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**SPCC President Highlights College's Progress in Anson County**

Almost 1,000 Anson County residents, with children dressed as princesses, comic book heroes, goblins, and ghouls, lined the sidewalks and parking lots of South Piedmont Community College on Tuesday, October 23 at the school's "Trunk or Treat" community event. College employees and students, themselves dressed in costumes, greeted community members and their children at car trunks decorated for Halloween and full of candy. Meanwhile, across campus, South Piedmont's President Dr. Maria Pharr spoke with members of the Anson County Chamber of Commerce at a Business After Hours event. As area families participated in "Trunk or Treat," Pharr explained how this event and other activities demonstrate the college's dedication to Anson County. "South Piedmont is invested in the future of Anson County, and we are committed to engagement with community members, to providing programs that support economic development, and to offering quality, convenient, and affordable education and training to area residents," said Pharr.



**Dr. Maria Pharr**

In her presentation, Pharr highlighted college efforts to raise education and training needs, recent and current investments, and new marketing strategies in Anson County.

**Education and Training that Meets Anson County Needs** Since beginning her role at South Piedmont less than two years ago, Pharr consistently has emphasized needs of Anson County residents, commissioning an "Anson County Task Force" within her first few weeks on the job as the college's president. According to Pharr, "The task force is a partnership among South Piedmont Community College, area secondary education leaders, and economic development partners in Anson County to determine needs for education and training in our area and to recommend classes and programs that meet those needs." The task force includes not only South Piedmont employees, but also members of the Anson Economic Development Partnership, the Anson County Chamber of Commerce, and principals from Anson High School and Anson County Early College. The group is due to deliver recommendations for future programming to college administration in November.

In addition to creating the task force, Pharr invested in research to understand future employment trends in Anson County, and college staff members conducted listening sessions throughout the area to determine programming that best supports Anson County residents and fosters economic development in the area. According to Pharr, "our goal is to use research from the task force, listening sessions, and economic studies to add programs beginning next year that complement existing educational and training efforts."

Currently, the college offers an array of programs in Anson County, including degrees for students who plan to transfer to 4-year colleges or universities, various programs at Anson High School and Anson Early College, a slate of business programs, and several health programs. The college offers its agribusiness and practical nursing curricula exclusively in Anson County.

South Piedmont also offers training in veterinary assisting, auto body repair, welding, notary public, programs for public safety officers, health and wellness for senior citizens, and GED/High School Equivalency programs.

New courses this year include holiday cooking classes at the Lockhart-Taylor Center in November and food safety and Class B Commercial Driver's License training in the spring.

Not only has the college expanded its programs since Pharr took the helm, but it witnessed growth in enrollment as well. Since 2016, enrollment in curriculum programs in Anson County increased by over 15%.

**Investments in Anson County** On top of enhancing education and training programs, South Piedmont continues to invest financially in its Anson County locations and in Anson County residents. "The environment in which students study is important to their experience and impacts learning, so South Piedmont is investing significantly to provide much needed updates to our Anson County facilities and to offer our students an inviting and engaging environment," said Pharr.

Since 2016, the college devoted over \$1.2 million to update its campus in Polkton and the Lockhart-Taylor Center in Wadesboro. Improvements to the Polkton campus include new sidewalks, HVAC updates, a renovated auditorium, a state-of-the-art welding lab, and landscaping improvements. At the Lockhart-Taylor Center, the college updated audio-visual technology. Currently, South Piedmont has committed an additional \$180,000 to update classroom and student spaces at the Polkton campus and the lobby at the Lockhart-Taylor Center.

Along with facilities updates, South Piedmont reinvests funding from Anson County to support area residents with tuition assistance. Since 2016, the college provided \$161,000 in

support for Anson County residents. According to Pharr, "Many students are balancing families, jobs, and economic situations that make it difficult for them to achieve their educational goals, and South Piedmont provides much needed tuition assistance that allows students to pursue their education without worry of financial constraints."

**New Marketing Efforts** As South Piedmont expands education and training opportunities and invests financially in the area, Anson County residents will soon see a lot more about the college. Since coming to South Piedmont, Pharr restructured the college's marketing efforts to provide for a more robust connection with community members.

"One of the challenges I noticed when I came to South Piedmont is that we weren't the best at telling our story and at informing the community about the value the college brings to the area and about what programs we have to offer," said Pharr.

Recently, South Piedmont hired an outside company to implement a broad marketing strategy, including monthly television interviews, streaming television commercials, and expanded social media marketing efforts. Soon, community members will see new billboards featuring South Piedmont lining the roads of Anson County.

For decades, South Piedmont Community College has supported education and workforce development needs in Anson County. Under Pharr's leadership, recent programming and enrollment growth, investments in facilities, and new marketing efforts establish South Piedmont as uniquely positioned and dedicated to continue as the backbone of education and workforce training in Anson County.

As the "Trunk or Treat" event demonstrates, area residents are finding new and exciting ways to connect with the college and explore what their community's college has to offer - hobgoblins, ghosts, superheroes, and all.

For more information about South Piedmont, visit the college's website at [www.spcc.edu](http://www.spcc.edu).



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Lawrence Gatewood  
County Commissioner



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**Lawrence Gatewood**  
County Commissioner-Elect  
District 5