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## Town of Wadesboro Provides Update on Volunteer Fire Department Contract Discussions

The Town of Wadesboro is currently in negotiations with its volunteer fire department to renew its service contract and has emphasized that fire protection services remain fully operational during the process and are not being interrupted for the safety and protection of the community.

The Town of Wadesboro and its volunteer fire department operate under a long-standing agreement in which the department provides fire protection services, while the town provides insurance coverage, equipment, and a stipend to volunteer firefighters. The contract is reviewed and renewed every three years.

As part of the current renewal process, the fire department's board has requested an increase in the per-call stipend and a long-term lease of its training facility. Town officials have stated that these requests are being carefully reviewed and that discussions are ongoing in good faith to reach an agreement that is fair, sustainable, and in the best interest of both the firefighters and the community they serve.

To ensure continuity of fire protection services while negotiations continue, the town is preparing an interim six-month contract extension as both parties work toward a long-term resolution.

Town officials are encouraging residents to contact Town Hall directly at 704-694-5171 for accurate information regarding town services and operations. Officials noted that while social media can be a helpful communication tool, incomplete or inaccurate information can contribute to misunderstandings.

The Town of Wadesboro stated that it remains committed to transparency, open communication, and responsible stewardship on behalf of its citizens. Wiley Ross is the Wadesboro Town Manager.

### Affordable Lending Library for Ages 0-5 at SPCC

South Piedmont Community College invites parents and early childhood educators to explore its Smart Start Resource Center - a convenient, affordable lending library filled with carefully selected books, toys, and learning materials for young children.

"The Smart Start Resource Center is one of our community's best-kept secrets. We encourage parents, caregivers, and educators to stop by and see what we offer. I guarantee you'll be impressed," said Stacey Fleming, director of South Piedmont's Education Stars program, which oversees the center.

Located on South Piedmont's Old Charlotte Highway campus, the Smart Start Resource Center is designed specifically for children ages 0-5. The center offers a vast selection of educational resources, including:

- Costumes, games, and puzzles
- Musical instruments and literature kits

- Art supplies and math manipulatives
- Puppets, outdoor play items, and STEM materials

With over 5,000 items available, families and educators can borrow materials for little to no cost.

**Affordable Membership & Free Delivery Services** Annual Membership: Just \$5 per year, allowing members to check out up to 15 items at a time.

- Free Memberships: Available for North Carolina pre-K teachers, as well as South Piedmont employees and students (5-item limit).

- Free Delivery: Offered to Union County childcare centers, preschools, licensed home-based childcare providers, and therapy/support organizations serving children ages 0-5.

"Young children grow and change so quickly. The Smart Start Resource Center helps parents, educators, and caregivers keep their materials fresh - without the high price tag of retail stores," said Fleming.

**Expert Guidance & Support** Beyond lending materials, the Smart Start Resource Center is staffed by early childhood specialists who help patrons select age-appropriate resources tailored to their child's developmental needs.

"You're not just borrowing books and toys - you're gaining a supportive community dedicated to helping your child thrive," Fleming said. "We truly care about you and your little one, and we're here to help you find the best resources for your family or students."

**Visit the Smart Start Resource Center** Location: SPCC, Mobile Unit 1, 4209 Old Charlotte Hwy. Call 704-290-5894 or email [smartstartresourcecenter@gmail.com](mailto:smartstartresourcecenter@gmail.com).

### N.C. Education Lottery Raises More Than \$1 Billion for Education for a Third Straight Year

For the third year in a row, the N.C. Education Lottery raised more than \$1 billion to support educational programs across our state. The \$1.07 billion raised in fiscal year 2025 brings the total amount provided for education by the lottery, as of June 30, 2025, to more than \$12 billion since it started in 2006.

Mark Michalko, executive director of the N.C. Education Lottery, said the lottery funds benefit education programs in every county in North Carolina. "At the lottery, we are driven by our goal to make a positive impact on the lives of North Carolinians," said Michalko. "The lottery has come a long way from raising \$325 million for education in fiscal year 2007, to more than \$1 billion a year today. The lottery's continued innovation through the years to meet the needs of our players will help us to continue to meet the needs of our great state."

As more customers move online for entertainment and to make purchases, the lottery developed digital instant games that can be enjoyed through Online Play. Investments in new technology at stores improved the purchasing experience for both customers and our retail partners.

The lottery set a record for sales in fiscal year 2025 of \$6.6 billion, based on final but unaudited results, and remains the only lottery to increase sales every year of its operations.

As a result of these efforts, the lottery surpassed the education funding goal for fiscal year 2025 set by the state of \$935 million by more than \$141 million. Under the state budget, those extra dollars will go into the state's Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund to support grants to counties to build new schools.

The N.C. General Assembly continues to allocate the largest amount of lottery funds to build new schools. Last year, \$368 million in grants were awarded to counties to build new schools. Celebrations were held across the state with at least eight ribbon-cutting ceremonies to open new schools, as well as topping-off and ground-breaking ceremonies for new projects.

This year, the N.C. General Assembly allocated \$1.08 billion that will be raised by the lottery for education programs, including:

- School construction, repair, and renovation.
- A free, academic preschool to at-risk four-year-olds in the NC Pre-K program.
- Support for salaries of non-instructional school workers in every county.
- Support for the state's Next NC Scholarship, awarded based on financial need to students attending a state university or community college.

In making those allocations for this year, the General Assembly increased the amount of lottery funds to help school systems with the costs of transportation to \$182 million, up from \$21.3 million the year before, and for the first time allocated \$11 million for The North Carolina Scholarship for Children of Wartime Veterans, a four-year scholarship for children of deceased, disabled, combat, or POW/MIA veterans.

North Carolinians can learn more about the impact the lottery makes in their county by visiting the lottery website's "impact" section. [nclottery.com/education](http://nclottery.com/education)

### Governor Stein Applauds Record DMV

### Graduates, Promises Shorter Lines And Fewer Sighs

**Largest-ever class of license examiners as DMV modernization continues**

Visiting the DMV may never be anyone's favorite pastime, but North Carolina leaders say relief is on the way, and it comes wearing a graduation cap. Governor Josh Stein joined North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles Commissioner Paul Tine in Rocky Mount to celebrate the graduation of 149 new DMV Driver License Examiners, the largest class in state history.

The graduates have completed the DMV's Driver License Examiner Basic School and will soon be stationed in offices across North Carolina, where they are expected to help shorten lines, speed up service, and allow residents to escape the waiting room before they finish an entire podcast series.

"Hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians visit the DMV each year, and they deserve a fast and easy experience so they can get on with their day," Governor Stein said. "I'm proud of today's graduates, grateful for their willingness to serve our people, and determined to keep pushing forward so that every North Carolinian can count on a faster, more efficient DMV."

Commissioner Tine said the new examiners will make an immediate impact. "Every new examiner means shorter lines, quicker service, and a better experience for customers," he said. "We still have work to do, but I'm proud of the progress we're making to improve every part of the DMV."

The record-breaking class follows major staffing improvements this fall, when the DMV cleared a six-month training backlog by running seven-week training sessions. In August, Governor Stein signed House Bill 125, which funded 64 additional examiner positions - all of which have now been filled. The result is a fully staffed graduating class that officials say is already paying dividends.

More changes followed in September, when Governor Stein signed House Bill 245, expanding online driver's license renewals. In just nine weeks, nearly 80,000 North Carolinians renewed their licenses online, sparing themselves a trip to the DMV and sparing everyone else a longer line. Statewide DMV vacancies have now dropped below 5% out of 632 positions.

Officials say modernization efforts are ongoing, with a focus on staffing, technology, and customer service — and perhaps one day, chairs that don't squeak.

More information about the DMV's long-term plans is available at: [nclottery.gov/strategic-plan](http://nclottery.gov/strategic-plan) and [nclottery.gov/staffing-plan](http://nclottery.gov/staffing-plan).

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