

County Quarterly

The story of North Carolina counties



**We Did One More
Thing — NCACC
President Johnnie
Carswell’s One More
Thing Initiative**

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President's Perspective




I could not have been more thrilled to welcome county officials from across the state to our 117th NCACC Annual Conference. Tropical Storm Debby didn't stop us from getting the county family together for our annual gathering and sharing special time together. I am thankful to Forsyth County for their wonderful hospitality. As I reflect on my year as NCACC President, the Annual Conference was a perfect culmination of the year. Between the sessions that touched on the most pressing issues we're facing, the special programming focused on my presidential initiative highlighting the good work counties are

doing to save lives from opioid overdoses, and the time spent connecting with longtime friends, I was reminded of what makes this Association so special.

As I hand over the gavel to our new president, I am so proud of the work we did this year and how we continue to prioritize empowering all 100 counties for the betterment of our state. I have complete faith that this work will continue in the year ahead and for many more after that. I am looking forward to continuing to be a county champion and promoting ways our counties can be thoughtful and strategic with their opioid settlement funds. I am more hopeful than I have ever been that, together, we can all do one more thing to help save lives.

With gratitude,


Johnnie Carswell

NCACC 107th President and Burke County Commissioner



I am so humbled by the celebration held in Forsyth County at the NCACC Annual Conference where I was appointed as your next NCACC president. I cannot thank Past President Carswell enough for the mentorship and support he has given me as I prepared to step into this role. I am so thankful to the membership of this Association for the confidence and trust placed in me as I begin my year as president.

This Association is such an important voice in our state and valuable resource for our counties. I plan to continue to support the great work the Association is doing to help make sure counties have what they need to carry out the business on behalf of the people we serve. I am very committed to making sure that our counties are recognized for the exemplary public service they provide and the public workers they employ. My presidential initiative, Heroic Hands: Celebrating Public Service, will highlight the important public service work of county employees and will endeavor to ensure this vital employment sector remains strong and sustainable. I have heard from so many of you about the crucial staffing needs many of our public sector jobs are facing, and we must make sure that we are doing everything we can to create a sustainable workforce. We also should remember to thank the longtime public workers who have carried out this work. I remain committed to recognizing our public service employees and will be encouraging all of us around the state to do the same.

I am excited about the year ahead and look forward to visiting many of our counties to personally thank them for the work that they do.

Let's have some fun this year!



Tare "T." Davis
NCACC 108th President and Warren County Commissioner



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JOHNNIE CARSWELL'S
ONE MORE THING
INITIATIVE

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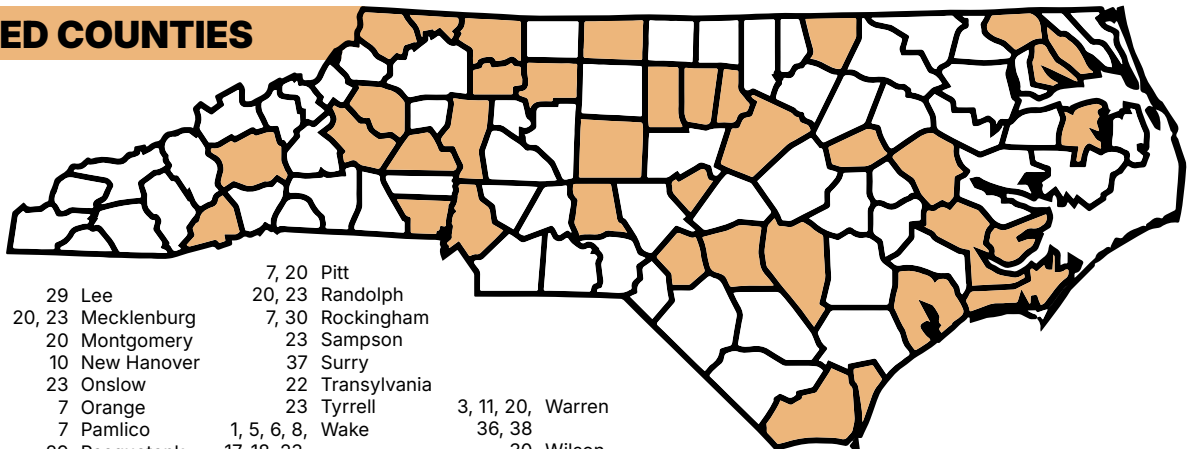
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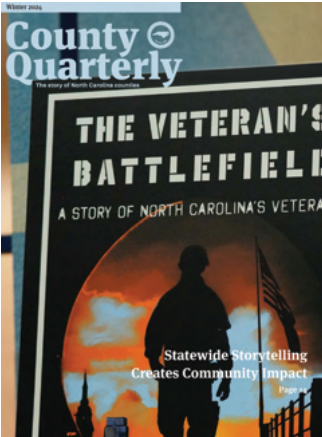
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County Quarterly

The story of North Carolina counties

CountyQuarterly (CQ) is distributed winter, spring, summer and fall to county commissioners, managers and clerks, and legislators, as well as others interested in the county story. The magazine seeks to bring the county story to life with a focus on the leaders who make county government tick, innovative programs that improve services to citizens and county history.

Thinking you missed our Summer 2024 issue? You didn't!

In order to get CountyQuarterly out to you, our readers, at the right time, we decided to rename this issue to be Fall 2024. Don't worry, the content didn't change, just the issue title. In this issue, we are highlighting our 117th Annual Conference host county, executive officers and amazing attendees!

Hurricane Helene Response and Recovery

This issue of CountyQuarterly was finalized prior to Hurricane Helene making landfall. We understand how deeply Hurricane Helene has affected our counties, and we truly appreciate your understanding and flexibility as we work to support our affected counties during this challenging time. Thank you for everything you do for our counties and the Association. If you have any recovery questions, need help from the Association or have resources to share, please email helenercovery@ncacc.org. For more resources, visit the Hurricane Helene Resources page at www.ncacc.org/helene.

For information on subscribing and advertising, go to www.ncacc.org/countyquarterly.



NCACC Upcoming Events

Operation Green Light for Veterans

Nov. 4-11, 2024 • Nationwide

Once again this Veterans Day, the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) invite the nation's 3,069 counties, parishes, and boroughs to join Operation Green Light and show support for veterans by lighting our buildings green. Visit www.naco.org/program/operation-green-light-veterans to learn more about Operation Green Light.

Legislative Goals Conference

Nov. 14-15, 2024 • Wake County

Before each legislative biennium, NCACC convenes a Legislative Goals Conference for North Carolina counties to come together to participate in voting sessions to finalize legislative goals, which guide NCACC's advocacy efforts. Visit www.ncacc.org/events/legislative-goals-conference-2024 to register.

Essentials of County Government

Jan. 16-17, 2025 • Craven County

Jan. 23-25, 2025 • Forsyth County

Feb. 19-20, 2025 • Buncombe County

The UNC-Chapel Hill School of Government (UNC SOG) and NCACC have partnered to offer newly elected county commissioners a crash course on the essentials of county government. Visit www.sog.unc.edu/courses/essentials-county-government to register.

NC Summit on Reducing Overdose

March 18-20, 2025 • Wake County

NCACC is excited to announce an event that will bring together local government leaders, subject matter experts, service providers, community partners and people with lived experience working to respond to the opioid overdose epidemic. Visit www.ncacc.org/events/2025-nc-summit-on-reducing-overdose to register.

Stay up to date on NCACC events by visiting www.ncacc.org/events or subscribing to the Weekly Update at www.ncacc.org/weekly.

THE NCACC AND 100 STRONG PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS:

100 STRONG PRODUCTIONS STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL

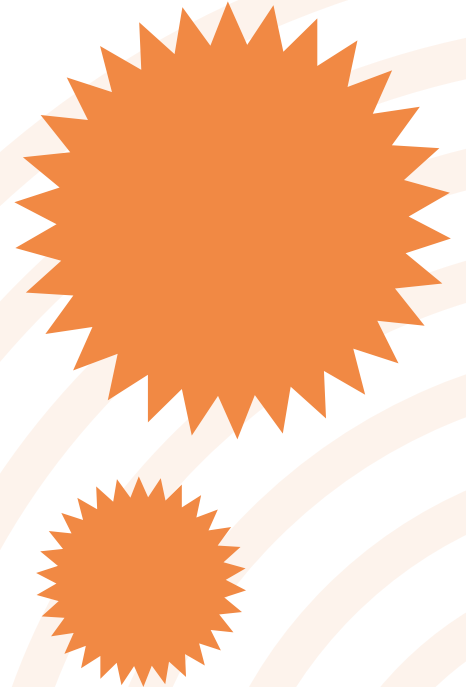
MAY 2025 IN RALEIGH, NC

CALL FOR FILM SUBMISSIONS

We are looking for stories that **uplift counties and North Carolina local governments** for our inaugural student film festival.

We are accepting submissions from **August 15, 2024 until November 30, 2024.**

To learn more about the film festival, visit **100strongproductions.com** or scan the QR code.



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Q&A WITH A COORDINATOR



In this edition, Alex Norwood spoke with CQ about his experiences as a strategic project coordinator with NCACC Strategic Member Services (SMS). Alex joined the Association June 2022, providing direct assistance to Alamance, Pamlico, Pitt and Rockingham counties. He recently accepted a position with Orange County as a Budget Analyst II. Congratulations, Alex!

What motivated you to pursue this opportunity to work with counties as an SMS Strategic Project Coordinator?

Coming out of grad school, I thought working with counties across North Carolina would be a great way to experience the many different aspects of local government. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Opioid Settlement funds have given counties a chance to explore projects and opportunities that they otherwise may not have been able to. I jumped at the opportunity to use my skills to help counties make the most out of these funds and impact their community. In the future, when I look back on my career, I will be thankful that this was one of my first experiences in local government.

What is the most impactful thing you have learned about counties from your time as a coordinator?

I've learned that when you are working for a county, no two days will ever be the same. County governments do so much for the community, and I love that I've been able to do a variety of things when working with the counties I've been assigned. I have been

able to expand my skillset in a way I didn't expect to when coming into the position.

How has your time spent in this role shaped your perspective on county government?

Over my time in this role, I have realized how important county government is to the people of a community. Growing up, I don't think a lot of people learn about government on a local level, but I hope that positions, like mine, allow more people to take an interest in county government as a potential career.

Can you describe an experience you have had in your role that really defines for you what working in county government is like?

During one of the first weeks I was working in Pamlico County, I spent the entire morning driving around the county taking pictures of properties for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) compliance, and in the afternoon, I created a budget breakdown of Pitt County's ARPA funds. It really showed me that you never know what your day will bring in county government.



WHERE IS ALBERT COATES?



SPRING 2024 WINNER

Frank Curry Zachary

County Commissioner,
Yadkin County

Congratulations to Frank Curry Zachary on finding the bust of Albert Coates in the spring issue of CountyQuarterly! Commissioner Zachary has spent more than two decades serving on the Yadkin County Board of Commissioners. First elected in 1980, he served two consecutive terms before stepping back to focus on family. In 2010, he returned to the Yadkin County Board and has been re-elected for four-year terms in 2014, 2018 and 2022. Currently in his sixth term, Zachary finds joy in contributing to his community. "I feel like we have done some very positive things for Yadkin County and want to continue to make positive changes," said Commissioner Zachary.

In addition to his work as commissioner, Zachary was licensed to practice law in 1976, and up until 2009, he was a partner in Zachary & Zachary, Attorneys at Law in Yadkinville, but has been in private practice since 2009. He is also an active member of the Human Services Advisory Board and the Partners Behavioral Health Board.

His commitment to Yadkin County is deeply rooted, having lived in the area his entire life, except for his time in college and law school. "We are close to the mountains and not too far away from the coast, so it's a very good location." Zachary appreciates the charm of Yadkin County, praising its good schools and proximity to shopping, restaurants and entertainment in Winston-Salem. He enjoys golfing and has a passion for collecting both major and minor league baseball caps. As a huge UNC Tar Heel fan, Commissioner Zachary cherishes the connection with his alma mater, where all three of his sons graduated.

NCACC Strategic Member Services (SMS) provides counties with a heightened level of in-person assistance and county-specific services. This includes assistance from Strategic Project Coordinators; support from subject matter experts for technical guidance on eligible use, reporting, and compliance for ARPA and national opioid settlement funds; and more. **For more information on SMS, visit www.ncacc.org/sms.**

NCACC is committed to good government and strives to keep alive the spirit of Albert Coates, the founder of the Institute of Government at the University of North Carolina, now known as the School of Government. Can you find the bust of Albert Coates in this issue? **Email us at communications@ncacc.org with your discovery and you could be highlighted next.**

Profile In Service: Honoring Commitment and Community: A Look at Leadership in Action

By Jodie A. Lanning, NCACC Senior Communications Specialist

In a world where many important contributions often go unnoticed, the M.H. “Jack” Brock Outstanding County Commissioner Award serves as a clear way to recognize and celebrate those who are making a difference in our counties. This year, the Association honored two notable commissioners: Wake County Commissioner Shinica Thomas and Brunswick County Commissioner Frank Williams. Their commitment to public service captures the true spirit of this award and demonstrates what can be accomplished through dedication and passion.

The NCACC’s M.H. “Jack” Brock Outstanding County Commissioner Award has a storied history, established to honor those whose work highlights communities and counties alike. Since its inception, the award has celebrated commissioners who embody innovation and commitment to enhance and improve the quality of life for their citizens. This award is presented annually to a commissioner who has demonstrated special achievements and efforts, primarily during the past 12 months, on behalf of county government throughout the state and/or region, not just within their county. With criteria that emphasize impact and excellence, it has become a prestigious accolade, awarded during the NCACC Annual Conference in August.

Profiles of the Recipients

Shinica Thomas, Wake County

Meet Wake County Commissioner Shinica Thomas, a dynamic public leader with a heart of service whose journey is marked by unwavering commitment and exemplary achievements. While she was first elected to the Wake County Board of Commissioners in 2020, Board Chair Thomas has undertaken countless roles in support of her community. She has served in leadership

roles for the YMCA, Town of Wake Forest, GoTriangle Transit, National Association of Counties and more. Commissioner Thomas’ commitment to community was recognized when she was appointed to the North Carolina Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service in 2019 by Governor Roy Cooper. Most recently with the NCACC, Commissioner Thomas served as co-chair for President Carswell’s presidential initiative, One More Thing, focused on empowering North Carolina counties to invest opioid settlement dollars for the greatest impact.

“It was a pleasure to help President Johnnie Carswell carry out the One More Thing initiative. As the co-chair of the planning committee, I was inspired to see colleagues from across the state come together with a shared commitment to maximizing opioid settlement dollars for their communities. County governments are at the forefront of this life-saving work, and that is not a responsibility I take lightly. This experience has taught me so much about those struggling with addiction and those who have dedicated their lives to helping the people we serve, and that’s something I’ll carry with me throughout the rest of my career. I’m proud of what we’ve accomplished and look forward to continuing our efforts to make a real difference in the lives of those we serve.”

Alongside Commissioner Thomas’ numerous leadership roles in public service, her professional accomplishments are just as remarkable. She held positions with Girl Scouts of North Carolina Coastal Pines and the North Carolina Community College System. As the daughter of a US Army veteran and wife of an Air Force veteran, Commissioner Thomas is an adaptive, responsive leader who works tirelessly in the best interest of the community and its future.



(Left) M.H. "Jack" Brock Outstanding County Commissioner Award Winner and Brunswick County Commissioner Frank Williams



(Center) M.H. "Jack" Brock Outstanding County Commissioner Award Winner and Wake County Board Chair Shinica Thomas

Congratulations, Chair Thomas, on receiving the 2024 Outstanding County Commissioner of the Year Award!

“I was surprised and deeply honored to receive the M.H. ‘Jack’ Brock Outstanding County Commissioner Award. This recognition is a testament to the collaboration and partnership of our county staff, my fellow commissioners and community partners who work tirelessly to improve the lives of our residents.”

Shinica Thomas, Board Chair, Wake County

“I was surprised and deeply honored to receive the M.H. ‘Jack’ Brock Outstanding County Commissioner Award. This recognition is a testament to the collaboration and partnership of our county staff, my fellow commissioners and community partners who work tirelessly to improve the lives of our residents. As I often say, we are better together, and this award demonstrates how that philosophy unites us and makes us stronger. It is my privilege to serve, not only within Wake County but across the region and state, to help strengthen local governments and create meaningful, lasting change. I look forward to continuing our shared mission of service and progress.”

Frank Williams, Brunswick County

On the other side of this prestigious honor is Brunswick County Commissioner Frank Williams, whose impressive career has sparked meaningful change. Commissioner Williams was sworn in as the NCACC’s 105th president just three years ago. He was first elected to the Brunswick County Board in 2012, which was his first run for public office. He served as chairman 2016-2020 and when he became Association president the next year, he promptly got to work on an important presidential initiative, 100 Counties Prepared. The initiative was borne out of his experience serving as Chair of the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners during Hurricanes Florence, Dorian and Isaias, a time in which he observed a lack of emergency preparedness

training suitable for elected officials. Commissioner Williams appointed a statewide task force to develop a full day of emergency preparedness training for county commissioners. The first 100 Counties Prepared training was held in conjunction with the NCACC Annual Conference in 2022, and it continues to be offered to county leaders. The initiative was recognized with a N.C. Emergency Management Director’s Challenge Coin Award and the N.C. Emergency Management Association’s James F. Buffalo Award.

Commissioner Williams’ commitment to his community is evident through his extensive history of serving in leadership roles with Communities in Schools, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, National Association of Counties and more. He also has a thriving small business focused on communications strategy and public relations. Congratulations, Commissioner Williams, on receiving the 2024 Outstanding County Commissioner of the Year Award!

“This is an absolute honor because there are a lot of amazing people who have won this award. My uncle [pictured below], who was a New Hanover county commissioner, received this award in 1960. It’s an honor to try and live up to his legacy.”



W.E. Dennison and Governor Hodges congratulate Outstanding County Official Award Winner, Berry A. Williams, 1960

Shared Commitment to the Community

What unites these two honorees is their shared passion for the community. Commissioners Thomas and Williams both embody qualities like resilience and innovation. However, their distinct approaches highlight the different paths they’ve taken to create meaningful change.

Their ongoing journeys celebrate excellence and inspire us all to take action. Both are poised to continue their important work, reminding us that recognizing such achievements motivates everyone to strive for greatness. The M.H. “Jack” Brock Outstanding County Commissioner Award not only honors their past but also fills us with hope for the future. 🌟



(Left to right) Wake County Board Chair Shinica Thomas, NCACC 108th President and Warren County Commissioner T. Davis, Brunswick County Commissioner Frank Williams



NCACC Executive Director Kevin Leonard with both award winners

Discovering Forsyth County: A Blend of Science, Art & Community

By Philip Lane, NCACC Communications Director



*Boathouse at the Reynolda House Museum of American Art, Forsyth County,
Photography courtesy of the Reynolda House Museum of American Art*

Located near the center of North Carolina, Forsyth County is characterized by a diverse blend of culture, history and innovation. The county is home to a variety of resources that foster community engagement and educational opportunities. This article delves into four county institutions and explores the thriving arts scene that enhances the community's cultural landscape for both residents and visitors.

Kaleideum

Located in the heart of downtown Winston-Salem, the Kaleideum is a pivotal thread in Forsyth County's educational framework fabric. This hands-on science museum offers interactive exhibits and programs designed to stimulate curiosity and imagination in learners of all ages.

The museum emphasizes experiential learning and provides guests with opportunities to touch, explore and engage with various scientific concepts. Its exhibits cover a range of topics, including robotics and environmental science. The museum also houses a notable health and wellness section that educates visitors about human anatomy and the principles of healthy living through its interactive displays.

Kaleideum is not only known for its exhibits, but it also hosts a variety of programs, including summer camps, school field trips and workshops for families. These initiatives aim to deepen understanding of scientific concepts while fostering teamwork and problem-solving skills. In particular, the museum's focus on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics — also known as S.T.E.A.M. — education prepares children for future academic and career pursuits.

The museum demonstrates its commitment to community engagement through outreach programs in collaboration with underprivileged schools in Forsyth County. These programs provide science education directly to students who may lack access to such resources and help contribute toward the primary goal of providing equitable opportunities for all children. This focus on inclusivity seeks to enhance accessibility and support curiosity among future generations.

Forsyth County Courthouse

Just a short drive from Kaleideum, residents and visitors find one of the county's architectural feats, the Forsyth County Courthouse. The courthouse is a stunning example of Beaux-Arts architecture, featuring a stately façade and intricate detailing. Inside, the courthouse is home to several courtrooms and offices that support the county's judicial system.

The building serves as a historical landmark and offers

guided tours that highlight its architectural significance and the history of law in Forsyth County. Visitors can learn about landmark cases and the evolution of the legal system in North Carolina, enhancing their understanding of local governance and justice.

In addition to its legal functions, the courthouse also hosts community events, including public forums and educational workshops. This role as a civic hub emphasizes Forsyth County's commitment to transparency and community participation in the democratic process.

Forsyth County Central Library

Located just outside of downtown, the Forsyth County Central Library features an extensive collection of over 500,000 items, encompassing books, digital media and research databases. The library provides free access to computers, study rooms and meeting spaces — all designed to facilitate collaboration and creativity, which makes it a valuable resource for students, professionals and families.


The programming at the Central Library is diverse, catering to a wide range of ages and interests. The library's offerings include storytelling sessions for children, workshops on digital literacy for adults, and a variety of events such as author readings, cultural celebrations and local art exhibitions. Through collaborations with local artists to showcase their work, the library enhances Forsyth County's cultural landscape and strengthens community ties, while also promoting literacy and educational opportunities for residents.

Forsyth County Law Enforcement Detention Center

The Forsyth County Law Enforcement Detention Center plays a vital role in the region's commitment to justice and rehabilitation. Located downtown, the detention center houses individuals awaiting trial or serving short sentences and offers rehabilitation programs to support their needs. Through these rehabilitative offerings, the detention center is able to emphasize rehabilitation over punishment in its approach that is aimed primarily at reducing recidivism.

The detention center also offers other initiatives such as educational classes, vocational training and mental health support, which are designed to equip individuals with the skills they need for successful reintegration into society. In addition to its offerings, the detention center engages in community outreach programs designed to raise awareness about the challenges faced by those within the criminal justice system. Through fostering dialogue and understanding, these initiatives provide the opportunity to shape community perceptions and encourage compassion. The detention center emphasizes the importance of second chances through

*Forsyth County Courthouse,
Photography courtesy of
Forsyth County Government*



**Sylvia Y. Sprinkle-Hamlin
Central Library Building**

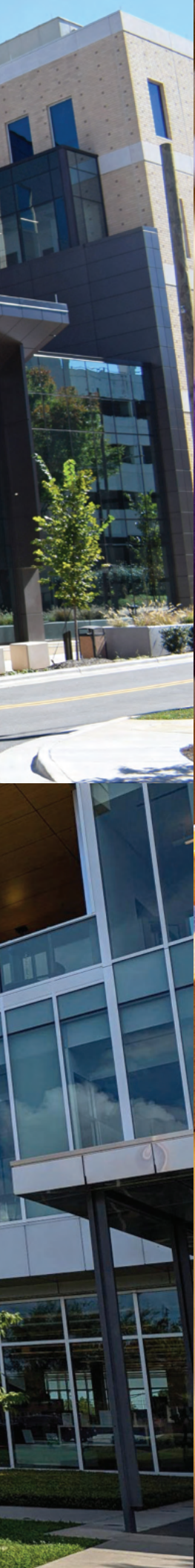
In Memory Of
Sylvia Y. Sprinkle-Hamlin
For Her Dedication And Contributions
To Forsyth County

County Library Director (2000-2019)
Library Employee (1979-2019)
Patron Of The Arts For
The National Black Repertory Company
& The National Black Theater Festival

Dedicated By
The Forsyth County Board of Commissioners
March 3, 2022



Forsyth County Central Library



*Weaving lesson at the Sawtooth School for Visual Art, Forsyth County,
Photography courtesy of the Sawtooth School for Visual Art*

various workshops and collaborative efforts with local organizations and promotes the idea that everyone has the potential for change.

A Flourishing Arts Community

Beyond its educational and civic institutions, Forsyth County boasts a vibrant arts scene that reflects the creativity and passion of its residents. The arts scene here is a mosaic of creativity, encompassing visual arts, performing arts, culinary arts and music that shape the collective spirit of the community.

The Winston-Salem Arts District is a focal point for artistic expression, featuring numerous galleries and studios where visitors can explore local artists' works that showcase everything from contemporary art to traditional crafts. The district also frequently hosts art walks and festivals, providing opportunities for artists to connect with the community and share their work.

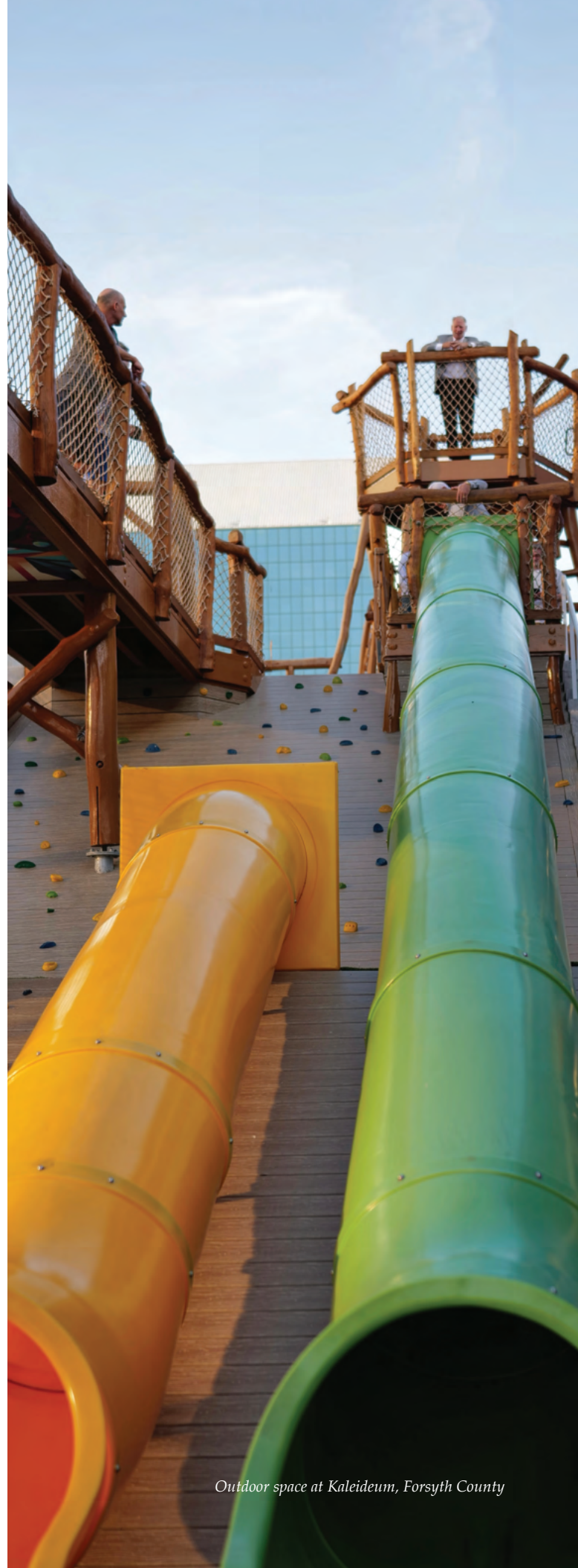
The county is also home to several renowned art institutions, such as the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA), the Reynolda House Museum of American Art (Reynolda House), and the Sawtooth School for Visual Art (Sawtooth). SECCA hosts rotating exhibitions and educational programs, while Reynolda House offers a glimpse into the lives of the Reynolda family and the impact of their art collection on the region. Sawtooth provides classes, workshops and events to all members of the community and is designed to provide the ability to "make" at any skill level.

Forsyth County celebrates its artistic spirit through special events such as the annual "Arts on the Green" festival, which highlights local artists, musicians and performers. These festivals create a platform for collaboration, allowing artists to connect with the community while reinforcing the idea that creativity is a cornerstone of civic life.

Shaping a Brighter Future Together

Forsyth County is a vibrant region that combines educational institutions, historical landmarks and a flourishing arts scene to create a rich cultural tapestry. Whether engaging in hands-on learning experiences at Kaleideum, exploring the history of the county courthouse, accessing the wide variety of resources at the central library, or learning about the processes of the rehabilitation-focused detention center, each organization plays a vital role in nurturing growth and opportunity.

As the community continues to evolve, education, justice, and the arts ensure that it remains a place of discovery and connection for residents and visitors alike. Exploring these establishments offers a glimpse into the heart of Forsyth County — a community that truly values curiosity, creativity and civic responsibility. 🌍



Outdoor space at Kaleideum, Forsyth County



NC Summit on Reducing Overdose

March 18-20, 2025

Wake County

Registration is open! For more information about
this event, visit www.ncacc.org/ncsoro.



We Did One More Thing

NCACC President Johnnie Carswell's One More Thing Initiative

By Laurel Edwards, NCACC Director of Strategic Planning

NCACC President and Burke County Commissioner Johnnie Carswell kicked off his presidential initiative in Wake County in August 2023. He committed to spending his year as NCACC president helping counties find the one more thing they could do to reduce opioid overdoses. The One More Thing (OMT) initiative developed over the past year, with a series of meetings and opportunities to learn about effective strategies and programs for counties to consider implementing. In addition to the dedicated support provided by NCACC's Opioid Settlements Technical Assistance Team (OSTAT), President Carswell wanted to encourage all counties to be thoughtful, strategic and impactful with the dollars they receive from national opioid settlements. These funding installments, disbursed over 18 years, allow counties a unique opportunity to invest in lifesaving initiatives.

President Carswell convened a planning committee of county commissioners and staff from across the state representing counties of all sizes. The committee made plans to meet with experts on high-impact opioid abatement strategies included in the North Carolina Memorandum of Agreement (NC MOA), which governs how local governments can spend their opioid settlement dollars. The committee was also tasked with identifying key topics to be presented to county commissioners at the NCACC Annual Conference.

The committee's inaugural meeting was held in Burke County in November 2023. The first meeting was focused on laying the foundation of the committee's work by providing an overview of the opioid settlements and the NC MOA. Committee members shared their

perspectives on how the initiative could provide resources, information and training to counties to implement high-impact programs addressing opioid overdose. Subsequent meetings provided information on strategies prioritized by the committee.

One meeting focused on strengthening partnerships with law enforcement and settlement strategies supporting justice-involved individuals, including:

- Diversion and deflection programs, which work to keep individuals with opioid use disorder out of the justice system and instead route them to healthcare and supportive community services.
- Evidence-based addiction service programs in county jails to provide life-saving medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) for this population at especially high risk for overdose.

The committee explored how these programs can be set up, the potential costs, and the benefits to the county, staff and individuals served. Discussion emphasized that all those present – commissioners, sheriffs and staff – have a shared goal: to improve the health and safety of our communities.

Another committee meeting explored opportunities to engage with faith leaders and to intersect with faith communities on opioid overdose prevention efforts. The committee aimed to understand how faith-based programs could help provide supportive services under NC MOA strategies and be integrated into a community's overall response plan.

The committee also dedicated time to learning about the role of peer support in building and delivering

(Left) NCACC 107th President Johnnie Carswell and (right) NCACC President-Elect Wallace Nelson at NCACC 116th Annual Conference in Wake County, August 2023



effective programs. Peer support specialists are individuals with lived experience who are trained to advocate for and provide support to others living with opioid use disorder or who are in recovery. The committee had the opportunity to hear from counties that have developed and implemented peer support specialist programs and from peer-led, community-based organizations offering crucial services within a county that are vital to the community's response.

Alongside the work of the committee, President Carswell spent time on the road across the state and the country, telling the story of the good work North Carolina has done at the county level to address the opioid overdose crisis. One highlight from his travels was an invitation to lead a panel at the National Association of Counties (NACo) Annual Conference in Hillsborough County, Fla., focused on different states' approaches to investing opioid settlement dollars. North Carolina remains the state with the highest percentage of settlement dollars going directly to local governments – an allocation model negotiated by NCACC and the North Carolina Department of Justice. The North Carolina model enables local governments to tailor programs to the unique needs of each community.

The work over the 2023-2024 presidential year culminated in a special two-day pre-conference program at the NCACC Annual Conference in Forsyth County. County leaders attended plenary and breakout sessions to learn about the aforementioned key topics sent forward by the committee.


President Carswell set out to highlight the good work to help save lives through investments of opioid settlement dollars and to provide more information to counties that are working to set up impactful programs

in North Carolina. Even beyond this presidential initiative, this work will be sustained through the NCACC OSTAT team, which continues to provide technical assistance and subject matter expertise to local governments.

Many thanks to the One More Thing Planning Committee for dedicating a year to exploring these topics in depth and creating important learning opportunities for all counties to help prevent more opioid overdoses.

- Johnnie Carswell, NCACC 107th President, Burke County
- Mike LaBrose, Committee Co-Chair, Caldwell County
- Shinica Thomas, Committee Co-Chair, Wake County
- Tare Davis, NCACC 108th President, Warren County
- Hope Haywood, Commissioner, Randolph County
- Wendy Jacobs, Commissioner, Durham County
- Donnie Potter, Commissioner, Caldwell County
- John Shaw, Commissioner, Montgomery County
- Emily Truman, Commissioner, Gates County
- Jennifer Greene, Health Director, Alleghany and Ashe Counties
- Danny Scalise, Health Director, Burke County
- Robert Nesbit, Chief of Staff, Consolidated Human Services Agency, Mecklenburg County
- Wes Gray, Health Director, Pitt County

For more information about the One More Thing initiative, visit www.ncacc.org/one-more-thing.

For support in planning, implementing, evaluating, and reporting on the North Carolina Opioid Settlement, visit www.ncopioidsettlement.org or www.ncacc.org/opioidsettlement. 



One More Thing Programming in Forsyth County, August 2024



(Left to right) NCACC Director of Strategic Planning Laurel Edwards, NCACC 107th President Johnnie Carswell, NCACC Director of Strategic Health and Opioid Initiatives Nidhi Sachdeva and NCACC Executive Director Kevin Leonard at NACo Opioid Settlement Summit in Washington, D.C., January 2024



NCACC 107th President Johnnie Carswell at One More Thing Programming in Forsyth County, NC, August 2024



(Left) NCACC Executive Director Kevin Leonard and (right) NCACC 107th President Johnnie Carswell at NCACC 117th Annual Conference in Forsyth County, August 2024

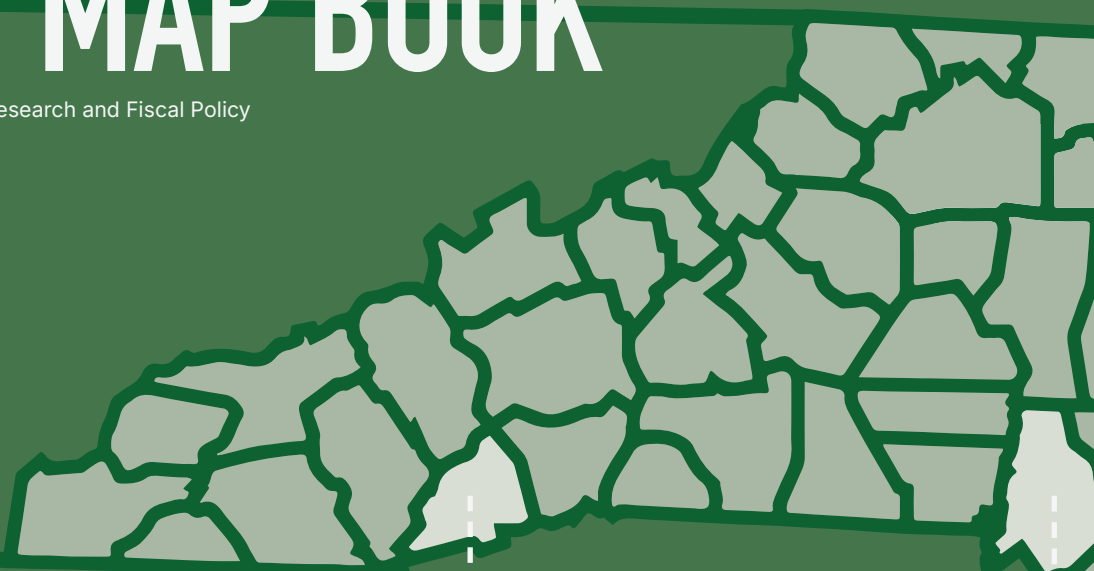
RESEARCH PULSE

HIGHLIGHTS FROM

THE 2024 NCACC

COUNTY MAP BOOK

By Denise Canada, NCACC Director of Research and Fiscal Policy



STATEWIDE FACTS

The median age, statewide, is 39.9 years old.

An estimated 87% of households had a broadband internet connection in 2022. This number is up from 2019, when an estimated 81% of households had a broadband internet connection.

Nearly 500,000 North Carolinians are enrolled in Medicaid Expansion.

TO LEARN MORE

These data points are excerpted from the 2024 NCACC County Map Book and represent the most recent year available.

Visit to www.ncacc.org/mapbook to access a downloadable version, additional county-level data, source list, indicator explanations and more. Email communications@ncacc.org to request a spiral-bound hard copy while supplies last.

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

In Transylvania County, 1 in 3 residents are over the age of 65.



SAMPSON COUNTY

Sampson County has the most agricultural land in the state at around 292,000 acres.

TYRRELL COUNTY

Tyrrell County is the smallest county (based on population) in the state with only 3,324 residents.

RANDOLPH COUNTY

Randolph County has the most farms in the state at 1,238.

DURHAM COUNTY

Durham County has the highest average weekly wage for employed residents in the state at \$1,767.

ONSHOW COUNTY

In Onslow County, 1 in 3 residents are under the age of 18. Onslow County also has the highest concentration of veteran residents at 33,349 or 16% of the county population.

MECKLENBURG AND WAKE COUNTY

Around 22% of North Carolina residents, or 1 in 5, live in either Mecklenburg or Wake County.

2024 Civic Excellence in Innovation Award Winners



2024

**EXCELLENCE IN
INNOVATION**
— AWARDS PROGRAM —

The Excellence in Innovation Awards program received nearly 60 applicants this year, highlighting the great work taking place across North Carolina counties.

After a thorough review by county leaders, staff and previous award winners, the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) and Civic Federal Credit Union are proud to name 13 outstanding projects as recipients of the 2024 Excellence in Innovation Awards.

To learn more about the Civic Excellence in Innovation Awards and see photos from this year, visit www.ncacc.org/civicawards.

BUNCOMBE COUNTY

Pioneering a Shared Training Hub

Over the last two years, departments of Social Services and Health and Human Services within North Carolina counties have experienced many changes to the policies that drive public benefits programs. High levels of turnover combined with higher-than-ever caseloads leave counties struggling to hire and onboard staff.

Buncombe County recognized these gaps in workforce development and, initially, created an in-person training team responsible for generating training content and onboarding new hires. Nearby counties that could afford to do so would send staff to Buncombe County for live trainings, but counties without the financial means or that were too far away were unable to access the helpful resources offered.

Wanting to share their information across the state, Buncombe County created an online Community SharePoint site that centralizes their training solution information. This site offers a comprehensive content library with over 200 courses on an array of county-level topics, recorded class sessions, onboarding information, real-time updates and more. By providing free, high-quality training resources through a centralized online platform, Buncombe County empowers other counties to enhance employee skills and improve public service delivery efficiently and effectively.

Since launching the site, Buncombe County has allowed access to 65 North Carolina counties as well as state entities including the Division of Health Benefits. Site data metrics show more than 16,000 visits from May 2024 to June 2024.

For more information about the training site, email Heather Ramsey, staff development manager of Health and Human Services, Buncombe County, at heather.ramsey@buncombecounty.org.

CALDWELL COUNTY

Workforce Wednesdays

In Caldwell County, there is a significant gap in understanding between the community and the industrial employers within the region. Many citizens

are unaware of the diverse career opportunities available in local industries, and, simultaneously, employers often fail to effectively market themselves to teachers and students who could fill the workforce needs.

Workforce Wednesdays: Connecting Careers to the Classroom is an exciting professional development initiative for teachers created by three dedicated organizations: Caldwell County Economic Development, Caldwell County Schools and Caldwell County Community College. The objective is to share data-supported evidence of high-growth, high-wage careers available in Caldwell County and demonstrate a clear path from post-secondary education to promising jobs through the local community college system. Teachers and those working with children have a profound influence on the next generation of the workforce, and it is essential that educators and school administrators are equipped with up-to-date knowledge about current and future workforce needs. This program aims to provide them with the insights and tools necessary to guide students toward successful and fulfilling careers.

Kelly Caswell, a teacher who participated in the first cohort of Workforce Wednesdays, states, "This was truly inspiring. I've shared it with my students, colleagues, friends and family. It was like a series of eye-opening events that made me aware of so many opportunities right here in my backyard. From puppies to pipettes, I've enjoyed all the thoughtful planning put into this event. Why move anywhere else when so many big industries are starting to come back here."

For more information, email Ashley Bolick, director of economic development, Caldwell County, at abolick@caldwellcountync.org.

CARTERET COUNTY

Turning the Tide

Carteret County, like many communities across the nation, has been affected by the opioid epidemic. This rise in opioid overdoses presents a significant challenge, with Carteret County experiencing a higher rate of opioid overdose deaths than the state average. Specifically, Carteret County sees approximately 32 opioid overdose deaths per 100,000 North Carolina residents, compared to the

statewide average of 22.7 per 100,000. The impact of opioid overdoses has been devastating for families and communities within Carteret County, and it became evident that an innovative and robust response was urgently needed to address this public health crisis.

Carteret County implemented a new program – the Post-Overdose Response Team (PORT). Funded by opioid settlement funds, PORT represents a data-driven, multifaceted approach to overcoming the complex challenges of addiction and overdose. Carteret County assembled a dedicated team of five North Carolina Certified Peer Support Specialists (CPSS) and a Navigator. The CPSS, with their own lived experiences of recovery, offers invaluable empathy, understanding and personal connection; the Navigator, a social service professional, complements the team by ensuring clients access to treatment options, community resources and family support networks. PORT’s approach centers on proactive engagement. Following an overdose, the team reaches out within 24-72 hours, offering immediate support and guidance to clients and families. By addressing this issue holistically, PORT not only helps in the immediate aftermath but also works toward a sustainable recovery.

The program’s success is undeniable. In the past year, Carteret County reported a decrease in overdose deaths. As of May 31, 2024, four deaths and 44 total overdoses have been reported by law enforcement this year. Clients report feeling more supported and equipped to manage their recovery, and the community has seen a decrease in repeat overdoses. The PORT model not only saves lives but also enhances the overall well-being of individuals and families, stands as a testament to the power of community-driven innovation and offers a beacon of hope for other communities struggling with the opioid epidemic.

If you or someone you know is struggling with substance use, contact the Carteret County PORT program at (252) 247-1129 or postODteam@carteretcountync.gov. For more information about the program, visit www.carteretcountync.gov/2339/PORT-Program.

CATAWBA COUNTY

Digital Setback and Site Plan Creator

In order to be issued a zoning permit in Catawba County, applicants must provide a ‘Site Plan’ map showing where the zoning setbacks are on the property and where planned structures will be placed on the property. Determining setbacks can be a complicated process. Historically in Catawba County, site plan mapping was done by hand – an analog process that was time consuming and very manual. In December 2023, Catawba County rolled out its new ePermitting software, allowing users to submit applications remotely, but this uncovered a problem with the site plan process since users still needed to submit their site plans to planning staff.

To tackle this issue, a pair of custom mapping applications were created: Setback Creator and Proposed Projects.

The Setback Creator allows planning staff to select property lines and generate setback polygons based on zoning regulations. A unique ‘Setback ID’ is generated for the applicant to add to the site plan and view their specific Proposed Projects application. The Proposed Projects application lets users add plans for where a structure will be placed within the setback and property boundaries and submit the proposed structures back to planning staff.

This project has been very successful, and the applications are utilized daily by the Catawba County Planning Department and its customers. With dozens of zoning permits are applied for each month, these tools have saved staff time, reduced errors and eliminated the need for paper. Since December 2023, the mapping applications have generated setbacks and site plans for approximately 400 projects. Related workload for staff at the Catawba County Planning Department has decreased by an estimated 50%. For customers, eliminating the need to come onsite to submit site plans has cut time, cut costs and brought in very positive feedback.

For more information, email Nathan Bost, GIS administrator, Catawba County, at wbest@catawbacountync.gov.

CRAVEN COUNTY

Collaborative Efforts to Address Transportation Needs

Craven County was experiencing a high number of emergency room visits and deaths related to opioid and fentanyl overdoses. Early on, participants of the Recovery Alliance Initiative – Craven County Collaboration identified lack of transportation to detox centers as one of the barriers to vital services needed for treatment and recovery from substance use. Safe and reliable transportation available at short notice was needed. Craven County expressed to the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) the importance of assisting with substance use disorder transportation and requested assistance while staying within the parameters of public transit and available funding.

CARTS funding was identified, and transportation was implemented throughout the county at no cost to the individual using the service. Craven Pamlico Re-Entry Council, Craven County Child Protective Services, Craven County Opioid Epidemic Response and Craven County Jail Administration staff all collaborated with CARTS to identify areas in need, educate drivers and staff, and offer help to recovering individuals.

Through this collaborative project, CARTS has provided over 1,900 trips and assisted approximately 45 individuals. Most trips are to and from Port Health, a local mental health and substance use treatment provider in Craven County. The individuals utilizing this project are receiving vital services needed to achieve recovery.

For more information, email Kelly Walker-Cuthrell, director, Transportation Department (CARTS) at Craven County, at kwalker@cravencountync.gov.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

Fort Liberty WIC Office

With a population of nearly 335,000, Cumberland County is home to Fayetteville and has a unique tie to Fort Liberty, an Army installation that lies within the county lines and is home to the largest military installation in the world by population

hosting over 258,000 people. Cumberland County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) created the Fort Liberty Public Health Partnership (Partnership) in 2019 alongside numerous other public health organizations to address pressing health issues across the Ft. Liberty and Cumberland County communities.

In response to the identified needs, the Partnership opened a Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) office on Ft. Liberty in March 2023. The Cumberland County WIC Program is implemented by the CCDPH and the Partnership, serving more than 11,500 participants in four locations across the county. CCDPH operates a WIC clinic on Ft. Liberty two days a week offering WIC-eligible Ft. Liberty residents to receive services on the installation. In July 2023, the Partnership was awarded a grant from the WIC Community Innovation and Outreach (WIC CIAO) Project to reduce barriers to WIC services for families in the Ft. Liberty and Cumberland County military community. Funding supports the implementation of innovative outreach strategies to increase WIC awareness, participation and benefit redemption.

The work of the Partnership has been recognized nationally as a best practice and was a National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) Public Health Innovation Award Winner in 2023. The Ft. Liberty WIC office has an average monthly enrollment of 1,004 WIC participants – an increase from an average monthly enrollment of 308 during the first quarter Ft. Liberty was open.

To learn more about WIC program benefits, eligibility and the Fort Liberty WIC office, visit www.cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/public-health-group/public-health/WIC.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

Library Community Navigator

In 2019 and 2020, consultants conducted a Community Needs Assessment for the Cumberland County Public Library as part of their strategic planning process. The assessment identified a need for increased support for the unhoused community within the libraries and for patrons needing assistance in connecting with essential services and resources. Libraries play a vital

role as safe havens for all community members, particularly those who rely on library services for internet access, computers and shelter. Note, this assessment predates the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated existing community needs such as homelessness, mental illness and more.

In response to the assessment and after reopening (due to the pandemic), the Cumberland County Public Library welcomed its inaugural Community Navigator, a pivotal role designated to cater to the evolving information needs of library patrons, in November 2023. This position is not mandated but rather serves as a proactive approach for the library and county to engage with the community and address its evolving needs.

Tasked with guiding community members toward essential resources, the library's community navigator operates across eight library locations. While the position is based at the library, the community navigator attends meetings and committees related to homelessness, mental health, substance use, reentry needs and more. Also, the community navigator plays a significant role in enhancing library staff capabilities through tailored trainings such as conflict resolution and adult mental health first aid. To date, the community navigator has successfully connected over 100 individuals and families with a myriad of resources, ranging from housing and food to medical care and reentry support post-incarceration.

For more information, email Faith Phillips, library director, Cumberland County Public Library, at fphillips@cumberlandcountync.gov or visit www.cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/library-group/library.

FORSYTH COUNTY

Community Resources and Assets

Originally developed in 2021, Community Resources and Assets was a collaboration between MapForsyth, the Forsyth Regional Opioid & Substance Use Team (FROST) and Partnership for Prosperity. Version one of the Community Resources and Assets was mainly map-based displaying locations and contact information for various resources including

substance use treatment, educational resources, food and clothing, childcare, and more. As time passed, more organizations requested similar applications tailored to certain groups. In mid-2023, Safe Youth Initiative requested a mobile friendly application with information on access to juvenile specific resources.

The decision was made to redevelop Community Resources and Assets. Many improvements were made to the application including the introduction of user-friendly dropdown menus based on resource categories, a "Near Me" tool, and expanded visible resource lists on mobile and tablet views. Since the application redesign was published, daily views have increased by nearly tenfold due to the fact that MapForsyth provides software training to service providers.

Community partners are crucial to the continued success of the application, and Forsyth County is focused on providing them with the resources needed to share with county citizens. In working with local partners, Forsyth County can secure more data sources and prevent duplication of effort by encouraging use of the application.

To view Community Resources and Assets, visit www.arcg.is/1Hyu9b0.

GASTON COUNTY

Danger Assessment for Law Enforcement

Gaston County's Danger Assessment for Law Enforcement (DA-LE) project addresses a critical need in the community: a comprehensive response system for domestic violence incidents. The Gaston County District Attorney's Office and Survivor Services leadership staff recognized gaps in services and barriers that faced domestic violence survivors seeking justice or support services.

DA-LE is an 11-question, evidence-based tool designed to identify high-risk offenders who may pose a lethal threat to their intimate partner. By utilizing this tool on all calls for service that involve intimate partner violence, Gaston County ensures that law enforcement and legal professionals have crucial information at their disposal. The DA-LE

initiative also involves training law enforcement officers, advocates, court personnel and more on best practices for handling domestic violence cases, developing workflow processes between agencies, and implementing specialized response protocols.

Following the rollout of the DA-LE tool, Survivor Services took additional proactive steps by establishing a High-Risk Fatality Prevention Team to do monthly evaluations of cases identified as high-risk through DA-LE. Since its integration, 524 cases have been reported, and among those, 217 identify as high-risk. DA-LE has transformed Gaston County's approach toward identifying and addressing high-risk cases of intimate partner violence and represents a significant advancement in efforts to combat domestic violence.

For more information, email Mollie Weakland, special events & service coordinator, Survivor Services, Gaston County, at mollie.weakland@gastongov.com.

LEE COUNTY R.E.N.E.W.

Over the past several years, many health and human services departments have seen an increase in mental health related challenges, and these challenges have put a strain on local county systems. Lee County leadership came together to provide a possible solution to bridge the gaps in services within the community. As a result, Resources for Eliminating barriers, creating New Beginnings, and providing Education for an enhanced Well-being (RENEW Lee County or RENEW) was born.

RENEW Lee County, housed in their newly established and expanding Community Support Services Department, is the approach used to assist individuals in the community with mental health and behavioral health needs. With the launching of RENEW in October 2023, the Community Support Services Department was formed due to multiple county initiatives including:

Health and Well-Being Initiative: RENEW will promote mental well-being in the community and provide opportunities to access mental health services for residents in need. \$250,000 was allocated to reimburse non-profits for a list of pre-approved mental health services. An additional \$250,000 was allocated for contracted services with

mental health providers in the community to help provide treatment.

Re-entry: The Lee County Re-entry Council is the lead agency in re-entry work within Lee County to coordinate community organizations working with justice-involved individuals.

Community Social Worker: This position assists law enforcement and other partners in accessing mental health resources, works closely with re-entry and pre-trial, connects residents in need to services and more.

Pre-trial Release: These services assist and assess individuals in jail for appropriateness of pre-trial release. Part of this process is linking individuals to mental health services such as substance use disorder treatment.

Opioid Use Disorder Reduction Initiative (OUDRI): Using funds from the opioid settlements, Lee County hopes to reduce the prevalence of opioid use disorder by investing in research-based practices and programs currently operating in and around the county. Services like access to treatment, re-entry services and transportation will be coordinated through the Community Support Department through RENEW Lee County.

For more information about RENEW Lee County, visit www.leecountync.gov/government/renew.

PASQUOTANK COUNTY Feral Cat Program

In Pasquotank County, the population of feral cats has continued to grow over time, despite the county's best efforts and traditional animal control practices. County shelters were taking in three times as many animals as other similar sized counties and faced a sustained increase in the number of nuisance calls related to cats.

Equipped with scientific literature regarding population control, the staff in Pasquotank County began to take a different approach. They called it TNVR – Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate, Return. This program included stakeholders from the county manager's office, the county sheriff's office, animal shelters and community volunteers.

The county observed that calls for service came from all areas of the county, and many were from repeat locations. They also observed that the locations of calls would migrate geographically over time within a given region. This information was indicative of an often ineffective “trap and euthanize” strategy employed by many local governments to manage feral cat populations.

This “vacuum effect” would result in new feral populations migrating into areas where cats are trapped and removed, often with greater success in breeding. Their numbers multiplied more than if the cats were sterilized and allowed to remain in place.

As a result of the county’s revamped efforts and emphasis on neutering over euthanasia, animal control calls related to cats decreased by 30% in 2023. Trapping calls were reduced by 44%.

For more information, email Mike Barclift, management fellow, Pasquotank County, at barcliftm@co.pasquotank.nc.us.

ROCKINGHAM COUNTY

Mobile Dental Expansion

Research has shown that school-based programs can reduce dental disease by 50%, remove barriers to care and decrease missed education time. These programs also ensure that children receive recommended preventative care such as sealants, which are 80% effective in preventing dental disease. While school-based programs are effective, they haven’t been widely replicated due to the complexities of integrating them within the education system and the challenges of establishing a sustainable business model.

Utilizing funds from the Duke Endowment and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, Rockingham County purchased a 38-foot trailer that had been converted to a mobile dental unit and hired a program coordinator and dental hygienist to provide care based out of the mobile unit.

By bringing the mobile unit and trained professionals directly to school parking lots, Rockingham County has had a tremendously successful first year for the

Mobile Dental Unit. Staff have delivered consistent and recurring services to 174 elementary school children who needed care and were not receiving it elsewhere. These young people now have access to preventative services, sealants, cleanings and have benefited from over 1,500 treatment and preventative appointments completed by the Mobile Dental Unit team this school year.

For more information, email Trey Wright, public health director, Division of Public Health, Rockingham County, at fwright@co.rockingham.nc.us.

WILSON COUNTY

Garden Partners

The Wilson County Public Library strives to provide meaningful and dynamic programming for adults with disabilities. Having traditionally focused activities around crafts, games and stories, the county was looking for a way to improve engagement and impact for their programs.

Garden Partners was established as a new opportunity for program participants to not only learn about horticulture but maintain a successful garden over time with their peers. It’s a collaborative effort between Wilson County, Seeds of Hope Wilson and Diversified Opportunities to provide a sustainable, accessible opportunity for community members.

The program began with raised, handicap accessible garden beds, materials provided by Seeds of Hope, and educational information on vegetables and herbs that could be planted. As time progressed and the Garden Partners harvested more vegetables, participants began to learn new recipes and cooking techniques to prepare healthy, homegrown dishes with the foods they had grown.

By the time the season had ended, Garden Partners became a full-fledged “garden-to-table” experience for adults with disabilities, and the program has developed its own rich sense of community. Garden Partners has been a tremendous success and has attracted four times as many participants as traditional indoor library activities in Wilson County.

For more information, email Lori Winstead, deputy county manager, Wilson County, at ljwinstead@wilsoncountync.gov. 🌱

The *Local Elected Leaders Academy* (LELA) helps local elected officials develop a mutual understanding of how governing at the local level affects residents and differing constituencies.

Built on the tenets of learning and practice, LELA creates pathways for education, service, and recognition tailored to the needs of local elected officials at any phase of their tenure in public office.

Earn recognition as Practitioner, Master, Mentor, or Ambassador through educational courses or earn service credits by attending NCACC meetings, leadership programs, and online programs.



2024 UPCOMING COURSES

Take the first step

Become a *Local Elected Leaders Academy* member by completing one of these upcoming *Essentials of County Government* courses. (12 CREDITS)

Jan 16–17, 2025 New Bern

Jan 23–24, 2025 Winston-Salem

Feb date TBD Asheville

Top 10 Primers LELA 101

Gifts, Favors, and Conflicts of Interest

Nov 12, 2024 Online
2 CREDITS

Rules of Procedure

Dec 4, 2024 Online
2 CREDITS

Mentor level LELA 301

Development Finance Toolbox

Dec 3–5, 2024 Chapel Hill
6 CREDITS

Program information: go.unc.edu/LELA
Course information: go.unc.edu/LELACalendar



Deer Season Ahead: Staying Safe on the Road

By Bob Carruth, NCACC Risk Control Manager

Seeing the leaves change and the days getting shorter reminds us of that time of year again: deer season. With increased deer activity and movement comes increased risk of deer interactions with drivers on the road.

Nationwide data shared by State Farm Insurance shows North Carolina ranks 16 in highest number of deer-related vehicular crashes annually. Drivers in North Carolina have a 1 in 87 chance of striking a deer at some point in their active driving years. According to the North Carolina Department of Transportation, from 2020-22, the top 10 counties in animal crashes and injuries had more than 16,000 crashes combined. Though this data shows that areas with higher concentration of drivers are more prone to having deer-related crashes, 2021-22 loss data from the NCACC County Risk Group (CRG) gives a more comprehensive picture of deer-related vehicle crashes involving county vehicles:

- Of the 65 counties covered under the CRG's auto coverage, 57 counties experienced at least one crash involving a deer.
- Of the 1,563 vehicle damage claims filed by CRG members, 215 (13.7%) were deer-related crashes.
- Of the 215 crashes, nearly every county department or function has seen at least one crash, but 174 (80%) are reported by the county sheriff's office.
- Those 174 deer crashes account for about 41% of the total claims filed by the county sheriffs' office.

CRG's loss statistics also show that the most common time of year for deer strike crashes is from October to January, which is colloquially known as "deer season." Here are some additional facts concerning deer movement during this time of year:

- Deer are most active during the hours immediately before and after dawn and dusk.
- Deer will often move in packs. This mainly includes does and fawns but may also include bucks. If you see one, there is probably another lurking close behind.
- Deer will normally congregate around water and food sources like river bottoms and farmland. To view your county's deer population density, visit the North Carolina Division of Wildlife website at www.ncwildlife.org/media/1663/download?attachment.
- Deer are generally thought to move more when the humidity or rain is present, although heavy downpours discourage movement.

So, what precautions should you take during this time of year? To reduce the chance of a deer incident occurring, or if one does occur, to lessen its impact, follow these steps:

Practice situational awareness: You should always practice situational awareness while driving, but especially during the times and locations noted above.

Congratulations to the 2024 Frank Bonner Scholarship Award Winner!



Melissa Poteat, Iredell County

We are proud to announce that the 2024 recipient of the Frank Bonner Scholarship Award is Melissa Poteat. Melissa currently serves as the risk management/wellness/safety division manager for Iredell County, where she has been employed for over 25 years. During the majority of those years, Melissa has been involved in leading the county's risk management program.

The Frank Bonner Scholarship Award honors the life of Frank Bonner, a dedicated and long-serving Beaufort County commissioner who passed away in February 2004. Frank Bonner was an insurance agent in the Aurora and Washington area for many years, and he was instrumental in establishing the NCACC County Risk Group (CRG) in the early 1980s. He served as both a CRG trustee and chair for many years.

This scholarship covers tuition and travel expenses to attend the 5-day annual Public Risk Management Association (PRIMA) Institute. This training is the premier professional development event for public sector risk managers, and the 2024 Institute is being held in Scottsdale, Arizona.

We'd like to extend a huge congratulations to Melissa and to the others who applied for the scholarship. The application period for the 2025 scholarship will open in early August 2025.



*(Center, holding certificate) Melissa Poteat
accepts the Frank Bonner Scholarship Award*

You should continually scan your surroundings within your line of sight in front of your vehicle – from wood line to wood line or fence to fence. Also, try to look as far ahead of the road as possible. You may see a deer in time to avoid it.

Slow down: For many drivers, it takes about two seconds to perceive and react to the danger and another three seconds to stop. Driving 10 miles per hour slower during the times and locations noted above will increase your reaction distance and, perhaps, avoid a crash with a deer.

Increase your following distance: This will reduce the likelihood of being involved in a crash if the vehicle in front of you strikes or takes evasive action to avoid a deer.

Use your horn: When you see a deer, slow down and start honking your horn. Loud noises will scare them off, but do not flash your headlights, especially at night. Bright lights may cause them to freeze and dart in front of your car.

Don't swerve: Although your instincts may tell you to swerve, don't. If you are involved in a collision, your car may be damaged and there is a chance of injury. The chances of injury are much greater if your car swerves outside of its lane. If you practice good situational awareness as noted above, you can more easily react to any incident that occurs.

Consider installing grill guards: Grill guards will not prevent a deer-related crash but will lessen the impact. Rather than replacing fenders, front grills and radiators, if your car has grill guards installed, you might only need to replace the headlights.

Avoid touching or trying to move an injured animal: A frightened and wounded deer can be dangerous or further injure itself. Avoid approaching the animal and focus on your own safety.

Relocate to a safe area: If you are involved in a collision, move your vehicle off of the road and out of oncoming traffic, and call 911.

Although the behavior of deer and other animals is unpredictable and total elimination of this type of crash may never be achieved, following the practices as outlined above will help to reduce the occurrence and severity of loss. If you have any questions regarding the CRG driver safety programs and resources, contact us at rmp@ncacc.org. 📞



Washington Watch

Recent U.S. Supreme Court Decisions Set to Affect Local Government

By Kyle Leopard, Strategics Consulting Government Relations Advisor, with contributions from Ryan Murphy, Shirley Speidell and Zach Hurwitz

This article was written for CountyQuarterly by Strategics Consulting, a partner of NCACC.

During its October 2023 to July 2024 term, the Supreme Court of the United States issued several opinions that may significantly impact local governments. These decisions covered a wide array of topics pertinent to local governments and the individuals they govern, from administrative law and federal regulations to new standards for public officials' social media use, employment liability claims, the assessment of local impact fees and local authority regarding homelessness.

Court observers have noted that this term might prove to be one of the most consequential in American history. Leading the list of notable cases is the Supreme Court's decision in *Loper Bright Enterprises, Inc. v. Raimondo*. In a six to three ruling, the Supreme Court overturned the long-standing legal precedent known as the *Chevron* deference doctrine, which has shaped the federal regulatory system for almost four decades. The Supreme Court also adopted an Ethics Code for the first time ever during this term. Public officials must understand the Supreme Court decisions affecting local governments in order to effectively serve their communities amid shifting legal landscapes. These key decisions from the 2023-2024 term include:

City of Grants Pass v. Johnson – Regulation of Public Encampments: The Supreme Court ruled in this case that local governments can enforce generally applicable laws that prohibit unhoused individuals from camping on public property and that such regulations do not constitute "cruel and unusual punishment" under the Eighth Amendment. The decision should provide more clarity to local governments about their authority to address homelessness as well as allow officials to regulate public health and safety at the local level.

Scheetz v. El Dorado County – Local Impact Fees:

The issue in this case involved a challenge to a county's assessment of impact fees for development permits. The Supreme Court held that local impact fees are permissible monetary extractions, however the fees must bear a relationship to the government's interest and to the potential impact of the development on the community. Local impact fees are now subject to the "essential nexus" and "rough proportionality" requirements from two previously established cases regarding local impact fees, *Nollan v. California Coastal Commission* and *Dolan v. City of Tigard*.

Muldraw v. City of St. Louis – Title VII Employment Claims:

The Supreme Court ruling in this case revised the standards by which an employee can bring and settle an adverse employment action against their employer under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The issue involved was whether Title VII prohibits discrimination in lateral transfer decisions and reassignments without a court determination that the transfer decision caused a "material harm." The new standard requires only that a claimant must show "some harm from a forced transfer." The decision lowers the bar that Title VII plaintiffs must meet and might result in increased employment claims and liability for local governments.

Lindke v. Freed and O'Connor-Ratcliff v. Garnier – Public Officials on Social Media:

In these two cases, the Supreme Court ruled that public officials' social media use can be considered "state action" under certain circumstances. In the *Lindke* decision, the Court held that a public official's social media posts are state action "only if the official (1) possessed the actual authority to speak on the [government]'s behalf, and (2) purported to exercise that authority when [they] spoke on social media." The *O'Connor-Ratcliff*

decision affirmed a public official's ability to block users on social media platforms unless the official is exercising authority to speak on behalf of the government. The Supreme Court emphasized that public officials have their own First Amendment rights and that those rights are not relinquished by becoming a public official.

A Closer Look at the Impact of Overturning the Chevron Doctrine

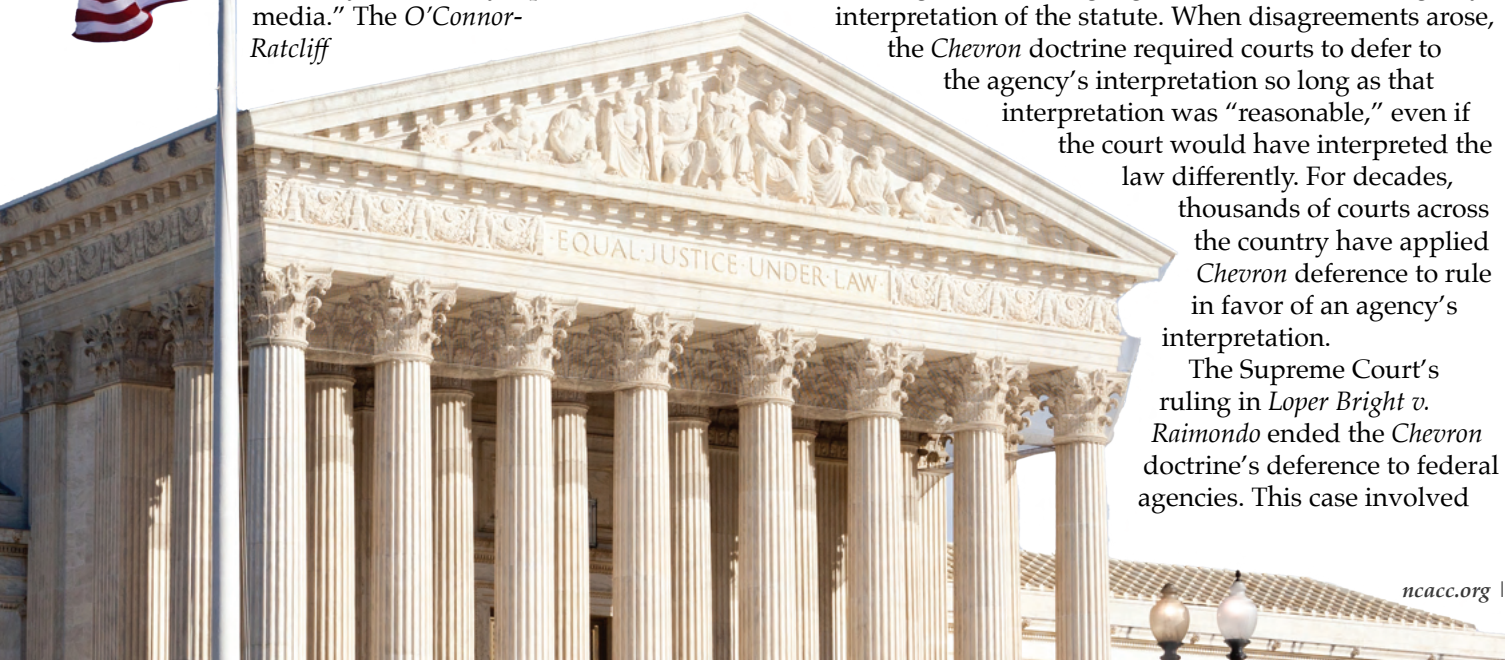
The Supreme Court's recent decision in *Loper Bright Enterprises, Inc. v. Raimondo* significantly changes the balance of interpretive authority between the federal judiciary and executive agencies and will reshape the current system of administrative law. The Supreme Court held that the *Chevron* doctrine violated the Administrative Procedure Act, ending 40 years of legal precedent with a ruling that will directly affect federal agencies and the regulations they implement and enforce. The impact of the *Loper Bright* decision will eventually extend to the work of local governments in North Carolina.

In a 1984 decision, *Chevron USA v. Natural Resources Defense Council*, the U.S. Supreme Court determined that courts must defer to federal agencies' reasonable interpretations of ambiguous statutes. Historically, bills passed by Congress do not spell out the exact details on how that new law should be implemented. A typical law authorizes a federal agency to issue regulations that set forth how a law will be implemented based on the scope of the authority granted to the agency by Congress. This process sometimes required significant interpretation when a law enacted by Congress was ambiguous, leading to disputes between Congress, federal agencies, the judiciary and private citizens.

The *Chevron* decision established a legal principle allowing agencies to implement laws based on congressional intent from ambiguous language by creating and enforcing regulations based on the agency's interpretation of the statute. When disagreements arose,

the *Chevron* doctrine required courts to defer to the agency's interpretation so long as that interpretation was "reasonable," even if the court would have interpreted the law differently. For decades, thousands of courts across the country have applied *Chevron* deference to rule in favor of an agency's interpretation.

The Supreme Court's ruling in *Loper Bright v. Raimondo* ended the *Chevron* doctrine's deference to federal agencies. This case involved



a regulatory action by the National Marine Fisheries Service, which is a federal agency within the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, requiring certain commercial fishing vessels to allow government observers onboard and requiring each fishing company to pay for those onboard observers. The regulation was challenged by several fishing companies who claimed the agency did not have statutory authority to require the companies to bear the costs of the observers but was upheld by lower courts under the *Chevron* deference. Upon appeal, the Supreme Court decided to hear the *Loper Bright* case to address whether the *Chevron* deference doctrine should remain as precedent, be clarified or be overruled. On June 28, 2024, the Supreme Court issued a ruling vacating the lower court decisions and overruled the long-standing *Chevron* doctrine, setting a new standard requiring courts to exercise independent judgment as to whether agencies are acting within their statutory authority.

Without the *Chevron* doctrine, the authority to interpret laws will shift substantially away from federal agencies to the judiciary. Many experts expect that there will be more legal challenges to federal regulations across the courts. The six-member majority opinion led by Chief Justice Roberts argued that the *Loper Bright* ruling would reduce shifting agency interpretations and limit overly broad agency interpretations, while the dissent warned it may lead to increased uncertainty regarding administrative actions by making legal challenges easier.

New legal challenges to existing federal regulations using the *Loper Bright* ruling might affect state and local governments, particularly regarding programs funded with federal dollars or created by federal law. Potential areas that could be affected include, but are not limited to, procurement and grants administration, Title X and ADA requirements, regulations involving child support enforcement, Community Development Block Grant program regulations, and numerous environmental regulations. Another consequence of this ruling is that bills written by Congress are likely to be much longer to guard against possible challenges based on ambiguous statutory language.

While there is both concern about and support for the decision to overturn the *Chevron* doctrine, the full impact of *Loper Bright* remains to be seen. Local governments and public officials in North Carolina will have to closely monitor legal developments and remain aware that current federal regulations continue to apply unless altered by a court or the issuing agency. 🗳️

About the author: Kyle Leopard is a government relations advisor for Strategics Consulting, NCACC's federal government relations consulting firm. To learn more, visit www.strategics.consulting.

Highlighting the NCACC 117th Annual Conference!

In August, more than 400 county commissioners, officials, staff, sponsor representatives and YouthVoice delegates convened in Forsyth County, Winston-Salem, N.C., for the 117th North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) Annual Conference. Counties from across the state participated in the conference, which included various workshops on important county issues with nationally known speakers and offered numerous opportunities for networking. The event was themed "Shaping County Futures" to showcase the art of intentional decision-making and the opportunity counties have to shape their own future.

During the conference, the Association elected its 2024-2025 executive officers, awarded individuals and partner organizations who positively impacted North Carolina counties, and hosted educational sessions and relationship-building events.

Tare "T." Davis, Warren County commissioner, was sworn in as the new president of the Association. President Davis also unveiled his presidential initiative, "Heroic Hands: Celebrating Public Service," which focuses on honoring the dedication of North Carolina public service organizations and their workers.

In addition to President Davis, the Association's executive officers for 2024-2025 include:

- Wallace Nelson, Perquimans County commissioner, sworn in as president-elect
- Allen Thomas, Hoke County commissioner, elected and sworn in as first vice president
- Todd McNeill, Ashe County commissioner, elected and sworn in as second vice president
- Johnnie Carswell, Burke County commissioner, sworn in as immediate past president

The NCACC recognized significant members and partners who contributed to the mission and vision of the organization. Award winners include:

- Jim Burgin, North Carolina senator, recipient of the Friend of the Counties Award
- Dr. Breeden Blackwell, NCACC 2004-2005 president and former Cumberland County commissioner, inducted into the NCACC Hall of Fame



SHAPING COUNTY FUTURES

NCACC 117TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

- Johnnie Carswell, NCACC 2023-24 president and Burke County commissioner, inducted into the NCACC Hall of Fame
- Gloria Whisenhunt, Forsyth County vice chair and commissioner, inducted into the NCACC Hall of Fame
- Shinica Thomas, Wake County commissioner, recipient of the M.H. "Jack" Brock Outstanding County Commissioner Award
- Frank Williams, NCACC 2021-2022 president and Brunswick County commissioner, recipient of the M.H. "Jack" Brock Outstanding County Commissioner Award

Attendees also heard from keynote speakers Judge Steven Leifman, associate administrative judge of the Miami-Dade County Court Criminal Division, who highlighted America's mental health crisis and the key elements needed to reform mental health and criminal justice systems; and Dr. James H. Johnson Jr., William R. Kenan Jr. Distinguished Professor of strategy and entrepreneurship and director of the Urban Investment Strategies Center at the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, who shared insights on seven demographic trends poised to reshape business, commerce and education.

On the final day of conference, the NCACC held the first public screening of 100 Strong Productions' newest documentary, *The Generation Theory*. The film focuses on work and public service across generations and reveals how local leaders are pioneering innovative programs to attract and keep talent. This coming November, 100 Strong Productions is partnering with counties featured in the film to hold two screenings.

- Thursday, Nov. 7, Catawba County
- Tuesday, Nov. 19, Surry County

For more information about the film and to watch the trailer, visit www.thegenerationtheory.com. 📺



(Left) NCACC 108th President T. Davis and (right) NCACC 2nd Vice President Todd McNeill



Keynote speaker Judge Steven Leifman



Forsyth County volunteers



Keynote speaker Dr. James H. Johnson Jr.

Director's Cut



Dear County Commissioners, County Managers and County Staff,
As we begin a new Board year, I want to share my sincere thanks to all of you who were able to attend our 117th Annual Conference this past August. It was an incredible few days of educational content, networking, and highlighting the hard work and accomplishments during the past year by all our counties, as well as our 2023-2024 NCACC President Johnnie Carswell, the Board and the One More Thing presidential initiative.

Our team is also grateful for the partnership with Forsyth County. It was their leadership and involvement in the planning process that made the entire event extra special. We appreciate the dedication they had in shaping the conference into an incredible event and sharing their beautiful community with us. We hope the sessions and networking opportunities during the conference left you feeling informed, energized and connected to your county neighbors. We all had the opportunity to learn and have fun at the same time. Although, I couldn't keep up with Randolph County Commissioner Darrell Frye who went down the slide at the Kaleideum at

least 15 times! (BTW, Commissioner Frye, I think you might have a new holiday card for this year. See photo below.)

As we begin the new Association Board of Directors term, led by President Tare "T." Davis, we are excited to announce we've launched President Davis' presidential initiative, Heroic Hands: Celebrating Public Service. This initiative focuses on those who work in and provide the daily service that makes our counties run and operate. By highlighting the value of careers in public service, the aim of the initiative is to promote workforce development and training needs and work to create a pipeline of future county public service employees. Stay tuned as we showcase this initiative and shine a light on the public service roles that play a vital part in our county operations.

We are thankful to the NCACC executive officers who will be guiding the way for our Board of Directors and the Association this year. They are:

- President Tare "T." Davis, Warren County Commissioner
- President-Elect Wallace Nelson, Perquimans County Commissioner
- First Vice President Allen Thomas, Hoke County Commissioner
- Second Vice President Todd McNeill, Ashe County Commissioner
- Immediate Past President Johnnie Carswell, Burke County Commissioner

As always, thank you so much for your service to our counties and your support of your Association. Your feedback and questions are always welcome. Please don't hesitate to reach out if there is anything our team can do for you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Leonard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin Leonard
NCACC Executive Director



This issue of CountyQuarterly was put together prior to Hurricane Helene making landfall. We understand how deeply Hurricane Helene has affected our counties, and we truly appreciate your understanding and flexibility as we work to support our affected counties during this challenging time. Thank you for everything you do for our counties and the Association. If you have any recovery questions, need help from the Association or have resources to share, please email helenererecovery@ncacc.org. For more resources, visit the Hurricane Helene Resources page at www.ncacc.org/helene.



HURRICANE HELENE RESOURCES PAGE

**RESOURCES FOR AFFECTED
COUNTIES AND HOW YOU CAN HELP**

www.ncacc.org/helene

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County Quarterly

The story of North Carolina counties



Thank you, Forsyth County!

(Pictured) Forsyth County Board Chair Don Martin speaking to Annual Conference attendees during the opening ceremonies.

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