

Turning Citizens into Leaders: The Legacy of Leadership Harnett

Over the last two decades, some of Harnett County's most prominent business, community and government leaders have had one thing in common – they've all gone through Leadership Harnett, a citizen academy aimed at giving residents a new appreciation of Harnett County and their role in making it a better place to live and work.

Leadership Harnett began in 1997 as a way of bringing people from across Harnett County together and exposing them to different aspects of life in Harnett County. Former Harnett County Manager Neil Emory had seen a similar program in a county he previously worked for and decided Harnett County could benefit from such a program.

The Neil A. Emory Excellence in Leadership Award is given in his honor each year to a Leadership Harnett participant who shows exemplary leadership among his or her classmates.

The program is a testament to public-private partnerships in the community. Its inception was a joint effort between Harnett County, area chambers of commerce and Campbell University. Today, it is governed by a board of directors made up of Leadership Harnett alumni.

Leadership Harnett challenges graduates to apply what they've learned in serving their community and taking on greater leadership roles in the county by becoming active in a chamber or one of the county's many professional asso-



Erwin History Room curator Joe Johnson gives Leadership Harnett members a walkthrough of the history room, which houses artifacts, photos and memorabilia from Erwin's founding as a mill town to the present.

ciations, civic clubs, public boards and service organizations.

Harnett County Clerk of Court Marsha Johnson, who currently chairs the Leadership Harnett Board of Directors, went through the program in 2012.

"People hear about Leadership Harnett, but they don't know what kind of program it is," Johnson said. "Before I got involved, I didn't know."

"You have people who've lived their entire lives in Harnett County and ride by a place like Campbell University every day, but they have no idea all

of what goes on there or all that it means to our county," said Matthew Willis, an employee of the Harnett County Register of Deeds office, who serves as Leadership Harnett's administrator and is a member of the Class of 2012.

"It amazed me that I could live in this county all my life and not really know the county," said Dunn Area Tourism Director Stevens, who was president of the Coats Chamber of Commerce when she went through Leadership Harnett's inaugural class in

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1997. "That's the one thing you hear every year at graduation, how people didn't have a clue about all we have here."

Leadership Harnett consists of eight sessions, held the fourth Wednesday of each month from March until the graduation ceremony in October. Sessions focus on different aspects of Harnett County including Education, Business and Economic Development, Local Government, Health and Human Services and Quality of Life.

"We want our sessions to represent what makes Harnett County such a special place," Johnson said.

Just like Harnett County itself, Leadership Harnett continues to grow and evolve.

"We added an Agriculture Day last year," said Willis. "One of the members of the Class of 2013 recommended we have a day dedicated to agriculture."

"We're always striving to improve the program," Johnson added. "We're never satisfied with status quo."

Another fairly recent addition is the "Legacy Project," a service project where members of each class give back to the community. Last year's project involved raising money for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which provides books for children from birth until age 5.

Each Leadership Harnett class is made up of 22 members of the community. While the program is open to anyone who lives or works in Harnett County, the application process is competitive from year to year.

Some of the criteria for selecting applicants include demonstrated leadership ability, community interest and present involvement, personal accomplishments and recommendations, along with a willingness to assume expanded community responsibility.

"The applications have to be strong," said Johnson. "Most applicants put a lot of thought into their applications and you can tell they're serious. That's what we're looking for."

Applicants must have support from the organization or business they repre-

sent.

The cost of participating in Leadership Harnett is \$400, which helps cover program costs including meals, materials and graduation exercises. Scholarships are available for participants who need tuition assistance and some employers pay for their employees to attend the program.

"We do have a lot of sponsorships from local businesses, and we try to cut the costs down as much as we can," said Johnson. "We have very broad support from the business community, and we appreciate it because we couldn't do this without our partners who are willing to invest their time and money in the program. People are willing to sponsor the program because they realize the value."

One of the main ways people come into the Leadership Harnett program is by word of mouth.

"A lot of times, when someone goes through the program, they go back and tell their coworkers about the program and the benefits, and then they want to be part of it," Willis said.

Among the Leadership Harnett Board of Directors' goals is expanding the program by reaching out to people who may have never thought about being part of Leadership Harnett and sharing the program's benefits with them.

Johnson said going through the program is transformative, not only in expanding participants' knowledge of Harnett County, but in bringing people from different backgrounds and all parts of the county together in a positive way.

"People go in on the first day and they may have seen some of their classmates before, but they feel like they're on their own," she said. "By the time they finish, they've really come together as a group and they've made connections that will last a lifetime."

Stevens said the program wasn't as "well-oiled" when she went through it as it is today, but the benefits were just as great.

"I met so many people that I still have as friends today," she said. "There's a camaraderie that you develop with your classmates when you're with

them for those eight months."

Program participants visit businesses, institutions and developments all over the county and hear from leaders who represent the county and all of its towns.

"There are a lot of people in the eastern part of the county who are not familiar with all the growth going on in the western part of the county, and people from the western part of the county who don't know everything that's going on in the eastern part of the county," Johnson said. "What this does is put everyone in a room together and you get to hear Angier's perspective or Dunn's perspective and see how things are in every part of the county."

Then there are the places you go during Leadership Harnett that the general public wouldn't normally have access to.

"You get in some places that you can only get in through an organization like this," Stevens said. "You just can't walk up to their front door and say I want to see what you're doing here. Leadership Harnett gives you that kind of access."

She said she hates hearing people say how there's nothing to do in Harnett County.

"We have so many wonderful things in this county," she said, "and that's what Leadership Harnett shows you."

Stevens said what's made Leadership Harnett the success that it is has been the knowledge participants come away with.

"You walk away with just enough knowledge about the county that you want to be involved," she said. "That's what the whole program is about – it gives you just enough of a taste that you have to have more."

Although the 2016 class of Leadership Harnett has been selected, if you are interested in applying to the Class of 2017 or a future class, applications are posted at www.leadershipharnett.com. For more information about Leadership Harnett, contact Matthew Willis at (910) 893-7540 or send an email to mwillis@harnett.org.

Want to know about events taking place in Harnett County each month? Check out the Harnett County Community Calendar at 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.

Department Spotlight

Harnett County Youth Services

For thousands of youth in Harnett County, Henry Evans is a second chance. Evans is coordinator for Harnett County Youth Services, which operates the county's Juvenile Restitution and Community Service Program. He's been in his role for the last 17 years.

When children get in trouble with the law, a judge or Juvenile Court Services can send them to Evans, who puts them to work, either doing community service or paying their victim back through restitution.

Evans works with youth from age 7 to 16, though he said most are between 13 and 16 years old.

"We take any and all charges, from things as simple as stealing a candy bar or getting into a fight at school to wrecking someone's car or committing arson," he said. "Our job is to find work for them to do."

Community service and restitution can take any number of forms. Juveniles may pick up trash from the side of the road, or they may work with one of Youth Services' private sector or non-profit partners, or at the Harnett County Landfill, Parks & Recreation, or at senior centers across the county.

Evans operates through a state grant, but is a county employee. In addition to Evans, Harnett County Youth Services consists of program assistants Crystal Lynn and Moriah Green, and Anna Peele, who provides administrative support. Youth Services works closely with Harnett County's Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC), which receives funding from the state and then decides how to distribute those funds among multiple programs designed to prevent juvenile crime.

"You always hope the state sends more money, but Harnett County's really good at making do with what they get," he said.

Restitution is limited to \$1,000 or 200 hours at \$5 an hour.

When a juvenile works for a private company, the company is billed for



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their work. When they work for a non-profit or government organization, the work is paid for with money set aside in Youth Services' budget.

Program participants can work for three hours after school and for eight hours a day on holidays, during spring break and over summer.

They are allowed to miss five days during the program. Being dismissed from the program means going back to court and appearing before a judge.

The goal, Evans said, is to teach them respect and responsibility, while allowing them to pay for any damage their actions caused.

When a child is in his charge, they're held accountable.

"They have to have a certain behavior with us," he said. "We can deal with attitude, but if they do something illegal they can be charged."

In 17 years, Evans said the thing he's seen time and time again is that children want rules.

"They want to be held accountable," he said. "They respect it – something as simple as 'yes sir,' 'no sir,' 'yes ma'am,' 'no ma'am.'"

Over the years, Evans has had a pretty good record of success. Most juveniles who go through the program don't come back.

"We have about 10 to 15 percent recidivism," he said. "Eight-five percent don't come back."

He said there's no magic formula for who ends up in his program and who doesn't.

"Some come from unstable family structures and situations with one or two parents who are working two jobs to support them, and then you get kids who come from great families and just made a stupid mistake," he said.

However they enter the program, Evans said he wants them to leave the same way.

"Hopefully, the result is you have kids who start making good decisions before they turn 18 and end up in the adult court system," he said. "This gives them a chance to change their behavior and they get a taste of what happens if they don't."

He said he doesn't see his job as telling juveniles what to do and what not to do.

"I want them to stop and think, and decide of the consequences of their actions are worth what they're about to do," he said.

Evans said he is stern, but caring.

"My philosophy is once a kid opens up and starts talking, you don't turn your back on them," he said.

For someone who is closing in on two decades of working with youth, Evans said he was initially interested in adult probation.

"I saw an ad for this job in the paper and I applied," he said. "Now, I can't see myself not working with kids. I just enjoy working with them."

He said his reward is seeing former charges graduate from high school and go to college or find a good-paying job.

"Some keep in touch," he said. "Sometimes you get a card from one of

them in the mail and you see that they've straightened up and are productive citizens – that's the icing on the cake.

He said he enjoys hearing from former charges, even though it makes him feel old now to hear from 30-year-olds who went through his program.

Evans estimates he works with 200 children a year on average.

"The numbers have gone down in the last few years – there haven't been as many referrals," he said.

Evans said the most gratifying part of his job is seeing people who come into the program at a difficult time in their lives learn, mature and grow up.

"It's nice to see a smile on a kid's face when they've done a good job," he said. "I've seen kids who picked up trash on the side of the road and they

would take their parents back after they were through with us and show them what they did.

"You can't reach everyone, but as long as you make a difference in one kid's life, you've done what you've been sent here to do," he said. "I try to reach as many as I can. You help the ones you can and worry about the ones you can't."

For more information on Harnett County Youth Services, go to www.harnett.org/youth/.

For more information on the Harnett County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, go to www.harnett.org/jcpc/ or contact Wendy Butcher at wbutcher@harnett.org or by phone at (910) 814-6692 to inquire about available funding for programs that assist youth in Harnett County.

Commissioners Share Priorities with State and Local Leaders During Annual Legislative Luncheon



The Harnett County Board of Commissioners hosted elected officials from the state and federal level during the board's annual Legislative Luncheon on Feb. 1. Commissioners shared the county's legislative priorities for the coming year and asked legislators for assistance in accomplishing those priorities. Priorities included: assisting in construction of a four-lane highway from Harnett County into Wake County, authorizing counties to operate natural gas as an enterprise, expanding broadband in rural Harnett County communities, authorizing the use of recreation fees for construction, allowing Harnett County to establish a county-wide tourism entity, allowing Harnett County to establish an agricultural business district and allowing counties to use E-911 funds for needs other than equipment. Those who attended the lunch included U.S. Rep. David Price, N.C. Rep. David Lewis, N.C. Rep. Brad Salmon and N.C. Sen. Ronald Rabin. Representatives also attended the luncheon from the offices of U.S. Sen. Richard Burr, U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis and U.S. Rep. Renee Ellmers.

First-timers Give at Harnett Blood Drive



There were a number of new faces giving blood for the first time during last month's Lillington Community Blood Drive in the Harnett County Government Complex. Above, Division on Aging employee Kami Jackson has been giving blood for years, but was able to convince her sister, Wake County teacher Michelle



Turner, to give for the first time. The sisters sat side-by-side as they gave their life-saving donations. Dave Burke of Holly Springs also gave blood for the first time in Harnett County, but for a very special reason. Burke gave blood in memory of his niece who was killed by a drunk drive in California. The blood drive fell on her birthday and he said he was driving through Lillington when he saw the sign to donate blood and decided it would be a fitting way to honor her memory. The next Lillington Community Blood Drive will be held March 10.

Board of Elections Needs Poll Workers

The Harnett County Board of Elections needs poll workers to serve during the March 15, 2016, Primary Election and one-stop voting, which runs from March 3 to March 11.

County employees may serve as poll workers, but must take vacation or use comp time, however you will receive payment for serving as a poll worker.

To be a poll worker, you must be registered to vote in Harnett County. Near relatives may not work in the same precinct and you cannot serve as a poll

worker while you are a candidate or hold a position with any political party.

Poll worker training sessions will be held Tuesday, Feb. 23, Wednesday, Feb. 24, and Friday, Feb. 26 from 6 until 9 p.m. at the Lillington Community Building at 607 S. 13th St., Lillington. You only have to attend one of the sessions.

If you are interested in serving as a poll worker or if you know anyone who would like to work, contact the Harnett County Board of Elections at (910) 893-7553 by Feb. 12 to sign up for a class.

Upcoming Events

- The Harnett County Beekeepers Association will host a beginner beekeeping course Saturday, Feb. 20 at 126 Alexander Drive, Lillington. The class will begin at 9 a.m. The course fee is \$20. Payment will be accepted the morning of the course. RSVP with your name and contact information to HarnettBeekeepers@gmail.com.
- Harnett County Parks and Recreation will host a Couch to 5k program for beginners who would like to run a 5k. Classes will be Mondays and Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. at Barbecue Creek Park from March 7 through April 22. Registration is \$10 and includes a T-shirt. To register or for more information, call (910) 893-7518. For similar programs at other locations, contact municipal parks throughout the county.
- Harnett County Extension and Community Association will host an art workshop March 9 from 10 a.m. until noon at 126 Alexander Drive, Lillington, featuring artist and teacher Trisha Roberson. The cost to attend is \$25. To register or for more information, contact Patricia McKoy at (910) 893-7523.

If you know of any important events for March or future months that should be included in this newsletter, email bhaney@harnett.org.

Human Resources Corner

Five Ways to Manage Medical Debt

New rules are now being phased in for how and when medical debt is documented on your credit report. Credit-reporting agencies (CRAs) will now allow six-months to resolve a new medical charge-off before it appears on your credit report. If you resolve an old medical charge-off on your report it will be removed almost immediately, unlike other types of charge-offs.

It's important to deal with outstanding medical bills as soon as they arrive so you don't end up in collections. Here are five ways to manage medical debt.

Read your bill carefully. If you're faced with a bill you weren't expecting, confirm you received medical treatment on the day in question. To dispute a bill, contact the provider directly.

Check your insurance coverage. Make sure your medical provider has your correct insurance information. Check with your insurance company to confirm what is and is not covered. A small mix up can lead to big charges your provider should have covered.

Don't ignore bills. If you owe the bill, try to resolve it right away. If you delay and the bill ends up in collections, it can have a negative impact on your credit report. If you don't owe the bill, dispute it immediately.

Negotiate your bill. A large balance may make it difficult to pay the full amount at once. Ask for payment options if you're unable to pay in full right away. Consider breaking the payments down into more affordable portions.

The hospital or medical provider may offer an installment plan with no interest. Hospitals may negotiate the bill down to a lower amount to entice you to pay in full a lot sooner.

Check hospital guidelines for financial help. Some offer charity care if you meet certain financial hardships. This could reduce the amount owed.

Avoid charging medical bills. If you can't pay off a debt when the credit card bill arrives, you may face high interest rates. That could make it more difficult to pay. Plus, it will look like regular debt to creditors.

For more advice on managing medical debt, visit the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau at consumerfinance.gov.

Five Ways to be #PrivacyAware

"Respecting Privacy, Safeguarding Data and Enabling Trust" is the theme for Data Privacy Day. The initiative aims to create awareness about the importance of privacy and protecting personal information. Share these five tips on being #PrivacyAware with your family and friends.

- **Posts are forever** — What you post can last a lifetime. Before posting online, think about how it might be perceived now and in the future, and who might see it.
- **Own your online presence** — It's

okay to limit how and with whom you share information. Consider disabling Internet "cookies," limiting clicking on ads, and examining a website's privacy policy before revealing any information.

- **Is this TMI (too much information)?** — If you wouldn't put a sign on your front lawn advertising your week-long family vacation, then why would you post it online? Before you update your status, ask yourself if your post is TMI?
- **Post only what you would say in real life** — It's difficult to interpret

emotion or intent in an online format. So follow the golden rule: only say to others what you would have them say to you.

- **Think before you act** — Be wary of communications that implore you to act immediately, offer something that sounds too good to be true or ask for personal information.

The effects of our digital footprint expand much more than we realize.

Learn more about data privacy at staysafeonline.org/data-privacy-day.

Employment Anniversaries

The following Harnett County employees celebrate employment anniversaries this month:

5 years	Heather Carter (Health)		Lianna Simmons (Social Services)
	Paul Hart (Parks & Recreation)	15 years	Franklin Carson (Sheriff's Office)
	David Whittenton (Sheriff's Office)	20 years	James Williams (GIS)
	Sonya Cissell (Social Services)		Warren Jeffries (Sheriff's Office)

February Employee Birthdays

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

Feb. 1	Larry Weathers (Public Utilities)		Michael Cockburn (Parks & Recreation)
2	John Rouse (Health)		Michael Martin (Sheriff's Office)
	Elaine Weeks (Health)		Jeff Huber (Sheriff's Office)
	Daniel Holder (Tax)		Alicia Gatrell (Social Services)
3	Michael Chappell (EMS)	16	Shannon Warren (EMS)
	Stanley Price (Planning)		Duncan McCormick (Social Services)
	Jonathan Coupee (Sheriff's Office)		Kimberly Baker (Tax)
	Courtne Gonzalez (Social Services)	17	Nick Dula (Economic Development)
	Willie Purdie (Transportation)		Curtis Thompson (Sheriff's Office)
4	James Lowery (Public Utilities)		James Lanier (Sheriff's Office)
5	Thomas Ray (Public Utilities)		Kimberly McGee (Social Services)
6	Melissa Otto (Health)	18	Larry Adams (EMS)
	Ronald Beasley (Sheriff's Office)	20	Timothy Loftus (EMS)
	Paulette Strickland (Social Services)		Brittany Tart (EMS)
7	Catherine Wilkes (EMS)		Tony Strickland (Sheriff's Office)
	Kimberly Cochran (Health)	21	Martin Denton (Public Utilities)
	Anthony Crouch (Sheriff's Office)		David McCrae (Planning)
	Shonda McNeill (Social Services)		Neurall Robinson (Planning)
	David Syck (Solid Waste)		Michael Williams (Sheriff's Office)
8	Sherrie Gregory (Sheriff's Office)	22	Brian Haney (Administration)
9	Tony Spears (Board of Elections)		Betsy Shoemake (Health)
	Felicia Nordan (Communications)	23	John Burgess (Public Utilities)
	Pamela Thomas (EMS)		Beverly Gore (Health)
	Blaine Payne (Public Utilities)		Roy Greene (Sheriff's Office)
	Vesper Brown (IT)	24	William Owens (EMS)
	Matthew Willis (Register of Deeds)		Donald Smith (Sheriff's Office)
	Traci Ferrell (Tax)	25	Dixie Perez (Board of Elections)
10	Harold Wright (EMS)		Sherry Roberts (Communications)
	Jennifer Brock (Planning)		Deana Macklin (EMS)
	Lettie Jones (Social Services)		Johnnie Jackson (Public Utilities)
11	James King (EMS)		Charles Ginn (IT)
	Albert Adams (Solid Waste)		Penny Cummings (Social Services)
12	Lawrence Foster (Sheriff's Office)	26	Steve Berube (Animal Services)
	Brian Stephenson (Public Buildings)		Joseph Myatt (Sheriff's Office)
	Kristine Johnson (Social Services)	27	Robert Webster (EMS)
13	Scott Lent (Communications)		Oliver Tolksdorf (Health)
	Glenn McFadden (Public Utilities)		Jamie Turlington (Health)
14	Theresa Pina (EMS)		Woody Allen (Sheriff's Office)
	Kain Craddock (Public Utilities)		Ernestine Bellamy (Public Buildings)
	Cherl Ward (Sheriff's Office)		Chase Banker (Sheriff's Office)
	Jeremy Roberts (Sheriff's Office)	28	Joseph Powell (Board of Elections)
	James Cook (Sheriff's Office)		Donny Osborne (Public Utilities)
	Michael Britt (Sheriff's Office)		Jessica Nelson (Sheriff's Office)
	Gwendolyn Speas (Social Services)		Deen Taylor (Planning)
15	Judy Herrin (Health)	29	Gary McNeill (Sheriff's Office)

If you are a county employee who has a birthday in February and are not listed, or if you go by a different name than is listed and would like it included next year, email bhaney@harnett.org with the correct information.

County Employees Show Panther Pride



Harnett County Manager Joseph Jeffries challenged county employees to submit their best Carolina Panthers Fan Photo to cheer the Panthers on as they prepared to play in Super Bowl 50. Employees responded, submitting more than 25 fan photos for the contest. The winning photos, which were announced the Friday before the Super Bowl, were submitted by the Harnett County Department of Social Services, above, and the Health Department Women's Health Clinic, at right. Those who took part in the winning photos will be treated to a pizza party by Jeffries and Deputy Manager Paula Stewart. To view all the photos that were submitted, go to www.facebook.com/HarnettCounty/.

