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Anson Principals Recognized for Completing Leadership Program

This is a release from Anson County Schools: Congratulations to Anson County Principals Carri Decker, Michael Vetter, and Dr. Travis Steagall for being recognized by the board during their regular meeting today for successfully completing the Leadership Program for Principals sponsored by district administration!

Throughout this program, these exceptional leaders demonstrated their dedication and a commitment to excellence in educational leadership, reflecting the hard work and passion they bring to their current leadership positions.

We at Anson County Schools are so proud of their achievements and know they will continue to make a positive impact in our schools.



Carrie Decker



Michael Vetter



Travis Steagall



Rotary Planetarium Camp is in Full Swing

The Rotary Planetarium and Science Center is hosting a Science Camp called Oceans Alive STEAM Camp. What a week it's been! Fourth and fifth graders dived deep into the wonders of the ocean during the "Oceans Alive" STEAM camp. Here's a splash of what these energetic innovators got up to:

- Made Their Own Ice Cream – A deliciously cool experiment!
- Submarine Design and Testing – Future marine engineers in action.
- Bridge Building Challenge – Spanning 18 inches and holding 6 matchbox cars, these bridges were engineering marvels!
- Shark and Squid Dissections – Hands-on marine biology at its best!
- Into the Deep Movie – A breathtaking journey under the sea in our theater dome.
- Slime Making with Hampton B. Allen Library – Special thanks to the Hampton B. Allen Library team for this gooey, fun activity and read-aloud!
- Coral Reef Creations – Learning about and crafting vibrant ecosystems with modeling clay.
- Edible Aquariums – Tasty treats that are fun to make and eat!
- Discovery Place Science Museum Visit – A thrilling day out in Charlotte, featuring an iMax movie about the cities of the future and our role in sustainable living.
- Pizza Party & H2Olympics – Celebrating with games that taught the properties of water: surface tension, cohesion, adhesion, and capillary action.
- Indoor & Outdoor Games Galore – Giant UNO, Jenga, Jumbo Twister, and a grand finale kickball tournament!



Campers not only had a blast but also learned invaluable lessons about our oceans and the importance of ecosystems. Huge thanks to everyone who made this week possible, especially our friends at Hampton B. Allen Library. Keep exploring, keep innovating, and remember: the ocean is alive with possibilities!

Anson County Government and Town of Wadesboro July 4th Schedule

Anson County Government Offices and Wadesboro Town Hall will be closed Thursday, July 4 and Friday, July 5 in observance of the July 4th Holiday. Emergency Services and Law Enforcement will be in regular operation. In Wadesboro, Thursday's trash will be picked up on Wednesday. All other days will be normal schedule. The NC License Plate Agency for Anson County will be open on Friday, July 5 during normal business hours, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

SPCC Now Offering Educator Preparation Program

Designed for Working Teachers in Need of Licensure

South Piedmont Community College is now offering educators an affordable, accessible option for securing their state teaching licenses. In June, South Piedmont's accrediting agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges approved South Piedmont's proposal to begin offering an Educator Preparation Program.

"We are thrilled to offer this program as part of our efforts to partner with local school districts to address persistent teacher shortages," said South Piedmont President Dr. Maria Pharr. "We look forward to welcoming our first group of Educator Preparation Program students this fall, and working alongside them as they expand their knowledge and skills, work toward state licensure, and prepare for successful, fulfilling careers in education."

As part of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Cultivating Carolina Classroom's initiative, South Piedmont's Educator Preparation Program is designed for working elementary-school teachers who already have bachelor's degrees.

Over the course of three semesters, EPP students will study pedagogy, classroom management, and other topics needed to prepare them for state licensure. Students will be able to complete the program both in person and online through the College's HyFlex technology. HyFlex allows students to choose, day by day, how and when they'll attend class: in person, online in real time, or online at a time that fits their schedules.

For more information, visit: spcc.edu/educator-preparation-program.



Governor and NCDHHS Take Action to Lessen the Burden of Medical Debt for North Carolinians

North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper and the NC Department of Health and Human Services announced new actions leveraging the state's Medicaid program that will encourage hospitals to relieve a potential \$4 billion in existing medical debt for approximately two million low and middle-income North Carolinians and ease the burden of medical debt in the future.

NCDHHS submitted a request to the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to approve a set of conditions hospitals must meet to be eligible to receive an enhanced amount of Medicaid funds. These conditions include relieving existing medical debt and establishing policies to prevent the accumulation of medical debt for low- and middle-income North Carolinians. Hospitals that choose not to meet these conditions will receive the standard amount of these funds.

"Large medical bills from sickness or injury can cripple the finances of North Carolinians, particularly those who are already struggling," said Governor Cooper. "Freeing people from medical debt can be life changing for families, as well as boost the overall economic health of North Carolina."

Medical debt is a growing burden across the United States. A recent investigation (kffhealthnews.org/diagnosis-debt) found that up to 41% of US adults are estimated to have some form of medical debt. Medical debt is incurred by people regardless of whether they have insurance, and there is a disproportionate impact on Black and Hispanic communities, as well as people living in rural areas particularly those in Southern states. While hospitals are not the only form of medical debt, they are the largest. North Carolina hospitals currently hold an estimated total of more than \$4 billion of debt and often expect to receive a small fraction of the original value through collections practices.

"North Carolinians are carrying the emotional and financial burden of debt, and often delay necessary care because of past bills," said Health and Human Services Secretary Kody H. Kinsley. "Medicaid Expansion gave 600,000 people access to care. Relieving medical debt will get individuals and families into care sooner, bring down the cost of care and give them a fresh start on a healthy and productive life."

Once approved by CMS, hospitals that implement a set of medical debt relief and mitigation policies will be eligible for enhanced payments under the Healthcare Access and Stabilization Program (HASP) (hospitals that choose not to implement the policies will be eligible for HASP payments at a lower level). These policies will provide relief to consumers through forgiveness of existing debt, establish protections against the accumulation of future medical debt, and prevent problematic debt collection practices going forward. Specifically, hospitals will be required to implement the following policies as a condition of eligibility for enhanced HASP payments:

- Relieving all medical debt deemed uncollectible dating back to January 1, 2014 for any individuals not enrolled in Medicaid with incomes at least at or below 350% of the federal poverty level (FPL) or for whom total debt exceeds 5% of annual income.
- Relieving all unpaid medical debt dating back to January 1, 2014 for individuals who are enrolled in Medicaid.
- Providing discounts on medical bills of between 50-100% for patients with incomes at or below 300% FPL, with the amount of the discount varying based on the patient's income.
- Automatically enrolling people into financial assistance, known as charity care, by implementing a policy for presumptively determining individuals eligible for financial assistance through a streamlined screening approach.
- Not selling any medical debt for consumers with incomes at or below 300% FPL to debt collectors.
- Not reporting a patient's debt covered by these policies to a credit reporting agency.

NCDHHS has partnered with Undue Medical Debt (unduemedicaldebt.org) as the preferred facilitator of medical debt relief. This work aligns with NCDHHS' continued commitment to improve the health and well-being of North Carolinians through smart investments that lower costs in the long-run by addressing social determinants of health, supporting access to prevention, removing barriers to health care, and incentivizing healthy outcomes.

Additional information is available in the Frequently Asked Questions on the Effort to Relieve Medical Debt in North Carolina (ncdhhs.gov/medical-debt).

With Moderate Drought Conditions, Forest Service Discourages Burning

N.C. Forest Service officials are discouraging outdoor burning due to the ongoing dry weather. As hot and dry conditions persist across much of the state, fire danger will be moderate to high across the Piedmont and Coastal Plain until significant rainfall is received.

"Outdoor burning and at-home fireworks are discouraged until your area receives substantial, soaking rain," said Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Troxler. "Fire danger is high. Fuels can ignite quickly, and unattended fires are likely to escape and spread in a hurry. We understand fireworks are a major part of Independence Day celebrations and festivities, and that's why we always encourage folks to attend professional fireworks displays rather than conducting their own."

Being diligent and responsible with outdoor fire and fireworks is critical all the time. If a wildfire is caused by your backyard fire or fireworks, you may be subject to law enforcement action.

While there is not a state issued burn ban currently in place, one may be needed if dry conditions worsen or fail to improve. Continue to check for burn bans or fire restrictions in your area.

"Anytime we're experiencing prolonged dry conditions and increased fire danger, the conversation as to whether or not to implement a burn ban, when to implement it and where, is taking place," said Greg Hicks, assistant commissioner for the N.C. Forest Service. "Those conversations have been happening for a while now and will continue to happen as we look at conditions on a day-to-day basis."

The N.C. Forest Service is continuing to monitor conditions. Residents with questions regarding a specific county can contact their NCFS county ranger's office, their county fire marshal's office or local fire department to ensure you are not violating any open burning regulations. Additionally, Troxler and the agriculture department continue to monitor crop conditions and agricultural impacts. "Agricultural growth conditions continue to deteriorate statewide. Right now we are in a wait and see mode and all of us need to pray for rain."