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

## Anson County Memorial Day Ceremony Planned for May 25

The Anson County Veterans Service and Veterans Council are inviting residents and visitors to attend the county's Memorial Day Ceremony on Monday, May 25, to honor and remember the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving the United States.

The ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. at Wadesboro Park, located at the corner of Center Street and Gatewood Street, just off Morven Road in Wadesboro.

Organizers say the annual observance provides the community an opportunity to pause, reflect and pay tribute to fallen service members whose sacrifice helped preserve the nation's freedoms.

Residents of all ages are encouraged to attend and join veterans, families and community leaders for the special remembrance ceremony.

For more information about the event, or other opportunities and services available for veterans in Anson County, contact Michael Curlee at 704-465-0086 or email: [MCurlee@ansoncountync.gov](mailto:MCurlee@ansoncountync.gov).

## Memorial Day: Remembering the Sacrifice Behind the Holiday

For many Americans, Memorial Day marks the unofficial beginning of summer - a long weekend filled with cookouts, beach trips, family gatherings and the familiar sight of flags waving proudly across neighborhoods and cemeteries alike.

But beneath the hamburgers, hot dogs and holiday sales is a much deeper meaning rooted in remembrance, sacrifice and gratitude.

Memorial Day is a day set aside to honor the men and women of the United States military who gave their lives while serving their country. It is one of the nation's most solemn observances, recognizing those who never returned home from war and conflict.

The origins of Memorial Day trace back to the years following the Civil War, which claimed more American lives than any conflict in the nation's history. Communities across the country began holding springtime tributes to fallen soldiers by decorating graves with flowers, wreaths and flags. Because of this tradition, the holiday was originally known as "Decoration Day."

One of the earliest widely recognized observances took place on May 30, 1868, when Union veterans organized ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery. Over time, the observance expanded to honor American military personnel lost in all wars.

In 1971, Memorial Day officially became a federal holiday observed on the last Monday in May.

Today, many communities continue longstanding traditions such as cemetery visits, parades, patriotic ceremonies and moments of silence. Small American flags are often placed at the graves of veterans, and many families take time to reflect on loved ones who served.

At 3 p.m. local time each Memorial Day, Americans are encouraged to pause for the National Moment of Remembrance - a brief moment of silence intended to honor those who died in military service.

The holiday can sometimes be confused with Veterans Day, but the two observances serve different purposes. Veterans Day honors all who have served in the military, while Memorial Day specifically remembers those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

As another Memorial Day arrives, the holiday remains a reminder that the freedoms Americans enjoy today came at a tremendous cost - one paid by generations of service members and their families.

## Anson Unemployment Rate Fell in March

Anson County's unemployment rate dropped to 4.1 percent in March, continuing a positive trend as jobless rates declined across all 100 counties in North Carolina. According to figures released Monday by the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Anson County's rate improved from 4.4 percent in February and also stood lower than the 4.4 percent reported in March of last year.

The report showed Anson County had a labor force of 8,868 workers in March, with 366 unemployed residents.

Statewide, North Carolina's not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell to 3.5 percent in March, down from 3.8 percent in February. The state recorded 5,108,174 employed workers, an increase of more than 31,000 from the previous month.

Among neighboring and nearby counties, Richmond County reported a 3.7 percent unemployment rate, Montgomery County stood at 3.6 percent, Stanly County posted one of the state's lowest rates at 2.8 percent, while Scotland County recorded a 4.8 percent rate.

Anson County ranked 81st among North Carolina's 100 counties for unemployment in March, according to the statewide rankings released by the Department of Commerce.

Across the state, unemployment rates decreased in every county during March. Hyde County had the highest rate at 8.5 percent, while Stanly and Currituck counties tied for the lowest at 2.8 percent.

Additional employment data is available through the North Carolina Department of Commerce at this website: [d4.nccommerce.com](http://d4.nccommerce.com).

## Free Voter ID Clinic Planned for Thursday in Wadesboro

New Rural Project Anson County will host a Voter ID Clinic on Thursday, May 21, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Ebenezer Baptist Church on Salisbury Street in Wadesboro.

The clinic is designed to assist residents with obtaining the identification needed for voting and to provide information about voter ID requirements in North Carolina.

Organizers say the assistance is free and available to community members who may need help securing proper identification for future elections.

Residents who are unable to attend the clinic may also receive assistance by calling or texting 866-432-8683.

Additional information is available online at [voteriders.org/help](http://voteriders.org/help).



Elin Lockhart is pictured above with her Coach and Aunt Melanie Lyon.

Mrs. Lyon was recognized by the Board of Education on Monday, May 18 for 45 years of service as Coach of the Anson Middle School and Anson High School Majorette Programs. Congratulations to Elin and Melanie!

## Anson High Feature Twirler Elin Lockhart Honored by School Board

Anson High School Feature Twirler Elin Lockhart, a sophomore, was recognized by the Anson County Board of Education and Superintendent Dr. Brian Ratliff during the board's Monday, May 18 meeting for her impressive accomplishments in baton twirling competitions across the state and region.

Elin, daughter of Charlie Lockhart and Nicki Lockhart, has been taking baton lessons since she was just a year and a half old. She practices almost daily, continually working to sharpen her skills and learn new techniques.

Dr. Ratliff praised Elin during the recognition ceremony, highlighting her many recent achievements and joking with the audience as she approached the podium.

"We have a lot going on with Elin," Ratliff said before listing her awards and accomplishments.

Among her honors at the NBTA East of the Mississippi Regional Baton Twirling Competition were First Place Regional Solo, First Place Open Solo and Second Place Intermediate Strut. She also earned Second Place in the Miss East of the Mississippi Pageant competition.

At the NC State Baton Twirling Competition, Elin captured First Place in NC State Solo, First Place in NC State Strut and First Place in Advanced Two Baton competition. She also placed Second in NC State Three Baton competition and was named Majorette of North Carolina.

As a result of her outstanding performances, Elin qualified to compete at the national competition, which will be held at the University of Notre Dame in July.

In addition to her success in competitive baton twirling, Elin is also the Feature Twirler for her beloved high school Bearcats. And you can watch her performances each Friday night at our home football games during halftime. "Football season is the highlight of my year. Twirling on the field is my favorite part of what my sport allows me to do. And my football field performances are what help prepare me most for collegiate level twirling," said Elin. She is recognized as an excellent student by her teachers.

And she is already exploring colleges with hopes to continue twirling at the collegiate level after graduation.

"Elin is a natural talent. But her strong determination and unmatched work ethic distinguishes her from many others. You can always find her in her practice spaces, which are hard to come by in our area," said Anson High School Majorette Coach Melanie Lyon. "Elin's tosses have

gained such height that it's difficult to find a gym with ceilings high enough for her to work on big college tricks like triple illusion tosses and double walkovers, as well as four and five spin tricks. These are all required elements for many division 1 college feature twirlers nowadays," Lyon added. Elin makes it work as she practices outside on a concrete pad for most of her repertoire and heads for the grass to complete her daily practices. And, of course, it's easier when practicing in an air conditioned gym, which Elin does from time to time - and she appreciates that luxury!

Following the presentation, board members and attendees applauded Elin's dedication, talent and hard work as she continues representing Anson County with excellence on the local, state and national stage.

## Police Announce New Arrests in Ongoing Anson Inn Assault Investigation

The Wadesboro Police Department says its investigation into a violent May 1 assault at the Anson Inn on East Caswell Street remains active and ongoing, with multiple arrests now made and additional charges or arrests still possible.

Police Chief Michael Childers previously announced that investigators reopened and expanded the investigation after additional evidence and surveillance footage were reviewed following the initial response to the incident.

According to the department, officers originally responded to the Anson Inn on May 1 for an assault call. At the time, the victim was reportedly unable to communicate with officers because of medical reasons, and investigators later determined false information had been provided during the early stages of the case.

After further investigation by the Wadesboro Police Department Criminal Investigations Division, officers obtained a statement from the victim and reviewed surveillance footage from the motel. Investigators said the victim's statement was consistent with the video evidence collected.

As part of the continuing investigation, authorities have now arrested Divine Clinzel Cox, born December 24, 2003, in connection with the assault.

Cox has been charged with felony attempted first-degree murder and felony assault inflicting serious bodily injury. Police said he is being held in the Anson County Jail without bond.

"I, along with the men and women of the Wadesboro Police Department, understand the frustration surrounding the length of this investigation," Childers stated in a press release. "However, I remain confident in the work conducted by our investigators and the evidence gathered throughout this case."

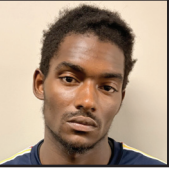
Investigators have also filed charges against Alisha Bennett, born October 23, 1985, following additional investigation into the incident.

Bennett was charged in Anson County with felony possession of cocaine, felony possession of a controlled substance on jail premises, possession of drug paraphernalia, obstructing justice, false report to police and resisting a public officer.

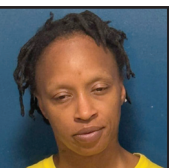
Officials said Bennett received no bond on the Anson County charges. Police also stated Bennett has outstanding charges in Richmond County, including driving while impaired, multiple hit-and-run offenses, driving while license revoked, no liability insurance, school attendance law violations and three counts of misdemeanor child abuse. Authorities said she received a secured bond of \$25,000 related to the out-of-county charges.

Chief Childers said the Wadesboro Police Department remains committed to ensuring justice is served in the case and thanked investigators, responding officers and the Anson County District Attorney's Office for their work throughout the investigation.

Anyone with additional information related to the incident is encouraged to contact the Wadesboro Police Department at 704-694-2167.



Divine Cox



Alisha Bennett

## Community Rallying Around Young Lupus Fighter "MJ"

### Fundraiser plate sale is May 30

Family, friends and community members are coming together later this month to support 12-year-old Elliott McNeil, affectionately known as "MJ," as he battles Lupus and Lupus nephritis.

A fundraiser plate sale, "MJ Lupus Fight Plate Sale," will be held Saturday, May 30 beginning at 12 noon at Harvest Ministries Church and will continue until sold out.

Supporters can purchase hot dog plates, which include two hot dogs, chips and dessert for \$7, or fish plates featuring baked beans or slaw, dessert and a choice of water or soda for \$12.

Organizers say all proceeds from the event will go toward helping MJ and his family as he continues his fight against the disease.

The fundraiser also carries special meaning for the family as they remember MJ's late grandmother Virginia Teal who also battled Lupus and passed away at the young age of 31.

Loved ones say the community's encouragement and support mean the world to MJ and his family during this difficult journey.

"His fight is our fight," organizers shared, along with purple hearts symbolizing Lupus awareness and support for MJ.



MJ Elliott

## Hot Car Safety

Every year children and pets die from heatstroke in cars, either because they were left or became trapped. More than half of these cases were because an adult forgot about the child or pet in the back seat.

To help avoid this catastrophe:

- Put your purse or phone next to the child's car seat so you'll always check the back before leaving the car.
- Keep a stuffed animal or memento in your child's car seat when it's empty. Move it to the front as a visual reminder when your child is in the back seat.
- Making a habit of checking your vehicle before getting out could save a life.