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JULY 3RD
6:00 PM

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WILMINGTON

JULY 4TH
7:30 PM

SYMPHONY POPS CONCERT

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10 COWAN ST, WILMINGTON, NC 28401

JULY 4TH
9:00 PM

FIREWORKS SHOW X 2

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3:00-9:00 PM

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and more!



Topsail Gun Gal

By Dorothy Royal

On the mainland side of the Surf City Bridge resides a traffic circle. Over the last few years, it is not uncommon to see the traffic and directional signs within the circle crushed, damaged or missing from non-observant drivers. Unfortunately, D.O.T. must have mistaken their new traffic observation camera apparatus as something too large to damage, but they were wrong. High tech and solar panel powered, the camera became the last victim of car vs. traffic circle. Sorry D.O.T. but I think it's time we admit defeat and celebrate by adding a ramp and a flaming circle for those late-night drivers who consider the traffic circle a challenge.

Rip Currents are a frightening and familiar occurrence along the coast, but recently a new study came out with a different course of action to take if you are ever trapped in one. The standard practice was to swim ACROSS the rip current, finding calmer water and a way back to shore, but now that has been updated to focus on one simple word: FLOAT. The new idea helps prevent the panicked swimmer from over struggling which may lead to drowning. The terrifying idea of being dragged out to the depths of the sea causes humans to go into full fight mode, but now people are saying that it makes more sense to conserve all your energy and simply float, allowing the current to pull you along and release you back into calmer waters. A simple fix for this is for swimmers to wear a floatation device, even in shallow waters. Life jackets, rafts, floats and boards (kick boards and surf boards) may prevent a tragedy. A Rip Current can affect water knee-deep and are visible in some cases to the trained eye. Side with caution and wear a floatation device when enjoying the ocean.

The State of Virginia is getting ready to impose some outrageously strict firearm regulations starting July 1st of this year. Several law enforcement agencies across the state have vocalized that they will not be enforcing some of these rules and lawsuits are piling into the courts from individuals and groups to put a stop to them or at least limit their reach.

Here we are about to celebrate 250 years of freedom and Virginia is going backwards.

What about another assault on the cost of living? Duke Energy reported a 2 Billion dollar (yes with a B) profit last year and are asking for an increase of 15% in the rate they can charge us to increase their profits for their shareholders! What happened to the commission responsible for regulating what they CAN charge? Maybe that board is made up of Duke Power shareholders. Disgusting all around.

A great quote I saw the other day was "How did the government acquire the earth and why do we have to pay to live here?" That is the absolute truth – we should not be taxed and fee'd to death just to survive. The older I get the more waste and abuse I see from local governments on up. Maybe we need to take our 250th anniversary and re-organize the corruption we call government. Why do we have to pay property taxes every year for the same property, whether it is a home or a vehicle? I paid taxes when I bought it- that should be the end of the conversation.

The State of Florida is heading toward reducing or removing real estate property taxes all together from a person's primary residence. Known as the homestead exemption, starting in 2027, a person would no longer pay taxes on $150,000 of their home value with the amount increasing to $250,000 in 2028. The plan is to work toward complete removal of all non-school property tax on a person's primary home. The measure will be on the ballot in November for Florida voters.

An odd trend I am noticing lately in TV shows and movies is the return of people smoking. It sounds odd, but when you add that with great music it feels like the 1980s are making a comeback. Think kids will start making ashtrays again as gifts for their parents? Probably not, but let's all agree to keep that good music flowing!

Remember knowledge is power, our great country is only 250 years old so we still have a lot of work to do, and protecting and demanding our FREEDOM is the responsibility of all Americans. Happy Birthday USA!

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Coastal Common Sense

By Kim McGahey

Last year, the Topsail Beach Board of Commissioners, in its tax and spend infinite wisdom, voted to spend an $8.5 million grant windfall on a new unnecessary town government building. A large group of local residents has questioned that shortsighted decision.

The locals first suggested that the $8.5million be applied to a property tax reduction for all Topsail Beach residents. In light of upcoming increases in countywide property values and property taxes, this approach made the most fiscal sense. An across the board tax reduction would have placated conservative local residents facing the coming property tax re-valuation and would have demonstrated the Commissioners' commitment to fiscal responsibility.

However, the Board summarily rejected that proposal without much debate and instead opted to use the windfall to expand Town facilities. Locals subsequently questioned the need for the expansion, which, like most government projects, started at $8.5 million, quickly rose to $12 million and will likely reach $15 million upon completion.

Were the existing Town offices overflowing? Were there desks in the halls manned by overcrowded employees? Were the current facilities inadequate for the Town to satisfactorily serve the public and conduct its business? Was there a pressing need from police and fire departments directly related to public safety? Was this planned expansion researched thoroughly with adequate public input? The answers to all these thoughtful questions were no.

But the Commissioners adopted a "damn the torpedoes" attitude and lightly skipped over the legitimate need for a new Town building, going straight to design and build options. Taxpayers never voted thumbs up or down on the actual need for this government monstrosity.

New Commissioners came on board last November and in an effort not to upset the apple cart, they missed a golden opportunity to terminate this wasteful project and instead silently acquiesced. Therefore, in the minds of the incumbent Commissioners this bridge to nowhere was a fait accompli.

However, local taxpayers, outraged by this backroom boondoggle, were not deterred and presented another viable alternative to spending the $8.5 million. Their vision was to create an attractive cultural, recreational, historical, retail commercial center on this prime piece of Main Street real estate.

A Town Center would benefit locals and tourists alike as the highest and best use for the property.

The Town Center would include an outdoor amphitheater music/arts venue with seating for 500 people, an interactive historic park next to the existing historic Assembly Building, and a commercial Main Street development featuring low-profile, two-story, cottage-style architecture for retail shops, restaurants and galleries. Unfortunately, the Commissioners barely blinked an eye as they ignored this exciting futuristic vision.

Topsail Beach has the most scenic oceanfront setting in North Carolina and possibly the entire Southeast. We have avoided the terrible ugly development that has plagued Surf City, Myrtle Beach, the Outer Banks and Virginia Beach. We have what the rest of the world desires. A small investment now in a musical, historical, commercial park could make Topsail Beach the most desirable destination venue for classical, jazz, bluegrass and all music. We could become the Aspen Music Institute of the Southeast coast. "We heard them play at Topsail" would become world famous.

Even though some Commissioners inherited this unsightly and unnecessary building, it is never too late to do the right thing by terminating this 1964 East Berlin looking government edifice. We have a rare opportunity to either build an ugly municipal eyesore that will permanently scar our town, or instead create a wonderful one-of-a-kind oceanfront Town Center that locals and guests will love, admire, and use for generations.



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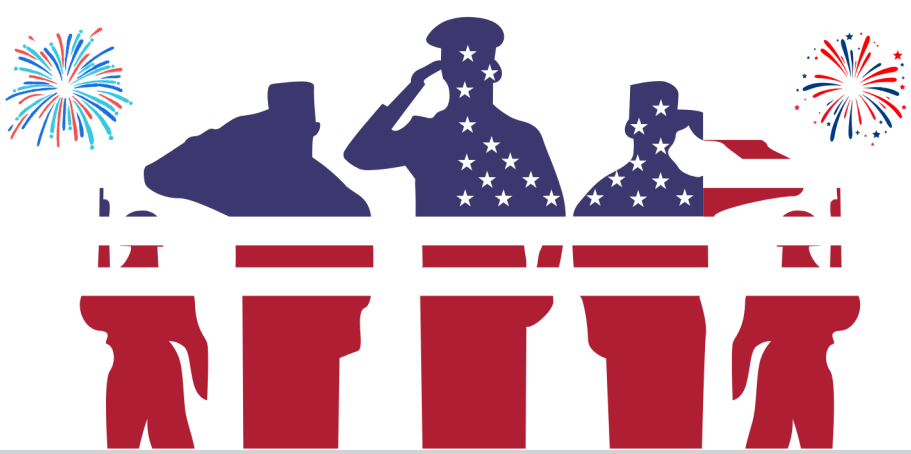

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CFCC to Expand Class Offerings for In-Demand Skilled Trades

Cape Fear Community College is expanding class offerings in high-demand technical programs for the fall semester. New offerings will include daytime and evening options, spanning several areas of study, including Criminal Justice, Electrical Systems, Plumbing, HVAC, Mechatronics, and Business Administration.

"We are committed to providing students with flexible pathways to education and career training," said Jim Morton, CFCC President. "Expanding these course offerings provides more opportunities for students to pursue their educational goals in a way that fits their schedules and needs."

New offerings beginning this fall will be offered in person at CFCC's North Campus, the Burgaw Campus and the Alston Burke Surf City Campus. New offerings include:

North Campus:

Electrical Systems Technology Certificate Program

o ELC112: DC/AC Electricity - Offered at 5:30 PM - 8:10 PM on Tuesday and Thursday

o ELC113: Residential Wiring - Offered at 5:30 PM - 8:10 PM on Monday and Wednesday

Plumbing Certificate and Diploma

o PLU110: Modern Plumbing - 7:30 AM - 10:15 AM on Tuesday, 7:30 AM - 10:25 AM on Wednesday and Thursday

Burgaw Campus:

Air Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration Technology (HVAC) Certificate Program

o AHR110: Intro to Refrigeration - Offered at 9:00 AM - 10:50 AM on Monday, Wednesday and Friday

Mechatronics Engineering Technology Certificate Program

o ATR112: Introduction to Automation - Offered 9:00 AM - 9:20 AM, 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM on Monday and Wednesday

o ATR280: Robotic Fundamentals - Offered 9:00 AM – 9:20 AM, 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM on Tuesday and Thursday

Surf City Campus:

Criminal Justice Technology Certificate and Associate's Degree

o CJC111: Introduction to Criminal Justice - Offered at 1:00 PM - 2:15 PM on Tuesday

Plumbing Certificate and Diploma

o PLU110: Modern Plumbing - Offered at 5:00 PM - 8:20 PM on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

Air Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration Technology (HVAC) Certificate Program

o AHR110: Intro to Refrigeration - Offered at 6:00 PM - 9:40 PM on Tuesday and Thursday

o AHR111: HVACR - Offered at 6:00 PM - 8:15 PM on Monday

Mechatronics Engineering Technology Certificate Program

o HYD110: Hydraulics/Pneumatics I - Offered at 5:30 PM - 7:15 PM on Monday and Wednesday

o ELC131: Circuit Analysis I - Offered at 5:30 PM - 6:45 PM on Tuesday and Thursday

Business Administration Pathway Certificate Program

o ACC120: Principles of Financial Accounting - Offered at 6:00 PM - 7:50 PM on Monday

o BUS110: Introduction to Business - Offered at 6:00 PM - 7:50 PM on Wednesday

Registration for fall classes is now open. For more information on these programs and to apply, visit cfcc.edu/.

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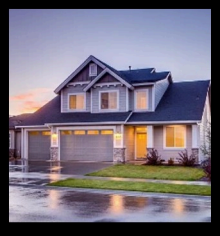


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– D. R. Royal

Holly Ridge Family Keeps Farm Small by Choice While Welcoming Topsail-Area Campers

By James Warner Smith

When Patrick and Brittany Brown looked at the 7-acre Holly Ridge property that would become Live Oaks Farm, they could see more than open ground.

They saw room for chickens, goats and ducks. They saw space for flowers, pumpkins, Christmas trees and family projects. They saw old live oaks, a pond, a place for their children to grow up outdoors — and, eventually, a small way to welcome visitors without losing the quiet character of the land.

At one point, the Browns were told the property could probably fit 25 or 30 camper sites. They chose three.

That decision says a lot about what Live Oaks Farm is trying to be. Located near the Topsail and Surf City area, the farm is not a traditional campground and does not try to be one. Instead, it offers a handful of low-key camping spots for visitors who want to stay close to the coast while experiencing a quieter, more personal side of the area.

For the Browns, overnight stays are one piece of a larger picture. The family also keeps chickens and other animals, sells eggs, grows seasonal flowers, plans fall activities, and continues to shape the land into a working family farm. Camping is not about packing the property with as many visitors as possible. It is about creating one more thoughtful revenue stream that helps the farm remain active, cared for and productive.

That kind of balance is becoming more familiar in coastal communities, where small farms and family properties often face pressure from rising land values, development and changing visitor demand. Around Topsail, Holly Ridge, Hampstead and Sneads Ferry, tourism is a major part of local life, but not every visitor is looking for a condo, hotel room or large RV park. Some are looking for a quiet patch of land, a fire pit, a sky full of stars and a place where their children can see animals or wake up under old trees. Live Oaks Farm gives them that option.

Guests book the farm's campsites through Hipcamp, the world's No. 1 app for finding and booking campsites. But the experience itself is distinctly local. Campers are not just passing through a generic outdoor space. They are staying on a family farm shaped by the Browns' own work, plans and restraint.

The setting is part of the appeal. The farm sits beneath mature live oaks and includes a pond, willow trees, azaleas, chickens, Nigerian dwarf goats and ducks. Depending on the season, visitors may see signs of the family's pumpkin patch, Christmas trees or flower-growing plans. Patrick also has a wood workshop on the property, adding to the sense that this is a lived-in, working place rather than a purpose-built resort.

For many families visiting the Topsail area, that is exactly the point. A small farm stay can offer the best of both worlds: close enough to enjoy the beach, restaurants and coastal attractions, but far enough away to slow down at the end of the day.

The Browns' approach also reflects a wider shift in how some landowners think about agritourism. Rather than adding large-scale attractions or converting land into dense lodging, families are finding smaller ways to invite guests in. A few campsites, a farm tour, seasonal flowers, eggs, pumpkins or animals can help make a property more financially resilient while keeping its original character intact. At Live Oaks Farm, the scale is intentional.

Three campsites mean the family can maintain privacy, protect the feel of the farm and offer guests a more relaxed experience. It also means the Browns can continue developing the property in a way that fits their family, rather than turning it into something unrecognizable.

That may be what makes the story resonate locally. The farm is not trying to become the biggest or busiest place to stay near Topsail. It is trying to remain itself.

As more visitors discover the mainland communities around Topsail Island, small places like Live Oaks Farm show another side of coastal tourism: one rooted in family land, working farms and thoughtful limits.

For Patrick and Brittany Brown, the goal is simple. Keep building the farm. Keep caring for the land. Welcome a small number of guests at a time. And let the property help support itself without losing what made it special in the first place.













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Topsail Gun Gal II

By Dorothy Royal

Happy 250th anniversary to the United States of America! I remember the 200th anniversary when my mother dressed me up like Betsy Ross and we went to Boston to celebrate. Family trips were cooler back then.

Do you think all those years ago that I could ever have imagined that for the 250th Anniversary, states like New York and California would be trying to restrict a private citizen from certain shapes? Yes, shapes. Let me explain. Out of fear, that is not substantiated by any facts, the states of New York and California are doing their best to pass laws that would take effect in 2029 to restrict what shapes a person would be allowed to print with a 3-D printer. Yes, you heard that right. The two states are currently hiring panels of "experts" to devise a way to restrict the use of a 3-D printer in a person's home, regarding what shapes they can print. Now granted, their goal is to keep "ghost guns" out of the hands of criminals, and we all can agree that is a good thing to do, but the fact is this is one more step in a complete invasion of privacy that our Constitution was put in place to protect against. Remember the young child who had a Kellogg's Pop-tart at school and a teacher thought it resembled the "shape" of a gun and he got in a lot of trouble? That should have been a great big red flag to all American's that our freedoms are seeping away.

The A.T.F. learned that they are not allowed to make laws when the Texas federal court, with the assistance of the Trump Administration, vacated any regulations that considered a handgun with a stabilizing brace as a short barreled rifle (a class 3 weapon). The Texas federal court also dismissed A.T.F.'s classification of Forced Reset Triggers as being machine guns. The US Supreme Court struck down the ban on bump stocks, which originated in a Texas court, when the A.T.F. tried to classify them as machine guns. Who has the authority to make new gun laws? Congress - not the A.T.F.

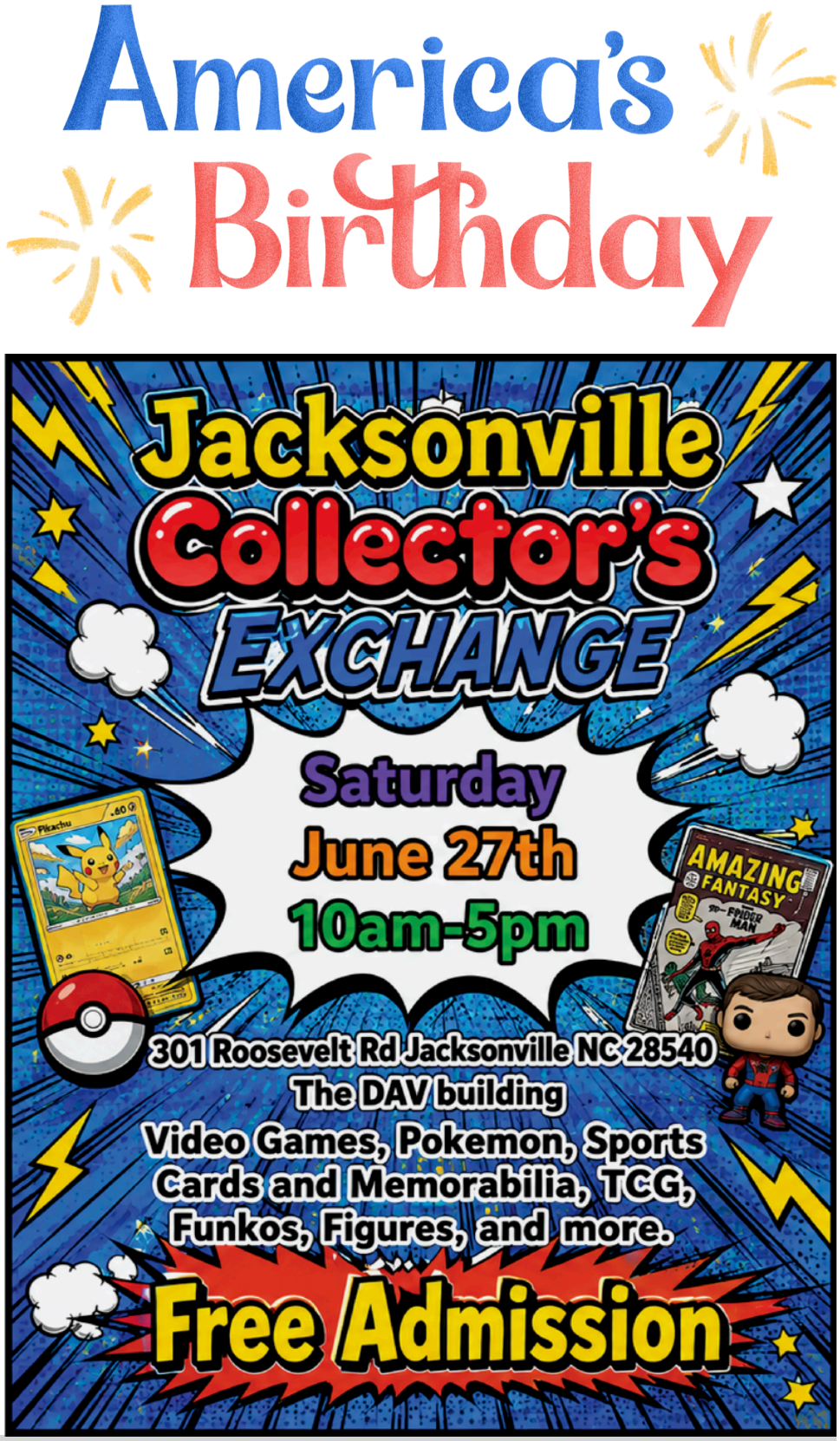
The City of Jacksonville, N.C. is in the process of researching the annexation of a large amount of real estate, currently owned by the Federal Government, that is being used for military housing and services. The property owner, which would remain the US Government, would not pay taxes on the property and the focus of the annexation would be to offer more services to the area and to allow Jacksonville to be able to use the large number of residents in requests for grants and government funding.

Area property owners, who are not part of the annexation, are concerned that the City of Jacksonville will continue to pursue their properties as well. At this time there should be no concern for that, but it's worth talking about. The Mayor of the Town of Holly Ridge came out vocally in opposition to the annexation, which is ironic since the town recently voted to annex an additional 1200 plus acres (that involves 2 counties) into the Town against heavy opposition from residents. Holly Ridge council members shared concerns about the E.T.J. of the Jacksonville annexation, fearing that it would impact Holly Ridge. Perhaps they don't understand that annexed property does not create E.T.J. (extra territorial jurisdiction). An E.T.J. is only based on true city limits. What is an E.T.J.? Simple, it is a small section of land that surrounds the true city limits where the owners of the land have no rights, such as voting, pay no taxes and receive no services (police or fire) from the city, but are governed by ZONING. Services are provided by the county. Several communities across the country are dissolving E.T.J.s since they don't serve a real purpose anymore other than government overreach.

During these hot summer months, there is one word that stands out above the rest, shade, Shade can mean life or death to people, animals and vegetation. Water shortages are becoming more and more commonplace, and with the clearing of thousands of acres of land, we are losing our shade. A physical change in temperature can be felt when going from full sun to shade. It is common to see an old farmhouse surrounded by trees among acres of crops. Common sense - and we are losing it. Trees were created by nature to cool the earth, to stabilize the soils, to house and feed the birds and insects. Humans have forgotten their importance and think replacing a 100 year old oak with a sapling does the trick. They are wrong. The more we build, the more we destroy, the worse our quality of life will get.

Duke Energy is asking the Department of Energy to allow them to "exceed" the limits of energy production due to massive demand. Rolling blackouts are the alternative or perhaps they should be expected as a hot summer is here to stay. What better time to cut off the electricity we all depend on for our daily lives then at the same time you are asking for a huge increase in costs to the consumer. Scare tactics are known to work.....I'm just guessing - I could be wrong.

Remember knowledge is power, celebrate the 250th anniversary by reading the Constitution of the United States (and the Bill of Rights while you are at it) and remember FREEDOM takes work, from all of us.



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Deputies Arrest Two Following Child Drug Exposure

The Onslow County Sheriff's Office Special Victims Unit has arrested two individuals following an investigation into methamphetamine exposure involving two juvenile children.

On April 13, 2026, detectives initiated an investigation after receiving referrals from Onslow County Social Services concerning two juvenile victims reportedly exposed to methamphetamine.

During the investigation, detectives determined the juveniles were residing in an environment contaminated with methamphetamine residue with their parents. The investigation was reviewed with the Onslow County District Attorney's Office, and the following individuals were charged.

On May 19, 2026, Hayley Nicole Germain, 28, of Jacksonville, was arrested and charged with:

• Two counts of Felony Exposing a Child to a Controlled Substance

With assistance from the Pender County Sheriff's Office, Germain was arrested and transported to the Onslow County Detention Center and received no bond.

On May 20, 2026, Larry Lee Joiner, 39, of Jacksonville, who was already being held in the Onslow County Detention Center on unrelated charges, was additionally charged with:

• Two counts of Felony Exposing a Child to a Controlled Substance

Joiner also received no bond.

Both individuals received first appearance dates in Onslow County District Court and remain in the Onslow County Detention Center.





Deputies Investigating Fatal House Fire in Midway Park

Detectives with the Onslow County Sheriff's Office investigated a fatal house fire that occurred in the Midway Park area.

On Monday, June 8, 2026, at approximately 4:36 a.m., Onslow County Emergency Services received a 911 call regarding a fire at 6 Savage Court. When first responders arrived, the structure was fully engulfed. Firefighters quickly brought the fire under control and conducted a primary search of the home.

Upon entering the home, firefighters discovered Douglas Alan Hill, 79, deceased inside the home.

The cause of the fire has not been determined at this time. There were no other people in the home at the time of the fire.

The Onslow County Sheriff's Office has assumed the lead role in the death investigation. The Sheriff's Office will be assisted by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation and the North Carolina Office of State Fire Marshal as to the cause and origin of the fire.

Responding agencies include Piney Green Volunteer Fire Department, Pumpkin Center Volunteer Fire Department, Hubert Volunteer Fire Department, Camp Lejeune Fire & Emergency Services, Bear Creek Fire Department, Onslow County EMS, Onslow County Fire Rescue, the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, and North Carolina Office of State Fire Marshal.

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Coastal Common Sense II

By Kim McGahey

In my opinion, a newspaper publisher in Burgaw is breaking his arm patting himself on the back as the last bastion of truth in Pender County political reporting. But just like most other self-righteous liberals, he suffers from a psychological disorder called Projection. As such, he accuses you of what he is guilty of.

In the recent verbal volleyball, he accused local conservative activists of controlling the Pender County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and the Pender County Republican Party (GOP) Executive Committee. In reality, local conservative activists have zero control over elected officials or the Pender GOP. The conservatives only expose facts of public record, in search of the truth, which unfortunately may incriminate the publisher's fellow liberal friends.

First, let's examine the publisher's credentials. A retired minister abandoned the ministry after an extra-marital affair forced him to move to Pender County. Seeing the red political majority here, he immediately aligned himself with lifelong Democrats who changed their party affiliation to Republican to seek public office and infiltrate the Pender GOP. This allowed him to use his newspaper platform to constantly disparage conservative elected officials and activists.

Once established as the only local newspaper in Pender County, he used his monopoly to secure a cushy, non-competitive six-figure annual deal with the Pender County government to provide all the legal notices for the county. It seems that lucrative deal was never put out to bid or subjected to annual competitive review until the current BOCC discovered his taxpayer-funded gravy train and subsequently transferred the public notice function to the more expansive and economical coverage of the Wilmington Star News. Anyone can now view these legal ads for FREE on the StarNews website.

Thus, the publisher could no longer subsidize his meager subscriber income with this large government gratuity. He became a very bitter opponent of the BOCC and used his newspaper as a whipping post against conservative commissioners and activists who had succeeded in exposing his taxpayer-funded sweetheart deal. You can understand why his reporting as a disgruntled liberal should be taken with a grain of salt.

His bogus accusations that local conservative activists control the BOCC and Pender GOP can be disproven by the results of the recent Republican primary where the behind-the-times, good old boy, status quo RINO Republicans won county offices and the Pender GOP leadership. If conservatives controlled the BOCC and the GOP, their slate of candidates would have cleaned house and no corrupt RINOs would hold elected office.

As it was, the publisher's constant yellow journalism coupled with suspicious election interference, prevented forward-thinking, problem-solving patriotic conservatives from prevailing.

Now, with the recent exposure of one commissioner's questionable $1.85 million income from taxpayer-funded grants to his non-profits, and another commissioner's family members earning six-figure combined incomes on the county-endorsed EMS payroll, serious allegations arise: Why are these two former Democrat County Commissioners being personally enriched with taxpayer funds?

Meanwhile, the publisher sits silently by, conducting no investigative journalism into his two crony commissioners profiting at the public trough. He barks about always seeking the truth and protecting the public's right to know as the watchman on the wall. Yet he conveniently looks the other way when his sleazy liberal friends and progressive allies get caught with their hands in the taxpayer cookie jar. Rules for thee, but not for me, says he.

250 years ago when our freedoms were secured, the Founding Fathers warned against small-town tyrants stealing from the public vault. Beware a disgruntled reporter and shady commissioners as they team up to pull the wool over taxpayer eyes. They will look you in the eyes and tell you what you want to hear, and then stab you in the back to enhance their own personal power and wealth. As responsible citizens, we must demand the immediate resignation of the two at the trough.

Swansboro and Holly Ridge Fire Departments Introduce the Shelby Program

By Holly Ridge Fire Department Facebook

In a collaborative effort with the Swansboro Fire Department protecting our community means caring for both our two-legged and four-legged family members.

The Shelby Program was created to provide emergency veterinary assistance for animals rescued during fires and other emergency incidents. When pets survive a crisis, they often need immediate medical care. This fund helps ensure those life-saving treatments are available when they are needed most.

We were just recently provided the opportunity to offer this program to a citizen of Holly Ridge.

The Shelby Program is 100% donation-based, and every contribution goes toward helping animals affected by emergency situations.

If you would like to support this important cause, donations can be made online through the Town of Swansboro website by selecting “Donations” and choosing “Emergency Vet Fund,” or by mailing a check payable to Swansboro Town Hall.

https://swansboro-nc.org/#/city/payments/miscellaneous



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'New World Screwworm' Parasite Affecting Livestock, Wildlife and Pets

By The Sound Cat Veterinary Hospital, Facebook
Wilmington, NC

You may have seen recent news reports about the New World screwworm, a parasite that has recently been detected in parts of the southern United States. While this parasite can affect livestock, wildlife, pets, and, in rare cases, people, there is currently no reason for pet owners to panic.

New World screwworm is the larval stage of a fly that lays eggs in open wounds or body openings. The larvae feed on living tissue, which can lead to serious infections if left untreated.

The good news is that there are several steps pet owners can take to help reduce risk. Certain veterinarian-recommended parasite prevention medications may provide an added layer of protection against the New World screwworm for pets. While no preventive product can guarantee protection against New World screwworm, parasite control, along with prompt attention to wounds and skin issues, are among the best ways to help protect your pet.

We recommend regularly checking your pet for wounds, skin irritation, or signs of discomfort, especially if they spend time outdoors. If you notice a wound on your pet, please contact us immediately.

This serves as a good reminder of the importance of routine wellness exams, especially during the summer months when your pet is spending more time outside. If you notice anything unusual or have concerns about your pet's health, don't hesitate to bring them in for a check-up. When in doubt, our team is here to help.

50th Anniversary of Surfside Sportswear and Gifts in Surf City

By Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce



On June 9th, we celebrated the Fussel Family at Surfside Sportswear & Gifts. It's their 50th Anniversary of doing business in Surf City at their original location.

Peggy Fussel and other local business owners gathered around her kitchen table more than 44 years ago to establish a Chamber of Commerce. We're here because of the forethought of business leaders like the Fussell Family.

Congratulations, Surfside Sportswear & Gifts!





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Legal Doesn't Mean Safe: What You Should Know About Hemp-Derived THC Products

By Cara Vitadamo
PMHNP-BC, CARN-AP

Walk into a gas station, vape shop or convenience store in Hampstead, Surf City, Holly Ridge or many other communities across Eastern North Carolina, and you will likely see products containing Delta-8, Delta-9 or Delta-10 THC.

They are sold as gummies, drinks, vape cartridges, chocolates and other products. Many are marketed as legal, natural alternatives to marijuana. Because they are sold openly and are easy to purchase, many people assume they are safe.

Over the past several years, I have noticed growing confusion among patients, families and community members about hemp-derived THC products and the risks associated with them. Many people are surprised to learn that these products can have significant effects on both mental and physical health.

As a psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner who works in both mental health and addiction treatment, I believe consumers deserve accurate information so they can make informed decisions.

The first thing to understand is what THC actually is.

THC, short for tetrahydrocannabinol, is the primary psychoactive substance found in cannabis. It is the chemical responsible for the "high" associated with marijuana. THC affects areas of the brain involved in mood, memory, attention, judgment, coordination and reward.

Most people have heard of Delta-9 THC, which is the primary form found in marijuana. Delta-8 and Delta-10 are chemically similar compounds that can also produce intoxication and impairment. While they are often advertised as milder alternatives, they still affect the brain and body.

Many consumers are surprised to learn that these products became widely available because of a loophole created by the 2018 Farm Bill. The law legalized hemp products containing less than 0.3% Delta-9 THC by dry weight. Manufacturers found ways to convert hemp-derived CBD into other psychoactive forms of THC and sell them legally in many states.

As a result, products capable of producing a high are now sold in places where consumers may not expect to find intoxicating substances.

Another concern is the lack of oversight.

Unlike prescription medications, hemp-derived THC products are not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for safety or effectiveness. Independent testing has found that some products contain different amounts of THC than listed on the label. Some products have also been found to contain contaminants, including pesticides, heavy metals and chemical byproducts from manufacturing.

One of the most common things I hear is, "It's legal, so it can't be that bad."

The reality is more complicated.

THC affects the brain's reward pathways and can lead to tolerance and dependence. Over time, some individuals need increasing amounts to achieve the same effects. When they stop using, they may experience withdrawal symptoms such as irritability, anxiety, sleep problems, restlessness and decreased appetite.

Many people also use THC products to help with stress, anxiety or sleep. While some individuals report short-term relief, research suggests regular THC use may worsen anxiety, depression and mood instability in some people over time.

The mental health risks are particularly important to understand.

THC can contribute to paranoia, hallucinations and psychotic symptoms in vulnerable individuals. In recent years, health care providers have reported cases of severe psychiatric reactions following the use of Delta-8 products, including episodes that required hospitalization.

Research also suggests that cannabis-induced psychosis may increase the risk of developing long-term psychiatric disorders in some individuals.

Young people face even greater risks.

The human brain continues developing into the mid-20s. Areas responsible for judgment, impulse control and decision-making are among the last to mature. THC exposure during adolescence has been associated with problems involving attention, memory, learning and academic performance. Regular use during this critical period may have lasting effects on brain development.

Another common misconception is that cannabis products are an effective treatment for ADHD.

Although some people report that THC helps them feel calmer, current research does not show meaningful improvement in attention or executive functioning. In some cases, THC may actually worsen concentration, memory and motivation.

The risks are not limited to mental health.

THC can increase heart rate, raise blood pressure and place additional stress on the cardiovascular system. Research has linked cannabis use with an increased risk of heart attack and stroke, particularly during the hours immediately following use. THC can also interact with certain medications, including sedatives, blood thinners and some psychiatric medications.

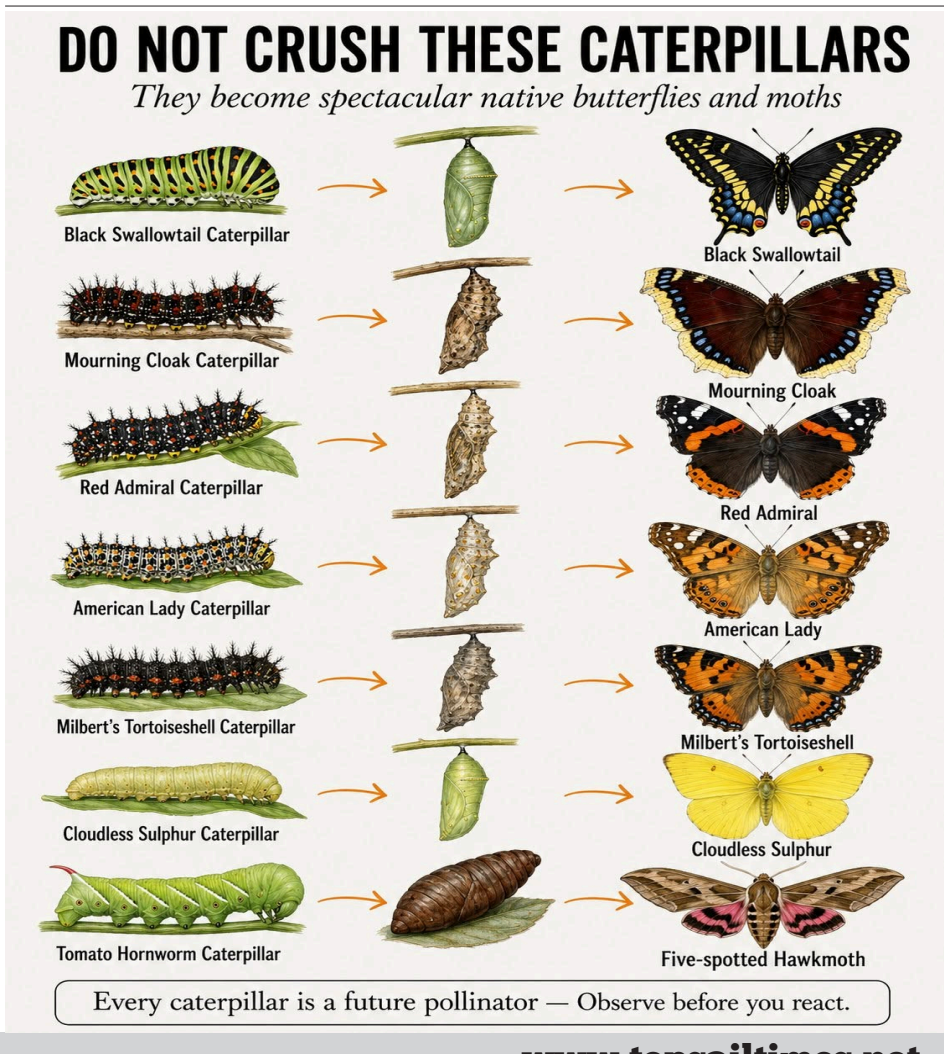
The goal of this article is not to tell adults what choices they should make. Rather, it is to encourage informed decision-making.

As a mental health and addiction provider, I believe people deserve honest information about products that can affect the brain and body. Hemp-derived THC products are often marketed as safe, natural and legal. The reality is that they can carry risks that many consumers do not fully understand.

As access continues to expand, education becomes increasingly important. Consumers deserve to know what these products are, how they work and what potential risks they carry before deciding whether to use them.

Legal availability may make these products easier to obtain, but it does not make them harmless.

Cara Vitadamo, PMHNP-BC, CARN-AP, is a psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner and addiction specialist who lives and works in Eastern North Carolina.



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ALL ABC PERMITS

Small Acts, Big Impact for Local Students

By Kevin Borton

Through quiet dedication and community support, the LAMB Foundation is helping local students with intellectual disabilities thrive—one classroom at a time.

In the Topsail area, community isn't just a word, it's a way of life. It shows up in small gestures, familiar faces and neighbors who step in without being asked. And sometimes, it shows up in bright yellow aprons and a simple treat handed out with a smile.

That's where the story of the LAMB Foundation of North Carolina begins. Locally, they're supported by the Knights of Columbus Council #12281 in Hampstead.

You may have seen these Knights of Columbus volunteers outside local shops or at community events, offering Tootsie Roll candy and a friendly hello. It's a small exchange, but one that has helped fuel something much bigger.

For more than two decades, this group of volunteers has quietly worked behind the scenes to support students with intellectual disabilities across Pender and Onslow counties. Through fundraising efforts that range from yard sales, Father/Daughter dances to golf outings and donation drives, they've helped provide more than $336,000 in grants to local classrooms over the years. However, it would not be possible without the many business owners from our area whose provide donations, gifts, and storefronts.

The Topsail Area is known for its long uncrowded beaches, pirates' lore, vibrant sea turtle and sea bird conservation, its military pride, WWII history, and southern hospitality. It contains quaint shops, locally owned restaurants, and its quiet family communities.

It's also rich in community service; neighbors helping neighbors. The Knights embroil much of the Topsail Area atmosphere. The Knights of Columbus Council #12281 belonging to All Saints Catholic Church on US Highway 17 in Hampstead focus on four active foundations; Charity, Unity, Fraternity, and Patriotism.

The impact of those dollars is anything but small and one-hundred percent of the donations goes to this cause.

In classrooms across the area, teachers are using these funds to create more inclusive, hands-on learning environments. They're building spaces where every student has the opportunity to succeed in ways that work for them. From sensory tools and communication aids to interactive books and life-skills programs, the resources funded by LAMB grants are tailored to meet student's needs.

For some, that means strengthening fine motor skills with tactile tools like magnetic letters, lacing cards or sand trays. For others, it means building confidence through real-world experiences like cooking in a classroom kitchen or participating in outdoor activities, such as surfing and horseback riding.





"These trips are truly empowering for our students," says Jennifer Dinkins, EC Adaptive Teacher at Topsail Middle School. "What starts as nervousness often turns into confidence, pride and a sense of accomplishment that stays with them long after the day ends."

Sonya Burgess, EC Adaptive Teacher at Topsail Middle School Elementary, sees that same transformation. "Students experience success, feel proud of themselves and see that challenges can turn into accomplishments," she says. "It allows others to see their abilities rather than their disabilities."

Inside the classroom, those moments of growth continue in quieter, but equally meaningful ways.

"I'm honored to share that receiving the LAMB Foundation grant has been one of the most transformative supports I've experienced in my teaching career," says Jamie Rodenberger, EC Resource Teacher at Meadow View Elementary School, pointing to gains in both academic progress and emotional development.

At Dixon Elementary, speech-language pathologist Diane Tomlinson has seen how even small tools can make a lasting difference. "Interactive books that use visual and tactile cues have helped my students build vocabulary, practice sequencing and strengthen communication skills," she says. "These resources make learning both effective and enjoyable, and they wouldn't be possible without this support."

Mia Murphy SLP, Speech Language Pathologist at Topsail High School who also holds cooking classes states "Our goal is to empower students with the confidence and skills to prepare simple meals—an important foundation for independence and readiness for everyday life."

That sense of growth extends beyond lesson plans and classrooms. Parents see new sides of their children. Students discover abilities they didn't know they had. Confidence builds in ways that carry into everyday life.

At the heart of it all is a simple mission: to support individuals with intellectual disabilities, regardless of background, faith, or ideology and to strengthen the community as a whole.

"It's our mission and responsibility to help those in need," says Kevin Borton, LAMB Director for Council #12281. "Our area is more than a vacation destination. It's a community made up of real people, and the work we do can make a lasting difference. But the real heroes are our area teachers, local businesses that support our cause, and brave unyielding students and parents."

Like many community-driven efforts, the need continues to grow. In 2025 alone, twenty-eight local teachers submitted more than $26,000 in grant requests, each one designed to support specific student needs for the upcoming school year. Thanks to generous donations, the group was able to fund $15,000. However, the goal moving forward is simple: Say yes to every request.

In a place like Topsail, that goal feels less like a challenge and more like a shared promise. Neighbors look out for one another, classrooms nurture students and community members show up, one small act at a time.

A COMMUNITY EFFORT

The LAMB Foundation's work is made possible by local volunteers, families, and businesses who believe in supporting every student's potential.

Those interested in learning more, making a donation, becoming a sponsor, or getting involved can contact:

Kevin Borton, Local LAMB Director – Council #12281
Email: LD12281@LAMBNC.ORG
Website: https://www.lambnc.org/
Next Charity Event is a Father / Daughter Dance on June 20, 20206 at the Hampstead Women's Club and a Golf Outing on October 5, 2026 at Castle Bay Golf Club

Every contribution—whether time, resources or support—helps create more opportunities for students to grow, connect and succeed.

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Rouzer, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Pass BUILD America 250 Act

By Caroline French
Rouzer Team Press

Congressman David Rouzer (R-NC-07), Chairman of the Highways and Transit Subcommittee of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, joined the Committee in supporting passage of a bipartisan, five-year surface transportation reauthorization. The bill makes historic investments in America's roads, bridges, transit systems, rail transportation, and highway and motor carrier safety programs.

The *Building Unrivaled Infrastructure and Long-term Development for America's 250th (BUILD America 250) Act* prioritizes moving people, goods, and freight safely and efficiently across the country. The bill focuses on proven infrastructure programs, provides the largest-ever investment in our bridges, improves transit safety, and ensures projects and programs are more efficient.

The bill also helps improve the long-term stability of the Highway Trust Fund by ensuring all road users contribute to the maintenance and improvement of our roads. This is the first new revenue stream for the Highway Trust Fund in over three decades.

"America's economic engine depends on infrastructure built to be safe, reliable, and capable of keeping the country moving," said Congressman Rouzer. **"The BUILD America 250 Act responsibly invests in strengthening our roads, highways, and bridges, reflecting collaboration among Congress, job creators, and our communities. I am proud to have helped shape this bipartisan bill, and thank Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen for their leadership. I look forward to continuing to advance these lasting infrastructure improvements benefiting our communities all across North Carolina and the entire country."**

North Carolina has experienced rapid growth, and our infrastructure must keep pace. The following North Carolina-specific provisions are included in the *BUILD America 250 Act*:

Empowering State Autonomy: North Carolina will receive more than $7.7 billion in highway apportionments for the state's 23,554 miles of Federal-Aid highways and 5,801 miles of National Highway System. The bill improves the formula-based approach, with 90 percent of highway funding directed to states to address their unique infrastructure needs.

Supporting North Carolina's Economy: Allows agricultural vehicles to operate on interstates at North Carolina's state weight limits, helping move goods more efficiently across the state and improving public safety.

Developing Future Interstates: Establishes two future interstate corridors in North Carolina, expanding and improving the state's federal highway network.

Accelerating Project Delivery: Cuts red tape by streamlining environmental reviews and improving the permitting process to move projects forward faster and at lower cost.

Investing in Bridges: Increases funding to repair and modernize North Carolina's more than 19,343 bridges. This bill provides the state with more than $185 million annually for bridge rehabilitation projects.

Strengthening the Highway Trust Fund: Preserves the user-fee principle while establishing the first new revenue stream for the Highway Trust Fund in more than 30 years through fees on electric vehicles (EVs) and plug-in hybrids.

Boosting Transit Security and Efficiency: Supports North Carolina's 96 transit agencies by strengthening incentives to enforce fare evasion laws and directing funding toward safety and security measures protecting passengers and taxpayer dollars.

Promoting Amtrak Accountability: Incorporates Rep. Rouzer's *Amtrak Executive Bonus Disclosure Act (H.R.192),* creating transparency and accountability for Amtrak by requiring reports on the use of federal funds and on how executive bonuses are determined.

Background

To craft the *BUILD America 250 Act*, the Committee spent the last 18 months holding numerous hearings, including several chaired by Congressman Rouzer. The Committee also solicited input, ideas, and priorities for consideration from all Members of the House and job creators across the nation – over 11,000 individual policy requests were submitted.

The Committee urges swift action by the House and Senate to get this legislation to the President's desk, as current program authorization expires September 30, 2026.



Local Author Named Finalist in International Books That Make an Impact

Cathy Mails, owner of Sea Green Natural Cleaning, has earned international recognition as a finalist in the International Impact Book Award for her book, The Detox Dwelling, a practical guide to nontoxic cleaning and healthier living.

The International Impact Book Award is a global community dedicated to recognizing excellence in storytelling and elevating authors whose words create real impact.

"The International Impact Award is such an honor," said Mails. "It's an award where meaningful books are recognized, celebrated and positioned for the world to see."

This achievement reinforces the value of the information Mails shares in The Detox Dwelling.

In an announcement, the International Impact Book Award stated that judges select 20 finalists from among thousands of submissions, making the recognition a significant achievement.

"This year's submissions were nothing short of extraordinary," the organization stated. "Through every page, we encountered stories filled with wisdom, hope, resilience, awareness, healing and inspiration. It was a powerful reminder that books are more than stories — they are opportunities to learn, grow, reflect and connect with one another."

"It was my desire to make a healthy, environmental impact with The Detox Dwelling," said Mails. "It's a practical guide to nontoxic cleaning for healthier homes and greener living, and it resonates with readers."

The Detox Dwelling is available on Amazon and at the Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism office.



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CFCC Launches Innovative Live House Project to Build Workforce Skills

Cape Fear Community College is launching an exciting new Live House Project that will give students hands-on experience building residential homes from the ground up. In Fall 2026, CFCC students will begin construction on the first home as a part of a multi-semester project designed to mirror real-world residential construction timelines and industry standards. The college plans to build two to three homes at a time through this initiative.

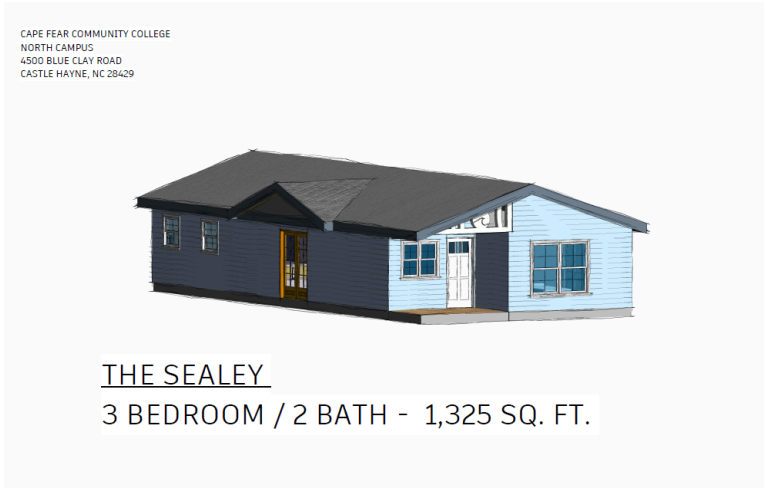
The first home will be constructed at CFCC's North Campus over four academic semesters – Fall 2026, Spring 2027, Summer 2027, and Fall 2027. The home will feature 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms and total 1,325 square feet. It will be built to withstand winds up to 130 miles per hour. Upon completion, the home will be publicly auctioned.

"This project creates an unmatched learning environment for our students," said Jim Morton, CFCC President. "Students will gain real-world experience working together across multiple disciplines while contributing to a project that directly serves our community."

The Live House Project will involve students and faculty from numerous CFCC programs, including:

Air Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Technology
Architectural Technology
AutoCAD & CAD Software
Carpentry
Construction Management
Electrical Apprenticeship
Electrical Systems Technology
Interior Design
Land Surveying (Geomatics)
Landscaping and Gardening
Mechanical Engineering Technology
Welding Technology

To learn more about the Live House Project, as well as opportunities for community members, businesses, and industry partners to support the project, visit cfcc.edu/foundation/live-house-project/.





Memorandum from the Department of Important Infrastructure and Metropolitan Sovereignty

RE: The Surf City "Stop-and-Go" Carousel Experiments

It has come to our attention at the City of Shallotte that our coastal neighbors to the north in the Town of Surf City have engineered a traffic management solution so profoundly bureaucratic, so beautifully counterintuitive, that we are forced to pause our own busy schedule of doing absolutely nothing to applaud it.

According to official dispatches, the brilliant minds at the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and Surf City have implemented a historic, ground-breaking pilot program: putting a stoplight inside a roundabout.

Yes, you read that correctly. The entire civil engineering purpose of a roundabout—a continuous-flow system designed specifically to eliminate the need for traffic lights—has been upgraded. Motorists crossing the bridge onto the island will now be forced to come to a complete, agonizing halt at a temporary red light before they are permitted to enter the circle that was built so they wouldn't have to stop.

Here at the City of Shallotte, we recognize peak administrative genius when we see it. Why let traffic flow naturally when you can micromanage it into a state of pristine, gridlocked paralysis? It's like installing a screen door on a submarine, or a suggestion box at our own town hall—spectacularly useless, yet highly official.

A Masterclass in Congestion

To ensure maximum efficiency, Surf City is also deploying plastic barricades to block pedestrians from crossing, forcing actual humans to follow a labyrinth of "signed detour routes" just to look at the ocean. NCDOT officials claim they will "analyze the effectiveness" of this temporary signal over the coming weeks to see if making people wait at a light to enter a circle is a viable long-term solution for human happiness.

We are watching closely. In fact, our Department of Importance is already drafting plans to install a series of speed bumps inside our local car washes and a toll booth at the entrance of our drive-thrus to mirror this bold, forward-thinking strategy.

How True Professionals Handle the Heat

While Surf City plays with temporary toys and multi-week "feasibility studies," we prefer to remind everyone how real, sovereign municipalities handle the summer influx without ruining the entire concept of European road design.

Down in Ocean Isle, they don't need an algorithm or a temporary solar-powered light tree to figure out how circles work. When the peak tourist season hits and the bridge starts backing up, they simply deploy the local police department. A real, live officer stands directly in the heat, using aggressive hand gestures and sheer willpower to wave locals through while giving sunburned tourists the classic "wait your turn" stare. It's elegant. It's personal. It involves zero digital intervention.

But please, Surf City, continue with your automated roundabout-halting experiment. We encourage all drivers to "slow down, pay close attention to the signal," and contemplate the existential dread of stopping at a red light so you can legally enter a yield sign.



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Coastal Common Sense III

By Kim McGahey

The Future Facists of America (FFA), a non-governmental organization sponsored by George Soros affiliates, the Democratic National Committee and the Pender County Democrat Party, recently gave out its annual civic awards to local recipients.

The Holier Than Thou Award goes to Andy Pettigrew, publisher of the Pender Post and Voice, whose self-righteous propaganda against local conservative office holders has given him a small, but deeply disturbed group of misinformed followers. His broad influence is felt in every election. Andy is recovering from shoulder injuries sustained from patting himself on the back this past year and we wish him well.

The Give Away The Farm Award goes to the Topsail Beach Town Council for insisting on ensuring that their lovely, quiet beach community is no longer an exclusive, scenic outpost on the Eastern Carolina coast. 1964 East Berlin architecture for sprawling new government buildings and wide open accessibility to the hordes from over the bridge have created a commonplace atmosphere quite contrary to the cottage exclusivity that used to embody this diamond on the shore. Thankfully, now everyone can dump their trash on the beach and poach local private beach house showers.

The Forest Through The Trees Award goes to the Pender County Board of Education for their attachment to the way we were and refusal to accept the way we want to be. Their keen ability to avoid planning for the County's expanding future by maintaining adherence to the unpopulated past has slowed the influx of families looking for excellent schools. We applaud the Board's effort at population control by accepting low test scores, lack of discipline and overcrowded classrooms.

The International Influencer Award goes to Holly Ridge Mayor Pete for his creative efforts to introduce Middle Eastern culture to Eastern Carolina. He brings a refreshing view of Sharia law to the rural backdrop of Onslow County and has helped normalize intimidation and top down civic management in an otherwise laid back coastal town.

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Award, otherwise known as Didn't Earn It (DEI), goes to the Pender County Republican Party for its sustained efforts to transform the Party into a guilty body that endorses wife beaters, pornographers and homosexuals. These attributes truly reflect the morals and values of Pender County residents and makes us all feel more like helpless victims. Finally, the Pender GOP is open to everyone.

The Old And In The Way Award goes to Pender Republican Party Chairman Emeritus Carolyn Justice, affectionately known by party insiders as Carolyn Pelosi, for her ability to perennially manipulate weak-minded voters after 60 years at the public trough. Her exemplary influence as a former State Representative has kept her browbeating tactics alive and well in the local GOP where puppets are plentiful.

These well deserved awards to influential local groups and individuals testify to the 'blueberry vs beach' entitlement mentality that pervades our area. Why embrace any future changes in one of America's fastest growing counties when everything has worked so well in the past? This is the way it's always been and this is the way it's always going to be. As forests fall and traffic jams lengthen along Highway 17, it's reassuring to know that our local leaders have the situation under control.

Share your opinion pieces with us at: topsailtimesnewspaper@gmail.com

SBI Arrests Former Corrections Lieutenant

The North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) was requested by North Carolina Department of Adult Correction personnel at the Pender Correctional Institution on March 10, 2026, to investigate allegations of impropriety by one of its staff members.

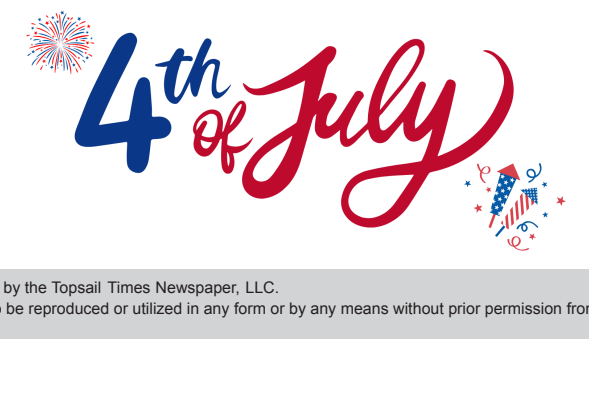
Following a thorough investigation, SBI agents charged former Lt. Rannie Lee Boney with:

-- 1 felony count of obtaining property by false pretense

-- 1 felony count of embezzlement by a public official

-- 1 felony count of uttering a forged instrument

Boney turned herself in this morning at the New Hanover County Courthouse and received a $20,000 unsecured bond. She has a first appearance on Thursday morning at 9 AM at the Pender County Courthouse. No additional information is available.





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Seven-Layer Taco Dip



1 (16 ounce) can refried beans
1 (1 ounce) package taco seasoning mix
1 (16 ounce) container sour cream
1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened
1 (16 ounce) jar salsa
1 large tomato, chopped
1 medium green bell pepper, chopped
1 bunch chopped green onions
1 small head iceberg lettuce, shredded
2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese
1 (6 ounce) can sliced black olives, drained

Step 1:
Gather all ingredients.
Step 2:
Blend refried beans and taco seasoning in a medium bowl; spread mixture onto a large serving platter.
Step 3:
Mix sour cream and cream cheese in a medium bowl; spread over refried beans.
Step 4:
Top with salsa. Layer tomato, bell pepper, green onions, and lettuce over top.
Step 5:
Sprinkle over Cheddar cheese and garnish with black olives.
Step 6:
Serve and enjoy!



Word Search: Independence Day

D	J	L	P	A	R	A	D	E	S	M	I	A	E
U	R	E	N	I	T	R	W	I	E	S	M	D	R
N	J	S	I	U	O	P	Y	R	O	L	G	E	E
O	A	T	A	Y	F	J	C	R	N	R	D	C	S
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L	R	R	T	O	I	R	T	A	P	A	F	P	T
C	E	F	F	N	I	C	C	T	E	D	U	E	R
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D	A	A	P	M	I	N	U	T	E	M	E	N	O
M	S	K	R	O	W	E	R	I	F	S	S	I	F



Redcoats
Declaration
Freedom
Parades
Minutemen
Patriot
Fireworks
American
John Adams
Britain
Fourth July
Glory
Independence

Opening of the Carolina Museum of the Marine in Jacksonville

By Jacksonville North Carolina Government

Congratulations Carolina Museum of the Marine on your first day open to the Public! Images are from an early morning gathering, June 8, for Museum Plank Holders, and an event held Friday, June 5 in the atrium of the museum.















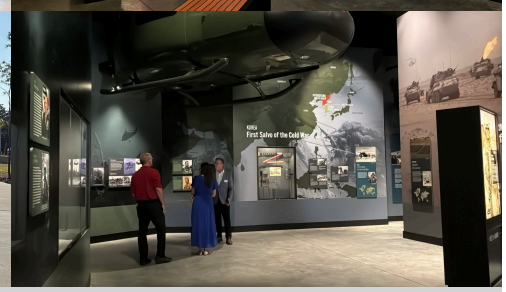

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Guns for Women

By Dorothy Royal | Surf City Guns & Ammo, Holly Ridge, NC | surfcityguns.com

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, I took 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 the 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 require 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 women. 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 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 activate 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? Check with local laws. Handguns and long guns can now be purchased in NC with a background check done on site for NC residents.

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