

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #149
Wadesboro, NC
28170

Postal
Customer

THE EXPRESS

205 West Morgan Street • Wadesboro, NC 28170 • 704-694-2480 • TheExpressNews@gmail.com • www.TheExpressNewspaper.com

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

Health Dept. Expands Screening Program for Uninsured Residents

More residents now eligible for lifesaving Pap Smear & HPV screenings

The Anson County Health Department has expanded a key health program, increasing the number of uninsured residents who can receive important women's health screenings through a grant-funded initiative. Health Director Brian Ellerby announced the update, noting that additional funds have been approved to significantly broaden access.

Originally designed to serve 50 individuals, the program will now provide Pap Smear and HPV screening services to 103 uninsured residents in Anson County. The grant, provided by the James R. Braswell and Bronnie L. Braswell Trust, also supports colposcopy services for 17 uninsured residents who need further evaluation following abnormal results.

Ellerby emphasized the importance of spreading the word so eligible residents can take advantage of the expanded opportunity. These screenings play a critical role in detecting cervical cancer early, when it is most treatable, and in identifying potential health concerns before they become more serious.

Patients needing a colposcopy must have a referral from their physician, including a current history and physical, as well as prior Pap test results if available. Those scheduling a Pap Smear or HPV screening will be seen through the Health Department's Well Women or Family Planning programs. While the screenings themselves are covered through the grant, patients may still be responsible for other associated services, such as physical exams.

Health officials note that regular screenings are vital. Medical guidance recommends routine Pap tests, as they can identify cervical cancer early - often before symptoms appear - when treatment is most effective.

Residents interested in scheduling an appointment or learning more are encouraged to contact the Anson County Health Department at 704-694-5188 and ask to speak with Lori Ross, Nursing Director.

With expanded funding now in place, local health leaders hope more residents will take advantage of these services and prioritize preventive care, strengthening the overall health of the community.

The Health Department is located at 110 East Ashe Street in Wadesboro.

Free Tax Assistance April 1

AARP volunteers help make tax season less taxing for Anson County residents

Free income tax assistance will once again be available at Grace Senior Center for Anson County residents age 60 and older, those with disabilities, or individuals of low- or moderate-income who need help preparing their income tax returns. The program is sponsored by AARP and Grace Senior Center and is designed to turn tax-time headaches into sighs of relief.

Volunteer counselors, trained in cooperation with the Internal Revenue Service (yes, they speak fluent "tax"), will be available at Grace Senior Center on Wednesday, April 1, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Free assistance will be provided for Forms 1040EZ, 1040A, 1040, and the North Carolina return.

Participants are asked to bring a picture ID, this year's tax package, age and earnings statements (W-2 forms), interest statements from banks (1099-INT forms), a copy of last year's tax return, and any other relevant income or expense information. In other words, bring the paperwork - and let the volunteers handle the math.

All individuals with appointments must pick up a tax package at Grace Senior Center prior to their scheduled time and bring the completed package with them to the appointment. Electronic filing of returns will be available, meaning no stamps, no envelopes, and no wondering if your return fell behind the refrigerator.

Appointments are required. To schedule a time or to learn more about this free and helpful service, call Grace Senior Center at (704) 694-6616.

Lilesville Plans Easter Egg Hunt at Hatcher Park

Family fun, food trucks & a visit from the Easter Bunny

The Town of Lilesville is inviting families to hop on over to Hatcher Park for its annual Easter Egg Hunt, set for Tuesday, March 31 at 6:00 p.m. The event is open to children ages 0-12 and promises an evening full of springtime fun and community spirit.

Young participants can look forward to searching for colorful eggs scattered throughout the park, while also enjoying a special visit with the Easter Bunny. Photo ops and themed props will be available, giving families a chance to capture a few memorable moments - possibly including that classic "smile through the excitement" pose.

The fun will start even earlier for those arriving hungry, as food trucks will be on site from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., offering a variety of options for families to enjoy before or after the hunt.

Organizers encourage residents to bring the whole family out for an evening designed to celebrate the season and bring the community together in a relaxed, festive setting.

For more information about the event, contact Jamie Varela at 321-202-3465.

Library to Host Classic Movie Showing

The Hampton B. Allen Library will host a special movie time featuring the musical comedy *Frankie and Johnny* on Monday, March 30, at 10:00 a.m. The showing will take place in the library's Pritchett Room. It's free and is open to the public.

Released in 1966, *Frankie and Johnny* stars Elvis Presley as a riverboat entertainer who becomes involved in romance, comedy and a little bit of trouble along the way. The film blends music, humor and colorful characters as the story unfolds along the lively Mississippi riverboat scene.

The movie features several musical performances by Presley and is known for its lighthearted tone, catchy songs and classic 1960s style.

Everyone is invited to attend and enjoy this movie.



Pictured left to right are Whitney Dunlap, Hannah Dunlap, Leslie Smith, Ashley Cole, Tasha Coleman, Carrissima Martin, Betty Garris, William Terry and Debra Ratliff.

Anson County 4-H Celebrates Youth Achievements at 2026 Achievement Night

Honoring accomplishments, leadership and years of service

Anson 4-H recently celebrated the accomplishments of youth members and volunteers during the 2026 4-H Achievement Night, highlighting success in project records, presentations, competitions and community service. The evening served as a reminder that hard work, creativity and a little bit of determination can go a long way - especially when backed by a strong community.

Several youths were recognized for their project record achievements. Zaire Smith-Maxwell earned County Gold awards in Healthy Lifestyles (Cooking) and Family and Consumer Sciences (Entrepreneurship). Zoe Martin received a gold award in the Science and Technology portfolio and later placed third at the state level, while Andrew Martin also earned Gold in the same category and advanced for state consideration. Zoe Martin also earned top honors in the Health and Fitness presentation category, later receiving Gold at the district level and Bronze at the state level. Cloverbud members Kenleigh Cole and Trenton Cole were recognized for their participation in youth presentations, proving that even the youngest members are already making their mark.

Youth also showcased their talents through the Creative Talent and Favorite Foods competitions, with participants such as Zoe Martin, Zaire Smith-Maxwell, Ethene Duncan, Laia Smith-Maxwell, Trenton Cole, Chase Cole and Andrew Martin earning top placements in categories including art, crafts, photography, writing and cooking. Teen Summer Camp volunteers Ethan Dillon and Zoe Martin were recognized for their leadership, and graduating seniors Ethan Dillon and Jahzaria Underwood were honored for their years of involvement in 4-H—likely leaving behind some pretty big shoes to fill.

Adult volunteers were also recognized for their dedication to the program. Whitney Dunlap, Tracy Harrington and Roshunda Terry were acknowledged for supporting summer camp and youth programming. Years of service awards were presented to Ashley Cole (7 years), Leslie Smith (10 years), William Terry (15 years), Carrissima Martin (16 years), Debra Ratliff (20 years), Hannah Dunlap (20 years), Kim Bennett (34 years) and Betty Garris, who was recognized for an incredible 43 years of service—long enough to see generations of 4-H'ers come full circle.

The Busy Bees and Eager Beavers 4-H Clubs received charter seals for meeting program requirements, and the evening concluded with the installation of the 4-H Volunteer Leaders Association officers. Betty Garris will serve as President, Leslie Smith as Vice President, Carrissima Martin as Secretary and Hannah Dunlap as Treasurer.

The event was a joyful celebration of youth achievement, volunteer leadership and the strong community support that continues to make Anson County 4-H thrive.



Pictured left to right are Zoe Martin, Ethan Dillon, Jahzaria Underwood, Kenleigh Cole, Laia Smith-Maxwell and Zaire Smith-Maxwell.

Suspect Leads Deputies on Unusual Highway Chase in Stolen Side-by-Side

Ride meant for trails takes detour onto major roads

A stolen side-by-side and a questionable sense of direction by the alleged crook led to a brief but memorable pursuit in Anson County, ending in custody for the suspect who clearly did not have a well thought out getaway plan.

On Sunday, March 22 deputies with the Anson County Sheriff's Office responded to the Pecolia Dixon Leak Lane area in the Pee Dee community regarding the larceny of a side-by-side. While gathering information from the victim, deputies observed the stolen vehicle approaching their location - an unexpected drive-by on the investigation itself.

Deputies attempted to flag the driver down, but when the driver failed to stop, they initiated a traffic stop. The driver instead chose to continue on, leading deputies on a pursuit that stretched from Highway 145 onto Highway 74.

The pursuit came to an end near the Anson-Richmond County line at the Pee Dee River Bridge, where deputies successfully brought the vehicle to a stop. The driver then exited the side-by-side and fled on foot into a wooded area, perhaps realizing at that point that his whole plan wasn't going particularly well. Deputies pursued and quickly took the suspect into custody.

Authorities identified the suspect as Michael Jon Shepard, 34, of Rockingham. The side-by-side was returned to its owner with minimal damage, despite its brief use as a highway-speed vehicle.

Shepard was transported to Atrium Health Anson for medical treatment before being released into custody at the Anson County Detention Center.

He faces multiple charges, including larceny of a motor vehicle, possession of a stolen motor vehicle, felony fleeing to elude arrest, two counts of second-degree trespassing and damage to property.

Shepard is being held under a \$150,000 secured bond. His first court appearance is scheduled for March 30, 2026.



Michael Shepard

Wadesboro Police Conduct Checkpoint as Part of "Booze It or Lose It" Campaign

The Wadesboro Police Department conducted a driver's license checkpoint Saturday night into early Sunday morning as part of the North Carolina Governor's Highway Safety Program "Booze It or Lose It" campaign, along with its ongoing efforts to promote roadway safety throughout the community.

During the operation, officers issued a total of 61 citations, made one arrest and charged two individuals with Driving While Impaired. A total of 15 officers participated in the checkpoint, working to identify violations and keep impaired drivers off local roads.

The department expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by partnering agencies, including the Anson County Sheriff's Office, Lilesville Police Department and the North Carolina Highway Patrol. Officials noted that coordinated efforts such as these help strengthen public safety and enhance enforcement capabilities across the county.

The Wadesboro Police Department stated it remains committed to ensuring the safety of both residents and visitors, emphasizing that continued enforcement and community partnerships are key to maintaining safer roadways.

Spring Clean Community Yard Sale Set for Saturday at the Library

Ready to declutter, discover treasures and support a great cause all at once? The Friends of the Hampton B. Allen Library are inviting the community to take part in a lively Spring Clean Community Yard Sale this Saturday, March 28, from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m.

The event will be held at the Hampton B. Allen Library, located at 120 South Greene Street in Wadesboro, and promises a day full of bargains, browsing, and neighborly fellowship. Shoppers can expect everything from household goods and décor to handmade items and unique finds - all while supporting local efforts.

Yard sale vendors, small businesses and community support stations are all welcome to participate. It's a perfect opportunity to clear out closets, showcase products or connect with the community in a fun, high-traffic setting.

Spaces are available now, but they won't last long. Call 704-694-5177 or email circleft@gmail.com to reserve your spot. Whether you're selling, shopping or simply stopping by to say hello, this springtime event is a wonderful way to refresh your home and celebrate community spirit.