

THE EXPRESS

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



New Anson Business Part of Statewide \$41 Million Rural Investment

Anson County is taking center stage in a new round of rural development funding announced by Governor Josh Stein, as part of a broader \$41 million investment expected to create jobs and boost local economies across North Carolina.

Through the state's Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA), seven grants totaling \$1,657,500 were approved for communities statewide, helping drive an estimated \$41 million in combined public and private investment and the creation of 189 new jobs.

In Anson County, a \$225,000 grant will support the reuse of a 29,000-square-foot building in Wadesboro for Hinson & Hale Medical Technologies, Inc., a manufacturer of medical supplies including surgical drapes, isolation gowns, sterilization wraps and procedure packs for hospital systems, group purchasing organizations, and the U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense. The project is expected to create 59 new full-time jobs over the next two years, with total employment reaching 96 full-time positions within five years, and represents an investment of \$1,403,214, according to the RIA. The building is located at 493 Anson Apparel Shirt Road in Wadesboro.

Hinson & Hale Medical Technologies has been awarded a five-year local incentive through the Anson County Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP), supporting its investment and job creation commitments.

William "Bill" G. Christian, CEO and President of Hinson & Hale Medical Technologies, emphasized the company's commitment to both the region and its mission: "I am honored to share this announcement with our community and the State of North Carolina. Project Pima - our initiative to reestablish textile manufacturing in Anson County - will bring approximately 59 jobs to Wadesboro by the end of 2028, and it would not have been possible without the extraordinary support of so many dedicated individuals and institutions.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to Governor Josh Stein for his steadfast support of Project Pima. His commitment to rural economic development in North Carolina set the tone for everything that followed, and we are deeply grateful for his leadership.

To Anson County Government - thank you for your responsiveness, your civic pride, and your willingness to work alongside us. Your local leadership is exactly the kind that makes economic development possible, and we look forward to a long and productive relationship. Our initial product line - surgical towels, surgical wrappers, and reusable medical apparel including surgical gowns and scrubs - is built on the belief that quality American-made textiles, designed to be laundered and reused, can reduce costs for healthcare systems while reducing waste. We are excited to bring that mission to life right here in Wadesboro.

To all who played a role in bringing Project Pima to this moment: thank you. Anson County is ready, and so are we."

"Investing in rural infrastructure unlocks opportunity," Stein said. "When we strengthen rural North Carolina, we empower local economies, connect people to critical services and ensure everyone has a fair shot at success."

Additional projects receiving funding are located in Henderson, Rockingham, Cherokee, Gaston, Robeson and Stanly counties, reflecting a statewide effort to support business growth, building reuse and job creation in both small towns and larger rural areas.

The grants are part of the state's Building Reuse Program, which helps local governments renovate vacant buildings, expand existing facilities and prepare sites for new economic opportunities. The program is administered through the rural economic development team at the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

State officials say these investments are designed to strengthen long-term economic competitiveness, particularly in rural areas where infrastructure improvements can play a key role in attracting and retaining jobs.

For Anson County, the funding represents both immediate job creation and continued momentum in revitalizing existing spaces - turning underused buildings into engines for future growth.

For more information, visit www.commerce.nc.gov.

Class of 1971 Reunion Meeting

The Bowman High School Class of 1971 will meet this Saturday, April 25 at 2:30 p.m. at the Myrtlewood Apartment Complex in Wadesboro to make plans for the upcoming class reunion.

All class members are invited to attend.

PPES Celebrates Terrific Kids for Third Nine Weeks

Peachland-Polkton Elementary School recognized dozens of students for their character and positive behavior during its Terrific Kids Celebration for the third nine weeks, held Tuesday, April 21.

The event honored students who consistently demonstrated good character, responsibility and respect - qualities that school leaders say help create a strong and supportive learning environment.

Those recognized included (from left):

- Front row: Jonah White, Janiah Hardin, Ruby Shaver, Layla Lowery, Ella Carpenter, Vienne Nguyen, Austyn Sutton, Raelynn Lotharp, James Laws, Richard Jolly, Karson Williams and Laiken Hargett.
- Second row: Walt Shaver, Jayden Colean, Daleyza Valdez, Zakiyra Borden, Liam Ronquest, Rhyann Williams, Izabella Honeycutt, Gracie Harding, Brooklyn Mowry, Journee Watts, Nic Little and Aubrey Gullledge.
- Third row: Miracle Riley, Jayden Botello, Parys McLendon, Kyndal Medley, Terriah Robinson, Stephen Miller, Kaiden Johnson, Jacob Quintanilla, Austin Sheppard, Kingston Dumas, Bayla Funderburke and Emily Morales.
- Fourth row: Jamaad Sturdivant, Axel Ramos, Logan Parnell, Corbin Davis, Ozariah Burns, Trinita Rose, Colton Harding, Savannah Stelling, Brandon Stansberry, Taylin Allen, Zaveion Marsh and Nealie Alexander.

Students not pictured include Bernardo Rodriguez, Yamileth Flores, Isaac Reyes, Messiah Brown, Amara Dutton, Amaya Dutton, Lydia Dutton and Malia Mason.

School officials said they are proud of each student recognized and applauded their efforts to set a positive example for their peers.

Farmers Market Opens this Saturday with Fresh Finds and Festive Flair

The wait is over - and it's almost time to swap grocery store aisles for open-air smiles. The Anson County Farmers Market returns for the season this Saturday, April 25, bringing with it a colorful mix of fresh flavors, friendly faces and just enough temptation to make you buy more tomatoes than you planned.

The market will be open every Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to noon through September 26 at 1736 US-52 South in Wadesboro (just past Wadesboro Primary School), offering a one-stop shop for all things local and delicious.

Shoppers can expect a wide variety of farm-fresh produce, meats and eggs, along with honey, herbs and spices, canned goods and baked treats that may or may not make it all the way home. Local artisans will also be on hand with handmade items including jewelry, soaps, candles and textiles - perfect for gifts or a little something for yourself.

Opening day comes with a bonus: a special plant sale featuring seedlings and starter plants for vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers. Whether you've got a green thumb or just good intentions, it's a great chance to kick off your own backyard garden.

And because no good market morning should be done on an empty stomach, food trucks will be on site to keep everyone fueled while they browse, shop and catch up with neighbors.

For more information about the market or how to become a vendor, contact Liesl Hall at 704-238-7104 or ansonfarmersmarket@yahoo.com, or reach out through the Anson County Farmers Market Facebook page or Instagram @ansoncountyfarmersmarket.

SPCC Literacy Program Breaks Record

If reading, writing and a whole lot of goodwill had a scoreboard, South Piedmont Community College just posted a personal best. The college's Literacy Services program is celebrating its most successful month since launching in January 2022, with March numbers that show both strong community support and meaningful impact.

A team of 20 volunteer tutors logged more than 182 hours of service, working one-on-one with 33 adult students looking to sharpen their reading, writing and comprehension skills. That's a lot of pages turned, pencils sharpened and "aha" moments along the way.

Those volunteer hours also carry real economic value. Based on benchmarks from the Independent Sector, the time donated in March is estimated at \$6,007.82 — the highest total the program has recorded to date.

"Our volunteers are the heartbeat of this program," said Director of Literacy Services Dr. R. J. Lightsey. "Reaching this record-breaking milestone isn't just about the hours on a spreadsheet; it's about 33 lives being changed through the power of literacy. The fact that we have reached our highest level of service since inception shows the incredible commitment our community has toward helping their neighbors succeed."

The Literacy Services program was created to provide free, high-quality tutoring to residents of Union and Anson counties. By pairing volunteers with students, the program builds a supportive learning environment where adults can gain confidence, strengthen skills and open doors to new opportunities — whether that means advancing in the workplace or simply tackling everyday tasks with greater ease.

Since its founding in January 2022, the program has continued to grow through the dedication of its volunteers, proving that sometimes the most powerful investment a community can make is time.

For more information or to become a volunteer, visit spcc.edu/programs/literacy-services.

Andre the Giant to Be Honored with NC Highway Historical Marker

A larger-than-life figure in every sense of the phrase will soon receive a lasting tribute in North Carolina, as Andre the Giant is honored with a state Highway Historical Marker. The marker, part of the North Carolina Historical Marker Program, will be dedicated Thursday, April 23 at 4:30 p.m. at the intersection of N.C. 73 and Old N.C. 220 in Ellerbe.

Born André René Roussimoff in rural France in 1946, the man who would become known worldwide as Andre the Giant grew up with acromegaly, a condition that caused his body to continue growing. By his teenage years, he already stood 6-foot-7 - and he wasn't done yet.

His remarkable size and presence eventually caught the attention of French-Canadian wrestler Édouard Carpentier, who encouraged him to come to North America. From there, Andre's career took off, filling arenas and captivating audiences as one of professional wrestling's most recognizable stars. His fame extended beyond the ring, including a memorable role as Fezzik in the beloved film *The Princess Bride* - proof that even giants can have perfect comedic timing.

Andre's connection to North Carolina began through his wrestling travels in the 1970s, when he frequently performed across the state. Somewhere between the bright lights and packed arenas, he found something he appreciated even more - the quieter pace of life.

In 1978, he purchased land near Ellerbe in Richmond County, eventually expanding it into a 194-acre ranch along Big Mountain Creek. While he remained an international celebrity, locally he was known simply as a neighbor - one who enjoyed the countryside, valued privacy and occasionally lent his considerable presence to community causes, including opposition to a proposed radioactive waste site.

Residents came to know him not just as a global star, but as a thoughtful and down-to-earth individual - a "Gentle Giant" who traded the roar of the crowd for the calm of rural living.

Today, his legacy lives on both in wrestling history and in the community he called home. The Rankin Museum in Ellerbe preserves that legacy with a permanent exhibit featuring memorabilia from his life, including personal items that offer a glimpse into the man behind the legend.

Andre the Giant died January 28, 1993, while in France to attend his father's funeral. In accordance with his wishes, his ashes were returned to his North Carolina ranch - a final homecoming for a man who traveled the world but found his place in Richmond County.

For more information about the historical marker, call (919) 814-6625 or visit www.dncr.nc.gov.