

You Are Invited to the Special Olympics

Anson County Spring Games on Tuesday, April 29

Special Olympics Anson County is excited to host its Spring Games with limited participation on Tuesday, April 29 at Anson High School. In the event of rain, the Games will be held on Thursday, May 1.

You are invited to "Be a Fan in the Stands" welcoming the Special Olympians as they come onto the field. Just an hour of your enthusiasm would be very much appreciated. Opening Ceremonies are at 9 a.m. and Track and Field events start immediately after.

In addition to staff and athletes, only registered volunteers will be allowed on the field. **Volunteers Needed** If you are interested in becoming a volunteer to assist setting up the field with signs, tables, chairs and tents, or serve at the registration/informational tables, please contact Sylvia Tillman at (704) 690-0602.

Each athlete will have an assigned student buddy throughout the day.

In advance, thank you for your support of our Special Olympians.

Flat Rock Church Cemetery Now Has a Maintenance Fund

There is now a Cemetery Fund set up through Truist Bank to keep and maintain the Flat Rock Church Cemetery. Every Truist location will be capable of accepting a donation. Please obtain a receipt for your records.

Donations are gratefully accepted for ancestors' final resting place.

For further details please contact Deaconess Chris Clemons Polk at fcford1954@aol.com.

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ESTHETIC PROCEDURES

North Carolina's March Employment Figures

The state's seasonally adjusted March 2025 unemployment rate was 3.7%, unchanged from February's revised rate. The national rate increased 0.1 of a percentage point to 4.2 percent.

North Carolina's unemployment rate increased 0.2 of a percentage point from a year ago. The number of people employed decreased 574 over the month to 5,098,097 and increased 1,627 over the year. The number of people unemployed decreased 350 over the month to 195,233 and increased 8,235 over the year.

Seasonally adjusted Total Nonfarm employment, as gathered through the monthly establishment survey, increased 8,300 to 5,070,900 in March. Major industries experiencing increases were Professional & Business Services, 2,500; Government, 1,800; Private Education & Health Services, 1,700; Manufacturing, 1,200; Construction, 600; Leisure & Hospitality Services, 400; Other Services, 300; and Information, 100. Major industries experiencing decreases were Financial Activities, 200; and Mining & Logging, 100. Trade, Transportation & Utilities employment remained unchanged.

Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rates since March 2024

| | Mar 2024 | Apr 2024 | May 2024 | June 2024 | July 2024 | Aug 2024 | Sep 2024 | Oct 2024 | Nov 2024 | Dec 2024 | Jan 2025 | Feb 2025 |
|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| N.C. | 3.5 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 |
| U.S. | 3.9 | 3.9 | 4.0 | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.1 | 4.0 | 4.1 |

Since March 2024, Total Nonfarm jobs increased 64,400 with the Total Private sector increasing by 48,300 and Government increasing by 16,100. Major industries experiencing increases were Private Education & Health Services, 21,200; Government, 16,100; Professional & Business Services, 13,000; Trade, Transportation & Utilities, 7,800; Construction, 6,900; Other Services, 4,100; Financial Activities, 2,800; and Leisure & Hospitality Services, 1,600. Major industries experiencing decreases were Manufacturing, 8,000; and Information, 1,100. Mining & Logging employment remained unchanged over the year.

South Piedmont Community College, UNC Charlotte Celebrate Signing of 49erNext Agreement

South Piedmont Community College and UNC Charlotte recently celebrated the formal signing of their 49erNext agreement, which guarantees South Piedmont graduates admission to UNC Charlotte.

"At South Piedmont, we are committed to providing students with access to opportunity, and today, we are taking that commitment to new heights. With 49erNext, we are forging a clear and direct pathway for our students to seamlessly transition to their top transfer destination - UNC Charlotte," said South Piedmont Interim President Michelle Brock.

Brock signed the 49erNext agreement alongside UNC Charlotte Chancellor Dr. Sharon Gaber at an event held on April 4 at South Piedmont's Old Charlotte Highway campus in Monroe.

Through the 49erNext program, students who earn an Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in Engineering, Associate in Arts-Teacher Preparation, or Associate in Science-Teacher Preparation degree are guaranteed admission to UNC Charlotte. UNC Charlotte is South Piedmont's top transfer institution.

In addition to guaranteed admission, South Piedmont associate degree graduates will receive collaborative advising from both institutions, early advising and registration at UNC Charlotte, and support throughout the admissions and financial aid processes.

49erNext has been proven to prepare students for success at UNC Charlotte. Data show that 65 percent of 49erNext students graduate within two years of transferring - 26.5 percent higher than the graduation rate of other transfer students.

Additionally, 49erNext students remain enrolled at a higher rate than their peers.

To be eligible for 49erNext, students must:

• Earn a two-year degree from South Piedmont. • Have earned 15 or fewer credits from South Piedmont at the time of enrollment in 49erNext. • Intend to pursue a major offered at UNC Charlotte (excluding architecture, fine or performing arts, graphic design, and nursing).

For more information, visit spcc.edu/co-admission-agreements/49ernext.

2025 NC Child Health Report Card

Report Card highlights need for mental health resources

NC Child and the North Carolina Institute of Medicine released their 2025 NC Child Health Report Card, which reviews and grades 14 key indicators of children's health. Since 1997, NC Child and NCIOM have released a biannual report card to provide legislators, public health officials, non-profit leaders, school administrators, and parents with the latest information on child health and well-being. Each edition of the Child Health Report Card also includes a special section that further details the different challenges and opportunities around a key issue area.

The 2023 NC Child Health Report Card had a special focus on youth mental health; the 2025 Report Card continues this focus, however with a particular emphasis on school-based mental health. NCIOM President and CEO Michelle Ries says that the decision to continue that focus in was driven by worsening trends and the need for greater support services. "We know that schools play a vital role in the lives of children," said Ries. "Schools are where children learn and where they build connections. What happens in school matters for their development and for their health."

The special section on school-based mental health covers four key areas: access to student mental health support staff, mental health referral services, the connection between physical activity and mental health, and social media and mental health.

"Today's youth are dealing with rising rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation - and what happens at school can contribute to those issues through peer pressure and bullying," said NC Child Executive Director Erica Palmer Smith. However, what happens at school can also help alleviate the challenges young people face. We need to look at the factors contributing to the youth mental health crisis and how to best address them."

In 2024, there were 1,928 students for each school psychologist in North Carolina, nearly four times the 500:1 ratio recommended by the National Association of School Psychologists. Ries says that the data speaks for itself.

"School psychologists, counselors, and social workers provide vital support for students with developmental, learning-based, and social-emotional needs," said Ries. "They are often on the frontlines when it comes to prevention, intervention, supporting students in the foster care or juvenile justice system, or helping children who are at-risk."

"North Carolina faces a youth mental health crisis, and our school systems should be part of the solution to help address students' needs," said Dr. Ellen Essick, section chief at NC Health Schools within the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. "But across our schools, we do not have an adequate school-based mental health system to meet the level of need that we're seeing. The solutions are less about fixing students, teachers, or our schools, and more about fixing a system that's not supporting our students, teachers, and schools satisfactorily. That starts with growing our instructional support personnel workforce so that students have meaningful access to school psychologists, counselors, social workers, and nurses."

NC Child and NCIOM hope that the key findings in the 2025 Child Health Report Card can help guide and inform parents, decision makers, school personnel, and other child health practitioners across the state. "The Child Health Report Card tells us what's working and where we need to improve so that every child in North Carolina can reach their full potential," said Smith.

Broadly, the NC Child Health Report Card evaluates 14 different indicators of child health and well-being that span the issues of birth outcomes, access to health care, secure homes and neighborhoods, and health risk factors.

Here are the 2025 Child Health Report Card grades (best to worst):

A: Insurance Coverage

B: Breastfeeding; Preconception and Maternal Health Support

C: Teen Births; Health Services Utilizations and Immunizations

D: Oral Health Access; Healthy Eating and Active Living; Tobacco, Alcohol, and Substance Use; Education

F: Birth Outcomes; School Health; Housing and Economic Security; Child Abuse and Neglect; Mental Health

"What we know is that these grades - and their impact on our state's children - can change for the better," said Smith. "It's on each of us to work together to develop and implement solutions that ensure that every North Carolina child has the opportunity to reach their full potential."

Download the 2025 NC Child Health Report Card here:

ncchild.org/publications/2025-child-health-report-card.

About NC Child NC Child is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that advocates for public policies that improve the lives of all North Carolina children. As the state's only multi-issue child advocacy organization, NC Child's work addresses policies that affect the whole child, including health and well-being, early childhood education, and family economic security. NC Child is also a leading source of state-level research and data on the issues affecting children and families, and the organization serves as a trusted and reliable source for policymakers and other child advocates across the state.

For more information, visit ncchild.org.

North Carolina Institute of Medicine (NCIOM) The North Carolina Institute of Medicine (NCIOM) is an independent nonprofit organization committed to better health for all North Carolinians. Visit nciom.org for more information.