

Order of the Long Leaf Pine awarded to Dr. Altheria S. Patton at event held January 16



On Saturday, December 12 Governor Pat McCrory awarded the Order of the Long Leaf Pine to Dr. Altheria S. Patton, a sixty year veteran educator who devoted her life to educating students in Anson County. This honor speaks to Dr. Patton's dedication to education and also to Anson County's commitment to its children and their teachers. On Saturday, January 16 Anson County, Anson County Schools and alumni associations hosted a countywide celebration where Dr. Patton was presented the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, municipal proclamations and other awards.

At the celebration over 200 former students, colleagues, family and friends gathered to celebrate Dr. Altheria Smith Patton's recognition by Governor McCrory. To further punctuate the occasion Wadesboro Mayor William Thacker along with mayors of all the municipalities in Anson County proclaimed January 16 as Dr. Altheria Smith Patton Day. Wadesboro Town Manager Alex Sewell presented the Town of Wadesboro's proclamation. He spoke of Dr. Patton's consistency and loyalty to the town and remarked, "We're so honored and pleased that she's a citizen and resident of Wadesboro."

despite only being Sheriff for just 14 months. Representing the county, Sheriff Reid presented the Anson County Proclamation and emphasized, "What an honor and a privilege it is to acknowledge Dr. Patton, while she could see and hear our appreciation."

School Superintendent Michael Freeman and Board of Education Chair Dr. Bobbie Little spoke on behalf of Anson County Schools and shared personal stories of Dr. Patton's impact upon them. Superintendent Freeman stated, "Dr. Patton ('Miss Patton' at the time) and my mother were the only two people who thought I could do and be more. Dr. Patton urged me to apply for and attend college. She had a way of making you feel that you were the ONLY student in the school. She is the reason I am where I am today." Additionally, Dr. Little and others shared their experiences with Dr. Patton and anecdotes about her "persistence and kindness."

Dr. Jim Sims was scheduled to present the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, but due to illness was unable to attend. However, a former student and the lead organizer of this event and award application, Dr. L. Diane Bennett, a Charlotte entrepreneur, presented the Order of the Long Leaf Pine to Dr. Patton before an adoring and appreciative crowd. Dr. Bennett remarked, "What an honor it is to honor the woman who inspired greatness in us when we didn't see it in ourselves. God bless you Dr. Patton."

Dr. Little, a fellow recipient, affixed the Society of the Long Leaf Pine lapel pin to Dr. Patton's jacket. This event was a fitting tribute to a sixty year veteran of education and public service in one county, comprised of diverse and supportive communities.

Dr. Patton's remarks, befitting her English teacher style, centered on two poems, *Silence* by Edgar Lee Masters and *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost. *Silence* captured her emotions of the day, and *The Road Not Taken* epitomized her life and "the choice that changed my life forever - staying in Anson County despite numerous other opportunities."

Dr. Patton ended by thanking everyone, and offered a particularly heartfelt thanks to the men and women of the East Polkton Alumni Association, to whom she said, "I fell in love with you and your families. You accepted me in your homes and into your lives...that's the reason I stayed. Thank you all. God bless you."

Better Business Bureau Releases 2015 Year-end Report

Consumer complaints rise by 9%, customer reviews skyrocket by 134%

The Better Business Bureau has released its annual report for 2015 for consumer activity related to businesses located in the BBB's 20 county service area in the Southern Piedmont of N.C. and S.C. This report includes statistics on consumer requests for business reviews, consumer complaints, customer reviews, settlement rate for complaints filed, and the top five types of businesses that generated the most complaints.

• **Consumer complaints:** In 2015, consumers filed 14,876 complaints against area businesses, up from 13,642 complaints filed in 2014, a nine percent increase. "There is not one or two specific reasons why consumers are filing more complaints. BBB is seeing an increase in complaints across all types of businesses," said BBB president Tom Bartholomy.

• **Complaint settlement rate:** The overall settlement rate for all complaints filed by consumers in 2015 was 91 percent, the same as in 2014.

• **Verified customer reviews:** Last year, BBB implemented a new customer review feature on BBB reports which provides a mechanism by which customers can give positive or negative feedback about their experience with the business. BBB verifies the legitimacy of the customer before the review is posted on the company's BBB report. In 2015, customers posted 4,733 reviews about businesses compared to 2,022 reviews in 2014, a 134 percent increase.

• **Consumer requests for business reviews (inquiries):** In 2015, consumers requested 2,948,769 reviews on local businesses, compared to 3,027,301 consumer requests in 2014, a 3 percent decrease. "The good news is that consumers are continuing to do their homework before contracting with a business by checking them out with BBB," said Bartholomy.

The top five types of businesses with the most complaints were:
 • 2015: 1) Auto dealers – new cars; 2) Television – cable and satellite; 3) Collection agencies; 4) Auto dealers – used cars; 5) Telephone communications.
 • 2014: 1) Auto dealers – new cars; 2) Collection agencies; 3) Television – cable and satellite; 4) Auto repair services; 5) Auto dealers – used cars.

Consumers can visit bbb.org to check out businesses or to file a complaint against a business.

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission Introduces New Turn-In-Poachers Program

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission announces a new program that could reward members of the public who report suspicious activity or provide knowledge related to wildlife poaching violations that results in a conviction. The Turn-In-Poachers (TIP) program was created to encourage any concerned citizen to report information on wildlife violations.

"Wildlife crimes affect us all, whether we are hunters, anglers, trappers, bird watchers or just someone who enjoys walking in the woods," said Lt. B.J. Meyer, assistant training director and communications supervisor for the Commission's Law Enforcement Division. "Despite our constant efforts, it is not possible for our officers to apprehend all violators on their own. We need the guidance and support of the public to be most effective, so we rely on our citizens to assist in the reduction of wildlife crimes."

The Turn-In-Poachers program was developed in partnership with the N.C. Bowhunters Association to implement Session Law 2013-380, which established the Wildlife Poacher Reward Fund. The fund receives at least 10% of replacement and investigative costs (by court order) from adjudicated cases. Additional money to support the fund comes from wildlife law violators themselves, who are required to pay restoration fees directly to the NCWRC. The restoration fee replenishes the fund in the amount of the reward paid out to capture the poacher.

"Poaching includes the illegal take of game, fish, plants, trespassing, littering, theft, and destruction of property," Lt. Meyer added. "With this new program and partnership, we can work together to protect our resources for the future enjoyment of all North Carolinians."

These rewards range from \$100 to \$1,000, depending on the severity of the crime and the fines assessed by the court. To see a complete list of eligible violations, visit www.ncwildlife.org.

All tips received through the program will remain anonymous. However, to be eligible for the reward, you must provide the NCWRC with your name and contact information.

Tips can be submitted in four ways:

- 1) Via the internet: www.tipsubmit.com
- 2) Via mobile app: To install the free app, search for "TipSoft" or "TipSubmit" in the Google Play store (Android) or the Apple App Store (iOS).
- 3) Via text: To submit an anonymous tip through text messaging, type WILDTIP and your message, then send it to 274637 (CRIMES on most cell phones). Texts are anonymous, so senders must identify themselves in the body of the text in order to claim a reward. Message and data rates may apply.
- 4) Via phone: To submit a tip via phone, for reward or anonymously, dial 1-855-WILDTIP. The hotline is available 24 hours a day to handle calls from concerned citizens. This phone number is only for poaching-specific violations. For all other wildlife violations, questions and concerns, call 1-800-662-7137.

Do You Need a Coat or Blanket? Would You Like to Donate?

The Faith-Based Center of Hope continues their "Warm Coats, Warm Hearts" program. They have distributed coats to several of the churches and schools in Anson County.

Blankets for the elderly are also available. Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church is the pick up site, or you can deliver donated items there too. Just call to schedule it.

To donate coats and blankets or to request help, please contact Vancine Sturdivant at 704-848-4412 or Ester Lindsey at 704-848-8452.



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