

## Harnett Veterans Treatment Court Gives Veterans Gift of a Second Chance

Last month, Harnett County's Veterans Treatment Court celebrated its two-year anniversary. The court was the first of its kind established in North Carolina to give veterans who get in trouble with the law a second chance by giving those who have committed certain misdemeanors treatment instead of traditional punishment.

"Today is a special day," said Program Coordinator Ret. Lt. Col. Mark Teachey. "We're recognizing our two year anniversary."

The ceremony saw considerably less fanfare than the court's one-year anniversary, when officials and the media packed the courtroom to see the graduation of six veterans from the program, including Staff Sgt. Tommy Rieman, an Iraq war veteran who received the Silver Star and Purple Heart who was recognized by former President George W. Bush during the 2007 State of the Union Address and who was featured in the documentary "Halfway Home." N.C. Gov. Pat McCrory also attended last year's ceremony and CBS News covered the event for a segment that aired nationally on CBS Sunday Morning.

Last month's two-year anniversary was more business than ceremony with around a dozen veterans appearing before Chief District Court Judge Jackie Lee to update the court on their progress through the program.

Even without the dignitaries and



**A veteran salutes Chief District Court Judge Jackie Lee during the Harnett County Veteran Treatment Court's two-year anniversary on Nov. 4.**

media presence, however, there was still plenty to celebrate during this year's anniversary. Teachey recounted the court's success over the past year, which saw the retirement of Chief District Court Judge Andy Corbett and addition of Judge Lee, as well as the appointment of several members of the team to the Governor's Working Group on Veterans and a presentation before the Governor's Crime Commission.

"We've definitely had a full plate this year," Teachey said.

He also touted the court's importance, stating that every dollar invested in the court can save \$20.

"We have saved more than \$1 million," he said.

Judge Lee said while the statistics are impressive, they don't tell the full story of what the court has meant in the lives of the veterans who've come through it.

"When you have these veterans come in here with their shoulders slumped, their eyes downcast and

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Above, members of the Harnett County Veterans Treatment Court team pose for a photo in front of the Harnett County Courthouse on the court's two-year anniversary. Harnett County's Veterans Treatment Court was the first of its kind established in North Carolina. At left, Harnett County Clerk of Court Marsha Johnson was this year's recipient of the Judge Albert A. Corbett Jr. Gold Eagle Award for superior performance in promoting the court throughout the year. From left, presenting the award are retired Judge Andy Corbett and Chief District Court Judge Jackie Lee, who now presides over the court.

they're relics of who they were when they were in the service, and then when they graduate, they are who they once were, proud soldiers with their shoulders erect, their eyes direct and a smile on their face — to see that change, that's what this court is about," she said.

"The people who serve this court don't get extra pay for being here. They donate their time," she said, turning to the veterans. "We look at you as our children. We want you to be successful and we will be there to hold your hand on the road if need be. Thank you for allowing us to help you."

Court officials also handed out

awards to those who have support the court over the last year.

Organizational awards went to the Harnett County Sheriff's Office, Select Bank and Trust, N.C. Division of Adult Probation and Peace of Mind Inc.

Individual "Silver Eagle" awards went to Probation Officer Mike Warren, Phil Hewitt and Curtis Marlowe.

Officials also announced the creation of an award that memorializes a veteran who was participating in the program when he died earlier this year. Sgt. Salvador Ramirez died on Aug. 25, 2015, at his home.

Teachey said the Sgt. Nieves "Sal"

Ramirez III Compliance Excellence Award was created because "we wanted a memorial for a true American hero who gave everything he had on the ground fighting terror in Afghanistan and Iraq, and then returned home and gave everything to the citizens of the world and Harnett County."

Judge Lee and Sgt. Ramirez's wife, Angie, announced Staff Sgt. Charles Pyle as the first recipient of the award.

Harnett County Clerk of Court Marsha Johnson received the Judge Albert A. Corbett Jr. Gold Eagle Award for superior performance in promoting the court throughout the year.

# Department Spotlight

## Harnett County Division on Aging

The Harnett County Division on Aging is part of the Harnett County Health Department. The Division offers a wide array of programs that serve residents who are 55 and older, as well as the disabled. Programs are funded through local, state and federal funds.

As local public health administrator, Mary Jane Sauls heads the Division and oversees a staff of nine additional employees.

"Our purpose is to provide services specifically tailored to the needs of senior citizens in our county," said Sauls. "We have a wide array of services to keep our senior population active and healthy."

The Division on Aging's programs include:

- Community Alternatives Program for Disabled Adults (CAP-DA), which is a Medicaid program that serves disabled adults who need skilled care but want to remain at home.
- Elderly Nutrition Program, which provides lunchtime meals for seniors age 60 and older five days a week. These include congregate sites where lunchtime meals are served at senior and community centers throughout the county and where seniors receive educational information and participate in activities, crafts, social activities and trips. These also include home-delivered which are delivered to homebound residents where no one can prepare meals.
- Family Caregiver Support Program, which offers assistance to caregivers who provide care for the elderly. Services include providing educational information, assisting in accessing services and counseling, as well as respite care and supplemental services.
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, which assists seniors who are raising their grandchildren with support groups, education, supple-



**Medicare Counselor Latorius Adams works with Lillington resident Gale Carucci to review her prescription drug plan. Carucci said she is new to Medicare and wanted help processing all the information she has received from providers. She said Adams was a great help.**

mental resources and training opportunities.

- Senior's Health Insurance and Information Program (SHIIP), which provides free Medicare counseling to beneficiaries and offers information programs to community organizations.
- Operation Fan/Heat Relief, which provides fans for eligible seniors who do not have air conditioning
- In-Home Aide Services, which helps seniors remain at home by assisting families with attaining and maintaining self-sufficiency.

One of Aging's most prominent programs is the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), which provides volunteer opportunities for adults age 55 and older and mobilizes volunteers to meet community needs.

The program sponsors numerous activities including the annual RSVP Senior Citizens' Fair, Red Cross blood drives and the Harnett County Food Pantry.

RSVP has more than 400 volunteers who provide more than 36,000 hours of service to dozens of agencies.

Volunteers serve in places including the food pantry, hospital, blood drives, the Senior Games, senior prom, senior health fair, Veterans Treatment Court, Meals-on-Wheels and much more.

"We have a strong presence in Harnett County and we're very proud of that," said Sauls. "We're here to serve everybody."

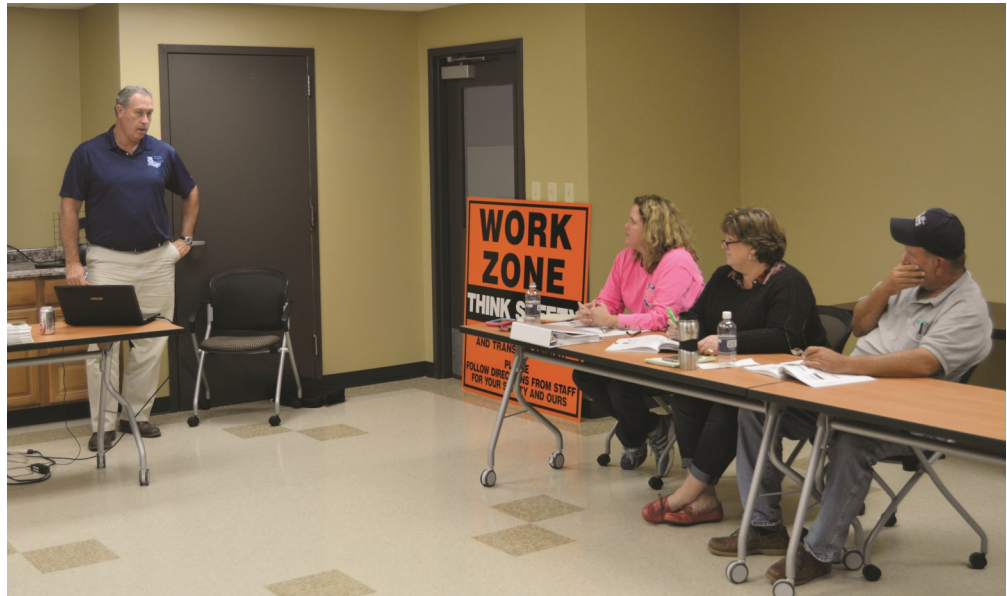
She said RSVP gives seniors numerous ways to stay active and get involved in the community and give back.

Sauls noted that county employees can also volunteer for the Meals on Wheels program and other activities. Regular employees are authorized one and a half hours of administrative leave each week to perform volunteer work for any Harnett County nonprofit organization, which includes the Food Pantry and Meals-on-Wheels.

For more information on the Harnett County Division on Aging, go to [www.harnett.org/aging/](http://www.harnett.org/aging/).

## Solid Waste Hosts Landfill Training Class

Harnett County Solid Waste hosted a training course last month for the North Carolina Chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA). Instructor Scott Bost led the Landfill and Transfer Station Certification course, which landfill personnel from central North Carolina attended. Three Harnett County employees — Nina Smithwick, Robert Lee and Beth Blinson — passed the exam that followed the course and received their certification.



## Animal Shelter Offering Pet Pictures With Santa



Harnett County Animal Services is inviting the public to come out and take pictures with Santa Claus and one of his elves at the Harnett County Animal Shelter at 1100 McKay Place, Lillington.

Citizens are invited to come out and have their children's picture made with Santa along with a newly adopted pet or one of their own pets. Photos with Santa are free of charge and will be offered every Friday leading up to Christmas (Dec. 4, 11 and 18) from 1 until 5 p.m.

Animal Services Director Steve Berube said he and some of his staff were brainstorming ways to increase pet adoptions from the shelter around Christmas and came up with the idea.

"We thought it would be neat if people adopted an animal, they could get a picture of their new pet with Santa Claus," Berube said, "and then we decided to offer it to the public."

For more information, call Harnett County Animal Services at (910) 814-2952 or visit [www.harnett.org/ac/](http://www.harnett.org/ac/).

## Social Services Seeking Christmas Gifts for Foster Children

Harnett County Social Services is collecting Christmas presents for foster children in the county and needs your help. Each year, the department seeks sponsors to assist in providing toys and gift cards for foster children at Christ-

mas. Sponsors receive a form with information about a foster child with their clothing sizes, special interests and toys they would like for Christmas. Gift cards are also appreciated.

To sponsor a child, or for more in-

formation, contact Kerry Willis at (910) 814-6803. Presents and contributions must be returned to DSS by Dec. 7 to give employees enough time to purchase gifts and make sure each child has what they need.

## Planning Dept. Holds Chili Cook-Off



Harnett County Planning Services held its first annual Chili Cook Off on Tuesday, Nov. 24. Five Planning Services staff members made chili for the cook off and Administration employees were invited to judge the entries. Planner David McCrae was selected as the first annual Planning Services Chili Cook Off winner and received a certificate along with a box of different kinds of hot sauce. Senior Planner Landon Chandler took second place honors and received a ladle.

## Help Health Dept. Spread Christmas Cheer

The Harnett County Health Department and Walmart are teaming up to make sure children in Harnett County have a great Christmas while their families learn about the importance of access to health care. The Health Department's Social Work Division has placed a Christmas tree inside the Walmart at 590 E. Jackson Blvd., Erwin, with anonymous tags for customers to select and purchase gifts for the children. The program will run from now through Dec. 18, so if you're in Walmart and see the tree, consider supporting this important cause.



## Upcoming Events

- Harnett Animal Welfare Coalition and Harnett Central High School's Voices for Animals are collecting gently worn shoes and used cell phones as a fundraiser to benefit the Harnett County Animal Shelter. Basic flip-flops, Crocs, fur-trimmed and bedroom shoes cannot be accepted. If you have items to donate, you may call (910) 890-6413 to schedule pickup.
- The Harnett County Public Library will hold Sensory Storytime Saturday, Dec. 5 at 11 a.m. This is a special event filled with stories, songs and activities designed for audiences with autism spectrum disorders, sensory integration issues and other development disabilities.
- Harnett County Cooperative Extension will host "First on Scene," to teach farmers who may be first on the scene in the event of a farm incident how to respond safely. The training will be held Thursday, Dec. 10 from 5:30 to 9 p.m. at the Extension Office at 126 Alexander Drive. A meal will be provided. To pre-register, call (910) 893-7530 or email [bparrish@harnett.org](mailto:bparrish@harnett.org).

*If you know of any important events for January or future months that should be included in this newsletter, email [bhaney@harnett.org](mailto:bhaney@harnett.org).*

## Human Resources Corner

# Debt: The Ghost of Holidays Past

When the holidays are over, some may find themselves haunted by the ghost of overspending also known as debt. Plan now to avoid that from happening this year. Here are some helpful strategies:

### Start with a Budget

Spent too much last year? Create a holiday budget to keep within your limits. Consider not just the cost of gifts, but the other important parts of the holiday like meals, parties and travel. And don't forget the wrapping paper and shipping for out of town gifts. To help pay for the holiday fun, focus on the good cheer you'll share with friends over coffee and treats at home, or renting a movie online.

### Pay with Cash

Leave the credit cards at home and pay with cash. Withdraw a fixed amount that matches your holiday budget and resolve to spend only what's in your wallet.

### Make a List

And check it twice. Jot down the names of everyone who'll get a gift this year and pair it with an item best suited to them. Decide the maximum you want to spend on each gift to help you stick to your budget.

### Look for Deals and Steals

Shop smart — and early. It's often those last-minute impulse purchases that blow your budget. Download apps and online coupons that can help stretch your holiday funds.\* Just be careful not to fall into retail traps that encourage you to buy more and save more. Focus on buying only what's on your list so as not to overspend.

### Get Personal

You don't have to spend a lot of money to communicate the essence of giving. Go beyond the usual baked goods and handmade ornaments. A gift of time can mean just as much. Lunch or an oil change coupon can add that

personal touch without breaking your budget.

### Plan Holiday Spending for Next Year Now

That's right, go ahead and begin planning for next holiday season by opening a holiday savings account at your bank or credit union. This is a special account where you set money aside year-round for holiday spending next year.

Your funds typically earn interest or dividends like any other savings account, giving you a little extra for holiday spending or a solid start for the next year. The money becomes available for use around the end of October, just in time for the holidays.

Hopefully, by following these tips, the only ghosts you'll see from now on are on Halloween!

*\*Check with your mobile service provider as data charges may apply.*

## Annual Employee Holiday Luncheon is Dec. 11

Harnett County Human Resources will host the county's annual Employee Holiday Luncheon Friday, Dec. 11 from 11:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. The luncheon is an opportunity for county employees

to fellowship together over a meal. Employees celebrating milestone anniversaries will also receive service awards. The event is floating, meaning you can eat at any time, however service

awards will be presented at noon.

The annual lunch will be held in the Harnett County Government Complex Commons between Social Services and the Health Department.

## Employment Anniversaries

The following Harnett County employees celebrate employment anniversaries this month:

5 years	Donna Smith (Animal Services) Michael Stinecipher (Sheriff's Office) David Dowdy (Sheriff's Office) Matthew Perez (Sheriff's Office) Crystal Hernandez (Social Services)	15 years	Randolph Clegg (Public Utilities) Oliver Tolksdorf (Health) Donna Johnson (Planning)
10 years	Thakida McDougald (Social Services)	25 years	Vicky Walden (Aging) Cherie Shaw (Public Utilities)

# December Employee Birthdays

The following Harnett County employees and board members celebrate birthdays in December. Please join us in wishing these employees a happy birthday.

Dec. 1	Monnie Lee (Social Services)	16	Matthew Seevers (Sheriff's Office)
2	Andrew Baker (EMS)		Frederick Clarida (Social Services)
	Patti Wilder (Finance)		Lori Lee (Tax)
	Eva Hairr (Sheriff's Office)	17	Anthony Underhill (Public Utilities)
	Ashana Smith (Social Services)		Jason Clutter (Sheriff's Office)
	Sue Johnson (Tax)	18	Heather Giunta (Library)
3	Kay Capps (Elections)		Donna Johnson (Planning)
	Ritisha Blue (Social Services)		Betty Ellis (Sheriff's Office)
	Latessia Greene (Social Services)	19	Rhonda Wade (Animal Services)
4	Tara Dixon (Social Services)		Jeffrey Armstrong (Sheriff's Office)
	Misty Wilson (Social Services)		Harriette Coley (Social Services)
	Toni Monzon (Social Services)	20	Christopher Duke (Elections)
	Catherine Keever (Social Services)		Amy Hennings (EMS)
5	Justin Lugo (EMS)		Kerry Taylor (Soil & Water)
	Benjamin Nuesmeyer (Public Utilities)	21	Leonard Hendges (EMS)
	Joshua Teasley (Sheriff's Office)		Bevrilin Eason (Health)
	Tina Sills (Social Services)		Lindsey Bennett (Planning)
	Davie McKoy (Transportation)		Larry Smith (EMS)
6	Stoney Baker (Public Utilities)		Kathy Mitchell (Social Services)
	Jose Peralta (Sheriff's Office)	22	Lori Barnes (Health)
7	Daniel Bristow (EMS)		Kathy McNeill (Sheriff's Office)
	Brian Watson (Public Utilities)	23	Kenneth Raynor (EMS)
	Juan Gutierrez (Public Utilities)		Donna Clayton (Library)
	Clayton Williams (Sheriff's Office)		Doris Stewart (Sheriff's Office)
8	Christopher Latta (Sheriff's Office)	24	Theresa Jones (Planning)
	William Bryant (Parks & Recreation)		Donald Harrop (Planning)
	Kenneth Atkins (Sheriff's Office)		Bobby Strickland (Sheriff's Office)
9	Nicholas Everette (Public Utilities)		Sandra Owen (Social Services)
10	William Sutton (IT)	27	Kiley Marshall (Transportation)
	Christopher Carroll (Sheriff's Office)	28	Claire Jones (Elections)
	Bronwyn Stinecipher (Social Services)		Gary Kidd (Sheriff's Office)
11	Walter Titchener (Sheriff's Office)		Teresa Wood (Social Services)
	Timothy Bradley (Sheriff's Office)	29	Patrick Moran (EMS)
	Stephanie Pollard (Social Services)		Deanna Barefoot (Finance)
12	Christina Williams (EMS)		Christopher Norris (Public Utilities)
	Kendra Kenney (Social Services)	30	Thomas Collins (Fleet Maintenance)
	Joseph Miriello (Tax)		John Fordham (Sheriff's Office)
13	Benjamin Rose (Sheriff's Office)		Edna Langdon (Social Services)
	Terri Strickland (Solid Waste)		Kristy Taylor (Tax)
14	Joshua Gilbert (Public Utilities)	31	Deeanna Parrilla (Sheriff's Office)
	Angela McLamb (Human Resources)		Brandon Nordan (EMS)
15	Lavonda Avery (Health)		April Williams (EMS)
	Steven Tart (Public Buildings)		Robert Marinez (EMS)
	Lisa Hinson (Social Services)		Scott Kelly (Sheriff's Office)

Want to know about events taking place in Harnett County each month? Check out the Harnett County Community Calendar at [www.harnett.org/publicinfo](http://www.harnett.org/publicinfo). And if you know of an event that should be on the calendar and isn't, email information to [bhaney@harnett.org](mailto:bhaney@harnett.org).

# Harnett Holds Biggest Veterans Day Event Ever



On Nov. 11, the Harnett County Veterans Council held its largest Veterans Day commemoration ever. Events included the annual Veterans Day Ceremony at Veterans Memorial Park in Lillington, during which two names were added to the Harnett County Vietnam Veterans Monument. The ceremony also memorialized Staff Sgt. Donald D. Stewart of Coats, who was killed in action during the Vietnam War and whose remains were finally brought home to be laid to rest. Next was the annual Veterans Day Parade through Downtown Lillington. After the parade, a memorial service was held for Staff Sgt. Stewart. Following the service, he was buried with full military honors at Lakeside Memorial Gardens in Angier.



## Annual Emergency Planning Meeting Held



The Harnett County Local Emergency Planning Committee held its annual meeting Nov. 4 in the Harnett County Emergency Operations Center. The committee is made up of officials from Harnett County, municipal governments, public utilities, emergency operations, and the education and business communities. During the meeting, NC Emergency Management Area 7 Coordinator Alan Byrd gave a presentation on the importance of Hazmat Planning. He said the LEPC was created as an oversight committee over the chemical industry to keep citizens safe.