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Joint Undercover Operation Results in Major Drug Bust

A joint undercover drug operation between the Anson County Sheriff's Office, the Wadesboro Police Department and the State Bureau of Investigation called "Silent Night" resulted in the arrest of twenty individuals in Wadesboro and across Anson County since early Wednesday morning, December 5. Teams of officers began knocking on doors at 6 a.m., arresting individuals on various counts of selling marijuana and cocaine.

Lt. Brandon Chewing of the Wadesboro Police Department said, "Operation Silent Night was the result of a six month undercover operation. Last Wednesday we picked up most of the 25 suspects. Of the 25 individuals charged, there are approximately 150 felony charges against them. Most of the arrests were made in Morven, Wadesboro and Polkton, with a few in Ansonville and Lilesville. More arrests will be made in the near future."

Sheriff Tommy Allen said, "We have each of these individuals on video tape making these sales to undercover operatives. The last time we did this we arrested fourteen individuals and all fourteen pled guilty later in court. It's hard to deny 'that's not me handing over the dope and taking the money' when they see and hear themselves on the TV screen," Sheriff Allen said.

Officers are still looking for five more individuals they have warrants for and will continue to do so until all are in custody. Two or more undercover buys were made from each individual. Most bonds were set between \$5,000 and \$20,000. Some individuals made bond; some are still in custody.

Arrested were as follows: Clayton Bennett, Donnie Lee Brown, William Bernard Cason, Ronnie Lee Hall, Veneshia Harrington, Preston Lamont Lewis, Brandy Liles, Bruce Little, Curtis Little, Jr., Gennie Little, Jeannie Little, Deion Depri Marsh, Joe McLendon, Raymond John Outlaw, Edward Dondre Polk, Jeffrey Costella Polk, Patrick Riley Polk, Rodneil Veran Rivers, Fredrick Teal and Randy Wall. There were a total of 107 charges.

During the operation officers seized money, weapons and drugs. All subjects will appear in court over the next several months.

Awards Presented at Chamber Banquet

In a release from the Chamber of Commerce: The 50th Annual Membership Meeting and Banquet was held on November 13 at South Piedmont Community College's Lockhart-Taylor Center.

Leon Gatewood presented the 2012 Henry W. Little III Award for Community Leadership. Gatewood stated, "The person receiving this award is a natural born leader. If you go into a community and see it growing, that takes leadership."



Lawrence Gatewood and Jilla Gathings

Gatewood stated that this person is the best County Manager we have ever had. He presented this year's H.W. Little Award to County

Manager Lawrence Gatewood, who thanked everyone for the award...but not for himself, but for the 240 county employees and Board of Commissioners. He also stated that he enjoys his work and has never had so much fun. He thanked Jeff Waisner for his work on the Belk Building, the library and the courthouse. He also commented on projects that include the new EMS Building, Argi Civic Center, and supporting the new Anson County Hospital.

Dr. Fred Thompson, the 2011 Henry W. Little award winner, presented this year's W. Dunlap Covington Award. Thompson first acknowledged some of the past winners included Lynn Edwards, Elaine Scarborough, Dana Maness and Todd Moore. He stated that they all show what leadership looks like. He went on to state that the recipient is a native to Anson County and is a leader. She is Chair of the Leadership Anson Oversight Committee; Chair of the Chamber's Annual Dinner, Chair of the Chamber's Golf Tournament, holds a registration site for the Big Game Hunt Tournament, is a member of Kiwanis and is involved in many different mission projects. Thompson presented this year's "Dunnie" award to Jilla Gathings. "I do the things I do because I enjoy it, especially Kiwanis," Gathings stated. She thanked everyone and said she was so honored.

Josh Bricker of PNC Bank and Lewis Evans were unanimously elected as directors on the Chamber board.

Chamber Past Chair Carly Little presented outgoing director Jay Wright, State Farm Insurance, with an appreciation plaque. Wright was unable to attend the banquet. Little thanked him for his service to the Chamber.

Lynn Edwards, the Chamber's Executive Director, opened the 50th annual meeting by welcoming everyone to Anson County Chamber's version of Mardi Gras, which was the theme for the evening. Edwards thanked the corporate sponsors, along with annual dinner committee members, for their assistance in planning the annual membership meeting and dinner; the banquet's caterers, Beth Rogers and Cathy Thompson, the volunteer servers (students from ACEC, AHS & AMS); and assistance from Freda Buchanan. The centerpiece for the evening was beautifully arranged by Michael Horne's Florist. There were 180 RSVP's which was a record number for the 50th membership meeting.

Vice Chair Jeff Rodgers recognized Chamber board members, and members of the following committees: Big-Game Hunt, Golf Tournament, Leadership Anson and Marketing/Bike Ride. In honor of Veteran's Day, Rodgers also recognized the veterans who were in attendance for their service.

School Board Meets December 17

The Anson County Board of Education will hold their regular monthly meeting on Monday, December 17 at the Charles Riddle Staff Development Center, located at 320 Camden Road in Wadesboro. Closed session will begin immediately after the opening of the meeting at 5:30 p.m. Open session for the public will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Early Release Information for Schools

Anson County Schools will have early release for students on Thursday, December 20th. The times are listed below:

- All elementary schools release at 12:30 p.m.
- Anson New Technology High School and Anson Early College High School release at 1 p.m.
- All other secondary schools release at 1:30 p.m.

With a Kind of Hush Our Wadesboro Christmas Parade Marched In



At exactly 4 p.m. on Thursday, December 6 the Wadesboro Christmas Parade began its march through the streets of uptown. School age students were gleefully in attendance as Anson County Schools were released early for the first time in several years. Onlookers outlined the parade route and you could hear their cheerful voices, merry with anticipation. There was a kind of hush over the crowd and the voices of children and their laughter rang out in sync with the many floats and marchers as they passed by. Laughter, what better tribute to the true measure of a parade?

The sights and sounds of the day included smiles and chatter, marching bands and Christmas music, all of which you could easily hear this year without the repeated blare of sirens. Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Lynn Edwards said, "The fire trucks were asked to refrain from using their sirens due to the number of complaints from parents of very young children and elderly parade goers. We love for the fire departments to participate, and they always look great with their big trucks and beautiful lights," Edwards continued. I would think it a safe bet to say the surrounding area pets were particularly happy with that change, as were the tiny tots involved in the parade who didn't need to cover their ears with their warm woolen mittens.

On the downside, one of your all time favorites was unable to make the parade this year. The Oasis Steel Drum Band was headed to Wadesboro, but unfortunately had a mechanical problem in Union County, leaving them stranded and pulled from the lineup. "We were really sorry to hear that, especially knowing how much everyone enjoys them, including myself," said Edwards. But the show must go on and so must a parade. And, even without one of the favorites, it was a great day...and a great parade topped it off!

This was the seventh year for Edwards, but the first one done totally in house by the Chamber of Commerce, which means no contracts with anyone else. "We are still learning, but both Shelby Emrich and I were pleased. I would like to thank everyone with the Town of Wadesboro, the Wadesboro Police and Fire Departments, Rodney Diggs and his crew, and

everyone involved for all the hard work they put into making this a safe a fun event," commended Edwards.

Thursday's weather quickly turned from the previous week's mid 70-degree temperatures to a very parade-like and chilly 50 degrees. It seemed Christmassy with a bit of a chill in the air, and once the parade started you forgot all about being cold.



I love a parade, and found this a particularly good year for our hometown version. If you haven't done so already, don't forget to thank Lynn Edwards and the Chamber of Commerce for the long hours of preparation and hard work it takes to put on something of this caliber. There are so many behind the scenes things you would never even think about if you haven't ever been involved in this type of work. It is nothing to take lightly, that's for sure. I would like to offer my own sincere thanks to everyone involved. What a wonderful gift you bestow upon us each year, the gift of a parade! And, all we have to do is simply enjoy it. I hope you did.

By Melanie Lyon

Partnership for Children Announces Finalists for Champion for Children Award

In a release from the Partnership for Children: The Anson County Partnership for Children is pleased to announce the four finalists for the 2013 Champion for Children award, to be presented at the Champions for Children Reception prior to the Seventh annual Barn Blast on January 25. Chosen as a result of their extensive efforts to make Anson County a better place to be a child and to raise a child, the Partnership is proud to acknowledge the following community members for their tireless efforts to make life better for Anson County children. The four finalists for the Champion for Children award are: HOLLA! (Helping Our Loved ones Learn and Achieve); Gail S. Litaker; Charles H. Riddle; and Vancine Sturdivant.

Presented by the Partnership for Children, the Champion for Children award recognizes an individual, group, or business who champions the well-being of children; demonstrates commitment to providing a better future for children; works with others in the community to raise awareness about children's issues; believes in building strong families; demonstrates leadership on behalf of children in the community; and does their best to make life better for Anson County children. The following are excerpts from the nominations received on behalf of each finalist.

- HOLLA! (Helping Our Loves ones Learn and Achieve) - The HOLLA! organization was formed in 2005 as a grassroots initiative built upon the belief that it takes a village to raise a child. Through its many community programs, HOLLA! has motivated not only our children to excel in school, but has also spurred a movement of parents becoming more involved in the educational process of their children. HOLLA! embraces the whole child; academically, socially, emotionally and physically, providing opportunities to build character and self-esteem. Working to counter the adverse effects that poverty has on children and the community, HOLLA! has created a haven for developing better futures for our children and the building of strong families.
- Gail S. Litaker - Gail Litaker has taught music in Anson County schools for over 32 years. Through her love of music she has enriched the lives of children throughout Anson County, enhancing their learning, and encouraging children to open their minds to the learning of other subjects. Described as a 'musician in love with music', Gail has helped children learn that they are a part of something bigger than themselves and the importance of taking responsibility for helping others. Knowing that music can reach children that are sometimes unreachable in other ways, Gail proposed and teaches a community children's choir for all of Anson County's K-6 grade children, called Thursday's Child. Thursday's Child children have been involved in numerous mission and good-deed projects as they learn through both music and action, to share with others in our community and our world.
- Charles H. Riddle - Charles Riddle is a retired educator, elementary school principle, and tireless children's advocate. Since 1952, Charles has focused his 'powerful quiet energy' on seeking and doing what's best for education, and ultimately, for children throughout Anson County. As a dedicated devotee of humanity, Charles understands and epitomizes the essential qualities of someone that believes in a life of service towards others. As a true ambassador for education, Charles took every opportunity to promote the Anson County School System, and worked to mobilize forces and put them to work for children no matter the cause. While serving as principle for Central Elementary School, Charles pulled together the resources to start a Clothing Closet for needy primary children; proving yet again, that his heart is always with the children.
- Vancine Sturdivant - Vancine Sturdivant is known by many in Anson County as a guardian of the young, the poor and the old. Her generous spirit permeates all that she does from her political activities to her enlisting everyone in her path to help her nurture people in her community. In her efforts to ensure that children are given the opportunity to succeed, Vancine started the Back to School with Pride program that collects book bags and school supplies for hundreds of local children in need. In addition, Vancine was the conduit that brought Toys for Tots to Anson County; determined that every child would receive love and experience the joy of Christmas. Vancine advocates and pushes for the election of those in support of education and children's welfare.

The Champions for Children Reception is a new addition to the annual Barn Blast fundraiser for 2013. Sponsored by Union County Community Action, the Champions for Children reception will be hosted in the Olde Mill Gallery at the Lockhart Taylor Center, prior to the Barn Blast, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. Tickets for the Champions for Children Reception are available for \$100 which includes early entrance to the 2013 Barn Blast.

Proceeds from the 2013 Barn Blast will be used to support the work of the Anson County Partnership for Children including the following children's literacy activities: Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, Motherhood, Raising a Reader Book Bag Program, Reach Out and Read and local book distributions.

Anson County Partnership for Children is a non-profit public/private organization which was formed in 1996 in response to the North Carolina Smart Start initiative. The Partnership is responsible for developing collaborative strategies to meet the unique needs of children and families in Anson County, focusing on: Child Care Quality, Accessibility and Affordability, Health, Literacy and Family Support. For more information contact Ashley Haynes at 704-694-4036.

Applications Being Accepted for No-Cost Spay/Neuter Clinic

The Sandra Harmon Clive Memorial Fund is currently accepting applications for their next Spay/Neuter Clinic. Qualified applicants are offered the services at no cost thanks to the generosity of the late Mrs. Clive. So far over 75 cats and dogs have participated in the program.

This program is offered to low income citizens and senior citizens in Anson County. You can find applications at Brown Creek Animal Hospital, the Anson County Health Department and Hampton B. Allen Library.

Brown Bag Book Club Meeting

The Brown Bag Book Club and In the Know program will be held in the Pritchett Room at the Hampton B. Allen Library on Monday, December 17 at noon. The program will be presented by a representative of the Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge, speaking about the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. This will be a covered dish buffet, and everyone is invited to bring a dish and a friend.

Everyone is invited to attend this informative and free event. For more information call 704-694-5177.

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