TOPSAIL TIMES

TOPSAIL ISLAND, HOLLY RIDGE, HAMPSTEAD AND SNEADS FERRY

January 2024 | American-Owned. Free Press. | Volume IV, Issue 1 | FREE!

2024 Dolphin Dip And Shrimp Dip

Polar Plunge

By Andrew Taylor-Troutman

Wrapping up the end of the year, my young family and I spent a few days at Topsail Island. Back home in Chapel Hill, I often joke with my three kids that, if they are really bored, they can go jump in the neighborhood pool.

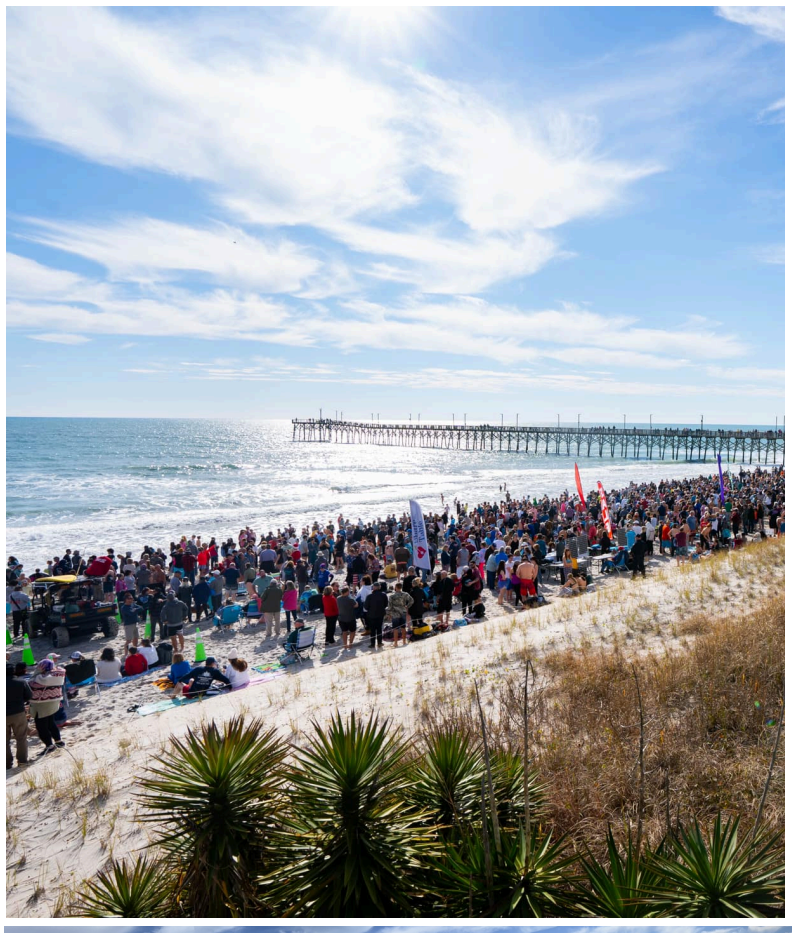
But swim in the ocean?! They didn't think I was actually serious until they saw their mother getting on her bathing suit.

I expected that we would be the only ones on the beach. But as we descended the stairs at the public access, there was a lone woman walking her dog. The wind whipped up, and I saw her pull her heavy coat more tightly around her. I also saw her jaw drop when she noticed that we were taking off our jackets to reveal our swimsuits!

My wife gave her a phone in order to record us. We took off running toward the beach, and her dog followed excitedly but wisely chose to pull up in front of the water. We were all yelling until we hit the waves, and then the cold took our breath away. We splashed around a bit, screaming and laughing. We chugged back out to the sand, and our lone observer was still recording our family's polar plunge. Teeth chattering, all of us were still grinning.

The woman asked my youngest daughter, "How was the water?"

My girl groaned, "This was Dad's idea!"



910-803-2313

Visit our Facebook page or send us an email!

Topsail Times

Print Dates 2024

Feb 2nd
March 1st
April 5th
May 3rd
May 31st

Or send us a text
(910) 526-1060

GET IN TOUCH WITH US!
TopsailTimesNewspaper@gmail.com
www.TopsailTimes.net

TOPSAIL TIMES NEWSPAPER

Publisher
Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC

Contributing Writers
Dorothy Royal
Kim McGahey
LuAnn Hooper
Joshua Patti
NeuseNews.com
NC Board of Elections
Cheryl Crane-Hunter
Becky Borneman
Walter Zabicki
Topsail Chamber of Commerce
Eastern Carolina Rail

Contributing Photographers
Garrett Gossett
Becky Borneman
Dorothy Royal

Table of Contents

Topsail Gun Gal 2024 3
The Health And Benefits Of Dance 6
Building Trust: A Cornerstone for Effective Governance 8
Eight-Year-Old Spearheads Christmas Card Drive 8
Topsail Chamber Announces The Winning Boats 9
Pender Shows Documentary Exploring Veterans' Challenges 10
Chairman Rouzer Welcomes Surf City Mayor To Subcommittee 11
Celebrating Ward Realty 12
Holly Plaza Press Release 13
State Board Approves Presidential Primary Candidates 14
The Pink Gala 15
Coastal Common Sense | Green New Deals 16
Community Updates 17
Wilmington To Raleigh Corridor Study Gets $500,000 Grant 18

For the year of 2024,
Topsail Times Newspaper will be printing
ONE publication a month.

TOPSAIL TIMES NEWSPAPER

Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC is an American Owned, Free Press, that allows for opinions which may not represent the company or its assigns. Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC is not responsible for any promotions, offers or commitments, by advertisers or contributors. No portion of the print copy or electronic copy via website shall be reproduced without written permission by Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC. All material in this paper is the property of Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC. Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC shall not be held responsible for any errors or omissions or for any documents directly provided to Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC. Advertisements are accepted upon the representation that the advertiser have the right to publish the contents thereof. In consideration of such publication, the advertiser agree to indemnify and hold publisher harmless against any expense or loss by reason of any claims arising out of publication.

Interested in Advertising?

Have a story idea?
Are you a writer or photographer?

Send us an email at
topsailtimesnewspaper@gmail.com

WHERE CAN YOU FIND OUR PAPER?

Hampstead
DDT
Hampstead Library
Post Office

Wilmington
Hughes Brothers Tire

Burgaw
Burgaw Brewery
O'Reilly's Auto Parts

Holly Ridge
Smoky Tonys
Holly Ridge Town Hall
City Cafe
Oceans RV Resort
Southern Roots
Holland's Shelter
Paradise Axe & Arcade
Post Office
AC Tire

Surf City
Jersey Mikes
Coral Cottage
Surf City BBQ
Beach Furniture Outfitters
Thomas Seafood
Post Office
JM's On The Water
Herring's Outdoor Sports
IGA & Ward Realty

Topsail Beach
Godwin's Market
Quarter Moon

Sneads Ferry
Denny's
HWY 55
Mason Dixon
Rick's Restaurant
Denoias Pizza

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE LOCATIONS: WWW.TOPSAILTIMES.NET

Topsail Times is printed by the Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC.
This publication is not to be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means without prior permission from Topsail Times.

Topsail Gun Gal 2024

By Dorothy Royal

Our southern borders are being invaded and not by the invaders you think. The South American Tego lizard can reach 4 feet in length and 10 pounds in weight. Known for eating other reptiles and eggs from ground nests (like from quail and turkeys), this invading lizard has already been spotted over 100 times in South Carolina. With weather staying warmer in North Carolina, it is possible these "once pet" critters may wander across the state line. If you do spot one, take a photo and send it to the SCDNR (if in South Carolina) or the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources (if spotted in NC).

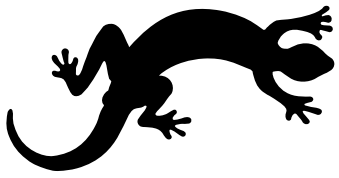
Voters in Colorado may still have a chance to vote for Donald Trump in the Republican Primary on March 5th. In a 3-2 vote, the Colorado Supreme Court cited that Donald Trump violated the 3rd section of the 14th Amendment, which would authorize them to keep him from being on the ballot in the primary. The 3rd section was originally created to prevent politicians who were in states that succeeded from the union prior to the Civil War from holding office after the war. Should Donald Trump's attorneys file an appeal before January 4th, his name will remain on the ballot until a decision is reached by the U.S. Supreme Court. So far other states have attempted the same thing but have failed.

North Carolina Board of Elections has approved a new political party to be on the Presidential ballot in 2024. The No Labels Party won't have their candidate on the primary ballot in March as they have opted to select a candidate by convention instead (which is allowed). Who is the No Labels Party? Check them out at http://www.Nolabels.org. If you like common sense, this might be a new party to learn more about.

What ever happened to being able to buy a house from Sears? In 1920, you could order a 2 bed 1 bath home for $4,317.00 that included all the wood you would need, a shingle roof with a 17 year warrantied shingle, kitchen cabinets and even the fireplace mantle. Of course you had to provide your own concrete, block and brick, because that would be crazy to ship anyway. For an extra $138 you could get 2 finished rooms in the attic - what a bargain! Today you couldn't get the permits for this same house for that price (especially if you need a water/sewer tap). Many of these homes still exist in older neighborhoods, especially near train tracks. The average yearly salary in 1920 was $3,269.40 (which today would be about $50,000.00) Wouldn't it be nice if people could just order one of these homes today from Sears for $60,000.00? Now that would be an awesome (and affordable) starter home.

On December 1, 2023 new gun laws took effect in North Carolina. Now NC Conceal Carry Permit holders can carry their firearms in places of worship, even if those services are held on the grounds of a school. The new laws also will allow NC Conceal Carry Permit holders to carry guns on some school properties, during select times. There will also be a two-year statewide awareness initiative for gun lock distribution programs and safe gun storage. New firearms sold in North Carolina are already required to come with gun locks and most gun shops will provide additional locks for free.

Remember knowledge is power and asking questions when things don't make sense is a good thing.



RAFFLE RAFFLE RAFFLE

1911 Stainless II
.45ACP

Raffle Ticket $10.00

Only 100 tickets to be sold!

Raffle will be drawn when all tickets are sold. Do not need to be present to win.

* Must be 21 years or older and able to pass an NC background check to claim prize. Failure to do so within 30 days will forfeit prize.

MSRP $1,021.00

Held by Surf City Guns & Ammo 127 Sound Road in Holly Ridge

RAFFLE RAFFLE RAFFLE

Surf City Guns & Ammo

PURCHASE PERMITS NO LONGER NEEDED FOR HANDGUN PURCHASES

Award winning local gun shop that specializes in firearms for self-defense, 3 gun competition, hunting, target shooting and ladies department.

OPEN

Weds & Thurs 11am - 6pm
Fri & Sat 11am - 7pm

(910) 328-4499 SURFCITYGUNS.COM

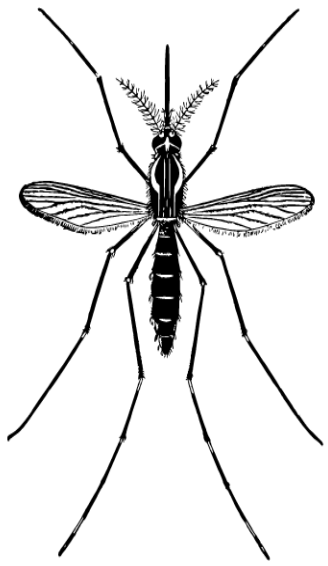
127 Sound Road, Holly Ridge, NC

LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIRST RESPONDER & MILITARY DISCOUNTS

Pestech OF GREENVILLE

Call Chris Rhodes

EAST COAST EXTERMINATING PROFESSIONALS



252-353-4760

FIRE ANTS, MOSQUITOS, ROACHES, SILVERFISH, FLEAS, TICKS, MICE AND MORE!

HOME ☑ NO BUGS!

LAWN ☑ NO FIREANTS!

YARD ☑ NO MOSQUITOS!

OUR SERVICES:

INSIDE / OUTSIDE TREATMENTS
YARD TREATMENT FOR MOSQUITOS
YARD TREATMENT FOR FIRE ANTS
FREE SERVICE CONSULTATIONS
ONE-TIME, MONTHLY & QUARTERLY TREATMENT OPTIONS
TERMITE CONTROL TREATMENTS
MOISTURE CONTROL TREATMENTS

FULLY LICENSED & GUARANTEED!

Visit our website: www.pestechofgreenville.com

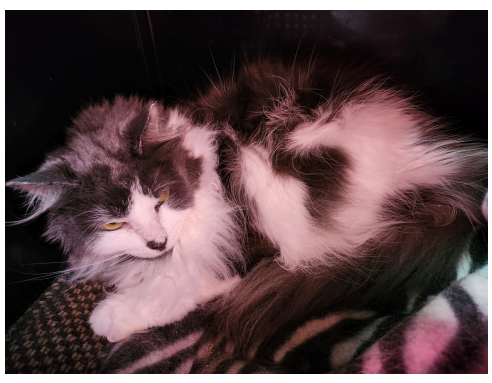
Call our office today to schedule an appointment!!

F.U.R.R

FELINE URGENT RESCUE AND REHAB

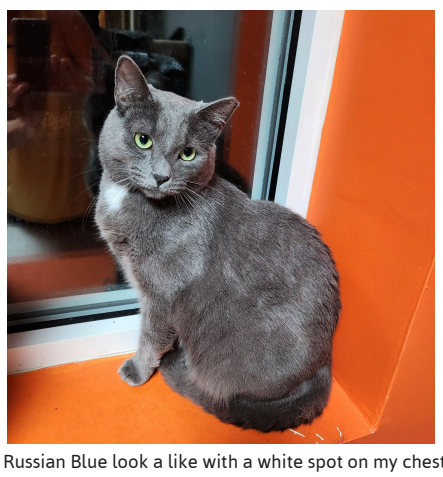
Adopt. Donate. Volunteer.

Charlie



My name is Charlie, but I'm a tiny young lady! People tell me that I am so beautiful that I just can't be real...but I am! My long soft fur makes me look like a fuzzy stuffed animal. I had a very traumatized kitten hood & witnessed my brother getting eaten by a coyote. Thank goodness I made it out of there when FURR saved me. The ordeal has left me very scared, but I'm learning to trust the people who love me. I just want a calm, quiet home where I can be brushed, petted & held! Most of the time I just tuck my little head down by my chest. I do love treats & shaking that jar gets my attention every time! Would you like a little cuddle bug? Come meet me!

Blue Marlin



I am a Russian Blue look a like with a white spot on my chest! My fur is that silky, shiney silvery blue/gray color. My eyes tell you how truly sweet I am! My favorite thing is being scratched behind my ears & on top of my back. Next to that, I'd say kitty treats are my next favorite thing! I was homeless until FURR saved me! My brother, Perch, was also saved & we look like twin Russian Blue kitties! We can't wait to see if Christmas will mean a new home for us! Our paws are crossed for our dream to come true!

Bubbles

My name is Bubbles and I'm a BEAUTIFUL little boy that FURR saved! My best traits are my silky smooth fur & my adorable personality! I have the sweetest little meow & I love to tell everybody what I'm thinking. You just won't find a calmer, more laid back kinda kitty than me! I totally vetted & ready to move on with my life. FURR has prepared me well. I also have 2 sisters: Beaches, who looks just like me and Mermaid who is a tortoise shell. We all three had a rough start in life. Are u the one to change all that for me? For us???

CHECK OUR WEBSITE TO SEE CATS AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION

www.catfurr.org

864-483-2444

Topsail Times is printed by the Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC.
This publication is not to be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means without prior permission from Topsail Times.

FAMILY FRIENDLY ENTERTAINMENT

LATE NIGHT KITCHEN

Paradise Axe AND ARCADE

ALL YOUR FAVORITE CLASSICS

GAMES FOR ALL AGES

100 GAMES

FROM $0.25 TO $1.00 GAMES

NEW REDEMPTION PRIZES

NOW SERVING FOOD

WINGS, CHICKEN TENDERS, PIZZA

HOT DOGS, CORN DOGS, NACHOS

PACKAGES FOR PARTIES AVAILABLE

STRESS RELIEF

WALK INS WELCOME

GROUP DISCOUNTS

AGES 10 AND UP

OPEN WEDNESDAY - SUNDAY

(910) 803-2300

127 SOUND ROAD IN HOLLY RIDGE

The Health And Benefits Of Dance

By LuAnn Hooper

Dancing keeps you fit, energized and ageless!

Whether it is: Country Line, Salsa, Latin, Clogging, Belly Dance, Lyrical, Contra, Square Dance, Jazz, Ballet, or a large number of other types of dance movements,

Finding "Our Groove", has proven to ease depression, support the cardio system and improve overall joint function.

By all accounts, dancing gives us a step toward better health, and bring more fun in our lives. NOTE: Contrary to popular opinion dancing is NOT just for kids, and a special ability is NOT necessary. "

"You are never too old, and there is NO such thing as two feet. When you have a good instructor teaching you, you can learn anything as a beginner".

BRAINY BENEFITS:

Stepping into a Dance Studio can help us enrich our lives while sharpening cognitive function. Older Adults had significant improvement in working memory score, reported University of Illinois Chicago researchers. Just like working out and doing puzzles, dancing works out brain paths and keeps them active and healthy.

GROVIN' TO THE MUSIC

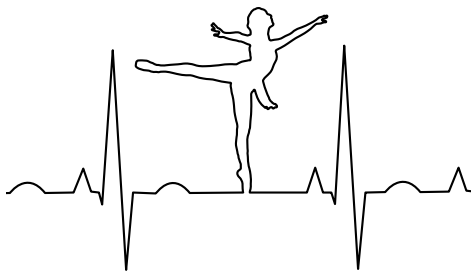
There is something beyond a "good workout" than can be found in dancing. Once you dissolve into the beat, self-consciousness drops away as you let your body flow to the rhythm of the music. It almost seems as it the health benefits of dance are simply a bonus.

The latest scientific research gives some Insite into the countless ways dancing is good for you. One 2016 study showed 73% retention (memory of the steps), and 81% compliance, (they could follow the steps). The best part was that more than 50% of the participants wanted to continue the classes after the study. Any exercise program that makes you want to keep doing it, gets extra points!

Dance-bases workouts offer a wealth of physical and mental health benefits, including:

Increased cardiovascular fitness, Improved balance, Lowered fall risk, Increased overall mobility, Improved cognitive function, Enhanced quality of life, Promoting emoting well-being, Lowered risk of depression, and Encouraging social connectedness.

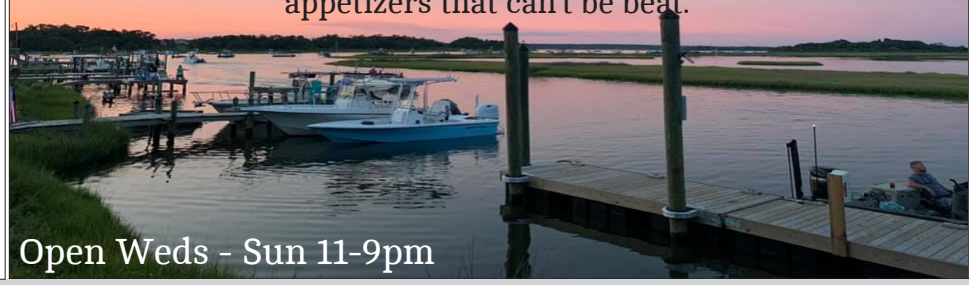
(CREDITS: Natural Awakenings, Marlaina Donato/Good Health Lifestyles, Carol A Weber)



Low Cost Spay/Neuter Vouchers
Funded by NC Community Foundation Dallas Fred Allen Endowment Fund
Companion Animals $39.99
Ferals $15.00
for Residents and Rescues within Onslow County
Applications Available Online!
Website: www.oc-paw.com

Onslow County Partners for Animal Welfare, Inc
OCPAW
Animal Welfare Liaison
Call 910-745-7930 with any questions.

Live and Local
REAL TALK
WSME
Freedom 97.1
1120 AM
Raeford, Kelli and Lee
WEEKDAYS 7-9 am

Surf City's Premier Waterfront Dining
Located at 602-B Roland Avenue
across from the Surf City Town Park
JM's On The Water offers an extensive menu that includes scrumptious seafood, steaks, sandwiches, salads, and an array of appetizers that can't be beat.

Open Weds - Sun 11-9pm

Topsail Times is printed by the Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC.
This publication is not to be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means without prior permission from Topsail Times.

Coral Cottage

boutiques

Fashion is Everything

ShopCoralCottage.com

(910) 650-2891

14061 NC Highway 50E, Surf City, NC

Mattresses • Accessories • Artwork • Flags • Sofas

Beach Furniture Outfitters, Inc.

One Stop Shopping

Serving Topsail Island for Over 25 Years!

Free Local Delivery & Setup

Furnishing Beach Homes is Our Specialty!

See Diana for any of your Real Estate Needs! Licensed Broker #265974

13997 NC Hwy. 50 | Surf City

910.803.0455

www.BeachFurnitureOutfittersInc.com

Lamps • Gifts • Outdoor Furniture • Puzzles

Fresh Seafood & Local Produce

Local Pender County Honey | Bait and Fishing Supplies

Local Stump Sound Oysters By the Dozen or Hundred

THOMAS

TACKLE AND SEAFOOD

ON THE MAINLAND 1/4 MILE FROM SURF CITY BRIDGE

910-328-4361

8AM - 6PM | OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

14210 NC-50, Surf City, NC 28445

Scallops
Shrimp
Tuna
Clams
Flounder
Crab Cakes
Gator Tail
Frog Legs
Snow Crabs

Fresh Produce

Gullah Gourmet Products

Bayou Classic Products

Principles of Good Governance

Building Trust: A Cornerstone for Effective Governance

By Joshua Patti
Holly Ridge Town Council Member

Principles of Good Governance

In this op-ed series, we delve into the principles of good governance, drawing inspiration from a variety of real-world experiences to illuminate the key factors that contribute to effective and accountable governance. As Mayor Pro Tempore of Holly Ridge, I will be using my real experiences to write an honest op-ed series on good governance, where I'll share insights and lessons learned to contribute to the well-being and progress of Holly Ridge. Each piece explores different aspects of governance, emphasizing transparent communication, collaboration, and the responsible handling of confidential matters. The series aims to provide insights into the universal challenges and successes of governance, offering valuable lessons applicable to diverse contexts for the establishment of robust, responsive, and accountable public institutions.

Building Trust: A Cornerstone for Effective Governance

Trust is the bedrock upon which a successful government stands. From the intricate dynamics between town managers and councils to the crucial relationships between mayors and councils, government staff, and the townspeople, trust plays a pivotal role in fostering effective governance. In the intricate dance of local politics, the trust between a town manager and the council is paramount. Open communication, transparency, and the ability to speak in confidence are essential elements that empower these relationships. When a town manager and council share a foundation of trust, decisions are made with the community's best interest in mind.

However, the ramifications of a breach of trust in this relationship can be profound. A breakdown in communication or a breach of confidence can lead to strained relationships, hindering the council's ability to function cohesively. It may result in a lack of support for critical initiatives, erode team morale, and ultimately undermine the effectiveness of the entire local government.

Similarly, the relationship between a mayor and council is equally vital. It's a partnership that relies on mutual respect and trust, with the understanding that the mayor is the voice of the people and the council the stewards of community interests. Open dialogue, collaboration, and confidentiality in discussions are essential to creating a cohesive and effective governing body. The importance of trust extends further to the relationships between government staff and the council. When staff members feel they can communicate openly and confidentially, it fosters an environment conducive to innovation and problem-solving.

Yet, trust isn't solely confined to the government chambers. It extends to the heart of communities, linking townspeople and the council. Citizens place their trust in elected officials to represent their needs, making transparency and accountability imperative. Open forums, town hall meetings, and mechanisms for confidential discussions ensure that the voices of the people are heard and considered.

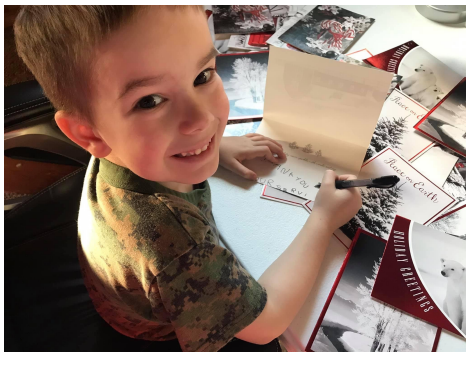
Speaking in confidence is a delicate yet crucial aspect of these relationships. It allows for frank discussions, the exploration of innovative solutions, and the resolution of internal challenges without compromising public trust. The assurance of confidentiality builds a stronger bond between government officials, fostering an environment where ideas can be freely exchanged, and decisions can be made collaboratively.

In a time where public skepticism about government is not uncommon, reinforcing trust is not merely an option—it's a necessity. Government officials must commit to transparency, open communication, and the responsible use of confidential discussions to ensure the communities they serve flourish. By prioritizing trust in every facet of governance, we can collectively build a stronger foundation for a prosperous future in Holly Ridge.

Eight-Year-Old Tucker Rose Spearheads 'Salute To Veterans' Christmas Card Drive

Sneads Ferry - In the spirit of holiday giving, eight-year-old Tucker Rose is spearheading the annual “Salute to Veterans” Christmas card drive, aiming to deliver festive cheer to Veterans at the local VA home in Kinston, NC. Starting from Veterans Day and continuing until Christmas Eve, this initiative is now in its fourth successful year.

Rose, who has been collecting Christmas cards for veterans since the age of four, expressed his motivation behind the drive. "We started my Christmas card drive during COVID, for Veterans because we figured they wouldn't be able to have visitors for the holidays, and this would be a great way to lift their spirits," he said. The first year of the drive saw 200 cards collected, predominantly by mail.



Over the years, the drive has gained significant momentum. In 2021, local Harley Davidson dealers in Jacksonville, Wilmington, and Shallotte, along with Saigon Sam's, joined as drop-off locations. By 2022, the initiative expanded its reach with the involvement of Dixon Elementary School and various Major League Baseball teams.

This year's goal is ambitious: to collect 2,500 cards, equating to 25 cards per veteran. The community's response has been overwhelmingly positive, with significant contributions from local businesses and schools. "Dixon Elementary School really outdid themselves this year and contributed over 600 cards," Rose added, highlighting the local support.

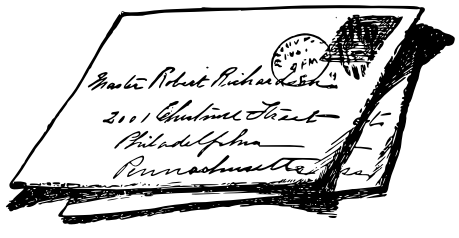
The impact of these cards on veterans is profound. "It makes them very happy to receive Christmas cards, especially seeing someone going room to room, hand delivering them," Rose shared. Last Christmas, he observed that many veterans had few family visitors, making the card delivery especially meaningful.

In Tucker's Mailbox "Salute to Veterans" 302 S. Stingray Lane Sneads Ferry, NC 28460

Apart from the Christmas card drive, Rose is engaged in other initiatives promoting positivity and historical remembrance. He has been sending an American flag, received in 2020, to be flown at significant sites worldwide. His efforts extend beyond Veterans, as he also writes letters to families of 9/11 and Sandy Hook victims and astronauts lost in space missions.

Rose encourages more people to join his efforts. Drop-off boxes are available at various locations, including Harley Davidson dealers and Saigon Sam's Military Surplus. He also maintains a Facebook page, "In Tucker's Mailbox," where he shares his outreach activities and encourages traditional letter writing.

Rose, with his father's help, invites the community to contribute to the "Salute to Veterans" initiative, emphasizing, "Spreading positivity in such a challenging world is made much easier with your help, and it is greatly appreciated."



Original story covered by NeuseNews.com

Topsail Times is printed by the Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC.
This publication is not to be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means without prior permission from Topsail Times.

Topsail Chamber Announces The Winning Boats In The 2023 Topsail Flotilla

The Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism announced the first, second, and third-place winners of the 2023 Topsail Island Flotilla.

The first-place trophy and $1,000 prize were presented to “Polar Express” by Kathy Blackburn, Jeff Brown, and friends. “Whoville” by Team Shakespeare captured second place. Tracey and John Shakespeare won a $300 cash prize. The third-place winner was “Splish Splash” by Claire Jennings who received a $200 cash prize.

“Our five judges had a difficult time selecting just three winners,” said Tammy Proctor, Executive Director at the Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism. “With 27 boats registered, this was the largest Topsail Christmas Flotilla, and the lighted designs on the boats were amazing.”

The sponsor of the 2023 Flotilla was Sea Tow of the Greater Wilmington area.

“Sea Tow’s sponsorship and leadership on the water caused this Flotilla to be our best yet,” said Annette Erny, chair of the chamber’s events committee. “We can’t thank Sea Tow enough.”

The Topsail Flotilla was a portion of a day of activity, which also included the Christmas Market at Soundside Park, 517 Roland Ave. in Surf City. Santa and Mrs. Claus met with families for photos.

Topsail Dental sponsored the musical entertainment, *Fryd on the Boat*, which performed all afternoon.

The Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism is committed to making the area an even better place to live, work, build a future, and play through regional economic development, demonstrated community leadership, and advocacy for our business community through collaboration.

For more information about the Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, call 910-329-4446 or visit online at topsailchamber.org.

Pictured is The Polar Express Flotilla Boat and its team

Pender County Shows Documentary Exploring Veterans' Challenges

Pender County Veterans Affairs is partnering with The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) to show The Veteran's Battlefield, the newest documentary from NCACC's 100 Strong Productions. The screening and panel discussion will take place on January 17, 2024, at the Hampstead Annex Auditorium, 15060 US Hwy 17

Hampstead, NC 28443, from 5:30 pm to 8:00pm.

The Veteran's Battlefield is a documentary that explores veterans' challenges in North Carolina and how counties and residents can best support our veteran population. North Carolina is home to around 700,000 veterans and has the eighth-largest veteran population in the nation.

Veterans face a wide range of challenges that can seem overwhelming. The Veteran's Battlefield highlights these challenges and how county Veteran Service Officers and community leaders are working to support them.

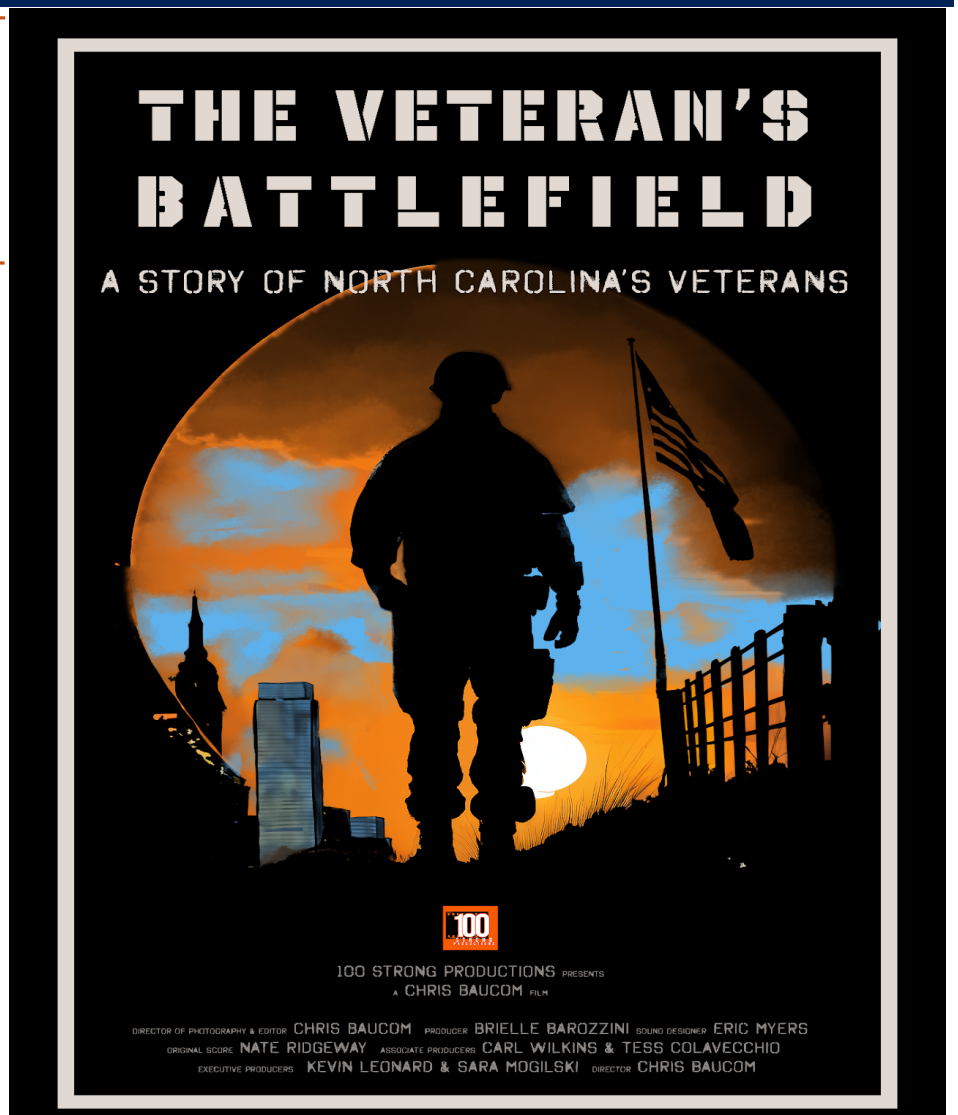
Pender County Veterans Services informs, advises, and assists Pender County veterans, their dependents, or survivors in obtaining benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs, state, or local municipalities. Pender County is home to more than 5,400 veterans.

The documentary showing is free and open to the public.

Following the documentary, Pender County Veterans Services, local stakeholders, and non-profit organizations who will be at the event will distribute information and host community discussions surrounding veteran services and support.

REGISTER ONLINE:
https://pender-county.ticketleap.com/

For More Information:
Visit the website Veteran's Battlefield (veteransbattlefield.com) for more information.



City Cafe

Lunch Specials
Southern Homestyle Cooking

Closed Sunday and Monday
Open Tuesday through Saturday
5:30am - 2:30pm

910-329-4321

204 US Highway 17 S, Holly Ridge, NC 28445

Serving the best breakfast and lunch around!

Chairman Rouzer Welcomes Surf City Mayor To Subcommittee Hearing On WRDA 2024

WASHINGTON, DC - Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Chairman David Rouzer (R-NC-07) held a hearing to receive feedback from stakeholders across the nation as the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee prepares for the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024. Stakeholders testified to the importance of maintaining a consistent two-year WRDA schedule to meet the water resources needs in communities nationwide.

Chairman Rouzer was proud to welcome Surf City Mayor Teresa Batts who provided testimony on the importance of WRDA in assisting with flood control, inland waterway navigation, coastal restoration, and beach renourishment as the Town continues to wait for approval for their overdue renourishment project. Click here to watch Mayor Teresa Batts' testimony.

Full remarks:

Today's hearing marks the second in a series of hearings this subcommittee is holding in preparation for the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024. This past week, we heard from Assistant Secretary Connor and General Spellmon regarding the Administration's priorities for WRDA 2024. Today, we have the opportunity to hear from stakeholders from across the nation who will testify to the importance of Army Corps Civil Works programs and maintaining a consistent two-year WRDA schedule.

WRDA is one of the most important pieces of legislation we work to draft and pass here in the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and we are proud to do so regularly. Every two years since 2014, Congress has passed a bipartisan, consensus WRDA bill into law, helping communities across the country. I look forward to working once again with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to continue the important work and tradition of passing this bill every two years.

As I mentioned at last week's hearing, WRDA is a critical legislative vehicle to meet the water resources needs in our communities nationwide. Reliable water navigation systems allow for the safe and efficient shipping of cargo, fueling our economy. Levees protect homes and businesses from flooding. Dams also provide flood control for communities, along with power and opportunities for recreation. Of particular importance to my constituents on the coast in North Carolina's Seventh Congressional District, coastal restoration and nourishment projects mitigate erosion and damage from frequent coastal storms.

WRDA 2020 reauthorized the Coastal Storm Risk Management projects in Wrightsville Beach and Carolina Beach allowing these beaches to continue to receive renourishment. As sand naturally shifts over time, these coastal communities rely on a predictable renourishment cycle to ensure they can withstand storms. WRDA 2022 also provided authorization for investment in other erosion mitigation efforts, such as the Shoreline and Riverine Restoration in Southport, North Carolina, which will bolster the riverbank's resilience against damage from storms and vessel traffic.

To enhance flood mitigation efforts, it's important to have a clear understanding of the need. As such, the 2022 WRDA also authorized the National Coastal Mapping Program in North Carolina which will map inland and coastal waterways to identify factors that increase flood risk. I was pleased to see funding included in the 2024 Energy and Water Appropriations bill. I was also pleased to continue support of the Wilmington Harbor deepening project as authorized in WRDA 2020 to allow the Port of Wilmington to meet increasing demand. All of these efforts are critical parts of keeping Americans safe and allowing our nation's economy to thrive, which is exactly what this legislation enables.

An important part of the WRDA process is the partnership between the federal government, non-federal partners, and stakeholders, who come together to solve local resource needs. I am glad to see today that we have a panel of witnesses made up of diverse interests and geographic areas. This panel can speak to water resource challenges as well as to solutions these WRDAs can provide.

I look forward to hearing from each of you here today on the importance of WRDA in assisting with flood control, inland waterway navigation, coastal restoration, beach renourishment, and ensuring safe movement of goods through maritime transportation.

I'd like to extend a very warm welcome to each of you, but in particular to a friend and constituent of mine, Mayor Teresa Batts of Surf City, North Carolina, with whom my staff and I have done a tremendous amount of work through the years as it relates to the needs of Surf City and the coastal area there.

U.S. Congressman DAVID ROUZER 7th District of North Carolina

SOUTHERN ROOTS GRILLE

MEATLOAF EVERY THURSDAY

DAILY LUNCH SPECIALS UNDER $10

FLOUNDER BASKET • OYSTER PLATTER
PORK CHOPS • HAMBURGER STEAK
CHICKEN SALAD • BBQ PORK
WESTERN BURGER • SHRIMP PO BOY
CAJUN CATFISH • BEEF TIPS

OPEN EVERYDAY EXCEPT TUESDAY
BREAKFAST ONLY SATURDAY (OPEN TIL NOON)
SUNDAY (OPEN TIL 1PM)

Beep Beep!
(910) 803-0773
552 EAST OCEAN RD, NC-50, HOLLY RIDGE, NC

CALL OR TEXT TO BOOK OUR FOOD TRUCK!
(910) 599-6164

SOUTHERN ROOTS GRILLE
SOUTHERN ROOTS FOOD TRUCK

Celebrating Ward Realty

David remembers the day of his first boat ride, the same day he ate potato chips for the first time. He was 4 years old, and he traveled with his father, A.H. Ward, to visit Topsail Island.

"That was 1947," David Ward recalled. "Ed Yow introduced my father to Topsail."

David also remembers getting kicked off the island by military police because Operation BumbleBee was still underway.

"At that time, you had to get a permit to visit the island," he explained. "The military leased the island for Operation Bumblebee, but they were in demobe mode. Daddy came to the island with an eye to develop."

In 1948 Operation Bumblebee ended on Topsail Island.

A.H. Ward owned and operated Standard Realty & Construction in Wilmington. He saw potential on the beautiful island, and he purchased some property. He moved a military barracks, divided it, and restructured it into four cottages.

"Daddy offered his first cottages for sale around 1948," David recalled.

The company's first office was a part of a former barracks.

A.H. Ward was one of the principal designers of the layout of a subdivision called Surf City. In 1949, Surf City Subdivision One was laid out. The foundation of the Town of Surf City was underway, and the town was incorporated that same year.

In 1952 A.H. Ward changed the name of the family company to Ward Realty Corporation, a company that was responsible for the development of much of Topsail Island. They built a total of 19 subdivisions and built approximately 100 cottages through the years. The company also built a shopping center on the corner of Roland Avenue that housed a grocery store, a hardware store, and boutiques.

A.H. Ward served as the mayor of Surf City. He was the mayor in 1954 when Hurricane Hazel hit the island.

"I remember 15 houses floating in the sound and marshes," David said. "One house was picked up and set down across the road and the furniture was still in place."

David's memories of those early days include working at the family's grocery store on Topsail Island, picking up bullets found on the beach from the military's former target range, and swimming when he didn't work.

"I worked in the grocery store from the age of 12," David said. "I swam one day that entire summer."

The Ward family worked to create subdivisions such as Del Mar Beach, Grady-Moore Beach, White Hills Beach, Buccaneer Beach, Pirates Cove, and Channelbend.

"I graduated with a degree in architecture from State in 1974," David said. "My brother and I designed built each house in Channelbend. Every home is different."

He remembered alternating designs on one home four times to preserve a tree.

"I liked the finished product," David added.

It wasn't until 1957 that Ward Realty entered the vacation rental market. The company was one of the first vacation agencies in the nation to have a computer-run accounting and reservations system.

David Ward collaborated with Software Dynamics to create one of the first full-service rental software programs in the country. It was called Resort Manager System.

Ward Realty now offers a selection of more than 300 rental properties.

"We're renting to the grandchildren of our first renters," David said.

Ward Realty is a full-service company, offering sales, rentals, and property management.

"Honesty and integrity are important to me as a company," said David of the company's growth and longevity. "We have 24 employees, and we treat everyone like family."

David's son, Brandon, has taken over the reins of the company, however, David still works in the company. He said he's not very good at retirement.

In 2024, when the Town of Surf City celebrates its 75th anniversary of incorporation, Ward Realty will celebrate 77 years of service to Surf City, and the entirety of Topsail Island.

"I often look around and I wonder, 'What would Dad think?'," David said.

Surely, A.H. Ward, who passed away in 2000, would be proud of the company that has grown, prospered, and is celebrating three generations of leadership in the real estate industry.

Lamberth Insurance Services
Tammy Lamberth
Agency Owner/Broker
(910) 430-6003 Work | (910) 389-5428 Cell
Providing coverage for
LIFE HOME AUTOMOBILE BUSINESS
RVs · Worker's Comp · Flood · Renters and more!
LAMBERTH INSURANCE SERVICES
tammy@lamberthinsuranceservices.com
www.lamberthins.com

Reviews
For your insurance needs
"In all my years of owning a home, business, and vehicles, I have never had an agent take such time and care to make sure all of my needs were met and that everything I treasure is protected. Tammy provides quarterly reviews and it is amazing how often things change that most people would just overlook."
- D. R. Royal

Holly Plaza Press Release

Transcript provided by Holly Ridge Town Mayor Jeff Wenzel

The Town of Holly Ridge is thrilled that USDA is issuing housing assistance vouchers to all families that have been displaced from Holly Plaza Apartments due to the conditions that required the condemnation of the complex in late November. These vouchers are distinctly different from the previously offered HUD section 8 vouchers which were tied to a specific property, specifically Holly Plaza apartments.

A Zoom video call was held on Tuesday 12/19 with representatives from the Town of Holly Ridge, HUD, and USDA. The Town had requested this call to get information and clarification on the differences between HUD and USDA housing assistance vouchers that are available to the displaced Holly Plaza tenants.

The Federal Government representatives explained the similarities and differences between the vouchers. I'll start with the differences:

• USDA vouchers can go to any landlord or apartment complex that accepts the HAP contract for the voucher. The vouchers cannot be used for a hotel.

• Residents can accept the Towns lump sum settlement payment offer, first announced November 21, and still be qualified for the benefits provided by the USDA voucher. Conversely, HUD says any resident that accepts the Town's lump sum settlement payment offer will invalidate their status with HUD and would have to reapply to seek benefits if they chose. They may be put on a waiting list for housing.

Here are the similarities between the USDA and HUD vouchers...

• Vouchers are renewable annually

• Vouchers can be transferred to different properties

Other takeaways from the Zoom call are:

• USDA wants to talk directly to each resident as soon as possible. Eric Hixon's direct line is 706.521.2224 and his email address is eric.hixson@usda.gov

• Residents do not have to go through an attorney or the Town to receive the USDA housing voucher.

• Letters of Priority Entitlement (LOPE) were mailed 2 weeks ago to each resident's Holly Plaza address. Because time is of the essence, they were also emailed to David Miller on December 15th, 2023. Mr. Miller is a South Carolina attorney that is representing some of the residents in a class action lawsuit against the Town, Pendergraph management company and Pendergraph's owner, Frankie Pendergraph. These vouchers were supposed to be printed and distributed to each resident on the 16th of December, but unfortunately that did not happen. USDA's Byron Waters said, "There was an unfortunate misunderstanding last week. We understood that Mr. Miller would deliver the letters this past weekend. Unknown to us, Mr. Miller wanted a time when he could make sure that he was able to deliver every tenant their voucher letter and did not plan to travel until he found such a time even though the goal was the weekend. That limitation was not made clear to us. Had we understood, we would have pushed for sooner even if not all tenants could meet. We regret that confusion. But Mr. Miller assures us that every tenant will receive their voucher letter on Wednesday."

• As of December 23rd, the Town is aware of residents who still have not received the LOPE from the attorney.

• Any resident that has not received your LOPE can call Eric Hixson at 706.521.2224 and he will rectify the situation.

• The USDA vouchers were triggered once the Town condemned the property and told USDA that the buildings would not be repaired. USDA then began the acceleration process against the Town of Holly Ridge on the USDA financed property and USDA started working on vouchers for the displaced residents.

• Since the residents were displaced by no fault of their own, they are moved to top of the list for any USDA-RD property where they wish to live. USDA issued a LOPE, which (again) stands for Letter of Priority Entitlement, to each resident.

• USDA provided a current list dated 12/13/2023 of every USDA property with a vacancy within 3 counties of Onslow County, but the USDA vouchers can be used anywhere in the United States. Town Manager, Heather Reynolds sent the spreadsheet to all residents. The attorneys defending the Town in the Federal lawsuit provided the information contained on the spreadsheets to the attorneys that are suing the Town (and others) 2 Fridays ago. If you have not received information on available housing in the USDA program, contact Town Manager, Heather Reynolds and provide an email address where the information can be forwarded.

I want to reiterate that the residents do not have to live at a USDA/RD property to use the voucher, but they do have priority if they choose to live at a USDA property.

The voucher details can and should be validated by USDA by reaching out to Mr. Hixson at 706.521.2224.

The Town is no longer pursuing the HUD Pass-through vouchers because the HUD pass-through cannot be combined with the USDA vouchers. The pass-through vouchers would only allow the Town to collect approximately $15,000 per month towards housing of the tenants which is nowhere near sufficient. This amount is equivalent to 3 days of hotel that the Town is currently paying. Furthermore, the HUD pass through vouchers are much more restrictive, offer less money assistance and less flexibility compared to USDA vouchers.

As of December 27th, 2023, 22 of the 43 families have accepted the lump sum settlement payment by the Town. Residents have until December 29th at 5pm to accept the lump sum settlement payment by the Town. Residents should reach out to the Heather Reynolds, Town Manager of Holly Ridge to setup an appointment. Again, PLEASE understand that signing the agreement and accepting the payment does not disqualify the residents for the USDA voucher and is not intended to affect the right to make any claim or bring any lawsuit against any other party except the Town.

The Town reached out to ONWASA. Franky Howard, CEO of ONWASA, has confirmed that ONWASA has forgiven all water and sewer bills since the day the residents were removed from the Holly Plaza Apartments in late October.

A special thanks to residents of Summerhouse for their generous donations to the residents.

The Town would like to thank the community for stepping up and holding fundraisers as well as collecting items such as gas cards for the residents. Material donations are being accepted and coordinated by Liberty Baptist Church in Holly Ridge and those who wish to donate material items can contact 910.329.0201.

There are no plans for the future of the condemned Holly Plaza Apartments currently. Since the Town is being sued through a federal class action lawsuit, the Town must keep the property secure for now, so the buildings can be used by all parties for evidence collection.

Although this matter has been evolving daily for months, here is a Timeline of important events:

On October 6th, 2023, the Town held a special called meeting to discuss the concerns of a Holly Plaza citizen who had brought a petri dish of mold she had grown in her HVAC ducts.

On October 19th, I spoke in person to US Senate Thom Tillis' field rep and Representative Greg Murphy's field rep and briefed them on the situation. They both asked for a letter from the Town so they could reach out to HUD and USDA to escalate the issue and see what options for assistance were available. Both were emailed the requested letter on Town letterhead the same day. On October 25th, we received notification that William Moore from Representative Murphy's office "had sent inquiries to HUD Headquarters, the NC Housing Finance Agency, and USDA Rural Development regarding any help that could be afforded to the Town of Holly Ridge and the residents of Holly Plaza.

On October 25th, The Town Council held an emergency meeting to authorize expenses to relocate a single family who provided the Town with doctor's orders to leave their apartment due to mold found in the teenage daughter's bloodwork. The Town approved the request. Multiple citizens spoke during public comment asking what was required to allow them to be moved out. They also asked how they could get a special called meeting to authorize them to move out of the moldy apartments.

On October 27th, the Town held a special called meeting and decided that the residents of Holly Plaza needed to leave the apartments so extensive mold testing could be performed on all units. The Town authorized funds to pay for 30 days of housing for all residents at Jacksonville's Rooms2Suites which is part of the Hilton family. The hotel gave the Town a reduced rate of $139/night plus taxes. This hotel was chosen as it had availability within the next week for all residents and also has a kitchenette with cooking capabilities. Residents began checking into the hotel the same day.

On October 30th, the Town was able to coordinate with the City of Jacksonville and Onslow County to provide student busing from the very first school day the residents were displaced to Jacksonville, which is 27 miles away.

On October 31st, the Town hosted a Halloween party for the residents at the hotel. The Town provided candy and pizza.

On November 6th, Holly Ridge Mayor Jeff Wenzel spoke at the Onslow County Commissioners Meeting briefing the county on the current status and also requested assistance from the county department of social services.

On November 8th, at the request of the Town, Onslow County assistant county manager Kari Sanders hosted a

seven-agency informational meeting at the hotel with over 40 residents in attendance. This included a presentation from an agency that helps people find available low-income properties to rent. Each of the seven agencies set up a table with literature and business cards so the residents could seek assistance if they chose. The Town provided pizza.

On November 15th, I gave a tour of the Holly Ridge Plaza to US Senator Ted Budd's Eastern North Carolina field rep. This included touring the inside of a vacant apartment.

On November 21st, the Town inspector confirmed unsafe living conditions and condemned the Holly Plaza apartments.

Also on November 21st, at a special called meeting, the Town Council voted to authorize a lump sum settlement payment offer, referenced earlier, to residents. The Town Council also approved $2,000 for incidentals which is to be added to the following amount based upon how many months are left on their current lease agreement:

$1,125/month for 1 bedroom
$1,440/month for 2 bedrooms
$1,755/month for 3 bedrooms

In signing and collecting the lump sum settlement agreement, the residents agree to not pursue future litigation against the Town only. If a tenant has less than 6 months remaining on the lease, if they sign the agreement, they will receive 6 months of rent.

As an example, if a tenant had 2 months remaining on a 2-bedroom lease, they would receive the following lump sum payment:
$8,640 (6 months times $1,440/month for a 2 bedroom)
$2,000 (incidentals)

$10,640 TOTAL + any security deposit paid

The Town also extended the hotel arrangements at the November 21 meeting, this time through 12/31/2023 with a checkout day of January 1st, 2024.

On December 6th, HUD emailed a letter to the displaced residents advising them "Accepting a buyout offer may terminate your tenancy under North Carolina law and make you ineligible to receive long-term rental assistance from HUD."

On December 13th, in response to the Town's continuing request for assistance to the displaced residents, Representative Greg Murphy's office informed the Town that USDA was going to be issuing USDA tenant protection vouchers to the residents.

On December 19th, the Town was on a Zoom call with HUD and USDA to get specific details of the USDA vouchers since the Town was not sent the LOPE letters. Clarifications such as qualifications and disqualifications on the use of USDA and HUD vouchers were discussed and clarified, as mentioned previously.

On December 26th, the Town Council announced they had extended the hotel arrangements an additional 14 days with a checkout day of January 15, 2024.

The Town and the former residents of Holly Plaza have struggled daily for months to investigate, evaluate, and address an extraordinarily difficult situation that neither created. In addition to people recognized herein, the Town is extremely grateful to USDA for providing the financial assistance for these residents to have the opportunity and options to find long-term safe and secure housing. These people have been our neighbors and fellow citizens. We will continue to do our best to help them, as good government, and good neighbors, should.

State Board Approves Presidential Primary Candidates

Includes Early Voting Plans for the 2024 Primary

The State Board approved candidates to go on ballots for the 2024 presidential preference primary in North Carolina.

The State Board of Elections on Tuesday unanimously approved names of candidates to go on ballots for the 2024 presidential preference primary in North Carolina.

The approved candidates (see lists below) were those submitted by the Democratic Party, Libertarian Party, and Republican Party for inclusion on each party's primary ballot.

The primary election is March 5.

The State Board will meet again on Jan. 2, 2024, when it may consider adding additional candidates who were not submitted by the political parties.

The following are the lists provided by the political parties for the 2024 primary, approved by the State Board on Tuesday:

Democratic Party:
Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Libertarian Party:
Toad Anderson
Charles Ballay
David (TrimeTaveler) Dunlap
Jacob Hornberger
Beau Lindsey
Lars Mapstead
Chase Oliver
Michael Rectenwald
Joshua Smith
Mike ter Maat

Republican Party:
Ryan Binkley
Chris Christie
Ron DeSantis
Nikki Haley
Asa Hutchinson
Vivek Ramaswamy
Donald J. Trump

The Green Party did not submit any candidates for the primary but may still nominate a candidate for the general election on Nov. 5, based on the candidate chosen by that party's national nominating convention.

The other recognized political party in North Carolina, the No Labels Party, will nominate its general election candidates by convention rather than primary, under General election participation by new political party. N.C.G.S. § 163-98, since this will be the first general election the party will participate in. The State Board recognized No Labels as a political party earlier this year.

Also, a candidate may seek a spot on the presidential primary ballot through a petition, as addressed in Nomination by petition. N.C.G.S. § 163-213.5. Any person seeking the endorsement by a national political party may submit a petition signed by 10,000 qualified voters who are affiliated with the same political party as the person for whom the petition is filed.

For more information, view the State Board of Elections' guide.

Early Voting Plans

The State Board also approved in-person early voting plans for the March 2024 primary election for the following counties, which did not unanimously approve plans at the county level:

- Bladen County: Majority plan (includes additional Sunday hours)
- Burke County: Majority plan (includes additional Saturday hours)
- Columbus County: Minority plan (includes additional Sunday hours)
- Davidson County: Majority plan (includes additional Sunday hours)
- Guilford County: Majority plan (includes additional sites and weekend hours)
- Pasquotank County: Majority plan
- Randolph County: Majority plan (includes additional or different weekend and Sunday hours)
- Rockingham County: Majority plan (includes additional Saturday hours)
- Union County: Majority plan (includes additional Sunday hours)

The in-person early voting plan for Lincoln County was deferred for approval by the State Board to its Jan. 2, 2024, meeting so that the State Board may resolve a dispute regarding a proposed voting site.

State law requires the State Board to adopt early voting plans when the county board does not unanimously agree on the sites and schedules for early voting.

Additional information about these early voting plans is available at the State Board's meeting folder.

The State Board also signed off on all other counties' early voting plans, other than the deferred Lincoln County plan, for having met statutory requirements.

In-person early voting for the 2024 primary begins Thursday, Feb. 15, and runs through 3 p.m. Saturday, March 2.

County Board Appointments

The State Board unanimously appointed the following individuals to county boards of elections:

Douglas Orrin Smith, a Republican, to the Granville County Board of Elections
June Stroud Reeves, a Republican, to the Iredell County Board of Elections
David Michael Hester, a Democrat, to the Caswell County Board of Elections

Video of this meeting will be available in the meeting folder as soon as it is ready.

Press release originally written by the North Carolina State Board of Elections. *It is available on their website at www.ncsbe.gov.*

Topsail Times is printed by the Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC.
This publication is not to be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means without prior permission from Topsail Times.

The Pink Gala

By Cheryl Crane-Hunter

In 2023, I became a 11th year breast cancer survivor. Each year, I have a Pink Gala for our community. We dance, eat and celebrate cancer survivors. Surf City Farm was illuminated with light and paintings reflecting "The Nature of the Island." We made a donation to the Reel Housewives. Next year will be our 3rd Gala. We would love to have you and your businesses join us in the next plans. Love and Light.

Connie Goodson, Ashley Wells

Amanda Rogers, Karen W. Burton

Pat & John Jackson

Dave Lesesky, Jan Rink

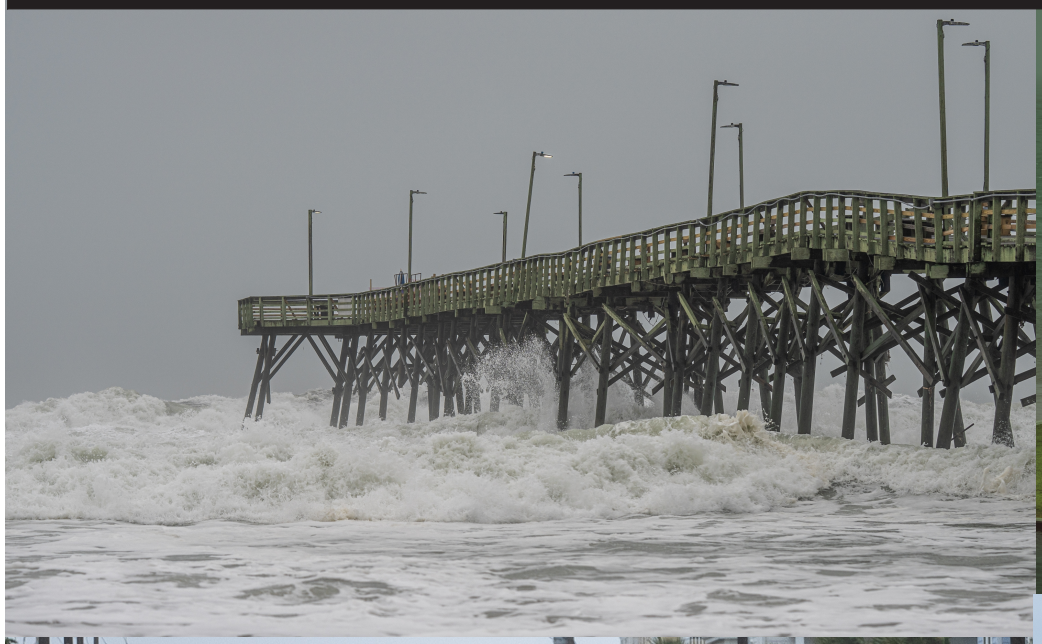
Janet Koehler, Joey Blackburn

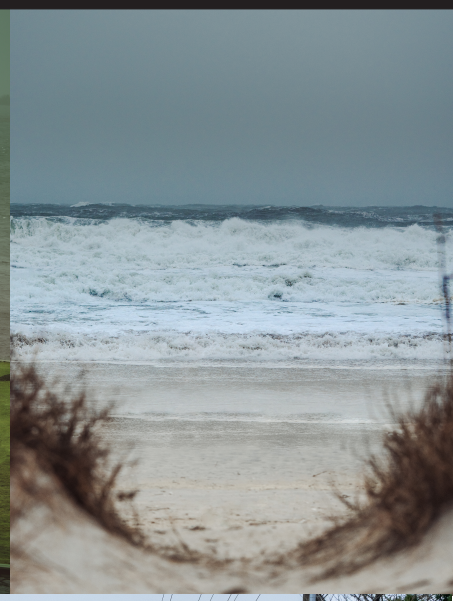
Pat Jackson, Gay Jenkins

Susanne Delgrosso, Cheryl Crane, Marci Sherman

Michelle Haddock, Margie White

December Storm Photos by Garrett Gossett





Topsail Times is printed by the Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC.
This publication is not to be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means without prior permission from Topsail Times.

Coastal Common Sense: Christmas Cookies

By Kim McGahey

Once upon a time in a tiny town down by the ocean, there lived a humble little girl. She wasn't rich and she wasn't famous, but she was very happy. She would work hard at her chores to help her family buy enough food to feed all the hungry mouths. And she played quietly on the sandy shores as the other people of the town were elbowing each other to get ahead.

It made her sad that the busy people of the town were so mean to each other. After all, she wanted them to enjoy the fresh ocean air, the salty waves and the grandness of what Mother Nature had given them all to live in.

The townspeople, in their hurries, didn't notice the wonderful simple things that made her life so full of love. All they wanted was to make money and they never focused on the natural wonders around them.

One chilly winter day when all the town was preparing for Christmas, the little girl stopped to look at the colorful lights and the pretty holiday decorations; and the joy of Christmas filled her heart. It was such a beautiful season, she didn't understand why all the people weren't smiling and being filled with the spirit of giving and sharing.

As she sat by the postmaster's door happily munching the Christmas cookies her mother had baked that morning, she could see the people shoving each other for a place in line to mail their Christmas packages. Even though Christmas was only a few days away, the people were yelling at the poor old bespectacled postmaster for being too slow. The postmaster had such a small shop and the nasty people put off their mailing far too long. But they blamed him, cursing him and each other so much that it brought tears to the little girl's bright blue eyes.

One sorrowful tear rolled off her rosy cheeks and dropped onto her cookie, and suddenly a giant Christmas smile came across her angelic little face.

As she stood in line looking up at the cruel people with frowns on their twisted faces, she continued to light up a cheerful broad smile. But it was the only smile in the room. She beamed a joyous holiday glow as those around her grew meaner and uglier.

Slowly, the line of selfish mailers inched closer to the tired old postmaster. She was close enough now to see beads of sweat on his furrowed brow from all his honest hard work. He had a kind face, she could see, gently wrinkled from years of smiles and good thoughts. Yet the impatient people still cursed his speed. Poor old man, she thought. Such a decent fellow being treated so badly.

Finally, after being jostled for what seemed like forever, the tiny figure in torn clothes with a small box in her bundled hands made it to the edge of the postmaster's counter.

All the kindly old man could see when he looked down through his sweat-smeared glasses was the tattered hat atop sparkling blue eyes and a giant Christmas smile.

It warmed the aged clerk's heart to see this bright little holiday flower before him. Soon he forgot about the curses and the madness of the greedy crowd in his shop.

And then, just as the jeers were rising to a deafening crescendo of selfishness, two tiny hands rose slowly but with purpose from below the smiling face and tattered hat with a box that she placed in front of the kind old postmaster.

"Merry Christmas", whispered the little girl. "These cookies are for you."

And the old postmaster smiled back and had a very Merry Christmas!

Be kind to your family and friends. Pray for your enemies. We celebrate that Jesus was born to save our souls. Matthew 1:23.

Pender County Board of Education: Green New Deals, by Phil Cordeiro

By Phil D. Cordeiro

The Pender Topsail Post & Voice has published multiple articles addressing the debate over procurement of electric buses for our school system. When I requested the publisher of that newspaper print this article, he refused on the grounds that it would, "appear to many to be an attempt [by me] to gain more publicity" during an election. Although I'm running to keep my seat on the Pender County Board of Education, I feel allowing a community elected official to respond to this topic of public concern is simply the right thing to do. My sincere appreciation goes to the Topsail Times for allowing me the opportunity to communicate my views on this issue to our community.

On August 8th, your board of education entered into an agreement with Governor Cooper's administration and Duke Energy to obtain three electric school buses. There are a handful of major issues with this arrangement.

First, the charging stations for these buses will be property of Duke Energy (not the school system). And, according to the school system's contract, Duke Energy can charge the school system any price it wants for us to purchase these charging stations after an initial two-year period. On this point, I ask myself only one question: Is this a deal I would make with my own money? The answer is a resounding no.

In 2015, Duke Energy pled guilty in federal court to polluting the drinking water of millions of North Carolinians. Is this really the company we're trusting not to make a profit off Pender County?

Second, the school system (and its school buses) has served as an emergency operations center during a variety of natural disasters. When the electric grid is down for days or weeks, we need diesel powered generators and buses to do the job -- not electric buses that will be useless once their batteries have been drained after their ~130-mile advertised range (versus the ~500-mile range of a diesel bus). Why would we intentionally limit our options in such emergency scenarios?

Third, no meaningful discussions have taken place over training requirements for personnel. Who will maintain these buses? Who will conduct out-of-warranty repairs? How much will it cost to send our diesel mechanics to acquire these new skills?

Fourth, a study published by AAA found that electric vehicles experience a "41 percent decrease of combined driving range" on average in winter conditions. This means a bus advertised by Duke Energy and Thomas Built Buses to have a range of ~130 miles may only have a range of ~77 miles in January/February (while a diesel bus can still drive ~500 miles).

Last, and maybe most important, is the fact that the school system's mission isn't to advance green energy policies or combat climate change. The school system's mission is to educate our community's youth -- period.

Unfortunately, in modern times public servants let too many 'shiny objects' distract them from their primary purpose (in the Marine Corps we called this "mission creep"). And, when we do so, we often lose the forest for the trees -- spending time (our most valuable resource) on issues that distract from what should be our primary focus.

What are your thoughts on electric school buses? If you're interested, please contact me anytime. I'm always willing to listen. Hearing from constituents helps your representatives in government understand what's on peoples' minds and helps guide the decisions we make on your behalf.

Topsail Times is printed by the Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC.
This publication is not to be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means without prior permission from Topsail Times.

Governor's Volunteer Service Award Nominations Accepted Now

SURF CITY- The deadline for nominations for the 2024 Governor's Volunteer Service Award is approaching quickly.

"The deadline is Feb. 13, so there is still time remaining to submit nominations for the 2024 Governor's Volunteer Service Award," said Tammy Proctor, the Pender County Coordinator for the 2024 Volunteer Service Awards.

The awards program, created by the Office of the Governor in 1979, recognizes North Carolina's most dedicated volunteers. Through the years the award has been bestowed on thousands of North Carolinians who have shown concern and compassion for their neighbors by volunteering in their local community.

"Each county selects up to 10 individuals, businesses, groups/teams, and one paid director of volunteers to be recognized for their outstanding contributions to our community," said Proctor.

One of the nominees will be nominated for the Governor's Medallion Award for Volunteer Service, which is awarded to approximately the top 20 volunteers in the state. A local committee evaluates the nominations.

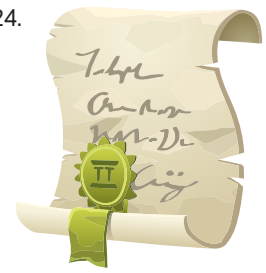
"We have several amazing volunteers in Pender County," said Proctor. "We urge every organization, director, or business to nominate someone today."

Printed nomination forms are available from the Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism office, 13375 NC Hwy 50, Surf City. Nomination forms are available online at www.volunteernc.org or via this link, https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/H957RPB.

Nomination forms are also available via email by contacting the chamber at director@topsailchamber.org.

The deadline to submit nominations is Feb. 12, 2024.

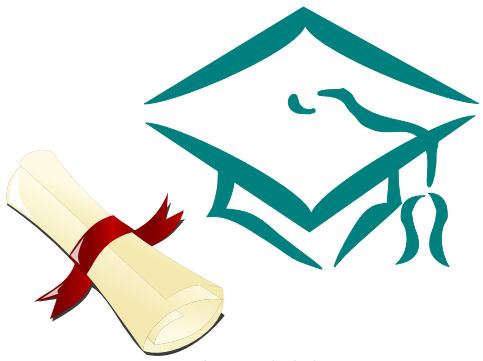
Award recipients will be recognized during National Volunteer Week, April 21-27, 2024.



VFW North Carolina 5th District Teacher Of The Year 2023-2024

The VFW North Carolina 5th District is proud to announce that Allison Schwerin has been named its Teacher of the Year for 2023 - 2024. Allison is a Career and Technical Education teacher at Dixon Middle School. A teacher since 2005, she is certified to teach Business and Information Technology, Special Education, Social Studies and English Language Arts. As a Career and Technical Education teacher, she engages her students in becoming college and career ready. Allison also ensures that her students become productive citizens. She incorporates civic literacy where applicable and invites speakers from the local community to her class. A proud military spouse and wife of a retired law enforcement officer, she understands the importance of students making connections with their friends, school and the community around them. Allison, also works alongside her schools military liaison and supports her efforts to help the schools military students and their families.

Her Teacher of the Year Package will be forwarded to VFW North Carolina for further judging. If Allison wins at the national level, she will be awarded $1,000 for professional development expenses and Dixon Middle School will be awarded $1,000.



Pictured right:
Allison Schwerin

Pender County Manager David Andrews Announces Retirement

Pender County Manager David Andrews is retiring after 33 years in local government. Andrews announced his plan to retire in a letter to the Board of Commissioners. His retirement will be effective March 1, 2024.

Andrews is from Texas. He began his career as a finance director in the City of South Tucson in 1990.

He joined the Pender County government in September of 2022.

During his tenure at Pender County, he has been instrumental in Pender County's approach to employee hiring, recruitment, and retention. He has reduced turnover, increased retention, and added new positions. He has also been very active in capital investment projects, including the acquisition of land for implementation of the Pender County Schools $178 million school bond project, which will provide much-needed schools for the growing community. He has been instrumental in the design and permitting phases for a new criminal justice center and the new Health and Human Services Building, which will house the Health Department and the Department of Social Services. With more people moving to the area, he helped move water projects forward, including the land purchase for a new Membrane Water Treatment Plant. Construction of the Scotts Hill water tower will be completed within the next few months. In addition, he also began work on projects that improved the area, including a new Hampstead Library, Central Pender Park, Abbey Nature Preserve Park, and much more.

Andrews says he loves Pender County and plans to stay in the area after he retires.

In a letter to the Board of Commissioners, Andrews says he wants to thank the County Commissioners and the County staff for their confidence in him and their support and collaboration.

In the letter, Andrews also stated that he is committed to ensuring a smooth transition by assisting in the handover process, completing ongoing projects, and providing any necessary assistance during his notice period.

In a statement, Chairman Brad George said, "On behalf of the citizens of Pender County and the Pender Board of Commissioners, I would like to congratulate Andrews on announcing his retirement. During his tenure with Pender, his leadership has been instrumental in advancing the county to the next level. We wish him well on his next adventure. The search for a new county manager will start immediately."

Surf City Guns & Ammo
Conceal & Carry Class
January 13th
8:30am to 5pm
30 ROUNDS OF AMMO
SPOTS FILLING UP FAST!
$35.00 TO RENT GUN & AMMO
(910) 328-4499
127 Sound Road in Holly Ridge

This publication is not to be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means without prior permission from Topsail Times.

Wilmington To Raleigh Corridor Study Gets $500,000 Federal Rail Grant

The first step toward returning passenger rail service between Wilmington and Raleigh via Goldsboro has come with a $500,000 Federal Grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. As announced by U.S. Senator Thom Tillis on December 5th, this funding will be used for identification and planning for this rail corridor's use.

$3.5 million in grant money is being designated to go to seven designated rail projects in North Carolina as Step 1 of a program to identify rail corridors and develop scope, schedule, and cost estimates for possible passenger rail expansion.

"This $3.5 million in grant funding to identify and develop potential rail lines across North Carolina could be transformational in how North Carolinians travel," says Senator Tillis.

Passenger rail service to the Raleigh/Goldsboro/Wilmington corridor to these cities and other locales could resume for the first time since 1968, with a 7 - 12 year timeline as a target for completion.

"This is outstanding news," says Gene Merritt of Eastern Carolina Rail, a 501(c)(3) designated non-profit organization based in Wilmington. ECRail has already been lobbying and hosting public events to generate support for passenger rail. "We are working closely with the DOT's Rail Division to make this happen," Merritt adds.

While seven corridors were chosen for initial Federal funding, only three involve new passenger service, while Wilmington to Raleigh via Goldsboro is one of only two newly designated routes in North Carolina, the other being Salisbury to Asheville.

Wilmington to Raleigh will involve restoring railroad tracks from Castle Hayne to Wallace through Pender County and constructing a new bridge over the NE Cape Fear River for modern rail traffic. Modern trains from Raleigh to Wilmington are slated to run under three hours and between 70 to 80 mph.

Other railway improvements are also slated including some new passenger depots. Plans already include a new passenger train station for Wilmington and refurbishment of the historic Goldsboro Union Station. Additional stops along the route (except for Goldsboro and Selma) have yet to be determined.

The final cost is thought to be upwards of $300 million, with local and state contributions to be 20 percent, and the rest to come from already approved federal funding.

Raleigh's Union Station is becoming a hub for rail traffic and a $1 billion grant is supporting a new route to Richmond, Virginia. The Raleigh to Wilmington line is envisioned to include three trains per day in both directions.

* * *

The following corridors were awarded $500,000 for identification and development according to Senator Thom Tillis' press release:

- Charlotte to Washington, DC Corridor
  - The proposed Corridor would provide improvements to the existing state-supported Carolinian service between Charlotte, NC and Washington, DC (with existing service continuing north to New York, NY) by improving/adding services in Greensboro, Winston-Salem, High Point, Raleigh, Durham, Salisbury, and Burlington NC and Petersburg, Richmond, Fredericksburg and Alexandria, Virginia by addressing infrastructure capacity constraints. Improvements include constructing/rehabilitating a partially abandoned alignment between Raleigh, NC and Petersburg, VA that is more direct than the existing routing through Rocky Mount, NC, potentially shaving more than an hour off the end-to-end travel time.
- Charlotte to Atlanta, Georgia Corridor
  - The proposed Corridor would provide new service on a new high speed rail alignment between Charlotte, NC and Atlanta, GA, with potential intermediate stops including Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport in South Carolina and Augusta and Athens, GA, then serving a downtown Atlanta station and terminating at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the world's busiest airport.
- Charlotte to Kings Mountain Corridor
  - The proposed Corridor would connect Kings Mountain, North Carolina to Charlotte, North Carolina. The proposed Corridor would provide new service on existing alignment with capacity improvements west of the Charlotte Gateway Station and likely extending service to Kings Mountain, in addition to track, crossover, or signal improvements.
- Winston-Salem to Raleigh Corridor
  - The proposed Corridor would connect Winston-Salem, NC with Raleigh, NC, with intermediate stops at Greensboro, Burlington, Durham, and Cary, complementing the existing state-supported Piedmont and Carolinian services. The proposed Corridor would also include new frequencies, improvements to reliability, and new stations.
- Fayetteville to Raleigh Corridor
  - The proposed Corridor would provide a new service connecting Fayetteville, NC with Raleigh, NC, with intermediate stops at Lillington, and Fuquay-Varina, NC, using an existing alignment.
- **Wilmington to Raleigh Corridor**
  - **The proposed Corridor would connect Raleigh, NC to Wilmington, NC. The proposed Corridor would provide new service on an existing alignment, part of which has been abandoned and would need to be reconstructed, to include new stations.**
- Asheville to Salisbury Corridor
  - The proposed Corridor would provide new service on an existing alignment between Asheville and Salisbury in western North Carolina, following a line that last hosted passenger trains in 1975.

Topsail Times is printed by the Topsail Times Newspaper, LLC.
This publication is not to be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means without prior permission from Topsail Times.

Free Fly • Life is Good • Vineyard Vines • Fish Hippie • Olukai • Costa Del Mar

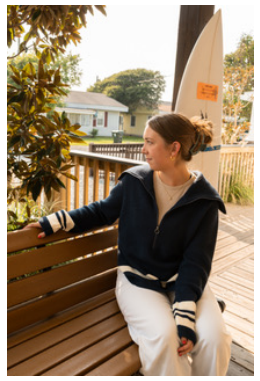
Herring's Outdoor Sports

Store Hours

Open Everyday

9am-7pm

From hats to shoes and everything in between,
we've got you covered!



Topsail Island's premiere outfitter for life's everyday adventures.
Inspired by the sea, sand and salt air, we love our coastal lifestyle and living on island time!

#ShopLocal

Family Owned and Operated for 61 years!
701 N. New River Drive, Surf City, NC
910-328-3291

" the little store with MORE than you would ever expect... "

Shibumi Shade • Maui Jim • Patagonia • Pura Vida • Birkenstock • Hey Dude • Brooks

NEW IN-STOCK

#Birkenstock **#Sandals**

Shop in store or online:

www.herringsoutdoorsports.com

MORE WORKOUT, LESS TIME!

HOTWORX®

24 HOUR INFRARED FITNESS STUDIO

TRY YOUR VERY FIRST HOTWORX SESSION FOR FREE!

HIT THE ISOMETRIC WORKOUTS
Pilates, yoga, core and more

OR TRY THE HIT WORKOUTS
Cycles, dual pulley water rower, or blast for a total body workout

BOOK SESSIONS DIRECTLY FROM THE APP

(910) 967-9328

112 Charlie Medlin Dr.
Surf City, NC 28445

WWW.HOTWORX.NET

DDT

Beat the Chill with Hot Deals at DDT!

Early Buy Discounts Available All month long.
Some Cash and Carry Deals too Hot to Handle!

Located Behind DDT 7000 sq. ft. of consignments with over 50 venders!

CAROLINA MARKETPLACE
OVER 60 VENDERS
252-315-2313

Choose your style, color & size. 8 ft., 6 ft. & 4 ft. Saddle seat bar stools with or without backs. Bottle opener included.

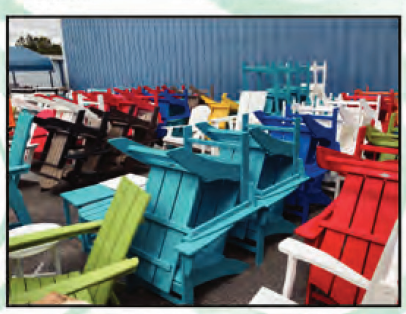
We Carry Sunroom Furniture!

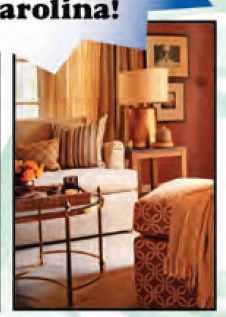
At DDT we can furnish your coastal home from top to bottom!

sunbrella® PERFORMANCE FABRICS

New & Exciting Coastal Fabrics
Beautiful • Durable
Bleach Cleanable • UV Resistant
Worry Free

LARGEST Collection of Coastal Furniture & Nautical Gifts & Accessories in North Carolina!





www.DDTOUTLET.com

Like Us On f

21740 Hwy.17 North, Hampstead, NC
(South of Holly Ridge, North of Hampstead)
910-329-0160