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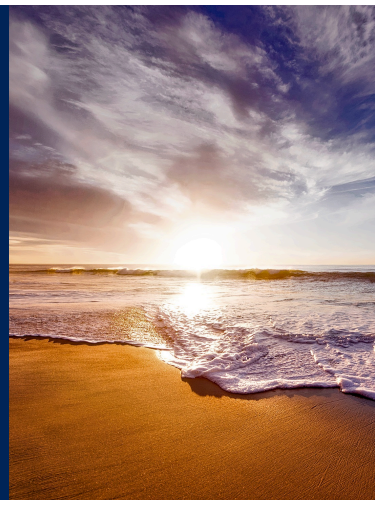

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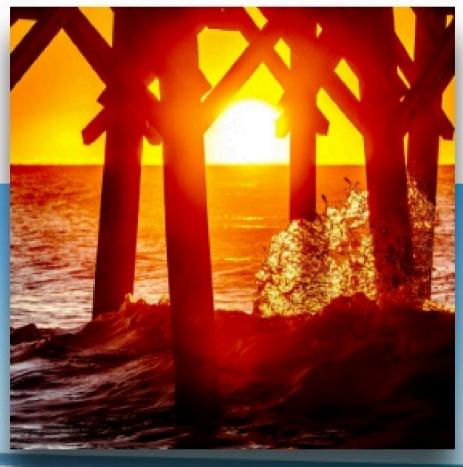

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Table of Contents

Topsail Gun Gal 3
Coastal Common Sense 4
WGU Offers New Year Scholarships to New Students 6
When A Paper Becomes Propaganda | 2021 Murder | FEAST 8
CFCC News | Deputies Arrest Fugitive after Brief Standoff 9
Lori's ACE Home and Hardware Coming to Surf City 10
Pilot Program | Flotilla Winners | Farewell to Beloved Bookstore 11
Effort to Combat Substance Abuse for Inmates 12
Lumbee Fairness Act Passes | Nominate a Volunteer 14
The Rise of Esports: A New Opportunity with Pixel Pros League 15
Chamber Establishes a Foundation | Murder Mystery Dinner 16
WILMINGTON: No. 14 U-Haul Growth Metro | NC Coastal Land Trust Completes Fundraising Campaign for South End of T.I. 17
Fatal Dog Attack | PPNC Award | Gone, Not Forgotten 18
Join the Spring 2025 Citizens Law Enforcement Academy 19
Talk on WWII's Deadliest Day for American Forces | Dip Photos 20
Guns for Women 21

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Topsail Gun Gal

By Dorothy Royal

Could it be? Is it true? Could common sense be making a comeback? Even just a little bit?

Meta (aka Facebook) put out a statement in the beginning of January that it was ceasing the use of "fact checking". To me the First Amendment is precious, and to have that overbearing, and often "incorrect" AI bot following my every word and second guessing me was just a bit too much. Once I posted a photograph that I had just taken of an image on a billboard and the "fact checking" monster told me it was a false image. Should I doubt my sanity? Certainly not. Maybe the movement of "nonsense" is starting to dwindle.

In a video statement, Mark Zuckerberg said, "We're going to get back to our roots and focus on reducing mistakes, simplifying our policies and restoring free expression on our platforms." Maybe government officials could get on board with that idea too.

How I miss that great big smile on Aunt Jemima's face. Will she make a comeback too? Some people on social media have been making posts that she will return this year, but according to Pearl Milling Company – that's a big no. What a shame!

California is on fire again. Unfortunately, this time the areas most affected are heavily occupied residential communities. Thousands of buildings have burned with none of the fires contained. Fire hydrants are running out of water or don't have enough pressure. Homes, businesses, schools, churches, and medical facilities are gone. It looks like a movie set. A horrible movie set. Lives are lost. Pets are lost. Heirlooms are lost. Money, jewelry, books, antiques, vehicles, paintings, photo albums, record albums, childhood memories, favorite recipes.....all gone.

The Mayor of Los Angeles, Karen Bass, is being blamed for the massive loss of funding for the Fire Department that was redirected to funds to service the homeless. How much money are we talking? How about $17 million, yes $17 million dollars was taken away from the Fire Department Services. Last year the budget for the Department was just under $850 million dollars for Los Angeles, while the budget for the homeless was over a billion (yes with a B) dollars.

I see some priorities are way out of whack. With over a billion dollars you couldn't provide a home for all the homeless? Sounds like a giant waste of government funds.

Her answer to the devastation from the fires is that she is going to cut out "all the red tape" required to build back. Why is there red tape at all? I think some of our government officials have lost sight of simplicity. Our country does not need to be a giant HOA with overbearing rule mongers. Maybe this will be the shift that is needed to wake some people up.

The really bad news? Last year, State Farm Insurance dropped over 60% of the homeowners in one of the largest residential communities affected by the fire.

So, the real question is – should the people in California, who pay outrageous taxes, have no insurance and have limited water, rebuild and stay in California?

Don't people ask the same question about those in Hurricane prone areas? What about our neighbors to the south and west still struggling, and in many cases are still homeless, from Hurricane Helene. Many of those people had no flood insurance so how do they rebuild?

What we all must be aware of is that the insurance industry is "for profit" which means, every time it takes a giant hit and must pay out big money it gets worried. No profits, no reason to be in business. Too big a risk – cancel policies and move out of areas – great for their bottom line, terrible for struggling homeowners.

Maybe we need to rethink the future. What if new homes in tornado prone areas were built underground. What if hurricane prone homes were built one story and out of concrete block – laugh all you want but some of the oldest homes on Topsail are one story block structures NOT on pilings. Sand and water come inside your home you just shovel it out and refurnish. What if fire prone areas restricted development and designed communities with natural fire breaks?

Our planet is not fighting us – we are fighting the natural progression of what society needs to do to survive. Are we really experiencing global warming or we at the end of an ice age? Can we really prepare for the extreme weather with how we live now, or should we learn from our losses and rebuild differently?

Maybe more people should think about mobilizing.

RV's are a growing trend since you can move your home in the case of an emergency (like a fire or hurricane). Maybe more towns need to recognize the simplicity and value of adding more RV approved zones and RV parks.

We can't fool mother nature, and we can't stop father time. The best we can do is adapt and learn.

Remember knowledge is power, Aunt Jemima needs to make a comeback, and mother nature does what she wants, no matter the consequences to us silly humans.

Aunt Jemima

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Coastal Common Sense

By Kim McGahey

There's a new sheriff in town - and I don't mean Pender County sheriff. I mean a law enforcement official that 77 million Americans voted for on November 5, 2024. And the opposition is fleeing like rats off a sinking ship before the January 20, 2025 inauguration.

Finally, after 4 years of insufferable woke entitlement, soon no more perverts and weirdos will be running our federal government. No more intersectional appointments, unlawful prosecutions of political opponents or twisted policies based solely on the social justice identity politics barometer. The voting Americans have set us on a long overdue course back to normalcy with sound rule of law governance and the time honored principles of meritocracy.

The major meltdown on the Left resulting from this historic comeback is amusing to watch. Hollywood celebrities and pop culture idols are buying one-way tickets to Europe because they embrace the Marxist dogma of the ousted progressive Left. Complicit liberal news media anchors are coughing up $15 million defamation settlements to Trump.

And promises from previously cancelled new administration appointees to prosecute lawbreakers like sanctuary cities, illegal migrants and surreptitious COVID-19 scientists have sent all the lefty liberals into a brainless rhetorical tailspin making them senselessly cheerlead cold blooded murderers on our city streets. Their upside down woke world is about to be turned right side up - much to the cheers of a majority of Americans. Plop, plop, fizz, fizz oh what a relief it is!

The looney Left is already making ridiculous claims that the new administration will dish out retribution against political enemies, sponsor brainwashing by loyalists and open internment camps for anyone who doesn't get on board the Trump train. Ironically, they accuse Trump of these very same Marxist tricks that the OBiden cabal recently implemented against the Right in order to retain their ill-gotten power. Impeachment, indictment and assassination against Trump did not work. Now the new sheriff and his rule of law posey at the Department of Justice will guarantee truth, justice and the American way for all citizens.

The President-elect is already a greater leader in just 4 weeks than the previous President was in 4 years. World heads of state, top corporate executives and media pop culture celebrities are all knocking at the Mar-A-Lago door in an attempt to retain their wealth, status and power. But the new sheriff is only beholden to we the people and owes nothing to anybody else. And he is right at home driving a garbage truck or flipping burgers at McDonalds. Now Everyman has a blue collar billionaire to lead them into a promising future.

The non-violent admonitions of Dr. Martin Luther King have been brought forward to the people so we can focus on the content of our character and not the color of our skin. We are free at last; thank God Almighty we are free at last!

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WGU Offers $2,500 New Year Scholarships to New Students

By Glenn Gillen

According to YouGov.com, about 34% U.S. adult citizens made at least one New Year's resolution at the start of 2024. For those resolving to jump start their education in 2025, nonprofit online Western Governors University has announced a New Year Scholarship valued at $2,500, credited to recipients at $625 per six-month term and renewable for up to four terms.

According to MyFutureNC, North Carolina needs 2 million adults with a high-quality credential or postsecondary degree by 2030 to meet expected workforce needs. Right now, the organization's dashboard shows that figure at about 1.6 million.

An accredited online university, WGU has rolling terms enabling students to enroll at any time and potentially start classes the first day of the following month. WGU offers more than 80 bachelor's and master's degrees and certificates in business, I.T., healthcare and K-12 education. The university currently has 5,829 students and 9,570 alumni throughout North Carolina.

Tuition is around $4,000 per six-month term for most degree programs at WGU, and each student is assigned a program mentor who will work with them until graduation. The average time to complete a bachelor's degree at WGU is 2.5 years, depending on the transfer of any existing college credits and WGU's competency-based model, which allows students to progress through courses at their preferred pace once they demonstrate mastery of the course materials.

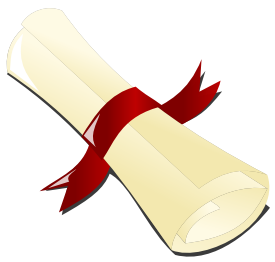
"We've seen double-digit growth in enrollment in the Southeast over the past several years," said Ben Coulter, Ed.D., chancellor of WGU North Carolina and Southeast regional director. "That is a testament that WGU's asynchronous, competency-based approach is appealing to working adults who want the flexibility to study at their preferred time and pace."

Prospective students can find out more about the New Year Scholarship and apply starting December 15 at https://www.wgu.edu/financial-aid-tuition/scholarships/general/new-year.html. To learn more about Western Governors University, visit www.wgu.edu.

About WGU

Western Governors University, the nation's leading nonprofit, online university, is transforming higher education to be more student-centric, affordable, accessible to all, and relevant to the workforce. Established in 1997 by 19 visionary U.S. governors, WGU creates life-changing pathways to opportunity for those underserved by traditional institutions — working adults, historically underrepresented communities and a diverse, growing number of learners looking for a flexible, online model that better suits their life circumstances. WGU's competency-based education model allows students to demonstrate mastery as they progress through programs at their own pace.

Accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, WGU operates in all 50 states and offers more than 80 programs in health, education, technology and business. WGU serves more than 186,000 students nationwide, with more than 360,000 alumni, and has awarded more than 405,000 degrees. Learn more at wgu.edu. Follow WGU on X at @wgu and on LinkedIn.



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When A Paper Becomes Propaganda

Opinion Piece by Phil Cordeiro

"A man's true character is not revealed during good times – it is revealed during difficult times." This aphorism came to mind after reading the December 5th edition of the Pender-Topsail Post & Voice newspaper (and I use the term "newspaper" loosely).

Specifically, after witnessing our Pender County Board of Commissioners meeting on the afternoon of Monday, December 2nd, I recalled what seems to be a never-ending series of occasions upon which the Publisher of that "newspaper" (hereinafter Mr. Publisher) has used it to levy personal attacks upon Commissioner Jerry Groves in the most vitriolic and aggressive manner – including numerous accusations that Commissioner Groves is an ardent and devout racist.

The next thought I had regarding Mr. Publisher's coverage of December 2nd's commissioner meeting – at which Commissioner Brad George nominated Commissioner Jerry Groves to be vice chair of the Pender County Board of Commissioners – was, "Why is Mr. Publisher suddenly at a loss for words when it comes to criticizing Commissioner Groves? He usually has so many."

As an aside – when trying to explain phenomena of any variety I'm a firm believer in Occam's razor. In basic terms, its principle holds when you're given a number of explanations for a specific phenomenon, you should always choose the simplest explanation.

Well, I have an idea. Mr. Publisher doesn't really care whether or not Commissioner Groves is actually a racist. He only cares about using his "newspaper" to attack people who are a threat to him and his group of friends (including Commissioner Brad George and Board of Education Member Beth Burns) retaining an iron fist on the levers of power in Pender County.

Why would I have such a thought? Well, if Mr. Publisher was genuinely interested in driving Commissioner Groves from public life for being a racist, then Mr. Publisher would have excoriated Commissioner George for allying himself with a man he alleges is of such moral turpitude. However, Mr. Publisher seems to be surprisingly mum on this newly forged alliance between Commissioners George and Groves.

Now back to the title of this piece. Why would you read something such as the Pender-Topsail Post & Voice? Well, I guess many of us in Southeastern North Carolina may be enjoying a low country boil over the Christmas season – and we'll need something to put down on the table. And, I guess an act of charity is always a good thing during this time of the year. Surely, if Mr. Publisher continues his moral bankruptcy his "newspaper" will be equally so before long.

Onslow County Man Found Guilty of 2021 Murder

After a six-week-long trial in Onslow County Superior Court, a jury found a Jacksonville man guilty of murder Wednesday morning.

Aron Burdell Watkins, 51, of Blue Creek Road in Jacksonville, was found guilty of one count of murder, one count of robbery with a dangerous weapon, one count of possession of a firearm by a felon, and one count of being a habitual felon.

North Carolina Superior Court Judge Bob Cherry sentenced Watkins to life in prison without the possibility of parole on the murder and habitual felon counts, while sentencing Watkins to a minimum of 146 months and a maximum of 188 months (12-15 years) for robbery with a dangerous weapon and possession of a firearm by a felon.

On November 2, 2021, just after 6 p.m., Onslow County Sheriff's Office deputies responded to Onslow Memorial Hospital for a report of a man suffering from a gunshot wound. The victim, Jonathan O'Neal, had been transported to the hospital in a car and dropped off at the emergency room.

O'Neal passed away later that night from the gunshot wound.

The investigation revealed that O'Neal and Watkins had been in an altercation at a residence on Blue Creek Road earlier that evening, which escalated, resulting in Watkins shooting O'Neal. Watkins and a female subject drove O'Neal to the hospital, where they dropped him off and left the area.

Watkins was arrested on November 22, 2021.

Onslow County District Attorney Chief Assistant Michael Maultsby prosecuted the case, while Attorneys Christian Smith and Ed Baily represented the defendant.

For more information or questions, please contact the Onslow County Sheriff's Office at 910- 455-3113 or Public Information Officer Trevor Dunnell at (910) 219-4936 ext. 4936, Cell: (910) 787-4216

FEAST Wilmington Holiday Discount

Feast Wilmington is offering a holiday discount of 25 % off tickets to the signature Feast Fest 2025 events through December 24 at feastwilmington.com. Next year's festival will feature three signature events at Live Oak Bank Pavilion at Riverfront Park on Saturday, March 29 and Sunday, March 30, as well as several off-site Feast Experiences during the week leading up to the festival. The multi-day food and drinks festival will feature over 70 top chefs and 20 breweries from across the region.

The 2025 events at Riverfront Park include:

Craft + Cuisine

Saturday, March 29 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. 20 local breweries partnered with 20 local chefs to create unique and memorable pairings

Pier Party

Saturday, March 29 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Fine coastal cuisine, cocktails, and top-notch entertainment along the Cape Fear River

Brunch Elevated

Sunday, March 30 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Next-level brunch bites, mocktails, cocktails, coffee & conversation.

Tickets can be purchased individually or as a Weekend Pass for only $195 to all three events. Tickets are inclusive of all food and drink and each event also includes live entertainment. The restaurant lineups for each event can be viewed at Feast's talent page.

"Next year's festival is shaping up to be an incredible lineup of local chefs and brewers to represent Wilmington's vibrant food and drink scene," said Feast Wilmington director Jessica Maurer. "Now is the time to give yourself or your loved ones the gift of Feast."

Feast Wilmington is proud to partner with three local non-profit beneficiaries for these events. The Craft + Cuisine event will benefit the Cape Fear Craft Beer Alliance, while the Pier Party and Brunch Elevated will benefit the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina at Wilmington and the Downtown Business Alliance.

For more information on Feast Wilmington and the local food and beverage scene, check out Feast Unwrapped, a free weekly newsletter. Each Wednesday Feast Unwrapped provides insights and details about local happenings and broader industry trends.

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CFCC and UNCW Partner to Implement Try Teal Program to Address Nursing Shortage

Cape Fear Community College (CFCC) and the College of Health and Human Services at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) have partnered to implement an innovative program to address the critical shortage of nurses through the "Try Teal" program. This partnership gives CFCC Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) students the opportunity to begin their journey toward a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN).

Through "Try Teal," CFCC ADN students can enroll in two Registered Nurse (RN) to BSN courses at UNCW without tuition or fees, saving students over $1,200. All course-related costs, including textbooks, are covered. These online courses are part of UNCW's accelerated RN to BSN program, designed to accommodate the needs of working adults. Upon successful completion, students are conditionally admitted to UNCW's program, streamlining the path to advanced nursing education.

Eligibility criteria include:

· Current enrollment in CFCC's ADN program

· Successful completion or active enrollment in NUR 113 or NUR 114

· Completion of ENG 111 with a grade of "C" or higher

· A cumulative college GPA of 2.4 or higher

· Good academic standing at the last institution attended

"This collaboration is mutually beneficial for both our students and the healthcare community," said Jim Morton, CFCC President. "It provides an affordable pathway for our nursing students while ensuring a steady flow of skilled healthcare professionals to meet our region's workforce demands. Together, we're enhancing the quality of life in our community."

"The Try Teal initiative represents a significant step forward in addressing the critical nursing workforce shortage," said Jack Watson, Dean of the UNCW College of Health and Human Services. "Our partnership with Cape Fear Community College reflects a shared commitment to supporting students and advancing healthcare in our communities. We aim to remove financial barriers and provide a seamless pathway for future nurses to enhance their education. Together, we're empowering the next generation of nursing professionals to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape."

The Try Teal Program is made possible through the support of the New Hanover Healthcare Career Partnership and the New Hanover Community Endowment. This partnership highlights the institutions' dedication to tackling the region's critical healthcare challenges by prioritizing the education and training of future nurses.

To learn more about CFCC's Associate Degree Nursing Program, visit cfcc.edu/associate-nursing/

CFCC Scholarship Fundraiser Raises $113,500 for Automotive Technology Programs

Cape Fear Community College (CFCC) is excited to announce its recent fundraiser for students in the Automotive System Technology, Automotive Customizing Technology, and Collision Repair and Refinishing programs raised $113,500. These funds will directly benefit students by providing critical tools, equipment, and scholarships to support their pursuit of careers in the automotive industry, helping to meet the growing demand for skilled professionals in these fields.

The fundraiser, held on November 14, brought together community members, industry leaders, and automotive enthusiasts for an evening of celebration and giving. Two major donors and longtime CFCC supporters—Tim and Vicki Milam, CFCC Board of Trustees Chair Lanny Wilson, and his wife, Jill—made significant gifts, exemplifying the community's commitment to education and workforce development.

"We are grateful for the generosity of our community," said Jim Morton, CFCC President. "This incredible support demonstrates our region's value in developing a skilled workforce and the importance of helping students achieve their career goals. These funds will impact the lives of our students and the industries they serve."

"CFCC's automotive programs are phenomenal, and their instructors go above and beyond," said Tim Milam, CEO of Coldwell Banker Sea Coast Advantage. "It is an honor for my wife and me to contribute to helping these young people grow and prosper in this community that we love. I encourage people who don't know what's happening at Cape Fear Community College to contact the Foundation and find out. They're doing incredible work."

CFCC's automotive programs provide hands-on training in advanced vehicle systems, customization techniques, and collision repair, preparing students to succeed in various automotive careers. The programs also contribute to the local economy by producing highly trained graduates who meet the needs of employers in the region. To learn more about these programs, visit cfcc.edu/division/vocational-trade/

To learn more about supporting Cape Fear Community College student education opportunities through program support, scholarships, faculty grants, and capital projects, visit cfcc.edu/foundation/change-a-life/.

CFCC Academic Warning Lifted by SACSCOC

Cape Fear Community College (CFCC) is pleased to report that its academic warning status has been officially lifted by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The announcement was made at the SACSCOC annual meeting on Sunday, December 8, 2024.

During the academic warning period, which began on December 5, 2023, Cape Fear Community College remained fully accredited. The warning status did not affect the quality of education, transferability of credits, or the college's ability to confer degrees and credentials. The college actively addressed the concerns identified by SACSCOC, ensuring compliance with all accreditation standards.

"This announcement reflects the incredible dedication of our faculty, staff, and leadership team," said Jim Morton, CFCC President. "Throughout this process, we remained steadfast in our commitment to providing high-quality education and workforce development opportunities for our students and community. I am grateful to everyone who worked tirelessly to address the concerns raised, ensuring we continue to meet and exceed the highest standards of excellence in higher education."

CAPE FEAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Deputies Arrest Fugitive after Brief Standoff

At approximately 7:56 p.m. on Sunday, December 8, 2024, deputies with the Onslow County Sheriff's Office received a call to assist with an incident after several bail bondsmen attempted to recover a fugitive from a residence in Maysville.

Bail bondsmen searched the home at 2656 White Oak River Road as Brian Franklin Fry, 42, of Maysville, was located in a closet inside the residence. After several attempts to take Fry into custody, Fry made his way into a bathroom, where he started a fire, and gunshots could be heard coming from inside the home.

No one was injured as a result of the shots being fired.

Maysville Fire Department, with the assistance of Pollocksville Volunteer Fire Department, Western Carteret Fire and EMS, and Pumpkin Center Volunteer Fire, extinguished the fire. Deputies entered the home and located Fry in a back bedroom closet.

Fry was taken into custody and transported to Onslow Memorial Hospital.

Fry was released and taken to the Onslow County Detention Center under no bond. Fry was originally wanted for failure to appear for court in Onslow County on July 25, 2024, for felony statutory sex offense with a child and felony indecent liberties with a child.

Deputies seized a handgun as the case remains open for investigation with future charges pending.

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Lori's ACE Home and Hardware Coming to Surf City

Locally Owned Home and Hardware Store Scheduled to Open in Spring 2025.

"The Helpful Place" will soon be part of the Surf City, Holly Ridge and Topsail Island communities.

Scheduled to open its doors in Spring 2025, Lori's Ace Home & Hardware will be located at 14021 NC-50 in Surf City. True to the Ace brand, Lori's Ace will provide an elevated service experience and high-quality product selection from best brands like Stihl, Milwaukee, Big Green Egg, Traeger, Benjamin Moore, Yeti and many more.

Lori's Ace not only offers products in familiar categories such as paint, grilling, outdoor power, electrical, plumbing and hardware, but also a vast selection of home and garden décor and gifts, lawn and garden supplies, kitchen and bath accessories, wild bird food and feeders, pool supplies, cleaning supplies, and live plants in the Garden Center.

"We're excited to bring convenience and superior service to the individuals, families and businesses in Surf City, Topsail Island and the surrounding communities," said Lori Tracy Stobbe, president and co-owner. "Everyone we talk to is already excited for the store to open, and we're looking forward to making a positive impact in the community."

This is the second Ace store for owners Lori Tracy Stobbe and Nate Stobbe, who moved to North Carolina from Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota in June 2022. Their first store is in Fayetteville and has been very well received in the community. "After a year and a half, we still have people every day thanking us for opening the store," said Tracy Stobbe. "Knowing we are making a positive impact in people's lives is what drives us every day."

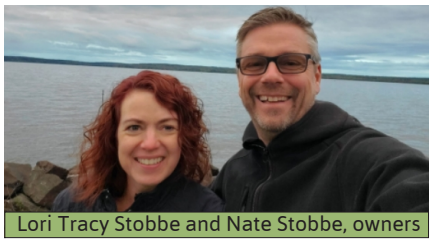
Lori has over 25 years of experience leading and developing marketing, communications and branding for national, regional and local businesses. Nate has over 30 years of experience leading commercial building manufacturing and custom home building companies.

The hiring process for the Surf City store will begin in February and will include Assistant Store Manager, Sales Associate and Cashier positions. Lori's Ace will be looking for team members who get their energy from helping others, are eager to learn, are good problem solvers, and can provide superior service with a smile. Available positions will be posted online early next year.

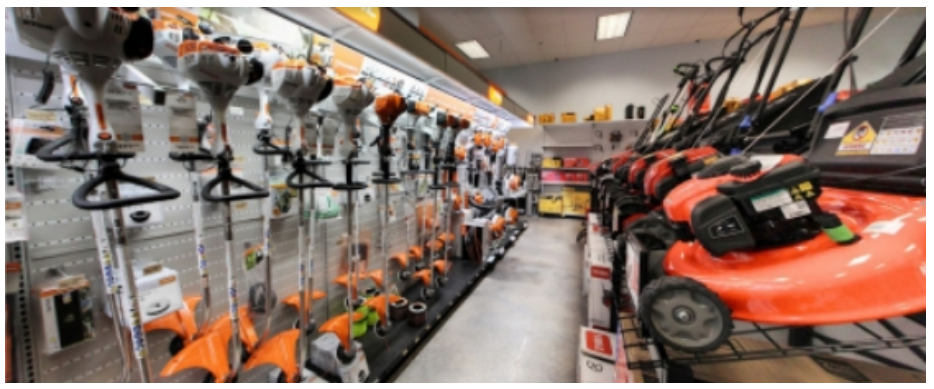
About Lori's Ace Home & Hardware

Lori's Ace Home & Hardware is locally owned and provides an unmatched customer service experience. Their robust, high-quality product selection includes best brands like Benjamin Moore, Stihl, Ego, Milwaukee, DeWalt, Craftsman, Big Green Egg, Traeger, Weber, Yeti and Scout.

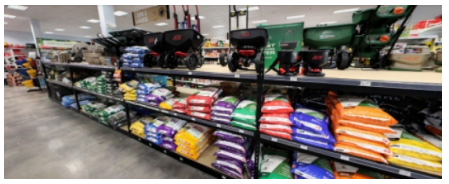
The stores include Grilling, Outdoor Power, Paint, Patio, Lawn/Garden, Holiday Décor, a Garden Center, Home Décor & Gifts, Wild Bird, and much more. For more information on Ace, visit acehardware.com.



Lori Tracy Stobbe and Nate Stobbe, owners



Photos from Lori's Ace Home & Hardware in Fayetteville, NC



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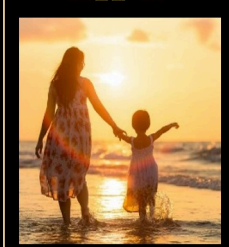

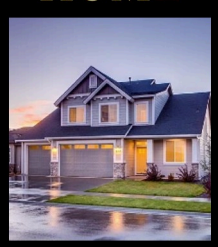

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– D. R. Royal

CFCC Celebrates 100% Pass Rate for BLET Pilot Program

Cape Fear Community College (CFCC) is proud to celebrate the graduation of the second cohort from its Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) Pilot Program, a noteworthy advancement in law enforcement education. All 21 graduates from this cohort excelled by earning a 100% passing rate on the State Comprehensive Exam, a distinction achieved by only a select few community colleges. In addition, 18 graduates have already secured employment with law enforcement agencies across the region – New Hanover County Sheriff's Office, Wilmington Police Department, Surf City Police Department, Oak Island Police Department, Bald Head Island Public Service, and Leland Police Department.

CFCC was among only two community colleges in North Carolina that offered a second round of the new BLET pilot program. It was developed in collaboration with the North Carolina Justice Academy and extended the traditional BLET curriculum by two hundred hours based on feedback from a statewide task analysis. The pilot program now totals eight hundred and seventy-eight hours, compared to the previous six hundred and forty hours. This extension emphasizes practical exercises and de-escalation activities, reflecting the evolving needs of law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve.

"The success of our graduates reflects the hard work and dedication of our students and instructors," said Jim Morton, CFCC President. "This program equips graduates with the skills and training to serve and protect our communities. We are proud to support law enforcement agencies by providing well-prepared officers ready to make a difference."

For more information about CFCC's Basic Law Enforcement Training program, visit cfcc.edu/basic-law-enforcement/.

2024 Topsail Flotilla Winners Announced

The 2024 Topsail Flotilla faced chilly and windy conditions, but 13 brave captains weathered the choppy Intracoastal Waterway on Dec. 14.

"It was extremely competitive for first, second, and third-place honors among the captains," said Tammy Proctor, Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism director.

The first-place winner was Boat Number 10, captained by Jason Williford. It featured Santa's sleigh pulled by several marlin with the lead marlin sporting a Rudolph red nose. On the stern dangled the Grinch. Williford captured first-place honors in the Topsail Flotilla in 2021 also.

Second-place, Boat Number 5, captained by Adam Hawley, featured a brightly lighted Santa and Reindeer aboard the Topsail Voyages.

Third Place, Boat Number 8, Captained by Rick Brown featured a Christmas Pirates theme. Brown has the distinction of winning the flotillas in Swansboro and Jacksonville this year as well.

The winners were honored at the Chamber's Annual Christmas Party on Dec. 16, hosted by Daddy Mac's Beach Grille.

Sea Tow was the premier sponsor of the 2024 Topsail Flotilla. They guided the boats and made certain all boaters were apprised of the Captains' Rules. Thanks to Sea Tow's generosity, the Chamber was able to present a $1,000 check to first place, $300 to second place, and $200 to third place. Additional event sponsors were Clark Sneed of Southeastern Yachts, attorneys Rizzo & Blackburn, and Surf City Signs.

The creatively decorated flotilla set sail from Bush Marina to Soundside Park, where they paraded before five judges.

"The flotilla and the Christmas Market were well attended – again," said Karen Seibert, Chairperson of the Chamber Board of Directors. "This is one of our signature events of the year."

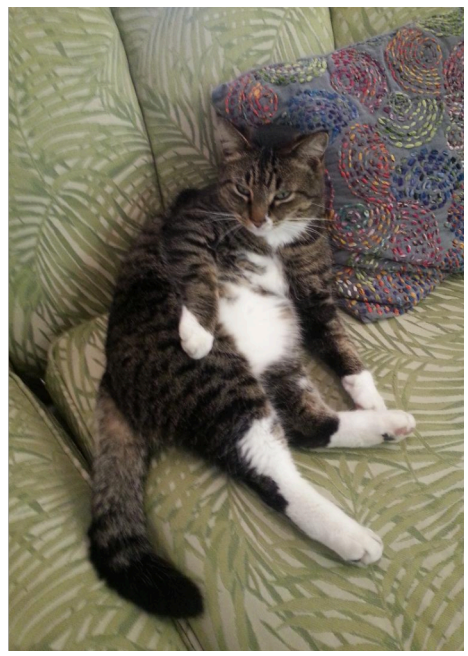
The 2024 Topsail Flotilla is in dry dock until the 2025 Topsail Flotilla sets sail again on Dec. 13, 2025.

Pictured in the group shot is Rick Brown, Tammy Proctor (chamber director), Annette Erny (Chamber events committee), Adam Hawley, and Jason Williford.

Farewell to Beloved Topsail Beach Bookstore

By Lori Fisher
Quarter Moon Books

I want to thank everyone who has supported Quarter Moon throughout the past 30 years. It has been an amazing and wonderful journey for me. I've been blessed with fantastic staff, including Claire Braxton, who worked with me over 23 years! The memories of customers, many who became dear friends; the plethora of authors that came to visit, along with our annual author luncheons; and all the talented musicians that entertained us, will keep my heart smiling forever! Oh! And let's not forget old grumpy Socks, the store cat for 13 years! He's been gone for 3 years and I still miss him so very much! Thank you!



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OCSO Program has Grown in an Effort to Combat Substance Abuse for Inmates

Breaking the cycle of addiction can pay community-wide dividends. Not only does it reduce substance use and maladaptive behavior, but it also reduces the risk of relapse, re-offending and overdose death. Breaking the cycle of addiction improves the community's health, wellbeing, and increases public safety.

Onslow County Detention Center has incorporated a substance use treatment program which provides medication, substance use counseling, case management, and peer support services for inmates struggling with addiction. Every effort is being made to treat substance use in a comprehensive manner.

"My concerns are recidivism, fighting the drug epidemic and safety of community. My primary goal is keeping people from coming back to jail and stop people from dying," said Onslow County Sheriff Chris Thomas.

As inmates go through booking, they undergo a health screening and if identified as a substance user, they are assessed for withdrawal symptoms and their need to be inducted into the program. If an inmate chooses to enter the program, he or she will receive treatment during incarceration and will be referred to community-based treatment upon release.

The program's clinical services include group and individual counseling.

In 2021, the Onslow County Board of Commissioners approved two federal grants from the Comprehensive Opioid Stimulant and Substance Use Program (COSSUP) to bring the program to the Onslow County Detention Center. The program averaged 1-2 participants in the early stages, until six months ago, when Program Director, Veronica Ortiz, was brought in to oversee operations.

As of November 20, 2024, the program has grown to 52 participants, with more growth expected.

"Some participants are a little skeptical when entering the program, but they eventually come around and are appreciate having assistance and support they are not used to having," Ortiz said.

Measuring the program's success rate is difficult because success looks different for everyone, explained Ortiz. Out of 116 participants, since July 1, 2024, seven have been rearrested, with two recently inducted back into the program.

With a low re-offending rate, the program has seen success in other ways.

"Do they have a job? Are they sober? Are they doing things people who don't suffer from addiction are doing that society considers productive? These are the measures with which we also rate success," added Ortiz.

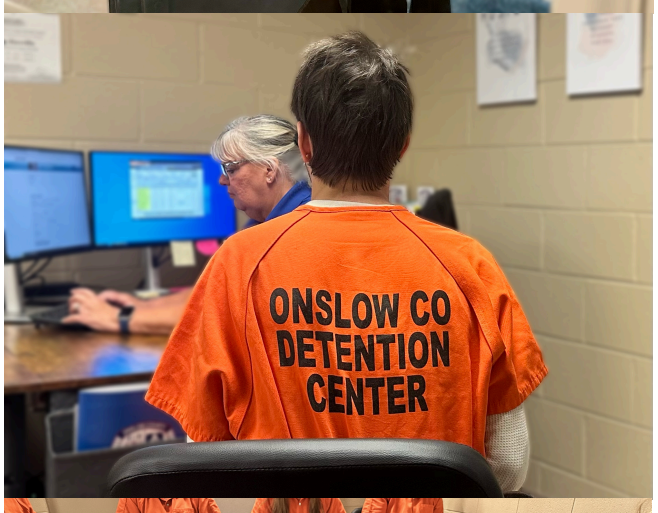
One anonymous participant, who says they have been in and out of jail a total of 33 times in the last four years, says they are grateful for the program, which is helping them finally change their life around.

"It's more than medication. They care. They go the extra mile for all of us and are changing the lives of everyone in the program." - Anonymous Participant

Quick Statistics (Onslow County Detention Center participants only)

- 92% of participants who have entered the program have experienced multiple overdoses
- Average age of participant- 38
- Average age of first use- 21
- Primary substance used- fentanyl
- 47% of the participants grew up in a home with parents/adults who engaged in substance use
- 61% of participants have a previous mental health diagnosis
- 68% of participants grew up in poverty

For further media inquiries or questions, please contact Public Information Officer Trevor Dunnell at (910) 219-4936 ext. 4936, cell (910) 787-4216



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Lumbee Fairness Act Passes in House with Bipartisan Support

By Kennedy Stowater

On December 17th, 2024, the United States House of Representatives passed H.R. 1101, the Lumbee Fairness Act, legislation introduced by Congressman David Rouzer (NC-07). The bill, which passed by a vote of 311 to 96, gives the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina full federal recognition and associated federal protections.

"The Lumbee people are an integral part of our Southeastern North Carolina community. They are our neighbors and our friends. We attend church together. Our children go to school together. But for generations, the Lumbee Tribe has been denied full federal recognition and tribal sovereignty. Today, I am proud the House of Representatives came together to pass my bill, the Lumbee Fairness Act, and help ensure the Lumbee people have the same rights and benefits as the other federally-recognized tribes across the country," ***said Congressman Rouzer****.*

"I want to thank Congressman Rouzer and all the co-sponsors of the Lumbee Fairness Act for ensuring its passage today in the United States House. Their hard work is to be applauded as they pushed this across the finish line before the House adjourns for Christmas break. This is a great step towards Congress rectifying the 1956 Lumbee Act and ensuring that the remains of the Indian Termination Era policy continues to be dismantled. To our allies in Congress and Indian Country, continue to push forward and let us see this bill adopted by the Senate and finally finish what our ancestors began almost 140 yrs ago," ***said Lumbee Tribal Chairman John Lowery.***

Background:

The Lumbee Tribe consists of 55,000 members, making it the largest American-Indian tribe east of the Mississippi River and the ninth largest tribe in the nation. Members of the Lumbee Tribe reside primarily in Robeson, Hoke, Cumberland, and Scotland Counties.

In 1885, the State of North Carolina formally recognized the Lumbee Tribe. In 1956, Congress recognized the Lumbee as an Indian Tribe when they enacted the Lumbee Act, but the bill unfairly denied the Lumbee any federal services and benefits associated with such recognition. Since then, the Lumbee have continued to fight for full and complete federal recognition. On February 17, 2023, Congressman David Rouzer introduced H.R. 1101. In the Senate, Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) introduced companion legislation.

Nominate a volunteer for the 2025 Governor's Volunteer Service Award

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2025 Governor's Volunteer Service Award.

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 ten individuals, businesses, groups/teams and one paid Director of Volunteers to be recognized for their outstanding contributions to their communities. One of the nominees will be nominated for the Governor's Medallion Award for Volunteer Service, which is awarded to the top 20 volunteers in the state. A local committee evaluates the nominations.

Nomination forms are available in Pender County from the office of the Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism.

"Forms are available online or we can email a PDF form to nominators," said Tammy Proctor, the Pender County coordinator for the awards program.

Please return the completed forms to Tammy at director@topsailchamber.org or via mail at PO Box 2486, Surf City, NC 28445 no later than Feb. 25, 2025.

For more information contact the Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism at 910-329-4446.

Guidelines:

1. Nominees must have been engaged in volunteer activities for at least one year in North Carolina. Volunteer service performed outside the state is ineligible.
2. Nominees are ineligible if they receive compensation for their service.
3. Nominees are ineligible if they are required to do the service.
a.This includes services mandated by schools, the court, or other authorities.
4. Self-nominations are ineligible.
5. Previous award recipients from within the past 10 years are ineligible.
6. Family members may not nominate their family members.
7. Group Nominees must be made by someone external to the group.

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The Rise of Esports: A New Opportunity with Pixel Pros NC Esports League

By Joseph Ferriola

Esports has rapidly grown from a niche hobby into a global phenomenon, captivating millions of players and spectators worldwide. Beyond the competition, esports nurtures critical life skills like teamwork, strategic thinking, and digital literacy—skills that resonate in our tech-driven world. Recognizing this, the Pixel Pros NC Esports League is bringing these opportunities to our local community.

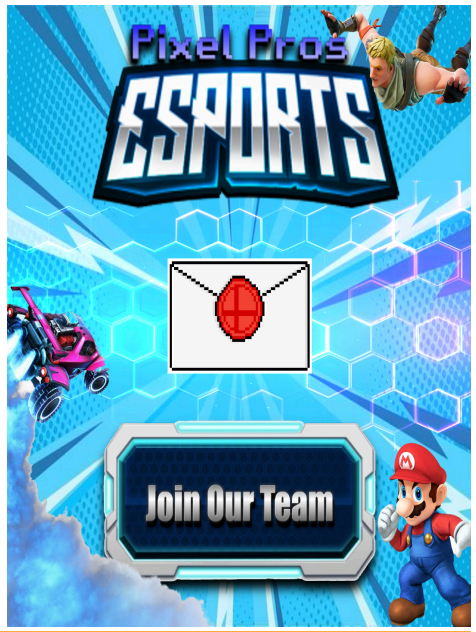
The Pixel Pros NC Esports League is proud to introduce its Middle School Esports League, an innovative program designed to give students a structured and supportive gaming experience. More than just playing video games, this league empowers participants to build confidence, collaborate with peers, and develop personal growth. Popular games such as **Fortnite, Rocket League, Super Smash Bros. Ultimate, Minecraft (PvP modes), and Mario Kart 8 Deluxe** will take center stage in an exciting season of competition.

Our vision extends beyond a single team. The league plans to form multiple teams within the middle school division, fostering a competitive yet collaborative environment for participants. Practices and matches are hosted at Paradise Axe and Arcade in Holly Ridge, where students will train and compete using high-quality equipment. This infrastructure ensures a professional-level experience while reinforcing teamwork and sportsmanship.

But we're not stopping there. The Pixel Pros NC Esports League is already looking ahead, planning to expand into high schools in the near future. By building a pipeline from middle school to high school competition, we aim to create a sustainable and inclusive ecosystem for young esports enthusiasts.

Esports levels the playing field, welcoming participants of all physical abilities to shine in competitive gaming. It's not just about winning; it's about building connections, mastering skills, and embracing the community.

As esports continues to thrive, programs like the Pixel Pros NC Esports League are paving the way for the next generation of competitors.



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Topsail Chamber Establishes a Foundation

The Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Board of Directors established the Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation, a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization. The new Foundation has been approved by the NC Secretary of State.

"The foundation will enable the Chamber to apply for grants to enhance the Chamber's programs," said Tammy Proctor, Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism director.

"Kathy Blackburn, a Chamber board member and attorney, was instrumental in working us through the formation of the foundation," said Karen Seibert, the Chamber Board chairperson. "It was a process that involved our entire board of directors under Kathy's guidance."

The Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation can accept charitable gifts and legacy donations from estates. Funds given to the Foundation are tax deductible and will be applied to programs within the Chamber.

"Chamber members who have expertise in grant writing have formed a committee to research and guide the foundation," said Proctor. "Grants for educational and community programs are available. With the new Foundation and a committee of experts, we can begin our grants search."

Chambers of Commerce fall under the IRS restrictions of a 501 (c) 6. Chambers nationwide have established foundations as a revenue stream to apply grant funding to Chamber programs and enhance the economic impact on their communities.

"It is our hope that the Foundation will be a tool that will impact our business community," said Proctor.

For more information about the Foundation, please contact the Chamber at 910-329-4446.

Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre Coming to Hampstead

The Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism is teaming up with Get-A-Clue Productions, Outback Steakhouse, and Share the Table for a murder mystery dinner theatre on Feb. 8, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. Tickets go on sale today.

"We are pleased to partner with Get-A-Clue Productions which will perform an interactive, original script for our event," said Tammy Proctor, the Chamber's director.

The plot is set in 1975. All ticket holders are participants in the 20-year reunion of the Class of 1955. Poodle skirts are out. Disco is in. The audience is having a groovy time while they enjoy dinner from Outback Steakhouse until someone mentions the mystery of the murdered prom queen. Guests in Flashback to Murder are encouraged to wear their best leisure suits and bell-bottom pantsuits.

Share the Table will host Flashback to Murder at their new facility located at 21 Perkins Dr. in Hampstead.

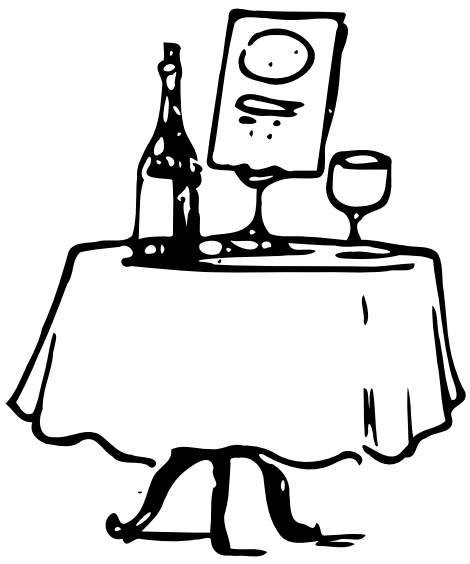
Murder mystery dinner theatre guests are encouraged to bring non-perishable items to restock Share the Table's food pantry. Much-needed items include peanut butter and breakfast cereals.

"We are thrilled Outback Steakhouse is joining us in our first murder mystery dinner theatre," said Proctor. "The Outback staff has been excellent to work with and will prepare a steak, chicken, baked potato, Caesar salad, and bread buffet."

Tickets for the theatre and dinner are $80 per person. Tickets, which are limited to 96 guests, are available online at topsailchamber.org/events. Click on Feb. 8, 2025, on the events calendar to purchase tickets.

"These tickets are limited and we anticipate a sell-out event," added Proctor.

For more information contact the Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism at 910-329-4446.



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WILMINGTON: No. 14 U-Haul Growth Metro of 2024

By Jeff Lockridge

The Wilmington metropolitan area is the 14th leading U-Haul Growth Metro of 2024.

The Greater Wilmington market posted the 14th largest net gain of U-Haul® customers using one-way moving equipment to and from metro areas last year in the U.S.

The Dallas-Fort Worth (Texas) Metroplex tops the growth metro list, followed by Charlotte (N.C), Phoenix (Ariz.), Lakeland (Fla.) and Austin (Texas).

The U-Haul Growth Index is compiled from well over 2.5 million one-way truck, trailer and U-Box® portable moving container transactions that occur annually in the U.S. and Canada. This is the first year that metropolitan areas have been part of the annual growth reports and rankings.

"The entire area around Wilmington is growing," stated Matt McCoy, U-Haul Company of Southern Atlantic Coast president. "They're building a lot of new residential projects: houses, apartments and townhomes. The downtown area is very popular here, with a lot of nice restaurants and hotels catering to residents and visitors alike. There is a lot of appeal to living in North Carolina, and Wilmington offers good weather, southern charm and proximity to beautiful beaches.

"The job market is also bringing more people to this area. There is a rumor that an Amazon® warehouse is going to be built nearby, and they're building a UPS® warehouse north of town that is supposed to employ about 1,000 people."

Florida boasts seven of the top 25 U.S. growth metros, Texas has five and North Carolina has three.

2024 U-Haul Growth Metros

1. Dallas, TX
2. Charlotte, NC
3. Phoenix, AZ
4. Lakeland, FL
5. Austin, TX
6. Nashville, TN
7. Raleigh, NC
8. Palm Bay, FL
9. Houston, TX
10. Greenville, SC
11. Jacksonville, FL
12. Tampa, FL
13. Charleston, SC
14. Wilmington, NC
15. Sarasota, FL
16. Fort Myers, FL
17. Boise, ID
18. Richmond, VA
19. Bend, OR
20. Indianapolis, IN
21. Brownsville & McAllen, TX
22. Tyler, TX
23. Daytona Beach, FL
24. Spokane, WA
25. Springdale, AR

* *The metro areas of McAllen and Brownsville are combined for U-Haul analytic purposes.*

While U-Haul rankings may not correlate directly to population or economic growth, the U-Haul Growth Index is an effective gauge of how well states, metros and cities are attracting and maintaining residents.

U-Haul is the authority on migration trends thanks to its expansive network that blankets all 50 states and 10 Canadian provinces. The geographical coverage from 23,000-plus U-Haul rental locations provides a broad overview of where people are moving like no one else in the industry.

U-Haul continues to benefit the environment through its shared-use business model. Truck and trailer sharing empowers communities to share moving equipment so that families and individuals don't need to own large-capacity vehicles to transfer belongings. Sustainability initiatives like U-Haul Adaptive Reuse (the preserving and repurposing of existing buildings for new stores), truck modifications to improve fuel economy, and plastic Ready-To-Go Boxes® that are shared hundreds of times before being recycled are among the ways U-Haul promotes green business. U-Box Load Share, the Company's latest sustainability program, continues to earn awards for providing ecofriendly solutions to today's gig economy.

About U-HAUL

Founded in 1945, U-Haul is the No. 1 choice of do-it-yourself movers with more than 23,000 rental locations across all 50 states and 10 Canadian provinces. The U-Haul app makes it easy for customers to use U-Haul Truck Share 24/7 to access trucks anytime through the self-dispatch and -return options on their smartphones with our patented Live Verify technology. Our customers' patronage has enabled the U-Haul fleet to grow to 192,000 trucks, 138,700 trailers and 39,500 towing devices. U-Haul is the third largest self-storage operator in North America with 1,024,000 rentable units and 88.5 million square feet of self-storage space at Company-owned and -managed facilities. U-Haul is the top retailer of propane in the U.S. and the largest installer of permanent trailer hitches in the automotive aftermarket industry. Get the U-Haul app from the App Store or Google Play.

NC Coastal Land Trust Completes Fundraising Campaign for South End of Topsail Island

By NC Coastal Land Trust

The North Carolina Coastal Land Trust (Coastal Land Trust) announced that it has reached its goal to raise nearly $8 million to purchase and protect the South End of Topsail Island. More than 760 donors contributed a total of about $1.5 million to the Save the South End campaign. The Coastal Land Trust secured the rest of the funding needed through grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, North Carolina Land and Water Fund, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Over the next three months, the Coastal Land Trust will complete the due diligence associated with purchasing the South End and placing it in permanent conservation protection. Once the purchase is completed this spring, the Coastal Land Trust will own and manage the property for up to one year before ultimately transferring it to the State of North Carolina to be managed by the Division of Coastal Management.

Background

The South End, also known as 'The Point', is a special place. The property features sound-to-sea frontage along the Atlantic Ocean, New Topsail Inlet, and Banks Channel and hosts an expanse of pristine dunes, beach, estuarine wetlands, and maritime shrub forest providing habitat for a diversity of coast-centric wildlife. Loggerhead sea turtles annually make their epic crawl up the beach to lay their eggs, Wilson's Plovers nest among the dunes, and Willets skitter and forage along the intertidal flats. Seabeach amaranth, a rare sand-binding coastal plant, dots the open beach. More than 30 different priority (declining) bird species have been documented there. The South End is unparalleled in coastal conservation values and is currently unprotected from future residential development.

The urgency to conserve this natural treasure led the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust to embark on an ambitious campaign in March of 2024. The Coastal Land Trust negotiated and signed a contract to purchase this property, marking a pivotal step towards its permanent preservation. However, this endeavor came with a daunting challenge – raising nearly $8 million by March 2025 to complete the acquisition.

About the NC Coastal Land Trust

The North Carolina Coastal Land Trust enriches North Carolina through conservation of natural areas and working lands, education, and the promotion of good land stewardship in our coastal communities. Founded in 1992, the Coastal Land Trust has protected more than 91,000 acres of places with scenic, recreational, historic, and/or ecological value. www.CoastalLandTrust.org.

Photo by Gavin Shwahla

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Fatal Dog Attack Tragically Claims Life of Minor

It is with profound sadness that the Onslow County Sheriff's Office reports the death of a minor following a fatal dog attack in Jacksonville last week.

On Friday, November 29, 2024, at 2:54 p.m., deputies responded to a 911 call to Harris Creek Road in Jacksonville regarding a dog attacking a minor.

When deputies arrived, they found an 8-year-old boy suffering from bite marks on the neck. Emergency Medical Services performed life-saving measures on the scene before transferring the child to Naval Medical Center Camp Lejeune. Despite swift actions by first responders, the child succumbed to his injuries shortly after arrival.

Investigators determined the child and a sibling were letting the dogs out of the residence to use the bathroom when the attack occurred. Family members of the victim stated the dogs did not show signs of aggressive behaviors prior to the attack. Neither law enforcement nor Onslow County Animal Control has experienced interactions with the dogs prior to the incident.

The dogs were identified as a Pit Bull/Great Dane mix. Both dogs were secured and have been quarantined by animal control.

"This is an unimaginable tragedy for the family and our community. Our thoughts and prayers are with them during this incredibly difficult time," said Sheriff Chris Thomas.

The case remains an open investigation and additional information will be released as the investigation allows.

We urge residents to remain vigilant and ensure the safety of their families and pets.

For further media inquiries or questions, please contact Public Information Officer Trevor Dunnell at (910) 219-4936, cell (910) 787-4216, or email trevor_dunnell@onslowcountync.gov.

Crime Stoppers offers cash reward of up to $5,000 for information that is deemed of value or assistance to law enforcement. Please call Crime Stoppers at 910-938-3273 or Information can also be anonymously texted via Text-A-Tip by typing TIP4CSJAX and your message to 274637 (CRIMES). Callers to Crime Stoppers may remain anonymous and never have to reveal their identity.

Local Photographer wins PPNC Award for Children's Portrait

Jeff Wenzel, owner and photographer at Above Topsail, has been awarded first place in the Children/Babies Portrait category at the annual Professional Photographers of North Carolina (PPNC) photo competition. Competing against more than 250 entries across various categories, Jeff's winning image is a striking black-and-white portrait of his son, Deacon.

The photograph was originally a test shot in Jeff's studio in Holly Ridge.

I asked my son to stand in my portrait studio and let me take some test shots to ensure my lighting was locked in before the high school senior arrived," Jeff recalled. "I took one picture, looked at the back of my camera, and dismissed my son. It wasn't until I was reviewing the images from the senior's session that I noticed just how good that throwaway test image was. I cropped it, made it black and white, and texted it to my wife."

The response was immediate and heartfelt.

"My heart just melted!" Lindsey replied, confirming to Jeff that he had captured something extraordinary.

Jeff's goal as a photographer and artist is to evoke emotion with every image.

When people see my work, I want them to feel something," he said.

This image, which began as a simple lighting test, has grown into an award-winning portrait that connects deeply with viewers.

Jeff received the award at PPNC's annual award presentation in July. His studio, Above Topsail, located at 301 US HWY 17S, Suite 2, Holly Ridge, NC 28445, offers a range of photography services including high school senior portraits, family sessions, sports portraits, and business headshots, as well as Topsail landscape artwork and custom picture framing.

Gone, Not Forgotten

By Andrew Taylor-Troutman

On my most recent trip to Topsail Island shortly after the new year, my family arrived a day behind my brother-in-law's crew. During supper, I asked my three-year-old nephew about the ocean, knowing that he had stomped out to the beach with his daddy earlier that day. The child stopped chewing. "Ocean is gone." He meant that the sea was not presently in view. He resumed eating, though he seemed a little puzzled that he needed to make such an obvious explanation for his uncle.

We were in town to celebrate my in-laws and their 50th wedding anniversary. They had vacationed at Topsail for nearly as long. Though I've only been in the picture with my wife a comparatively short time, I have noticed plenty of changes. Most recently, Quarter Moon, a beloved bookstore, closed. It is gone.

Time rolls on, and one need not study quantum physics to know that time is not linear. When we are young, it seems the morning trip to the beach was a month ago. You go to school, and math lessons last forever, but recess is less than half a minute. Young lovers gaze into each other's eyes for ages and epochs, while their parents swear that they are only just out of their diapers. A night might last an eternity staring at the ceiling, and a morning is gone with a single cup of coffee.

A 50-year marriage is a testament not only to the passing of time, but the passing of truths and stories, and peace that surpasses all understanding. One might hear of such faith at Emma Anderson Memorial Church.

Something like luck or grace is mixed in with the years, and, whatever you might call it, the concept is more mystifying than even physics, although it is likewise so simple that you sense it right when you experience it.

My nephew reminded me to pay attention to what is right in front of me. What a gift to find delight and wonder in this day before it, too, is gone.

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Join the Spring 2025 Citizens Law Enforcement Academy: A Unique Opportunity to Learn the Inner Workings of Law Enforcement

By Onslow County Sheriff's Office

Are you curious about what goes on behind the scenes in law enforcement? Have you ever wondered about the day-to-day duties of deputies, the operations of a 911 center, or the policies that govern law enforcement agencies?

If so, the Spring 2025 Citizens Law Enforcement Academy is the perfect opportunity for you. The Citizens Academy began in the Fall of 2017 and this Spring will be the 16th academy offered by the Onslow County Sheriff's Office.

When and Where: The Spring 2025 session will run from Feb.11 through April 15 with classes held every Tuesday evening from 6-9 p.m. The academy will take place at multiple locations, including the Onslow County Sheriff's Office, Onslow County Emergency Operations Center, 911 Dispatch Center, and Hines Farm Park.

What to Expect: This 10-week, hands-on academy is designed to provide participants with an in-depth, immersive experience of how law enforcement agencies operate.

Whether you're interested in the law enforcement field, public safety, or simply want to know more about how our community is protected, this is your chance to learn from the experts.

Key Highlights of the Program:

• **Ride-Alongs with On-Duty Deputies**: Step into the shoes of a law enforcement officer as you accompany deputies on their patrols, seeing firsthand the challenges they face.

• **911 Center Tour:** Go behind the scenes at the 911 dispatch center to observe how emergency calls are managed and how first responders are deployed in real-time.

• **Meet Judiciary and District Attorney Officials:** Hear directly from key figures in the justice system, including judges and district attorneys, to gain insight into how cases are prosecuted and what policies guide decision-making in law enforcement.

• **Interactive Presentations and Real-World Insights:** Engage in a variety of presentations that cover detention procedures, jail management, the mission and duties of law enforcement, and much more.

Why You Should Enroll:

• Gain a deeper understanding of law enforcement policies and practices.

• Develop an appreciation for the work and dedication of our first responders.

• Get an inside look at the operation of local law enforcement agencies and the justice system.

• Network with local officials and law enforcement officers.

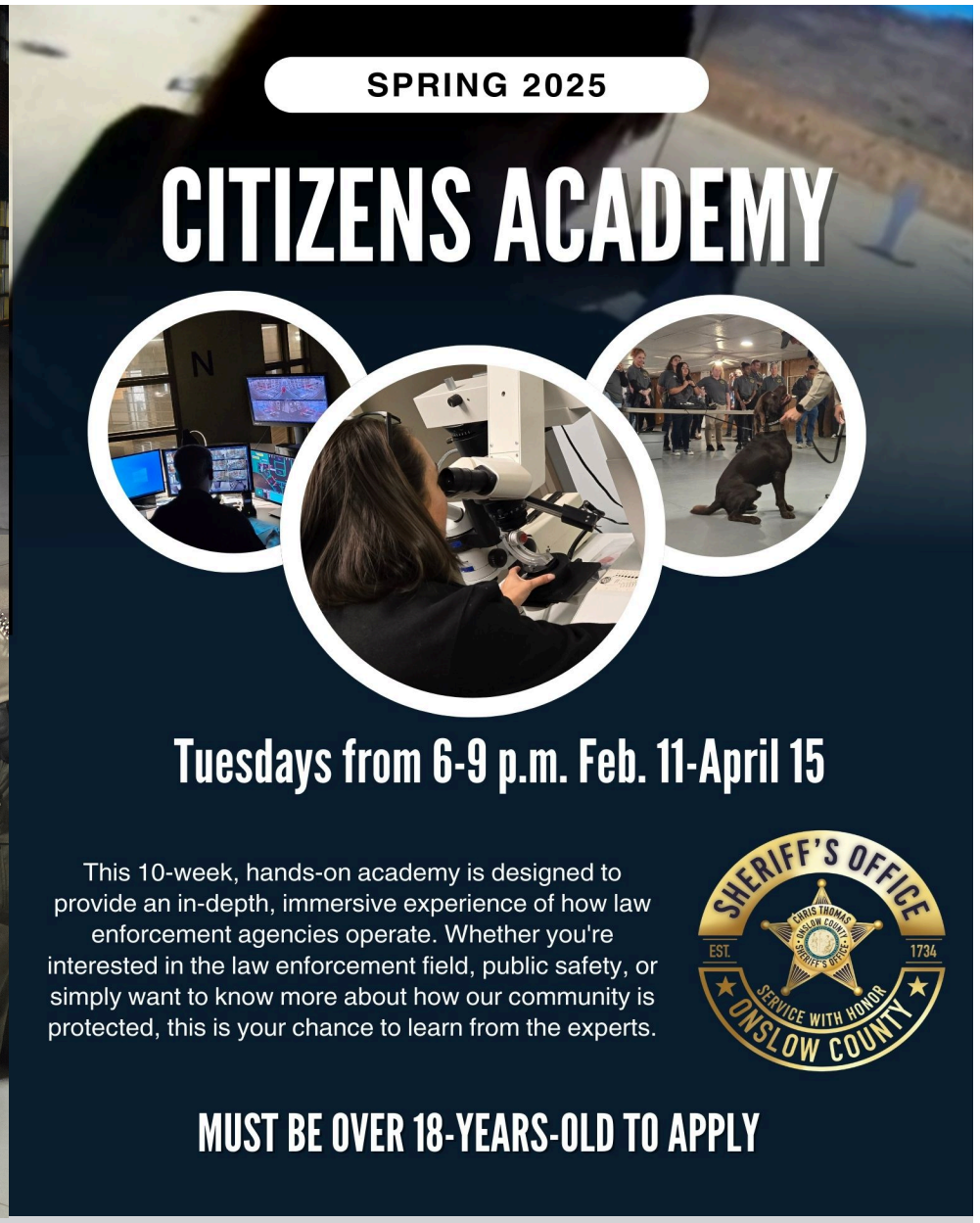
This is your chance to get an up-close and personal look at how law enforcement operates, from policy-making to the daily actions that keep our community safe.

Enrollment is now open! Spaces are limited, so don't wait—sign up today and be a part of this exciting and educational experience. You'll walk away with a greater understanding of the law enforcement world and the vital role it plays in maintaining public safety.

For more information or to register, visit:

https://www.onslowcountync.gov/2219/Citizens-Academies

Further questions should be directed to Capt. Bruce Dixon at (910) 989-4007



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Pender County Library Presents Author Talk on WWII's Deadliest Day for American Forces

Pender County Library welcomes acclaimed local author and military historian Rona Simmons to discuss her latest book "No Average Day" on Thursday, January 23, at 5:00 pm at the Main Library in Burgaw, 103 S. Cowan St. in Burgaw.

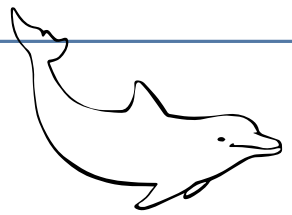
During a single devastating day in the autumn of 1944, more than 2,600 American service members lost their lives in combat zones across the globe—marking the deadliest day for U.S. forces in World War II. Through detailed research and compelling storytelling, Simmons reconstructs this crucial day through the experiences of ordinary soldiers, sailors, and airmen. Experience their gripping stories and learn about the lesser-known events that shaped history!

A recipient of two gold medals from the Military Writers Society of America, Simmons brings personal connection to her work as the daughter of a World War II P-38 fighter pilot.

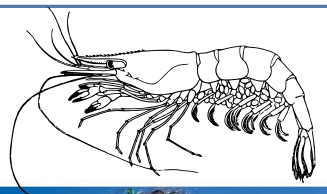
This free program offers community members a unique perspective on an overlooked day in American military history.

For more information, please call 910-259-1234 or visit penderpubliclibrary.org.

Pender County Library



Dolphin Dip & Shrimp Dip
Photos by Amy Fowler Shores



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Guns For Women

Most women purchasing a gun are going to get advice from a man on the type of gun and caliber size they need.
Unfortunately most men suggest guns that are PERFECT FOR A MAN...BUT NOT FOR A WOMAN.
After learning to shoot and getting my purchase permit I headed out into the world of male dominated gun shops. After stopping at a few I found a man who took time to explain each gun to me and he finally convinced me that I needed to carry the gun that he actually owned. The problem was he was a 200 lb body builder and I was not (ha ha). Needless to say I purchased a .40 caliber semi-automatic and bought the ammo and headed to the range.
While all the other women in my group were loading their clips with ease, I was struggling to the point of my thumbs nearly bleeding. When I finally got the gun loaded and ready, Itook my position and began to fire. BAM BAM BAM. The noise was tremendous, the recoil was more than I ever wanted and by the time I was done shooting everyone was staring at me. Though I still hit the target my shoulders were sore and my head hurt.
This was NOT the right gun for me.
Of course my husband did not see my problem. He was gracious enough to take the gun (which I now see is a conspiracy on the part of men) and I continued on my search for the right gun. Unlike most men I know, I was not raised shooting a gun.
I knew very little about them and found that in this case knowledge and comfort were the two most important things I needed to focus on.
Guns scare me and I needed a gun that I could feel safe around, know how to load and unload, and that I could ensure was safe around my children.
These were not things that anyone in a gun shop had ever asked me about and I knew that needed to change.

When a woman comes into my shop the questions I ask are.....
1. Do you have children in the house? (to me anyone under 18 is a child) SAFETY SAFETY SAFETY
2. Is this your first gun? I usually recommend a revolver for a first time gun owner - super easy to load, unload and clean.
3. Do you plan on carrying this gun for personal security? Makes a difference on size, weight and safety features
4. Do you plan on taking this gun out for target practice? (which I strongly recommend so that you become comfortable with the gun)
5. Will anyone else be using this gun (at the range)? Most men don't like shooting pink guns

When a woman comes into my shop these are questions that THEY ask me about handguns....
1. How do I open the gun to put in the bullets? The revolver is the easiest of the handguns to load and unload. In the case of a semi-automatic pistol, some guns required you to load the clip and then ratchet the gun back to put one bullet in the chamber. Not all pistols require ratcheting. Make sure if you buy a semi-automatic pistol that you CLEARLY UNDERSTAND from the seller how to load the gun correctly. Guns should come with an instruction manual that should also have instructions. Do not be embarrassed to ask!!!! This is going to be your line of defense and you need to know how to use it.
2. What if the bullet jams? Revolvers do not jam. In the case of a semi-automatic pistol it is possible to have a bullet jam due to inferior ammunition; the gun needing to be cleaned or a weak or stiff clip spring. Jams do happen in semi-automatic pistols and you MUST know how to clear the jam safely. Ask your seller and read the instruction manual.
3. How do I know the gun is loaded? In the case of a revolver, you slide open the cylinder and can easily see if the gun is loaded. Some semi-automatic pistols have "load" indicators such as a colored dot. ALWAYS PRESUME THAT A GUN IS LOADED. When looking at a pistol always remove the clip and ratchet back the slide to view inside the gun to make sure it is empty. Do not look down the barrel or pull the trigger to check. All it takes is one bullet!
4. My husband said that I need a .40 or .45 caliber gun because anything smaller won't stop someone. More people are killed by a .22 cal. bullet then any other round. The purpose of a gun is to PREVENT harm, not to cause it. It is more important that you are able to load the gun and can control it. I recommend a .38 special or 9 mm for woman. If they want a larger caliber I always suggest that they shoot one first before making that their first gun. Some gun shops offer an indoor or outdoor range where you can rent a gun, which is an excellent way to try different types of handguns.
5. My husband said I should have a gun with a laser...is that true? Lasers are very popular and definitely make a gun "cool" looking but I always tell people to know how to aim their gun correctly first, and not to depend on the red dot. On a bright sunny day the dot may not be visible.
6. How much should I spend on my first gun? Depending on the brand and style of gun you choose, your gun could cost anywhere from $250 and up. Most guns come with a basic warranty (if purchased new). We sell handguns that can cost up to $1500 but we don't recommend anything like that for a first time buyer. We sell a nice selection of revolvers for $300 and up. There is nothing wrong with a used gun for a first time owner as long as it has been inspected by an authorized gun dealer. Don't be afraid to ask friends and family for recommendations, it is an easy conversation starter!
7. If I lock up the gun and need it in a hurry, what do I do? Practice locking and unlocking your gun. Whether it is a cable lock through the gun itself or a trigger lock, make sure you know where the keys are and how it works. We do not recommend storing guns loaded. If you have a gun for personal protection leave a clip loaded but out of the gun (and out of the reach of children). My husband always teases me that if I ever needed my gun in a hurry I would be better off hitting the intruder with the gun box then trying to remove all the safety features. My response is that I have children in the house and that takes priority over everything else.
8. How do I clean the gun? How often? A clean gun is a gun that is going to serve you well. It takes very little time to clean a gun that has been fired and worth every minute. The instruction manual and/or gun dealer can show you how to properly clean and care for your gun. All inclusive kits are available for around $15.00
9. What difference does the barrel length make? A great bit of difference. The longer the barrel the more accurate the gun. Most conceal and carry guns are short barreled and made for easy storage on your body. Some people have a gun for carrying and a gun for target shooting. There are quite a few guns designed to do both, just let your seller know what you want your gun for. We sell a short barreled .380 that is perfect for self protection but not a gun I would take to the range.
10. How can I carry my gun? Check with your local gun laws. Every state is different. In North Carolina, you need a Conceal & Carry permit to carry the gun on your body (out of plain sight). We sell several purses with holsters built right into them (since most women would be unable to find a gun in a hurry if they simply dropped their gun into their purse (ha ha). There are holsters designed for wearing on your hip, concealing inside your pants and ankle holsters. We sell a t-shirt where the holster is sewn onto the fabric and can be worn under another shirt (for both men and women). How you carry your gun is just as personal as what kind of gun you have.
11. What is an ambidextrous clip release? It is a button on semi-automatic pistols that allows the user to release the clip from either side of the gun (preferred by left handed shooters). Not all guns come with this feature.
12. What if I already own a gun but I don't like it? Depending on your local gun laws and local gun dealers you may be able to trade your gun in for one that is right for you. Always check around since the value of a gun varies GREATLY from one gun dealer to another. Our shop offers consignment (most shops do not). Be cautious of the neighbor that "will take it off your hands". That is usually a good indicator that the gun is worth more than they are offering. Don't be afraid to call around or look your gun up in the "Blue Book" for reasonable values. Be careful of using web sites to determine the value since in most cases the price listed is "asking price" and not what the gun sold for. Check your local laws before selling your gun to a private citizen.
13. Someone gave me a gun. How do I register it? Check your local laws since State Laws vary. North Carolina does not have a gun registration so therefore you are entitled to own the gun. If you are going to transport the gun across state lines CHECK WITH EACH STATE you will be traveling in first. If you have a Conceal & Carry permit for your state check and see what other states allow you to carry your gun in their states.
14. Other than a gun, what do you recommend for personal protection? With the introduction of tasers, people now (depending on your state's laws) have the ability to have a home protection device that can give them time to stop the intruder and get help. Tasers are usually designed to "shoot" a pronged device up to 15 feet - an electrical charge is applied and the person usually drops to the ground for 5 seconds - giving you the ability to defend yourself without direct contact. A background check is required when a taser is purchased to active it. Most tasers cost over $250.00 and re-fill cartridges can be $30 or more.
15. What do I need to buy a gun? Handguns and long guns can now be purchased in NC with a background check done on site for NC residents.

Linguine with White Clam Sauce

1 (12 ounce) package linguine pasta
1/4 cup olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced
3 (8 ounce) cans minced clams, with juice
3/4 cup chopped parsley
2 tablespoons white wine
1 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 teaspoon salt

Ingredients

Steps

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Cook linguine at a boil until tender yet firm to the bite, about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add garlic; cook and stir until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in liquid from clams, parsley, white wine, basil, and salt; simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in clams until heated through. Add cooked linguine pasta; toss to combine and serve warm.

Word Search: Frozen

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The Word Bank

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Sauna
Snowman
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Castle
Kristoff
Anna
Ice
Arendelle
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Olaf
Songs
Gloves
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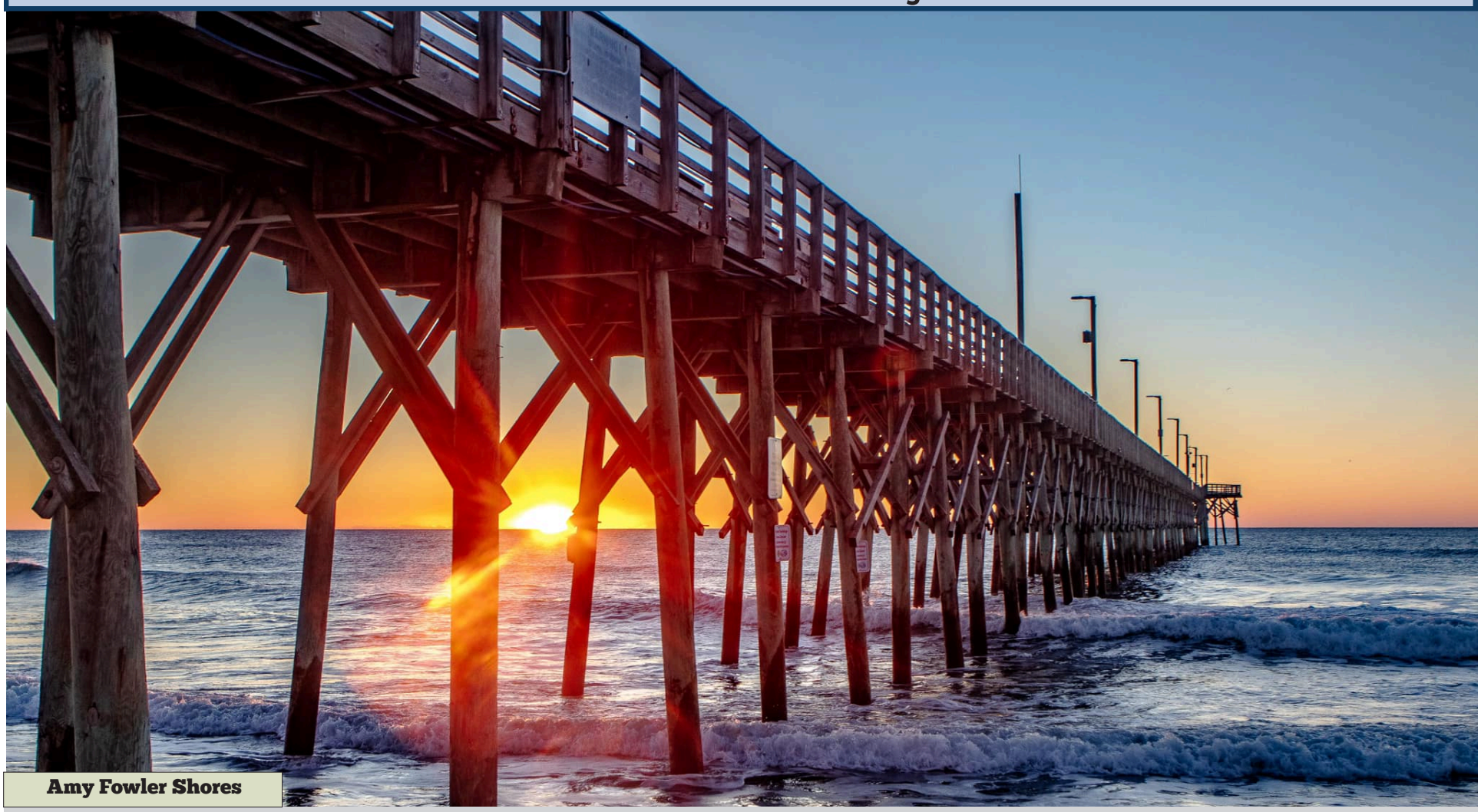

Amy Fowler Shores

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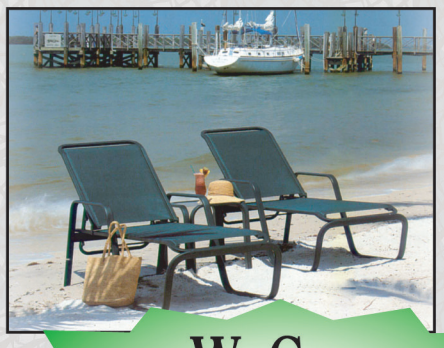

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