



Harnett County Manager Joseph Jeffries, right, and Planning Services Manager Jay Sikes canoe down the Cape Fear River as part of a kickoff event for the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. The plan, which will wrap up this year, was just one of many accomplishments Harnett County Government saw in 2016.

County Reflects on Year of Accomplishment

The arrival of a new year offers an opportunity to look back on past accomplishments and forward to what's in store for the new year. For Harnett County, 2016 was a year of transition, during which the County completed numerous major projects and laid the groundwork for even bigger things to come in 2017 and beyond.

Economic Development Expands

One of the top priorities of the Harnett County Board of Commissioners is Economic Development. In 2016, Har-

nett County Economic Development added staff and moved to a new location. An expansion of sales tax revenue allowed Harnett County to hire two additional economic developers, adding capacity to assist the department in accomplishing the goals set out in the Economic Development Strategic Plan, which was completed and adopted in 2015. The department also relocated to 200 Alexander Drive, Lillington.

Under the direction of Deputy County Manager Paula Stewart, each member of the three-person team of

economic developers is dedicated to a different sector of the business community. Small Business & Downtown Development Manager Nick Dula works with small businesses and entrepreneurs to help them grow and build successful businesses; Existing Industry & Product Development Manager Angie Stewart serves as a liaison between the county's existing business and industry, and the resources they need to succeed, thrive and grow; and Marketing & Business Recruitment Manager Debbie Taylor markets Harnett County to at-

Keep up with Harnett County on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and go to www.harnett.org/publicinfo for news releases, important updates, a community calendar and other information.



tract new industry. The realignment of staff along with the services of Economic Development consultant Lee Anne Nance will allow Harnett County Economic Development to provide more hands-on service and to more readily tackle the economic development needs and opportunities in the county in the years ahead.

Parks & Rec Plans for Growth

Harnett County Parks & Recreation had a productive 2016 that sets up an even busier year to come. The County received a \$400,000 PARTF grant to develop the first phase of a Government Complex Park along the Cape Fear River off of Alexander Drive in Lillington. The park's first phase will be completed in 2018 and will include a walking trail with a boardwalk, canoe and kayak access, a river observation deck, ballfields, and multi-purpose fields. Future phases will include additional walking trails, a playground, splash pad, bocce court, basketball courts, sand volleyball, shelters and environmental education amenities.

Parks & Recreation also announced plans to develop a new park and community center on the Old Boone Trail School property on Old U.S. 421. The park will incorporate the former school's media center, gymnasium and ball fields, and will include a picnic shelter, small outdoor basketball court and a walking trail. The community center will also house a satellite location of the Harnett County Public Library with nearly 1,000 books as well as newspaper and magazine subscriptions. The site will serve as a pickup and drop-off location for reserved books, and will offer programs in fitness, arts and crafts, story time, and movies. The idea for the park, which will officially open in early 2017, came about after citizens in the Boone Trail community asked county officials to help them preserve portions of the abandoned school. The citizens are selling old high school uniforms from the school with proceeds going toward the park.

In addition to announcing two new parks, the department is currently developing the Harnett County Parks & Recreation Master Plan, which will look at existing gaps in recreational

opportunities in the county, and will determine where new parks should be located and what new programs and facilities are needed. The plan is being completed with citizen input gathered from multiple community meetings, as well as surveys distributed to residents throughout the county.

Solid Waste Adds Convenience

In the area of Solid Waste, Harnett County saw the construction of a new five-year cell for the Anderson Creek Landfill where the life of the construction and demolition debris landfill had expired. Harnett County Solid Waste is also in the process of adding two new convenience sites—the Ponderosa site at 721 Ponderosa Road, Cameron; and a renovated Campbell University site at 117 Kivett Road, Lillington. The sites, which will each have an attendant, will feature compactors for recycling and household trash. The projects are being completed with \$30,000 in grants.

In 2016, compactors were added to the county's convenience sites to replace open-top containers that were unsightly, allowed water intrusion and required more frequent hauls for unloading. A new compactor was also added at the Anderson Creek Landfill and staff received certified training on Waste Operations Efficiency from Caterpillar. Repairs were made to the Dunn-Erwin Landfill transfer station.

The County's Environmental Officer, Deputy Gary McGuire, was also recognized by the North Carolina Solid Waste Enforcement Officers Associa-



Harnett County Environmental Officer Deputy Gary McGuire receives the 2016 Solid Waste Enforcement Officer of the Year 'Mike Stillwell Award.'

tion with the 2016 Solid Waste Enforcement Officer of the Year "Mike Stillwell Award" for his outstanding efforts to address illegal dumping and develop successful campaigns to address roadway litter, and for his community-based philanthropic projects.

Development Services Cleans Up

Harnett County Development Services saw success with the endorsement of its Problem Properties Program. Funding of the program allowed staff to successfully remove seven homes that were proven to be a threat to their surrounding neighborhoods. The program has reduced safety and health hazards, and has stabilized property values in the addressed areas. One project site has also been conveyed to Harnett County Habitat for Humanity to help the non-profit address housing needs in the county. County staff are currently working with property owners to complete demolition and removal of another eight homes.

Development Services also got a fresh look in 2016, changing its name from the Harnett County Planning Department and reorganizing to better represent the department's services of Planning, Central Permitting and Inspections.

DSS Advances Technologically

The Harnett County Department of Social Services implemented the first phase of its switch to its new Northwoods software for Adult and Children's Services, meaning the division no longer has paper casefiles. Instead, social workers use tablets in the field and have access to client files in electronic format while away from the office. Additional sections of the department will go paperless as phase II is implemented in 2017, and clients will be able to check themselves in at a kiosk in the lobby to cut down on lines and wait times.

All Adult and Children's Medicaid cases are now current in the NC Fast system. Child Support Enforcement met all goals set by the state for the third year in a row and brought in more than \$3.9 million of child support payments into Harnett County. Food and Nutrition also met all requirements from the USDA to have Food Stamp cases pro-

cessed in a timely manner.

Social Services opened and maintained two emergency shelters during Hurricane Matthew in October, hosting 139 residents in the shelter at Harnett Central Middle School. Following the storm, DSS processed Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (DSNAP) applications from residents with assistance from the department's peers in Buncombe County. Out of 4,141 applications that were processed in a five-day period, 3,197 were approved for disaster assistance. Social Services also raised more than \$2,500 through fundraisers to assist 45 elderly residents at Christmas through Adult Services' Christmas Cheer program.

Health Encourages Healthier Habits

In 2016, the Harnett County Health Department continued providing essential programming to the County's residents to improve community health outcomes. The department sponsored a series of educational workshops, lunch and learns, and conferences in 2016 with more than 500 residents in attendance. Events offered information on topics including heart health, high blood pressure, healthy cooking on a budget, breast cancer awareness and the Girls are Great program.

The Health Department used a grant from Susan G. Komen North Carolina Triangle to the Coast to support community-based health initiatives aimed at educating women on the importance of mammography screening and providing access to screenings in the County. In 2016, more than 200 women utilized the program and more than 1,800 received screenings at the Health Department. The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program served more than 36,000 participants in 2016 at the Health Department's three sites in Lillington, Dunn and Spring Lake.

Within the Health Department, the Harnett County Division on Aging serves some of Harnett County's more seasoned residents. The Division's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) had 291 registered volunteers serving in 25 stations across Harnett County in 2016, accounting for 28,793 hours of unpaid, volunteer service in the community. The program sponsored six blood drives at the Harnett County



District Court Judge Joy Jones administers the oath of office to Harnett County Commissioner Gordon Springle during the December 5, 2017, Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Springle was selected as the board's chairman when the new board reorganized.

Governmental Complex Commons Area, during which 243 units of blood were collected. In 2016, more than 250 volunteers with the Elderly Nutrition Program served more than 42,000 home-delivered meals to seniors and approximately 18,000 meals at the County's six senior centers.

The Medicare/Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) served 1,049 Medicare beneficiaries in 2016 and held 37 outreach events in the community. During Medicare open enrollment, the program served 709 and helped save Harnett County residents more than \$500,000 in prescription drug costs. The VITA/NC Economic Tax Assistance Program prepared 2,650 tax returns at no cost to Harnett County's elderly, low-income and disabled populations.

The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program held a Back-to-School celebration at Carolina Skate Land in Dunn in August, with community donations providing backpacks full of school supplies to program participants. The Grandparents and Family Caregiver group also received more than \$1,800 in donations and contributions, which allowed the group to purchase additional supplies for Alzheimer's disease and dementia patients in the program.

Commissioners Focus on Employees

County employees were a focus of

the Harnett County Board of Commissioners in 2016. The County's strengthened financial position allowed commissioners to provide fulltime employees with a one-time \$1,200 bonus at the end of November. Commissioners also adopted a new Performance Pay Plan that will kick in after the existing 3/5 Pay Plan and will give employees the opportunity to earn increases throughout their careers with the county based on their performance reviews. Additionally, the County has commissioned a market analysis of its grade table to determine where the county's pay scale should be relative to surrounding counties and towns to help the County hire and retain talented employees.

The County also said goodbye to Board of Commissioners Chairman Jim Burgin and welcomed Commissioner Howard Penny Jr. to the governing body. Chairman Burgin, who opted not to run for reelection in 2016, served on the board for eight years and was voted to serve as chairman twice. During his penultimate board meeting in November, Chairman Burgin was awarded the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, the highest civilian honor bestowed by the State of North Carolina. The new board reorganized during their first meeting in December with Commissioner Gordon Springle selected as chairman and Commissioner Joe Miller selected as vice chairman.

What's Happening in Harnett?

Are you looking for something to do over the weekend? Have you ever wanted to run your own business, but need some help getting started? Keep up with what's going on in Harnett County with the Community Calendar at www.harnett.org/publicinfo.

The calendar compiles community events taking place throughout Harnett County — from all the town festivals and parades going on in the fall to community meetings and seminars at Triangle South Enterprise Center — and puts them in a single location. It also includes events held by partner organizations including area chambers of commerce, the Dunn Area Tourism Authority, Campbell University, Central Carolina Community College and Raven Rock State Park. See something that's missing from the calendar? Let us know and we'll add it! To submit an event for inclusion in the Harnett County Community Calendar, email bhaney@harnett.org.



Members of the 2012 Class of Leadership Harnett participate in the program's opening session, held each year at Camp Agape in Harnett County. Applications are currently being accepted for the 2017 Leadership Harnett class. For more information, contact Brian Haney at bhaney@harnett.org or (910) 893-7555.

Want to Get More Involved ? Apply to Leadership Harnett!

Did you know that Harnett County is home to the largest water ski and wakeboard camp in the world? Or that Harnett County Public Utilities operates the largest surface water treatment plant on the Cape Fear River? Or that in 2013, Campbell University opened the first new medical school in North Carolina in more than three decades?

Harnett County's residents have a lot to be proud of and in the Leadership Harnett program, you'll see why! During the program, you'll gain an appreciation for all that Harnett County has to offer; learn about key partnerships between County government, the business community and nonprofit sector; and discover new opportunities to get involved and shape the future of Harnett County.

Leadership Harnett is open to anyone who lives or works in Harnett County and is essential both for longtime county leaders and those who are looking for ways to get more involved in their community. The seven-month program runs from

March through October each year and aims to educate and inspire a diverse group of future leaders who are representative of the county's population. Sessions are held the fourth Wednesday of each month and take participants to businesses, attractions and other locations across Harnett County to learn about topics including Education, Business & Industry, Human Needs & Health Care, Local Government, Recreation & Tourism, and Agriculture.

The cost to participate in Leadership Harnett is \$400, which may be paid by a participant's employer, but the program does offer scholarships to those who express a need.

To learn more about the Leadership Harnett program and to apply for admission into the Class of 2017, go to www.leadershipharnett.com/about. The deadline to apply for 2017 is January 31. For more information, contact Brian Haney at bhaney@harnett.org or (910) 893-7555.

HCSO Sgt. Meredith Receives Appointment to State Board



Harnett County Board of Commissioners Chairman Gordon Springle administers the oath of office to Harnett County Sheriff's Sgt. Aaron Meredith, who was appointed to serve on the North Carolina Local Government Employees' Retirement System Board of Trustees.

Harnett County Sheriff's Sgt. Aaron Meredith has been appointed to serve on the North Carolina Local Government Employees' Retirement System Board of Trustees. Harnett County Commissioners Chairman Gordon Springle administered the oath of office to Sgt. Meredith, whose term began immediately upon appointment and will expire March 31, 2020. Sgt. Meredith said he looks forward to completing his term on the Board of Trustees.

"I am honored to be asked to serve in this capacity and look forward to serving the employees of North Carolina to the best of my ability," he said.

"This is a great honor for Harnett County," said Harnett County Board of

Commissioners Chairman Gordon Springle in announcing Sgt. Meredith's appointment. "We're proud of him for receiving this recognition."

Sgt. Meredith started working with the Harnett County Sheriff's Office in 1998 and began working in his current capacity as sergeant over Crime Prevention in 2008. He is a member of the Sudan Shriners and of Palmyra Masonic Lodge No. 147 A.F. & A.M., and is a 2016 graduate of Leadership Harnett. Sgt. Meredith and his wife, Sharon, have one child, Dylan.

The North Carolina Retirement System was established in 1941 and covers nearly a million current and former public servants. The system has more than \$89 billion in assets.

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.

Upcoming Events

- The Harnett County office of the N.C. Cooperative Extension will present "Growing and Pruning Blueberries," a workshop for growers and gardeners, February 11 from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. at the Harnett County Agricultural Center at 126 Alexander Drive, Lillington. To register, call Matt Jones at (910) 814-6024.
- The Harnett County Public Library will host #JustListen with Dr. Gail Hayes on February 11 at 2 p.m. Join Dr. Hayes as she discusses important and sensitive issues surrounding race. The library is located at 601 South Main Street, Lillington.
- Harnett County Parks & Recreation is looking for experienced instructors who can assist with programming in the areas of Fitness (Yoga, Pilates), Dance Fitness (Zumba, POUND), Dancing (Shag and Ballroom), Youth Martial Arts, and Arts & Crafts in 2017 and beyond. Instructors are needed to help form a base of programs for the future park at the Old Boone Trail School. Anyone interested should contact Drew Bryant at (910) 893-7518 or at wbryant@harnett.org.

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

Human Resources Corner

Four Ways to Rule Your 52-Week Challenge

Looking for an easy way to save \$1,378 a year? Take the 52-Week Challenge! This popular challenge is an incremental savings plan that encourages you to save a little cash each week. Over the course of the year, those small deposits will add up to big savings. Here's how to rule your 52-Week Challenge.

Start the challenge

The Challenge is simple: start your year by saving \$1 in the first week of 2017, then \$2 in the second week, \$3 the next and so on. At the end of the year, you will have saved \$1,378 – a little more than pocket change! It's a great way to start an emergency fund or to save for a special purchase.

New Year's challenge

Embrace the 52-Week Challenge as a New Year's resolution. Let

your family and friends know about your challenge. Share your monthly progress on social media to hold yourself accountable and be recognized for your efforts. Your progress may even motivate others!

Have fun with your challenge

Create a support team of friends and coworkers, and arrange a "buddy challenge." Ask them to save along with you. This way you can support one another. Want more of an incentive? Plan a trip together with the money you've saved.

Count down instead of up!

As the Challenge comes to an end in December, it may be harder to save larger amounts with the holidays looming. Instead try counting down instead of up. Kickoff your 52

-Week Challenge in January with \$52 in week one, \$51 in week two,

and so on. By the time December rolls around, you'll be down to single digit dollar amounts and can finish the challenge with ease.

Hack your Challenge

Worried you'll forget to save for your weekly challenge? Create a separate account and have your weekly contribution automatically deposited into that account. Hint: if you deposit \$26 each week for 52 weeks, you'll still end up with \$1,378 at the end of your year!

Take the Challenge now and watch your savings grow all year long with the 52-week challenge chart, which you can download at <http://www.lgfcunewsworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/52week-challenge-chart-newsworks.pdf>.

Article provided by Local Government Federal Credit Union.

Join Data Privacy Day on January 28

DATA PRIVACY DAY

JANUARY 28, 2017



Personal information is like money: value it and protect it. Take steps this month to command respect for your privacy from others, require your data be safeguarded and gain greater trust in our online world. Then on January 28, join the Data Privacy Day celebration on Facebook and Twitter to gain more tips using #PrivacyAware.

Article provided by Local Government Federal Credit Union.

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)		Alicia Gatrell (Social Services)
2	John Rouse (Health)	16	Shannon Warren (EMS)
	Elaine Weeks (Health)		Duncan McCormick (Social Services)
	Daniel Holder (Tax)		Kimberly Baker (Tax)
3	Stanley Price (Development Services)	17	Nick Dula (Economic Development)
	Michael Chappell (EMS)		Curtis Thompson (Sheriff's Office)
	Laura Bright (Library)		James Lanier (Sheriff's Office)
4	James Lowery (Public Utilities)		Kimberly McGee (Social Services)
5	Thomas Ray (Public Utilities)	18	Larry Adams (EMS)
6	Angela Kokoszka (Health)	19	Teddy Howard (Sheriff's Office)
	Melissa Otto (Health)	20	Timothy Loftus (EMS)
	Ronald Beasley (Sheriff's Office)		Brittany Tart (EMS)
	Paulette Strickland (Social Services)	21	David McRae (Development Services)
7	Kimberly Cochran (Health)		Neurall Robinson (Development Services)
	David Syck (Solid Waste)		Martin Denton (Public Utilities)
8	Sherrie Gregory (Sheriff's Office)		Michael Williams (Sheriff's Office)
	Sarah Horrell (Social Services)	22	Brian Haney (Administration)
9	Tony Spears (Board of Elections)		Betsy Shoemake (Health)
	Blaine Payne (Public Utilities)	23	John Burgess (Public Utilities)
	Vesper Brown (IT)		Beverly Gore (Health)
	Matthew Willis (Register of Deeds)		Roy Greene (Sheriff's Office)
	Traci Ferrell (Tax)	24	Williams Owens (EMS)
10	Jennifer Brock (Development Services)		Donald Smith (Sheriff's Office)
	Harold Wright (EMS)	25	Garrett Daniel (Administration)
	Lettie Jones (Social Services)		Sherry Roberts (Sheriff's Office)
11	Albert Adams (Solid Waste)		Deana Macklin (EMS)
12	Lawrence Foster (Sheriff's Office)		Johnnie Jackson (Public Utilities)
	Kristine Johnson (Social Services)		Charles Ginn (IT)
	Brian Stephenson (Solid Waste)	26	Steve Berube (Animal Services)
13	Scott Lent (Sheriff's Office)		Joseph Myatt (Sheriff's Office)
	Glenn McFadden (Public Utilities)	27	Oliver Tolksdorf (Health)
14	Theresa Pina (EMS)		Jamie Turlington (Health)
	Kain Craddock (Public Utilities)		Ernestine Williams (Public Buildings)
	Cheryl Ward (Sheriff's Office)		Chase Banker (Sheriff's Office)
	James Cook (Sheriff's Office)	28	Joseph Powell (Board of Elections)
	Michael Britt (Sheriff's Office)		Deen Taylor (Development Services)
	Jeremy Roberts (Sheriff's Office)		Donny Osborne (Public Utilities)
	Gwendolyn Speas (Social Services)		Jessica Nelson (Sheriff's Office)
15	Judy Herrin (Health)	29	Gary McNeill (Sheriff's Office)
	Jeff Huber (Sheriff's Office)		

Employment Anniversaries

The following Harnett County employees celebrate employment anniversaries in February 2017. Please join us in congratulating them on reaching this public service milestone.

5 years	Joseph Combs (EMS)		Lori Lee (Tax)
	Renea Warren-Ford (Finance)	10 years	George Keele (Public Utilities)
	Jesse Neighbors (Sheriff's Office)		Lorie Babb (Register of Deeds)
	Larry Smith (Sheriff's Office)	15 years	Sarah Monk (Social Services)
	Chrystal Johnson-Hammons (Social Services)		

Public Utilities Celebrates Plant Expansion



The Harnett County Department of Public Utilities (HCDPU) completed its expansion of the Harnett County Regional Water Treatment Plant, taking the plant's capacity from 24 to 42 million gallons a day (MGD) and making it the largest surface water treatment plant on the Cape Fear River—larger than plants in Fayetteville and Wilmington. Harnett County already has one of the premier utilities departments in the state. HCDPU provides service to approximately 125,000 people in Harnett County and the surrounding Cape Fear region, supplying water to four of Harnett County's five municipalities, as well as Johnston and Moore Counties; Linden and Spring Lake in Cumberland County; Holly Springs and Fuquay-Varina in Wake County; and Fort Bragg. Approximately 98 percent of Harnett County's residents have access to public water.

February 2017 Commissioners Meetings and Closings

Feb. 6 — Commissioners Meeting, 9 a.m.

Feb. 6 — Legislative Luncheon, 11:45 a.m.

Feb. 14 — Commissioners Work Session, 9 a.m.

Feb. 20 — Commissioners Meeting, 7 p.m.

Feb. 28 — Annual Planning Retreat, 9 a.m.

County Recognizes Coble Ski School for Success



The Harnett County Board of Commissioners presented Coble Ski School founders Gary and Shirley Coble, and their family with a proclamation congratulating them on their continued success and accomplishments in Harnett County during the January 17 board meeting. Since its creation more than 20 years ago, Coble Ski School has become known as the world's largest water ski and wakeboard camp and has produced world champion water skiers including current owner and head coach, April Coble Eller, who has won 30 National Titles, the US Master and World Championships, and has been recognized as a two-time USA Water Ski Athlete of the Year and as National Coach of the Year.

Commissioners Thank Board of Elections



The Harnett County Board of Commissioners recognized members of the Harnett County Board of Elections and staff on January 3 for their hard work during the November 8, 2016, General Election, which saw the largest turnout in Harnett County's history with 46,280 people voting—27,356 of them during early voting.