



# CountyLines

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## Accor among commissioners seeking seats in Legislature

The candidates filing period closed Feb. 28, and the last day contained a few surprises, most notably a decision by NCACC President Mary Accor of Cleveland County to throw her hat in the ring for a seat in the N.C. House of Representatives.

Accor will challenge Rep. Tim Moore for the District 111 seat this fall. Neither has opposition in the May primary, so they will face off in the November general election.

Accor is among a dozen sitting commissioners pursuing a seat in the General Assembly. Two are making a run for Congress: Iredell County Commissioner Scott Keadle is among the challengers to Rep. Patrick McHenry in the Republican primary for the District 10 seat, while Guilford County Commissioner Billy Yow will challenge Rep. Howard Coble in the Republican primary for the District 6 seat. Rep. McHenry is in his third term, while Rep. Coble is in his 13<sup>th</sup> term.

Two of the 12 commissioners vying for a seat in the General Assembly do not have any opposition in either the primary or the general election. Henderson County Commissioner Chuck McGrady, who chairs the NCACC's Environment Steering Committee, and Gaston County Commissioner John Torbett seemingly

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New Hanover County Board of Commissioners Chairman Jason Thompson discusses the impact that the experimental wireless network will have on providing new government services.

Photo by Todd McGee

## Diving into the digital divide

New Hanover County, City of Wilmington launch nation's first wireless network using television frequency 'white spaces'

By Todd McGee  
Communications Director

When television broadcasters made the switch from analog to digital TV in June 2009, they left behind a lot of empty space – white space, to be technical.

In the telecommunications industry, white spaces are frequencies that are allocated for broadcasting purposes but are not used locally (think back to the days before cable when most TVs had 50 or so channels but could pick up signals from only a handful of stations in the area).

Full-power analog TV broadcasts operated between the 54 MHz and 806 MHz TV frequencies (channels 2-69) in the United States. Since the switch to digital, full-power TV stations can now operate only between 54-698 MHz, which frees up a significant amount of broadcast frequencies – or white space. In addition, the digital signals use up less space on the spectrum, which means more of them can be packed into fewer channels, freeing up even more space.

What to do about the white space has been an ongoing issue for the Federal Communications Commission since Congress announced its intention in 2005 to convert to digital broadcasts. The FCC voted unanimously in November 2008 to approve the unlicensed use of white

space over the objections of TV broadcasters, who fear their signals will be interfered with as people begin using the white spaces.

While bureaucrats and lobbyists argue about rules and regulations, innovators are already looking at ways to utilize this opportunity.

New Hanover County and the City of Wilmington were selected by the FCC to serve as the pilot market for the nation's first "Smart City" White Spaces Network Trial, and the two governments, in a partnership with TV Band Service LLC and Spectrum Bridge Inc., have taken the first steps toward tapping into this potential.

"Building upon our current information technology investments, TV white spaces will help the county make the most efficient use of our existing resources and infrastructure," said Jason Thompson, chairman of the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners, during a Feb. 24 event commemorating the launch of the trial. "It is allowing us to extend video and data connectivity to areas that were once outside the bounds of current technology due to cost or environmental concerns."

The city and county have installed

Please see White Spaces on page 11

## Perseverance pays off with sales tax referendums

Hertford, Randolph counties latest to make successful case to voters on revenue option

By Jason King

Assistant Communications Director

If there's one lesson learned by counties that have held a referendum on a quarter-cent sales tax increase, it may be: if at first you are not successful, keep trying. Hertford and Randolph counties did just that March 2 and joined 10 other counties that have gained voter approval to levy the Article 46 sales tax granted to counties by the General Assembly in 2007.

Randolph County first placed the referendum on ballots in May 2008, when just 30 percent of voters approved. Randolph County Manager Richard Wells said that this time the issue resounded with voters (it unofficially passed with more than 54 percent of the vote) because it was directly tied to capital needs at Randolph Community College (RCC).

"A third of the population has attended the community college, or has a family member who has attended, or knows someone who has been there," Wells said. "The community college is our only institution of higher learning – we don't have another college or university located here."

Recent community college figures showed that 44 percent of the county's unemployed, working-age adults were receiving training at RCC, and the number

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Chatham County Commissioner Mike Cross (left) and Forsyth County Tax Assessor/Collector Pete Rodda (right) listen as Alexander County Manager Rick French describes what worked for his county in its quest for the quarter-cent sales tax.

Photo by Jason King



## NCACC awarded for support of IEI

NCACC Executive Director David F. Thompson accepts an award on behalf of the Association for its long-term support of the Institute for Emerging Issues at N.C. State University. Thompson was presented the award during a Feb. 8 leadership dinner on the opening night of the 2010 Emerging Issues Forum, an annual two-day event. This year's Forum was entitled "Creativity, Inc.," and focused on innovation in government. In the background is former N.C. Governor Jim Hunt, who presented the award to Thompson.

Photo courtesy Steve Exum for the Emerging Issues Forum

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# NCACC kicks off series of six district meetings on April 8

Ethics training to be held in conjunction with three district meetings

In addition to a legislative update, the NCACC's April district meetings will include an opportunity for county officials to learn about issues impacting youths from local students who will participate in the meetings. Lessons learned from the exercises will set the stage for the NCACC's Annual Conference, which will be held Aug. 26-29 in Pitt County and will feature a youth-oriented theme.

Three of those six district meetings will include a two-hour seminar on ethics that will help county officials meet a new statutory requirement. Those district meetings are scheduled for April 13 in Haywood County, April 14 in Cleveland County and April 21 in Beaufort County. Separate registration is required for the ethics training (available online at [www.ncacc.org/ethicstraining\\_2010.html](http://www.ncacc.org/ethicstraining_2010.html)) and the district meetings (online at [www.ncacc.org/districtmeetings\\_2010.html](http://www.ncacc.org/districtmeetings_2010.html)). The ethics training will be offered from 1:15 – 3:30 p.m. All district meetings will run from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. and will include dinner.

The remaining district meetings will be held April 8 in Halifax County, April 22 in Duplin County and April 27 in Forsyth County.

Ethics training will also be offered in conjunction with three N.C. League of Municipalities district meetings and a School of Government webinar scheduled for March 25. There is no charge to attend the ethics training seminars held in conjunction with the NCACC and

NCLM district meetings.

NCLM district meetings to be held April 15 in Columbus County, April 15 in Randolph County and April 20 in Johnston County will include the training. The ethics training will be held from 1:15 – 3:30 p.m. For more information on the NCLM offerings, visit [www.nclm.org/2010ethicstraining.htm](http://www.nclm.org/2010ethicstraining.htm).

For commissioners who cannot attend a training session in person, the School of Government is hosting an ethics training webinar on March 25 from 4 – 6 p.m. For information on the webinar, visit [www.sog.unc.edu/courses/0688/](http://www.sog.unc.edu/courses/0688/).

Session Law 2009-403 (H1452) requires governing boards of cities, counties, local boards of education, unified governments, sanitary districts, and consolidated city-counties to adopt a resolution or policy containing a code of ethics and to receive two hours of ethics training by Jan. 1, 2011.

The School of Government spearheaded a committee to draft a model code of ethics, and at press time for this issue of *CountyLines*, the model code was being printed. It was scheduled to be made available for purchase on the School's Web site, [www.sog.unc.edu](http://www.sog.unc.edu), at the end of March, and back from the printer in mid-April.

NCACC Deputy Director Patrice Roesler and Legislative Counsel Jim Blackburn participated on the committee, which was convened by School of Government faculty member Fleming Bell.

## NCACC STAFF NOTES

Members of the Government Relations Team made site visits to Wake County on Feb. 15 and Onslow County on Feb. 22. In addition to having lunch with each Board of Commissioners, members toured facilities such as the Hammond Road Detention Center in Wake County and the 911 facility in Onslow County. ... Government Relations Director **Kevin Leonard** provided a preview of the 2010 short session to the Durham County Board of Commissioners during the Board's annual planning retreat Feb. 18. ... Policy Advocate **Anthony Allen** traveled to Rowan County to meet with 911 Communications staff members, County Manager Gary Page and N.C. Rep. Lorene Coates on Feb. 18. ... Executive Counsel **Sharon Scudder** and Intergovernmental Relations Director **Rebecca Troutman** met with Union County's manager and finance officer Feb. 25 to learn about issues the county is facing as it prepares its 2010-11 budget. The next day, the duo visited Mecklenburg County to update the Board of Commissioners during its annual Strategic Planning Budget Retreat on the state budget outlook and its possible impacts on counties, and to review several legal cases that could be of inter-

est to the county. ... Legislative Counsel **Jim Blackburn** told the Legislative Study Commission on Urban Growth and Infrastructure Issues on Feb. 25 that counties and cities have a lot of the tools they need to plan regionally for orderly growth, and that local officials are very interested in being able to plan on a regional basis. ... Deputy Director **Patrice Roesler** taught a session on county jails at the School of Government's County Administration Course on Feb. 26. ... **Judy Rhyne, Catherine Franklin, Nancy Johnson, Penny Cummings** and **Willie Allen** – all members of the strategic goals team charged with enhancing the state-county relationship through effective communication and the development of a working partnership – traveled to Randolph County on March 4 to meet with county staff and gain a better understanding of the challenges facing Emergency Services and Information Technology. ... **Leonard** co-chaired a March 4 meeting of the Water and Wastewater Study Commission subcommittee that is examining infrastructure funding issues. ... Also on March 4, **Troutman** provided an update to the N.C. Association of County Finance Officers on the state budget and sales tax collections.



## CountyLines

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 215 N. Dawson St., Raleigh, NC 27603  
 Phone: (919) 715-2893  
 Fax: (919) 733-1065  
 e-mail: [ncacc@ncacc.org](mailto:ncacc@ncacc.org)

[www.ncacc.org](http://www.ncacc.org)

**Executive Editor:** David F. Thompson  
**Editor:** Todd McGee  
**Assistant Editor:** Jason King

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# Voters in Hertford, Randolph counties see the need

There has been a seemingly endless supply of bad economic news for counties in recent months – declining sales tax revenues, rising unemployment rates and stagnant property values. Many county commissioners have probably stopped reading their morning newspaper and watching the evening news.

In the midst of this bad news, counties received some good news in early March when voters in Hertford and Randolph counties approved referendums on the quarter-cent sales tax.

In Hertford County, the measure received more than 87 percent of votes cast, while more than 54 percent of voters in Randolph County approved the additional sales tax. What makes these

results even more encouraging is that both counties had put the issue on the ballot before – multiple times in Hertford, in fact – and in each instance, voters had overwhelmingly rejected the additional tax.

What may have made the difference this time is that the voters were aware of the tremendous financial difficulties being faced by counties, and that both counties had needs that

were not going away, despite the souring economy.

Both counties had pledged to use the revenues generated from the new tax for capital needs. Hertford County had a list of needs, while Randolph County had pledged to dedicate the funds to its overflowing community college.

The counties also made a concerted effort to educate voters on how the funds would benefit the county. In Randolph County, where the unemployment rate was 11.4 percent in December, the message put to citizens was that Randolph Community College would be the venue to retrain citizens so they will be able to find new careers in today's economy. Obviously, the message resonated with voters.

As an educator and parent, I am always looking for learning opportunities. I think there are several lessons that can be learned from these results. One is a simple one that our parents instilled in us when we were in grade school – if at first you don't succeed, try, try again!

The other lesson is not to underestimate voters. Many observers will say that trying to implement a new tax or increase taxes during an economic recession is not a wise move. The citizens in Randolph and Hertford counties, however, displayed an ability to look beyond the short-term and make a decision that will benefit their communities for a long time to come.

For once, the newspaper contained some good news for counties. Let's hope this is just the beginning.



President's Perspective  
by Mary Accor

*Mary S. Accor*

## Sales tax

Continued from page 1

of students enrolled in college credit classes had reached an all-time high. With such high demand, Wells said, the college has exhausted its resources, and the need for additional classroom space and parking is evident.

"The community college did a great job about getting the word out that all money would be going to them," Wells said. "People understood that this was for the future of the county."

Wells said the county is hoping the additional sales tax will bring in \$2 million annually – which would equate to roughly 2 cents on the property tax rate.

After previous failures at the polls, Hertford County gained approval for the sales tax with a whopping 87 percent of the unofficial vote. County commissioners had pointed out the county's infrastructure needs in a resolution in support of the sales tax increase, and a fact sheet made available by the county said the roughly \$350,000 in projected annual revenues from the tax would "be used to lessen the need for future property tax increases."

County Manager Loria Williams said the county's education campaign targeted the school system, the community college, and other agencies that would see the benefits from the additional revenues the sales tax would bring.

"We didn't do any advertising," she said. "Our county attorney kept us very much in line with the law."

Williams said the county distributed an informational brochure and got word out on the special referendum via a "State of the County" address that aired on the county's public access channel on Time Warner Cable.

Lee County also previously had its voters reject the proposed sales tax increase before finding success in November 2009. Lee County Commissioner Amy Dalrymple, the NCACC's District 9 Director, was one of three officials to share with the NCACC Tax and Finance Steering Committee on Feb. 18 their successful – and not so successful – strategies from campaigns for local option revenue referendums.



Chatham County Commissioner Mike Cross (center) discusses an informative brochure the county produced on the 0.4 percent land transfer tax prior to a November 2007 referendum on the issue. Lee County Commissioner Amy Dalrymple (left) and Alexander County Manager Rick French also participated in the panel discussion on lessons learned from county referendums on local option revenues.

Photo by Jason King

Dalrymple credited an intense and organized grassroots effort for the county's success. During the referendum's first appearance on the ballot in May 2008, when just 44 percent of voters approved of the tax, Dalrymple said advocates would announce a presentation session at the high school auditorium, with nice printed brochures available, only to have 20 people show up. The successful campaign last fall was spearheaded by two individuals with strong backgrounds in marketing, and they focused on more intimate, personal get-togethers.

"They realized that at the end of a hard day, you don't want to leave your home on a cold rainy night and go to an old run-down auditorium and watch a PowerPoint presentation about how sorry the school is and how badly the tax is needed," she said.

Coalition members would host cookouts, pot-luck dinners or other events at their homes. Some held mothers nights out at the local coffee and wine bar.

"That intimacy – that personal touch – of those small groups ... through that we were really able to energize the county," she said.

One of the more effective tools that the coalition employed involved a voting tree model: each coalition member was

challenged to develop a list of 20 people who had committed to vote for the tax. Coalition members then called back the 20 people on their sheets and asked them to get the commitments of 10 more people.

"A week before the election took place, we knew we had won," she said.

The two other panelists at the steering committee meeting – Chatham County Commissioner Mike Cross and Alexander County Manager Rick French – each experienced one local option revenue campaign. Each encountered different results, with Chatham County voters rejecting a 0.4 percent land transfer tax referendum and Alexander County voters embracing the quarter-cent sales tax.

French said the county had for a long time been making its case for the need for a new jail, so voters for the most part were already knowledgeable about the need and what the tax revenues would be used for. More than 83 percent of voters passed the measure in January 2008.

"They jumped on it right out of the gate," he said of county commissioners. "There was really no organized opposition against it."

Chatham County encountered plenty of opposition and misinformation tactics in its quest for the land transfer tax. The

Raleigh-based North Carolina Association of Realtors has pumped money into each of the 21 counties that have held referendums to fight what the group terms the "Home Tax."

Cross, who co-chairs the NCACC's Legislative Goals Committee, said realtors created the misconception that the land transfer tax is an annual tax on home equity.

While realtors were the driving force behind the defeat of the land transfer tax referendum in Chatham County, they were an asset to Lee County in its quest to gain authorization to levy the quarter-cent sales tax to help renovate Lee County High School.

"Realtors were having a really hard time selling houses in that school district because of the poor condition of the high school," Dalrymple said. "So they were 100 percent behind the effort and were a great help."

Even though the realtors were on board with the sales tax, the anti-tax group Americans for Prosperity worked against the quarter-cent referendum.

"Every time they put an ad in the paper, every time they put a handout in someone's hand, it always written '.25¢.' People had in their mind – and they let the misconception continue – that it was a quarter for every dollar you spent," Dalrymple said.

Dalrymple said one of the best pieces of advice for a county considering placing a local option revenue referendum on the ballot is to make clear the real cost of the tax. For example, when advocating for the sales tax, she would ask someone if they were spending \$100 on an item, would they be willing to kick in another quarter for the high school? The answer was almost always yes.

French said any board of commissioners should make clear what revenues from the tax will be used for. According to Cross, announcing that schools will be the beneficiary of the revenues gives a county its best chance at realizing the revenue option.

*Editor's note: Other presentations from the NCACC Tax and Finance Steering Committee meeting on Feb. 18 are summarized on page 9.*

# Give teachers, students tools to be successful

By **Jim Goodnight**

President and CEO, SAS Institute

Two weeks ago the *Financial Times* ran the headline "China Leads the World in the Growth of Scientific Research." China is now the second-largest producer of scientific papers in chemistry and materials science, and will pass the United States within 10 years.

A Jan. 4 *BusinessWeek* headline read "Americans fall behind in U.S. patents issued for the first time in 2009." More U.S. patents were issued to foreign residents than to U.S. residents.

Scientific papers and patents are a good measure of a country's innovation and creativity. The United States is weakening. We're not keeping up.

At the university level, the United States is still No. 1 in the world. On just about every top 20 list, the United States will have the majority, followed by the United Kingdom. But our K-12 system needs serious overhauling. The United States ranks:

- No. 25 in math among developed countries (for 15-year-olds);
- No. 21 in science; and
- No. 20 in graduation rates.

Between 30 percent and 35 percent of American students do not graduate from high school. Of those who do graduate from high school, fewer and fewer are interested in pursuing careers in STEM fields: science, technology, engineering and math.

These are the skills that are needed for a knowledge economy. And, while most kids in the United States may not be interested in the STEM skills, kids in India, China and the rest of Asia are. The knowledge jobs will go to where the talent is located, so in the future, more and more of our knowledge jobs and the associated innovation and creativity will be moving to Asia.

Is it possible to reverse the trend? Quite frankly, I don't believe it is. Here's why: The Chinese, Indians and other Asian countries outnumber us around 10 to 1 in population, and more and more of them are going to college and getting advanced degrees, especially in the STEM areas. So we have a big numbers problem.



Jim Goodnight

We should be encouraging foreign Ph.D. students to stay here and work after they get their diplomas. They still come here because our universities remain the best in the world. There should be no limits on the number of STEM Ph.D.s in the United States.

During the '70s, '80s and '90s, many foreign Ph.D.s stayed and went on to innovate here in the United States and create new jobs. After 9/11, they were no longer welcome.

During the last Bush administration they were kept out for fear of terrorism. The Obama administration wants to keep them out because the unions say they take American jobs or lower American salaries. So, we will continue sending some of the best and brightest students back to India, China and Korea to innovate there.

What about our K-12 system? It can be fixed, but I am afraid we may be too

late. By the time it's fixed, most of the knowledge jobs may be in Asia.

One of the first things that should be done is to get teachers out of the isolated classrooms in which they spend the vast majority of the day. Let's allow them the flexibility to talk to each other about best practices and what's working with individual students. This practice is known as professional learning communities – or PLCs – and is already being effectively used in pockets around the country. We should encourage system-wide meetings of teachers in the same discipline to learn what other teachers are doing.

The SAS Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) can be used to identify the teachers whose kids have outperformed their predicted growth. We can study the methods that led to success so they can be shared.

University schools of education should be required to study their graduates' effectiveness to make sure that the skills they are teaching are relevant.

Let's bring technology into the schools. So many of today's kids drop out because they are bored or find what is being taught to be irrelevant. Today's generation of kids is the most wired generation in history. Let's let them use these tools.

Every teacher and student should have a laptop computer, and the teacher should be trained in its use. Curriculum resources are not a problem. SAS provides award-winning, online curriculum

material for grades 8-12 at no charge.

We have also provided laptops for the teachers at 31 schools in North Carolina and helped train them. The governor, the General Assembly and the Golden Leaf Foundation provided laptops for the kids. Public-private partnerships like this are key to transforming our education system.

Results from integrating technology into classrooms and administration are encouraging. The superintendent of Wilson County Schools, Larry Price, reports that since starting a one-to-one laptop initiative, student discipline incidents have decreased about 12.5 percent and student suspensions are down about 17 percent. The most remarkable early finding is that their dropout rate has decreased by 41 percent. The students are engaged so they stay in school.

At Raleigh's Centennial Campus Middle School, the eighth-graders all have laptops. The cohort of students that moved from seventh to eighth grade last year increased their reading scores by 15.9 percent and math scores by 9.1 percent. Their initiative is only in its third year, so you can only imagine what these kids will do in the future.

There is no better goal for the future of our state, and of our country, than to equip the next generations of our citizens to not only survive in the world of tomorrow, but to thrive and prosper.

*Jim Goodnight spoke during a dinner for Emerging Issues Forum supporters on Feb. 8.*

## UNC-CH Wicker Scholarship applications due April 1

If you are a local government employee with a rising high school senior who is accepted this year by UNC-Chapel Hill, consider applying for the Jake Wicker Scholarship. Each spring the UNC-Chapel Hill Office of Scholarships seeks freshmen undergraduate applicants for this \$1,000 scholarship.

The student must have at least one parent who has been continuously employed full-time by a North Carolina city or county government for at least five years prior to Jan. 1, 2010. The scholarship is awarded based on relative financial need and academic promise.

Applications must be received by April 1, 2010. For more information, contact Torie Davis at (919) 843-1619 or torie\_davis@unc.edu.

The scholarship was created by the 1990 Municipal and County Administration class to honor course director Warren Jake Wicker, a member of the School of Government faculty for 48 years.

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# Youths engage in government through 4-H

Trust levels in government can be improved among youths through programs such as those being implemented in Cabarrus, Catawba and Transylvania counties. Used as models, these county programs can help change the dynamic of youths' views of government.

Cabarrus Citizenship Focus is a partnership between the county 4-H/Cooperative Extension program and two high school teachers who wanted to change how students learn about civics. The program is designed to educate students about what government does.

The program utilizes 29 volunteers, including mayors, school board members, commissioners, town council members, and county government and cooperative extension employees.

Fifty-five 10<sup>th</sup> grade students visited the Cabarrus County Government Center and interviewed employees, took part in a budget simulation and conducted a panel discussion with elected officials.

As a result of the students' participating in the program, 85 percent reported a better understanding of their citizenship responsibilities in the community. Many of the students said their participation gave them more confidence in talking with elected officials, and 44 percent said they would encourage adults they know to vote in local elections.

Catawba County also started the C3 Civics Leadership Academy for selected high school students. The week-long (35 hours) class focuses on local government issues and economics. Each student then serves a 35-hour internship in a local government department. The event concludes with a dinner for students, their parents and elected officials, and the students make presentations about their visions for Catawba County.

Besides the knowledge gained from

the class, some of the students earn academic credit for participating, and others receive community service hours that are required for graduation.

"It has been a good way for kids to get an inside view of county government and for county government to have a chance to meet and mentor some outstanding teens," said Donna Mull, a 4-H agent in Catawba County. "Several teens even continued volunteering in the department where they were assigned after the official internship ended."

Mull said the program was initially funded through a grant from the Civic Education Consortium at the School of Government at UNC-Chapel Hill. Mull said she is now seeking local funds to continue the program.

Youth Speak in Transylvania County is another model program that is a partnership between community groups, both county high schools and the county 4-H program. According to Community Drug Prevention Coordinator Heather Strickler and Ren Uriarte, director of youth services at the Center for Dialogue, in 2009, 92 percent of the 38 participants agreed that the Youth Speak process should be used each year to relay ideas and concerns to the student council and/or principal.

The two-week program helps students engage in respectful dialogue to identify a school or community issue they would like to address. Students develop an action plan to address this issue and present their plan to a panel of citizens, who offer advice and suggestions for tapping other resources for implementing the action plans. According to Mary Arnaudin, a 4-H agent in Transylvania County, the Board of Commissioners has invited students to report on their progress at a commissioners meeting.



The Pitt County 4-H event committee held a candidates forum in October 2008 and hosted, among others, Pitt County Commissioner Ephraim Smith (second from left) and N.C. Court of Appeals Judge Sam Ervin IV (second from right).

Photo courtesy Pitt County 4-H

## Pitt County 4-H put candidates on display for 2008 general election

Pitt County high school students wanted a first-hand look at the political process, so in October 2008, Pitt County 4-H hosted a successful "Political Candidate Meet and Greet." The event conflicted with a visit to Greenville by Republican Vice President Nominee Sarah Palin, but even so, seven area candidates, including one Congressional candidate and three candidates for the General Assembly, came out to share their views on youth issues.

Ashten Bergstedt, a 15-year-old 4-H member, served as Mistress of Ceremonies for the evening and led the group through an entertaining and informational evening.

The candidates were introduced by 4-H members serving on the event com-

mittee. These 4-H members researched the candidates and wrote introductions for the candidates. Each candidate spoke for approximately three minutes and fielded a youth-related question. The questions were written by youth members of the event committee. Topics that candidates were asked to address included air pollution, teen pregnancy, substance abuse by youths and college affordability.

"Tonight was the first time many of the youth had seen an actual ballot," said 4-H Extension Agent Vanessa Spiron. "Some even commented that they just 'picked names.' That is why we are trying to educate youth about the voting process so they will be able to make an informed decision when they get old enough to vote."

# Justice and public safety agencies could feel crunch

Counties could be impacted by potential state funding reductions to justice and public safety agencies for 2010-11, a team from the General Assembly's Fiscal Research Division told members of the NCACC Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee on Feb. 9.

Denise Thomas of the Fiscal Research Division said that justice and public safety agencies account for 11 percent of the state's total general fund budget, and staffing reductions could be in play as the governor and legislators make adjustments to the state budget for the upcoming fiscal year. These agencies combine to employ more than 31,000 people.

Governor Beverly Perdue has already mandated that state agencies hold back 5 percent of their budget to meet reversion targets that will cushion the deficit in revenues that state fiscal analysts are projecting.

Steering committee members also heard from Nicole Sullivan, manager for

the Department of Correction's Office of Research and Planning, on the Justice Reinvestment Act, a new federal initiative that attempts to reform the nation's criminal justice system by addressing the rising prison population. In North Carolina, incarcerations grew by 93 percent from 1982 to 2007.

Governors and Legislatures in 12 states, including North Carolina, have established statewide councils to address prisoner re-entry issues. The General Assembly has established a Joint Select Committee on ex-offender reintegration into society to look at issues including barriers in accessing jobs, housing, education, training and services.

The Reinvestment Act is designed to provide data to help policymakers decide which areas to concentrate resources as they attempt to address the rising recidivism rate. North Carolina is projecting a shortage of 8,500 prison beds by 2017, and policymakers are realizing that the

conventional way of building prisons is costly and may be not feasible in light of the economic situation.

North Carolina is also one of 25 states involved in the National Atlas Sentencing and Corrections projects conducted by the Justice Mapping Center. This project is generating maps to depict the residential distribution of prison and parole populations and the geographic deployment of criminal justice resources associated with those populations. Project benefits include a better understanding of spatial patterns and demographic dynamics of prison admissions, prisoner re-entry expenditure projections, and probation/parole caseload distributions in high-concentration areas. In other words, mapping of this kind would accurately determine which communities would most need resources.

In other news from the meeting, Mark O'Donnell of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities

and Substance Abuse Services provided an update on the residential transition Level III and Level IV group homes process. O'Donnell said this consolidation of residential group homes was necessary as the Division faced a 42 percent cut in state funds.

To help with child transition, child/family teams were set up to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of each child. The Local Management Entity acts as the lead agency in this process and is charged with coordinating meetings with partners from the community to assist children during the process.

In addition, members received an update on the NCACC's progress toward achieving flexibility of E-911 funds. For more on this issue, see page 10.

Chairman Hubert Sealey, a Robeson County commissioner, set the steering committee's next meeting for Tuesday, May 11, at 10 a.m. at the Albert Coates Local Government Center in Raleigh.

# Tax collectors wield a big stick to keep rate strong

Pigs may fly before a county tax collector wins a public popularity contest – and that’s why the people in charge of collecting the taxes levied by county boards of commissioners must have thick skin. A handful of the best county tax collectors in the state shed their skin, so to speak, and traveled to Raleigh on Feb. 18 to share some of the methods and techniques they utilize to maintain high tax collection rates with members of the NCACC Tax and Finance Steering Committee.

Forsyth County’s Pete Rodda said a county will quickly realize the benefits of spending some money and “scrubbing” its database to keep taxpayer names and addresses current.

“If you put a bill in the mail and it doesn’t get there, what good has it done?” he asked.

Tax administrators can obtain name-and-address lists from employers – public and private – to locate delinquent taxpayers. Collectors can proceed against income streams such as tenant rent payments to ensure that taxes owed become taxes paid, he added.

Frances Wilson said Chatham County realized dramatic results from outsourcing its foreclosure process to a local legal firm that specializes in foreclosures. The county previously used the “In Rem” method, but by outsourcing it realized a 50 percent increase in collection of past due taxes.



Forsyth County’s Pete Rodda and Johnston County’s Pat Goddard are both past presidents of the N.C. Association of Assessing Officers, an NCACC affiliate.

Photo by Jason King

Of the 900 parcels the county turned over to the attorney, only about 150 have yet to pay, Wilson said.

“The same people get the same notices year after year and they ignore us,” she said. “[We] have to use heavier measures.”

Pat Goddard said Johnston County found that its building community was often in arrears of taxes. By working directly with the financing arm for the developers and builders, and asking for payment, the county sees about a 95 percent cooperation rate.

Goddard said Johnston County’s tax collections employees undergo formal training in customer service because of the sensitivity employees need to use when discussing the difficult subject of past due taxes.

“We hear all the reasons about why

people can’t pay their taxes,” she said. “Sometimes you have to do something out of the ordinary to get those taxes paid.”

That includes seizing money from bank accounts, Goddard said. The county took just such action against the now-defunct supermarket chain Winn-Dixie, which owed the county \$800,000 in taxes. It turned out the money had come from a national fuel account, and the county’s actions caused a serious transportation problem for Winn-Dixie. But the county received its tax payment.

“You can’t bluff,” Rodda said of proceeding against an individual’s stream of income or a company’s bank account. “We give people time to work things out but once they ignore you ...”

NCACC Project Manager John Ed Whitehurst reminded steering committee members about the successes counties have had in collecting past-due taxes through the Local Government Debt Set-off Clearinghouse, administered by the NCACC, the N.C. League of Municipalities and Five Star Computing. The program allows local governments to submit any outstanding delinquent debt (totaling \$50 or more) through the clearinghouse

to the N.C. Department of Revenue to attempt to offset delinquent debts against individual income tax refunds and N.C. Education Lottery winnings.

Dr. Jack Vogt, adjunct faculty with the School of Government and nationally recognized as the expert in local government capital planning and budgeting, also addressed the steering committee. Vogt provided a primer on capital budgeting and provided an overview of the new capital financing options made available by the General Assembly and last year’s federal stimulus package.

Vogt discussed the need to adapt a capital improvement program to current challenges – investing in core functions such as schools, funding only what is mandated, and shortening the forecasting period. He emphasized the need for a county board of commissioners to set financial policies for capital budgeting and finance, such as debt limitations, reserve amounts and forecasting requirements.

The committee will next meet Thursday, May 20, beginning at 9 a.m. at the Albert Coates Local Government Center in Raleigh.

– Jason King and Rebecca Troutman

## Applications for 2010 Public Executive Leadership Academy due by May 1

Do you have an idea for a project that you would like to move forward in your community? Would you like to develop that project alongside other visionary public executives with the assistance of renowned leadership experts?

The 2010 Public Executive Leadership Academy (PELA), sponsored by the School of Government at UNC-Chapel Hill and the North Carolina City and County Management Association (NCCMA), offers public executives the opportunity to identify and work through a community change project during two intensive, enlightening and productive week-long sessions.

PELA is designed for new and veteran municipal and county managers interested in honing their leadership and collaboration skills, as well as assistant managers and key department heads that represent the next generation of leaders.

PELA participants routinely comment about the value of this experience

on their present work and long-term career. Public service is a demanding job, and PELA provides an opportunity to recharge batteries, hone leadership skills and gain greater self-awareness.

“In attending PELA, I had the opportunity to step away from the daily grind and remember why I went into public service in the first place – to make a difference in my community,” said Danna Stansbury of the Land of Sky Regional Council. “The PELA experience is like no other program in the country, and it has definitely made a difference in my career.”

PELA uses a range of interactive and reflective learning experiences, including simulations, case studies, small learning teams, and participant-led discussions. Local and national speakers from universities and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), as well as expert consultants and managers, will lead discussions and share their experience and insight. Participants will

also learn from another valuable resource – each other. A complete list of 2010 faculty can be found at [www.pela.unc.edu](http://www.pela.unc.edu).

“PELA is an intensive executive training experience on the cutting edge of leadership thinking, augmented by some of the best academic minds in American business and government,” said Durham County Deputy Manager Wendell Davis.

The 2010 Academy runs July 11-16 at the Rizzo Conference Center in Chapel Hill and Aug. 8-13 at the Carolina Inn in Chapel Hill. The application deadline is May 1, and the application is available online at [www.pela.unc.edu](http://www.pela.unc.edu).

Applicants will be notified by May 15 regarding admission. The course fee is \$4,200 and may be paid over two fiscal years. Lodging, most meals, and instructional materials are included in the course fee. NCCMA members will receive a \$500 tuition discount, and a limited number of partial scholarships are available through the NCCMA. Scholarships are also available through the Local Government Federal Credit Union at [www.lgfcu.org](http://www.lgfcu.org). For more information about the application process, contact Gail Wilkins at [wilkins@sog.unc.edu](mailto:wilkins@sog.unc.edu) or (919) 962-9754.

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# Sign of the times: counties will work for jobs

As the state's unemployment rate jumped to 11.2 percent by the end of 2009, the NCACC Intergovernmental Relations Steering Committee tackled the difficult subject of job creation during its Feb. 23 meeting in Raleigh. From broadband to business incentives to economic development boards, committee members discussed a number of different strategies that counties can consider to spur job creation and economic development.

Jane Smith Patterson, executive director of the e-NC Authority, walked committee members through the benefits of having broadband technologies accessible and available at competitive prices. She said studies have shown that communities with new broadband access experienced an average 6.4 percent higher job growth than before they had broadband.

Patterson cautioned that the United States was far behind other countries with regard to broadband deployment, and that the Federal Communications Commission's definition of broadband will not support eLearning, HDTV, health screening or home businesses with high-bandwidth needs.

She also discussed the e-NC Authority's incentives for "middle mile" and "last mile" investments – only 11 counties do not have at least 70 percent availability of Internet access to their homes – and also touted the job creation benefits of the state's seven business and technology centers (BTTs), which are created and funded through e-NC.

With a return on investment of 71:1, the BTTs are credited with the creation of 1,675 jobs since their inception. The Authority, through a donation from MCNC, also received one of the first federal stimulus grants to map the entire state's broadband infrastructure. MCNC, a private nonprofit corporation established in 1980 to advance technology-led economic development and job creation throughout the state, was awarded nearly \$30 million in stimulus funds to create and incent "middle mile" infrastructure in the far west and the southeast.

## Guilford innovative with incentives

Steering committee member Kay Cashion introduced fellow Guilford County Commissioner Steve Arnold to describe the county's innovative commercial investment policy. In an effort to treat all new real property business investments as worthwhile and welcome, the county has adopted a new incentives policy that recognizes any increase in the real property valuation of at least \$10,000. If an investment grant is approved, the owner of the real property may receive for three consecutive years a grant up to the amount of property taxes paid on the real property improvement value increase.

The investments are only for conforming uses, for properties not in violation of any applicable county or municipal code, and for real property

owners not delinquent in paying any taxes or fees to the county or a municipality. Guilford County had contracted with Ernest C. Pearson, an attorney and economic developer with Nexsen Pruet LLC, to draft the Guilford County Commercial Investment Grant program. More information can be found online at [www.co.guilford.nc.us/cig\\_09.php](http://www.co.guilford.nc.us/cig_09.php).

## Commerce stands ready to assist

N.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco pledged to committee members his department's spirit of cooperation and flexibility to assist counties in attracting and retaining new business and industry. Secretary Crisco noted the changing landscape in economic development – more high-tech, high-investment but with fewer jobs attached.



Keith Crisco

In response to committee Chairman Brian McMahan's offer of county assistance to Commerce, Secretary Crisco relayed that the General Assembly was not likely to advance any major economic development initiatives during the short session. Instead, he said he believes that the current statutory language would need a bit of tweaking to stay relevant.

His department could be seeking additional funding for advertising and for establishing new offices overseas in emerging and growing markets.

Secretary Crisco cautioned that several negatives were often broached in his business recruitment conversations – concerns with K-12 quality, corporate tax structure, and county-by-county variances in attracting businesses. Secretary Crisco did voice his concern over the lack of progress in tax modernization efforts. He also noted the need to review the makeup and profiles of the state's seven economic development regions.

Bonnie Renfro, president of the Randolph County Economic Development Corporation, described the State Economic Development Board's strategic planning efforts to improve North Carolina's competitiveness. Her committee, "Widely Shared Prosperity," was looking for county advice on barriers to regional resource and revenue sharing, and whether there was a lack of incentive to collaborate.

The committee was also investigating a permanent and steady revenue stream to finance infrastructure improvements, and asked if there are legislative solutions that need to be considered to give counties more flexibility or options.

The Intergovernmental Relations Steering Committee's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 18, from 1:30 – 5 p.m. at the Albert Coates Local Government Center in Raleigh.

# Know your coverage: Not all property losses paid the same

If the unfortunate does occur and one or more of your county buildings are heavily damaged – for example by a fire or windstorm – understanding the different types of damage evaluation and loss settlement options can be extremely important.

Real property is normally insured and claims are paid using one of four basic methods of loss valuation: actual cash value, replacement cost value, functional replacement cost value and historical replacement cost value. All provide significant variations of settlement that depend upon the level and design of your property coverage. Selection of each can and will affect your property insurance costs as well as the portion of reconstruction costs you may have to pay in order to be back in the same financial position as before the loss occurred.

Replacement cost valuation – the amount of funds required to rebuild the damaged building back as close to original condition as reasonably possible, using modern materials and workmanship, without any applied depreciation for obsolescence, age, use or condition – is most prevalent in commercial property insurance policies today.

Actual cash value is simply the replacement cost value as described, less applied depreciation for obsolescence,

age, use and condition. Absent suspected arson or other foul-play, insurance carriers typically pay the actual cash value amount quickly after the loss. This gives the insured immediate working capital to begin making repairs.

After the reconstruction of the building is completed, a second and final check is cut for the remaining balance between the actual cash value and replacement cost amounts. It also is at this point that any chosen deductibles that apply are subtracted against the total recovery amount.

The functional replacement cost value method is sometimes used to control cost and allows reconstruction with materials that may be different but that still provide the current functionality of the structure comparable to pre-loss. Many older county buildings are constructed of materials difficult or impossible to obtain today, and they often serve a different purpose than what was originally intended. It essentially changes the valuation basis to the cost to replace the damaged or destroyed property with property that can serve the same func-

tion, but not necessarily be of the same materials.

Such an example might be an old school building that has been converted to office space. The county would not rebuild a school and then convert it to office space; it would simply build a new office facility, assuming it is economically advantageous.

The last method of property loss valuation, historical replacement cost, is the hardest to procure and the most expensive. Sometimes also called "original reproduction cost," the purpose is to reproduce the damaged building or specific building features to the exact design, decorative style and dimensions as they existed at the time of loss, using identical materials with respect to kind and quality. Substitution of materials and architectural features with those of like kind and quality will be required only if the identical materials and features cannot be reasonably obtained.

This kind of policy requires a historical replacement cost appraisal, which calculates the additional costs needed to restore the building. This normally will inflate the value of the building significantly and, as such, inflates the insurance cost proportionally. Requirements also normally dictate that this class of building be included on the National Register

of Historical Places, and the insured must have submitted a specific written request to the insurance carrier for historical replacement cost valuation to apply.

Finally, there is normally a time limit on how long an insured can refrain from the rebuilding process and still expect to collect an amount larger than the actual cash value. The NCACC Liability & Property program allows a two-year window. Since it may vary among the standard "for-profit" insurance carriers, if your county is not a member of the Liability & Property Pool, it would be sound advice to review this point with your agent. Unlike the private sector, in government operations the process of rebuilding may end up being a slower process, and depending on the size of the project, it is possible to approach a two-year time line in unusual circumstances.

Regardless of the valuation method ultimately used by the insurance adjuster handling your property loss, it is best to read your property coverage provisions, ask appropriate questions and understand how the computation for loss payment is derived before a loss occurs.

*Michael Kelly serves as Property and Casualty Program Specialist for the NCACC's Risk Management Pools. He writes a regular column on risk management for CountyLines.*

## Managing Your Risk

by Michael Kelly  
NCACC Risk Management

# DENR seeks 'good faith effort' from counties on ban

State officials say enforcement of landfill ban on certain items doesn't involve searches, fines

By **Todd McGee**

Communications Director

Counties will not be punished if banned materials wind up in their landfills as long as the county is making a good faith effort to comply with the new bans, said an official with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) during the NCACC Environment Steering Committee's Feb. 10 meeting.

Scott Mouw and Paul Crissman from the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance discussed the status, history and effects of material disposal bans. Mouw discussed the economic reasons behind bans on plastic bottles and wooden pallets and cited the "tremendous" demand for these raw materials.

Mouw said the amount of materials being recycled is increasing significantly across the state. He cited a survey of local governments that showed the landfill bans helped increase awareness among citizens about the need to recycle and that many governments and haulers were also

participating in the education process.

Crissman, a section chief with the Division of Waste Management, discussed DENR's vision for enforcing the bans and said that his department is limited in the amount of inspections it can perform.

"Our goal is compliance and understanding, not penalties and fines," he said. "There was a lot of pressure on us to come up with an enforcement policy. We are guaranteed to disappoint people. We had people angry at us because we were not looking into people's trash cans."

Crissman said that as long as a local government is attempting to comply with the bans, there would not be a penalty if DENR determines that a landfill actually violates the new laws.

"We have decided that the presence of a program constitutes compliance," he said.

So far, Crissman said his office has not received any complaints about a landfill not complying with the ban on plastic bottles.

The steering committee meeting began with a joint session with the

Agriculture Steering Committee. The two groups heard a presentation from Steven Burke, president and CEO of the Biofuels Center of North Carolina (see Agriculture Steering Committee wrap-up on page 13 for more information about the joint session).

An official with the DENR Division of Air Quality told committee members that DENR is expected to lobby the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to set the new National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) at the high end of the range proposed by EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson.

In January, the EPA announced that it would propagate a new standard that would lower the primary eight-hour ozone standard to a range from 0.060-0.070 parts per million (ppm). The EPA is accepting public comments through March 22.

Laura Boothe from DENR said she believed that DENR's response would likely be to encourage the EPA to adopt the higher standard of 0.070 ppm. If EPA chooses the lowest possible standard of 0.060 ppm, then much of the state would

be above the allowable limits, Booth said.

DENR is also expected to express concerns about the proposed secondary standard, which is designed to account for the impact of ozone on plants. The department believes more scientific research is needed before a secondary approach can be adopted and also believes that EPA needs to recognize that different areas of the country may benefit from different secondary levels.

"We are pretty sure they are going to go with a secondary standard," Booth said. "It is designed to account for the cumulative effects of repeated ozone exposure."

Committee member Allen Hardison provided an update on the Compost Operation Stakeholder Advisory Group. Hardison is the NCACC appointee to this group, which has so far met twice. The Division of Water Quality is attempting to regulate runoff from yard waste and compost facilities as wastewater and is basing this decision on a definition of stormwater runoff contained in the Clean Water Act.

Steering Committee Chairman Chuck McGrady of Henderson County set the committee's next meeting for Wednesday, May 5, beginning at 1 p.m. at the Albert Coates Local Government Center in Raleigh.

## More information on the Web

To view PowerPoint presentations from the Environment Steering Committee meeting, visit [www.ncacc.org/committees/scmembers-env.html](http://www.ncacc.org/committees/scmembers-env.html).



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# Ashe County celebrates state-of-the-art jail

The only thing that could slow down the opening of Ashe County's Law Enforcement Complex was Mother Nature. The new \$11.9 million Law Enforcement Center and its adjoining detention facility was completed under budget and roughly three months ahead of schedule, but county officials had to twice postpone an open house due to heavy snow before finally getting the opportunity to show off the state-of-the-art facility Feb. 12.

County officials left no stone unturned in their quest to ensure the project was as cost-effective as possible. Most of the furniture in the three-story Law Enforcement Center, which houses the Sheriff's Department and offices for the N.C. Highway Patrol, the Division of Motor Vehicles, 911 dispatch and communications, and the magistrate, came from Lowe's – and not the way you might think.

Lowe's President and CEO Larry Stone, with whom the county has enjoyed a long relationship, allowed county officials to pick out rooms of furniture from the home improvement company's old headquarters in Wilkesboro.

"Once we got it up here, Larry said, 'we'll just donate that to the county,'" said County Manager Dan McMillan. "The mover estimated it at about \$80,000 worth of furniture."

Another item – a stainless steel refrigerator in the Sheriff's Office break room – was recovered as stolen property during a drug raid on a house.

Even with some hand-me-downs, the complex fits in nicely on a county campus in Jefferson that includes the courthouse and Agricultural Services building. In addition to offices, the



30,000-square-foot Law Enforcement Center includes a booking office, holding cells, interview and monitoring rooms, evidence storage, a training center, male and female locker rooms and workout areas, and lots of unfinished space on the third floor for expansion.

In the detention facility, inmates are monitored through a state-of-the-art audio/video system that sends data to separate control rooms on the male and female sides of the facility.

There's a video arraignment room, allowing for remote hearings, and communication between visitors and inmates is handled through video visitation modules.

Gone are vending machines: Inmates will now log into a vending kiosk that keeps track of their available spending money and allows them to order snacks and other amenities. Friends and family can deposit money into an inmate's account when they visit.

The 35,000-square-foot detention facility represents a sorely needed upgrade from the old jail. Chief Jailor Sharon Price said that the old facility was meant to accommodate 17 inmates but has housed as many as 52.

"We're going from 17 beds to 162, so it's a major change for us," she said.

– Jason King



Ashe County Manager Dan McMillan talks about the history behind the county's previous jails, which are depicted in a mural painted on a wall at the old jail facility. Staff had prints made from pictures they took of the mural, which was painted directly on sheetrock by a former deputy's wife. Sheriff James Williams said he hopes the mural can be disassembled and moved to a conference room at the new Law Enforcement Center. The Sheriff's Office offered prints for sale to the public to raise money to help accessorize the new Law Enforcement Center.

Photos by Jason King

## Task force to look at public health funding streams, standards

By Rebecca Troutman

Intergovernmental Relations Director

At the NCACC Human Services Steering Committee's Feb. 11 meeting, committee members learned first-hand what the General Assembly had in mind when it approved a state budget special provision that directed formation of a Public Health Improvement Plan and Task Force.

This provision called on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop a five-year public health improvement plan, including a list of core services and activities, performance measures and health status indicators. The plan should promote uniformity across health departments, meet national standards of performance, and reduce geographic and racial health disparities. Further, the task force is to identify a reliable and consistent source of state revenue to fund a flexible funding formula.

Given that county revenue sources largely fund county health departments, which have budgets augmented by federal, Medicaid and service fee dollars,

counties have expressed concern over efforts to require – rather than incent – regionalization, especially in service areas that are funded predominantly by county funding.

Rep. Beverly Earle (Mecklenburg), who serves as one of three chairs of the House's Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, emphasized that her subcommittee did not intend the provision to be considered a negative reaction to county health department performance. Rather, she said subcommittee leaders believed that the small funding streams they instituted over the years to address specific health issues may have outlived their usefulness.

Legislators are concerned that North Carolina's health indicators do not reflect state and federal investments. According to Earle, the state ranks 44<sup>th</sup> in infant mortality and 41<sup>st</sup> in teen pregnancy, for example. She said that counties with the worst indicators were receiving little or no funding to combat these public health problems.

Rep. Earle relayed subcommittee members' concerns with possible dupli-

cation of effort, inefficient administration, and lack of funding for low-wealth areas. The five-year plan should address these concerns, and Earle said that local health directors are expected to help develop the plan. She emphasized that there is no legislative intent to redesign health departments.

Danny Staley, president of the N.C. Association of Local Health Directors and health director for the Appalachian District Health Department, spoke on behalf of county health departments. His concerns centered on the flow of money – most state dollars were actually from the federal government, with strings attached in terms of use. If there are no new dollars, and the existing funding is merely redirected, he said those communities with positive health indicators might see a decline. Further, he said negative health indicators are a result of external and environmental factors beyond the control of county health departments – public health being a community concern.

Maria Spaulding, a former Wake County director of human services who now serves as DHHS deputy secretary

for long-term care and family services, told committee members that federal monitoring of North Carolina's food stamps program showed it to be the fifth-most accurate state nationally with no audit findings. Given that the federal government provides financial incentives for proper food stamp administration, this is good news.

Of special note is the rollout of the childcare services Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) system that will serve as a replacement to the system of distributing hard checks to families and providers. With a planned June pilot, the new system will increase accuracy, provide faster provider payment, reduce county DSS administrative costs, and reduce and prevent fraudulent activities.

Spaulding spoke briefly about the legislative study committee that is considering childcare consolidation, and noted that while the county DSS directors are not represented on the committee, they submitted their concerns and recommendations for consideration. According

Please see Human Services on page 12

# Counties call on legislators for help on use of E-911 funds

By Todd McGee

Communications Director

For more than a decade, North Carolina's counties have asked the Legislature for greater flexibility in allowed uses of E-911 fees. Expanding the use of these funds has been NCACC's top Justice and Public Safety goal since 1995.

Prior to 2007, cities and counties were allowed to set their own 911 service charges for landline phones, while there was a statewide charge of 80 cents per month for wireless phones. The charges for the land lines varied greatly across the state, from 25 cents per month (Wake County) to \$3 (Washington County).

In 2007, the General Assembly voted to do away with local 911 service charges and to combine the wireless and land line charges, and instituted a statewide fee of 70 cents per month. The General Assembly eliminated the Wireless 911 Board and expanded the 911 Board.

The 911 Board is charged to oversee the distribution of the fees back to the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in accordance with existing law. The 911 Board also has the authority to lower the fee.

Under current law, these funds can only be used for equipment to answer the call, not to process the call or to ensure

## Legislative goal on E-911 funds

Support legislation to preserve county revenue from E-911 charges and allow counties greater flexibility in the use of the funds; and restructure the 911 Board created by G.S. 62A-41 to add additional local government representation.

emergency aid is received. The 911 Board and telephone companies have resisted allowing more flexibility in the use of the 911 funds even though the citizens who pay the fee would benefit greatly from a more comprehensive 911 system.

"The 911 system does not just involve answering the phone call," said NCACC Director of Government Relations Kevin Leonard. "Some would say that the most important part of the entire system is the dispatch, when the 911 operator directs the appropriate aid to the scene. Yet the revenue being generated by the fee cannot be used to process the dispatch. It can only be used for the equipment needed to receive the call."

Two committees are reviewing this issue and are expected to make recommendations for the 2010 short session. The House Select Committee on the Use of 911 Funds met for the first time Jan. 26. The committee is co-chaired by Reps. Lucy Allen (Franklin) and Angela Bryant (Nash). Rep. Allen introduced a bill

in 2009 that would have expanded the allowable uses of E-911 funds (her bill – H1480 – was eventually changed to a bill that created the select committee to study the system).

At the committee's Feb. 23 meeting, Pasquotank County Manager Randy Keaton, Franklin County 911 Director Christy Shearin and Catawba County Assistant Manager Lee Worsley made a presentation that highlighted the needs for enhanced uses of the 911 funds.

Worsley's presentation took legislators through an actual call received by the Catawba County 911 Center on Jan. 15. The caller was asking for help for a child who had fallen into a pond at an apartment complex and was unconscious.

The entire phone call took more than six minutes to process and involved dispatching resources from three different agencies – Catawba County EMS, the Hickory Fire Department and the Hickory Police Department. The 911 dispatcher had to coordinate communications between each of the agencies until they arrived on site, yet the fees generated from the 911 fund supported only the first 27 seconds of the call.

The 911 Board created a subgroup to study and make recommendations to the 911 Board, which in turn will report its findings to the General Assembly. Keaton, Shearin, Worsley and NCACC First

Vice President Brian McMahan (Jackson County) served on that committee. This subgroup submitted a series of recommendations to the 911 Board. One recommendation called for increased flexibility in the use of the E-911 funds, but only if a PSAP had met certain standards regarding the type of equipment used in the facility. The 911 Board rejected this recommendation, but Leonard said that legislators are still open to this concept.

"If we can build a draft piece of legislation that will create state 911 standards, then once standards are met, add in the flexibility of 911 funds and also incentivize PSAP consolidation, then I think we're moving in the right direction," Leonard said.

Another concern for counties is the revenues that have built up in the 911 Fund. According to a report to the House Select Committee from Richard Taylor, executive director of the 911 Board, the fee has generated a fund balance of more than \$90 million. Given the state's dicey budget situation, some 911 officials are nervous about the safety of that revenue.

In addition, Taylor told the committee that the 911 Board is recommending that the fee be reduced from 70 cents per month to 60 cents per month, effective July 1. Reducing the fee would negatively impact the amount of funds available to counties to upgrade their 911 systems.



## LOCAL ELECTED LEADERS

# Academy

## Strategic Leadership Education for County and Municipal Elected Officials

### Webinar: Ethics for Local Officials

MARCH 25, 2010 4:00 – 6:00 PM

In 2009 the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation that requires local governing boards to adopt a code of ethics and requires board members to receive ethics training by January 1, 2011.

This webinar is a convenient way for elected officials to fulfill the legal requirement for two hours of ethics training. This live, interactive seminar allows participants to listen to the presenters, view the presentation materials online, and ask questions. Board members may view the webinar as a group or individually. The only equipment required is a computer with Internet access.

After the webinar date, an archived version will be available to view on-demand. To register for the webinar or to purchase the archived version, visit [www.sog.unc.edu/courses/0688/](http://www.sog.unc.edu/courses/0688/), or contact Gail Wilkins at [wilkins@sog.unc.edu](mailto:wilkins@sog.unc.edu) or 919.962.9754.

### Collective Bargaining: A Beginner's Guide

APRIL 9, 2010 GREENSBORO  
APRIL 23, 2010 ASHEVILLE  
MAY 21, 2010 WILMINGTON

A bill to require counties and cities to engage in collective bargaining with law enforcement, fire, and EMS unions is pending right now in Congress. Nobody knows whether it will pass, but experienced observers give it a chance. This would be a major change for North Carolina.

If you are interested in learning more about this proposed legislation and its possible impact on local governments, please join us at an upcoming half-day program to discuss 10 basic questions related to collective bargaining.

To register, visit [www.sog.unc.edu/courses/0391/](http://www.sog.unc.edu/courses/0391/), or contact Lisa Sheffield at [sheffield@sog.unc.edu](mailto:sheffield@sog.unc.edu) or 919.962.3464.

Visit [www.lela.unc.edu](http://www.lela.unc.edu) for an up-to-date calendar of educational programs offered through the Local Elected Leaders Academy. To learn more, contact Donna Warner at 919.962.1575 or [warner@sog.unc.edu](mailto:warner@sog.unc.edu).



Philip Hill, a communications engineer with Spectrum Bridge Inc., demonstrates the television equipment being used to wirelessly transmit data being collected from a monitoring device set up at a pond.

Photo by Todd McGee

## White Spaces

Continued from page 1

video cameras in high traffic areas to provide real-time traffic monitoring. The county has upgraded its public parks by placing video cameras to help with public safety issues and extending high-speed wireless access to enable citizens to stay connected.

Officials have placed sensor devices in various wetlands areas to collect data required by the Environmental Protection Agency. The sensors continually broadcast their data back to the monitoring station, enabling personnel to retrieve the data on a real-time basis instead of having to make more costly spot checks by physically driving or boating to the sensor. This not only cuts down on the time and effort needed to retrieve the data, but also allows problems to be identified and resolved more quickly, thereby providing a better service to citizens.

Dr. John Chapin, a consultant for TV Band Service LLC, said the trial will help identify the many ways in which organizations, including government agencies, can benefit from this emerging field.

“We expect to learn a lot about the technology and the uses of the TV white spaces through this trial,” Chapin said. “We’re pulling together a variety of radios and applications. We’re excited to grow the trial network and invite future participation by radio vendors, government organizations and potential users.”

More than 100 reporters, entrepreneurs, government officials and researchers from N.C. State University’s electrical engineering department attended the Feb. 24 demonstration event at the

Screen Gems Studios in Wilmington. Officials showed live footage from cameras installed at an area park and a nearby highway and demonstrated data that was being collected from a monitoring device set up at a pond on the facility.

Because these applications use the airwaves to transmit their data, there is no need to dig and bury expensive cables, and there is no need to visit the location to retrieve the data. In addition, the units can be powered by a solar cell, making them portable and environmentally friendly – not to mention exceedingly cost-effective, Chapin said.

For instance, if a city is doing a big road construction project, the city may want to establish a traffic camera at the site because citizens may be interested in monitoring the traffic – as well as the progress of the project. Because it is using wireless technology, no cables would have to be run to the camera, meaning the units can be set up quickly. Once the project is finished, the camera could be taken down and moved to another location, Chapin said.

The advantage of using the white spaces is that the signals can travel much further than a traditional wireless network and can penetrate buildings and other impediments. Signals can travel as far as two miles regardless of the terrain, and can reach even further if the area is flat and open, Chapin said. In addition, the signals can carry more data, resulting in faster speeds for Internet access. And because the signals don’t travel as far as traditional analog broadcast signals, a station can be used on different sides of the county at the same time to deliver different signals, Chapin said.

## Elections

Continued from page 1

have a clear path to Raleigh, unless someone decides to mount a write-in campaign or gets on the ballot as an unaffiliated candidate. McGrady, co-winner of the 2009 Outstanding County Commissioner Award, will replace Rep. Carolyn Justus, who has decided to retire from the Legislature. Torbett will replace Rep. Wil Neumann, who has decided to run for the Senate seat being vacated by retiring Sen. David Hoyle.

Another member of the NCACC Board of Directors, District 4 Director F.D. Rivenbark of Pender County, will challenge incumbent Rep. Carolyn Justice, a former Pender County commissioner, for a seat in the N.C. House of Representatives.

In addition to the commissioners who are seeking a higher office, many veteran commissioners decided to retire from public service this fall, including NCACC Past Presidents Danny Wright (Vance County) and Bobby Greer (New Hanover County).

### Sitting commissioners running for Congress/N.C. General Assembly

#### U.S. House

**Name (Party), County**  
Billy Yow (R), Guilford County  
Scott Keadle (R), Iredell County

**Incumbent**  
Rep. Howard Coble (District 6)  
Rep. Patrick McHenry (District 10)

#### N.C. Senate

Hood Richardson<sup>1</sup> (R), Beaufort County  
Ron Alligood (D), Granville County  
Chris Humphrey (R), Lenoir County  
Paul Johnson (R), Surry County  
Andrew Webb (R), McDowell County  
Jim Davis (R), Macon County

Sen. Marc Basnight (District 1)  
Sen. Doug Berger (District 7)  
Sen. Charles Albertson\* (District 10)  
Sen. Don East (District 30)  
Sen. Joe Sam Queen (District 47)  
Sen. John Snow (District 50)

#### N.C. House

F.D. Rivenbark<sup>1</sup> (D), Pender County Commissioner  
Arnold Lanier (R), Randolph County Commissioner  
Fred McClure (R), Davidson County Commissioner  
John Torbett<sup>2</sup> (R), Gaston County Commissioner  
Mary Accor<sup>1</sup> (D), Cleveland County Commissioner  
Chuck McGrady<sup>2</sup> (R), Henderson County Commissioner

Rep. Carolyn Justice (District 16)  
Rep. Harold Brubaker (District 78)  
Rep. Hugh Holliman (District 81)  
Rep. Wil Neumann\*\* (District 108)  
Rep. Tim Moore (District 111)  
Rep. Carolyn Justus\* (District 117)

<sup>1</sup>Unopposed in primary  
<sup>2</sup>Unopposed for seat

\* Not seeking re-election  
\*\* Filed for N.C. Senate

### Sitting commissioners who did not file for re-election

Alexander County	Harold Odom and Wes Bolick
Alleghany County	Doug Murphy
Ashe County	Gary Barber
Cabarrus County	Grace Mynatt and Coy Privette
Camden County	Philip S. Faison (NCACC District 1 Director)
Caswell County	George W. Ward, Jr.
Chowan County	Kenny Goodwin, Jimmy Alligood and Louis Belfield
Clay County	Harry Jarrett
Columbus County	Ronald Gore
Craven County	Jason Jones
Davidson County	Max Walser
Edgecombe County	Thomas C. Cherry
Gaston County	John A. Torbett <sup>2</sup>
Granville County	Ronald Alligood <sup>1</sup> and James W. Lumpkins
Guilford County	Steve Arnold
Halifax County	Gene Minton
Haywood County	Charles “Skeeter” Curtis
Henderson County	Mark Williams
Hyde County	George Davis
Jones County	Charles Battle
Lee County	Jamie (James) Kelly
Lenoir County	Chris Humphrey <sup>1</sup>
Lincoln County	Bruce Carlton
Madison County	Vernon Ponder and Eddie Fox
Mitchell County	Patrick Phillips and Kevin Street
New Hanover County	Bobby Greer (NCACC Legislative Goals Committee Co-Chair)
Orange County	Mike Nelson
Pasquotank County	Marshall Stevenson and Matt Wood
Pender County	Norwood Blanchard
Rutherford County	Brent Washburn
Stokes County	Ron Carroll
Surry County	Craig Hunter
Swain County	Genevieve Lindsay and Glenn Jones
Union County	Allan Baucom and Parker Mills
Vance County	Danny Wright (NACo Director)
Warren County	Bill Davis
Washington County	Billy Corey
Watauga County	John Cooper
Wilkes County	Zach Henderson <sup>3</sup>
Wilson County	Josephine Edwards and Frank Emory
Yadkin County	Chad Wagoner and Tommy Garner

<sup>1</sup>running for N.C. Senate    <sup>2</sup>running for N.C. House    <sup>3</sup>running for sheriff

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**COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR** – James City County, Virginia (pop. 63,329). Historic James City County, Virginia, with a history of stability in its top leadership, is seeking a talented, results oriented professional to serve as the County's next Administrator. The County is governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors, elected for staggered four year terms, with the County Administrator serving as Chief Administrative Officer. The County's government is recognized both within the Commonwealth and nationally for its creativity, ability to work cooperatively with neighboring jurisdictions and strong leadership in the Hampton Roads region and in the state. James City County operates with an approved FY 2010 budget of \$164.1 million spread over a wide range of service areas. Minimum requirements for the position include a bachelor's degree in business or public administration, or related field, with a master's degree in public or business administration preferred. A minimum of five to seven years of progressively responsible local government and/or private sector experience in management of an organization comparable to James City County is required, with an appropriate amount of time spent in a supervisory/managerial role in the public sector. Experience beyond the minimum stated, in a variety of local government or private sector settings, is also highly desirable. The ideal candidate should also possess experience in a high performing, comparably sized, growing community with a wide range of duties in operation and management. Past experience of the individual must show high levels of performance and leadership in areas that include finance and budget, growth management, long range and strategic planning, staff development and maintaining positive lines of communication at all levels. Additional experience in team building and outreach and development of high performance functions of governmental departments a significant consideration. ICMA Credentialed status for candidates is desired. The salary for the position is negotiable within a range of \$140,000 to \$165,000 based on the candidate's qualifications and experience and is supplemented by an excellent benefit package. Please submit a letter of application, detailed résumé with salary history and work related references to: John A. Anzivino, Senior Vice President, Springsted Incorporated, 1564 East Parham Road, Richmond, VA 23228; Fax 804-726-9752 or e-mail [Richmond@springsted.com](mailto:Richmond@springsted.com) by March 22, 2010. For a complete community/position profile related to the position please visit [www.springsted.com](http://www.springsted.com). James City County is an EOE.

**LEGAL COUNSEL** – Wake County's Division of Housing and Community Revitalization seeks submissions of statements of qualifications for legal counsel on real estate and community development matters. For details, please visit the Wake County website: [www.wakegov.com/bids/default.htm](http://www.wakegov.com/bids/default.htm).

**CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER** – Moore Co., pop. 85,280 with a total annual operating budget of over \$130M is seeking an experienced professional as the CFO. Located in the Sandhills of North Carolina, Moore County is home to Pinehurst and Southern Pines. Position is responsible for accounting and financial management systems in accordance with N.C. General Statutes. This position manages cash and investments, fixed assets, debt and grant administration, payroll and timekeeping, procurement of goods and services for all County agencies. The Chief Financial Officer oversees the preparation of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. Minimum requirements include four year degree from an accredited university or college in accounting or related field and Certified Public Accountant designation. Experience in governmental fund accounting preferred. Moore County residency required. Salary range: \$65,677 to \$99,761, hiring rate commensurate with qualifications and experience. Employment applications are available at [www.moorecountync.gov](http://www.moorecountync.gov) and in the HR Office. Submit completed employment applications and a cover letter with salary expectations to: County of Moore Human Resources, 1 Courthouse Square, PO Box 905, Carthage, NC 28327. Fax# 910-947-2792. Application deadline is 5:00 P.M. EST, Monday, April 5, 2010. EOE.

**CITY MANAGER** – Southern Shores, N.C. (pop. 2,500 off season and approx. 10,000 in season). The coastal resort Town of Southern Shores located on the Outer Banks is seeking a talented professional to serve as its City Manager. The Town is governed by a five member City Council. The Mayor and a four member non-partisan Council are elected for a four year staggered term. The Town has a 2010 budget of \$5.7 million and 20 full time employees. Salary is open, depending on qualifications. However, the minimum starting salary is expected to be \$90,000 plus. The Town offers an exceptional benefit package. Minimum requirements for the position include a bachelor's degree in business or public administration, or related field. A minimum of 5 to 7 years of progressive management responsibility in local government or private sector management experience is required. The candidate must possess expertise and leadership skills in areas that include finance and budgeting, strategic planning, staff development, project management, organizational development, and possesses excellent communications and interpersonal skills. The candidate must build strong working relationships with council, staff, other governmental units and very active citizen volunteer groups. Experience in coastal government and knowledge of coastal regulations will be considered a plus. Please submit a letter of application, detailed résumé with salary history and work related references to: J. Webb Fuller, c/o Town of Southern Shores, 5375 N. Virginia Dare Trail, Southern Shores, NC 27949 or email [wfuller@southernshores-nc.gov](mailto:wfuller@southernshores-nc.gov) by April 12, 2010. EOE.

**DEPUTY CLERK TO THE BOARD** – Carteret County. Performs advanced clerical and administrative work in support of activities of the Board of Commissioners and County Manager. Daily duties include effective communications with the public, developing and maintaining official records and files, and assisting the Clerk to the Board in the full range of those assigned duties. Applicant must possess the following: excellent computer, communication, and organization, skills, considerable knowledge of County policies and departmental organization, regulations, and procedures and the ability to interpret them, and general knowledge of NC General Statutes as they apply to local government. Education and Experience: Associate's degree in Business Administration or Public Administration, or five years of progressively responsible experience in advanced clerical/administrative work with three years of supervisory experience. Three years governmental experience, preferably in a local government setting; or any equivalent combination of training and experience which provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities. Position requires occasional travel, including overnight travel, to training sessions. Also requires the working of extended hours and the working of hours outside the normal workweek. Starting salary: \$36,475. Excellent benefits package. Closing Date: open until filled. County application form available at ESC and Carteret County website: [www.carteretcountygov.org](http://www.carteretcountygov.org). County application must be submitted to: Employment Security Commission, 309 Commerce Avenue, Morehead City, N.C. 28557. Carteret County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

**CHIEF WATER PLANT OPERATOR** – Pasquotank Water Department is currently seeking applicants for a full-time Chief Water Plant Operator. Duties will consist of, but not be limited to: analyzing water quality, water treatment, consumption data, sludge disposal needs, treatment, consumption trends, and determine equipment needs. Additional duties: supervise, train, develop, direct, and evaluate staff members; respond to emergency calls; perform skilled and technical work as required. Candidates will need to have: 1) At the minimum, a High School Diploma or G.E.D.; 2) Five plus years of experience in a conventional water treatment facility; 3) valid driver's license. 4) NC Operator Certification. Salary Range: \$35,025 – \$49,036. Hours of operation will be Monday through Friday starting at 8:00 am until 5:00 pm. Position open until filled. Application and/or résumé may be submitted to the following: Pasquotank County Personnel Office, 206 East Main Street, P.O. Box 529, Elizabeth City, NC 27907-0529.

**GRANTS ADMINISTRATOR** – Gaston County, NC. Works with County Departments to prepare grant applications including narrative descriptions, work plans and detailed multi-year budgets; acts as the County Liaison for the Community Development Block Grant program; administers various state, federal and foundations grants by working with the Finance Department to draw-down grant funds and to meet reporting requirements. Requires a Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration or related field and 2 years of professional experience working with state and federal grants, preferably in a government setting. A Master's Degree is preferred. Pay scale: \$49,180 – \$76,239 annually. Open until filled. For information/application, contact the Gaston County Department of Human Resources, PO Box 1578, Gastonia, NC 28052. (704)866-3005. [www.co.gaston.nc.us](http://www.co.gaston.nc.us). An Equal Opportunity Employer.

## ADVERTISING POLICY

The NCACC publishes career opportunities in CountyLines and on its Web site at [www.ncacc.org/classifieds.htm](http://www.ncacc.org/classifieds.htm).

### CountyLines rates (monthly)

\$1.50 per printed line (minimum of \$25 per monthly ad) for North Carolina member counties and county entities; \$3.50 per printed line (minimum \$75) for all others.

### Web site rates (one-time charge)

\$20 per ad (up to 400 words) for N.C. counties and county entities; \$50 per ad for all others. After 400 words, all ads will cost an additional \$5 per every 50 words.

### General information and instructions

Ads published in CountyLines run in one issue only unless otherwise requested by the advertiser. Ads published in CountyLines are posted online at no additional charge and will remain posted on the Web site until the position's closing date or the position is filled, for up to six months. Advertisers are asked to notify the NCACC when their position has been filled. Ads may be submitted, along with billing information, to Jason King via e-mail ([communications@ncacc.org](mailto:communications@ncacc.org)), or faxed to (919) 733-1065. Non-N.C. member counties must provide a credit card number before ads will be posted. **The deadline for advertising in the next issue of CountyLines is Thursday, April 8.** For more information, please call Jason King at (919) 715-0045.

## Human Services

Continued from page 9

to Spaulding, county DSS directors believe that childcare administration could be best and most efficiently managed by county DSS departments alone.

Macon County Board of Commissioners Chairman Ronnie Beale discussed the findings and recommendations of his county's comprehensive childcare study and the measures Macon County has taken to spur daycare capacity. Macon County initiated the study after the only facility to provide infant care closed.

Beale emphasized that lack of daycare opportunities hampered economic development and employment opportunities. While Macon County officials are looking for a private partner to operate a comprehensive service facility, state regulations create cumbersome barriers for new homes. For example, under the five-star rating system, all new homes are automatically assigned a one-star rating, and one-star homes receive lower reim-

bursement rates despite having higher startup costs. Representatives from the DHHS Division of Child Development, Ron Byrd and Ila Teague, were on hand to receive Macon County's study.

The steering committee's final presentation was on the NCFast automation initiative – a statewide information technology project through DHHS to provide technology tools for county DSS workers. Anthony Vellucci, NCFast program director, reviewed the benefits and plans to put much-needed IT on the desks of county social services workers.

The NCFast project, which has been years in the making, will provide case management tools, automatic eligibility determination, and records management to increase worker productivity and reduce chances of fraud. Vellucci noted that the software platform had been purchased and is up and running in a test environment.

The steering committee's next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 13, from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at the Albert Coates Local Government Center in Raleigh.

## Calendar of Events

For a complete listing of events, visit [www.ncacc.org/meetings.htm](http://www.ncacc.org/meetings.htm).

### ▼ APRIL

- 7 NCACC Board of Directors meeting, Quorum Center, Raleigh (Wake County)
- 8 NCACC District Meeting, Hilton Garden Inn, Roanoke Rapids (Halifax County)
- 13 NCACC District Meeting (includes ethics training opportunity), Waynesville Inn (Haywood County)
- 14 NCACC District Meeting (includes ethics training), Don Gibson Theatre, Shelby (Cleveland County)
- 15 Ethics training at NCLM District Meeting, The Depot, Whiteville (Columbus County)
- 15 Ethics training at NCLM District Meeting, Trinity City Hall Annex (Randolph County)
- 15-17 N.C. Association of County Clerks to the Board Annual Conference, Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center, Salisbury (Rowan County)
- 19-23 N.C. Tax Collectors Association Spring Conference, Sheraton Atlantic Beach (Carteret County)
- 20 Ethics training at NCLM District Meeting, Smithfield Recreation & Aquatics Center (Johnston County)
- 21 NCACC District Meeting (includes ethics training), Beaufort County Community College, Building 10, Washington
- 22 NCACC District Meeting, The Bistro at Duplin Winery, Rose Hill (Duplin County)
- 27 NCACC District Meeting, Tanglewood Country Club, Clemmons (Forsyth County)



# Orange feeds county's hunger for local foods

By Jason King

Assistant Communications Director

A new farm enterprise incubator initiative in Orange County is trying to grow the farming community and keep pace with a budding demand for locally grown foods, members of the NCACC Agriculture Steering Committee learned during their Feb. 10 meeting in Raleigh. Extension Agent Carl Matyac provided an overview of the county's PLANT @ Breeze program, which trains current and new/prospective farmers in Orange and six surrounding counties.

The 168-acre Breeze Farm is on property that was sold to the State of North Carolina by a charitable remainder trust established by the William Breeze family. The state designated it to the N.C. State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, which collaborates with local cooperative extension centers on the program. The Orange County Board of Commissioners has for the past three fiscal years committed \$10,000 for the PLANT @ Breeze initiative.

The initiative includes classroom training and an apprenticeship. For \$110, participants in the classroom program receive training from extension agents, faculty from N.C. State and N.C. A&T, and local farmers. Weekly classes last three hours each and are held over a two-month period in January and February. Matyac said that the classroom training includes a big emphasis on marketing.

Participants are required to develop a business plan at the end of the classroom portion. Those who have their business plans approved can apply to become an apprentice on the farm. If approved, the participant agrees to rent a quarter-acre plot for \$110. The participant is responsible for planting, weeding, irrigating, harvesting and marketing their crops. Extension staff provides the land prep (by contracting with local farmers), bedding work, irrigation setup and on-site consultation. Apprentices can rent plots for a maximum two-year period.

Matyac said that Orange County offers a unique market for agriculture because there is a high interest in local foods, particularly organically grown crops, and the county has excellent local food markets. There are currently 22 practicing apprentices at the farm, and all apprentices have sold their crops in a local market.

"It's not a huge area of financial impact but it is growing tremendously," he said. "People just snatch them up."

While the farm is not certified organic, "most of the participants are quite intent on keeping it organic," he said.

Using intensive, year-round grow-

## More information on the Web

To view PowerPoint presentations from the Agriculture Steering Committee meeting, visit [www.ncacc.org/countylines/2010/03/ag.html](http://www.ncacc.org/countylines/2010/03/ag.html).

ing, Matyac said some apprentices annually gross \$25,000 an acre on the farm.

Matyac said the most common problem among participants involves weed maintenance issues on various plots. He said that Cooperative Extension is currently developing a handbook on expectations for apprentices.

## Farmland preservation tools available to counties

Orange County is one of six in the state to have an approved Farmland Protection Plan in place in January 2010. Dewitt Hardee, program director for the N.C. Agriculture Development & Farmland Preservation (ADFP) Trust Fund, discussed Farmland Protection Plans as part of his presentation on how counties can help preserve their county's agriculture base through planning and policies.

According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, North Carolina lost 600,000 acres of farmland between 2002-07. With loss of cropland in mind, the General Assembly in 2005 created the ADFP Trust Fund "to fund projects to encourage the preservation of qualifying agricultural, horticultural and forestlands to foster the growth, development and sustainability of family farms."

According to Hardee, agribusiness is a \$70 billion annual industry in North Carolina. For counties, Hardee quoted an American Farmland Trust survey that showed that for every dollar in taxes received from working lands, only 34 cents in services is paid by the government. There are also quality of life objectives to farmland preservation, and developing traditional rural areas destroys the landscapes that attract and retain people and industries in North Carolina, he added.

"We're trying to keep sprawl off the land," he said. "If we don't find a way to protect [existing farmland] that \$70 billion is going to disappear."

The ADFP Trust Fund works with various levels of government to help protect agricultural interests, Hardee noted. Two examples are the military and the N.C. Department of Transportation. The military is interested in keeping housing developments from encroaching on military bases, Hardee said, due to the military's need for "dark areas" for aircraft landing zones. The Trust Fund also works with the military, he said, to provide food resources and develop alternative energy sources. The Trust Fund

works with the DOT and state agencies to try to make sure that road construction does not fatally disrupt family farms.

"The No. 1 thing that kills a family farm operation is a highway going through the middle of it," he said.

Mr. Hardee spoke of the ADFP Trust Fund's farmland preservation toolbox and included resources for counties. Among these are Conservation Easements, Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VADs), Enhanced VADs, and Farmland Protection Plans, all of which counties can use to support county agricultural policies.

In a VAD or EVAD, the property owner enters a voluntary agreement with the county to surrender their development rights to the property. Property owners receive varying degrees of benefits. Farmland Protection Plans are tools developed by counties to help a county identify its inventory of agricultural resources, challenges and opportunities for family farms, maintenance tools, and schedules and funding.

The ADFP Trust Fund has model ordinances for VADs and Farmland Protection Plans available on its Web site, [www.ncadfp.org](http://www.ncadfp.org). Follow the "Farmland Preservation" link to access the models.

The Association has a legislative goal to expand funding for the Trust Fund and "to create a dedicated revenue source to assure continued and stable fund maintenance."

## North Carolina ripe for organic crop production

Committee members also heard from Chris Reberg-Horton, an assistant professor of crop science at the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at N.C. State University. Reberg-Horton said that North Carolina is a hotbed for organics processors due to its status as a prime shipping area for the East Coast. There is no organic certifying agency in the state now, however, and most organic crops are shipped in from the Midwest for processing.

"We have a real niche here," he said. "Our growers are transitioning a lot of land in a hurry to catch up with the market."

Reberg-Horton called organic crops "value-added," but said it does take a "rethinking" of one's farm system to make it work. There is a price premium on organically grown crops and goods. For example, in 2008, egg farmers typically received anywhere from two to four times the price they would for conventional eggs. Organic soybeans drew \$23-\$25 a bushel, while organic corn drew \$9-\$12 per bushel.

Reberg-Horton explained that a real problem for livestock farmers is price stability, and organics does offer a lot

of shelter from that problem. He did add that organic farming is "definitely a little harder to do and more expensive." Reberg-Horton said that various studies have shown that yields for organic crops are roughly the same as conventional crops over the long-term, but he argued that establishing a long-term outlook for profit is virtually impossible.

Reberg-Horton also discussed a three-year USDA grant that N.C. State has received to develop corn, peanut, soybean and wheat varieties with traits identified by farmers as necessary for organic production. Reberg-Horton will co-coordinate the breeding effort.

## Researchers finding state's niche in biofuels sector

Steven Burke, president and CEO of the Biofuels Center of North Carolina, told members of the Agriculture and Environment steering committees that North Carolina holds vast potential to be a leader in the production of biofuels.

The Biofuels Center, located in Granville County, has been given the long-term task of developing a statewide biofuels industry to reduce the state's dependence on imported liquid fuels. Burke said the commitment to this effort from the State of North Carolina has increased production of feedstocks in the state and that the state holds great potential due to climate conditions and topography.

Burke said that due to those factors, North Carolina will not be dependent on a single crop – in particular a food source – for biofuels development. Some of those feedstocks being grown and researched now include canola, switchgrass, industrial sweet potatoes and trees.

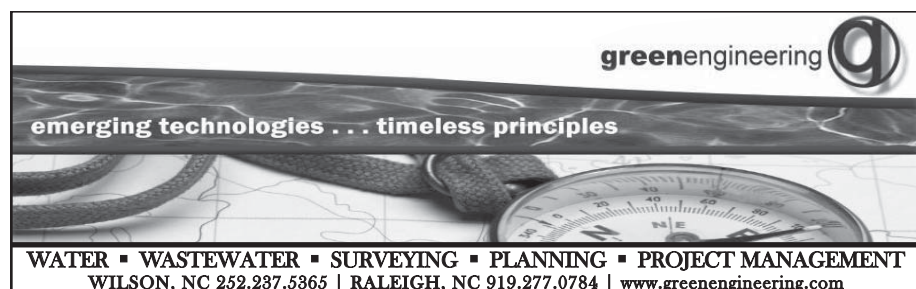
"There's no other state in America that can grow so many of the different feedstocks for biofuels as can North Carolina," he said. "The task is to look at which of these feedstocks are actually most important for North Carolina."

Burke estimated that two-thirds of feedstocks will come from forestry (tree-based) resources, and a third will come from "other stuff." He added that the state must be aggressive in identifying which crops can be grown in which regions throughout the year.

"How about barley as a winter crop to support soybeans to augment trees in a given region?" he asked.

Burke said that counties can contribute to the effort by showing leadership. An easy action would be to purchase vehicles that can utilize biofuels for a county's fleet. He said it is also feasible for counties and municipalities to use their waste for conversion to liquid fuels, which can be used in those alternative fuel vehicles. Burke also said counties can help with recognition that local biofuels production can join a county's roster of economic development tools.

Chairman Ray Jeffers, a Person County commissioner, set the steering committee's next meeting for Thursday, May 20, at 9 a.m. at the Albert Coates Local Government Center in Raleigh.



**Cabarrus, Macon counties  
eliminate positions**

Counties continue to struggle along with the economy, and at least two counties took drastic measures in February in attempts to curtail budget deficits.

Macon County commissioners on Feb. 8 eliminated the full-time position of county attorney and accepted the resignation of Lesley Moxley, who had held the position since 2006. The Board then voted to retain Chester Jones, who also serves as Clay County attorney, to provide legal services as needed.

Cabarrus County on Feb. 22 announced that due to an anticipated \$6 million revenue shortfall, it had eliminated 76 positions and laid off 65 employees (11 of the positions were vacant).

"Unfortunately, there were no other viable options," said County Manager John Day. "We knew four years ago that there would be a gap between expenses and revenues in fiscal year 2011. We planned for that in the five-year plan by proposing a property tax increase and a sales tax referendum to offset costs of school construction and other capital projects.

"However, with 1,400 foreclosed homes and an unemployment rate of 12.1 percent, we cannot consider a tax increase this year."

Furloughs also are being considered, and the county is offering an incentive to encourage eligible employees to retire. The county also announced reduced hours at county-operated parks and libraries.

**Haywood County swings deal  
for former Wal-Mart property**

It appears Haywood County got a really good deal at Wal-Mart. The county signed off on a contract Feb. 10 to purchase a 14-acre property that includes a building that used to house Wal-Mart operations. The county purchased the property for \$6.6 million. Renovations are expected to add as much as \$5.9 million before the county can move departments into the facility.

"When you take a look at trying to find 14 acres, already flat, already paved with a building on it, you'd be hard-pressed finding one at that price," Chairman Kirk Kirkpatrick told *The Mountaineer*. "You might find 14 acres somewhere, but not graded and paved. If you compare what we will be paying and what it would cost to construct buildings that will accommodate both the social service and health departments, I think we saved a lot of money."

**Scouts celebrate centennial**

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners on Feb. 1 adopted a resolution in appreciation of the contributions of scouting for the past 100 years. Scouts from left to right are Gus Wagoner, Ben Reales, Jesse McCall, Stephen Moncrief, Jacob Woodel, Ben Cornett, Justin Adkins, Jacob Cleary, David Cox, Gavin Joines, Michael Lee, Ethan Binion, Julian Castillo and Matthew Hettleman. Commissioners, from left to right, are Milly Richardson, Vice Chairman Randy Miller, Chairman Ken Richardson, Doug Murphy and Steve Roten.

Photo courtesy Bob Matthias

**School of Government tackles  
'Budget-Balancing Tactics'**

The School of Government at UNC-Chapel Hill has announced a new resource for local government officials as they prepare and adopt their budgets for fiscal year 2010-11, which will be another challenging financial year for officials across the country.

"Budget-Balancing Tactics in Local Government," by David Ammons and Trevor Fleck, draws on news reports nationwide and survey findings in North Carolina to identify a broad array of cost-cutting and revenue-enhancing approaches currently used by local governments to cope with the growing budget crisis.

Cost-cutting methods discussed include hiring freezes, delayed facility and infrastructure maintenance, across-the-board cuts in departmental budgets, service cutbacks, purchasing and travel restrictions, equipment cutbacks, employee position reductions, furloughs and retirement incentives. Examples of revenue-enhancing ideas addressed in the book are fee increases, tax increases, asset sales, increased reliance on grants, the leasing of government assets to outside parties and greater reliance on reserve funds.

The publication is available for free viewing online or purchased at [www.sog.unc.edu](http://www.sog.unc.edu). To view or order, click on the "Publications" link at the top of the page and enter the publication title in the search field.

**NCACC Past President Carey  
named Secretary of Administration**

Former Orange County Commissioner Moses Carey Jr., a past president of the NCACC, was appointed Secretary of Administration by Governor Beverly Perdue on Feb. 19. The post became available when former Secretary of Administration Britt Cobb was named the governor's new chief of staff. Carey was serving as chairman of the Employment Security Commission.

The Department of Administration, created in 1957, oversees Government Operations such as building construction, purchasing and contracting for goods and services, managing state vehicles, acquiring and disposing of real property, and operating auxiliary services such as courier mail delivery and the sale of state and federal surplus property.



Moses Carey Jr.

**County Health Rankings provide  
snapshot of health in each state**

Wake and Orange counties placed tops in the state in the first set of reports to rank the overall health of every county in all 50 states, released Feb. 17 by the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The reports, available at [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org), are meant to help leaders compare their county with others to find ways to improve their community's health.

The report ranks each county in every state on how healthy people are and how long they live. Counties also are ranked on key factors that affect health such as smoking, obesity, binge drinking, access to primary care providers, rates of high school graduation, rates of violent crime, air pollution levels, liquor store density, unemployment rates and number of children living in poverty.

The online rankings include snapshots of U.S. counties with a color-coded map that compares each county's overall health with other counties in each state.

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**New commissioners take seats on Cumberland, Pasquotank boards**

Cumberland and Pasquotank counties welcomed new commissioners March 1, and both commissioners hope voters will return them to their respective boards this November.

In Cumberland County, Phillip Gilfus, a 29-year-old attorney, was sworn in to serve the remaining nine months on the term of Breeden Blackwell, an NCACC past president who resigned at the end of January. Gilfus has filed for an at-large seat on the Board.



Phillip Gilfus

Charles Jordan was sworn in as a Pasquotank County commissioner March 1. He will serve as the Board's Northern Outside representative through December, completing the term of the late Jimmie Harris, who died Jan. 18. Jordan, a member of the county's Planning Board, filed as a candidate for an at-large seat on the Board of Commissioners.



Charles Jordan

**LGFCU adds county officials to advisory councils**

The Local Government Federal Credit Union (LGFCU) on Feb. 9 named 11 county officials to its advisory councils. Advisory council members, who represent the philosophical character of the credit union and contribute their time without compensation, serve as liaisons between credit union members and non-members and LGFCU management.

January appointees include: Davie County Deputy Register of Deeds Hannah Keller (Central Piedmont Council); Catawba County Sheriff's Office CEO Coy Reid (Foothills); Randolph County Sheriff Maynard Reid (North Piedmont); Ashe County Director of Environmental Services Phillip Hurley and Wilkes County Public Health Nurse Denise Monahan (Northern Mountain); Orange County Cooperative Extension Agent Deborah Taylor (Triangle); Wayne County Assistant EMS Manager Jennings Rhodes III and Sheriff's Detective Richard Winders Jr. (Triangle East); Graham County Paramedic Jeffrey Ennis and Board of Elections Director Susan Farley, and Carol Schley, a retired employee of the Macon County Sheriff's Office (Western Mountain).

**Hyde County commissioners consider unification**

Hyde County commissioners continue to discuss the possibility of putting a referendum on unified government before voters this year.

In July 2006, Camden County became the nation's first to gain "unified government" status, giving the Board of Commissioners the statutory authority to exercise most municipal functions. Camden County has the unique distinction of being a member of the NCACC and N.C. League of Municipalities.

The unification means no community is allowed to incorporate. There are no incorporated areas within Hyde County.

Hyde County Attorney Sid Hassell told the Board of Commissioners that the county would receive an estimated \$250,000 – \$300,000 annually in shared electrical and gas utilities revenues from the N.C. Department of Revenue.

H399 was adopted by the General Assembly in 2005 and added language to Chapter 153A of the General Statutes that defined unified government. In addition to Camden and Hyde, Currituck County met the criteria to hold a referendum on unified government – something the county did unsuccessfully in 2005.

**Five counties planning anniversary celebrations in 2011**

Transylvania County got a jumpstart in February on plans for its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration in 2011. With Commissioner Mike Hawkins leading the Sesquicentennial Committee, the county has held two planning meetings with residents to discuss venues for events and topics.

In addition to Transylvania, Clay and Mitchell counties will celebrate their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversaries next year. Avery and Hoke counties will commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their formation dates in 2011. Pitt County is celebrating its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

For a list of county formation dates and parent counties, visit [www.ncacc.org/countyformationdates.html](http://www.ncacc.org/countyformationdates.html).

**PIO organization to hold conference in Cabarrus County**

County and municipal public information officials from across the state will gather in Cabarrus County on April 28-30 for the North Carolina City & County Communicators (NC3C) Annual Conference. Covered topics include integrating digital media and Web sites, citizen engagement, public records law in the digital age, online video, and the changing role of the PIO.

The \$50 registration fee is priced to fit today's tight budget. For more information, visit [www.nc3c.com](http://www.nc3c.com).

**Legislative committee to study ABC system reform**

A new General Assembly study committee will examine the state's alcoholic beverage control system and discuss ways to reform it, legislative leaders said Feb. 18. The Joint Study Committee on Alcoholic Beverage Control, comprised of legislators and a cross-section of public members representing various perspectives, will make recommendations to the General Assembly prior to the legislative session that begins in May.



Howard Hunter III

Hertford County Commissioner Howard Hunter III was appointed to the committee to represent counties by Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight. Sen. Don Vaughan of Guilford County and Rep. Ray Warren of Alexander

County will co-chair the committee.

"Our ABC system needs to evolve just like any other business," said Speaker of the House Joe Hackney. "We need to determine how best to make these changes and bring our system in line with modern-day standards of ethics and transparency."

The NCACC opposes changes to the system proposed in 2009 legislation due to the usurpation of local control. Governor Beverly Perdue in January said she is considering proposing privatizing the ABC system, something the NCACC also opposes due to the potential loss of local revenues.

For background on the ABC system, visit [www.ncacc.org/documents/2010issues\\_abc.pdf](http://www.ncacc.org/documents/2010issues_abc.pdf). For information on the legislative committee, visit [www.ncleg.net](http://www.ncleg.net), click on the "Committees" link at the top of the page, and select "Joint Study Committee on Alcoholic Beverage Control" from the dropdown menu.

**Pitt County tops state in annual recycling rankings**

The total amount of material recycled last year by North Carolina municipalities and counties increased by 40,000 tons from the previous fiscal year, according to the North Carolina Solid Waste Annual Report. The tonnage increase represents a 3.2 percent rise during a year in which total landfill disposal fell by 12.2 percent.

The county rankings, released by the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, show the wide range of performance across the state and once again challenge some conventional thinking about why some counties do better than others. For example, although poorer, rural counties might be expected to struggle with recycling, the top 10 counties include some remote jurisdictions that have consistently performed well in the state rankings.

Examples of small rural counties performing consistently well in the recycling rankings include Swain, Macon, Pamlico, Polk, Dare and Watauga counties. The performance of Haywood County, which just missed the top 10

**Top 10 counties in pounds recycled per capita, 2009**

County	Total Tonnage	Population	lbs. per capita
1 Pitt	47,467	155,570	610.24
2 Catawba	43,653	154,941	563.49
3 Dare	8,326	33,955	490.41
4 Buncombe	50,515	227,875	443.36
5 Orange	18,577	129,296	287.36
6 Swain	1,888	13,982	270.00
7 Macon	4,326	34,227	252.78
8 Watauga	5,419	45,319	239.16
9 Guilford	50,601	468,344	216.09
10 Pamlico	1,372	12,892	212.88

**Note:** Yard waste, tires and some special wastes excluded from totals to allow consistent comparisons from year-to-year.

with a per capita recovery rate of 212.87 pounds, showed the effects of a new level of effort and range of recycling programs implemented in the past two years that almost doubled the county's per capita recovery from two years ago to last year.

**SHORTS**

**Alamance:** Commissioners on Feb. 15 approved the final bid on a \$9.5 million county facilities improvement plan that includes roofing work on the Human Services Building and renovations to the old courthouse. ... **M.J. Goodrum** took over as library director March 8. ... **Chowan:** County Manager Peter Rascoe was appointed by Governor Beverly Perdue to the North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund Board of Trustees in February. ... **Craven:** The Sheriff's Office and jail operations are tentatively scheduled to move into the new \$30 million County Judicial Center by the end of March. The new jail includes 292 beds. ... **Edgecombe:** Voters in the county's Water and Sewer

District 4 will decide May 4 whether to approve \$4.5 million in general obligation bonds to purchase land for and fund the construction and installation of a new water system. ... **Hyde:** Board of Commissioners Vice Chairman Barry Swindell resigned his seat Feb. 26. Swindell's first term was to expire in December and he did not file for re-election. ... **Mark O'Mara** took over as Emergency Medical Services director in December. He previously served 26 years with Davie County EMS. ... **Moore:** Caroline Xiong took over as interim finance director at the end of February following the resignation of Lisa Hughes, who served as finance director for almost 15 years. Xiong is a 10-year county veteran.

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## County Health Plan wellness program receives a makeover

By Alissa Willett

Wellness Program Coordinator

After a comprehensive examination, the County Health Plan's wellness program has been whipped into shape again, and we think Pool members will like what they see in the new "Well County NC."

"Well County NC" may not be on the map but it is the place to be in 2010. Our new-look wellness program not only sports a new logo but also enhanced services such as our spring initiative, "Get Fit on Route 66." The Web-based fitness challenge kicked off Feb. 15, and by the end of February, 667 County Health Plan members had stepped up to the plate. The challenge runs through June 1.

Each spring and fall, "Well County NC" will roll out a new wellness initiative to help educate employees on the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and encourage, motivate and celebrate employees who take the initiative to become healthier.

In addition to our bi-annual initia-

tives, a diverse list of wellness programs that cover topics such as nutrition, fitness, stroke and heart attack prevention, stress management and more are offered for all members to use at their own discretion. For more information, visit [www.nccountyhealthplan.org/wellness.html](http://www.nccountyhealthplan.org/wellness.html).

Wellness presentations can be arranged at your facilities as well. We are expanding our online capabilities to improve health education to our members while also improving our education efforts on all preventative care offered through the County Health Plan. We want our members to understand what is available to them so they get the best care at the lowest cost possible.

If your county is a member of the County Health Plan, we will help coordinate your county's health fair and biometrics screenings. We also offer grant money to help members build their own wellness programs.

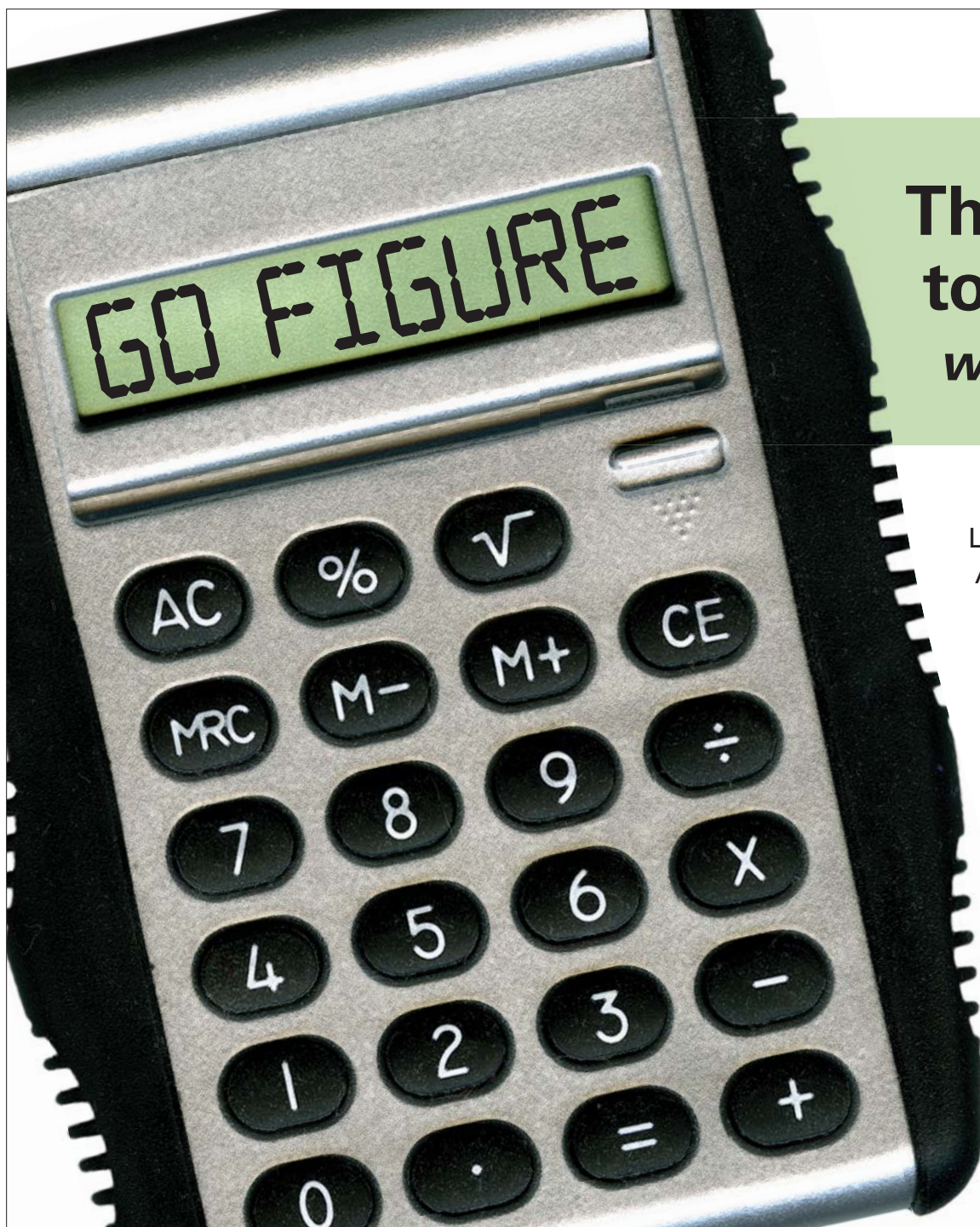
If you are a member interested in beginning or enhancing an active county wellness program, contact me at (919) 719-1125 or [alissa.willett@ncacc.org](mailto:alissa.willett@ncacc.org).



### From Wayne County to the 'Land of the Rising Sun'

Wayne County Commissioner Andy Anderson was among a dozen North Americans and one of two county officials to receive a lesson in *kokusaika*, the Japanese word for "internationalization," last November. Anderson participated in the 2009 Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar, sponsored by the Japan Local Government Center, in Tokyo and Japan's Tottori Prefecture on Nov. 1-11. Wayne County is home to a Japanese-based company, Uchiyama America Inc., which manufactures automotive seals. During a day off in his trip to Japan, Anderson paid a visit to the company's headquarters. He wanted to make sure the company knows that he values their presence in Wayne County. "If you do not have good international relations with other countries, you will not get those industries in your county," he said in *County News*, the National Association of Counties' publication. "If you do [have them] and do not improve relationships, you will have problems and probably not get future businesses."

Photo courtesy NACo



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