

THE EXPRESS

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

Murder / Suicide Involves Man and 2 Year Old Child

Anson County Sheriff Tommy Allen confirmed that his agency is investigating the deaths of two individuals in what appears to be a murder/suicide that occurred late Monday afternoon, November 24 in southwestern Anson County. Sheriff Allen said that his officers were called around 5:15 p.m. to a location approximately five miles south of Peachland, off the Upper White Store Road, onto the Horne Store Road. Upon arriving at the scene officers found a 33 year old male subject in a small outbuilding behind the main house, deceased from a gunshot wound to the head. The deputies found a second subject, a two year old female inside the house deceased, but with no obvious signs of physical injuries.

Allen said that a note found with the deceased adult indicated a murder/suicide. The Sheriff identified the male as George Rufus Harris, III, and would later learn he was an absconder and wanted sex offender from Kentucky.

"The last time Kentucky had any contact with Harris was about a year ago. We believe he had been living here a few months," said Sheriff Allen. "Although we've had some calls to this residence over the past year we have not had any contact with him. There were six or seven other adults living in the house, along with at least four other small children besides the deceased child."

Allen continued, "The little girl whose first name was Kenya would have been three years old in January. At this time we are not sure about a motive for the killing of the little girl. We may know more after the autopsy."

Sheriff Allen said on Tuesday that his office had been in touch with the local Department of Social Services, the Health Department and the District Attorney's office.

The Sheriff described the conditions inside the house as horrid, the worst he had seen in 30 plus years in law enforcement. "I've talked with the DSS Director this morning. They are going to do an inspection of the house and determine the living conditions for the other children. But I can tell you it's not suitable for anyone, adults or children," Allen said.

The Sheriff said his investigation is consistent with a murder/suicide, but that once the investigation is complete, a report will be turned over to the District Attorney's Office.

Investigation Into Activities at Morven Fire Department Concludes No Wrongdoing Happened

Sheriff Allen presented with allegations of improprieties, conducts thorough investigation

Sheriff Tommy Allen said that his department had closed their investigation into allegations into wrong doings at the Morven Fire Department. Some of the allegations were checks not being deposited, questionable purchases and unauthorized use of departmental equipment. No criminal charges will be made.

Allen said that when the allegations were originally presented to him he asked the SBI to assist his detectives in the investigation. Bank records were obtained; some citizens and members of the department were interviewed, including the fire chief.

"It was obvious from the start that you had a department that was fractured with disgruntled current members and former members. It was also obvious that the department had few accounting policies, poor record keeping and not much accountability with few checks and balances. However, from bank statements investigators found the questioned checks were properly deposited. And from records and statements the fire chief was authorized to use certain departmental equipment," Sheriff Allen said.

Allen said that District Attorney Reece Saunders had asked that once the investigation was completed the files be sent to the State Attorney General's Office for review and any recommendation for criminal charges be made by them. In a letter dated November 10, 2014, from Special Deputy Attorney General Adren L. Harris, it stated it was determined that there was insufficient evidence to proceed on any criminal charges at this time.

"I certainly recommend that the department establish prudent organizational policies, better record keeping of meeting minutes and develop accounting policies on handling funds and paying bills. Hopefully the department will, for the betterment of the community, come together, work out their differences and move on past all this," Allen said in conclusion.

Lawsuit Against Lanesboro Correctional Alleges Guards Helped Gang Members

Five former inmates at Lanesboro Correctional Institution in Polkton filed a lawsuit on November 7 saying they want changes made in operations that will ensure inmates' safety. The group alleges that officers have helped gang-affiliated inmates obtain weapons and wage attacks.

The 45 page lawsuit document tells of officers allowing stabbings by gang members by leaving doors unlocked, and claims that officers had failed to separate attack victims from their attackers. It claims that an officer provided the weapons. In that instance the lawsuit is referring to a bag of shanks (homemade knives) found in the ceiling of a unit manager at the prison. The inmates claim they filed complaints but were ignored.

The inmates bringing the suit, who are all currently incarcerated, but at different prisons, are seeking compensation and a promise that they will never have to serve time at Lanesboro Correctional again. Their names are Stacey Wynn, Orlando Harshaw, Sean Smith, Benjamin White and Tavieolis Hunt. They are serving time for convictions that include murder, rape and robbery with a dangerous weapon. Daryl Atkinson, the lawyer representing the inmates, said, "Irrespective of what people may have done, on or in society, the punishment is imprisonment. The punishment is not to be placed in an unsafe environment where you can be stabbed and cut and your medical conditions can be ignored."

Officials at the Department of Public Safety have acknowledged the lawsuit, but said they cannot comment on impending litigation.



Peachland-Polkton Terrific Kids for the First 9 Weeks

Peachland-Polkton Elementary School held its Terrific Kids Celebration for the first 9 weeks on Tuesday, November 18. Pictured are the students who were recognized for this honor.

From left, front row: Aubrey Jones, Natalie Horne, Alyssa Campbell, Aiden Horne. Second row: Jackson Stinson, Adisun Taylor, Jaylin Osborne, Savanna Smith, Brea Deese, Eva Hyatt, Hunter Mills, McKayla Mills, Jameria Howard, Jaycee Biggers, Cameron Baker. Third row: Prince Vang, Shaniyh Dennison, Prince Allah???, Hailey Rogers, Hunter Howell, Jake Kearney, Luke Hyatt, Caroline Austin, Jasmine Bailey, CaMya Little, Des Horne, Raiquan Burns. Fourth row: Parker Griffin, Hillary Adams, Alana Wegner, Jak Kendall, Marley Joyner, Laura Castrejon, Adrianra White, Ashton Jones, Gracie Stinson, Savannah Lowery. Fifth row: McKensie Pace, Katie Horne, Maddie Wright, Argel Flores Garcia, Carmen Wright, JaMia Bennett, David Godwin, Sheneeka Allen. D'Angelo Cannon, Lexi Perkins and Adrianna Anastas are not pictured.

From the Sheriff's Desk

Sheriff Tommy Allen Bids Farewell

From Sheriff Tommy Allen: This will be my last "From the Sheriff's Desk" and I wanted to use this opportunity to personally thank the people of Anson County for entrusting the honored position of Sheriff to me for 28 years. I leave with mixed emotions but with absolutely no second thoughts or doubts about my decision to retire. My father once told me, "One of the secrets to success is knowing when to start and knowing when to stop ... and you can stay too long." I know the time is right for me now.

It is difficult to express in a few sentences what a tremendous privilege it has been to have served as your Sheriff these many years. I have often told people that I have the greatest job around. Sure, when it's bad it's awful; but when it's good, which is most of the time, it's great. I've tried to do the job as best as I could, with the limited resources I had and with the knowledge and understanding of what is legal, what is right and what is best for all involved.

I will deeply miss my co-workers as they are like family to me.

I feel I leave the Sheriff's Office, Jail and 911 in excellent shape and well organized for Sheriff-Elect Reid to build upon. With major upgrades in the jail over the past few years we are good there for years to come. We've just completed the successful move into the new 911 Center and that building, now also housing EMS and Emergency Management, will be adequate for the foreseeable future. The Sheriff's Office itself is in good shape. We've upgraded our computer systems and software; provided officers the best equipment and training available; and streamlined operations wherever we can.

Not everything we did worked. But we learned from our mistakes. The people of this county have stood by me through both the good times as well as the bad. I hope and I ask that you will give the same support, patience and encouragement to Sheriff-Elect Reid as he takes over this job December 1.

What am I going to do next? Maybe just relax and enjoy not having the pressure and responsibilities of being THE SHERIFF - at least for a little while anyway. It's been a good run. Thank you again and may God bless you all.

Sheriff Tommy Allen

Toys for Tots Motorcycle Ride is December 6

Whether you ride or not, please come out for fun and to help Anson kids in need have a brighter Christmas

The Anson County Toys for Tots Motorcycle Ride will be held on Saturday, December 6. Everyone is invited to participate, whether you are a rider or not. A highlight of the event will be an auction for an official Carolina Panthers football which has been autographed by the entire team!



Pictured with the Panthers' football are, from left, Vancine Sturdivant, Tommy Allen, Mark Hammonds and Bernice Bennett.

This special football is being held in the custody of Sheriff Tommy Allen until the day of the auction. You may contact Vancine Sturdivant at 704-848-4412 or any Toys for Tots Executive Board members to make a bid, or you can come to the event as a rider or non-rider and bid then. You do not have to be present to win. If you would like to see the football before December 6 you can contact Vancine or Sheriff Allen.

This fun event will help raise money that will be used to provide Christmas for many Anson kids who otherwise would have nothing on Christmas day. Please come and/or consider donating anything you can to brighten a child's life.

The Motorcycle Ride and Auction will take place at 10:30 a.m. at 302 Salisbury Street in Wadesboro.

CROP Walk to Fight World Hunger Held in Wadesboro

Anson County was well represented on Sunday, October 5 by groups who stand up for others and support Church World Services. There were 55 walkers and 10 volunteers, and the event raised almost \$2,500, a fourth of which will go to two local agencies to fight hunger right here in Anson County.

Organizer Tim Harris said, "Thanks to everyone who came out or just sent donations to support these efforts. A special thank you goes out to Premier Fibers of Ansonville for being a faithful sponsor for our event. Thank you also to The Express Newspaper and the Anson Record for publicizing this event. And, thank you to the Wadesboro Interchurch Council for helping plan the event. Come out next October and walk with us!"

Toys for Tots Application Deadline is December 5

Anson County Toys for Tots has announced that the deadline for applications is Friday, December 5. Applicants can obtain applications from the following sites:

- Grace Senior Center - Dr. Bernice Bennett
- Department of Social Services - Priscilla Little
- Anson County Child Support - Jennifer Tarlton
- Anson County Health Department
- Anson County School System - Kam McDonald

Anson Singers to Present Christmas Concert December 7

The Anson Singers, a community choir conducted by Emily Privette, will present their annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 7 at 3 p.m. in the First United Methodist Church of Wadesboro. The concert will be in conjunction with the Christmas Tour of Homes.

The concert is free and the public is cordially invited to attend. Come for a delightful afternoons of decorations and music as you begin your Christmas season!

Parks & Rec Youth Basketball Registration

Registration has started for Anson County Parks & Recreation Youth Basketball. This program is for grades K-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-9 and 10-12. The cost is \$25 per player. You can register at Little Park, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The deadline to register is Friday, December 12. For more information call Wendell Small at 704-694-5868.

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