Department of Environmental Quality Secretary Reid Wilson and Representative Kyle Hall, has been studying how to address growing electricity needs driven by population growth, advanced manufacturing and expanding data centers.

According to Duke Energy's 2025 forecast, electricity demand could increase between 16 percent and nearly 60 percent by 2040. Residential power bills have already risen nearly 30 percent since 2017, largely due to higher natural gas costs.

Among the recommendations are developing large-load tariffs to ensure major users cover associated costs, encouraging energy efficiency and load flexibility, reviewing grid interconnection processes and evaluating incentives and forecasting methods.

The task force will continue refining its proposals, with a final report expected in February 2027. The interim report is available at governor.nc.gov/NCEPTF.

Film, Television Productions Generate \$185.5 Million in NC

Film and television production activity in North Carolina generated an estimated \$185.5 million in direct in-state spending in 2025, marking one of the strongest years on record for the state's entertainment industry. The total ranks as the fourth-highest year-end figure since the current version of the North Carolina Film and Entertainment Grant program launched in 2015.

The \$185,521,578 in estimated spending reflects investment across 38 productions filmed in nearly half of North Carolina's 100 counties — 45 counties from the mountains to the coast. Activity included feature films, streaming and television series, reality programming, national commercials and independent projects.

More than 7,000 job opportunities were created for crew members, actors and background extras. Eleven projects that were pre-approved for rebates under the state's film grant program had production-related activity in 2025, generating more than \$179 million of the total in direct in-state spending.

"Film production is important to North Carolina, generating economic activity and supporting more than 7,000 jobs across the state last year," said Governor Josh Stein. "Producers know when they choose North Carolina, they'll find a supportive environment with an experienced workforce that understands and meets their needs."

Among the notable television and streaming projects filmed in 2025 were "Beast Games" Season 2 in the Northeast and Southeast Prosperity Zones; "Top Chef" Season 23 and Season 2 of "Blue Ridge: The Series" in the Southwest region; the pilot and first season work on "RJ Decker" in the Southeast; and Season 2 of "The Hunting Wives," which began filming in the Southwest.

Feature-length films shot across the state included "Bad Counselors" in the Southwest region; "Driver's Ed" in the Southeast and South Central regions; "May and the Woodsman" in the Northwest; "The Bard" and "Widow" in the Piedmont Triad region. National commercials and brand campaigns for companies such as AutoZone, Food Lion and Mack Trucks also chose North Carolina locations, taking advantage of the state's diverse scenery.

Local projects contributed to the momentum as well, including feature films "Long Drive to Yadkin," "Pretty Ugly," "A Good Fight," and "Venus: The Fibonacci Sequence," along with portions of the series "Military Makeover with Montel."

Production activity supports more than cast and crew. From small towns to major urban centers, projects drive business for hotels, restaurants, caterers, construction firms, transportation providers and countless other small businesses.

"Film and entertainment projects not only bring good jobs for the state's production workers but also generate customers for North Carolina small businesses," said NC Commerce Secretary Lee Lilley. "Many of the goods and services that keep these productions humming are provided by the small businesses that are the lifeblood of our state's economy."

Several productions filmed in prior years premiered in 2025, including television and streaming series "The Waterfront," "The Runarounds," Season 3 of "The Summer I Turned Pretty," and Season 1 of "The Hunting Wives." Feature films released in 2025 that were shot in North Carolina included "Roofman," "Christy," "Merv," and the critically acclaimed "A Little Prayer."

Looking ahead, multiple projects are already in production in 2026, including continued work on "RJ Decker" and Season 2 of "The Hunting Wives," as well as the recently awarded made-for-television movie "A Grand Biltmore Christmas," filmed under the title "Sweet Carolina Holiday."

"North Carolina's film and television industry has evolved into a dynamic, year-round economic driver," said Guy Gaster, director of the North Carolina Film Office. "Our incentive program, combined with a skilled local workforce and unmatched geographic diversity, continues to attract productions that deliver jobs and investment statewide."

The North Carolina Film and Entertainment Grant program provides rebates to qualifying feature-length film and television or streaming productions after they meet direct in-state spending requirements and successfully complete an audit. The program is administered by the North Carolina Department of Commerce and promoted by the North Carolina Film Office, part of Visit NC and the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina. For more information, visit filmmc.com.



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EARLY VOTING HOURS

FOR MARCH 3, 2026 PRIMARY ELECTION

Thursday, February 12	8:00am - 7:30pm
Friday, February 13	8:00am - 7:30pm
Saturday, February 14	8:00am - 3:00pm
Sunday, February 15	Closed
Monday, February 16	8:00am - 7:30pm
Tuesday, February 17	8:00am - 7:30pm
Wednesday, February 18	8:00am - 7:30pm
Thursday, February 19	8:00am - 7:30pm
Friday, February 20	8:00am - 7:30pm
Saturday, February 21	8:00am - 3:00pm
Sunday, February 22	12:00pm - 6:00pm
Monday, February 23	8:00am - 7:30pm
Tuesday, February 24	8:00am - 7:30pm
Wednesday, February 25	8:00am - 7:30pm
Thursday, February 26	8:00am - 7:30pm
Friday, February 27	8:00am - 7:30pm
Saturday, February 28	8:00am - 3:00pm

EARLY VOTING AT THE ANSON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

402 MORVEN ROAD IN WADESBORO 704-994-3223

**RE-ELECT
MARILYNN BENNETT
School Board Member at Large**

"...Committed to ideals and principles of education that promote sustained learning and growth for all children in Anson County Schools."

Advocate for Teachers and Students
Former Principal of Morven Elementary School
Former Assistant Principal and English Teacher of Anson High School & Anson Jr. High School



Paid for by the Committee to Elect Marilynn Bennett

ELECTION DAY IS TUESDAY, MARCH 3

POLLS ARE OPEN 6:30AM - 7:30PM

VOTE AT YOUR NORMAL VOTING PRECINCT