

THE EXPRESS

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

Railroad Crossing to Permanently Close

Beginning Monday, January 19, the at-grade railroad crossing on Ross Wright Road in Polkton will permanently close as part of the Polkton Rail Siding Extension project, a long-term effort aimed at improving rail safety and efficiency along the CSX SF-Line and Queen City Express corridor between Charlotte and Wilmington.

Ross Wright Road begins at Highway 74 directly across from Peachland-Polkton Elementary School.

Officials say the project is designed to reduce rail congestion and improve operations along this busy freight route, which plays a key role in regional commerce and transportation throughout North Carolina.

The current phase of the project includes extending a siding track along the south side of the railroad, generally located between Freedom Road and east of the bridge at Boston Avenue, as well as the permanent closure of the Ross Wright Road railroad crossing.

A second phase of the project is scheduled further down the road, with right-of-way acquisition planned for 2029 and construction anticipated in fiscal year 2032. That phase includes building a new two-lane roadway on a new alignment from N.C. 218 to U.S. 74, just west of Martin Street, while maintaining access to and from Polkton along the existing N.C. 218 corridor.

Plans also call for construction of a new bridge carrying the roadway over Peachland-Polkton Road and the railroad, along with two new intersections providing access to Peachland-Polkton Road and U.S. 74 near Horne Town Road. U.S. 74 will feature a reduced-conflict intersection design, limiting movements to right-in and right-out turns to enhance traffic safety.

Motorists are encouraged to plan alternate routes and stay informed as changes take effect. For real-time travel updates and additional information, visit DriveNC.gov or follow the NC Department of Transportation on social media.

New Anson County Middle School Nears Completion, Officials Say

Construction continues on the new Anson County Schools middle school, with work progressing toward an anticipated opening in 2026. The project broke ground in May 2024, and district officials are targeting occupancy by the summer of 2026.

The new school is located adjacent to Anson High School, with the entrance on Anson High School Road.

District construction updates provided through late 2025 show steady progress. Three-quarters of the exterior pavement around the building is complete, most interior painting has been finished, classroom tile installation is underway, and heating and air-conditioning systems are installed. Teachers and administrators report that the building "is beginning to look and function like a school."

Superintendent Dr. Brian Ratliff and project managers have noted that the fall weather helped landscaping efforts, and the overall project remains on track despite typical seasonal challenges. District and county officials have conducted multiple tours of the site, including a board of education walkthrough and a session with the Anson County Board of Commissioners, highlighting local collaboration on the effort.

When finished, the new middle school will be a modern, approximately 135,000-square-foot facility designed to support a comprehensive educational program in a contemporary learning environment.

Residents interested in photos and progress snapshots can check the Anson County Schools Facebook page, where periodic construction updates and site views have been shared. More details on phases of construction and district plans for the new middle school are expected to be released as the project moves closer to completion.

Partnership for Children's Message to Barn Blast Contributors & Sponsors

The Anson County Partnership for Children's beloved annual Barn Blast fundraiser will take place on Friday, Jan. 30, and this year's event marks the Partnership's 30th year. Executive Director Elizabeth Rizzo shared this message to auction donors and sponsors:

Dear Champions for Children, We have recently learned that many of our usual supporters of Barn Blast did not receive their letters for this year.

If you, or a business or organization you are connected to, typically support Barn Blast through donations of auction items and sponsorships, please reach out to us.

Your ongoing support is vital to the success of Barn Blast and the programs we are able to offer because of it like Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, Diaper Bank, Car Seat Program, Early Childhood Educator Training, and more.

We sincerely appreciate your understanding and continued commitment. Please contact us at 704-694-4036 or elizabeth.rizzo@ansonchildren.org for more information.

Thank you for your generosity "helping make Anson County a better place to be a child and to raise a child."

Women in Business Event to Focus on Heart Health

The Anson County Chamber of Commerce will host its first Women in Business event of 2026 with a special Heart Health Edition on Thursday, February 5. The evening promises a high-energy and informative program centered on women's heart health and overall wellness.

The event will take place from 5:15 to 6:45 p.m. at Atrium Health Anson, in the Community Room.

Admission is free, and food will be provided.

Featured speaker for the evening will be Dr. Holly Stegall, a board-certified family medicine physician with Atrium Health. Dr. Stegall cares for women and families at every stage of life and is known for her passion for service, wellness, and empowering women to take control of their health.

Attendees can expect an engaging evening that includes opportunities to mingle and connect, practical and life-changing heart health tips, and a celebration of women in leadership and the local community. The event will also feature fun door prizes & a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere.

Organizers encourage attendees to grab a friend and make it a girls' night out while kicking off 2026 feeling inspired, informed, and connected.



Ansonville Elementary Launches Student Safety Patrol

Ansonville Elementary School has announced the creation of a new student-led safety initiative known as the Student Safety Patrol. The program is designed to empower students while helping foster a safer and more aware school environment for everyone on campus.

Members of the Student Safety Patrol will assist with a variety of safety-related tasks and serve as role models by promoting responsibility, awareness, and cooperation among their peers. School officials say the initiative encourages leadership and teamwork while reinforcing the importance of looking out for one another.

Teachers and staff are excited to see the positive impact these young leaders will have on the school community as they take on this important role.

Stay tuned for more updates and pictures of the Student Safety Patrol in action on Facebook.

Friends of Anson County Animal Shelter Launches Business Partnership Drive

Community Support Sought to Begin 2026 Strong

Friends of the Anson County Animal Shelter is inviting local businesses to help launch 2026 on a strong note by becoming business partners in support of the shelter and its programs. The organization is currently seeking businesses willing to make a once-a-year donation or recurring sponsorship to help meet ongoing needs at the shelter.

Organizers note that anyone who owns even one pet understands the time, care, and resources required to properly look after animals. In addition to caring for shelter animals, the Anson County Animal Shelter provides valuable community services, including a pet food pantry and low-cost spay and neuter clinics that benefit families across the county.

A recurring sponsorship allows Friends of the Anson County Animal Shelter to better budget, plan, and expand services that directly impact animal welfare in the community. Business partners play a key role in ensuring these programs remain available throughout the year.

Businesses interested in becoming partners through a once-a-year donation can learn more and sign up by visiting www.friendsofansonanimal.org. Additional information about the organization and its mission is also available on the website.

In a message to the community, Friends of the Anson County Animal Shelter expressed appreciation for past and future support and extended best wishes for a prosperous New Year, emphasizing that every contribution helps improve the lives of animals and strengthens services for Anson County residents.

The Origins of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Monday, January 19 is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a federal holiday honoring the life, leadership, and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., one of the most influential figures in American history.

Observed each year on the third Monday in January, the holiday commemorates King's commitment to civil rights, equality, and nonviolent social change.

Martin Luther



This iconic image shows Dr. Martin Luther King with Lyndon B. Johnson at the White House. This meeting was closely associated with the signing and promotion of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia, to the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr. and Alberta Williams King. Raised in a deeply religious household, King grew up immersed in the traditions of the Black church, where his father served as pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church. From an early age, he witnessed both the strength of faith-based community leadership and the harsh realities of racial segregation in the South.

A gifted student, King skipped two grades and entered Morehouse College at the age of 15. There, under the mentorship of college president Benjamin E. Mays, he developed a strong moral and intellectual foundation that shaped his views on justice, equality, and social responsibility. King later attended Crozer Theological Seminary and earned a doctorate in systematic theology from Boston University, where he further refined his philosophy of nonviolent resistance.

The movement to establish a national holiday began shortly after King's assassination on April 4, 1968. Just four days later, Congressman John Conyers of Michigan introduced legislation to honor King with a federal holiday. Despite strong public support, the proposal faced years of resistance in Congress, with critics questioning the cost of an additional federal holiday and debating whether any individual deserved that recognition.

Public advocacy played a major role in advancing the effort. Civil rights leaders, labor unions, faith communities, and millions of citizens pushed for recognition, while musician Stevie Wonder's 1980 song Happy Birthday helped bring national attention to the cause. By the early 1980s, momentum had grown too strong to ignore.

In 1983, Congress passed legislation establishing Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a federal holiday, and President Ronald Reagan signed it into law. The holiday was first observed on January 20, 1986. While it became a federal holiday at that time, some states were slow to adopt it fully. It was not until 2000 that all 50 states officially recognized the holiday.

The holiday falls near King's birthday, January 15, and emphasizes reflection, education, and service. In 1994, Congress designated Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a National Day of Service, encouraging Americans to volunteer in their communities as a way to honor King's belief that "everybody can be great, because everybody can serve."

Today, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day stands not only as a remembrance of a remarkable leader, but also as a call to action. It reminds Americans of the ongoing work required to achieve justice, equality, and unity - principles King championed throughout his life and for which he ultimately gave his own.

Commissioners Meet January 20

The second January meeting of the Anson County Board of Commissioners takes place on Tuesday, January 20 at 6 p.m.

Meetings take place in the Board Room, Suite 209, of the Anson County Government Center, located at 101 South Greene Street in uptown Wadesboro.

To schedule an appearance at a board meeting, please sign up prior to the meeting. Information is available at 704-994-3201.

The Commissioners' board meetings are live streamed on their YouTube channel. Also, the videos are archived so they can be viewed at any time. Visit youtube.com and search for Anson Commissioners.

Anson Women's League to Serve Up Soup, Smiles, and Scholarships

The Anson Women's League will once again stir up something special with its popular Soup Luncheon on Tuesday, February 10, giving the community a delicious way to support a good cause.

The luncheon will be held at First Baptist Church, located at 309 Lee Avenue in Wadesboro, with serving hours from 11:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. Guests may dine in, carry out, place bulk orders, or take advantage of delivery service - because soup should come to you when possible.

This year's menu features homemade vegetable beef soup paired with a toasted cheese sandwich, along with a beverage and a homemade dessert, promising comfort food at its finest.

Tickets are \$10, and all proceeds will support Women's League scholarships and community service projects, turning every spoonful into an investment in education and local outreach.

Organizers encourage everyone to come hungry, bring a friend, and enjoy a warm meal prepared with care and purpose.

For tickets or additional information, contact any Anson Women's League member or email:

ansonwomen@yahoo.com

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