

Second Samuel Opens at Ansonia Theatre Friday

The Ansonia Theatre invites audiences to step into a simpler time - and a town full of unforgettable characters - when *Second Samuel* opens this weekend.

Set in a small South Georgia town in the late 1940s, the play offers a vivid portrait of community life, where everyone knows your name - and your business. When the beloved Miss Gertrude passes away, the town is stirred into a swirl of speculation, secrets and surprising revelations, creating a story that balances humor with heartfelt moments.

Guiding audiences through the story is Bernard Flat, known as "B Flat," played by Eversmith Tallman, whose perspective adds wit and quiet insight into everyday life.

Much of the town's chatter centers around the Bait N Brew, where Travis Shaw as Frisky and Covia Boyd as U.S. keep the conversation - and the gossip - flowing. Logan Tallman as Mansel and Glenn Caulder as Mr. Mozel round out a group of characters whose quirks and camaraderie add to the play's humor.

The women of the town play an equally important role, with Janine Klein as Omaha and Gina Clarke as Jimmy Deeanne leading a cast that includes Gracilee Bricker as Ruby and Cindy Heafner as Marcella. Their friendships and shared history bring depth and warmth to the production. Toni Carpenter as Doc, Jeremiah Tucker as June and Georgia Tolley as Mary Sue complete the ensemble.

Directed by Tommy Wooten, the production blends mystery, humor and heartfelt storytelling into a show that promises both laughter and reflection.

Performances will be held May 1 through May 10, with shows on Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 3:00 p.m. Tickets at ansoniatheatre.com.

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Young Author Shines at Hampton B. Allen Library Event



A rising young author took center stage at the Hampton B. Allen Library, where sixth grader M'Layah Smith shared her love of storytelling with the community.

M'Layah, a student at Ansonville Elementary School, was the featured author during a recent library event, where she presented a copy of her book, "Tales of the Adventurous Girl," to library staff member Dianne Welch.

The event highlighted not only her writing talent but also her dedication to learning and leadership. Described as an A+ student, M'Layah is already setting her sights on the future - she is currently working on her second book.

Library staff and attendees praised her creativity and confidence, noting that her accomplishment is an inspiration to other young readers and writers in the community.

With one book already completed and another on the way, M'Layah is proving that big stories can come from young voices - and that

sometimes the next great author might already be sitting in a local classroom.

M'Layah is pictured here with Library Director Dianne Welch.

Educators Selected for Professional Development Program

Anson County educators are stepping into the spotlight as part of a major regional initiative designed to strengthen classrooms and support student success.

Teachers from Anson County Schools have been selected to participate in a year-long professional development program through Huntington Bank's Ignite the Classroom initiative, marking the first time the district has been included in the program.

In total, 70 educators from across Anson, Mecklenburg and Union counties were chosen for the opportunity, which provides training, resources and ongoing support throughout the school year.

Participants will work together as a cohort and take part in immersive professional development experiences, including a visit this summer to the Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta - a nationally recognized school known for innovative teaching strategies and high student achievement.

"This is a powerful affirmation of the work happening in Anson County Schools," said Superintendent Dr. Brian Ratliff. "Huntington Bank's investment in our educators strengthens our classrooms, our students and our entire community."

The Ignite the Classroom initiative, now in its third year, aims to equip educators with tools and strategies to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. The program is offered at no cost to participants, thanks to funding from Huntington and support from corporate and community partners.

Regional leaders say the effort reflects a broader commitment to investing in education as a foundation for long-term community success.

Since its launch, the program has reached nearly 2,300 educators across 40 school districts, expanding its impact each year.

For Anson County, participation in the initiative represents both recognition and opportunity - giving local educators access to high-level training while bringing new ideas and energy back into the classroom.

For more information, visit www.Huntington.com/IgniteTheClassroom.

Duke Energy Grant to Support Local Outdoor Project

Anson County is among communities across North Carolina receiving funding through a Duke Energy Foundation Earth Day investment aimed at strengthening natural spaces, environmental resilience and community pride.

The Foundation announced nearly \$620,000 in grants statewide, supporting conservation efforts, habitat restoration and projects that expand access to safe and welcoming outdoor spaces. A total of 29 grants were awarded, including support for local initiatives that connect communities to nature and improve shared spaces.

In Anson County, Homes of Hope will receive funding for its park and outdoor classroom project, an effort that has been in development for some time and is now moving closer to completion.

Chipper Long, Director of Anson County Homes of Hope, said the funding will play a key role in finishing the Hope View garden and expanding its impact. "We have been trying for quite a while to get the Hope View garden funded and finished, and this will also include a playground for the neighborhood and the community at large," Long said.

The project is expected to provide both educational opportunities and a safe outdoor space for families, combining elements of environmental learning with recreation.

Organizers said a formal check presentation is planned for May.

The statewide investment also includes projects focused on clean water, wildlife habitat restoration, parks and trails, and community-led outdoor initiatives. Officials say the goal of the funding is to support local organizations working directly in their communities to improve environmental health while creating spaces that bring people together.

Union County Woman Enjoys \$8 Million Lottery Win

Some people find a dollar in an old jacket pocket. Haya Freitekh of Waxhaw found something a little more substantial - \$8 million, courtesy of a \$50 scratch-off ticket and what can only be described as top-tier luck.

Freitekh bought her winning "\$8 Million Money Maker" ticket at the Publix, instantly turning an ordinary stop for groceries into a life-changing trip. Milk, bread, eggs...and, apparently, a multimillion-dollar payday.

When she arrived at lottery headquarters to collect her prize, Freitekh faced the kind of decision most people only practice in their heads: take \$400,000 a year over 20 years, or opt for a lump sum. She chose the lump sum of \$4.8 million, and after required state and federal tax withholdings, took home \$3,456,494 - still enough to make even the calmest person consider doing a small celebratory dance in the parking lot.

The "\$8 Million Money Maker" game debuted in December 2024 with five top prizes of \$8 million and 10 prizes of \$100,000. One \$8 million prize and four \$100,000 prizes remain unclaimed, meaning hope - and a few daydreams - are still alive for North Carolina scratch-off enthusiasts.

While Freitekh's win may be the headline-grabber, lottery officials note that the games also benefit public education. For details on how lottery funds have made a difference across the state, visit www.nc lottery.com and click on the "Impact" section.

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