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Chesterfield Man Arrested After Dangerous Chase and 4 Hour Search

What started as a routine traffic stop by a Wadesboro police officer on Monday turned into a two state chase followed by a four hour search before the driver was found and arrested. The man, Bennie Earvain Smith, 29, of Chesterfield was charged with multiple offenses. He is being held in the Anson County Jail under a \$500,000 bond.



Bennie Smith

On Monday, June 3 at about 12:22 p.m. a sergeant with the Wadesboro Police Department turned on his blue lights to pull Smith over for a traffic violation on Camden Road, near Wadesboro Elementary School. At that point Smith accelerated away, headed toward Chesterfield County in South Carolina. As Wadesboro Police officers made chase they were joined by other law enforcement agencies, including the Anson County Sheriff's Office, the Polkton Police Department, the Lilesville Police Department, and the Chesterfield County Sheriff's Office.

During the chase, which reached high speeds, Smith ran cars off the road and nearly hit a construction worker. Smith drove into Chesterfield County, and then drove back into Anson County, headed for Wadesboro. Officers reported seeing Smith throw items from the car, believed to be a gun and drugs. The items were located by the Chesterfield County Sheriff's officers.

Once back in Wadesboro, at about 12:50 p.m., Smith traced through town and down West Wade Street, a quiet, dead end residential street, with at least ten or more law enforcement vehicles directly behind his compact car. At the bottom of West Wade Street Smith drove into a wooded area, jumped from his car and ran into the woods. At that point authorities began searching for him. K-9 units were used in the search.

Chief Spencer and Anson County Schools Superintendent Michael Freeman placed Wadesboro Elementary School and Head Start, which are located nearby on White Store Road, into a lockdown, with assigned officers stationed at the schools while the search continued.

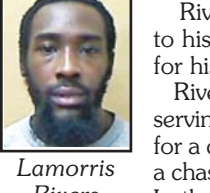
Smith's girlfriend, who lives on West Morgan Street a block away from West Wade Street, was interviewed by officers, and multiple officers remained parked in front of her house during the search. Other officers combed the area on foot and in vehicles. At approximately 4:30 p.m. Smith was found in the area of his girlfriend's house and arrested without further incident. He was reportedly cut and bruised from running through the dense woods, which are full of reeds and briar patches.

Smith has been charged with Felony Flee to Elude; Careless and Reckless Driving, Speeding in a School Zone, Driving Left of Center; Resist, Delay and Obstruct; and Failure to Heed to Lights and Siren. More charges are pending.

Wadesboro Police Chief Thedis Spencer said, "We are blessed to have other agencies such as Anson County Sheriff's Office, the Lilesville Police Department, the Polkton Police Department and the Chesterfield County Sheriff's Office that assisted the Wadesboro Police Department. I would also like to thank Superintendent Michael Freeman and the Principals at Wadesboro Elementary School, Anson Challenge Academy and Head Start for their patience and cooperation."

Lanesboro Minimum Custody Offender Escaped, Quickly Apprehended

Lanesboro Minimum Custody offender Lamorris W. Rivers (#0830041) was reported missing from the facility Saturday evening, June 1. Rivers was apprehended Sunday, June 2 at 10:20 a.m. by K-9 units from the Department of Public Safety's Division of Adult Correction.



Lamorris Rivers

He was found not far from the prison. Rivers was treated for injuries unrelated to his apprehension. He will face charges for his escape. Rivers, 31, is from Anson County. He is serving a sentence of two-and-a-half years for a conviction relating to leading police on a chase in an effort to evade arrest in 2015. In that case, according to police warrants, Rivers was intoxicated and led police on a high speed chase reaching speeds that topped 95 mph in a 35 mph zone. He was admitted to prison on August 17, 2018. He was scheduled for release August 13, 2019.

Rivers has a history of lawlessness. According to public records Rivers was one of five people arrested in connection with a 2018 home invasion in Salisbury. He is facing felony burglary and robbery with a dangerous weapon charges in that case, and is due back in court on June 10. He also has several other felony drug and weapons charges outstanding on unrelated cases in Stanly and Montgomery counties.

Public records show he also escaped from jail in Montgomery County in 2010.

Parks & Recreation to Offer Free Summer Open Gym

This summer Anson County Parks & Recreation will be offering a free Open Gym at Wadesboro Elementary School Gym for kids aged 10 to 15 years old. Participants will play basketball, football, whiffle ball, kickball, and a variety of other sports to keep kids engaged and active throughout the summer months.

Starting on Tuesday, June 11, Open Gym will be held Tuesdays through Thursdays, from 9 a.m. until 12 noon each week except for July 2-4. The program will end on Thursday, July 25.

- Each child must preregister with their name, birthdate and at least one emergency contact
- To participate a child must be aged 10 before June 1, 2019 and cannot turn age 16 before July 8, 2019.
- No adults other than Parks & Recreation staff will be allowed into the gym.

If you have any questions please contact the Parks & Recreation Department: Jeff Waisner at (704) 695-2550, Wendell Small at (704) 695-2782 or Allen Jackson II at (704) 694-5751.



"Pink Day" at Divine Unity House of Restoration Church

Divine Unity House of Restoration Church celebrated "Pink Day" on Sunday, April 28. Members got into the spirit, sporting pink color somewhere on their attire.

Lilesville Fire Department Earns Dive Rescue Certification

The Lilesville Fire Department is pleased to announce that they are now a Certified Dive Rescue provider by the North Carolina Association of Rescue and Emergency Medical Services. The Lilesville Fire Department now has certified dive rescue personnel along with a full complement of dive rescue equipment required to qualify as a dive rescue provider.

The rescue dive certification was awarded after more than a year-long process of training classes and equipment acquisition that concluded with an inspection on March 28, 2019 by the Rescue Association. Official notification of the certification was received on April 3, 2019.

Lilesville Fire Department is the first fire & rescue department in Anson County to receive the dive rescue provider certification, and is one of the only dive certified departments in surrounding counties. The dive program ensures that fire department personnel have received the training and equipment necessary to provide for safe and effective victim management related to under water rescue or recovery. There are only a small number of fire departments in North Carolina certified as Dive Rescue providers.

The rescue standards and certification process is administered by the North Carolina Association of Rescue and Emergency Medical Services. The dive rescue standards include NFPA 1670. By becoming a certified dive rescue provider agency, it recognizes that the Lilesville Fire Department has a vision to provide exceptional dive rescue services and has met the required equipment inventory and personnel training certifications needed to achieve dive rescue provider status. The minimum standards for dive rescue certification requires that at least eight members of the department be trained as a state certified Level 2 Rescue Diver. Currently Lilesville has ten Level 2 divers.

Lilesville Fire Chief M. K. Morton, Jr said, "With this state certification, it will increase efficiency and time in search & recovery in the event of a drowning. With the fire department covering the 2,500 acre lake area of Blewett Falls, locating victims in an area this size using the older technique of 'dragging' takes copious amounts of time, and is not an efficient recovery process. It will also enable us to assist local law enforcement agencies in underwater evidence search and recovery. In the past, if a county agency has needed a diver, outside resources were brought in to provide this service. Now we are able to provide it to our fire district, as well as public safety agencies in the county."

Morton continued, "I am extremely proud of our members for putting forth the effort to receive the training, and our department in receiving this certification. I would like to personally thank all of our members who were involved. It took involvement and support from every member on our department, whether they were in class, helping out or providing support. Without them this certification would not have been possible."

The Dive Rescue training program consists of over 140 class & dive hours, along with 10 public safety dives. With this dive rescue certification, the Lilesville Fire Department also becomes part of a state-wide resource list that will potentially benefit other communities in the event of natural disasters. Lilesville Fire Department also holds Heavy Rescue, Swift & Surface Water Rescue, and High Angle Rescue certifications.

Unemployment Rate Dropped to 3.9% in April

Anson County's unemployment rate for April was 3.9%, down from the 4.4% reported for March. Statewide the unemployment rate was 3.6% in April, down from March's 4.1% rate.

Anson's total labor force in April was 10,640. Of that number 10,228 were employed and 412 were unemployed. In March the total labor force was 10,524 with 10,059 employed and 465 unemployed.

Unemployment rates (not seasonally adjusted) decreased in all 100 of North Carolina's counties in April. Hyde County had the highest unemployment rate at 8.1 percent, while Buncombe County had the lowest at 2.7 percent.

All 15 of the state's metro areas experienced rate decreases. Among the metro areas, Rocky Mount at 4.9 percent had the highest rate and Asheville had the lowest rate at 2.8 percent. The April not seasonally adjusted statewide rate was 3.6 percent.

When compared to the same month last year, not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates decreased in 41 counties, increased in 28, and remained unchanged in 31.

Eight metro areas experienced rate decreases over the year, three increased, and four remained unchanged.

The number of workers employed statewide (not seasonally adjusted) increased in April by 25,602 to 4,884,935, while those unemployed decreased 26,548 to 179,910. Since April 2018, the number of workers employed statewide increased 90,162, while those unemployed decreased 327.

Chamber of Commerce Has Moved

Chamber is located in the new REV Uptown business incubator building in uptown Wadesboro

The Anson County Chamber of Commerce is up and running at their new location in uptown Wadesboro. They are located in the REV Uptown, located at 114 West Wade Street. It is the building that originally housed the Roses store, and, more recently, offices of the Employment Security Commission.

The email address is ansonchamber@windstream.net, and the website is ansoncountychamber.org. The telephone number is the same, 704-694-4181. The email address for Chamber Director Shelby Emrich is semrich@ansoncountychamber.org.

The Anson Economic Development Corporation (AEDC / AnsonEDP) announced Project REV, a business incubator and co-working space in uptown Wadesboro. The project, called REV Uptown, is progressing, with the building receiving extensive renovations. It will feature a coffee bar and visitor center which will be open to the public, along with offices for the Chamber of Commerce, AnsonEDP, Uptown Wadesboro, Inc. and the Anson County Tourism Development Authority. Three private offices, four semi-private co-workstations and co-working flex space for an additional 8-10 enterprises will round out the 3,400 square foot facility.

Along with the Chamber of Commerce, Borgstena Textile North America LLC is leasing approximately 1,500 square feet of incubator space which will house a staff of up to 10 administrative and technical employees. They are the North American subsidiary of Sweden's Borgstena Textile, a leading supplier to the automotive industry worldwide.

For more information on REV Uptown contact John Marek, Executive Director of AnsonEDP, at 704-694-9513 or John@AnsonEDP.com.

Book Sale at the Hampton B. Allen Library

The Friends of the Hampton B. Allen Library are hosting a book sale in the downstairs portion of the library. Come by today for great deals! The sale started on Tuesday, and runs through Thursday, June 6.

On Wednesday and Thursday the hours are 9 to 11 a.m.

Paperback books are 25¢, hardcover books cost 50¢, and magazines cost only 10¢ each or 12 for \$1.

For more information call 704-694-5177.

Zimmer Friends Get-Together is Friday

The Zimmer Friends group will hold a get-together this Friday, June 7 at Bojangles in Wadesboro, starting at 1 p.m.

They invite all who are interested in attending. This will be an opportunity to meet in the comfortable new restaurant.

For more information call Betty Huneycutt at 704-694-4213.

Knights at the Museum to Perform at Hampton B. Allen Library June 10

The Hampton B. Allen Library announces the 50+ Club meeting for Monday, June 10 at 10:30 a.m. in the Little Theatre.

The band Knights at the Museum will be the guests. Band members are Scott Drye, Joe Dutton, Stan Harward, Tim Knopp and Jimmy Rushing. Everyone is invited to join in for some delightful country, bluegrass and gospel music.

Any questions please call 704-694-5177.

Cyberbullying Workshop is Thursday, June 13

A free Cyberbullying Workshop will be held at the Anson County Cooperative Extension Center, located at 501 McLaurin Street in Wadesboro, from 12 noon to 1:30 p.m. Officer Talmadge Legrand with the Wadesboro Police Department will be the guest speaker. Resources and lunch will be provided free.

Contact Suzanne Maness at (910) 627-1769, toll free (877) 211-5995 or by email at connectionsfp@gmail.com for more information.

The deadline to register is June 10.