Town of Morven

Receives \$50,000 Grant for Outdoor

Entertainment Space

The city of Morven will receive

a \$50,000 grant from T-Mobile

to build an outdoor stage

and entertainment space for

Amphitheater, breathing life

into the performing arts while

bringing live entertainment to

the community. This state-of-

the-art venue will offer a dynamic

space for live performances,

cultural events, and community

gatherings, fostering a spirit of

creativity and connection. By

Community

HOLLA!

205 West Morgan Street • Wadesboro, NC 28170 • 704-694-2480 • The Express News @gmail.com • www. The Express Newspaper.com

MERRY CHRISTMAS FELIZ NAVIDAD MELE KALIKIMAKA JOYEUX NOEL BUONE FESTE NATALIZI

Enjoy Letters to Santa from Anson County Children in this edition!

Statewide Enforcement Keeps Impaired Drivers Off the Roads

The North Carolina Governor's Highway Safety Program is partnering with local and state law enforcement to enforce a simple, but weighty message: if you have consumed impairing substances, do not get behind the wheel. The statewide "Holiday Booze It & Lose It" enforcement campaign increases public awareness and deters impaired people from driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs and other impairing substances.

"Driving under the influence is deadly and illegal, and it should never be an option for getting home," said GHSP Director Mark Ezzell. "We want everyone to enjoy the joy-filled holiday season, but we want everyone to do so responsibly. There are many available choices for a safe ride home; impaired driving is never the answer.

From now until Jan. 5, law enforcement agencies will increase the number of patrols and sobriety checkpoints in

According to the N.C. Department of Transportation, a total of $12{,}146$ vehicle crashes involving an impaired driver occurred in North Carolina last year. Of that number, 394 crashes resulted in fatalities.

"Our mission is clear: to save lives by preventing impaired driving," said Joseph Guzman, a registered nurse at UNC Health and founder of Nurses Against Drunk Driving. 'We are committed to raising awareness, educating communities and advocating for policies that promote safe driving. Beyond advocacy, we aim to empower our hospital personnel, first responders and healthcare professionals to become vocal ambassadors of this message.

NC Division of Broadband **Launches Tech Resource** Finder to Help North Carolinians **Access and Use the Internet**

Website Links to 1,100+ Community Resources as Part of Governor Cooper's Plan to Close the Digital Divide

Governor Cooper has announced the launch of the state's Tech Resource Finder (ncbroadband.gov/resource-finder), a new website that provides more than $1{,}100$ resources that help North Carolinians use the internet, find public computers and Wi-Fi and access technical support and digital skills classes across the state.

"All North Carolinians need the resources to access highspeed internet and use it safely and effectively," said Governor Cooper. "This website will help ensure that more people can be part of the growing digital economy to work, learn, access telehealth and connect with others online.'

The N.C. Department of Information Technology's Division of Broadband and Digital Equity collected information about all organizations in North Carolina offering these services to help people get online and identify gaps within communities for future initiatives.

Tech Resource Finder users can search for local offerings by county, zip code or type of resource and can select a map view or table view. Each resource includes a description, address, website, contact information and directions. The division is also partnering with NC State University's to keep the Tech Resource Finder's offerings up to date.

"The internet is essential in almost every aspect of today's world," said State CIO and NCDIT Secretary Jim Weaver. "Our goal is to ensure that North Carolinians are aware of nearby resources available to help them get online and build their digital skillsets."

As part of the division's partnership with the United Way/NC 211, the Tech Resource Finder offerings will be integrated into the NC 211 system, so their trained community resource specialists can connect callers to these verified community sources. NC 211's service is available in most languages and is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. For more information about the NCDIT Division of

Broadband and Digital Equity and Governor Cooper's plan to close the digital divide, please visit ncbroadband.gov.

Anson Crisis Ministries Provides Free Food Tuesday Through Friday

Anson Crisis Ministries distributes free food items to over 1,000 families each month. This adds up to an estimated 50,000 people a year in Anson and surrounding counties. They serve families Tuesday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Anson Crisis Ministries is located at 117 North Rutherford

Street in uptown Wadesboro. The telephone number is 704-694-2445.

CPR Classes at the Health Department Could YOU be someone's lifeline? If you are interested

in a Hands-Only CPR session, stop by and see the Anson County Health Department Health Educator, Noelia Chumpitaz, and she will be glad to work with you. Infant CPR Want to learn Infant CPR Anytime? Infant

CPR Anytime teaches the life-saving skills of CPR, choking relief and more. Learn and practice on your own at home or share with friends and family, and be prepared to act with confidence when unexpected emergencies happen. Call to make an appointment and reserve your spot at

(704) 994-3381. The Health Department is located at 110 West Ashe Street in Wadesboro.

Chamber Business After Hours

Anson County Chamber of Commerce's Business After Hours serves two purposes. The event allows the host to showcase its business, services, and facilities to the business

Chamber at info@ansoncountychamber.org.

community and it offers Chamber members the chance to meet one another and network in a casual relaxed atmosphere. To schedule a Business After Hours, contact the T Mobile

blending regional appeal with local accessibility, the amphitheater will serve as a platform for positive self-expression, empowering residents, while attracting visitors to experience the unique charm of Morven. This project aims to enhance cultural engagement, stimulate local economic growth, and create a vibrant destination for entertainment in the region. Leon Gatewood, the Founder and CEO of the HOLLA! Community Development Center said, "We extend our

sincere gratitude to T-Mobile for their commitment to uplifting small town communities. HOLLA! is thrilled to receive the Hometown Grant, which will support the development of an amphitheater - a project that will ignite pride and excitement throughout our region. This venue will serve as a central hub of community engagement and activity, further advancing the mission of HOLLA! A special event and check presentation was held on Thursday, December 12 at the HOLLA! Center.

Morven is one of more than 20 cities and towns across North Carolina to be awarded a T-Mobile Hometown Grant

since the program launched in 2021. Along with Aberdeen, Goldsboro, Hickory, Kings Mountain, Mars Hill, Mount Airy and Wilkesboro, the state has received T-Mobile Hometown Grants totaling more than \$800,000. Hometown Grants is T-Mobile's way of giving people who live in small towns and rural communities a chance to transform the places they call home. Through community development initiatives across infrastructure, education, technology, environment and more, T-Mobile aims to create a stronger and more resilient future for communities nationwide.

Over 600,000 North Carolinians **Enrolled in Medicaid Expansion**

North Carolina Surpasses Two-Year Enrollment Goal in One Year

Hundreds of Thousands of North Carolinians Can Now Access Critical Health Care Governor Roy Cooper has announced that more than 600,000 people have

enrolled in Medicaid Expansion in the first year of implementation, in half the time that was first projected. "From day one, we set out to get people covered and get them care. Now, more

than 600,000 people have the peace of mind that they can go to the doctor, get needed medications and manage their chronic health conditions - that's life-changing," Governor Cooper. "This is a monumental achievement for North Carolina. When expansion launched, we estimated it would take up to two years to enroll

600,000 newly eligible individuals and families into Medicaid," said NC Health and Human Services Secretary Kody H. Kinsley. "Instead, we accomplished that achievement in the first year - a testament to the remarkable dedication of our many partners and community leaders across the state to help North Carolinians get covered and get care.' Medicaid Expansion launched on Dec. 1, 2023, and the state immediately took action to enroll nearly 300,000 people receiving Medicaid Family Planning benefits, nearly half

of newly eligible North Carolinians, in full health coverage. State partners, communitybased organizations, local advocates and other trusted messengers teamed up to support NCDHHS' NC Medicaid for More People campaign and continued the momentum. These efforts included hosting NC Medicaid events, attending community fairs and expos, sharing bilingual presentations and toolkits, coordinating resources and partnerships, and other innovative approaches to spread the word about expansion and increase enrollment. In the past year:

- 4.15 million prescriptions were filled by Medicaid Expansion enrollees for heart health, diabetes, seizures and other illnesses.
- \$62.2 million in claims for dental services have been covered by Medicaid for the expansion population.
- 217,183+ members of rural communities, or more than one in three of all newly William & Ida Friday Institute for Educational Innovation eligible people, gained access to health coverage through Medicaid.

NCDHHS' Medicaid Expansion webpage:

(medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/north-carolina-expands-medicaid) continues to provide

information on eligibility, how to apply and where to get support. Learn more about Medicaid Expansion, find resources and get involved at Medicaid.nc.gov.

Tips for Holiday Returns and Exchanges

Holiday returns aren't easy! And we don't mean the part where you explain to your mother why you returned the sweater she gave you.

Stores are not legally required to accept exchanges or give refunds unless the merchandise was defective or misrepresented. While most retailers do offer refund and exchange programs, policies vary greatly from one store to another. Be sure to doublecheck policies this holiday season, even if you are familiar with the brand, as stores can change their policies whenever they want. The following tips can help to make your holiday returns run more smoothly.

 Research retailers beforehand. Look up the business at the Better Business Bureau website BBB.org to check its rating, reviews, and complaints before purchasing, especially if you are unfamiliar with the retailer. This can help avoid issues with returns later. Get to know store policies. Before you make a purchase, find out if the store has

a return policy and, if so, how it works. Understand that many retailers change their policies for the holiday season. If the store allows returns or exchanges, find out if you need to pay a restocking fee. Ask the seller if they offer cash refunds, exchanges, or only store credit. Store policies are usually posted at the check-out counter or printed on the back of receipts. • Understand online store return policies. If you are shopping online, search for the

seller's return policy and read it through before clicking "buy." Find out if they accept returns or exchanges and who pays for the shipping when an item is returned. In some cases, you can save on shipping fees by returning an online purchase to the local brick-and-mortar store. • Get the details on a product's warranty. Most electronics and home appliances come

- with warranties that are to be fulfilled by the manufacturer, not the retailer. Find out how the store handles returns and repairs if an item stops working or needs replacement parts. Will the retailer ship the item to the manufacturer for you? Or will you need to deal with the manufacturer directly? Knowing the answers will leave you well-prepared for any future issues.
- · Use credit cards for extra protection. Paying with a credit card may offer additional protections for returns or disputes, especially if there is an issue with the product or the retailer. • Keep your receipt and packaging. Most stores will only accept returns and exchanges
- if you can present the item with its receipt and original packaging. Always include a gift receipt with items you give, and hold on to any gift receipts you receive. • Know the rules for returning gifts without a receipt. Returning gifts without a receipt
- can be tricky. Without a receipt, most retailers offer store credit or an exchange rather than a full refund to your original method of payment, especially if the item is marked down or on clearance. • Bring your ID. Many stores ask to see your ID when you return an item to avoid holiday
- return scams. Sometimes retailers require you to bring your ID and the original form of payment. If this is the policy of the store where your gift is from, you may need the
- Make returns in a timely fashion. Almost all return policies are valid during a specific time period. Some stores modify their return period during the holidays, so don't risk missing your chance to make your return. Take the item back to the store without delay.

assistance of the gift-giver in order to be reimbursed.

follow official channels and platforms when returning items.

Free Movie Dolly Parton's Christmas on the Square at the Library

The Hampton B. Allen Library invites you to join them for the movie Dolly Parton's Christmas on the Square. It will be shown on Monday, December 23 at 10:00 a.m. in the library's

Pritchett Room. Any questions please call 704-694-5177.

The Health **Department Offers Sick Visit Appointments**

Did you know that the Anson County Health Department offers sick visit appointments for those over 21 for the following: cold: flu; sore throat; seasonal allergies; urinary tract infections (UTI); earache; upset stomach; acute bronchitis; pink eye; minor abrasions, burns & bruises; sunburn; insect bites & stings; suture removal; and blood pressure check (nurse).

Same day appointments are available.

Primary health insurance is accepted as in-network is BCBS, Cigna, United Healthcare, Medcost, Aetna, Multiplan, Ambetter, Medicare, Wellcare Medicare, Amerihealth Next, NC Medicaid, NC Medicaid Prepaid Health Plans (Healthy Blue, Amerihealth Caritas, Wellcare-Medicaid, Carolinas Complete Health, United Healthcare Medicaid).

Affordable options are available for those who do not have insurance, or do not have one of the primary plans listed above. To make an appoint-

ment or learn more call 704-694-5188. The Health Department is located at 110 West Ashe Street in Wadesboro. The website is: www.co.anson.nc.us/164/ Health-Department, and they're on Facebook. Writers' Club

Welcomes **New Members** The Anson Writers' Club

meets on the fourth Sunday of each month, from 3 to 5 p.m. in the fellowship hall of First Presbyterian Church in Wadesboro, except in July and December. New members of all ages are welcome. For more information call

· Watch out for return scams. Be on the lookout for fraudulent return policies or Sandy Bruney at 704-694suspicious third-party return services that promise to handle the process for you. Always 5211 or email sandybruney@gmail.com.