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Serving Anson County and the Municipalities of Ansonville, Lilesville, McFarlan, Morven, Peachland, Polkton and Wadesboro.

## Annual Toll Rate Increase for Triangle Expressway and Monroe Expressway

The annual increase of the toll rates for the Triangle Expressway and the Monroe Expressway took effect Sunday, January 1. The North Carolina Turnpike Authority Board adopted schedules of incremental annual toll rate increases for both the Triangle Expressway and Monroe Expressway based on the financing requirements for each project.

For NC Quick Pass customers with a transponder driving a Class 1 or 2-Axle vehicle, traveling the full length of the Triangle Expressway, 18.8 miles, the cost will increase 9 cents to \$3.80, or 2.43 percent. For customers with a transponder driving a Class 1 or 2-Axle vehicle, traveling the full length of the Monroe Expressway, 19.8 miles, the cost will increase 5 cents to \$2.77, or 1.84 percent.

Toll revenue is used to pay off bonds sold to fund the construction of the projects, as well as fund the overall road maintenance including repairs, mowing and winter weather preparation and response.



## Laila Hammond and Gabriel Hersey Complete Reading Program

11 year old Laila Hammond and 7 year old Gabriel Hersey were recently awarded gift certificates for reading 80 books. They both attend Ansonville Elementary School and are enrolled in the Burnsville Recreation & Learning Center's Kids Café Program.

All reading books were checked out from the Geneva Allen Davis Historical Library which is located in the Burnsville R&L Center. The library offers of a variety of reading books, especially children's reading materials. All students are encouraged to check out books from the library, read books and write paragraphs from the stories they read.

During the summer BRLC held a contest during the Summer Fun Day Camp. Laila and Gabriel entered the contest, and together they both read approximately 80 books.

BRLC Director Carol Smith said, "These students are both excellent readers. During the Afterschool Kids Café they continue to build on their great reading skills weekly."

## Activities to Commemorate the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Birthday Take Place January 13-16

This is a release from Winnie Bennett: Members of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Planning Committee are developing and preparing activities to commemorate the birthday of the late, slain civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The theme for this year's events is "Unity."

Activities will commence with an MLK Gala which will be held at the South Piedmont Community College Lockhart-Taylor Center, 514 N. Washington St., Wadesboro, NC on Friday, January 13 at 6:00 p.m. This event will feature performances by Saxophonist Carl Ratliff, along with Sunshine Rae, Kenya Myles, and the Gatewood Brothers. Tickets for this event are \$25 and they can be obtained by calling either of the following numbers: 704-465-1790 or 704-695-4968. The program will conclude at 10:00 p.m.

The annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Unity Prayer Breakfast will be held on Saturday, January 14 at 9:00 a.m. at the South Piedmont Community College Lockhart-Taylor Center, 514 N. Washington St., Wadesboro, N. C. The community breakfast will address themes of Unity, Love, Equality, Civil Rights, and Social Justice. Community groups can reserve a table at costs of \$50, \$100, \$200, or \$300. Individuals can donate \$10 to attend. All funds received will be used to defray costs of the event and to support the activities of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Planning Committee.

Make checks payable to MLK Planning Committee, c/o Rev. Dr. Bernice Bennett, P. O. Box 6, Lilesville, NC 28091 or call any member of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Planning Committee.

Also, on Saturday, January 14 at 12:00 (noon), the MLK Planning Committee is sponsoring the MLK Annual Parade. This event will take place in uptown Wadesboro. On Sunday, January 15 all local churches are encouraged to sponsor an event at your church commemorating the birthday of Dr. King. A particular focus could be on fostering unity in divisive times.

The annual Memorial march and program are scheduled for Monday, January 16 beginning at 8:00 a.m. The Memorial march will begin at the Anson County Department of Social Services building and conclude at the Lockhart-Taylor Center where the program will start at 9:00 a.m.

All events are open to the public.

## Seniors, Review, and Make Changes to Your Medicare Advantage Coverage by March 31

Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey and SHIIP, the Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program, remind Medicare beneficiaries about the Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period in North Carolina.

"Our health can change dramatically within a year's time," Commissioner Causey said. "If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan, now is the right time to make sure you have the plan that best meets your needs."

If you're unhappy with your Medicare Advantage Plan (Medicare Part C), you have options. Each year, there is a Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period from Jan. 1 to March 31. During this time, if you're in a Medicare Advantage Plan and want to change your health plan, you can do one of these:

- Switch to a different Medicare Advantage Plan with or without drug coverage
- Go back to Original Medicare and, if needed, also join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan

If you switch Medicare Advantage Plans or go back to Original Medicare with or without a Medicare drug plan, your new coverage will start the first day of the month after your new plan gets your request for coverage. Keep in mind, if you go back to Original Medicare now, you may not be able to buy a Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) policy.

For assistance with Medicare questions, contact NC SHIIP at 1-855-408-1212 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to speak to a SHIIP counselor. The Medicare Plan Finder ([medicare.gov/plan-compare](http://medicare.gov/plan-compare)) can also help you find, compare and enroll in a new Medicare Advantage Plan or a Medicare drug plan in your area. You can also call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) for help. TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.

The Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period is only for people who are currently enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan. If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan and want to change your plan, check out your options today. Remember, the Medicare Advantage Plan Open Enrollment Period ends March 31.

(SHIIP counselors are not licensed insurance agents. They do not sell, endorse, or oppose any product, plan or company. If you have questions about your specific plan, we encourage you to contact your insurance agent or insurance company.)

## Anson County's Unemployment Rate Was 4.6% in November, Down Slightly from October's 4.9% Rate

**Anson County** Anson County's unemployment rate for November was 4.6%, down slightly from October's 4.9% rate. That ranked Anson County #76 statewide (low to high). One year ago in November 2021 the rate was 4.7%.

Here are other past rates: **2022:** September 4.2%; August 4.9%; July 4.7%; June 5.3%; May 4.7%; April 4.6%; March 4.9%; February 5.1%; January 5.1%. **2021:** December 4.4%; November 4.7%; October 5.2%; September 4.9%; August 5.8%; July 6.5%; June 6.1%; May 5.5%; April 5.4%; March 5.9%; February 7.5%; January 7.7%. **The 2020 rates were:** December 7.1%; November 7.2%; October 7.2%; September 8.5%; August 8%; July 10%; June 7.9%; May 10.1%; and April 8.2%.

In March 2020 the unemployment rate in Anson County was 4.9%, just before it was affected by the pandemic.

**Statewide** Statewide the unemployment rate for November was 3.8%. Here are other statewide past rates: **2022:** October 3.9%; September 3.3%; August 3.9%; July 3.7%; June 4.1%; May 3.6%; April 3.4%; March 3.6%; February 3.7%; January 3.8%. **2021:** December 3.2%; November 3.4%; October 3.6%; September 3.8%; August 4.4%; July 4.6%; June 4.9%; May 4.5%; April 4.4%; March 4.6%; February 5.6%; January 6%. **2020:** December 6%; November and October 6.1%; September 7%; August 6.8%; July 8.9%.

Anson's total labor force in November was 10,196. Of that number 9,731 were employed and 465 were unemployed. In October the total labor force was 10,326, with 9,819 employed and 507 unemployed.

Unemployment rates (not seasonally adjusted) decreased in 92 of North Carolina's counties in November, increased in four, and remained unchanged in four. Edgecombe County had the highest unemployment rate at 7.3 percent while Buncombe and Orange Counties each had the lowest at 3.0 percent. All fifteen of the state's metro areas experienced rate decreases. Among the metro areas, Rocky Mount had the highest rate at 5.9 percent while Asheville had the lowest at 3.1 percent. The November not seasonally adjusted statewide rate was 3.8 percent.

When compared to the same month last year, not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates increased in 66 counties, decreased in 20 counties, and remained unchanged in 14.

Eleven of the state's metro areas experienced rate increases over the year, three decreased, and one remained unchanged.

The number of workers employed statewide (not seasonally adjusted) decreased in November by 26,268 to 4,922,940, while those unemployed decreased by 9,287 to 193,189. Since November 2021, the number of workers employed statewide increased 100,977, while those unemployed increased 6,359.

It is important to note that employment estimates are subject to large seasonal patterns; therefore, it is advisable to focus on over-the-year changes in the not seasonally adjusted estimates.

## 2023 NC Travel Guide Kindles Interest in Following and Blazing Trails

Dream season for travelers opens today with the arrival of the "The Official 2023 North Carolina Travel Guide," a 108-page armchair tour designed to inspire real-life trips across the state. Drawing on authentic experiences found in all 100 counties, the new guide creates fresh ways to explore cities, towns and the outdoor wonderlands at the heart of 2023's Year of the Trail celebration.

"The Year of the Trail points the way to thousands of miles of pathways where nature lovers of all abilities can walk, paddle, pedal or otherwise immerse themselves in scenic beauty and outdoor adventure," said Wit Tuttle, executive director of Visit North Carolina. "Yet as the Travel Guide shows, travelers can follow byways built on music, sports, culinary pursuits or other interests. Maybe best of all are the details - the shops and retro motor lodges, the special places to stop for views, the must-have souvenirs - that inspire travelers to make the most of the journey as well as the stay."

"The Official 2023 North Carolina Travel Guide" is free. The print edition is available at the state's nine Welcome Centers or by calling 800-847-4862 (800-VISITNC). Readers can also link to [VisitNC.com/travel-guides](http://VisitNC.com/travel-guides) to request a copy, access the digital edition or download a PDF version.

To underscore the diversity of travel options, the guide features a different cover for each of the state's three major regions. In the mountains, a shot of the dog-friendly Bearwallow Mountain Trail near Hendersonville sets hillside greenery against blue skies and mountain peaks. ARTivity on the Green, Winston-Salem's photo-ready downtown art park, represents the creative spirit that infuses the state's Piedmont cities. The coastal cover, depicting White Lake Holiday Resort in White Lake, invites discovery of the inland beaches surrounding North Carolina's phenomenal bay lakes.

Inside the guide, vivid photos and lively text blocks zoom in on real pleasures that span the state. A feature on Year of the Trail presents 15 ways to tap into the celebration with options including the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, the Halifax Underground Railroad Trail, Tsali Recreation Area and the Yadkin River State Trail along with reminders for responsible enjoyment from the Outdoor NC sites. Other articles cover wellness, larger-than-life legacies, Native American heritage sites, culinary temptations, acclaimed golf courses and attractions found only in North Carolina.

"One of my favorite features is '30 free ways to have fun,'" Tuttle said. "It curates a list of world-class attractions - among them the North Carolina Botanical Garden, Reed Gold Mine, Cataloochee Valley and Corolla's wild horses - that add value to a trip and leave more budget for dining, souvenirs and excursions."

In all, the guide features 175 towns and cities and highlights nearly 400 attractions, restaurants, lodging properties and events with more than 180 images capturing the state's allure. A fold-out map, which is supported by a Town and City Index, expedites navigation as travelers chart getaways. Throughout the guide, readers will find references to initiatives including Dream Big in Small Town NC, the sustainability-focused Outdoor NC program, Accessible Fun for All, the Paw of Approval for pet-friendly travel and the Firsts That Lasts film series.

"For anyone looking for new ideas or new takes on favorite places, the Official 2023 North Carolina Travel Guide makes an ideal starting point," Tuttle said. "The pleasure of a trip begins with the planning and dreaming."

For more information to inspire a trip, stop by [VisitNC.com](http://VisitNC.com).

**About Visit North Carolina:** Visit North Carolina is part of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina. Established in 2014, the EDPNC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that oversees the state's efforts in business and job recruitment and retention, international trade, and tourism, film and sports development. The mission of Visit North Carolina is to unify and lead the state in developing North Carolina as a major destination for leisure travel, group tours, meetings and conventions, sports events and film production. For more information on North Carolina's destinations and travel assets, go to [VisitNC.com](http://VisitNC.com).

## Harvard Street Band Concert

The Hampton B. Allen Library will present a musical program on Monday, January 9 at 10:30 a.m. in the Little Theater. The musical guests will be the Harvard Street Band. Members are Robbie Griffin, Brady Green, Don Shell and Rick Hansen.

Everyone is invited to come and enjoy the music of these talented musicians and singers. For questions call 704-694-5177.

## Lifelong Improvement Through Free Fitness Together (L.I.F.T.) Class

This is a release from Roshunda Terry, County Extension Director: Are you an adult, of any age and fitness level, who would like to learn how to achieve and maintain a healthier lifestyle? Would you like to learn and practice exercises designed to help increase strength, flexibility, and balance while improving your nutrition habits? Would you like to make new friends and build community connections? Would you enjoy a FREE interactive program in a group setting? THEN LIFT IS FOR YOU!

L.I.F.T. is a research-based program that helps develop relationships, and improves functional fitness and emotional health. These classes will help improve your strength and mobility, learn healthy food options, and most importantly, help form a community to socialize and interact in the virtual world.

L.I.F.T. is an 8-week group-based strength training program that meets two times a week for 1-hour sessions. This program is open to all adults, young and old and will be taught in a hybrid format. Participants will attend in person with their local FCS agent and sessions will be taught collaboratively with local and area FCS agents over Zoom. The classes meet Tuesdays and Thursdays, from January 10 through March 7, from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. Anson participants will meet at the County Extension Office, located at 501 McLaurin Street in Wadesboro. These classes are free of charge.

Alexander, Anson, Montgomery, Lee, Richmond, Stanly and Union counties have partnered to offer this virtual fitness program. Agents will instruct the hour-long class and all you have to do is click the link and participate. How easy is that? Classes will be prerecorded for those who may have a scheduling conflict and have to miss our live class.

Making time for exercise can change your life! If you're looking for a free, at-home strength training program, L.I.F.T. is the program for you. Let's get active, together! The link to register is: [go.ncsu.edu/newyearnewlift](http://go.ncsu.edu/newyearnewlift).