

Open Letter in Support of Partnership for Children

Anson County Chamber of Commerce representatives Lynn Edwards and Lewis Evans shared this letter they sent to NC Senate President Phil Berger and NC House of Representatives Speaker of the House, Thom Tillis:
Dear Senator Berger and Representative Tillis,

The Anson County Chamber of Commerce would like to go on record in support of North Carolina's Smart Start program. We understand that this year's state budget presents a tremendous challenge and that many programs are facing cuts. However, it is our hope that North Carolina's nationally recognized Smart Start initiative will not receive the disproportionate cuts recommended by the Senate Appropriations Committee. These cuts and special provisions will eliminate many Smart Start programs that serve children and families, particularly in rural, less densely populated areas with limited resources and infrastructures like Anson County. In the past 14 years, the Anson County Partnership for Children has used Smart Start funding to provide services for children and families that go directly to the heart of early childhood needs in our county. The Senate Appropriations Committee's recommendations (to increase subsidy mandates to 54% of each local partnership's services allocation and to reduce each local partnership's administrative funding by 50%) will dismantle Smart Start in Anson County and in many rural counties across the state.

Surely you are aware of a 2010 U.S. Chamber of Commerce report that stated, "Early childhood education has a tremendous impact on the national economic security and viability of the American dream." Recent Duke University research shows that investments in Smart Start generate broad educational benefits. Research from an Oklahoma University economist shows that, over time, investments in our young children outperform the standard economic indicators and metrics for Wall Street by a significant margin. Recently the U. S. Chamber of Commerce issued a new report, "Ready, Set, Go! Why Business Should Support Early Childhood Education." This report recommends that governments and businesses support the development of high quality early childhood education programs. It has now been established that the early years between birth and kindergarten are critical periods of time for brain and emotional development, and the foundation that we lay sets the stage for all future learning. A solid investment in early education to support childhood development and working families not only helps a child develop into his/her potential, but also strengthens our economy and community.

You may not be aware of the needs in Anson County where, according to US Census data, 23.4% of Anson County children live in poverty, compared to the state rate of 14.6%. The per capita income of Anson County is \$14,853, compared to the state rate of \$20,307. According to Anson County Schools, 85% of Kindergarten students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, including Morven Elementary where 100% of this age group qualifies (2010-2011 school year). The North Carolina Department of Commerce has named Anson County as a "Tier One" county designating it as one of the most economically depressed in the state. Anson County continues to struggle with high unemployment and limited job availability. According to the NC Employment Security Commission, the February 2011 unemployment rate for Anson County remained at an alarming rate of 12.9%.

The mission of the Anson County Partnership for Children is "to help make Anson County a better place to be a child and to raise a child." Using Smart Start funds blended with many other revenue streams, the Anson County Partnership for Children has invested in our community's children and families since 1997. Anson County has received a total of \$10.5 million in Smart Start funding since 1997. With these funds, the Partnership has leveraged \$10 million in additional public and private non Smart Start funds. They have provided vital and comprehensive support of the child care industry, preventive health programs for young children, early learning and pre-literacy programs, parent education and support to vulnerable populations such as teen parents. The Anson Partnership is also a source for information and referrals on child care, receiving calls from parents seeking child care, parenting support or knowledge about the local child care industry.

The need for stable, quality child care in Anson County is critical to the success of our county's work force. Early childhood programs are vital to economic stability, reducing costly unscheduled absences in the workplace and attracting skilled workers to the area. The Anson County Chamber of Commerce and Smart Start both share a goal of building an educated work force that will enhance our community and quality of life for all.

We urge you to reconsider the important economic and educational role that Smart Start plays in local communities like Anson County across North Carolina. We encourage you to strive to maintain the valuable statewide Smart Start initiative that has wisely invested in our most important resource - our future generation. Please do not endorse the special provisions of the Senate Appropriations Committee which would dismantle the Smart Start initiative in communities like ours. If you truly believe that our children in North Carolina are priceless, then the return on investment in them should not be compromised.

Low Cost Hands-on Website Classes to Business Owners

No matter how small, every business needs a website. Nowadays people are looking online for services and products. Consumers don't grab the phone book like they used to. A Facebook page is not enough. Now small business owners in Anson County can create their own website and learn how to make the changes and updates themselves. A series of four workshops is being offered through New Ventures Business Development, Inc. There is an upfront fee of \$40 per website and you must commit to complete all four classes. In addition to the \$40 fee, domain names can be \$12 per year and website hosting can range from \$0.00 to \$120 per year.

The workshops are being taught by Merrie Datin of The Forever Inn Bed and Breakfast. Over seven years ago, out of necessity, Merrie learned how to create her business website and has since created websites for a number of Anson County businesses. Now Datin is offering her expertise to Anson County business owners in these hands-on classes where each student will purchase their own domain name and create their own small business website. "You can learn how to do it yourself and you won't have to wait for someone to do it for you and send you a bill. And, very importantly, you will own your domain name and website." Datin also includes search engine and online directory submissions in the workshop and comments: "It is essential that businesses claim their listing on the major search engines and local directories so their local customers can find them."

Workshops include 10 to 12 hours of class time (4 class meetings) and are limited to a maximum of 4 to 6 people. The fee for the workshop is per website so the class can be taken by a couple or partners. You'll have a published website at the end of the four workshops. Classes are held at SPCC.

To sign-up or for more details, contact Merrie Datin at 704-695-1304.

SPCC Offers Classes on Internet Research For Legal Topics

South Piedmont Community College's Corporate and Continuing Education Division will offer three one-hour sessions on legal research on the Internet for laypeople. Classes will be on Tuesdays in the coming weeks at the Lockhart-Taylor Center, 514 N. Washington Street in Wadesboro. "Finding Primary Legal Sources" will meet on June 21, "Court Opinions, Laws, and Regulations" will meet on June 28 and "Court Dockets and Related Documents" will meet on July 12. All courses will be from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The fee is \$20 per session and students must register prior to class.

SPCC Librarian Maryellen Clarke, who also has a law degree, will instruct the sessions.

For more information or to register, call Sandy Huntley at 704-272-5456. A minimum number of students is required to have the classes.

Fish Fry at Harvest Ministries

Everyone is invited to come out and enjoy a delicious fish fry meal at Harvest Ministries Outreach Center this Friday, June 3, from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. You can dine in or carry out. On offer is whiting fish, slaw, beans, hush puppies, dessert and a drink. The funds raised will help Harvest Ministries continue to reach the community with their many charitable efforts.

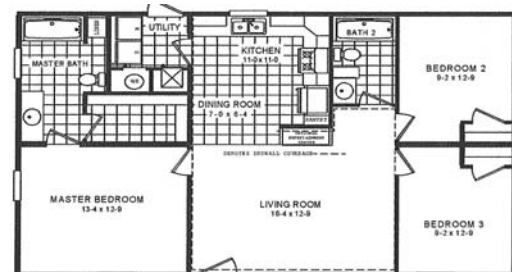
Harvest Ministries is located on Highway 74 behind Pizza Hut. For more information or to place an order call 704-695-2879. There are free deliveries for orders of 3 or more plates.

Catfish Stew Cookoff is Saturday

The town of Lilesville will be holding a catfish stew cookoff, on Saturday, June 4 at Hatcher Park commencing at noon and running until 4 p.m. with judging between 2 and 4 p.m. as individual stews are ready. One overall champion will be named and will receive a trophy, certificate and a cash prize of \$250.

You are invited to compete or just eat! For information contact the Lilesville City Hall at 704-8484711.

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